

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 28 May 2010****Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:
Responses to the Recommendations arising from the Review of
Archaeology held on 30 January 2009****Mrs Marjory Wright, Clerk to the Review Panel*****Conclusions and recommendations*****Conclusions**

The Review Panel was impressed with the leadership of the Head of Department of Archaeology, the collegiality of the Department's staff, the quality of support to students and the opportunities that were provided to enhance the personal development of the Department's GTAs. However, the Panel was disappointed to note that the Chair of Archaeology had been vacant since 2006 and hopes that it will be filled soon with a view to maintaining and enhancing the Department's standing both nationally and internationally.

The Department had adopted a frank and inclusive approach to internal review which had resulted in an exemplary document that was both reflective and forward looking and an excellent resource to support the Panel's review of the Department's learning, teaching and assessment. The students who met with the Panel were articulate and enthusiastic about their learning and spoke highly of the Department.

The Department demonstrated that it had made significant progress since the previous internal review in May 2003 and also demonstrated an impressive array of strengths and an awareness of the areas where it needed to improve. The most substantive of these are reflected in the recommendations that follow whilst development in other areas are encouraged through suggestions from the Panel.

Recommendations

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. It is important to note that the majority of these recommendations refer to tasks or issues identified by the Department for action either prior to the Review or in the SER.

The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are not ranked in any particular order.

Code of Assessment*Recommendation 1*

The Review Panel recommends that the Department utilises the entire range of bands prescribed in the Code of Assessment with a view to upholding the University's aim of promoting institution-wide equality in the student experience of assessment. (*Paragraph 3.3.1*)

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

Response:

The Department has implemented the full range of A grades in its marking schemes across all levels, and now fully conforms to the Code of Assessment. Elsewhere, moodle has also been aligned with the Code of Assessment which has proved important given a small but growing element of online assessments.

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel recommends that the capabilities of the Moodle assessment function be investigated with a view to ascertaining whether it might be modified to allow the Code of Assessment grade descriptors to be applied in marking. (*Paragraph 3.3.2*)

For the attention of: **The Director of the Learning and Teaching Centre**

Response:

The Learning and Technology Unit (within the Learning and Teaching Centre) has carried out investigations into the capabilities of the Moodle assessment function. An additional scale providing the opportunity to choose Schedule A grade descriptors of the University's Code of Assessment now appears as an additional choice when selecting the 'grade' to be used when setting up an assignment within Moodle courses. These changes have been publicised to Moodle Supporters through normal communication channels. Senate Office and the Student Lifecycle Project team have also been advised of these changes.

Assessment procedures*Recommendation 3*

The Review Panel recommends that the internal examiners reach an agreement on provisional grades and feedback before returning assessments to students even if the hand back date is slightly delayed to achieve this. (*Paragraph 3.3.8*)

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

Response:

This has been discussed in detail at Departmental meetings, and we remain of the view that it is better to return the marker's feedback to students promptly rather than delaying it to allow for moderation to be completed. Student responses and NSS results emphasise that promptness of feedback is a concern for them and is therefore a priority for us. Students are reminded on receipt of feedback that the mark is provisional and subject to internal and external review. If that review results in a difference of mark the marker and moderator discuss their marks and if possible, arrive at an agreement, recording the reason for the outcome. If the marks are in different grade bands, the external examiner is asked to adjudicate.

Student Recruitment*Recommendation 4*

Despite the fact that Archaeology is rarely offered as a school subject, the Review Panel recommends that the Department engages with the Recruitment and Participation Service since it is of the view that the Service could provide assistance with recruitment by ensuring

that the potential for studying Archaeology at the University of Glasgow as part of both an MA and BSc degree is drawn to the attention of schools. (*Paragraph 3.5.1*)

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

Response:

The Department has established a link with the Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Service and discussed how the subject can be given greater prominence in recruitment activities than has been the case in the past. Several schools sessions have been undertaken by staff during the past year for the first time. Clearly, this is a long-term game, but we are now actively pursuing options in undergraduate recruitment. As part of the launch of the new level 1 courses, we produced a glossy leaflet for prospective students explaining the new courses and experienced a significant uplift in numbers, not all of which can be explained by the more general level of over-recruitment within the Faculty. The new structure of the Undergraduate Course Prospectus helpfully brings together the MA and BSc options which has been a problem for us in the past.

Student Progression, Retention and Support

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel recommends that the Department makes its willingness and ability to accommodate students' needs transparent to both potential applicants and students in the early years of the undergraduate curriculum, to reduce the likelihood of those with financial difficulties or other needs perceiving the fieldwork commitments as being too difficult to achieve. (*Paragraph 3.6.11*)

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

Response:

We are reviewing the information provided in the course documentation regarding fieldwork, with a view to explaining the expectations, requirements, level of support etc. and emphasising flexibility of approach. Handbooks are not the only solution, however, as it is apparent that students do not assimilate the information already provided within them, so we are looking at alternative methods of communication – further development and wider advertisement of the existing fieldwork moodle is one approach, for example. We are also investigating the possibility of having fieldwork recorded on student transcripts, better to reflect student achievement. We regularly reassess the overall student fieldwork requirement as it is one of the highest in the UK, but believe this is still one of our key strengths and benefits all students in a range of ways, not only those wishing to pursue the subject as a career. Providing more opportunities internally (for example, possibly by including the field course within the fieldwork requirement) could help relieve some issues for students, but more important is an emphasis on our more flexible approach to when and under what conditions approved fieldwork can be undertaken. For instance, this year the Archaeology Society is organising its own field project during the Easter vacation and at weekends thereafter under the guidance and management of a number of postgraduate students – since we can be confident that this will be well-run and students will receive valuable training and experience, we have agreed to count this towards their fieldwork requirement.

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel recommends that the Department liaises with the Alumni Office to ascertain the employment destinations of Archaeology alumni with a view to exploring

whether any of them might be able to assist with the provision of suitable fieldwork placement opportunities for undergraduate students. (*Paragraph 3.6.12*)

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

Response:

We have not yet liaised with the Alumni Office as outlined above since we remain of the view that, for the purposes of identifying suitable fieldwork placement opportunities, our existing contacts with Archaeology alumni across a broad range of archaeological organisations, as well as a large number of other groups and bodies more generally together with access to British Archaeology bulletins etc. means we are very aware of the range of opportunities available to students and can draw them to their attention. We are not complacent, however, and will investigate the Alumni Office route to see what it can add to our existing resources.

Learning Resources

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel recommends that the University considers whether there would be merit in exploring potential solutions to address the significant disparity between the unit of resource for Archaeology teaching in Scotland and England with the Scottish Funding Council, in conjunction with other Scottish Higher Education Institutions if appropriate, with a view to strengthening the Department's ability to compete with institutions south of the border in attracting entrants to its undergraduate programmes. (*Paragraph 3.8.2*)

For the attention of: **The Vice Principal (Strategy and Resources)**

Response:

The SFC are currently reviewing the cost of teaching all subjects and the outcome is expected to be announced in May 2010. Both The Principal and The Vice-Principal (Strategy & Resources) have been lobbying with the SFC throughout the consultation period, arguing for Archaeology to be funded at at least the same rate currently prevailing in England.

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel had some concerns about the impact of a high workload on opportunities to enhance teaching practice and establish independent research and recommends that the Department be proactive in ensuring that probationary staff have well directed mentoring and are allocated an appropriately balanced workload that includes protected research time. (*Paragraph 3.8.6*)

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

Response:

This was also raised in feedback from the New Lecturer/Teacher Development Group and by the recent Faculty mentoring review. That review included a snapshot of current practice across the Faculty which demonstrated that, as a result of the adverse criticism, current arrangements for our new probationer are more clearly defined than most and closely aligned to the HR guidelines, building to a 100% workload in Year 3.

Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Student Learning Experience

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel recommends that the Department explores ways of strengthening engagement with the more formal aspects of obtaining and responding to feedback from students with a view to enhancing the quality and effectiveness of interactions between students and staff and encouraging students to participate in opportunities for the collective exchange of views on matters related to learning, teaching and assessment. (*Paragraph 5.6*)

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

Response:

A key aspect here has been the expansion of representation for the undergraduate and postgraduate SSLCs, involving a wider range of students and seeking to reduce the difficulty of representing large (e.g. Level 1, 2) and disparate groups (Level 1, 2, Postgraduate). This has been a topic of discussion at SSLC meetings in the past year, arising out of both the DPTLA and the NSS results. For example, putting student representatives in closer communication with their peer group via a special moodle has been discussed but for the moment it has been agreed to ensure that an open forum is provided for this purpose on course moodles, which has not always been the case previously. The University standard student feedback questionnaire template has been adopted and the optional questions for staff and students have been utilised. Mounting the questionnaires on moodle gives students instant feedback and provides a digestible format for staff to evaluate the returns and formulate a response.

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel recommends that the Department explores ways of promoting greater individual and collective engagement in the Annual Monitoring process, with a view to encouraging a team approach to identifying areas that might benefit from enhancement and good practice that might usefully be shared within and beyond the Department. (*Paragraph 5.8*)

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

Response:

The shift to AMRs being completed nearer the end of the courses (i.e. in June) has been welcomed by the Department, as it seems evident that proximity to the relevant course will encourage a greater engagement with the documentation. Proposed improvements to the structure and presentation of the AMR will also facilitate this. Greater attention has been paid in the past year to the responsiveness of the AMR process within the Department; full returns were made in a timely manner and there has been no feedback suggesting that these were not properly reflective and constructive – indeed, in a number of instances, examples of good practice were highlighted within the report.

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel recommends that the Faculty explores 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. (*Paragraph 5.10*)

For the attention of: **The Dean of the Faculty of Arts**

Response:

The Faculty Secretary has consulted Physical Sciences who say that there is no space in the Gregory Building: they themselves have even resorted to using the janitors' room for space

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel drew postgraduate taught students' perceived dissatisfaction with the 20-credit Faculty Research Skills course to the attention of the Head of Department and the Dean and recommends that the Faculty reviews the content of this course with a view to improving its relevance and value to postgraduate taught students. (*Paragraph 5.11*)

For the attention of: **The Dean of the Faculty of Arts**

Response:

The Faculty Research Training Course is under review by the Associate Dean (Postgraduate).