

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2018-19 QAT Received 04/07/2019

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Title and Name of Examiner:

Faculty / School of:

Engineering / Civil Engineering

Subject(s):

Architectural Engineering

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Years 2, 3 and 4

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

MEng / BEng in Architecture

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Points of innovation and/or good practice

Please highlight areas of innovation or good practice within the programmes or processes you have been involved with in this box.

This year I focused on the studio design work, together with the Architectural History and Theory essays, since other External Examiners are reviewing the procedures for written examinations.

The main points of innovation and good practice are:

- The briefing documents provided to students are comprehensive and explicit in what is expected, and tutorial meetings, interim reviews, and supervisions are pre-planned and programmed. Course documentation seems excellent.
- The formally scheduled studio tutorials with the staff and with visiting practitioners provide a variety of informed opinions and feedback to students about their emerging design proposals.
- Student learning is supported by a well considered marking scheme for the studio design work in which various aspects of the work are explicitly commented on.
- The course provides a clear sense of progression and development in the scope, scale and complexity of the studio design projects through years 2, 3 and 4.
- Students are encouraged to study in depth architecturally significant precedents, to learn from them, and to gain inspiration explicitly as a means of informing themselves about contemporary architectural thinking.

Enhancements made from the previous year

Please highlight any enhancements made to the programme(s) or processes over the past year in this box.

As recommended last year, I was pleased to see that in Semester 4.2, design development beyond the initial design proposals submitted in Seminar 4.1 was given formal credit.

I was extremely pleased to be informed that ARB (Architects' Registration Board) Prescription was granted to the course in September 2018.

My observations last year were minor but I was pleased by the thoroughness and rigour of the responses of the course team to them, and to learn of the actions that had been taken.

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

None.

For Examiners in the first year of appointment only

1.	Were you provided with an External Examiner Handbook?	Y
2.	Were you provided with copies of previous External Examiners' reports and the School's responses to these?	Y
3.	Were you provided with a External Examiner Mentor?	Y

For Examiners completing their term of appointment only

4.	Have you observed improvements in the programme(s) over the period of your appointment?	Y
5.	Has the school responded to comments and recommendations you have made?	Y
6.	Where recommendations have not been implemented, did the school provide clear reasons for this?	Y
7.	Have you acted as an External Examiner Mentor?	Y

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

Standards

8.	Is the overall programme structure coherent and appropriate for the level of study?	Y
9.	Does the programme structure allow the programme aims and intended learning outcomes to be met?	Y
10.	Are the programme aims and intended learning outcomes commensurate with the level of award?	Y
11.	Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?	Y
12.	Is the programme(s) comparable with similar programmes at other institutions?	Y

Please use this box to explain your overall impression of the programme structure, design, aims and intended learning outcomes.

The programme structure has been carefully devised to ensure a clear progression in terms of the size, scale and complexity of the studio design projects. As students progress there is also an increasing emphasis on them developing the ability to establish their own design brief.

There is an emphasis on sketching and hand drawing in the early years, and the making of simple models; as the course progresses students learn to use computer aided drawing software in 2D and 3D, and to enhance their model-making skills. At the same time, their understanding of building structure and building services also develop through lectures and examinations, and the reports accompanying their design proposals become increasingly detailed.

By the end of the four year course, they are capable of creating architectural designs that satisfy both aesthetic and technical requirements, that respond to their urban context, and for which they understand

both the structural systems and environmental servicing strategies and are able to undertake sample calculations. These, and related learning outcomes such as awareness of architectural history and theory, pedestrian movement, construction methods, and the responsibilities of the architectural profession, are all carefully built into the course as learning outcomes. These are all essentials for ARB Prescription and the gaining of this Registration Board recognition (as of September 2018) reinforces my own view of the well-rounded nature of the course.

13.	Is the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching clear?	Y
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Please explain how this is/could be achieved (examples might include: curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research)

Yes. Studio design work is informed by current thinking and use of state-of-the-art tools. Students are encouraged to learn from architecturally significant precedent buildings. The Architectural History and Theory assignments introduce more formal research skills, such as literature searching, evidence-based argument and Harvard referencing.

14.	Does the programme form part of an Integrated PhD?	N
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Please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD:

As I wrote last year, the analytical and mathematical skills developed on the course could act as a platform for moving on to a quantitative PhD, while the more qualitative skills in architectural history and theory could also lead to a PhD in the arts and humanities. The healthy mix of skills in numeracy, literacy and modelling could lead to some fascinating interdisciplinary research at the PhD level.

15.	Does the programme include clinical practice components?	N
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Please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum here:

Not exactly, but I regard it as highly valuable to student learning to have practitioners from (mostly local) architectural and engineering practices, spending time with them as tutors contributing to their design work and then attending reviews to give feedback on their completed project proposals. I understand that there is a continuing good connection with the West Yorkshire Society of Architects, and an annual exhibition is put on for them of student work. Students themselves are very positive about the experience, as evidenced in their student feedback.

16.	Is the programme accredited by a Professional or Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB)?	Y / N
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Please comment on the value of, and the programme's ability to meet, PSRB requirements here:

The MEng in Architectural Engineering has recognition from the Joint Board of Moderators representing four Professional Engineering Institutions (ICE, IStructE, CIHT and IHE). Students electing for the MEng/BEng in Architecture take the Architecture module Design Studio 3.1 and, provided they gain a pass mark in all modules, are then eligible for the MEng in Architecture. As of September 2018, this is recognised by the UK Architects' Registration Board (ARB). This recognition is well deserved.

17.	Does the programme design clearly align intended learning outcomes with assessment?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs, in particular: 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.</i></p> <p>Yes. As I noted last year, the assessment is based on a mix of written examinations and coursework, and the coursework itself comprises design proposals supported by reports and calculations. The moderation process by which studio design work is marked and graded by several staff members ensures that qualitative judgments about aesthetic aspects of the designs are shared by at least two members of staff. Several explicit and weighted criteria are used as the basis of the assessment, with marks awarded to each criterion and then summed to provide an overall mark.</p>		
18.	Is the design and structure of the assessment methods appropriate to the level of award?	Y
19.	Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the programme aims and intended learning outcomes?	Y
<p><i>Please comment on 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:</i></p> <p>As I observed last year, the achievements of the Year 4 students in their design studio projects are comparable with Architecture Part 1 courses elsewhere; the best of the work is excellent and the average is good. Some of the work was beyond the Part 1 level, towards Part 2 when considering the architectural creativity of the projects and the engineering insights and calculations of structure and services that the best of the students demonstrated.</p> <p>Conversely, I was not entirely convinced of the aesthetic quality of the work produced for Module 3.2. I understand that this project (an office building on an urban edge-of-city site in Leeds) has been run successfully for several years. The scale of the building is appropriate at 3000 sqm, it is multi-storey, and means of escape need to be considered along with other regulatory issues. The site presents some good urban contextual challenges. In respect of structural engineering it demands attention not just to components but also to engineering systems thinking; technically the work was appropriate. All these are positives. Nevertheless architecturally the student design proposals – all of them in my view – lacked a certain architectural spark, and I recommend that the course team review whether improvements to the project brief or the site or helping students to identify architecturally significant precedents could stimulate more imaginative design proposals.</p>		
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make in relation to assessment and feedback:</i></p> <p>Here I do want to make a recommendation about Module 3.1, which involves those students who elect for the MEng / BEng in Architecture undertaking an urban housing project in Naples. In my view, this is an excellent learning experience which has run successfully for several years. The students undertake background research jointly as a group and also produce a group model of the site and surrounding buildings. Individually they then prepare their own proposal for a block of apartments and their own model can be placed on the larger site model. My understanding is that at present, the tutor who leads this is also responsible for the awarding of student marks. My recommendation is that one or more additional staff members should be invited to review the design proposals and moderate the marks as a small jury and that, as with other design studio projects, the criteria to be used are notified explicitly to students.</p>		

The Progression and Awards Process

20.	Were you provided with guidance relating to the External Examiner's role, powers and responsibilities in the examination process?	Y
21.	Was the progression and award guidance provided sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner?	Y
22.	Did you receive appropriate programme documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
23.	Did you receive appropriate module documentation for your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
24.	Did you receive full details of marking criteria applicable to your area(s) of responsibility?	Y
25.	Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments?	Y
26.	Was the nature and level of the assessment questions appropriate?	Y
27.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments on assessment questions?	Y
28.	Was sufficient assessed work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work?	Y
29.	Were the examination scripts clearly marked/annotated?	N/A
30.	Was the choice of subjects for final year projects and/or dissertations appropriate?	Y
31.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate for the final year projects and/or dissertations?	Y
32.	Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
33.	Were you able to attend the Progression and Awards Board meeting?	Y
34.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
35.	Were you satisfied with the way decisions from the School Special Circumstances meeting were communicated to the Progression and Awards Board?	Y
<p><i>Please use this box to provide any additional comments you would like to make on the questions above:</i></p>		

Other comments

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

Members of the course team were very helpful. I spent one and a half days reviewing student work and had plenty of opportunity to engage with the staff members responsible for the various elements of the course. All the material I needed was laid out in an exemplary fashion.

Feedback from students was generally excellent. I focused particularly on feedback from Year 4 / Module 4.2 students. Here comments included that the staff were enthusiastic and encouraging, and gave good support and guidance; the project work was intellectually stimulating; they enjoyed meeting practitioners for tutorials, and the shared workspace felt collaborative.

Name of School and Head of School (or nominee)

Title and Name of Examiner:

Subject(s):

Architecture

Programme(s) / Module(s):

Programmes

MEng, BEng Integrated Masters programmes in Architecture

Principal modules (2nd, 3rd and final year)

CIVE1160 Architecture and Environment; CIVE1665 (Integrated Design Project 1 / Design Studio 1); CIVE2260 Architectural History and Theory 2; CIVE2860 Design Studio 2; CIVE3270 Architectural History and Theory 3; CIVE3870 Design Studio 3.1; CIVE3871 Design Studio 3.2; CIVE5265M Architectural History and Theory 4; CIVE5275M Management, Practice & Law; CIVE5840M Design Studio 4.1; CIVE5845M Design Studio 4.2

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

See above.

Title and Name of Responder:

Position*:

Head of School

Faculty / School of:

School of Civil Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Address for communication:

Email:

Telephone:

*If the individual responding to the report is not the Head of School please state their position within the School.

Completing the School response

The completed School response (including the full original report) must be sent directly to the External Examiner. A copy must also be emailed to the Quality Assurance Team at qat@leeds.ac.uk. External Examiners should receive a formal response no later than six weeks after receipt of the original report.

Response to Points of innovation and/or good practice

We thank _____ for very encouraging and supportive comments.

Response to Enhancements made from the previous year

We thank _____ for helpful suggestions last year and for _____ support regarding ARB part 1 prescription. We are scheduled to have an exploratory visit from the RIBA in February 2020 as part of a process to seek RIBA part 1 validation of our MEng, BEng programme in Architecture.

Response to Matters for Urgent Attention

If any areas have been identified for urgent attention before the programme is offered again please provide a specific response to them here:

Not applicable – no matters for urgent attention were raised by

Response to questions 1-7 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

Not applicable – no comments were made by

Standards**Response to questions 8 to 16 (and related comments)**

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

Again we thank _____ for very encouraging and supportive comments. These are welcomed and very highly valued by the staff, in particular the Architectural teaching team.

Assessment and Feedback

Response to questions 17 to 19 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We welcome _____ positive comments about our assessment procedures for our Design Studio work. We are particularly encouraged to see _____ comments about the high standards achieved by our students noting that some of the work exceeds that of Part 1. A similar view was expressed by the chair of the West Yorkshire Society of Architects when reviewing our students' work and presenting the prizes at the June 2019 exhibition. This augurs well for our aim to achieve RIBA part 1 validation in 2020.

We note _____ comments about the aesthetic quality of the work produced by our students for Design Studio 3.2 (CIVE3871). Although the teaching team believes that this was more of a problem for the 2018/19 cohort than in previous years the following action will be implemented for the 2019/20 academic year:

- In the initial module briefings, greater emphasis will be placed on the need to be more architecturally adventurous with a view to bringing the missing "architectural spark", mentioned by _____, back into the students' work. This message will then form a recurring message in the scheduled tutorials with the teaching team and visiting tutors.
- The teaching team will provide the students with more direction in the precedents to be studied in the group-based Precedent Study exercise which is undertaken in the 2nd week of the semester. Further directed study will be given in the scheduled small-group tutorials that follow the group exercises.
- A mark will be assigned to the physical scale model (as part of the overall report submission) – hopefully this will address some of the very poor models presented by some of the students.

With regard to the comments made by _____ about the assessment of the Design Studio 3.1 (CIVE3870) work, the teaching team agrees with and thanks _____ for recommendation. This module is based on a field trip to Naples which is supported by staff from the School of Architecture at the University of Naples Federico II. For the 2019/20 academic year (and thereafter), the students' work will be assessed by a team consisting of the module leader, the programme leader and two of the professors from the University of Naples.

The Progression and Awards Process

Response to questions 20-35 (and related comments)

Schools may provide a general response; however, where Examiners raise specific points these must be addressed individually:

We are very pleased to note _____ positive responses to the questions posed under the "Progression and Awards Process" heading.

Other comments

Response to items included in the 'Other Comments' section of the report

We would like to thank _____ for the care _____ continues to take in _____ role as our external examiner. We welcome _____ constructive and very useful feedback and hope that we have addressed _____ comments and recommendations with the rigour they deserve.

We are very pleased to note that the layout of the student work to be reviewed and the contact with the academic staff on the day before the Examination Board meeting both proved to be useful. We will adopt the same approach in June 2020. Finally, the academic staff welcome the opportunity to engage in very constructive discussions with _____ and thank _____ for very helpful views and suggestions for improvement.