

Academic & Student Support Services
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Simon Wright LLB
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Simon Wright LLB



Sent by email to profdavidporter@me.com

13 October 2015

Dear Professor Porter,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2014 – 2015

I am writing further to the receipt of your External Examiner's Report for the MArch.

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.

Issue(s) Highlighted:

1. your comments on the Programme Structure and suggestions for the forthcoming course review;
2. your suggestion that unit leaders could be more involved in the marking of each other's units;
3. your comments on the unit system introduced into the final master's year and suggestion that consideration is given to amalgamate units.

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

1. The School confirms that this is valuable feedback in thinking about the Course review process taking place over the coming academic year. The suggestion here appears to be that students would benefit by having aspects of the course, such as PME, stripped back from the requirements of the MArch II, in order to place more emphasis on Dissertation on the one hand and on design development on the other. They can be overloaded by the requirements of the course, with compromises to quality and finesse ensuing.

'Integration' would be a matter of spreading the ARB/RIBA criteria across the course, and conceptualising the two years more clearly together. This is very much the aim of the course review, and the School looks forward to discussing the results of this year's work with you.

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In the meantime, the School has confirmed that it would seem worthwhile to emphasise the need to guide students to not take on too much in their design projects in particular given the short timeframe of the MArch II.

2. This is a well-made point that is being addressed in the organisation of reviews over the coming year. Success will rely of course on participation from all the unit leaders.
3. Bigger units, run perhaps by two tutors rather than just one, would be beneficial to the quality of debates established in particular units and perhaps even allow the School to offer more than one day of teaching time/ unit. However, traditionally, units have been run by single tutors, and this remains an option for now. The School will give further consideration to your thoughts.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments including:

1. your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process
2. your particular commendation of “bright students”, “a diverse team of accomplished teachers”, “location and atmosphere”.

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.

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
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