

BAH Architectural Design 2014/15

External Examiner's report summary

Please indicate in the relevant boxes below whether you agree with the statements about the standards of Leeds Beckett University's awards, the standards of student performance and the conduct of the University's assessment processes.

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 the Faculty or nominee will be alerted and will oversee the response from the course leader.

Standards set		
"In my view, the standards set for the awards are appropriate."	Yes	
If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.		

Student performance			
<p>"In my view, the standards of student performance are comparable with similar course(s) or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar."</p> <p>I have reviewed a sample of student work from the collaborative / franchise institution and in my view the standards of student performance are comparable with students studying the award(s) at Leeds Bekett.</p> <p><i>* Not applicable – if you are a practitioner and are not in a position to assess national standards please indicate here.</i></p>	Yes	No	N/A *
	Yes		
			N/A *
If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.			

Conduct of processes		
"In my view, the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted."	Yes	No
	Yes	
If your answer is 'no', please provide a brief statement (bullet points) of the respect(s) in which they fall short.		

Areas for commendation
Any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes
The contextual studies approach continues to be a strength.

Main report

In this section you are asked to describe more fully how the University has or has not maintained academic standards and the quality of the student experience in relation to the course(s) for which you are the external examiner.

Please complete all sections of the form fully and where not applicable please state N/A. Where applicable please also complete the sections for any collaborative / franchise provision sampled.

If you are an external examiner for any of the University's Pearson Edexcel (HND/HNC level) provision, please also complete the section on page 8 sections l, m and n entitled "for External Examiners Associated with Edexcel Courses."

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

(a)The operation and conduct of the Board of Examiners (and any Mitigation Panel or Examination Committee meeting you may also have attended).
satisfactory

(a)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.)

I commented on the following issues last year (*in italics*):

“Weaknesses in demonstrating the understanding, application and integration of technology and sustainable design principles as evidenced by the technology reports associated with the final design project.”

This year the final year major projects showed evidence of significant improvement in the application and integration of technology, particularly in the better projects. This is encouraging.

“The requirement for the final year students to produce a ‘design and access statement’ as part of their final submission is good, but the overall standard remains disappointing. The team should look at the guidance provided, and the use of ‘exemplars’.”

There is still improvement needed in these documents

“Although the minimum pass standard is appropriate, there remains a general weakness in technology across all years, and there are a worrying number of referrals in each cohort.”

Although this year only the final year is part of a Leeds Beckett programme, I include the comment that there are still concerns with first and second year, but as noted above, there is a recognisable improvement in third year, as part of overall advice.

I also commented that:

“I did not received copies of draft assignment/coursework briefs before these were issued to students. As these are generally issued at the start of the academic year it is perhaps not appropriate or feasible for the external examiner to see them before issue to the students. It would be useful if I did see the briefs, during the course of the year, so that there is the opportunity to feedback comments to be taken into account the following year.”

I was not sent any copies of briefs during this academic year

and:

“I would also like the opportunity to meet the teaching team mid-way through the year, to discuss developments and issues with them.”

I have not had the opportunity to speak to the full teaching team, and would welcome the opportunity to do so during the next academic year.

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

The pass levels set at third year were appropriate, and were comparable to that of students on similar programmes elsewhere. The performance of the higher achieving students was very encouraging, and shows an improvement in the choice and scale of the projects chosen.

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

Strengths:

The third year students generally had an understanding of the contextual environment and a level of knowledge of urban planning issues beyond architectural undergraduate level. There were continued improvements in the engagement with the immediate context, as demonstrated in the final design project, and the selection of the scale of the project generally led to better realised schemes.

The availability and involvement of the staff with the students

Weaknesses:

The first design project in third year was generally poorly done and it seemed that the students had difficulty engaging with it. I suggest that the staff look carefully at the assignment brief for the equivalent project in the new programme, and ensure that the the students engage better.

Dissertations were again generally poor, and the briefing and choice of subjects for the research project next year should be considered carefully. I suggest that the team consider giving a range of topics that are relevant to the major design project, rather than giving students a free choice.

(a)The standards of the structure, organisation, design and marking of all examination papers and/or other forms of assessment.
<p>There are no examinations.</p> <p>I inspected a sample of work for each assignment for final year, and was satisfied that the marking was appropriate and fair, with the pass mark set at an appropriate level. This year I did not see a full set of feedback and assessment sheets, and will expect that next year all sample assignments have a full set of feedback and assessment sheets made available to me.</p> <p>Because of illness, a number of key staff were not available, and the staff available were not fully briefed and were unable to find additional information when requested. Next year, I will expect that all module leaders are available with full information about the module and assessments, and if any are unable to attend, an alternative member of staff should be designated, fully briefed, and with access to all the information about the module, including assessment sheets.</p> <p>There have also been some administrative problems which led to late confirmation of my interviews with third year students and late receipt of some assignments.</p>
(a)The curriculum, teaching or resourcing of the programme of study as indicated by the performance of the students in the assessment.
The programme of study appears to be well resourced. The cohort size is currently small, and well supported by the staff.
(a)Comments on the use of X-stream (VLE) within the course (if applicable)..
n/a
(a)Module content, consistency of modules and module assessment across the course and the achievement of learning outcomes. (You may be asked by your Faculty to provide detailed comments on the modules that you examine.)
From the information I received, the modules would appear consistent across the course in assessment and achievement of learning outcomes
(a)Areas of good practice you have identified – please expand on the key areas for commendation listed in the summary.
<p>The contextual approach, based on the philosophy that architecture has benefit to society, is commendable. Design projects are related to the environment within which the students live and study giving the opportunity for them to appreciate and understand the relevance of their work, with the potential for “live” projects and an engagement with the community in and around Hull. I noted this year a continued improvement in the scope and scale of major projects, appropriate to final year undergraduate level, leading to better realised and more “believable” schemes.</p>
(j) The University welcomes external examiners’ comments on its developing 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.
<p>It is normal practice to have two external examiners for an architecture programme, one academic and one practitioner. This is supported by the ARB and the RIBA, and is covered in “CEBE Briefing Guide series no7 guide 3” on external examiners for architecture courses. I would welcome the input of a practitioner examiner on all three years; it is particularly valuable in the developmental phase of the programme.</p> <p>I commend the architecture team’s approach of having a number of part-time appointments, including practitioners, but note that it can lead to problems of staff availability when external examiners attend, and in communication between staff. I would ask that the College arrange that all staff teaching on the programme, or at least all those with module responsibility are available when I inspect the work, and a time for a meeting between the external examiner(s) and all staff is included in the external examiner’s programme, as it is very valuable to have a dialogue between examiners and staff.</p>
(k) Collaborative / Franchise Provision: please include here any comments you wish to make on elements of collaborative / franchise provision for which you have responsibility (in addition to those you may have indicated previously in this report).

N/A

External Examiners' Report Checklist

Please comment for all boxes

Course Materials				
Did you receive?		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Course Handbook(s)?			
b.	Academic Regulations including any Professional Statutory Body requirements where appropriate (these may be included the Course Handbook)?	yes		
c.	Module specifications (these may be in the Course Handbook)?	yes		
d.	Assessment briefs/marketing criteria?	yes		

Draft examination papers				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	(i) Did you receive all the draft papers?			n/a
	(ii) If not, was this at your request?			n/a
b.	(i) Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate?			n/a
	(ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			n/a
c.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			n/a

Draft coursework				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	(i) Did you receive all the draft coursework?		no	
	(ii) If not, was this at your request?		no	
b.	(i) Was the nature and level of the coursework appropriate?			n/a
	(ii) If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			n/a
c.	Were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?			n/a

Marking Examination Scripts				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	(i) Did you receive a sufficient number of scripts from both home and (if appropriate) collaborative / franchise partner students?			n/a
	(ii) If you did not receive all the scripts, was the method of selection satisfactory?			n/a
<p>Recommended sample sizes at Leeds Beckett University are as follows:</p> <p>a) Samples should be determined by a square root of cohort size, no smaller than 6, no larger than 15. However it should be borne in mind that not all work is assessed in a way that makes a square root sample possible and allowance should be made. For example in subjects such as the performing arts where there may be a requirement for an external to come and view a performance instead, or to visit the exhibition of art work.</p> <p>b) Samples to include all classification categories, and it is helpful to concentrate around the boundaries to include some fails.</p> <p>c) Samples to consist of internally moderated work, clearly evidencing the moderation process.</p>				
b.	Was the general standard and consistency of marking appropriate?			n/a
c.	Were the scripts marked in such a way to enable you to see the reasons for the award of given marks?			n/a

Dissertations/project reports				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate?	yes		
b.	Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?	yes		

Coursework/continuously assessed work				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Was sufficient coursework made available to you for assessment from both home and (if appropriate) collaborative / franchise partner students?	yes		
b.	Was the method and general standard of marking and consistency satisfactory?	yes		

Orals/performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Were suitable arrangements made for you to conduct orals and/or moderate performances/recitals/appropriate professional placements?	yes		

Examination Committee/Board of Examiners				
		Yes	No	N/A
a.	Were you able to attend the meetings?	yes		
b.	Were the meetings conducted to your satisfaction?	yes		

c.	Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Examination Committee/Board of Examiners?	yes		
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