

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

Submitted By	
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**LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY**

Introduction

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.

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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:

Leeds Beckett school of architecture has a number of innovative and distinctive features that I have commented on previously. In particular, the course emphasizes a generous and well-rounded approach to architecture which goes beyond the narrower design, tectonic and technical disciplines of many schools, and explores architecture's relevance to many of the most pressing societal issues before us today, including environmental sustainability in the face of a warming planet, diversity and inclusion, appropriate materiality and the circular economy, issues of reuse of existing building stock, and the users' experience of architecture premiated over the more obscurantist priorities of many practising architects, critics and academics.

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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)

Strengths:

1. I continued to appreciate the thoughtful ideas-led approach to teaching in the school, and the way this grounds the students' work in the real ambience of not just current architectural culture, but of wider societal issues too.
2. Technology and professional studies are well considered and integrated with design work.
3. The continued use of moving image as a vehicle for both exploring and communicating architectural and urban issues is widespread and to be commended.
4. Students have a relatively sophisticated grasp of urban issues and of how their interventions are sited in the context of the wider city.
5. Students have an easy familiarity with sophisticated presentation techniques which greatly enhances their power to effectively communicate their ideas.

Weaknesses:

1. Understanding of landscape, and of how it and architecture can interrelate was weak. This is perhaps a missed opportunity, given that there is a landscape school within the same department?
2. As last year, I was a little concerned about projects set in places where students had never been, including Greece and Florida. Architecture is about understanding and creating places for people, and this is very hard to do when your understanding of that place is partial. If it is impractical for students to travel, perhaps it would be better to set projects in more accessible locations closer to home?

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? (required)

Yes

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

10

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)

A commendable feature of the course is the way students often work in teams, reflecting professional life, and preparing students to be able participants in their careers in architecture and associated disciplines from the outset.

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)

Yes

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:

During our examination we met a selection of March 1 and 2 students. Unlike previous years, the tone of the meeting was one of dissatisfaction and complaint. Particular issues raised:

- It was hard/impossible to enable one on one conversations with staff. Teaching was always conducted in groups.
- Timetabling was sometimes rigid, causing clashes in the timing of submissions of assignments.
- The preparation of the final exhibition was "chaotic".
- "I've never had a year like it."
- "I haven't had value for money."
- There was sometimes perceived to be a lack of leadership, and poor management.

It is quite clear to me that the school's staff are professional, committed and able, so these comments suggest that they are sometimes over-stretched, are struggling to cope with the demands on their time, and that this gives rise to the student dissatisfaction expressed.

Therefore I would strongly recommend that the University review the staff resourcing of architecture, and find a way to provide additional staff to ensure the smooth running of the school and to prevent damage to its very high reputation in the outside world.

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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).

Yes

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:

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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)

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

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

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

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

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

External Examiners new to the role only

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

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

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:

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Section E

Collaborative Provision

Please indicate if you have been satisfied with the following:

E) Do you examine collaborative provision?

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Section F

Degree Apprenticeships

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

No

Open comments

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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.

N/A

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.

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Final Comments

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

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.

I have always admired the school's experimental and ethical pedagogy, and this continues to be evident as the course has evolved over the years of my involvement. Therefore I applaud these deep ethical foundations. While some schools are happy to conduct business as normal, it is commendable that the Leeds Beckett course confronts students with the complexities of climate emergency, resource depletion, building reuse, and the circular economy.

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.

The studios provide a wide variety of options for students. Studio arrangements in schools of architecture are sometimes criticized for providing varying degrees of difficulty across different studios. The school here is aware of this potential problem the samples I have examined over the years suggest that there has been careful calibration across the studios to ensure consistency and conformity in the achievement of learning outcomes.

A couple of years ago I commented that there was a little too much agricultural/industrial imagery in the buildings produced. I wanted to see more particularity, and more attention paid to the joys or otherwise of those who will inhabit their buildings. I wanted to see more memorable,

cherishable, beautiful imagery. I believe this is starting to happen.

I find that the students understanding of urbanism and the city is relatively sophisticated; however, this is not matched by their understanding of how enabling their buildings to interact with hard and soft landscaping could enhance their designs. Too often, one felt that students considered the limit of their endeavours ceased at the outer face of their buildings. I have suggested providing students with tighter, more constricted sites and with at least one adjacent existing building on it, so that it is a bit of a squeeze to fit their buildings into it, and so that the possibility of reuse is enabled. Because sites are sometimes over-large, projects sometimes flatten like blancmange, and spread themselves out unnecessarily.

Each year I received an enormous amount of information prior to my visits, virtual at first, later in person. I suggested some kind of overview to the information, to make it easier to assimilate the information before the visit, and this has been at least partially addressed.

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

I have enjoyed seeing how technical studies are integrated with design projects, and how additional technical speculation is encouraged in the Technical Futures module.

I have appreciated the way students are treated as colleagues: one example is in their introducing and presenting assignments, not just their own design work, to us external examiners.

I was impressed during the Covid pandemic how flexibly and hospitably the school handled the problems of physical absence and distance learning, handling an almost insurmountable situation with flexibility and grace. Feedback from students - notwithstanding inevitable problems with distance learning - suggested that a difficult time had been well and professionally handled.

I have commented above that this year for the first time students complained to us about the management and quality of teaching, and I noted that - because staff are clearly professional, motivated and passionate about their subject - this must mean they are overstretched. I repeat therefore my strong recommendation to the University that additional teaching resource be provided to ensure the future and reputation of this fine school.

As in previous years, it has been a pleasurable and intellectually rewarding experience to examine at Leeds Beckett. I would like to thank all staff and students for making my visits enjoyable and rewarding, and commend them for what I continue to think is a school grappling with the real and important issues that confront the architectural profession as well as wider society today.

Email Address (required)

Date (required)

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