

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2010 – 2011

PART A: GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject area and awards being examined:

School of: Civil Engineering	Subject(s):
Programme(s) / Module(s): Architectural Engineering	awards: (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc.) BEng and MEng

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than 6 weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to:

Head of Academic Quality and Standards,
Academic Quality and Standards Team,
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building,
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

PART B: COMMENTS FOR THE INSTITUTION ON THE EXAMINATION PROCESS AND STANDARDS***Matters for Urgent Attention***

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box.

N/A.

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

N/A.

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School.

N/A.

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award?

- *The appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

The programme aims and intended learning outcomes are undoubtedly appropriate for the level of the award at BEng and/or MEng. Further, the standards actually achieved are equally appropriate and impressive.

2. Did the aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

Yes. The output standards and levels of achievement attained on the programmes are at least equivalent to, and in many areas surpass, those at other institutions in the UK of similarly high standing to that of the University of Leeds.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs?

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

The assessment methods, marking and degree classification system all seemed entirely appropriate and representative of good practice. Judging by student performance, examination standards, design-project output and obvious staff commitment, there is no doubt in my mind that the students continue to be exposed to a very high-quality learning environment.

I remain extremely impressed by the extraordinary levels of student feedback on the Architectural Engineering degree programmes, particularly in third and final year. The students benefit from very detailed, informative feedback, and I sincerely hope they realise how fortunate they are to have this level of commitment from their tutors. I am sure they do, having spoken to them. Feedback on these programmes at Leeds represents best practice nationally, in my experience. The downside of this excellent feedback in Architectural Engineering is that the students I spoke to then expect similar levels of feedback from the modules they take within core Civil Engineering, and they are slightly disappointed, it seems. This is a difficult balancing act for the School. The group of students I spoke to collectively agreed that within the Civil Engineering modules they took, the balance between contact time and assessment/feedback time was probably skewed a touch too much towards contact time, and not enough towards feedback time. I emphasise that this comment was elicited against a background proviso that the overall time committed by academics was likely to remain a constant into the future.

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

The mix of design project work and formal assessment in the Architectural Engineering degree programmes is entirely appropriate. The students are given ample opportunity to demonstrate learning-outcome achievements across a broad range of assessment criteria.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

N/A.

6. The nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

The programme has been enhanced over the past year, to an even higher level. I am delighted to see that students are introduced to a range of construction materials in early years, and that retrofit has been used in design projects as a means to stretch students architecturally and technically, against a backdrop of sustainable development.

There remains superb integration of architecture, structural engineering and building physics throughout the degree programme. The explicit use of project-based learning, precedent study, site analysis and sketchbooks is something of which the programme should be very proud, and many other civil engineering departments across the UK should learn from this.

7. The influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

I was very happy to see that materials research is clearly embedded in the curriculum. There might well be scope to embed other research-informed teaching in the curriculum, but there is indeed a profound influence of modern practice on the students' learning experience, something which is terribly important. At the visit, I was aware that there is some ongoing discussion about whether or not the Architectural Engineering students should conduct an individual research-based dissertation (as is the usual case in engineering programmes nationwide). Therefore, I quizzed the students on their thoughts about this. Very interestingly, they were unanimous that they would prefer the curriculum left as it is, for two main reasons. Firstly, the educational and holistic enriching which they received from the major final-year individual design project seems to them to have been of far greater importance than what they perceive to have been the benefits provided to their Civil Engineering peers through the research dissertation. Secondly, they believe that through doing several design projects they have picked up the ability to research ideas, make judgments about important vs unimportant issues, write professional reports, and use engineering judgment technically throughout. They feel that the ILOs for a research-based dissertation are therefore actually already covered implicitly within their various design projects. I feel that this viewpoint is important in helping the School decide on this issue.

The Examination Process

8. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?

- *Whether external examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

Yes.

9. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks?

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to external examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

Yes, I was given ample information. I was also shown a mini-handbook which the students are given. I think this document is excellent!

10. Was sufficient assessed/examination work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?

Yes, the layout of student work was exemplary.

11. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners?

Yes. The Board of Examiners was exemplary, reinforced by the obvious esprit de corps amongst staff, which was delightful to see. The administrative team clearly are outstanding at getting accurate paperwork to the Board on time, and they should be congratulated for this.

12. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

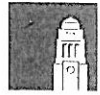
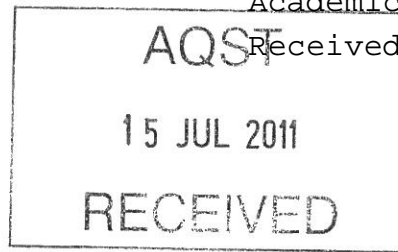
Yes.

Other Comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form.

It was a pleasure talking to four graduands on the MEng in Architectural Engineering. They were articulate, enthusiastic, extremely grateful for their experience at Leeds and fiercely supportive of the programme. They liked making models during the programme, and suggested that this could be made compulsory from Year 1 onwards for all design projects. I would endorse this. They felt that they would have preferred to have had two, rather than four, precedent studies to look at near the start of the final-year project. And they were particularly enthusiastic about the notion of the School possibly seeking ARB Part 1 accreditation. My personal thought on this is that given the studio time your students have, there is a decent chance of accreditation being granted.

Architectural Engineering at Leeds is an outstanding degree programme, delivered by a team of extremely dedicated academics. The programme is modern and focused, and it supports the students to a level to which other universities can only aspire. This is a programme of which Leeds University should be most proud and supportive.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

14 July 2011

Dear

Thank you for your prompt and very positive external examiners report for our MEng, BEng Integrated Masters programmes in Architectural Engineering.

I am very pleased to see your continued support for our Architectural Engineering programmes and your comments regarding the very high quality learning environment and our high standards. As you noticed, the AE teaching team introduced a few relatively minor changes to the programme in 2010/11. These seemed to have worked well and were well received by our students. Inevitably in the next couple of years further changes will be made to reflect not only the new members of the teaching team but also the outcome of our ongoing UG programme review. It was most helpful to be able to discuss some of our ideas for change with you.

I am pleased that we were able to arrange a meeting with some of our students this year. We will endeavour to make similar arrangements for next year. Thank you for raising some of our ideas for change with the students. Their comments about the lack of need for a research-based dissertation were particularly interesting and will be considered as part of the UG programme review. It is very reassuring to learn that our students feel that they have been able to develop their research and independent learning skills via their design projects. This should allow us to retain the strong theme of design throughout the AE programme and, at the same time, achieve the UK-SPEC and QAA Engineering output standards.

As last year, the AE teaching team is very pleased to see your continued support for project-based learning, precedent studies, site analysis and sketchbooks. The team places great importance on these key elements of learning which can be found in all 4 years of the programme. I note that our students commented on the need to have more model-making on the course. The AE team has already introduced compulsory model making in the second year architectural studies module and will ensure that it is a compulsory component of the final year design project for next year.

Thank you for your very positive comments about the level of feedback provided by the AE teaching team. I know that the team puts a great deal of effort into providing such feedback, particularly for the design-based project work which we consider to be the backbone of the AE programme. An intermediate feedback and progress review was also introduced by the team in 2010/11 for the

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50-credit final year design project; this seems to have been welcomed by the students. In 2011/12 the team will introduce feedback in the form of critique sessions led by local practising architects. I note your comments relating to the difficulties in balancing the amount of feedback across different modules and programmes. This is an issue that will, no doubt, be the subject of further discussion within the School!

Many thanks, once again, for your supportive report and your most helpful and constructive comments.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely