

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 27 May 2011

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Responses to Recommendations Arising from the Review of Glasgow University, Dumfries Campus held on 18 and 19 February 2010

Ms Fiona Dick, Senate Office

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 *Conclusions*

The Review Panel **commends** Glasgow University Dumfries Campus (GUD) for its newly developing vision and strategy, dedicated Director and staff and vibrant learning environment, so clearly valued by its students. It supports their prioritisation of finalising the Service Level Agreement with UWS and the Memorandum of Agreement with the Crichton Carbon Centre, and desire to improve and standardise liaison arrangements with the Gilmorehill Campus. The Panel recognise the importance to GUD of improving their external profile and student recruitment over the next few years and improving student retention.

7.2 *Summary of Recommendations*

The recommendations are interspersed in the preceding report and summarised below. 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.

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.

Response from School:

The School of Interdisciplinary Studies welcomes the DPTLA Report and considers its observations and recommendations to be helpful. The Report has been disseminated for staff and students on the School's Moodle site dedicated to the DPTLA Review and QAE procedures. The Report has been discussed as a standing item at successive meetings of the School Executive Group, considered by a full School Meeting on several occasions, and specific recommendations have been addressed or are currently being attended to by the School's Learning and Teaching Committee as detailed below in responses to Recommendations 1, 6, 8, 14, 16, and 21. Students are involved in reflections on the report via their representatives on these bodies, and in some cases have contributed actively to further deliberations on issues raised by the DPTLA Report (e.g. see response to Recommendation 1).

Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **recommends** that, when planning new courses and programmes or making changes to existing provision, the Department reflects on the balance and timing of formative and summative assessment to ensure that students are not over-assessed (see paragraph 3.2.5) and that the opportunities to receive formative feedback to support their learning are optimal (paragraph 3.2.4).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School recognises the need for fair but adequate assessment of students' assignments. As is also the case in the Colleges of Arts and of Social Sciences at the Gilmorehill Campus, the timing of assessments across Courses and Programmes has not previously been considered. The number of course choices, coupled with the limited time span available for assignments in a given semester, makes it impractical to sequence assignments evenly across courses. However, with regard to maximising pedagogically more supportive timings of formative in relation to summative assessments, the [School's] Learning and Teaching Committee (which is currently reviewing all Undergraduate curricula) will henceforth direct attention to the type, number, and timing of assessments to ensure an improved relationship between formative and summative assessments. Furthermore, in response to a recent (January 2011) request from the Undergraduate student representative on the [School's] Learning and Teaching Committee (to re-examine the pressures on students with regard to the lateness penalties pertaining to assignments), the Committee is currently investigating ways of diminishing such pressures that may involve the introduction of greater deadline flexibility, a reduction in the number of summative assessments, and greater use of formative assessments across all curricula.

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that realistic timescales for feedback on all assignments be agreed by programme teams, and communicated clearly to students in advance (*paragraph 3.2.8*).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

As noted at the Review, the delays in student feedback were isolated to a single programme and course coordinator. In general, the School strives, and generally succeeds, in meeting the university-wide norm of feedback within two weeks of the set submission date. The [School's] Learning and Teaching Committee will ensure that these norms are known to all students.

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that the distribution and breakdown of performance in individual questions in credit bearing examinations be provided to students, with a view to informing their future learning (*paragraph 3.2.8*).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School notes the value of such feedback on examination results, but currently has no formal and general communication mechanism beyond EXAMSURF for supplying such information to individual students outside of the teaching term. The School would welcome guidance as to how such feedback is communicated to students in other parts of the University.

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that Dumfries Campus staff routinely collate and analyse the management data relating to student entry routes, performance and progression with a view to benchmarking against the College of Social Sciences profile and to informing future planning and changes to existing provision (paragraph 3.2.9).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School is committed to improving the evidence base in these areas and has recently undertaken various activities in this regard, notably a study of entry routes for Primary Education students. Historical student data (over a 10 year period) has been collated relating to the student demographic and a more detailed picture of applications and progress is being maintained since the introduction of a new set of programmes following additional investment in the Campus from 2008. It is anticipated that future data collation will be facilitated by the introduction of Campus Solutions. It is hoped that the improved reporting capabilities of this will give easier access to information on students through their lifecycle from initial enquiry through to the application, student and graduate stages.

Curriculum Design, Development and Content

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel **recommends** that suitable, permanent space be identified for the use of students to meet for independent working (paragraph 3.3.2).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School is actively looking to identify and develop a permanent space for students to meet for independent working. Quiet working space within the library recently has been enhanced. The current Studio space within Rutherford / McCowan has been identified for a student facility space. Further opportunities may become available given that Glasgow University will now retain the lease on the Rutherford /McCowan building and will take a lead on space allocation.

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the use of Moodle be extended across all courses . (paragraph 3.3.2)

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School recognises the pedagogic and administrative value of Moodle and similar virtual learning environments (VLE). Until and including the 2009-10 Session, Moodle usage varied partly in conformity with its usage in different Gilmorehill departments, and partly according to colleagues' varying IT competencies or perspectives on Moodle's pedagogic worth. However, since the introduction of new methods of running Turnitin software via Moodle at the commencement of the 2010-11 Session, in October 2010 the Chair of the School's Learning and Teaching Committee instructed all teaching staff to use Moodle, except where Gilmorehill-generated courses do not use Turnitin (and it should be noted that many of these courses use Moodle, for example, to distribute lecture handouts). This instruction has led to widespread use of Moodle within the School and it is expected that this will in turn lead to a greater appreciation of its pedagogic and administrative value. With a view to extending Moodle use further, the [School's] Learning and Teaching Committee will review colleagues' use and evaluation of Moodle after the May/June diet of exams in 2011. In the light of this review, and in accordance with the currently developing policy on the use of VLEs as reflected in the University Learning and Teaching Committee's Strategy Action Plan, the School's Learning and Teaching Committee will thereafter attempt to develop some general guidelines for the use of VLEs.

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that, in instances of staff absences, their roles with students be attributed to other staff members and communicated to students as early as possible (*paragraph 3.3.4*).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School agrees that course conveners are responsible for assuring suitable cover for their absences and for alerting students, advisors, programme leaders and administrative staff of this; this responsibility has recently been emphasised both collectively and individually to relevant staff. In case of sudden illness, School administrators generally have sought to take the relevant decisions and communication roles.

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends** that the course team for the Creative Enquiry Project consider dividing the project up into several assessed tasks to provide additional opportunities for formative feedback and to make it easier to provide early assistance to students who are struggling with the project. They could, for example, assess a project plan and a draft of one of the chapters (*3.3.7*).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

As part of a more wide-ranging review of undergraduate curricula by a Short-Life Working Group (SWG) of the School's Learning and Teaching Committee, the Creative Enquiry Project (CEP) is currently being re-examined, partly in an endeavour to improve the timing, nature, and relationship of formative to summative assignments (see also Recommendation 1), and partly to

align the dissertation component with other Level 4 dissertations (including current practices with regard to formative feedback on dissertations during Semester 2). This SWG's review is at an early stage and therefore may not be able to effect changes to the CEP prior to commencement of the 2011-12 Session. However, in the interim, the CEP convener intends to establish a greater emphasis on formative feedback, particularly during Semester 1.

Student Recruitment

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that Dumfries Campus monitor more robustly the performance of its students with respect to their intake routes. Information such as the proportion of local students who are first generation in Higher Education and social class data would enable them to monitor the effectiveness of their widening participation initiatives (paragraph 3.4.2).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

In line with Recommendation 4, the data to be provided will improve the School monitoring of the performance of its students with respect to their intake routes. This information will be collated and analysed by the Head of School Administration with the Numeracy University Teacher and will be used to monitor the effectiveness of initiatives for widening participation.

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Dumfries Campus Director/staff seek advice from the University's International Director and Head of Student Recruitment and International Office, with a view to improving marketing of GUD courses and programmes both nationally and internationally (paragraph 3.4.10).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies and International Director and Head of Student Recruitment***

Response: Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies

Since August 2010 and the restructuring of the University, the School has benefitted considerably in relation to improved marketing of its courses. Although the 'Dumfries Campus' button has been lost from the University home page, listing of courses by alphabetical order and a clear indication of the Dumfries offerings are undoubtedly proving helpful. The School marketing officer works closely with her counterparts in RIO and has started to engage in joint marketing activities on behalf of both Dumfries and Gilmorehill.

The University's entire UK recruitment team visited the Dumfries Campus in February 2011 and met with the Head of School and programme leaders; the team members left well briefed about provision at Dumfries and with greater capacity for marketing our courses. The Head of School has spoken with the Head of RIO about improving marketing of our PGT programmes in the international context and the strategy here is being linked to the development of a 'suite' of offerings that can be defined as 'advanced environmental studies' at Dumfries.

Following discussions between the Head of School and the Director of Glasgow International College in autumn 2010, articulation routes have now been put in place through which GIC students can progress: 1) GIC Pre-Masters for Science & Engineering to MSc Applied Carbon Management; 2) GIC Foundation Certificate in Science to BSc Environmental Stewardship 3) GIC Pre-Masters for BLSS to MLitt Tourism, Heritage & Development. In addition the School marketing officer is working closely with the College recruitment and conversion marketing officer on improving international interest, with some targeted new activities already introduced in 2011, including regular e-newsletters to applicants.

Working with the College Business development manager, the School is now beginning to explore how it can develop partnership opportunities with specific overseas institutions. A visit by a member of academic staff to Canada in February 2011 was a further aspect of this and will be followed by another visit by another staff member to India in August 2011.

The Head of School has also been in discussion with Professor Conroy, who holds the internationalisation brief for the College. In 2010-11, fifteen full time international PGT students enrolled for courses at Dumfries and we seek to build on this to create sustainable growth in student numbers. There is also evidence of increased interest from international undergraduate students, particularly for the MA in Primary Education.

Response: International Director and Head of Student Recruitment

Discussions are underway between the Director of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies and the International Director on how to improve the positioning of Dumfries. This has covered both UG and PG programme portfolio development, along with how best to position Dumfries alongside the main campus in Glasgow.

Discussions around how to better coordinate the marketing effort – centrally and within the School are also progressing.

Improvements have been made to the Dumfries prospectus – in particular raising the profile of PG study at the campus, targeting international students.

Student Progression, Retention and Support

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel **recommends** that academic induction and social events, appropriate to the needs of students who may have a range of competing commitments, are included in the Dumfries Campus planned extended induction activities, with a view to assisting students to adjust to the challenges of University education and to improving student retention (paragraph 3.5.4).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The 2010-11 induction week sought to serve the needs of all types of students, both full time and local part time. The evaluation (based on 89 responses) suggested that the events were well attended by a mix of students and the consensus from this evaluation was that the Induction period (pre-induction and induction week itself) was broadly successful. Students considered the pre-induction process to be informative, though attention needs to be paid to website development. The Library/Student service induction and the Campus and Dumfries tours were

considered informative and useful. The Baseline IT/Writing Skills tests were considered broadly positive and helpful, though there were some critical views on technical issues such as IT access that need to be addressed for next year. The various social events were predominantly felt to be good. The main issue that arose related to the visit by new students to the Main Campus, and the Induction and Retention Working Group has agreed to move this next year to later in the semester.

In relation to subsequent retention related work, the general consensus is that, whilst there are still cases that are beyond our control, we have been able to monitor and react to potential drop outs much more effectively this year. The Early Warning System also appears to have been successful. In terms of specific activities, Student Services offered a Careers event in October and the Library a series of 'micro-sessions' on 'How the Library Works' and 'Using the Catalogue'. The Library and various aspects of Student Services reported very heavy use of their services throughout the semester.

In Semester Two in association with Student Services, we have been offering a series of set sessions throughout the semester on: further Library skills development; ongoing academic skills development and broader personal development, including fostering opportunities for volunteering with First year students and general careers development with other students. We will be offering a 'Careers Finishing School' for those graduating in the summer.

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel **recommends** that improved induction procedures for international students be put in place, for 2010-11, in consultation with international students and with staff in the recruitment and International Support Office and the international student advisers based in the Careers Service at the Gilmorehill campus. This might include:

- Clearer pre-entry information;
- Robust registration procedures;
- IT provision in Campus student accommodation;
- A buddy system, extending to weekends;
- Introduction to the local area;
- Clear information on how to access finance in a crisis situation; and
- Access to University web pages
<http://www.gla.ac.uk/faculties/lbss/forstudents/international/preparingforstudy/> from Dr Gayle Pringle, designed to enable international students to adapt to University life.

(Paragraph 3.5.6)

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School welcomes the proposals regarding improved induction procedures. During the 2010-11 academic year, induction information for this group of students was distributed electronically to ensure that it arrived in good time pre-arrival. This included a locally detailed International Students' Handbook, a PGT or UG Student Handbook and programme and

campus information. A clear Registration timetable was in place for all students and, despite Websurf problems for advising, the majority of International students were able to register timeously.

IT provision in the Hall of Residence was improved over summer 2010 with additional lines being installed to increase internet connection speeds.

A buddy system is being considered and it is hoped that, with the increase in student numbers, this will be more achievable. During Induction week a social welcome over coffee was introduced for PG students, which includes the majority of the School's International students. Greater efforts have been made to introduce students to local clubs, societies and leisure facilities. In addition, a social event was organised early in semester 1 and another in semester 2.

International students are invited to go on tours of Dumfries during induction week. In addition, a trip to Gilmorehill is offered in week 3.

Clear information on how to access finance in a crisis is provided in the relevant student handbooks. Advice is also available on the university website and given directly during advising sessions.

Recommendation 13

The Review Panel considers that GUD's focus on improving recruitment and induction, and its use of the early warning system are important aspects of improving GUD's retention and **recommends** that they monitor future retention figures, along with undertaking annual critical analysis of the success of their range of activities designed to improve student retention and progression (paragraph 3.5.11).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School is actively using the early warning system in semester 1 to identify any student at risk of withdrawing. This was extremely useful in 2010-11, although some concerns were raised regarding the resources required to undertake this. Analysis of the process has led to some amendments for 2011-12, when the administrative team will undertake the completion of the required information to assist the process. Retention is a key issue at the School and is being monitored closely through the Advising Team.

Quality of the Learning Opportunities

Recommendation 14

The Review Panel **recommends** that Dumfries Campus staff adhere to University policy in relation to use of TURNITIN (paragraph 3.6.5).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

During the 2009-10 academic year, the School broadly adopted use of TURNITIN, the only exceptions being some video-linked courses from Gilmorehill that had not adopted the VLE software. The Learning and Teaching Committee has now standardised practice within this School (as noted in response to Recommendation 6 above). However, it must be noted that, in cases where Gilmorehill Schools providing courses via the V-C link have opted not to use Turnitin, the School of Interdisciplinary Studies has decided to conform with the respective Gilmorehill Schools to ensure equity with Gilmorehill-based students.

Resources for Learning and Teaching

Recommendation 15

The Review Panel **recommends** that Human Resources / the Staff Development Service and the Learning and Teaching Centre provide information and training as appropriate on career pathways for University Teachers and the scholarship of learning and teaching, ensuring that staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities of the different academic career pathways (paragraph 3.7.6).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies
and Director of the Learning and Teaching Centre
and Director of Human Resources***

Response: Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies

The Head of School has addressed these issues through the P&DR process and also in a specific meeting with University Teachers within the School. The University Teachers are setting up a group to explore their shared interests in scholarship and needs for development, as well as to explore career pathways. Briefings from Human Resources and the Learning and Teaching Centre will be arranged in line with issues identified by the University Teachers group. In particular Dr Jane MacKensie of the Learning and Teaching Centre will visit the campus in Spring 2011 for a scoping meeting with the University Teachers on their needs and aspirations.

Response: Director of Learning & Teaching Centre

Dr Jane McKenzie has been in contact with the School of Interdisciplinary Studies to discuss how to develop scholarship amongst the University Teachers.

Response: Director of Human Resources

I think the issue is fully covered in the promotion procedures for Teaching staff –

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/policies/p-z/promotion/promo2010-11/acadcareer/>

Recommendation 16

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Dumfries Campus make more use of electronic library resources such as e-books, key chapters of books provided electronically and choosing journals for reading which are available electronically (3.7.16).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School recognises the value of such easily accessible sources, and has communicated this recommendation to all course conveners. As noted above in the response to Recommendation 6, the School's Learning and Teaching Committee intends to conduct a review of Moodle use following the May/June diet of exams. Integral to this the Committee will strongly encourage all course conveners to seek ways of extending reliance on e-books and other electronically-provided resources (e.g. by incorporating reference to such materials in Course Handbooks' bibliographies).

Recommendation 17

The Review Panel **recommends** that the finalising and signing of the Service Level Agreement with UWS be prioritised by the Director of Dumfries Campus and the Vice Principal (Strategy and Resources) with a view to improving the student learning experience and allowing for more effective resources management (paragraph 3.7.17).

*For the attention of: **Vice Principal (Strategy and Resources)**
and Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies*

Response: Vice Principal (Strategy & Resources)

This is now the responsibility of the Secretary to Court and as far as I am aware the SLA was signed. Some aspects are now easier to manage, as after extensive discussions with UWS and SFC, GU have retained responsibility for the lease, and thus the core infrastructure.

Response: Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies

This issue has been in the hands of Senior University Managers, and the Head of School has been involved in, and apprised, of developments. After considerable discussion, agreement has been reached that University of Glasgow will retain the lease on the Rutherford McCowan building until the lease expires in 2016, and the practical consequences of that decision are now being addressed. There does not appear to be a strong imperative to sign the SLA with UWS at present.

Recommendation 18

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Director of Dumfries Campus continues with his efforts to ensure that the Memorandum of Agreement with the Crichton Carbon Centre is funded and signed as swiftly as possible, to ensure that students on the MSc Carbon Management receive a high quality learning experience and the return of assessed work is timely (paragraph 3.7.18).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

After further attention from the Head of School, the Memorandum of Agreement with the Crichton Carbon Centre was signed in December 2010 and the financial transactions dependent

upon it have been brought up to date. The specific issue of timely return of assessed work has been addressed by the course team.

Recommendation 19

In order to enhance the quality of the student experience of video-linked lectures between Gilmorehill and Dumfries, the Review Panel **recommends** that a written agreement is established between the School of Interdisciplinary and Applied Studies at Dumfries and the College of Arts, detailing expectations regarding the delivery of video-linked lectures. The agreement should include the minimum expectations in relation to:

- the provision of handouts to students in advance of lectures where the content will be referred to during the lecture;
- lecturer experience in the use of visualisers and making eye contact with the camera;
- the availability of technical staff to deal with any transmission problems that may arise.

(Paragraph 3.7.20)

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies
and Head of College of Social Sciences
and Head of College of Arts***

Joint Response: Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies/Head of College of Social Sciences

This area remains under regular review. Considerable attention was given in Summer 2010 to ensure that the best possible arrangements are in place to support the video link and to overcome firewall problems. Technical staff at UWS and UoG have been extremely helpful in this. Individual lecturers have been encouraged to address the issue of handouts and 'eye contact'. The written agreement with the College of Arts has not yet been put in place, as more pressing issues relating to restructuring have assumed priority.

Response: Head of College of Arts

As indicated in the response from the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, no formal agreement is yet in place. Such an agreement should be between that School and any individual Schools within the College of Arts whose courses form a part of the programme at Dumfries, and the Dean of Learning and Teaching in the College should be aware of such School to School agreements, which would be a matter of record. The College of Arts notes that Recommendation 19 appears to suggest that technical staff provision is a College responsibility: it is not, and the School of Interdisciplinary Studies will require a separate agreement in respect of this with the relevant part of University Services. The College understands that informal discussions have begun on Recommendation 19, and welcomes any developments within the above framework.

Recommendation 20

The Review Panel **recommends** dialogue between Dumfries Campus's administration and the Registry to identify the cause of miscommunications in relation to payment of fees, and resolution of this (paragraph 3.7.22).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The School streamlined local registration procedures in 2010-11 to improve the communication with Registry concerning fee payment and registration. This process will change again with the introduction of Campus Solutions; students will be able to pay their fees online without the need to submit payment to the School to then forward to Registry.

Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience

Recommendation 21

Review Panel **recommends** that Dumfries Campus adopts a more reflective and analytical approach to Annual Monitoring, as described in the Code of Practice on the Annual Monitoring Process. This should include the systematic reporting of good practice and enhancements in courses and programmes, critical reflection on enrolments, results, trends in progression, data and commentary on the analysis of data sets, where appropriate, to allow the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer to compare outcomes with the College profile, better disseminate examples of good practice from GUD within the college and University more widely, and alert the College to any matters that require its attention (paragraph 5.1).

*For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies***

Response:

The Annual Monitoring process will henceforth adopt a more reflective and analytical approach including, as recommended, systematic reporting of good practice and enhancement, critical reflection and commentary. It will place more emphasis on review reports in future, and be aware of the need to make comparison with the College profile. In particular, attention will be paid to data concerning enrolments, results and progression. Currently the university AMR process and documentation are undergoing changes and the School Quality Officer (SQO) is aware of new requirements and formats. One change is the introduction of Semester One AMR for undergraduate courses, which enables a timely analysis and response to problems. The SQO will update the School Director and colleagues on relevant issues on a regular basis through meetings, inform the School Staff Student Liaison Committee, and communicate with the College QO through reports and meetings. The SQO and the Chair of the School's Learning and Teaching Committee have agreed that the final stage of each Annual Monitoring procedure will include a report to the Learning and Teaching Committee that will make recommendations and will highlight instances of good practice for further discussion and action by the Committee as appropriate. The School L&T Chair will bring to the attention of the University-level L&T Committee examples of good practice in the School.

Recommendation 22

The Review Panel **recommends** systematic gathering of graduate destination data for ongoing monitoring and critical analysis; and that Dumfries Campus work with the Careers Service for advice on gathering and presenting such data (paragraph 5.2).

For the attention of: **Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies**

Response:

The School will be working with the Careers Service to ensure that graduate destination data is systematically collected for ongoing monitoring and analysis.