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Sent by email to [rachel.sara@bcu.ac.uk](mailto:rachel.sara@bcu.ac.uk)

**03 December 2020**

Dear Professor Sara,

**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 (Design).

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. Systems to prevent isolation of newly arriving students (in a largely online teaching environment).
2. Opportunities for connections between studio units (perhaps in the dissertation conference or cross-unit reviews).

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.

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. Aspects of the course design can be considered as good practice for blended and online teaching models, including the way in which there are peer group activities to help build peer support networks and the relationship between the 'pop-up' studio and the online environments.
4. The risk of the students being isolated in MArch 1 is mitigated by the involvement of the practice visitors, who really help to bridge the link between the school and practice.
5. It is good to see that the course team are already considering how to develop the modules to respond to students who have lost their practice employment, including the proposals for 'practice shadowing'.
6. In the dissertation, the introduction of the student conference, in which to share the work generated through the dissertation was a valuable addition, and an example of really good practice that should be celebrated.
7. The MArch Studio unit was run by two people – which can make it easier to reflect and develop teaching practice.
8. The introduction of the year gallery for the M.Arch 2 is a really strong idea, and overall the structure of this year seems to be very clear and this benefitted students, particularly in a challenging time.
9. The practice management and economics (PME) course is interesting in its introduction to questions about procurement and buildability. Particularly the focus on VALUE, rather than costing. It is also valuable to see the PME linked to the thesis, particularly in the exploration of real clients and funding opportunities where possible.
10. I saw some extraordinary work and really congratulate the team on what would, at any time, be a great achievement, but in this time of covid and all the disruption it has brought, is extraordinary.
11. The course team have managed a really smooth transition in extraordinary times and students have both performed well, and are happy with their experiences given the circumstances.

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.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Wright', written in a cursive style.

Mr Simon Wright  
Academic Registrar