

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - 9 October 2009

DPTLA Reviews 2008-09: Summary of Recommendations

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this summary is to identify themes, which might require attention at a broader level either across a faculty or the University as a whole, or which should feed into University strategies:

The following abbreviations are used to refer to particular reviews throughout.

ARCH	= Archaeology	30 January 2009
MATH	= Mathematics	12/13 February 2009
ELAN	= English Language	20 February 2009
SLIT	= Scottish Literature	24 February 2009
MENG	= Mechanical Engineering	25/26 February 2009
CHEM	= Chemistry	10/11 March 2009
ELIT	= English Literature	16/17 March 2009

The themes have been identified via an examination of the recommendations made by DPTLA Review Panels that visited departments during session 2008-09. Only those topics of discussion that resulted in a recommendation were considered for this summary. Recommendations linked to very specific situations within a department or subject, have not been included in this summary.

The two main themes identified for 2008-09 are detailed in Section 2 and were as follows:

- Assessment, Feedback and Achievement;
- Resources for Learning and Teaching (Staff Related).

Whilst the individual recommendations do not indicate any significant issues to be addressed at departmental level, the cumulative effect of grouping recommendations together has highlighted a number of areas where University wide action might be considered. As a result, some actions are proposed for a senior officer or University Service to take forward. Other recommendations are detailed in Section 3 and have been grouped into seven broad categories: curriculum design, development and content; student progression; retention and support; assuring and enhancing the quality of the students' learning experience; the quality of learning opportunities; internationalisation; communication; and strategy and planning. As in previous years, most of the recommendations in Section 3 refer to potential improvements that are local in nature and do not require action at additional broader levels than that already suggested by the Review Panels and instructed by Academic Standards Committee.

The remaining recommendations that fall out-with these categories are listed in Appendix 1.

2. Main Themes

2.1 *Assessment, Feedback and Achievement*

All of the seven Review Panels made recommendations concerning enhancements to assessment. The recommendations can be grouped into three main categories which are:

- i) Reviewing the appropriateness of intended learning outcomes. (CHEM 4.2.3 & 4.8.10, ELAN 5.2.1 & 5.3.8, MENG 4.1.2 & 4.2.2, SLIT 3.2.3);
- ii) Improving assessment procedures to increase the opportunities for students to receive timely, meaningful and useful feedback on their assessed work (ARCH 3.3.8, ELAN 5.3.6, ELIT 3.3.5, MENG 4.3.1). It should be noted that last year the focus was formative assessment in terms of increased opportunities, whereas this year, the focus of the Panels' recommendations was on the procedure/timescales for return of work with feedback;
- iii) Broadening the range of assessment methods experienced by students (MATH 4.3.1, MENG 4.3.4, SLIT 3.3.1). This issue was highlighted in the 2007-08 summary of recommendations, having resulted in recommendations to four departments reviewed that year.

The University has existing Guidelines for Writing Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes at the Programme and Course level, plus the [Guide to the Code of Assessment](#) explains why careful attention should be given to the writing of aims and intended learning outcomes. [Guidelines for Writing Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes](#) were introduced in 2004 and Academic Standards Committee is **asked to consider** that if it might be timely for a review of the Guidelines. It is noted that the Guide to the Code of Assessment was revised and reissued in 2008-09.

As highlighted in the reports for the three previous sessions, assessment is one of the objectives of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy¹. It is a continuing priority for 2009-10 and a number of activities are already planned. In addition to specific action being taken forward by individual departments, the University is actively addressing assessment and feedback at institution-wide level in the light of a strategic objective of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy and the results of institution-wide surveys (eg, the National Student Survey (NSS) and the First Year Student Learning Experience Survey). The 2009 NSS results demonstrated that at institutional level, there was around a 5%-point improvement in the Assessment and Feedback category:

At the beginning of 2009, the Learning & Teaching Committee established a Working Group on Institutional Policy on Assessment Practice to encompass matters such as: the role of formative assessment; practices in marking; feedback to students and students' involvement and responsibilities; the assessment of placement / fieldwork learning; and reflect the role of technology. The resultant policy will also encompass matters such as students' involvement and responsibilities, the assessment of placement and fieldwork learning, and the wider application of modern information and communications technology.

In light of the ongoing nature of this work, no additional institution-wide action is proposed other than the review of Guidelines for Writing Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes. Assessment will continue to be monitored in future DPTLA Reviews and as a result of feedback from student surveys.

Other individual assessment-related issues that were identified by Panels were:

¹ Objective 5: To Develop further a wide range of assessment methods that are both effective in promoting student learning, and efficient in their use of staff time.

- Use of the whole marking scale set out in the Code of Assessment (ARCH 3.3.1, MATH 4.3.2);
- Review and communication of assessment regulations (ELAN 5.3.7, ELIT 3.3.10);
- Use of more formal, systematic detection of plagiarism (SLIT 3.3.6).

2.2 *Resources for Learning and Teaching (staff related issues)*

This session, a considerable number of recommendations were made in relation to aspects of teaching resources related to staff and graduate teaching assistants (GTAs).

- Eight recommendations identified opportunities for staff development for both staff and GTAs in terms of additional training opportunities for GTAs and other specific training that might be useful to staff (CHEM 4.8.4 & 4.8.8, ELIT 3.8.10, MATH 4.3.6/4.7.1 & 4.8.7, MENG 5.3, SLIT 3.8.6);
- Five recommendations to implement or improve workload models were made (ARCH 3.8.6, CHEM 4.8.3 & 4.8.9, ELIT 3.8.6, MENG 4.8.1);
- Three recommendations related to the provision and maintenance of Information Technology/Audio Visual equipment (CHEM 4.8.12, ELIT 3.8.3, MATH 4.8.3).

Other recommendations in this area included:

- The provision of janitorial staff to support out of hours teaching (ELIT 3.8.2);
- To facilitate succession management by shadowing colleagues (MATH 4.8.5);
- The potential for liaising with HATII to address the need for specialised technical support (ELAN 5.9.2).

A wide range of training opportunities are offered to staff members through the Learning and Teaching Centre and includes several developments/new initiatives introduced in Session to improve the effectiveness of the University's approach to supporting and developing staff to promote effective learning for their students:

- The University's Annual Learning and Teaching Conference, with themes linked to the strategic priorities of Assessment and Feedback and Promoting Student Success through the Curriculum;
- The Academic Unit within the LTC offers a range of courses, including the Higher Education Academy (HEA)-accredited New Lecturer and Teacher Programme groups and to develop disciplinary approaches to learning and teaching;
- The LTC provides statutory training for all GTA's, Tutors and Laboratory Demonstrators and an optional module leading to Associate Fellowship of the HEA and is responding to departmental requests for additional training and development support;
- During Session 2008-09, new guidelines on Peer Observation of Teaching and Programme/Course Design and Review were introduced and a Moodle resource Reflecting on your Teaching is under development;
- The LTC also provides activity-based CPD workshops to support the use of technology in teaching and learning on topics such as Electronic Voting

Systems, the use of Mahara, Moodle and others such as Enhancing the Effectiveness of Student Feedback.

Findings from a recent staff attitudinal survey conducted by Human Resources indicated training and development broadly, was improving. The survey also identified workload management as an area for improvement.

This is the second year running that Review Panels have drawn attention to workload models as a significant issue. Last year Academic Standards Committee did not recommend any further action in relation to University policy on departmental or faculty workload models. However it is clear that workload models remain an issue. Academic Standards Committee is therefore **asked to consider** again the need to revisit University policy on workload models to determine and clarify what is required of faculties and departments, and that this is drawn to the attention of Vice Principal (Strategy & Resources).

Furthermore, two of these recommendations related specifically to the support of probationary members of staff (ARCH 3.8.6, CHEM 4.8.9) and Academic Standards Committee is **asked to consider** that a reminder is issued to Heads of Departments, to ensure that probationary staff members' allocated workloads are cognisant of the demands of the required training.

3. Broad Categories

3.1 Curriculum Design, Development and Content

A number of recommendations were made regarding potential improvements to the curriculum. Although the particular issues addressed were specific to, and will be taken forward by, the departments concerned, two broad areas were identified as the rationalisation of courses to ensure the effective use of resources and the review of curriculum content (specific content or embedding employability, PDP and transferable skills):

- i) The review and possible rationalisation of courses and/or programmes to ensure the effective use of resources (ARCH 5.11, CHEM 4.3.5, ELIT 3.4.1, MATH 4.4.1 & 4.4.2, MENG 4.4.6, SLIT 3.4.4 & 3.4.5);
- ii) Embedding Employability, PDP and transferable skills in the curriculum and ensuring that the opportunities, both within the curriculum and separate events, are communicated effectively to students (ARCH 3.6.12, CHEM 4.4.4, ELIT 3.6.3, MATH 6.2 MENG 4.4.5, SLIT 3.3.2).

The University introduced new guidelines on course and programme design and review at the beginning of 2009. These provide guidance on the key steps to take in the design and review of new or existing programmes at undergraduate and taught postgraduate levels and should prove helpful to academic staff in reviewing courses and programmes.

In 2008 the Graduate Attributes Working Group (GAWG) was established to take forward work including employability to contribute to the development of graduate attributes. During 2009-10 GAWG will be consulting with staff, students and employers, to explore their views on an expanded set of attributes.

It is proposed that no additional action is required.

3.2 *Student Progression, Retention and Support*

Student progression, retention and support drew the attention of four review Panels in Session 2008-09. The issues raised were:

- i) The role and availability of advisors and supervisors (MATH 4.3.4 & 4.6.8, MENG 4.6.7 & 4.6.8);
- ii) Student induction (ARCH 3.6.11, MENG 4.6.1);
- iii) Inter-department / external liaisons (CHEM 4.4.3, MATH 4.6.4);
- iv) The transition from school to university (MATH 4.6.2).

Student retention is a strategic priority for learning and teaching. A Retention Action Plan is in place and key actions are listed below:

- launch of institution-wide surveys of students;
- engagement with 'First Year' quality enhancement theme;
- the development of an early warning system to identify students 'at risk';
- the development of an integrated student support service in Fraser Building;
- 'NUMBER: Student Mathematical Support' service established;
- the promotion and extension of the 'writing skills' project;
- pre-entry engagement with prospective students has been strengthened;
- the 'student network' is now available for all students;
- working closely with the SRC, opportunities for social integration have been targeted for improvement;
- the SRC actively promotes student engagement and integration in the wider community.

To improve student engagement further, a review of Student Advisory Needs was commissioned in 2007 to consider the optimum structure to deliver a flagship system of academic and pastoral guidance that would meet the present and future needs of the University's changing student population and enhance opportunities for student success. The recommendations from the review were adopted in 2009 and will be implemented over the next three years.

Student induction will be one of the topics at the Learning and Teaching Committee Away Day in November 2009.

In light of the numerous current initiatives, action will not be required.

3.3 *Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience*

Six of the seven Review Panels made recommendations in respect of:

- i) Compliance and review of the Annual Monitoring process at departmental level (ARCH 5.8, CHEM 4.8.11, ELIT 4.1.1, MENG 6.7);
- ii) Departmental engagement with the quality assurance agenda both at institutional and national levels for the enhancement of the student experience (MATH 6.4, SLIT 3.7.3);
- iii) Responding to student feedback (ARCH 5.6, MENG 6.4 & 6.5).

The effectiveness of the Annual Monitoring (AM) process is considered each year by the Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officers (FQAEO) Group and FQAEOs have taken action to improve departmental level reflection on AM findings. Developments in 2008-09 have included:

- the introduction of a standard set of responsibilities for Departmental Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officers (or equivalent) which is intended as a guide to the quality assurance and enhancement responsibilities that require to be discharged at departmental level;
- restating the requirement for Heads of Departments to submit a report on the Department's scrutiny of AM reports to the FQAEO to accompany these documents when they are submitted to the FQAEO;
- holding a staff workshop on 'Getting the most out of Annual Monitoring' in June 2009 to further promote consistency and good practice in the AM process.

The Senate Office will be revising the Code of Practice on Annual Monitoring with the view to reconfirming the importance of the AM process and clarifying its purpose. The review will take on board feedback provided by staff at the above workshop. Further workshops will be offered to staff in 2009-10.

During the past three years there has been a great deal of activity by the University and the Student Representative Council (SRC) in relation to student feedback and has included:

- the development of a Code of Practice on Obtaining and Responding to Student Feedback, which was introduced in Session 2008-09;
- the launch of the [Student Voice](#) website to allow key findings and information on actions taken in response to survey feedback, to be made available to students and staff and to inform the development of the educational environment;
- the development of a short summary report for DPTLA reviews aimed at a student audience for inclusion and discussion at Staff Student Liaison Committees. These will be published and linked to the Student Voice website. In addition, departments have been asked to report on the steps they have taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review and on the actions taken in the one-year-on progress report to ASC.

No further action is recommended at University level.

3.4 *Quality of Learning Opportunities*

Review Panels made recommendations concerning the new structure of the Academic Year for the University to take account of:

- i) the ability of departments to allow sufficient study time before examinations (CHEM 4.3.4);
- ii) how to minimise any potential disadvantage, due to the late arrival of Erasmus students (ELIT 3.3.9, MENG 4.6.13).

An interim review of the new structure is planned in Session 2009-10 after one year of operation, which will provide an opportunity to consider implications and pragmatic application of the changes. The above issues have been referred to the Convener of the Academic Structures Implementation Group (ASIG) for inclusion in that review. No further action is proposed at present.

No further action is proposed at this time.

3.5 *Internationalisation*

Three recommendations were raised on the review of opportunities for study abroad in relation to:

- i) increase the numbers of outgoing ERASMUS students (SLIT 5.2);
- ii) intra-department liaisons (ELANG 4.5);
- iii) compatibility of course structure to facilitate outgoing, for single semester duration (CHEM 6.3).

No further action is recommended.

3.6 *Communication*

As in previous academic sessions, all of the Review Panels made recommendations in Session 2008-09 concerning different aspects of communication. The issues identified were very specific to the departments although three areas of a more general nature emerged that included:

- i) Communication of Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ELIT 3.8.17, CHEM 4.1.1, MATH 4.1 & 4.2);
- ii) Informing staff and students of the availability of facilities, events and other opportunities (CHEM 4.8.15, MATH 4.8.10, MENG 4.7.3 & 4.8.2, SLIT 3.8.5);
- iii) Providing clearer information on the timescales for student feedback/support (CHEM 4.3.2, ELIT 3.4.5);
- iv) Internal/external liaisons in the review of departmental recruitment strategies (ARCH 3.5.1 & 3.8.2, CHEM 4.5.4, MATH 4.4.3).

No additional action is proposed.

3.7 *Strategy and Planning*

A number of recommendations were made in relation to strategy and planning. Some of these recommendations highlighted the need for:

- i) departments to develop strategic planning within the Faculty and wider environmental context (CHEM 4.8. 1, MENG 4.8.2);
- ii) the need to identify strategic priorities for development and investment (MENG 4.8.6).

However, there would appear to be a broader strategic issue, in that a significant number of recommendations were made in respect of assessment, retention and internationalisation, which are strategic priorities. This might suggest that there is still work to be done at the departmental level, in terms of awareness of and engagement with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategic priorities. Academic Standards Committee is therefore **asked to consider** how to bridge this apparent gap.

4. **Other Recommendations**

A list of other recommendations, grouped under headings where possible, is appended.

5. Action requested of Academic Standards Committee

- 5.1 Academic Standards Committee is **asked to note** that requests to take forward individual recommendations have been made by the Senate Office following the Committee's consideration of the individual DPTLA reports. University level action already in progress and outlined above in relation to key areas is noted above
- 5.2 Academic Standards Committee is **asked to consider** whether further University-wide action is required as follows:
- A review of the Guidelines for Writing Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes at the Programme and Course Level (see paragraph 2.1i above)
Action: Head of the Academic Development Unit, Learning and Teaching Centre;
 - A review of University policy in relation to workload models to determine what is required of Faculties and Departments (see paragraph 2.2 ii above)
Action: Vice Principal (Strategy & Resources);
 - Issuing a reminder to Heads of Departments, to ensure that probationary staff members' allocated workloads are cognisant of the demands of the required training (see paragraph 2.2.ii above)
Action: Director of Human Resources.
- 5.3 Academic Standards Committee is also **asked to consider** how to bridge an apparent gap at the departmental level in terms of awareness of, and engagement with, the University's Learning and Teaching Strategic priorities (see paragraph 3.7 above).

Appendix 1 - Other Recommendations

The Review Panels identified a number of individual recommendations, which are loosely grouped under the headings below:

Accommodation

- Faculty should explore with the Faculty of Physical Sciences whether it might be possible to secure the use of an additional room in the Gregory Building for postgraduate students, with a view to increasing the opportunities for engagement between postgraduate taught students and postgraduate research students. (ARCH 5.10)
- The Dean should initiate discussions with the Director of Estates and Buildings to accommodate the post-doctoral students in the existing Departmental Library, in order to ensure the library resource is retained and might potentially involve the relocation of the rooms belonging to History of Art. (SLIT 3.8.12)

Accommodation matters are monitored by the Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officers (FQAEO) Group through the annual monitoring process and through the DPTLA process. Dialogue is ongoing with Estates & Buildings and includes representation of the FQAEOs on the Estates & Buildings Super Users Group.

Departmental Committees

- The Department demonstrates its commitment to probationary staff by their representative inclusion on departmental committees, especially the Learning and Teaching Committee, IT and Research Committees. (MATH 4.8.6)
- The Department clarifies the remit of the Teaching Committee to include: the development and implementation of a Teaching Development Strategy for the next 5 years; reviews of the curricula and sustainability of courses; progression issues; the development of PGT courses; and consideration of the effectiveness and attractiveness of the full range of programmes on offer. Any curriculum review should be conducted with reference to guidance and advice from University Services, such as the Learning and Teaching Centre and the Equality and Diversity Unit. (CHEM 4.7.3)

DPTLA matters

- The preparatory guidance provided to Heads of Department should emphasise the need for reflection on the outcome and recommendations from the previous review in order to demonstrate the level of enhancement achieved. (ELIT 1.1.4)
- The Department adopts a more robust approach to the recommendations from the present Review in order to demonstrate objectively by a written minute, or similar, how it has responded to them and can reflect on how changes and developments have benefited or otherwise influenced the well-being of the Department, its Staff and its Students. (MATH 6.5)
- That the Academic Standards Committee approves a return visit to the Chemistry Department in two years time by a sub-group of the 2008-09 Review Panel to review progress and ensure that issues noted in the report have been resolved or are being moved towards resolution. (CHEM Conclusions)

Information Technology Resources

- The Department take steps to ensure hourly-paid staff members are able to access essential services such as the library and IT with the same ease as University-employed staff. (SLIT 3.8.7)
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Learning Opportunities

- The Department reviews arrangements for Postgraduate seminars to ensure that part-time students are not excluded, even if this requires repeating the seminars. (ELIT 3.4.7)
- The Department develops a plan to deliver learning opportunities for students to work on experiments individually as well as in pairs and groups. (CHEM 4.7.1)

Library

- The Department discusses with the University Library the adequacy of provision of secondary texts and that the Department considers placing extracts of relevant texts on MOODLE as well as providing on-line access to those DVDs currently available for hire. (ELIT 3.8.4)

MOODLE

- The provision of MOODLE training for staff that can be used for administrative communication and for uploading of supporting material for lectures and tutorial classes. (MATH 4.7.2)

Student Recruitment

- The Department develops the strategies it was already considering to increase future recruitment to Level 1 which, it was anticipated, would result in greater numbers of students at Level 2 and in Honours. (ELAN 5.5.4)

Support for Probationary Staff

- The Department clearly formalises the mentoring arrangements already in place and takes steps to ensure that all parties are aware of their relevant roles and responsibilities. (ELIT 3.8.13)

Tutorial provision

- The Department reverts to small group tutorials at Levels 1 and 2, with one tutor per group per semester in Session 2009-10. (MATH 4.6.9)