External Examiner's report summary

School of Art, Architecture and Design

Postgraduate

- MARCH Architecture(TP)

Please indicate, below, whether you agree with the statements about the threshold standards of Leeds Beckett University's awards, student achievement and the conduct of the University's assessment processes, using as a reference the framework for higher education qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements / Qualification Characteristic Statements. Please also list any shortcomings and areas for commendation. You should expand on any issues you mention here in the main report. If any boxes are ticked "No" the Dean of School or nominee will be alerted and will oversee the response from the Course Director.

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Standards Set

	Yes	No
"In my view, the threshold academic standards set for the modules/awards meet with the requirements of the relevant National Qualifications Statement's."	X	

If your answer is **'no',** please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short:

Student achievement

	Yes	No	N/A*
"In my view, students' who have been awarded qualifications have had the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar." *Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess this statement, please note here:	X		

Please provide any further comment on the comparability of collaborative provision
The work I saw was always of an appropriate standard, and some was of a high standard. The minimum pass level was set at an appropriate level to meet RIBA and ARB validation criteria. Boundaries between grades also seemed to me to be generally appropriate. Standards and marking are comparable with other UK schools of architecture with which I am familiar.

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short:

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Conduct of process

	Yes	No	
"In my view, the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are reliable, rigorous and fairly conducted."	X		

If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.

Actions from last year's report
(This will not be relevant if you are examining for the first time)

N/A

Areas of good practice/commendation

Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to learning, teaching and assessment:

I strongly appreciated the strong social ethic which underlies the teaching of the School. The School seems to me to get a lot of things right that other schools currently ignore to their detriment.

In particular, the School understands the importance of time in architecture, and it teaches students that they are not here just to learn about the design and construction phases of a building, but recognizes that there is a much long afterlife of a building when it is experienced, visited, maintained, and used.

Some studios were dealing with issues like the circular economy, temporary and meanwhile uses, the social sustainability of places, and the re-use of old buildings. Again, all these topics recognize the time dimension in architecture and the life of buildings and places.

The use of film by students as a medium to communicate architectural intent is commendable.

There seemed to me to be an emphasis on hand drawing and sketching: students' presentations were not entirely dominated by digital imagery. This is commendable.

The practice of simple websites students use to present their work is also to be commended.

I was impressed by the quality and depth of the professional practice component of the course.

Main report

In this section you are asked to describe more fully how the University has or has not maintained threshold academic standards and the quality of the student experience in relation to the course(s) for which you are the external examiner, using as a reference the framework for higher education qualifications and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements / Qualification Characteristic Statements.

Please complete all sections of the form fully and where not applicable please state N/A. Where applicable

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please also complete the sections for any collaborative provision sampled.

If you are an external examiner for any of the University's Pearson Licensed Centre Programmes (HND/HNC level) provision, please also complete the section on page 9 sections l, m and n entitled "for External Examiners Associated with Pearson Licensed Centre Programmes."

Professional Body Requirements

	Yes	No	N/A*
"In my view, the professional body requirements for this course have been met. *Not applicable if the course is not a professional body courseplease indicate here.	X		
If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.			

(a) The operation and conduct of the Progression and Award Board (and/or Module Board meeting you may also have attended).

We did not attend the Board meeting.

(b) The action, if any was required, taken in response to your report of last year. (This will not be relevant if you are examining for the first time.)

(c) The overall performance of the students, in relation to that of comparable levels of work in other institutions.

The work I saw was always of an appropriate standard, and some was of a high standard.

The minimum pass level was set at an appropriate level to meet RIBA and ARB validation criteria.

Boundaries between grades also seemed to me to be generally appropriate.

Standards and marking are comparable with other UK schools of architecture with which I am familiar.

(d) The strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills.

Generally I was impressed with the conceptual ideas, noted above, underlying the students' work. This gave all students a solidly resilient theoretical trampoline against which to test their design iterations, and meant that stronger students were able to produce proposals of convincing quality.

As also noted above, I commend the emphases on the circular economy; temporary and meanwhile uses;

social sustainability; and reuse of existing buildings. All these mark out the School's particularities.

I enjoyed meeting the students and appreciated the way the school made them part of its presentation of the school to us, so we got their unvarnished, unmediated impressions. This speaks well of the School's confidence and sense of itself.

I would like to have seen more emphasis on landscape. Too often, one felt that students considered the limit of their endeavours ceased at the outer face of their buildings. This is closely bound up with encouraging a positive approach to ubanism and context. It might be useful to provide students with tighter, more constricted sites, so that it is a bit of a squeeze to fit their buildings into it. Without this, there is a tendency for projects to flatten like blancmange, and spread themselves out unnecessarily.

I would like to see more north points - one on every single plan, and a clear understanding of how sun, and climate generally, will affect plan arrangements and elevational treatment.

It will be useful for students to understand the limits of describing their projects chronologically: "First I did this, then I tried this, etc." while it is useful to understand where they are coming from, this needs to be a brief introduction. The main part of their presentation to someone like me who knows nothing of their project, is to describe the completed proposal, and to take the presentee for a walk around and through it. Bring the idea of the architectural promenade into their narratives.

(e) The standards of the structure, organisation, design and marking of all examination papers and/or other forms of assessment.

Structure and organisation assessment was clear and fair. Assessment procedures appeared to me to be designed to bring out and highlight the qualities of student submissions.

Marking appeared to me to be fair, consistent and generally accurate. We raised two situations where we were concerned about the accuracy of marking, and this was satisfactorily addressed by staff in response.

(f) The curriculum, teaching or resourcing of the programme of study as indicated by the performance of the students in the assessment

There is a strong ethic underlying the teaching of the School, which recognizes the importance of time in architecture. Students learn that they are not here just to learn about the construction phase of a building, but that there is a long afterlife of a building when it is experienced, visited, maintained, and used. A useful extension to this approach might be more consideration of how building materials age and weather over time.

Commendable are the following:

Some studios were dealing with important issues like the circular economy, temporary and meanwhile uses, social sustainability of places and the re-use of old buildings.

Some studios encouraged students to use film as a medium to communicate architectural intent.

Across most studios, I saw that students are encouraged to use hand drawing to supplement digital

imagery.

(g) Comments on the use of My Beckett (Virtual Learning Environment) within the course (if applicable).

No comments

(h) Module content, consistency of modules and module assessment across the course and the achievement of learning outcomes. (You may be asked by your School to provide detailed comments on the modules that you examine.)

The four studios provide a wide variety of options for students : agency and live project pedagogy; digital and material morphology; scene sequence and mediated commons; and displacement, otherness and multiplicity. Studio arrangements are sometimes criticized for providing widely varying degrees of difficulty across different studios. In this case, the samples I examined suggest that there has been careful calibration across the studios to ensure consistency and conformity in the achievement of learning outcomes.

(i) Areas of student/staff engagement in teaching and learning, scholarship, research or professional practice.

No further comments

(j) The University welcomes external examiners' comments on its academic regulatory framework. Such comments may not have a direct bearing on standards set and achieved or the conduct of processes and so it may not be appropriate to include them elsewhere in this report or its summary. Please record any concerns or comments you may have here.

No comments

(k) Collaborative Provision: please include here any comments you wish to make on elements of collaborative provision for which you have responsibility (in addition to those you may have indicated previously in this report).

No comments

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