

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee - Friday 27 May 2011

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:  
Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Review of Civil  
Engineering held on 11 and 12 March 2010**

Ms Fiona Dick, Senate Office

**Conclusions**

The members of the Review Panel enjoyed their visit to the Department of Civil Engineering, where they were made most welcome. The conduct of the meetings was excellent. The Panel was impressed by the dedication and progressive attitude of staff and graduate teaching assistants within the Department and with its commitment to teaching and enhancing the student experience. The Undergraduate students who met with the Review Group were very positive when they spoke about the Department and its staff and of their learning experience within the Department. A number of recommendations have been made to support staff in enhancing the quality of the student experience and the management of teaching and learning in the Department.

**Recommendations\***

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are as summarised below. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer. They are grouped by the areas for enhancement noted above and ranked in order of priority.

**In light of the restructuring of the University, recommendations have been redirected to the appropriate designates. Please note that the text of the recommendations has not been updated.**

**An Evaluation of the Student Learning Experience****Recommendation 1**

The Review Panel recommend that programme aims are included in the main text of the Undergraduate Student Handbooks. [Paragraph 4.1]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject***Response:*

This was done for session 2010/11, based on the format used for the former Departmental Undergraduate Student Handbook. Revised programme aims have recently been developed, in response to comments arising from professional accreditation in 2010. These revised programme aims make clearer distinctions between MEng and BEng programmes and also

highlight more strongly the distinctive features of the degree programmes in Civil Engineering offered at the University of Glasgow. Future editions of the School Undergraduate Student handbook will include these revised programme aims.

### **Feedback on Assessment Recommendation 2**

The Review Panel recommends the Department reviews the turnaround times for feedback on assessment for all staff and courses. [Paragraph 4.3.2]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject  
and Head of School of Engineering**

*Joint response:*

The turnaround time for assessment varies according to the nature and extent of the coursework, and whilst simple coursework exercises are returned promptly, more complex and demanding exercises, such as the design projects, require a greater amount of time. For the larger design project work, staff have been asked to explain to the students the time involved in assessment, and to provide the students with a realistic estimate of turnaround time. The use of class emails and Moodle continue to be encouraged as a means of providing generic feedback on assessment as soon as possible.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Review Panel recommends that the Department do more to put case studies across the new School structure as this could help reduce the input from Civil Engineering staff input into the case studies. [Paragraph 4.3.3]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject  
and Head of School of Engineering**

*Joint response:*

The School Learning & Teaching Committee has discussed the development of multi-disciplinary case studies for Year 4 and Year 5 students, and is currently planning to use a case study undertaken by the Engineering and Management MSc students for that purpose next session. Unfortunately, due to the different structures of the degree programmes within the School, it is presently not possible for the Civil students to take part in this new case study, but the SLTC is tasked with establishing a more uniform structure to the MEng Year 4 and Year 5 curricula in order to facilitate such multi-disciplinary projects.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Review Panel recommend the use of proforma sheets for formative assessment within the Department by all members of staff. [Paragraph 4.3.4]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject  
and Head of School of Engineering**

*Joint response:*

The use of pro-forma sheets will be encouraged where appropriate but it is recognised that free-form text is sometimes the most valuable form of feedback, particularly on open-ended projects with highly variable outcomes.

### **Recommendation 5**

The Review Panel recommend the Department adopt the use of Assessment Guidance Sheets as standard practice for all major coursework submissions. [Paragraph 4.3.5]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**  
and **Head of School of Engineering**

*Joint response:*

Whilst not used for all major coursework exercises in session 2010/11, they will be from session 2011/12 onwards.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Review Panel recommends the inclusion of coursework submission deadlines be included in the course documentation. [Paragraph 4.3.6]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

*Response:*

This recommendation has not yet been acted upon in full, but it will be for next session. Staff should be able to give accurate deadlines for larger pieces of work but it is more difficult for some of the more straightforward exercises, where the issue date of the work may alter due to an unforeseen change to the teaching pattern. For these exercises it may only be possible to give deadlines to the nearest semester week, but that would still be useful information.

### **Recommendation 7**

The Review Panel recommends that guidance on plagiarism be given to students at the start of each year and in particular to year 2 and 3 direct entry students. Information on plagiarism should be included in all course documentation and given at the group advising sessions. [Paragraph 4.3.7]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**  
and **Head of School of Engineering**

*Joint Response:*

Information regarding plagiarism will be provided in the new School Student Handbook, which will be issued to every new student (including direct entry students and visitors/exchange students) and to existing undergraduate students at the beginning of each session. The University's policy on plagiarism is highlighted at our group advising sessions for all years of the degree programmes. A link to the University web page

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/academic/plagiarism/>

will be included in course documentation for next session .

### **Recommendation 8**

The Review Panel **recommends** the Department contact the Learning & Teaching Centre for advice on the use of technology to support both more timely feedback and sustainable long term levels of staff involvement in feedback processes. [Paragraph 4.3.10]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**  
and **Head of School of Engineering**

#### *Joint response:*

Initial advice has been received from Kerr Gardiner of the Learning & Teaching Centre and the contact is on-going. The basic message was that it is important to match the technology tool to the type of feedback required. A number of tools are available, such as EVS, Moodle, screen capture, Captivate and audio feedback, where students click on a highlighted part of their returned work and listen to an explanation from the tutor. This latter tool has been used in MVLS and may have applications in Engineering. The LTC has also established a working group called TELT (Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching) and part of its remit is to assess the actual provision of technology tools at GU and to provide a road map of how they may help learning and teaching. The School of Engineering has a representative on this working group (Yassamine Mather).

### **Curriculum Design, Development and Content**

#### **Recommendation 9**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department liaise with the Careers Service to identify and provide support for work-related learning opportunities through placements and positions post-graduation. [Paragraph 4.4.1]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**  
and **Head of School of Engineering**

#### *Joint response:*

Employment in industry is strongly encouraged although there is no longer a requirement for MEng students to obtain an industrial placement between Year 4 and Year 5. Linda Murdoch from the Careers Service gave two talks to our students last session on job-hunting in general, including CV production, interview techniques and where to go for help. Students are notified by email of all engineering jobs which come in, and for the Club 21 placements students are prompted at least twice centrally and also by staff in the discipline. The Careers Service also has plans to liaise with the Alumni Office to identify past graduates who may be able to provide work experience or placements for undergraduates.

#### **Recommendation 10**

The Review Panel recommends the Departments engages with students to encourage them to undertake study abroad options. [Paragraph 4.4.3]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

*Response:*

From a very low base (virtually a zero average over a number of years), the number of students taking advantage of study abroad options has increased, and this session there are 3 students studying abroad, with at least three more interested for next session. Information on Study Abroad Schemes will be included in the new School Undergraduate Handbook, and the opportunity to study abroad has been highlighted at the group advising sessions for students in Years 1, 2 and 3 for the past two years, and this will continue.

### **Student Recruitment**

#### **Recommendation 11**

The Review Panel recommends the Departments works with GIC staff to ensure that the standard of student achievement and curriculum match are appropriate for acceptance into the degree programmes. [Paragraph 4.5.2]

For the attention of: **Head of School of Engineering**

*Response:*

This issue is a concern for all branches of engineering. Engineering has maintained close liaison with staff at GIC since its inception (through J H Davies, A R Whittaker and T G Davies at UoG) and hold informal discussions several times per year.

Engineering and physical sciences share a common pathway at GIC, which limits the amount of material on engineering, and we do not see how the curriculum could be better matched without setting up a separate pathway.

We have considered whether the mark required for progression from GIC to UoG should be raised. Analysis requires the students' marks from GIC, which are not available.

From observation, the main obstacle to successful progression of students from GIC is their attitude and study skills. With this in mind, J H Davies gave an example lecture at GIC in 2009–10 to illustrate the difference in style of teaching and this will be repeated in 2010–11. He also explained the structure of the curriculum at UoG to ease the transition.

#### **Recommendation 12**

The Review Panel recommends the PGT students receive more support regarding issues in relation to the management and operation of collaborative degrees. [Paragraph 4.5.3]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**  
and **Head of School of Engineering**

*Joint response:*

An issue mentioned in the DPTLA Report was timetabling, specifically moving from one institution to another during the day, but for MSc students the timetabling of the joint degree courses is such that the students attend either institution one day per week – students are not required or expected to move from one institution to another during a single day. This issue

may arise for Year 5 MEng students who have chosen a Strathclyde course as an option, but the timing issue will be evident when they make their choice. Course Directors do strive to maintain good lines of communication between institutions and the students, but unforeseen changes to timetables can cause problems. The use of email and texting has helped to alleviate the communication problems in this regard.

### **Recommendation 13**

The Review Panel recommends the creation of a SSLC for PGT students at School level in the new School structure. [Paragraph 4.5.4]

For the attention of: **Head of School of Engineering**

#### *Response:*

A dedicated SSLC across the School for PGT students was not set up in 2010–11 but this will be done in 2011–12.

An hour per week has been set aside in 2010–11 for informal meetings between students and senior staff who manage the teaching (Convenor of Learning & Teaching, Head of Administration and Head of Teaching Office). All students, both UG and PGT, are invited to bring pressing issues to this meeting.

### **Recommendation 14**

The Review Panel recommends the creation of an induction course in January for PGT students who join courses then rather than September. This could be undertaken at School level. [Paragraph 4.5.5]

For the attention of: **Head of School of Engineering  
and Dean (Learning and Teaching), College of Science and Engineering**

#### *Response: Head of School of Engineering*

The School agrees that such an induction course is highly desirable and arranged a session after the first day of teaching in January 2011. The timing was chosen because it was as early as possible, while giving time for students to meet with Advisers. Only about half the official cohort attended; the rest did not arrive at the university until later (after their courses had already started – a serious problem). The presentation was placed on Moodle for late arrivals.

This session was no substitute for the full induction course offered to students who start in September, which lasts for a week. The start of the second semester would have to be delayed by a week to give time for such a course in January. Alternatively, induction could be run at the same time as examinations if these were moved from December to January.

#### *Response: Dean (Learning & Teaching), College of Science and Engineering*

The College sees January entry for PGT programmes as a significant means of developing PGT numbers, so where possible, this option will be included as new PGT programmes are developed.

As such, then, this issue is not one that is special for Civil Engineering, and the College anticipates there will be good numbers of students arriving to start programmes in January, particularly across Engineering. A priority for the College must be to deliver a good induction programme in January from 2012 onwards.

## **Student Progression, Retention and Support**

### **Recommendation 15**

The Review Panel recommends the new School structure addresses the issue of staffing within the Department with a view to improving the staff: student ratio on Civil Engineering programmes. [Paragraph 4.6.2]

For the attention of: **Head of School of Engineering**  
and **Head of College of Science & Engineering**

*Joint response:*

The School of Engineering is developing and implementing a holistic approach to utilising staff from all of the former departments to deliver teaching. This is being implemented for several reasons

- The educational experience is improved by exposing students to interdisciplinary aspects of Engineering
- Material common to more than one discipline is not duplicated, improving inefficiency
- Staff : student ratios across the School can be equalised.

The process of integrating courses will inevitably take some time. In the current year, mathematics courses for Mechanical Engineering and Electronics & Electrical Engineering have been combined and staff formerly in Electronics & Electrical Engineering have delivered courses for Aerospace Engineering students. These steps have started the process of equalising staff : student ratios in some parts of the School, and changes planned for next year will start to impact Civil Engineering in particular.

A longer term aim is to investigate the provision of a common syllabus for the first and part of the second year of the undergraduate degrees; implementation will be predicated on a thorough market survey.

## **The Quality of learning Opportunities**

### **Recommendation 16**

The Review Panel recommends the Department reviews the provision of workspace for PGT students and ensures that all PGT students are made aware of the study space currently available to them. [Paragraph 4.7.3]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

*Response:*

There is much competition for space in the Rankine Building and the provision of a dedicated space for PGT students is not possible. However, with the formation of the new School, the availability of general access rooms in the Rankine Building to PGT students has improved, and it is now a matter of establishing custom and practice and making the students aware of the study space available to them at induction courses and other appropriate opportunities, including in degree programme handbooks.

The School provides a dedicated Postgraduate Suite in the James Watt Building.

### **Recommendation 17**

The Review Panel recommends the Department reflects on the mentoring support provided to new lecturers and ensures that all staff are able to communicate efficiently in English. [Paragraph 4.7.4]

For the attention of: **Head of School of Engineering**

*Response:*

The School follows the university's general procedures for mentoring new staff. We are aware that one member of staff appointed in the last few years had particular problems with communication but this member of staff has now left the University. It is recognised that the procedures for induction of new staff do not make explicit provision for non-UK appointees; the College is looking to strengthen induction for such staff and the School has given information about its current processes to the Internationalisation Member of the College Management Committee, Maggie Cusack.

### **Resources for Learning and Teaching**

#### **Recommendation 18**

The Review Panel recommends that the new School structure introduces a standardised system for the training and development of the GTAs, ensuring that this system fulfils Senate requirements concerning the training of GTAs. [Paragraph 4.8.5]

For the attention of: **Head of School of Engineering**

*Response:*

It is the policy of the School that GTAs must attend the GTA Statutory Training Sessions run by the Learning & Teaching Centre. This covers generic skills; detailed technical training for a particular laboratory must be provided by the responsible member of academic staff. GTAs with a particular interest in teaching are encouraged to attend the GTA Module: Approaches to Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

#### **Recommendation 19**

The Review Panel recommends that the Department gives GTAs access to student feedback that attains to them. [Paragraph 4.8.6]



For the attention of: **Head of School of Engineering**

*Response:*

We will ask lecturers across the School to pass feedback on to demonstrators with discretion, so that any negative comments can be handled tactfully. We will also consider whether a question on demonstrators should be included on a future standard questionnaire. (Engineering currently uses a standard machine-readable form produced by the University, which does not ask about staff other than the lecturer.)

### **Recommendation 20**

The Review Panel recommends the inclusion of a student representative on the Learning and Teaching committee as recommended in university guidance (reference: Code of Practice on Student Representation). [Paragraph 4.8.7]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**  
and **Head of School of Engineering**

*Joint response:*

The SRC representative for Engineering is a member of the School Learning & Teaching Committee.

### **Maintaining Standards of Awards**

#### **Recommendation 21**

The Review Panel recommends that the Department produce AMRs for all its postgraduate programmes. [Paragraph 5.1.5]

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**  
and **Head of School of Engineering**

*Joint response:*

This recommendation will be fulfilled for session 2010/11 and for subsequent sessions.