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Sent by email to katie.lloyd-thomas@newcastle.ac.uk

02 December 2020

Dear Professor Lloyd Thomas,

Re: Institutional Response: External Examiner Annual Report 2019/20

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

Your report does not appear to raise any significant issues that require a more detailed response, however the School have been asked to note the following comments:

1. Due to job shortages for placement year students, extra teaching support will be needed in Year 4. This must be recognised in workload allocation in 2020/21 staffing. Furthermore, with possible budget cuts next year, the school needs to secure and prioritise part-time practitioners' involvement in design teaching to maintain the school's distinctive profession-oriented offer to their students.
2. Develop opportunities and support staffing, for cross-teaching, reviews and interaction between parts of the programme and to view work in other modules or design studios.
3. Look into offering more support in Year 4 developing dissertation topics, possibly involving more group work or a revised Year 4 submission.
4. Investigate means, through a criteria review for example, to encourage and reward risk taking in dissertation and design.
5. With role of dissertation examiner now phased out consider how to maintain more module specific review by external examiners.

I am confident that the Programme Team will endeavour to address the issues identified in your report and your comments will help inform their [Annual Review and Enhancement](#) process.



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Degree Outcomes

Whilst you have not raised this as a concern in your report from a subject specific point of view, the Chair of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee has asked the School to review their degree outcomes profile as there has been a significant rise in first class honours degrees during 2019/20 compared with other years.

The School will be required to look at this in detail to try and understand any underlying factors that may have contributed to this both positive and negative. I am sure you will agree that it is important we ensure that academic standards are appropriately set and maintained with reference to external expectations in line with our responsibility to publish a Degree Outcomes Statement as specified by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) Statement of Intent to protect the value of UK degrees.

The University is pleased to note your positive comments, including:

1. Your positive comments regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.
2. Confirmation that the actions taken as a result of the variation of assessments in relation to industrial action and Covid-19 have been appropriate to protect the academic standards of the programme and have allowed students to achieve their programme level learning outcomes.
3. Year 4 and 5 chairs showed great nimbleness to Covid developments and enormous commitment to ensuring students had a good educational experience despite the lockdown.
4. The introduction of a dissertation symposium in Feb 2020 was a very positive development and should be expanded to enable more interaction between modules, and between design staff.
5. Particularly commendable were the short videos many students had made to present their Design Thesis in lieu of in person reviews or interviews.
6. Very much appreciated the range of design units available to students and the group component of work in the first term.

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's [Public Information website](#) and will be available to all students and staff.

As this is your final year as External Examiner, we would like to thank you for your service and we are most grateful for your valuable input into this process.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Simon Wright
Academic Registrar