

Form 'External Examiners - Leeds School Of Arts' for
External Examiners - Leeds School Of Arts

Submitted By	
Began	14 Jul 2023, 1:41 pm
Finished	14 Jul 2023, 1:49 pm
Updated	14 Jul 2023, 1:49 pm
Status	Default Last Status Change: 14 Jul 2023, 1:49 pm by Kay Hartley  Status change history
Actions	Edit submission Print submission Delete submission

Page 1 of 9



Introduction

Leeds School Of Arts

Postgraduate

- MARCH Architecture (DA)(TP)
- MARCH Architecture(TP)

External Examiner ID

Name Of External Examiner:

First Name

Last Name

Collaborative Institution:

Date of Main Progression and Award Board Attended:

Introduction

External Examiners are required by the terms of their appointment to submit an annual report. The report will be considered in depth during course annual monitoring activity. A record of the University’s responses to examiners’ reports also forms part of the documentation for this activity. It is also used in compiling our annual report on external examining.

Your report will be widely circulated and shared with Students and therefore we ask you not to refer to anyone by name or in a way that allows identification of an individual.

Please complete all sections of the report unless they are not relevant (such as you do not examine Collaborative or Degree Apprenticeship Provision). This report must be **submitted within 28 days of the main Progression and Award Board** and failure to submit within the required timescale may result in termination of your tenure as an external examiner without good reason.

NO EXAMINING FEES WILL BE PAID IF YOU FAIL TO SUBMIT YOUR ANNUAL REPORT.

Page 1 of 9

Page 2 of 9

Section A

External Examiner’s Report Summary

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](#) applicable Subject Benchmark Statements / Qualification Characteristic Statements and [Leeds Beckett University regulations](#)

If any boxes are ticked “No” the Dean of School or nominee will be alerted and will oversee the response from the Course Director.

[HK1]Added Reference to correct section of Regulations in here.

Standards set

A1) “Threshold academic standards set for the modules/courses meet the applicable national academic standards.” (required)

See 14.3.6a of regulations

Yes

Student achievement

A2) “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.” (required)

14.3.6b of regulations

Yes

A2b) Please provide any further comment on the comparability of any associated collaborative provision:

Conduct of processes

A3) "Processes for assessment and the determination of awards are reliable, rigorous and conducted in line with the regulations at all times." (required)

see 14.3.6c of regulations

Yes

Professional Body Requirements

A4) Do the learning outcomes and assessment of the courses allow successful students to meet the Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies criteria at the appropriate level'. (required)

see 14.3.6a of regulations

Yes

Actions from last year’s report

A5) In respect of your feedback, has any required action from last year’s report been satisfactorily responded to? (required)

Yes

Issues/point for clarity during the year

A6) Did you raise any issues/point for clarity throughout the year? (required)

No

Areas of good practice/commendation

A7) Please outline any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features you have observed in relation to learning, teaching and assessment:

The particular strength of Leeds Beckett’s postgraduate architecture courses is a desire really to explore how architecture and architects operate. Current modes of practice are respected but also questioned; students acquire practical knowledge but treat it without complacency. The practice of architecture is prized open through questioning its procedural, ecological, economic, political, social and cultural assumptions.

Section B

Academic Standards

Please advise on the Academic Standards for the Programme:

B1) Do the Courses and its modules continue to be coherent and generally up-to-date and at an appropriate level to enable students to meet the relevant aims and learning outcomes? (required)

Yes

B2) What do you believe were the strengths and weaknesses of the students in general with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills? (required)

My evidence for the strengths and weaknesses of students with respect to knowledge, conceptual grasp or application of skills comes from reading a wide sample of their written ‘context’ studies, talking with individual students about their design projects and all that is associated with them, and talking with a group of students about their experience of the postgraduate programme as a whole.

As demonstrated in their written work:

- Their conceptual grasp of architecture’s practices and their effects is good, and allows them to look critically at these practices.
- Their knowledge tends to be quite specific and a bit narrow, without a broad background base.
- Their writing skills are often weak. They would benefit from specific help in formulating an argument (raising manageable research questions and ordering those questions) and in the use of sources (how to situate the arguments of others, how to place themselves in dialogue with those arguments, and how to reference the work of others).

As demonstrated in their design work and the conversations around it:

- Their conceptual grasp of what is at stake in proposing and making a building from a social and cultural point of view is often quite good.
- They are less adept at some other kinds of conceptual architectural thinking, such as conceiving accurately of scale (the sites they are given are often huge), or imagining a sequence of spaces and thresholds.
- Their knowledge and understanding of building precedents is poor.
- Their knowledge of technical issues is sound but not broad. Some students engage in technical experiment and exploration in a thoughtful and questioning way, but most don’t.
- They are competently skilled in drawing and in other modes of representation, including model-making.

General observations:

- This year’s students were less good than in previous years at taking a topic (whether in design or in their written work) and mapping it, finding out what they need to know about it. They found it hard to move from a general interest in a topic to a more specific questioning.
- In the studio, the students clearly share skills of drawing, model-making, use of software tools, etc., and learn from each other.
- They seem less adept at developing, or sharing, skills involved in writing – how to articulate and pursue an argument, how to work in dialogue with different kinds of sources (e.g. how to evaluate sources). This is probably not new, but in previous years the level of inquiry has been higher, and this has made the lack of some of these basic skills less prominent.

B3) Are the marking/grading criteria or marking schemes set at the appropriate level of study and have they been consistently applied including internal moderation processes? (required)

Yes

B4) Did students receive adequate and helpful feedback to inform their future learning?

B5) In your view please indicate how well you feel the course prepares students for progression to managerial or professional employment or further study?
(required)

0= not at all, 10= fully

7

B6) Please provide any further comments to indicate how the course could better prepare students for progression to managerial or professional employment or further study (if applicable)

B3) Consistency of marking
Please see 'Assessment', below.

B4) Feedback
I do not know what feedback the students receive as they leave the school.

During the course, feedback seems to have been inconsistent. Some key members of staff left, whether permanently or temporarily; this led to uncertainty among the students over who they should turn to for feedback and advice, and a sense that expectations were inconsistent. In some cases, there was a feeling that no feedback had been given at all. Even if this is a perception rather than a reality, it has meant that some students do not feel entirely confident about where the strengths and weaknesses of their work lie.

B6) Professional employability and / or preparation for future study

Most of the students I saw would be eminently employable, not so much because of specific knowledge or technical skills as because they are engaged, inquiring and resourceful. The problems with staffing this year have made them reliant on each other (they already worked well together), as well as self-reliant. They are adept at coming together to identify what they need.

As for the extent to which the course has prepared them for employment or future study, the setting and the programme undoubtedly help them to raise provocative and necessary questions. However, it is clear that, this year, the students would have benefitted from more targeted help in addressing those questions.

In previous years, we have seen how more consistent staffing, and therefore more consistent teaching, has allowed for a genuine partnership between staff and students in pursuing questions about how architecture, as a practice, is conducted – what and who it is for, how it is procured and made, and how it operates. These are hugely important questions, which, working from a practical and accessible base, staff and students have been able to formulate and explore. This year, it would appear that the school's resilience to staff changes and to staff absences has been worn away. Things like team teaching have been whittled away, so that the loss or absence of particular individuals has a major impact. It may well be that resilience in individuals has also been worn away, as they are increasingly stretched. If students are to be nurtured to take on professional and perhaps academic responsibilities themselves, a new resilience will need to be built up – more staff, and a renewed collaboration between staff and students.

B7) Have you had the opportunity to comment on or contribute to a review of the course including any proposed modifications or enhancements to provision?
(required)

No

B8) If you have answered no to any of the above or would like to add any further points of clarity, please expand in the box below:

Please see comments above and below.

Section C

Assessment

Please advise on the Assessment Process for the Programme:

C1) The internal assessment / examination procedures are comparable with similar awards in the UK. (required)

Yes

C2) Procedures for the Exam Boards were fairly and rigorously conducted (including procedures governing extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct and borderline performance), and in accordance with the University's Academic Regulations. (required)

Yes

C3) The design and structure of the assessment methods used were appropriate; there was comparability within and across modules/awards in terms of level and their effectiveness in measuring the overall learning outcomes. (required)

Yes

C4) There was sufficient rigour in the achievement of learning outcomes in professional placements / work-based learning / work experience (where relevant).

N/A

C5) The moderation process is rigorous and there is consistency in marking standards. (required)

Yes

C6) The range of exam papers / assignments provided for sampling purposes and their appropriateness in terms of subject / level / learning outcomes were appropriate. (required)

Yes

C7) If You have answered no to any of the above or would like to add any further points of clarity, please expand in the box below:

C5 – This year, we didn’t see the feedback given to students on their different modules, nor were we party to internal discussions over marks. Though we understand that marking moderation was thorough, and focused firmly on external criteria from the ARB / RIBA, the absence of some key members of staff will have meant that not all voices were heard.
It would be good to have access again to the written feedback, as we have sometimes had in the past.

Section D

Organisation and Arrangements

Please advise on the organisation and arrangements for you undertaking this role:

D1) I was new in post this academic year. (required)

No

D2) The University has helped me to undertake my role effectively. (required)

Yes

D3) I am satisfied with the range of external examiner activities undertaken and with my involvement in assessment procedures at module level. (required)

Yes

D4) I am satisfied with the appropriateness and timing of information, of draft examination papers for approval and student work for moderation. (required)

Yes

D5) I am satisfied with the on-line induction training designed to familiarise External Examiners with the University’s Regulations/Procedures concerning assessment.

Newly appointed External Examiners only

N/A

D6) I am satisfied with the level of support received from my mentor.

External Examiners new to the role only

N/A

D7) I am satisfied with the programme-level induction provided by the Course Director to familiarise me with the programme itself. (required)

Yes

D8) Are there any general or specific comments on the development and support offered by the University, especially improvements you would like to see:

D2. The following is almost a repeat of what I said last year:
I am very aware that I do not know how to use the online interface that the University proposes. I have lost track of my log-in details. I do not know how to set up multi-factor authentication. I do not know where to access an email sent to me on a Leeds Beckett email account – I do not know where to find the account.
I have no doubt that much of this information is in fact available. Unfortunately, for an External Examiner, the time required to engage with the

University’s online protocols is usually time we do not have. I have been repeatedly rescued by one of the Quality Officers in Quality Assurance Services, who uploads the External Examiner Reports for me – for which many thanks.

It would be very useful if all the information to do with accessing the necessary online forms could be sent in one go each year, and kept simple. If we need to access a Leeds Beckett email, we need to be told where we can find these emails. Ideally, any required access needs to be given in such a way that any Leeds Beckett online account does not interfere with pre-existing online accounts, nor assume that we have e.g. Microsoft or Google. These may be unreasonable requests; they come from someone who is not part of the University, but is occasionally required to access very specific aspects of University work.

D7. I realise (see below) that the work of the Degree Apprenticeship scheme was not separately flagged up and discussed this year.

D9) If You have answered no to any of the above or would like to add any further points of clarity, please expand in the box below:

As an external examiner, I received no mentoring or training – though I have undertaken the role in a number of other universities. I see that it is now available. I hope it includes training in using the online facilities.

Section E

Collaborative Provision

Please indicate if you have been satisfied with the following:

E) Do you examine collaborative provision?

No

Section F

Degree Apprenticeships

F1) Were you involved in the examination of Apprenticeship Provision?

See Below

Open comments

The Degree Apprenticeship work was not separately flagged up this year, so I do not know if I was involved in its examination.

Section G

End Point Assessment

G1) I have seen evidence that Apprentices have the opportunity to practice the assessment methods that will be used at End Point Assessment before undertaking the End Point Assessment.

G2) If you examine integrated apprenticeship provision, please provide specific comments on the suitability and content of End Point Assessment:

G3) If you have answered no to any of the above or would like to add any further points of clarity, please expand in the box below:

Where applicable, a copy of your report will be shared with the Chief External Examiner who is appointed to provide oversight of related modules and/or courses.

Final Comments

Are there any other final comments you would like to make in relation to your role as External Examiner?

Once again, it was a pleasure to come to Leeds Beckett, to meet staff and students, and to learn about their work. We were given a warm welcome – thank you to all those who were involved.

Staff were open and generous in their conversations with us, both about the academic pursuits they are involved with, and about the institution. Students remain enthusiastic and questioning, always keen to explore how architecture is and might be practiced, less confident this year about institutional support.

- In terms of the work of the design studios, some thoughts;
- The work on community engagement remains strong.
 - The loss of some studios has meant that there is very little emphasis on the qualities of buildings themselves. Students seem to have little understanding of what a building can do through its spatial and material presence. Could they simply spend more time in and with interesting buildings (Leeds has plenty of them), experiencing their qualities and finding ways of articulating them? (what are students’ initial responses, and how would they represent them or talk about them? How does hearing about / seeing other people’s responses alter those initial reactions?).
 - It seems a shame that few of the sites used in project work are local. Now that distant travel is becoming unaffordable in both financial and ecological terms, students are grappling with sites they have never seen. It’s clearly hard for them to get a visceral understanding of places, hard for them to understand scale, climate, the everyday negotiations / contestations that the production of space relies on. Leeds and environs are full of richness, contestation and possibility.
 - The aim and structure of project briefs needs to be carefully thought out, and supported through the way students’ projects are evaluated. How do ideas about what architecture is for become embodied in building proposals? How is both the process of enquiry and the outcome of the design project judged – according to what criteria?

- In terms of the ‘context’ work:
- The students’ inquiries remain relevant and incisive.
 - Students clearly benefit a lot from group discussions, both among themselves and with tutors.
 - They also need more individually-focused help. They are mostly not strong writers, and need help with how to pursue their specific topics – how to identify specific research questions, how to order them, how to evaluate and engage with sources, how to gather primary research. While some of this can usefully be done in a group context, it is invaluable for students – particularly those who are not confident readers and writers – to have individual discussions in which they feel very directly supported in their academic pursuits.

- Observations about the postgraduate architecture environment at Leeds Beckett:
- It is clear that there have been a lot of difficulties this year, difficulties which have no doubt built up over the previous years of Covid and austerity. These have manifested themselves in staff changes, and staff exhaustion.
 - The sense of support and trust between tutors and students, always a feature of the school in my previous years of external examining at Leeds, has been severely tested. From specific complaints about a lack of clear and timely communication in previous years, students this year have felt more generally unsupported are beginning to question whether their course provides value for money.
 - Staffing for teaching needs to be better resourced, individual staff members better supported, so that the school can rebuild its resilience and the strong partnership that formerly existed between staff and students.

End of Tenure Report

If you are at the end of your tenure as External Examiner, please provide an overview of the development of the programme during your term of office. This overview will be of value to the University, the programme team and to the incoming External Examiner.

Please include commentary regarding academic standards and student achievement across cohorts during the examiner's period of appointment:

This Section is only to be completed by external examiners at the end of their tenure.

Email Address (required)

Date (required)

2023-07-14

