

## **INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013-2014 - Master of Architecture (dissertations)**

Dear Ms Steane,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Welsh School of Architecture 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

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School.

- 1. [1 and 6 (first bullet point)] your perception “that those students pursuing topics in the history/theory area might benefit from being offered an alternative thesis model to the one currently outlines, which seems more suited to topics in building science or social science” and related comments;**
- 2. [6 (third bullet point)] your observation that few of the students made reference to any relation between their design and thesis projects, despite the fact that this linkage is what sets in motion the process of opening questions, establishing scope and narrowing focus of thesis topics, and is stated as a potentially synergistic outcome in the programme introduction” and related suggestion.**

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

1. *“We are addressing this by looking closely at the process of allocating students to dissertation tutors and affiliating them with research groups in the school – which should help to define interests in terms of history and theory earlier on in the course and provide support from a base of research interest/expertise in this area.”*

*We are also revising our ‘dissertation handbook’ this year and will bear this comment in mind in the process.*

2. *“This is an issue we are considering in the context of our MArch course review. We are keen to preserve an openness in the course framework, so that students have the freedom to make connections in different ways. On the other hand, we recognise the advantages of formalising the links, particularly in view of our emphasis on a final ‘design thesis’ rather than just a design ‘project’.”*

The School has also responded to your indication that “It seemed surprising, given the current expertise at the Welsh School, that not more of the theses were in the area of building science/ sustainability.”

*“This is largely because relatively few specialists in that area within the school teach on the MArch programme as they are full-time researchers or employed to teach on post-graduate programmes.”*

### Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School's provision including:

- a. [1, 2 and 3] your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process.**

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

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 Registry web pages and will be available publically.

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.

Dr S L Williamson

for Dr C B Turner  
Academic Registrar