

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 Responses to
Recommendations Arising from the Review of Glasgow University,
Dumfries Campus held on 18 and 19 February 2010**

Ms Fiona Dick, Senate Office

This report contains further responses to recommendations arising from the Review of the Dumfries Campus held on 18 and 19 February 2010. The recommendations where further responses were requested and the initial responses provided to ASC on 27 May 2011 are set out below for information and are followed by the further responses received.

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.

Updated Response

No further decisions regarding the CEP have been taken largely due to a matter of practical expediency. As part of the annual curriculum planning process, which takes into account student preferences with regard to courses, the School's Learning and Teaching Committee SWG has been able to determine that this Honours option shall not be required for the 2011-12 Session. However, although there is no longer any urgency regarding its restructuring, in Semester 1 of 2011-12 the Learning and Teaching Committee will consider whether the CEP may be required from 2012-13 and, if so, how best to rationalise its delivery, bearing in mind the likely impact of the recent the Court decision to cancel the Liberal Arts degrees.

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.

Updated response:

During summer 2011 the School of Interdisciplinary Studies has worked with the Student Lifecycle Team and the College of Social Sciences to ensure that relevant information is available to students on the School website pre-induction. This includes full registration and enrolment information, the Undergraduate, Postgraduate and International handbooks and the Induction week programmes. It is anticipated that the fuller functionality of MyCampus will be used for 2012 entry to allow earlier access to Programme / Course Handbooks and Reading Lists.

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).

Updated response:

Many colleagues already refer students to a number of electronic resources (e.g. online books and e-journals). Course conveners have been encouraged to incorporate greater use of electronically provided resources wherever possible/appropriate. However, to develop this through time, stronger links have now been made with the Campus Librarian, Avril Goodwin. She has now joined the School's Learning and Teaching Committee in order to assist the School to improve library services generally and, more specifically, to help maximize use of electronic resources.

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.

Updated response: Head of School

The Chair of the School's Learning and Teaching Committee has discussed this matter with the College of Arts acting member of the University's L&T Committee and has been informed that the Head of the College of Arts has helpfully clarified the position as follows: technical issues are not the responsibility of the College of Arts and therefore any such agreement as recommended concerning these need to be made with the appropriate University services; the other two points (concerning handouts and lecturer experience with visualisers and making eye contact) are matters requiring School-School agreements (i.e. a College level agreement is not necessary). Approaches were made to the UWS IT team with regard to the technical aspect of the Committee's recommendation and considerable progress has been made in improving the quality of the VC link. There is also a renewed high level commitment between UWS and UoG to agree upon and sign off the various SLAs relating to Dumfries Campus, including that for ICT services. Following recent communication with the Heads of Critical Studies and of Humanities, the School of Interdisciplinary Studies has accepted the following commitment: 'The Schools of Critical Studies and of Humanities recognise the importance of students studying at the Dumfries campus. The Schools will encourage their lecturers to engage with those students via the V-C link and will remind lecturers that any audio-visual material used in the lecture should be available to every member of the audience.' With regard to the provision of handouts, the norm is now that such materials are provided via Moodle and not in paper format, obviating the need for an obligation to provide these to the Dumfries Campus General Office on the day preceding a given lecture.

It should also be noted that ongoing use of the VC link will come under significant scrutiny as plans are made to 'teach out' the Liberal Arts courses.

Updated response: Head of College of Arts

The Schools of Critical Studies and Humanities have informed the College that an agreement has been reached with the Chair of the Teaching Committee of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies at Dumfries regarding this issue.

Finally, in noting the response to recommendation 1, ASC observed that the School was planning to – amongst other measures – look at the possibility of introducing greater deadline flexibility, in order to consider ways of diminishing pressure on students regarding penalties for late submission of coursework. Members were concerned that such action could lead to a departure from the Code of Assessment regulations relating to standard penalties for the late submission of coursework; and the School was therefore urged to ensure that these regulations were followed. – This has been duly noted and the regulations will be followed.