University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 7 October 2011

Periodic Subject Reviews 2010-11: Summary of Recommendations

Ms Catherine Omand, Senate Office

1. Introduction

This report summarises emerging themes of the recommendations from the recent round of Periodic Subject reviews for 2010-11, that may require attention at a broader level either across a College or the University as a whole, or that should feed into University strategies.

Following restructuring, the responsibility for dealing with the resulting recommendations falls to the corresponding School or College. The following abbreviations are used to reference reviews conducted in 2010-11[1]

MUSIC	Music	14 February 2011
EEE	Electronics and Electrical Engineering	24 February 2011
PSY	Psychology	25 February 2011
CEES	Central and East European Studies	8 March 2011

In total, 53 recommendations were made following the 4 reviews, 17 of which were subject-specific. Areas identified in the other 36, although subject related, could be considered for University-wide attention. None of the recommendations indicated significant issues for concern.

2. Main themes

The main themes identified in 2010-11 relate to:

- Student Support
- Resources for Learning and Teaching
- Feedback on Assessment

Other recommendations have been grouped into the following categories:

- Assessment
- Curriculum Design, Development and Content
- Graduate Attributes
- Recruitment

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[1] An Update Report was also undertaken for the School of Chemistry on 23 February 2011. Due to strike action, the Review of Life Sciences was rescheduled to take place on 27/28 October 2011.

The remaining Subject-specific recommendations have been listed in Appendix 1 for noting.

2.1 Student Support

Twelve recommendations fell under this category. The main areas of concern included: inadequate communication and/or information, PGT support and GTA support. The recommendations were as follows:

2.1.1 Communication

- Tutorial group structure to be communicated clearly to all concerned, in order to facilitate support for all students in tutorial groups (EEE3.6.10)

- Course information to be reviewed, with a view to providing clearer information about the structure of the course and the parameters for interactions between the Course Tutors and students in relation to student projects (MUSIC3.4.20)

- ERASMUS students to receive full information about available courses in good time for selection prior to arrival in Glasgow (EEE3.2.3)

- Issues raised at staff-student liaison committee meetings to be reported on at subsequent meetings (PSY5.4)

- NSS results to be routinely shared and discussed with students in the forum of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee with a view to demonstrating commitment to addressing student concerns, exploring what students would find useful in feedback and seeking shared solutions to any concerns identified (MUSIC3.3.11)

Increasing use of Moodle should ensure that appropriate information is communicated to students relating to course information, minutes of SSLC, outcome of questionnaires etc.

2.1.2 Additional support for PGT Students

- A sense of belonging to be fostered amongst postgraduate taught students, consideration to be given to focus groups, meetings with senior members of staff, one-to-one meetings, or inclusion in social events currently only provided for undergraduate students (EEE3.6.8)

- Engagement with the Staff/Student Liaison Committee to be improved, to provide clear information about the meeting dates, representatives and actions taken to be posted prominently on Moodle (or other widely viewed page), with a link emailed to students (EEE5.6)

- Postgraduate induction session to be more closely tailored to the student needs (EEE3.5.10)

- Support mechanisms for students who are unavoidably delayed in joining their programme to be introduced (EEE3.6.8)

The recently established College Graduate Schools will in future have increased responsibility for creating a supportive environment to meet the needs of growing numbers of postgraduate students.

2.1.3 Support for GTAs

- All GTAs to receive the training required by Senate regulations (EEE3.8.6)

- A systematic means of communicating to GTAs the progress of student groups through the course material to be devised and adhered to, in order to ensure that the GTAs have sufficient time to prepare laboratory and tutorial materials that match students' progress through the course (EEE3.8.7)

- Inclusion of GTAs in peer observation scheme, with a view to helping them develop as teachers (MUSIC3.8.12)

2.2   Resources for Learning and Teaching

A total of 12 recommendations were made in relation to Resources for Learning and Teaching. Of those, 5 referred to accommodation issues but the others included: how best to ensure the quality of the student experience and safeguarding staff wellbeing during a time of shrinking resources; adequate training for Advisers of Studies to ensure appropriate advice is given to entrants and provision of adequate support for Probationary staff. The recommendations were as follows:

- Serious consideration to be given as to how to deploy shrinking resources to best advantage whilst maintaining and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience whilst also safeguarding staff wellbeing through a balanced and achievable workload (MUSIC3.8.13)

- Discussion with the Student Lifecycle Project team to ensure that, when the Campus Solutions system goes live in August 2011, the different subject areas and their courses and programmes, within the School are clearly identifiable *(*EEE2)

- Clarity of advice to be given to entrants regarding flexibility and course selection and ensure that appropriate training is delivered to Advisers of Studies (CEES3.5.5 & MUSIC3.6.7)

- Clarification of the line management and where responsibility rests for resourcing the regular maintenance of the University-owned musical equipment in the Concert Hall (MUSIC3.8.5)

- The absence of disabled access to both 14 University Gardens and the studios in the Gilbert Scott Building to be addressed (MUSIC3.8.23)

- The absence of soundproofing in the Concert Hall/3 practice rooms at 14 University Gardens and the resultant noise penetration which intrudes into adjoining spaces including examination halls to be addressed (MUSIC3.8.23)

- Updating of essential teaching equipment to be addressed, given the detrimental effect of not doing so on current students and on recruitment (EEE3.8.8)

- To identify suitable social/study space (EEE3.8.11)

- Achievable targets to be set for PhD submission by Probationary staff and workload sufficiently realistic that the objectives of the probationary period are achievable (CEES3.8.2 & MUSIC3.8.9)

- Specimen or past examination papers, with worked solutions, to be made available to assist students with their revision (*EEE3.3.10)*

Accommodation and equipment matters have also been brought to the attention of Estates and Buildings by the University Quality Officers' Forum via the annual monitoring process and dialogue is ongoing with Estates and Buildings. The Academic Infrastructure Working Group is also considering the provision of more flexible teaching space as well as social/study space.

However, the ongoing issues with the adequacy/availability of accommodation for practice-based work in Music were raised in the DPTLA Review of Music in 2005 and have since been raised repeatedly via annual monitoring. The response to the 2005 DPTLA indicated that a relocation was anticipated but it has not yet taken place and the issues remain unresolved. In addition, the accessibility issues raised here have serious implications in relation to equality and diversity compliance.

2.3 Feedback on Assessment

Four recommendations were made with regard to feedback on assessment. These recommendations mainly concerned adequate communication, the need to provide clear timescales for feedback and the need to communicate with students about any delays. The recommendations were as follows:

- Student expectations to be managed more effectively, clear indications of expected timescales for feedback provision and how delays will be handled (EEE3.6.8)

- The Director of Teaching to compile a guide to explain the various forms of assessment feedback, indicating when such feedback should be provided. The guide to be used as a springboard for on-going discussion with students, to investigate what other forms of feedback would be most helpful for students and set out clearly staff and student expectations about the nature of feedback that should be provided and in what time frame (PSY3.3.13)

- Alternative feedback mechanisms to be used to make more prompt feedback possible (EEE3.6.8)

- Adequate feedback on project work to be provided in the same way as for other coursework, and provision of guidance on how to perform well in projects, perhaps in the form of grade descriptors provided to students (EEE3.3.11)

Supplementary to the Code of Assessment, the University's Assessment Policy was approved in February 2011. It states that a 3-week turnaround on assessment feedback should be the norm. It also requires that students be informed as to when to expect feedback and in what format, and that changes be communicated to students promptly.

3. Other Categories

The other themes arising from 2010-11 were as follows:

3.1 Assessment

A total of 6 recommendations referred to Assessment, 2 of which could be indicative of wider University issues:

- Assessment criteria to be distributed directly to students periodically throughout the year and not just at the beginning of the year (CEES3.3.3)

- The Learning and Teaching Centre should be consulted when revising programme specifications to ensure that programme ILOs are written in the appropriate format (MUSIC3.2.2)

3.2 Curriculum Design, Development and Content

A total of 8 recommendations fell into this category, and will be taken forward by the Subjects/Schools concerned. However, the following 2 relate to consideration or review of the range of provision offered and could indicate a topic requiring wider discussion:

- Careful consideration to be given to the the balance of benefits and costs to establish the optimum number and range of options (PSY3.4.11)

- The possibility of expanding the range of Joint Honours programmes to be explored (PSY3.4.13)

3.3 Graduate Attributes/Employability

The following 2 recommendations relate to graduate attributes/employability:

- Options for enhancing the opportunities for study abroad to be investigated (PSY3.4.16)

- Consideration to be given to arranging a careers session where postgraduate students could hear about the employment gained by previous students, to give them a better idea of the type of careers available on graduation (EEE5.10)

Following the final report and recommendations of the Graduate Attributes Working Group, the Graduate Implementation Group (GAIG) has been established to oversee the institutional rollout of the graduate attributes framework across the University.

3.4 Recruitment

In total, 4 recommendations related to Recruitment, 2 of which had possible University-wide application:

- Engage current students with recruitment processes such as open days, school visits and with induction programmes (CEES3.5.3)

- The Subject to discuss information made available for international students with the International Student Support section of RIO *(CEES3.6.9)*

4.   Action requested of Academic Standards Committee

4.1   Academic Standards Committee is asked **to note** this overview of the recommendations and **to consider** whether any further University-wide action is merited and should be initiated. Particularly, consideration should be given to drawing the attention of SMG or other senior group to the various long-standing accommodation issues in relation to 14 University Gardens and the subject area of Music.

4.2   Academic Standards Committee is also asked **to note** that the requests to take forward individual recommendations have been forwarded to the relevant individuals by the Senate Office following the Committee's consideration of the full PSR reports in May 2011 and to note the University level action already in progress as outlined above.

Other Recommendations

The following recommendations were subject-specific but noted here for information

Assessment

- The School should reflect on its schedules for the submission of assessed work, with particular focus on Level 3 semester 2, and consider how best to support students in managing the associated workload (PSY3.3.5)

- The School should continue to monitor the proportion of A grades being awarded at Levels 1 and 2, and as part of this monitoring, reflect further on the local grade descriptors and assessment weightings *(*PSY3.3.18)

- EEE, in communication with Registry, should ensure that all grades from ERASMUS institutions appear on students' Websurf/Campus Solutions records in order to provide students with a comprehensive record of their studies (EEE5.4)

- CEES should monitor the implication of the change to Honours entry to a 'B' pass in 40-credits at Level 1 and modify Level 1 courses to accommodate students wishing to enter Honours from Level 1, if deemed necessary (CEES3.6.1)

Curriculum

- The Subject Management Group should work with staff in the School to develop a clear vision for the future of the Psychology curriculum that recognises the core competencies and emerging themes within the discipline and capitalises on the breadth provided through the linkages between the School and the Research Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology *(*PSY3.4.4)

- The Subject should review the content of CEES Level 2 Course 2B to ensure that it appropriately enhances students' learning opportunities, while maintaining its coverage of the key issues (CEES3.4.4)

- EEE should consider the request by undergraduate students to assess the viability of moving the choice between a language or a design project from Year 4 to Year 2, as students believed it was rather detached from the rest of the Year 4 curriculum (EEE3.4.8)

- EEE should assess the viability of extending Data Acquisition for Music Processing 3 into a 20 credit course and discontinuing the existing additional 10 credit course which follows it (EEE3.4.9)

- The Head of Subject (EEE) and the Head of the Business School should discuss ways in which integration of the two subjects could be improved, thereby enhancing the experience of students on the MSc Electronics and Electrical Engineering with Business (EEE3.4.11)

- Training on cleanroom procedures should be provided to all relevant students as early as possible in their degrees (EEE3.4.12)

Quality Enhancement and Assurance

- Staff should use the excellent reports from Levels 3, 4 and M to inform the approach adopted in Level 1 and 2 annual monitoring reports in the future (PSY5.5)

- The Programme Specifications should be revised in line with University policy to ensure each provides aims specific to each individual programme, rather than providing generic aims and referring the reader to the Student Handbook (EEE3.1.2)

- The Programme Specifications should be revised in line with University policy to ensure each provides Intended Learning Outcomes specific to each individual course or programme, rather than providing generic aims and referring the reader to the Student Handbook (EEE3.2.2)

Resources Learning and Teaching

- The booking arrangements for studio facilities with BEng in Music with Electronics students should be explored with a view to finding a mutually satisfactory solution to concerns expressed about the limitations of the current booking system (MUSIC3.8.20)

- The School of Culture and Creative Arts and with Music should engage in urgent discussions on the longer-term strategy for creating an integrated and fit-for-purpose physical environment for Music and explore solutions to the issues, which might be implemented in the shorter-term (MUSIC3.8.23)

Recruitment

- The School should appropriately advertise and promote the Subject within the School and College (CEES3.5.2)

- The School of Engineering should consider to the suitability of the term 'discipline' given its negative connotations, the potential for confusion and its lack of use elsewhere in the University (EEE2)