



Academic & Student Support Services
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Sent by email

28 September 2017

Dear Mr Firebrace,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2016–2017

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the BSc in Architectural Studies.

Your Report has been considered by the School in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

Issues Highlighted

1. Detailed comments on the sequence of learning across years of the programme and the need to define a clearer programme identity.
2. Weighting of the third year history and theory module.
3. Detailed observations and suggestions on the marking of design work (including a need for more provisional interim assessment, more account to be taken of the first semester and comments on the role of markers and external examiners).
4. Reiterated concerns raised in earlier External Examiner reports on the need to raise standards on the mid and lower range of portfolios.

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The following response has been provided on behalf of the School:

1. The School agrees with your comments concerning continuity between years and the potential benefits of introducing a brief with a 'definitive architectural outcome' into year 1 and reinforcing the representation and consideration of site in year 2 and intend to address these issues in the coming year. The School is currently addressing the issue of balance between the initial research/ urban design phase of year 3 and the concluding building proposal phase. The degree of emphasis on each of these phases differs across units and the School is keen to keep the flexibility and diversity that this promotes, but acknowledge the need for more explicit and perhaps earlier conclusion to the initial phase.

On the issue of 'defining a clearer identity' for the course, the latest attempts at this favoured diversity within the overall remit of a 'grounded creativity', a vision based on a combination of the School's history and a belief that staff teach best from the position of their own research and design interests, which are inevitably diverse. The School intends to address the fragilities that may arise from this diversity through more frequent cross-year conversation.

2. The School has no current plans to increase the credits attached to the third year 'ICA' history and theory module beyond 10 credits, given that the standard is high and we find that our students are well prepared for the dissertation that they undertake in the 4th and 5th year (MArch 1 and 2).
3. Thank you for these comments. The process of marking year 3 design work has been in constant review over the last four years and the School will continue to refine our procedures, taking into account your suggestions.
4. The School will continue to address the needs not only of its top students, but also those in the middle and lower end of the mark sheet.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure and academic standards;
2. support from the School to prepare you for your role;
3. high general standard of history and theory work from all three years, with some excellent essays.

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and we thank you for your continued support of the programme.

In order to meet the expectations of the QAA Quality Code, both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on the University website and will be available to all students and staff.

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The University's provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar