

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 7 October 2011

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment
(now known as Periodic Subject Review): Update on
Recommendations arising from the Review of Civil Engineering held
on 11 and 12 March 2011**

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senate Office

At the meeting of the Academic Standards Committee held on 27th May 2011 it was agreed that further information should be sought for the following recommendations, which were made in the original report on the DPTLA review of Civil Engineering (March 2010).

- Recommendation 2, it was agreed that the Subject should clarify how the proposal detailed for review turnaround times on assessment for all staff and courses, fitted with the University's new assessment policy introduced in February 2011, see: www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_192549_en.pdf;
- Recommendation 4, it was suggested that pro-forma feedback sheets for formative assessment should be used by all members of staff.
- Recommendation 9, it was felt that a stronger response was required for this issue (work-related learning opportunities).
- Recommendation 18, it was noted that the School or College was responsible for half of Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) training provided to complement generic training provided by Learning & Teaching Centre and therefore some action was required in response to this recommendation.

The recommendations are reproduced in full below, with the original responses in italics. Additional comment on each recommendation is then provided.

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]

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 design projects, require a greater amount of time. For 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.

Staff will be reminded that feedback should be prompt and normally within three weeks, and any exceptions will have to be justified in writing to the Head of Discipline. The design reports mentioned in the response above are substantial submissions which, in order to give good quality feedback to a cohort of around 60 or more students, will take longer than the three week norm, but other coursework exercises should be returned timeously. The University's assessment policy (Section 7.2) mentions the use of technologies to maximise student engagement with the feedback process, and providing generic feedback through class emails and/or Moodle is a simple example of this in practice.

Recommendation 4

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

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.

Pro-forma sheets are used for larger coursework exercises, such as some of the design projects and the Year 4 Individual Project, which involves all staff. The use of pro-forma sheets will continue to be developed, but for smaller, simpler coursework exercises such as maths tutorial questions, the provision of a worked solution is a more appropriate form of feedback. The Assessment Policy highlights the need for a range of assessment tasks (Section 4.2), which must be fit for purpose. This applies equally to assessment methods and also to feedback mechanisms. It is therefore acknowledged that a single approach to feedback is not appropriate – it is dependent on the assessment task and the assessment method.

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]

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.

The School has identified the need to appoint a member of academic staff to liaise with Careers Service. The person appointed will provide coordination across the entire School, providing support to all five teaching disciplines. Vacation employment in industry is strongly encouraged by the School and some disciplines make arrangements for MEng projects to take place in industry. Although there is no longer a requirement for students in

Civil Engineering to obtain an industrial placement between Year 4 and Year 5, students are strongly encouraged to do so. As examples of current activity with the Careers Service: Linda Murdoch from the Careers Service gave two talks to Civil Engineering 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 engineering jobs which are available, and additionally via monitors in the Rankine and James Watt Buildings; 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.

[For information - the degree programme is vocational, and many of the students obtain vacation employment in the industry as a matter of course, particularly in the later years of the programme when they are of more use to employers. The industrial placement between Year 4 and Year 5 was a problem because in recent years not all students were able to get placed, given the increase in the number of MEng students and the decrease in job opportunities. Our external examiner also expressed his concern about the compulsory nature of the placement, and as the mismatch between supply and demand was unlikely to improve in at least the medium term, the industrial placement was removed as a requirement – but most students still get some relevant industrial experience between Year 4 and Year 5 in any case.]

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]

It is the policy of the School that GTAs must attend the GTA Statutory Training Sessions run by the Learning and 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.

It is the policy of the School and the College that GTAs must attend the GTA Statutory Training Sessions run by the Learning and Teaching Centre, which cover generic skills. In addition, 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.

Information on skills and professional development training within the College Graduate School can be found at

www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/scienceengineering/information/students/professionaldevelopment/

with the specific requirements for GTA training at

www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/scienceengineering/information/students/professionaldevelopment/tutorsanddemonstrators/