

## University of Glasgow

### Academic Standards Committee – Friday 8 October 2010

## DPTLA Reviews 2009-10: Summary of Good Practice/Key Strengths

Ms Fiona Dick, Senate Office

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this summary is to identify from DPTLA Review reports in session 2009-10 any significant themes in relation to key strengths and any good practice that may be worthy of further dissemination across the University.

It should be noted that the Reviews conducted in 2009-10 were, for the most part, based on Departments. The recent restructuring of the University will mean that the DPTLA system adjusts to accommodate Schools or other subject groupings in place of departments. It has been agreed that from session 2010-11, DPTLA will be renamed Periodic Subject Review (PSR). As this report concerns the past session, the majority of the text refers to the departmental structure in place at the time.

Those key strengths in **boxed** text below in Sections 3, 4 and 5 have been highlighted, for consideration as being worthy of further dissemination. The following abbreviations are used to refer to particular reviews:

HART	History of Art
STAT	Statistics
DUMF	Dumfries Campus
ACFIN	Accounting and Finance
HATII	Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute
CENG	Civil Engineering
URBS	Urban Studies
DENT	Dental School

### 2. Summary

As in previous years, the good practice/key strengths have been summarised under three broad headings: teaching, learning and assessment; student-related; and resource-related.

The themes emerging from these broad headings are:

- Student experience and enhancement of learning environment;
- The increasing efforts being made by departments to include Employability, Personal Development Planning, and transferable skills in the curriculum;
- Areas of good practices in assessment, balancing the fact that assessment practices are one of the stronger themes arising from DPTLA recommendations;

- Assuring and enhancing the quality of the Student Learning Experience;
- Undergraduate and postgraduate student recruitment;
- The variety of activities, services and materials aimed at providing pastoral support and support for learning for students.

The topics recommended for further dissemination fall predominantly under the following two areas: student experience and the learning environment, and employability.

### **3. Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

#### *3.1 The Range of Provision*

- Wide ranging and challenging suite of programmes offered by the Department, which is one of only a few UK departments which continue to offer a Single Honours degree in Statistics (STAT);
- The range of effective and appropriate teaching methods: lectures, tutorials, seminars, field trips and guest speakers (DUMF);
- The range of provision and innovative developments [For example the Accounting and Civic Responsibility course] (ACFIN);
- Range of PGT degrees offered by the Department (CENG).

#### *3.2 Quality of Teaching*

- The innovative learning and teaching methods in use (HATII);
- The teaching of Design from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> year (CENG).

#### *3.3 Research-Led Teaching*

- Research-led teaching with an emphasis on enquiry-led learning, reflecting a strong tradition of multi-disciplinary research of international renown (STAT);
- Research-led teaching (DUMF);
- Developing students as critical thinkers and independent learners as evidenced by staff and students (DUMF).

#### *3.4 Support for learning*

- Valued and effective tutorial and laboratory provision (STAT);
- The Departments efforts in supporting students with the Mathematics courses and with the retention issues this causes (CENG);
- The use of a tutoring system for 1<sup>st</sup> years students (CENG).

#### *3.5 Assessment*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of effective and appropriate assessment methods, such as: presentations, debates, group projects, problem-based learning, essays, and dissertations and the feedback viva in 'Issues in Contemporary Society' for engagement of students with the feedback they received (DUMF);</li> </ul> |
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- Assignment guidance sheets used by the Department (CENG);

- The range of assessment methods used by the Department to the benefit of the students (CENG);
- Transparency of its alignment of ILOs with teaching and assessment (DENT);

- Production of independent and reflective learners through use of formative assignments (DENT);

- Approach to feedback and assessment (DENT).

### 3.6 *Employability, Personal Development Planning and Transferable Skills*

- Excellent Work Placements for students (HART);

- The Department's concern for, and awareness of employability of its graduates, which it promotes through its strong links with potential employers (STAT);

- Availability and promotion of work placements as part of the MSc Carbon Management (DUMF);

- The introduction of an employability Finishing School (DUMF);

- The Department's record of employability and engagement with external stakeholders through its External Review Board (ACFIN);

- The commitment to employability and the inclusion of a large practical element to all courses and programmes, demonstrating academic and professional engagement (HATII);

- Engaging Industry personnel to assist in tutorials (CENG);

- The provision of high quality engaging teaching, embedded in real world policy and practice, leading to well qualified, employable graduates (URBS);

- Outreach placements consolidating student learning (DENT).

### 3.7 *Quality Assurance and Enhancement*

- Accreditation of programmes by the Royal Statistical Society for the courses undertaken by the majority of students (STAT);

- Committed approach to students' learning experience that includes many examples of good practice and innovation in the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment in a mathematically intensive environment (STAT);

- Use of case studies and tools within teaching (e.g. DataStream) (ACFIN);

- The curriculum design and development of the Departments courses (CENG);

- Integrative approach to review process (DENT);

- Exemplary SER that was comprehensive, well written, evaluative and reflective (DENT).

## 4. **Student related**

### 4.1 *Student experience and Learning environment*

- Intellectually developed courses (HART)
- Strong links with the University of Bologna (STAT);

- The informal and supportive approach by the Department to its staff and students, inculcating a warm and friendly atmosphere that facilitated social interaction (STAT);
- Sense of community and camaraderie (DENT);

- GUD's vision and strategy for the coming years along with its underpinning ethos (DUMF);

- The real appreciation by its students of their learning experience, and recognition of the value of their inter-disciplinary courses (DUMF);

- Small class sizes and use of these to support a more student centred learning environment (DUMF);
- Interdisciplinary teaching (DUMF);
- The dedication of the staff to their students (DUMF);

- Innovation in course content e.g. Ethical Accounting and the trip to Barlinnie (ACFIN);
- Collegiality of its academic and administrative staff (ACFIN);
- The approachability and enthusiasm of staff, which was reported to inspire student interest in the subject area (HATII);
- Positive feedback from students who are supportive of the Department staff and find the courses challenging and stimulating (CENG);
- The level 3 design projects (Interact) (CENG);

- The conscious effort made by the Department to harness the breadth of these [different disciplinary] backgrounds and experiences to enhance students' collective learning experience and break down professional boundaries (URBS);

- Collegiality of Department staff (URBS);
- Effective Management (DENT);
- Management of the undergraduate learning experience (DENT);
- Impressive and effective leadership through a period of substantial change (DENT);
- Collegiality of its academic and administrative staff (DENT).

#### 4.2 *Student engagement*

- Engagement with the research and local community, for example (DUMF):
  - Offering short courses and public lectures. E.g. a series of lectures at the Wigtown Book Festival; talks for regional heritage and literary societies; involvement in the Franco-Scottish Society;
  - The University of the Third Age;
  - Participation in Science Fairs;
  - Academic conferences disseminating research findings;
  - Distinguished speakers (Noam Campbell; Sir Magnus Magnusson; Professor David McLellan; and a range of Scottish writers)

- Schools-based initiatives - e.g. Crichton Challenge, a debating competition; and Schools 'taster days' introducing school pupils to the University experience;

- Strong professional relationship that exists between students and staff (DENT).

#### 4.3 *Student support*

- Informative, easy to navigate website that included a video on student experiences (STAT);

- The quality of support provided to students and the individual attention given, not only in times of difficulty but throughout the whole student lifecycle (HATII);

- The accessibility of the Department's programmes to students from a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, and the support provided by staff to this diverse group (URBS);

- Positive staff: student relationships, both academic and administrative staff being reported to be accessible, supportive and responsive to students' individual circumstances (URBS);
- Support provided to students by secretarial staff (DENT);

- Student support mechanisms (DENT).

#### 4.4 Recruitment

- Successful recruitment of international students to postgraduate taught programmes (ACFIN);
- Engagement with applicants during recruitment process (ACFIN);
- The rapid and strategic development of postgraduate taught provision and international collaborative arrangements (ACFIN);

- The recent expansion in postgraduate taught programmes, founded on research strength and active links with a range of professional, voluntary and governmental agencies (URBS);
- Robust, rigorous and transparent admissions process (DENT);
- Widening participation practice achieved through SWAPWest and GOALS (DENT).

## 5. Resource related

### 5.1 Staff

- Approachable and helpful staff (HART);
- Exemplary feedback by undergraduates and GTAs on staff support (STAT);
- Effective mobilisation of resources to maintain high standard of provision, despite significant increase in student numbers at the start of 2009-10 (STAT);
- Probationary staff positive and complementary regarding mentoring system (CENG);

- The support provided to Graduate Teaching Assistants and the Department's integration of them into a broad range of the Department's activities (URBS).

## 5.2 Learning Resources

- Excellent access to civic collections (HART).

## 6. Recommendation to Academic Standards Committee

6.1 Academic Standards Committee is **invited to consider and confirm** whether those items of good practice/key strengths highlighted in boxed text in Sections 3, 4 and 5, and summarised below, are worthy of wider dissemination across the University:

- The range of effective and appropriate assessment methods, such as: presentations, debates, group projects, problem-based learning, essays, and dissertations and the feedback viva in 'Issues in Contemporary Society' for engagement of students with the feedback they received (DUMF);
- Assignment guidance sheets used by the Department (CENG);
- Production of independent and reflective learners through use of formative assignments (DENT);
- The Department's concern for, and awareness of employability of its graduates, which it promotes through its strong links with potential employers (STAT);
- The introduction of an employability Finishing School (DUMF);
- The commitment to employability and the inclusion of a large practical element to all courses and programmes, demonstrating academic and professional engagement (HATII);
- Engaging Industry personnel to assist in tutorials (CENG);
- The provision of high quality engaging teaching, embedded in real world policy and practice, leading to well qualified, employable graduates (URBS);
- Committed approach to students' learning experience that includes many examples of good practice and innovation in the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment in a mathematically intensive environment (STAT);
- Use of case studies and tools within teaching (e.g. DataStream) (ACFIN);
- Integrative approach to review process (DENT);
- The informal and supportive approach by the Department to its staff and students, inculcating a warm and friendly atmosphere that facilitated social interaction (STAT);
- Sense of community and camaraderie (DENT);
- The real appreciation by its students of their learning experience, and recognition of the value of their inter-disciplinary courses (DUMF);
- The conscious effort made by the Department to harness the breadth of these [different disciplinary] backgrounds and experiences to enhance students' collective learning experience and break down professional boundaries (URBS);
- Engagement with the research and local community, for example (DUMF):  
Schools-based initiatives - e.g. Crichton Challenge, a debating competition; and Schools 'taster days' introducing school pupils to the University experience;
- Informative, easy to navigate website that included a video on student experiences (STAT);

- The accessibility of the Department's programmes to students from a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, and the support provided by staff to this diverse group (URBS);
- Student support mechanisms (DENT);
- Successful recruitment of international students to postgraduate taught programmes (ACFIN);
- Engagement with applicants during recruitment process (ACFIN);
- The rapid and strategic development of postgraduate taught provision and international collaborative arrangements (ACFIN);
- The support provided to Graduate Teaching Assistants and the Department's integration of them into a broad range of the Department's activities (URBS).

6.2 If considered appropriate, further information on the highlighted items will be sought from the subject areas concerned and circulated to heads of subjects and schools along with the contact details for the staff responsible. Thereafter, the information will be published on the Senate Office website and drawn to the attention of the Learning and Teaching Centre where any potential for possible contribution to other developments can be coordinated.