

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 23 April 2010

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:
Update to Responses to Recommendations Arising from the
Review of Theology and Religious Studies held on 5 March 2008**

Ms F Dick, Academic Policy Manager, Senate Office

This report contains further responses to recommendations arising from the Review of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies held on 5 March 2008. The recommendations where further responses were requested and the initial responses provided to ASC on 29 May 2009 are set out below for information and are followed by the further responses received.

Recommendation 2:

The Panel recommends that the Department continue its work in developing a robust and comprehensive workload model, in order to promote transparency and equity, and to further encourage staff to see their part in the overall aims and objectives of the Department. *[paragraph 2.9]*

*For the attention of: **Head of Department***

Response:

The Department recognises the need for an agreed an effective workload model. It is participating in the piloting of the new Arts Faculty model but it is rather too early in this process to give detailed comments upon the efficacy of this scheme.

Updated response:

The Department has agreed to use a modified form of the proposed Faculty Work Load Model as our own model. This has been circulated to staff and is being used for P and DR's.

Recommendation 4:

The Panel recommends that the Department revise its practice in relation to the provision of feedback, with agreed timescales being communicated to all involved in the process, with active monitoring to ensure that punctual feedback is adhered to, so that students can be confident in their expectation of timely and constructive feedback, which forms an integral part of the learning process on the course. *[paragraph 4.3.7]*

*For the attention of: **Head of Department***

Response:

The Department recognises that providing timely and appropriate feedback to students is an area which the Review correctly identified as requiring attention. Our practice has been better during this academic year and late return of essays has not been the source of anxiety it was experienced to be in the past. The office is now taking a much more proactive role in reminding lecturers of return deadlines and informing students re: the progress of marking. This initiative has made a significant impact but it is still the case that we have not yet achieved the targeted goal of returning all work to students within a month. We recognise that a number of staff remain under undue pressure and struggle to return work within the designated period. Reducing the turn around time for marking will remain a priority in the coming academic year.

Additional Response:

There has been a big improvement in return rates for student assessment. We now meet all targets at levels one and two but some honours courses are still in need of some greater efficiency. We are monitoring progress and this is a priority for us.

Recommendation 7:

The Panel recommends that the Department, in consultation with the faculty contact in the Learning and Teaching Centre, take forward its planned work on PDP, employability and transferable skills across the curriculum. *[paragraph 4.6.1]*

*For the attention of: **Head of Department***

Response:

A small group, including an advisor from the Learning and Teaching Centre, has met to discuss PDP and ways in which this can be enhanced within the current structures. PDP will be an integral part of our planned curriculum revision.

Additional Response:

Since the inspection we have undergone a major curriculum review and have introduced formative assessment, group projects and reflective journals into our teaching provision. Students will be encouraged to engage in PDP and all staff are now fully informed about policy in this area.

Recommendation 8:

The Panel recommends that the Department continue its work in broadening the range of assessment methods, aligning this with the articulation of transferable skills. *[paragraph 4.3.3]*

*For the attention of: **Head of Department***

Response:

The Department has a wide range of assessment methods in place but this area will be one we seek to further enhance as we revise the curriculum. We understand that we must also make more clearly evident the correspondence between assessment methods and transferable skills in the redesign of our courses.

Additional Response:

See above. We have worked closely with Teaching and Learning to increase the range of assessment tools and now have a very dynamic portfolio in our provision.

Recommendation 14:

The Panel recommends that the Department and the Dean pursue opportunities for inter-departmental and inter-faculty collaboration. The Panel suggests convening a committee at faculty level to develop such areas. *[paragraph 4.4.8–4.4.10]*

*For the attention of: **Head of Department and Dean***

Response: Department

See the response of the Dean to this point. Conversations have taken place between the HoD and senior members of cognate departments on a number of issues. These have not yet resulted in initiatives that will support teaching but we are open to, and will actively

pursue, such developments in the future. We are particularly keen to foster closer academic ties with the Department of Religious Education

Response: Dean

We have discussed a number of strategies for promoting collaborations at cross-Faculty and inter-Departmental level; to date these have been conducted on an informal and opportunistic basis, but have not been lost sight of, not least those which involve the Education Faculty, and our Graduate School

Additional Response

We have made efforts in this direction and have strengthened links with Law (we share and artist in residence and are co-operating with them on initiatives relating to religion and family law) and Religious Education, We are happy to be working with colleagues from SESSL in the new School of Critical Studies.

Recommendation 15:

The Panel recommends that a Postgraduate staff–student liaison committee be introduced, and that its remit be developed in conjunction with a review of the operation of the undergraduate staff–student committee. *[paragraph 6.3]*

*For the attention of: **Head of Department***

Response:

The Department recognises that such a body would be a useful forum for sharing ideas and discussions are underway as to its precise remit and constitution.

Additional Response:

We brought to the postgraduate students Council the issue of a liaison committee. However, at this moment there does not seem to be a demand for it. We have postgraduate representatives on other committees and very good working relationships with our postgraduate community. We will keep this issue under review

Recommendation 17:

The Panel commends the move towards team-taught courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and recommends that in forward planning and recruitment the Department seek to ensure that each staff member has at least one colleague whose areas of expertise overlap with her/his own to offer support in teaching and assessment. *[paragraph 4.4.1 and 4.4.2]*

*For the attention of: **Head of Department***

Response:

The Department is in favour of team teaching whenever possible. We do not yet have 2 staff members in all key areas and in Church History we face a serious staffing problem at the current time.

Additional Response:

We think there is a strong case for having two staff in each area and believe that Eastern Religions could be a flourishing area of academic growth. We have presented written requests/business cases for another member of staff in Eastern Religions to successive Deans. We have also made several funding bids to keep our very talented temporary lecturer

in Eastern Religions, Rose Drew, at Glasgow. So far we have not been successful in these efforts to ensure that we have two staff in the area. Dr Drew's contract expired at the end of January.