



EXTERNAL EXAMINER ANNUAL REPORT FORM

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	For completion by External Examiner:		
Name of External Examiner:	Professor Gerald Adler		
Home Institution / Employer of External Examiner:	Kent School of Architecture/University of Kent		
Programme and / or Subjects Covered by this Report:	M Arch/Dissertation		
Academic Year / Period Covered by this Report:	2014-15	Date of Report:	13.08.15

For completion by External Examiner in the spaces provided. Please extend spaces where necessary. **Please note this Form will be published online.**

1. Programme Structure

The M Arch Dissertation is well structured, and the work occupies a significant position in the degree programme. The integration of such a major piece of work within the course is admirable, especially given the fact that this is not the usual two-year Masters programme.

2. Academic Standards

Standards remain high in this highly academic piece of work within a largely designed programme, to the benefit of the overall degree. Standards set by the School, and the achievement of the students, are comparable to those of my own institution and of those I am familiar with.

3. The Assessment Process (including dissertations, if appropriate)

The University can rest assured that the assessment process is extremely thorough, with students afforded scrupulously fair and equitable consideration, from the timely despatch of dissertations, the sampling carried out by External Examiners, to the conduct and time-keeping of the interviews. The presence of an independent moderator convening the interviews is a valuable part of the process.

4. Year-on-Year Comments

It has been a pleasure to return to Cardiff for this year's examinations, but sad, too, as it marks my final year as External Examiner to the programme. The work has been somewhat 'quieter' than usual, in that the number of outstanding students I examined, and indeed the number of those my peer examiners saw, seems to have been fewer than in previous years. However, the important thing is that the overall standard is high, and that the Dissertation's significance within the degree, amongst the staff, and its standing within the student body, is as high as ever. An observation of mine this year is that external examiners do not have access to the internal examiners' assessments. I do not view this as a serious impediment to our work; however, reading these would allow External Examiners to understand the reasons for the assessments of Internal Examiners more speedily and readily. Perhaps a summary paragraph from the internal examiner could be made available to external examiners, at the same time as the internal marks, shortly before the visit to Cardiff.

One of the negative aspects of the prescribed, largely 'social science', methodology (see 7. below) is the tendency for some students to pay lip service to wide and extensive reading and looking; bibliographies which at first sight seem rich and extensive may turn out to have been compiled to give more the appearance of background reading than of actual engagement with a variety of sources.

The best dissertations had the benefit of an overall design eye – as one would expect from a leading School of Architecture – governing the 'look', of the theses. Best practice regarding use and integration of illustrations might be offered as a workshop, in order to encourage all students to take the communication of their work seriously.

5. Preparation / Induction Activity (for new External Examiners only)

N/A.

6. Noteworthy Practice and Enhancement

I am aware that nearly all students value the opportunity to meet the external examiner; she or he acts as a critical external reader, and is evidence of the seriousness with which the School takes the Dissertation. It clearly lends the event a 'sense of occasion', one that students generally rise to, and value.

7. Appointment Overview (for retiring External Examiners only)

I am very grateful to the School and University for inviting me to be External Examiner in a programme of such high standing, nationally and internationally. I have learned much from every visit, from the students' topics, their approach, and from staff enthusiasms and scholarship. I wish the Programme and Dissertation well.

One feature of the Dissertation that is both a strength, but also, in rarer cases, a weakness, is its generally 'social science' bias. Its pronounced and clear methodology obviously gives weaker students a structure to which they can work, compelling students to undertake research and to write with rigour; however more able students may well benefit from less prescription as regards methodology and structure, especially those writing from a more humanistic stance.

8. Annual Report Checklist

Please include appropriate comments within Sections 1-7 above for any answer of 'No'.

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
Programme/Course Information				
8.1	Did you receive sufficient information about the Programme and its contents, learning outcomes and assessments?	Y		
8.2	Were you asked to comment on any changes to the assessment of the Programme?		N	
Draft Examination Question Papers				
8.3	Were you asked to approve all examination papers contributing to the final award?			N/A
8.4	Were the nature, spread and level of the questions appropriate?			N/A
8.5	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			N/A
Marking Examination Scripts				
8.6	Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts to be able to assess whether the internal marking and classifications were appropriate and consistent?			N/A
8.7	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			N/A
8.8	Were the scripts marked in such a way as to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			N/A
8.9	Were you satisfied with the standard and consistency of marking applied by the internal examiners?			N/A
8.10	In your judgement, did you have the opportunity to examine a sufficient cross-section of candidates' work contributing to the final assessment?			N/A
Coursework and Practical Assessments				
8.11	Was the choice of subjects for coursework and / or practical assessments appropriate?	Y		
8.12	Were you afforded access to an appropriate sample of coursework and / or practical assessments?	Y		
8.13	Was the method and general standard of assessment appropriate?	Y		
8.14	Is sufficient feedback provided to students on their assessed work?	Y		
Clinical Examinations (if applicable)				
8.15	Were satisfactory arrangements made for the conduct of clinical assessments?			N/A
Sampling of Work				
8.16	Were you afforded sufficient time to consider samples of assessed work?	Y		
Examining Board Meeting				

		Yes (Y)	No (N)	N/A (N/A)
8.17	Were you able to attend the Examining Board meeting?	Y		
8.18	Was the Examining Board conducted properly, in accordance with established procedures and to your satisfaction?	Y		
8.19	Cardiff University recognises the productive contribution of External Examiners to the assessment process and, in particular, to the work of the Examining Board. Have you had adequate opportunities to discuss the Programme and any outstanding concerns with the Examining Board or its officers?	Y		
Joint Examining Board Meeting (if applicable)				
8.20	Did you attend a Composite Examining Board, i.e. one convened to consider the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.21	If so, were you made aware of the procedures and conventions for the award of Joint Honours degrees?			N/A
8.22	Was the Composite Examining Board conducted according to its rules?			N/A

Please return this Report, preferably in a Microsoft Word format, by email to:

ExternalExaminers@cf.ac.uk

Your fee and expenses claim form and receipts, should be sent electronically to the above email address or in hard copy to:

Quality and Standards, Registry Officer, Registry & Academic Services, Cardiff University, McKenzie House, 30-36 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0DE