

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee – Friday 5 October 2012

## Periodic Subject Reviews 2011-12: Summary of Recommendations

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**1. Introduction**

This report summarises emerging themes of the recommendations from the recent round of Periodic Subject reviews, and highlights issues 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.

Six reviews were conducted during 2011-12 and the following abbreviations are used to refer to particular reviews:

Life Sciences <sup>1</sup>	LS
Physics and Astronomy	Physics
Education	Educ
Law	Law
Management	Mngmt
Medicine (UG) <sup>2</sup>	UGMed

**2. Main themes**

In total, 94 recommendations were made, 64 of which were subject-specific. None of the recommendations indicated significant issues for concern. All recommendations were grouped under the follow categories:

- **Resources for Learning and Teaching** (31 recommendations)
- **Student Support** (19 recommendations)
- **Quality Enhancement/Assurance** (13 recommendations)
- **Assessment** (7 recommendations)
- **Curriculum** (6 recommendations)
- **Maintaining Standards** (5 recommendations)
- **Learning Opportunities** (5 recommendations)
- **Aims/ILOs** (4 recommendations)
- **Recruitment** (4 recommendations)

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<sup>1</sup> The Review of the School of Life Sciences was scheduled to take place on 17/18 March 2011 but was postponed due to industrial action until 27/28 October 2011.

<sup>2</sup> The review of PGT medicine was scheduled to take place during 2011-12, however it was postponed to allow extended discussion of the scope of the review in an organisationally complex subject area.

The activities referred to in the remaining 30 recommendations were identified as having potential for wider application across the University. These are summarised below for Academic Standards Committee consideration

***Resources for Learning and Teaching*** (11 recommendations)

Nine of the recommendations grouped under this category highlighted the need to provide training opportunities and support for new staff: probationers, University Teachers and GTAs. One recommendation proposed the engagement of GTAs in annual monitoring and review of courses to benefit from their direct delivery and engagement with students.

The issue of equity of opportunity for GTAs to teach had been raised in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2010-11 and consequently extra training was being provided by College Graduate Schools. The possibility of a generic training course was under discussion between the Learning and Teaching Centre and College Graduate Schools.

*Academic Standards Committee is invited to consider whether Heads of College (or nominee) should meet with Human Resource colleagues to discuss possible College or University-wide training for each category of staff as identified above.*

One recommendation sought development of a practical and comprehensive on-line overseas grade conversion table as students who had participated in an overseas programme, found the converted grades on-line difficult to understand and some experienced delays in receiving their grades. Investment in the development of IT software was necessary and the College was requested to provide resources to facilitate the School concerned to develop a practical and comprehensive on-line conversion table. It should be noted that, in 2011, a Working Group on the Treatment of Assessment from study abroad identified that there were a range of approaches used in Glasgow and produced a set principles to be used when dealing with marks, grades or credits achieved by students during periods of study abroad. The College's attention will be drawn to these principles.

***Student Progression/Support*** (10 recommendations)

Provision of additional support was frequently suggested by panels, mainly in relation to new and/or overseas students. It was recommended that a review be undertaken of the language entry requirements for overseas students and provision of language support such as development of guidance on assessment criteria that could be easily understood. One recommendation requested that consideration be given to establishing diagnostic measures to identify whether there were significant gaps in incoming students' knowledge and skills in order that they could be managed either by self-directed study or additional staff support. Another recommendation proposed that Postgraduate Taught students be sent information packs prior to arrival, including information on induction and timetables and given an early opportunity to meet with peers.

Measures to ensure that the advisory system was robust and proactive were highlighted as was a more consistent approach to the provision of course material on Moodle to ensure its usefulness as a tool for communication. A further recommendation proposed that annual dialogue took place with undergraduate

students to ensure marking and the use of different types of feedback were clearly understood.

Two recommendations sought operational procedures were established to resolve issues arising during placement as early as possible.

***Academic Standards Committee is invited to note that the Research and International Office has been invited to review language entry requirements of oversee students and Colleges have been invited to consider appropriate student support as highlighted above.***

*The issues involving placement will be brought to the attention of the newly appointed University Work Related Learning Development Adviser whose remit includes supporting College in relation to the creation of work-related opportunities.*

### **Quality Enhancement/Assurance** (4 recommendations)

Three recommendations sought assurances that issues raised at Staff Student Liaison Committees were being clearly recorded, monitored and progressed with issues and actions appropriately published via Moodle.

The other recommendation suggested the need for the University to provide guidance on the operation of penalties for late submission of coursework where several sub-components contributed to an overall coursework mark.

***Academic Standards Committee is invited to note that the Senate Office has been asked to review the University's guidance on Penalty for Late Submission.***

*Also that the University's Quality Officers Forum will be asked to promote good practice in relation to Staff Student Liaison committees, in particular, the use of a new Student Voice webpage where minutes and issues resolved from Staff Student Liaison Committees will be communicated.*

### **Learning Opportunities** (3 recommendations)

The recommendations included enhancing learning opportunities such as on-line provision of lecture recordings, quick and user-friendly links to useful information and opportunities for study abroad.

### **Assessment** (1 recommendation)

It was recommended that an assessment schedule be incorporated into course documentation, highlighting the various forms of feedback on assessments students could expect to receive and a schedule for receiving such feedback.

***Academic Standards Committee is invited to consider whether a University-wide template for course assessment schedules covering the feedback process would be deemed appropriate.***

### **Aims and Objectives** (1 recommendation)

It was recommended that there should be more consistency in provision of information on Intended Learning Outcomes.

### 3. **Action requested of Academic Standards Committee**

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 as identified above.

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 2012 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

#### *Resources Learning and Teaching (20)*

- Carefully consider requirements for enhancing the learning and teaching environment at the Observatory and maintains close contact with Estates and Buildings with a view to achieving as quickly as possible a successful refurbishment project similar to that achieved in the Kelvin Building Physics laboratories (Physics)
- Estates and Buildings address two pressing issues regarding accessibility for disabled students and staff of the School: access to the Common Room in the Kelvin Building (as recommended in the 2006 DPTLA); and access to the University Observatory (Physics)
- In recognition of the key role played by technicians in the successful delivery of laboratory-based teaching, the College consider approving the recruitment of a technician to replace the technician lost in 2010 (Physics)
- Continue to engage in dialogue with the College to consider the case for the introduction of dedicated teaching administration (Physics)
- In order to address the ongoing problem of staff shortages due to leave of absence and academic staff turnover, the College and School review the current level of staffing and invest accordingly (Law)
- The Head of School clarifies the role of the Head of Administration to ensure that the time for the supervision of administrative processes is adequate (Law)
- The College of Social Sciences provide resources to enable the School of Law to undertake an intensive marketing and advertising exercise for postgraduate study (Law)
- Consideration be given to resolving the issues of room size and technological limitations experienced by students and staff on the DLP course (Law)
- The College of Social Sciences should consult with the School of Law regarding the resourcing of the establishment of a law clinic (Law)
- Review practice and ensure they are compliant with the University policy on GTA payment (Mngmt)
- Seek confirmation from the NHS that the revision of contracts would include contractual teaching obligation (UGMed)
- The Undergraduate School of Medicine establish joint standardised service level agreements with each hospital. Service level agreements should identify expectations in relation to teaching, mentoring, feedback and assessment (UGMed)
- Further investment in strengthening operational procedures to ensure robust lines of communication are established and maintained with key contacts in the NHS (UGMed)
- Ensure that all University staff, especially clinical academics, are made aware of their obligatory teaching responsibilities (UGMed)
- University Teachers are appropriately supported, particularly those based in Research Institutes (UGMed)

- Address the recommendation outlined in the 2007 DPTLA report by reviewing its postgraduate portfolio to assess the viability of those courses with fewer than the University guideline of fifteen students (Educ)
- Trying to accomplish too much within current staff resource and the School give consideration as to how they might deploy Education's staff resource to maintain and enhance the quality of student support, whilst also safeguarding staff wellbeing through a balanced and achievable workload. The School seriously considers investing in additional administrative support (Educ)
- The outstanding maintenance issues across the School be undertaken as a priority with particular emphasis on the gymnasium which currently suffers from a leaking roof and associated problems with mould (Educ)
- The College puts the highest priority on putting effective workload and financial models in place to ensure that both teaching and research are properly supported within the College in 2012-13 and to prevent divisions from developing between research and teaching staff (LS)
- The College establishes a robust, transparent and consistent process for the allocation of teaching duties, in which all academic staff are encouraged to engage in learning and teaching and that ensures that research-led teaching continues to be a strength of the degree programmes offered by the College (Life)

#### *Student Progress/Support (9)*

- Undertake to ensure students are made aware of any pre-requisites or grades which would affect their eligibility or choice of Honours options at varying points during their years of study (Law)
- Management review the workload allocation for supervising undergraduate dissertations to ensure sufficient support can be provided to students (Mngmt)
- Seek agreement with the NHS in Greater Glasgow and Clyde that adequate facilities and support would be provided for the revised curriculum (UGMed)
- Place greater emphasis on student support from Years 3 to 5, offering some level of supervision, ensuring that students are aware of whom to contact if additional support was required and/or if a problem arose (UGMed)
- Student expectations on placement were clearly highlighted, emphasising student responsibility to be pro-active (UGMed)
- NHS staff are fully briefed on content, level of provision, appropriate student feedback and be given guidance on adequate student support, such as the availability of power point presentations to students (UGMed)
- Videos and podcasts are available to provide guidance and support clinical skills and that accessibility is improved (UGMed)
- Introduction on an appropriate induction and mentoring programme for all students entering the programme in Year 3 (UGMed)
- Review the guidance it gives to students progressing from Level 2 to 3 prior to any formative assessments, to ensure that students understand the level of attainment and depth of knowledge required in order to achieve certain grades, particularly with respect to written reports and essays (LS)

### *Quality Enhancement and Assurance (9)*

- Consider a range of means of eliciting meaningful feedback from students as recommended in the University's Code of Practice on Obtaining and Responding to Feedback from Students - [http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_107529\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_107529_en.pdf) (e.g. using focus groups or mid-course questionnaires)(Physics)
- Carefully check all course and programme documentation to ensure that the content is both consistent with the Code of Assessment and reflects School practice (Physics)
- As a matter of priority, revise the current strategic plan, including the formulation of a Learning and Teaching Strategy, in order to identify a more clearly defined and focussed way forward for the School of Law and to further meet the aims of the University's Strategic Plan (Law)
- In cooperation with the Learning and Teaching Centre, develop a systematic structure to address the issue of communication and, simultaneously, to review the provision of feedback to students, including providing more detailed information on what feedback entailed (Law)
- Implement appropriate procedures to ensure that communication with the School's external examiners is improved (Law)
- Review approach to providing feedback on assessed work with a view to fully meeting the timescales set out for the return of feedback in the University Assessment policy. The Subject should also ensure these timescales are met consistently throughout its provision (Mngmt)
- Regular review of the guidance given to Problem Based Learning (PBL) tutors and facilitators, and that more regular meetings are established to provide additional support (UGMed)
- The Convener of the Learning and Teaching Committee reviews the quality and consistency of the Annual Monitoring Reports with a view to improving the quality of the data and ensuring consistency across all programmes. The Annual Monitoring Report for BEd Honours (2010-11) is cited as an example of good practice. To assist with consistency the School should adopt the University-wide documentation outlined in the Senate Office website at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/annualmonitoring/> (Educ)
- Review its Programme Specifications to ensure that each one is distinctive to the programme, and contains the relevant information for, all available degree pathways (LS)

### *Assessment (6)*

- Resolve the problem pertaining to the variability of marking by staff and ensure that the marking scheme is fully implemented (Law)
- Review current provision at Levels 3 and 4 to identify opportunities to incorporate additional oral assessments (Law)
- Develop alternative assessment methods, in consultation with students, and increase the focus on continuous assessment and consider the correlation between assessment methods and programme learning outcomes (Mngmt)
- Consideration be given to introducing final summative clinical assessments at the end of Year 4 in order for Year 5 to be devoted to preparation for foundation training and portfolio-based assessment (UGMed)

- Review assessment processes to ensure that feedback is provided to the students in a consistent manner and within the University's policy of a three week turnaround time (Educ)
- With a view to ensuring consistent practice across the School and College, the School should use the University guidance on double marking to inform standard practice across all its programmes (Educ)

#### *Curriculum (6)*

- Investigate the feasibility of incorporating some additional basic programming into the undergraduate curriculum, in order to prepare students better with computing skills required throughout their programmes of study (Physics)
- Undertake a review of Problem Based Learning (PBL) provision to ensure uniformity of depth of content and to ensure that proper controls are put in place to prevent the educational benefits of PBL being undermined by inappropriate practices (UGMed)
- The vision for the curriculum should be shared with key NHS contacts to ensure that they are fully engaged with developments (UGMed)
- Action is taken to ensure that any possible gaps in knowledge that arise, as a consequence of the reorganisation of the curriculum, are rectified (UGMed)
- Address concerns regarding the lack of training in quantitative research methods by MSc Psychological Studies students a matter of urgency for the current cohort. A first step would be to meet with the student representatives to demonstrate how seriously the School views the situation (Educ)
- As part of the forthcoming review of the BEd programme, the School ensures that the need of the students for more exposure to the practical requirements of teaching is taken into consideration (Educ)

#### *Maintaining Standards (5)*

- Review the course and programme handbooks to ensure greater consistency of content, terminology and style (Mngmt)
- Provision of guidance on appropriate feedback to clinical staff (UGMed)
- Introducing peer observation for Problem Based Learning (PBL) tutors and facilitators and PBL facilitator briefings at the start of each case to minimise variation in facilitator practice and PBL group experience (UGMed)
- Introduce a standard template for the preparation of its programme and course handbooks and refers the School to the central guidance provided on the Senate Office website (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/centralguidanceonstudenthandbooks/>) (Educ)
- Urgently redevelops the final taught year of the MSci to provide the attainment at SCQF Level 11 required by the QAA and by the University Regulations, that will bring it in line with MSci programmes at other UK universities (LS)

#### *Recruitment (4)*

- Devolve responsibility for some of its recruitment procedures to RIO (Law)
- The College redevelop the MBA teaching space to bring it to a standard of comparable Business School competitors to allow the University attract the best possible students in a competitive market (Mngmt)
- Review Selection Process to ensure that students are selected based on skills aligned to the revised curriculum (UGMed)



- Continues to investigate strategies to increase international student recruitment together with the Research Institutes aided by advice and support from Recruitment and International Office (LS)

#### *Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (3)*

- Highlight aims and intended learning outcomes more directly to students (UGMed)
- Develop an overview of programmes for the School's webpages, outlining briefly what each programme provides and who it is aimed at (Educ)
- Review its Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for programmes and courses, ensuring that they encompass development of knowledge, intellectual skills and transferable and/or key skills and that assessment criteria match the developed ILOs such that the attainment of the ILOs aligns constructively with the published course aims (LS)

#### *Learning Opportunities (2)*

- In conjunction with the Learning and Teaching Centre and Careers Service, explore ways in which Graduate Attributes could be developed further for those students who did not intend to pursue a career in law (Law)
- Invite clinicians to the School to present guest lectures or seminars on a regular basis (UGMed)