

**University of Glasgow**

**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 5 October 2012**

**Periodic Subject Reviews 2011-12: Summary of Good Practice/Key Strengths**

**Ms Catherine Omand, Senate Office**

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this summary is to identify any significant themes in relation to key strengths and any good practice arising from Periodic Subject Review reports in Session 2011-12 that may be worthy of further dissemination across the University.

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

A total of 40 areas of good practice/key strengths were identified from which 23 could potentially be considered for University-wide dissemination. Good practice was grouped under the following categories:

### ***Learning and Teaching Resources (9)***

Areas of good practice identified under this category reflected resources that enhanced the student learning experience by the provision of innovative teaching and by assuring staff were adequately supported:

- use of Moodle for groupwork, providing an opportunity for students to integrate into the learning experience and facilitating student engagement, both socially and academically (LS and Mngmt).
- the piloting of a national e-Portfolio identified as a useful tool for preparation for further Levels and professional development (UGMed)
- use of innovative technology to improve teaching administration and feedback to large student cohorts (Life)
- Performing Art and Skills Development Workshop Series. The Performing Art Workshop employed theatre and drama to promote reflection and encourage initiative. The Skills Development Workshop Series aimed to put students in contact with an experienced practitioner, as an alternative to an internship, to

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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.

develop key management skills under the tutelage of the practitioner. Approaches used included: interactive discussion; case studies; individual and group exercises; psychometric testing and role play. (Mngmt)

- Use of working parties with carefully defined remits to consider specific issues, such as the impact of increasing class sizes and the development of students' problem solving skills (Physics)
- On-going engagement with the Learning and Teaching Centre and strong record of applications to the Learning and Teaching Development Fund (Physics)
- Appointment of a Senior Associate Tutor to mentor and encourage tutors to attend relevant lectures to promote staff development (Educ)
- Induction, mentoring and support programme for Probationary staff (Mngmt)

### ***Student Support (5)***

Areas of good practice identified included:

- Introduction of a student-led mentorship scheme as part of a revised careers strategy where Year 3 and 4 students were matched to Foundation Year doctors who gave advice on careers, training opportunities and how to prepare for speciality training (UGMed)
- Support provided by fellow students "Medic Families" in which Year 1 students were allocated to a pair of Year 3 students (UGMed)
- Students who did not meet the requirements to progress automatically invited to meet with a Progress Committee for advice and support. (UGMed)
- Provision of fortnightly small group supervision from Level 2 onwards (Physics)
- Training and support provided to GTAs (Mngmt)

### ***Assessment (3)***

Two areas of good practice highlighted under this category were the use of mapping or closely linking Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) to assessment (UGMed and Educ).

The other related to measured consideration of assessment practices and the increasing use of continuous assessment (Physics).

### ***Curriculum Content (3)***

Two areas of good practice identified a strong study overseas programme and excellent links with the profession (both Law). Elements of the programme were identified that could be shared with other Schools.

The other was a course 'Modern Educational Thought' designed to support international students not accustomed to expressing their own views (Educ). The Panel suggested that the course could be rolled out across the University.

### ***Quality Assurance/Enhancement (2)***

Two areas identified as good practice under this category were the Appointment of a Programme External Examiner to oversee the totality of assessment throughout the programme (UGMed) and rigorous procedures for course design and evaluation (Law).

### ***Recruitment (1)***

The broad range of activities associated with recruitment, involving community engagement and activity within schools and evident friendliness of staff and students at Open Days was praised (Physics).

Good practice/key strengths that are Subject-specific have been listed separately in Appendix 1.

### **3. Summary**

It is clear from this evaluation of key strengths and good practice that the Review Panels have recognised the quality of teaching staff; their development of strong relationships with students; and the level of support they provide to them despite high workloads and other pressures. Other themes that have been highlighted are:

- Continuing consideration of assessment practices and a variety of innovative approaches being introduced to enhance the student learning experience
- Increasing support networks to provide support to students, especially in Year 1 and international students
- Increasing support networks established to provide support for junior staff, especially probationers and GTAs
- Growth in the number of opportunities to take part in overseas exchanges and work experience

### **4. Recommendation to Academic Standards Committee**

Academic Standards Committee is **invited to consider and confirm** whether those items of good practice/key strengths identified are worthy of wider dissemination across the University. If considered appropriate, further information will be sought from the subject areas concerned and circulated to Heads of Subjects and Schools along with the contact details for the staff responsible.

Areas of good practice identified under each School will also be brought to the attention of School Quality Officers in order for them to track whether the practice has been adopted by another Subject within the School/College.

Where instances of good practice have been identified that correspond directly with recommendations from another review, Senate Office will highlight and forward directly to the Head of School/Subject where the corresponding recommendations were made.

Thereafter, the information will be published on the Senate Office website and drawn to the attention of the Learning and Teaching Centre where any potential for possible contribution to other developments can be coordinated.

Subject-specific examples of good practice and/or key strengths for noting

### *Learning and Teaching Resources (2)*

- The School's library on the excellent range of provision (Law)
- The facilities, in particular, the purpose-built Wolfson Medical School building, with a 24-hour access dedicated medical library and specialised Problem Based Learning tutorial rooms (UGMed)

### *Learning and Teaching Resources (staffing) (5)*

- the Head of School and teaching staff within the School maintained the quality of the student experience through a period of significant change (LS)
- The staff within the School work towards ensuring that the students have an engaging and positive experience through their commitment to teaching and support for the students (LS)
- For maintaining the role of Convener of Postgraduate Student Support and the Convener of Postgraduate Student support for her dedication (Mngmt)
- The high quality, research-informed teaching, particularly at postgraduate level, which was highly valued by the students who met the Review Panel (Mngmt)
- Constructive engagement with the PSR process, the open and reflective approach adopted in the SER, the timely provision of all documentation required for the Review, the helpful preparation for the review visit particularly by the Convenor of Learning and Teaching, and the cooperation and the positive attitudes displayed by staff and students in discussions with the Panel during the review visit (Physics)

### *Student Support (4)*

- The strong relationship with its students (Educ)
- The student-led UG and PG Business Clubs and acknowledges the financial support given to them by the Subject area and the personal support given to them by Senior University Teachers Mr David Logan and Ms Sheena Bell (Mngmt)
- The student support provided despite high workloads and pressures on staff within the Subject area (Mngmt)
- The supportive community created, through which students are supported in their learning and encouraged to pursue individual interests and opportunities (Physics)

### *Curriculum Content (3)*

- Development of LLM courses which had been excellent for the internationalisation strategy. Further developments such as a programme for North American students were planned (Law)
- Proactive approach in keeping abreast of, and contributing to, developments in the external environment in relation to the Physics and Astronomy curriculum (Physics)

- Aims of the School which were innovative, interdisciplinary, research-led and internationally relevant. *[paragraph 3.1]*

*Recruitment (2)*

- Success in the high calibre of student (Law)
- Meeting and exceeding recruitment targets for international students and contributing significantly to the University's internationalisation agenda by attracting a student body with international backgrounds (Mngmt)

*Quality Assurance/Enhancement (1)*

- High level of positive feedback from its External Examiners (Educ)