

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 25 May 2012

Periodic Subject Review: Responses to Recommendations Arising
from the Report of the Review of Music held on 14 February 2011

Ms Fiona Dick, Senate Office

Conclusions

The Review Panel was impressed with the quality of Music's provision, the accomplishments of Music's staff and with the enthusiasm of both staff and students for their subject. All the students who met with the Panel were confident and articulate.

Music had adopted an exemplary approach to internal review which provided a platform for reflection and discussion between staff and students and proved to be an excellent resource to support the Panel's review of the Subject's learning, teaching and assessment. The deficiencies in the physical environment continue to be a significant matter of concern and the Panel was left in no doubt that the issues of disabled access and soundproofing require urgent attention and that it is of paramount importance for the University to engage in urgent discussion with both the School of Culture & Creative Arts and with Music on the longer-term strategy for creating an integrated and fit-for-purpose learning environment.

NSS scores are disappointing and Music has some work to do both to communicate effectively to students that it is actively addressing the issues that the survey has identified and to engage students in exploring mutually satisfactory solutions to any residual issues that they may have.

The Panel was concerned that Music might be striving to do too much within its limited resources. Since much of its provision is dependent on the knowledge and expertise of individual members of staff and cannot be readily shared by the wider School, the Panel is **recommending** that in the course of the next year, both the School and the Subject give serious consideration as to how they might deploy Music's shrinking resources to best advantage to maintain and enhance the quality of the student learning experience, whilst also safeguarding staff wellbeing through a balanced and achievable workload (see Para 3.8.13).

Recommendations

The recommendations interspersed in the report are summarised below. It is important to note that the majority of these recommendations refer to issues identified by Music 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.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel noted that the format in which programme ILOs were written in the previous iteration of programme specifications requires amendment and **recommends**

that Music consults with the Learning & Teaching Centre when revising its programme specifications to ensure that programme ILOs are written in the appropriate format. (Paragraph 3.2.2)

For the attention of: **Head of Music**

Response:

This is in progress. Revised ILOs for the MA Music and BMus programmes have been drafted in consultation with the Learning and Teaching Centre. These are now more or less complete, though some aspects (such as 'key skills') are still under review. They will be put to Board of Studies in the academic session 2012-13.

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that Music routinely shares and discusses the NSS results with students in the forum of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee with a view to demonstrating its commitment to addressing student concerns, exploring what students would find useful in feedback and seeking shared solutions to any concerns identified. (Paragraph 3.3.11)

For the attention of: **Head of Music**

Response:

This has been implemented. The NSS results were discussed with students at the SSLC meeting on 14th November 2011, and the minutes of this meeting are made available to students (and staff) on Moodle at <http://arts.moodle.gla.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=180>. As will be seen in the minutes, detailed feedback on each course is also received and discussed. The NSS has been marked as a recurrent agenda item for future SSLC meetings.

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that Music reviews the information on the *Creative Practice 2* course contained in the Popular Music Studies Student Handbook, 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 the student's project. (Paragraph 3.4.20)

For the attention of: **Head of Music**

Response:

This has been implemented. A clearer outline of the Creative Practice 2 course has been written and this will be incorporated into the Popular Music Studies Handbook from 2012 onwards. It includes the text:

'This course contains a high proportion of self-directed learning through the undertaking of an individual creative project under the supervision of a member of staff, carried out through an initial seminar followed by individual tutorials held roughly fortnightly by arrangement with the supervisor. Students should be aware that the course requires a great deal of self-motivation; they may need to have or to acquire sufficient technical expertise in order to generate, record, edit and mix their own audio as necessary for their particular project. Some technical guidance is given, together with studio/lab access. Students are required to submit a project proposal in advance for discussion at a preliminary meeting in December.'

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that the variability in the clarity of advice to MA entrants regarding the flexibility of the MA programme is drawn to the attention of the Chief Adviser for the College of Arts so that it can be addressed in the training delivered to Advisers of Studies. (*Paragraph 3.6.7*)

For the attention of: **Chief Adviser for the College of Arts**

Response:

We will make sure that the range of options in Music are explained to students at Level 2 in our training, and we will make sure that all current advisers are aware of them in our regular bulletins and refresher training for them. I have responsibility for generic course lists of Arts courses in mycampus and the full range of Music modules is available there and in Music specific plan requirements.

However, it is important to note that we must also make sure our students are aware of the following and that this may well have some impact on their choice of courses:

1. The university's minimum requirements for honours entry are 80 credits of Level 2 study in at least two subjects. A student must therefore take at least one Level 2 module outside of Music.
2. A normal Level 2 curriculum is 120 credits. Most subjects offer 40 credits of courses at Levels 1 and 2, and most students elect to take all credits offered by a subject during a year. Students take one of two routes in year 2. Either they take 80 credits of courses at Level 2 and 40 credits at Level 1 in a new subject, or they take 120 credits of Level 2 study. Very occasionally, a student will follow a 100 Level 2, 20 Level 1 model. We feel we should always advise students that if they choose to take the 120/100 Level 2 option, then they do so through choice and recognise the potential academic and workload implications of studying their free 40 credits at Level 2 rather than Level 1.
3. One of the great values of the Glasgow Arts degree is its flexibility, and the option to change direction of study in years 1 and 2. We have also always considered it important that a student keeps as many options open to them as possible in case he or she changes their mind about their subject direction, or fails to achieve the required grades for honours entry in their first choice of subject. Both are not uncommon. Most subjects offer 40 credits of courses at Level 2 and require those 40 credits for Honours entry. We have therefore always recommended to our students that they maintain at least two subjects at level 2 in year 2, so that they are qualified for honours entry in both. In terms of Music Level 2, if a student chose to take more than the minimum required Level 2 options in Music Level 2 and only 1 module in another subject at level 2, then that student would have no alternate route to honours study other than Music. I do not think I would be prepared to change this recommendation, but it is only a recommendation, and students are free to choose courses as they wish within the constraints of the regulations.

While we will certainly make sure that students are aware of all the potential options available to them, then, unless I am directed otherwise, I think it is important that we do so within the contexts I have laid out here.

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University clarifies the line management for *Music in the University* and where responsibility rests for resourcing the regular maintenance of the University-owned musical equipment in the Concert Hall. (*Paragraph 3.8.5*)

For the attention of: **Vice Principal and Head of the College of Arts**

Response

The issues addressed under Recommendation 5 are the subject of ongoing discussions involving colleagues in Music with colleagues elsewhere in the University. The Head of School updates the College as required. The College does not have responsibility for Concert Hall equipment.

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Culture and Creative Arts ensures that the workload of probationary members of staff in the School is equitable and sufficiently realistic to ensure that they are able to attend the New Lecturer and Teacher Programme and that the objectives of the probationary period are achievable in the context of their overall remit. (*Paragraph 3.8.9*)

For the attention of: **Head of School of Culture and Creative Arts**

Response:

The School is aware of the need for probationary staff to be fully supported and to have a realistic and equitable workload. A new system of Induction has been introduced, together with a systematic approach to appointing mentors, setting goals and managing the workloads of probationary staff.

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that consideration be given to including GTAs in Music's peer observation scheme, when it is implemented, with a view to helping them develop as teachers. (*Paragraph 3.8.12*)

For the attention of: **Head of Music**

Response:

Peer observation of teaching has been partially implemented. Some observation took place this session, but came rather late in the year, and as a result only those members of staff still with classes scheduled could be involved (including part-time and probationary staff). Unfortunately this was too late to capture GTA teaching in 11-12; but now we have an appropriate framework, GTAs will be included from 2012-13 onwards. Feedback from staff has been positive.

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel recognised that Music might be trying to accomplish too much within its limited resources and **recommends** that, in the course of the next year, both the School and the Subject give serious consideration as to how they might deploy Music's shrinking resources to best advantage to maintain and enhance the quality of the student learning

experience whilst also safeguarding staff wellbeing through a balanced and achievable workload. (*Paragraph 3.8.13*)

For the attention of: **Head of School of Culture and Creative Arts and Head of Music**

Response Head of School of Culture and Creative Arts:

The School is aware of the present limitations placed on Music which compromise both its ambitions and its ability to maintain the quality of the student learning experience. Music has benefitted from greater administrative support under the new structure and has recently been successful in obtaining a Kelvin-Smith Fellowship. In addition, Music has been worked into the School and College development plans in terms of fundraising for scholarships and infrastructure, which should help with the longer-term objectives of the subject.

Response: Head of Music

This has been discussed but remains somewhat intractable. Since the Review, budgets have not been substantially cut, contrary to expectation. However, workload issues in Music remain. These arise mainly from pressure of delivering a wider range of provision at level 1 and 2 than other subjects within School and College. This results from the supply of 240 credits at levels 1 & 2 for the BMus programme, plus 80 L1/2 credits tailored to meet the needs of the BEng programme (other subjects deliver 80 credits across levels 1 & 2). Given this situation it is hard to see where reductions in the UG teaching load could be made without either cutting degree programmes or investing in additional music staff.

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that Music explores the booking arrangements for studio facilities with BEng in Music with Electronics students with a view to finding a mutually satisfactory solution to concerns expressed about the limitations of the current booking system. (*Paragraph 3.8.20*)

For the attention of: **Head of Music**

Response:

This has been implemented. A new online booking facility has been established, accessible at <http://www.music.arts.gla.ac.uk/studiobookings>.

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University engages in urgent discussion with the School of Culture and Creative Arts and with Music on the longer-term strategy for creating an integrated and fit-for-purpose physical environment for Music and that, alongside this, it explores solutions to the following issues, which might be implemented in the shorter-term:

- The absence of disabled access to both 14 University Gardens and the studios in the Gilbert Scott Building;
- The lack of soundproofing in the 3 practice rooms located at 14 University Gardens and the resultant noise penetration which is clearly intrusive to teaching, assessment and staff research;

- The absence of soundproofing in the Concert Hall and the resultant noise penetration which intrudes into adjoining spaces including examination halls. (*Paragraph 3.8.23*)

For the attention of: **Vice Principal Strategy & Resources**

Response:

Discussions continue with the Head of the College of Arts as to the provision of a suitable physical environment for Music. There are no immediate plans but the purchase of the Western Infirmary Site and/or planned developments in the Kelvin Hall have the potential to provide a long term solution.

- Disabled access to all university facilities are kept under review. Given the size and historic nature of the estate, much of it is not ideally configured for disabled access and the cost making the whole estate accessible is prohibitive in a short time frame. Each year the University increases the percentage of its estate that could be considered to be accessible. Modifications are often made when major refurbishments are undertaken. If a student with disabilities selects a course either modifications are made at that time or classes are moved to more accessible locations. No specific modifications have been made to the estate 14 University Gardens or the studios in the Gilbert Scott Building in the last 12 months.
- Additional sound proof music practice pods have been installed in 13 University Gardens (the old Hetherington Club). No specific modifications have been made to 14 University Gardens
- Estates & Building have been working with Historic Scotland to improve the soundproofing and general usability of the Concert Hall. This is not proving to be a trivial process as Historic Scotland are raising concerns over the impact of the proposed modifications on the architecture of the space.