

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee – Friday 24 May 2013

## Periodic Subject Review: Responses to the Recommendation Arising from the Review of Management held on 12 and 13 March 2012

Gavin Lee, Clerk to the Review Panel

**Conclusions**

The Review Panel commends Management on its delivery of a broad range of programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level, and the quality of teaching evident across the provision. The importance the Subject area places on research-led teaching is commendable and appreciated by students and teaching staff. Management have successfully met and exceeded their targets to recruit international students and the Review Panel notes that Management are aware of the challenges posed by increased student recruitment. The Review Panel encourages Management to consider administrative staffing levels to ensure that the Subject area can continue to provide sufficient support to academics and students and ensure a fair and equitable workload balance.

**Commendations**

1. The Review Panel **commends** Management on meeting and exceeding its recruitment targets for international students and contributing significantly to the University's internationalisation agenda by attracting a student body with international backgrounds. [paragraph 3.6.1]
2. The Review Panel **commends** the student support provided despite the high workloads and pressures on staff within the Subject area. [paragraph 3.7.3]
3. The Review Panel **commends** Management for maintaining the role of Convener of Postgraduate Student Support and the Convener of Postgraduate Student support for her dedication. [paragraph 3.7.4]
4. The Review Panel **commends** the high quality, research-informed teaching, particularly at postgraduate level, which was highly valued by the students who met the Review Panel. [paragraph 3.8.1]
5. The Review Panel **commends** the use of Moodle as a tool to support student learning. [paragraph 3.8.3]
6. The Review Panel **commends** the Performing Art and Skills Development Workshop Series as a demonstration of the innovative teaching and assessment methods employed by Management and of its responsiveness to student needs and feedback to enhance the student learning experience. [paragraph 3.8.5]
7. The Review Panel **commends** 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. [paragraph 3.8.6]

8. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject area's exemplary induction, mentoring and support for Probationary staff. [paragraph 3.9.3]
9. The Review Panel **commends** the training and support provided to GTAs by the Learning and Teaching Centre and the Subject area. [paragraph 3.9.4.]

### ***Recommendation 1***

The Review Panel **recommends** that the new Workload Model is implemented and used as a management tool to review staffing profiles to ensure administrative and teaching loads are manageable and to ensure that the workload allocations take cognisance of local requirements and the impact of high student numbers. [paragraph 3.9.2]

**For the attention of: Head of School**

### **Response**

The new School Workload Model was fully implemented in the Subject Area of Management for the 2012/13 academic year. The Head of Subject consulted with colleagues at several Subject Meetings in 2012 about the content of the model, its allocation of workload points for specific tasks, and the level of discretion available to him in applying the model in practice. Colleagues were asked to agree certain 'groundrules' for the application of the model, in particular the tolerable level of deviation from the target workload of 1650 points (+/- 10% was agreed) and that in cases where particularly problematic allocation decisions had to be made, that more senior colleagues would be asked to take on additional tasks in the first instance.

The Management WLM has been updated every 6-8 weeks in response to updated data, with each new iteration emailed to all colleagues and published on the staff area of Moodle. The circulation of each revised version has been accompanied by a request for colleagues to check that their allocation is accurate, and changes have been made at each stage in response to feedback on this.

Every effort has been made to equalise workloads as far as possible in line with the objectives of the model and the agreed practices for its implementation. It has been very difficult to meet the +/- 10% objective: the two main factors preventing this were the appointment of new colleagues part-way through the session and the very high scores of certain colleagues as a result of the way in which their administrative load is calculated by the model. Others with the lower scores tend to be colleagues on probation.

Each iteration of the WLM for this year, and correspondence on its application, can be made available if requested.

### ***Recommendation 2***

The Review Panel **recommends** that Management ensure that monitoring and progression of issues raised at SSLCs are clearly recorded in the minutes and actions are published on Moodle and communicated to students. [paragraph 5.4]

**For the attention of: Conveners of Staff Student Liaison Committees**  
**For information: Head of Subject**

## **Response**

Conveners of SSLCs were consulted about how best to implement this Recommendation. Actions taken as a result were: SSLC meeting agendas were updated to include items on the minutes of the previous meeting and actions arising; SSLC Conveners have prepared Action Grids to assist in the recording of necessary actions and their completion. Management is participating fully in the initial stages of the Student Voice initiative designed to improve communication between students and their representatives on issues affecting the learning experience.

## **Recommendation 3**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject 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. [paragraph 3.4.11]

**For the attention of: Head of Subject**  
**For information: Head of Academic Development Unit**

## **Response**

Several Course Conveners have begun the process of reshaping the form of assessment used. This is especially important for those courses experiencing rapid growth in student numbers, e.g. MSc courses and MA Level 2. For the MSc, we are piloting potential alternatives such as assessed business simulation exercises. For non-Honours, the potential to expand the objective testing used successfully for many years on Level 1 is being assessed. There are a range of implications of the more general use of these and other alternative assessment methods for our learning experience and for satisfying the criteria of our external accreditations. These will be addressed carefully before formal adoption of these methods. To assist the process, we are consulting with colleagues in the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences to learn from their experience with similar techniques.

## **Recommendation 4**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject review its 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. [paragraph 3.4.16]

**For the attention of: Head of Subject**

## **Response**

The rapid rise in student numbers in most of our courses and programmes means that Management continues to find it highly challenging to meet the three week turnaround target. In the vast majority of cases we are very close to this target, and are continuing to review our processes to improve performance. We took advantage of the Peak Flow Analysis undertaken at School level to review assignment deadlines. We have reviewed and expanded our pool of markers, utilising GTAs and atypical workers where appropriate to do so and after the necessary training has been completed. This has required additional effort to ensure quality standards are maintained.

Alongside this, we have made sure that the reasons for any delay in the return of marks are more effectively and timeously communicated to students.

### ***Recommendation 5***

The Review Panel **recommends** that consideration is given to additional learning support that might be provided to support students whose first language is not English e.g. to develop an understanding of assessment requirements and criteria in order that students are enabled to reach their academic potential.. [paragraph 3.7.6]

**For the attention of: Head of School, School Management Team  
For information: Student Learning Service, College of Social Sciences  
International Student Learning Officer**

### ***Response***

In response to our requests on this issue, Dr Gayle Pringle-Barnes has developed a proposal for additional provision of academic skills sessions to the regular meeting of School PGT Conveners and their Administrative colleagues. Substantive additional provision for an additional 90 students (at a cost of c£7k) was implemented for the Management and Economics Subject Areas in the 2012/13 academic session. Student attendance at these additional sessions was very poor, however. A review of this situation in order to put in place further changes for 2013/14 is currently ongoing in partnership with colleagues from the EFL service and with Dr Pringle Barnes. The review will be considered in full at the School's Learning and Teaching Committee.

### ***Recommendation 6***

The Panel **recommends** that Management review the workload allocation for supervising undergraduate dissertations to ensure sufficient support can be provided to students.

**For the attention of: Head of Subject  
For information: Head of School**

### ***Response***

The general policy statement and allocation of workload points for specific tasks in the Workload Model (WLM) is a School-level responsibility. The later meetings of the School WLM Committee in Session 2011/12 reviewed the draft model and made some changes to the allocation of points to some activities including undergraduate dissertations. The model has been applied rigorously in Management to ensure that staff are able to give the appropriate support to students, and that these efforts are recognised properly. A number of new staff appointments have been made since the PSR. These new staff members are now in post and are in a position to undertake dissertation supervision, thereby expanding the supervisory capacity significantly.

### ***Recommendation 7***

The Review Panel **recommends** that the process for ethical approval of dissertations be reviewed to ensure that the approval process does not delay students undertaking research for their dissertations. [paragraph 3.4.5]

**For the attention of: Head of Academic and Student Administration,  
College of Social Sciences**

### ***Response***

A review of procedures for ethical approval was carried out School-wide, which resulted in the streamlining of the submission and review processes for student dissertations. In this year's cycle there have been no major issues arising that have impacted on students, and overall, turnaround times have improved. There were still some minor issues with short delays at peak

times, but these were solved quickly. These improvements can be attributed to better communication between supervisors and the ethics committee, and proactive circulation of information by the committee convener on what documents are required in support of the application.

### ***Recommendation 8***

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School permits recording of lectures by individual students, or adopts a policy whereby all lectures are recorded officially and provided online to the relevant group of students to ensure that the students can benefit equally from the learning opportunities provided by recorded lectures. [paragraph 3.8.7]

**For the attention of: Head of Subject  
For information: Head of Learning and Technology Unit**

### ***Response***

This issue was discussed at the School Learning & Teaching Committee in October 2012 where it was recognised that through the International Student Barometer and elsewhere, there was evidence of student demand for recorded or podcasted lectures. The immediate outcome of the L&TC discussion was a reiteration that individual student requests for permission to record lectures should be supported. However, the L&TC noted that there were other issues to address before a decision could be made to require all lectures to be recorded. The legality of requiring lecturers to record their material was raised, as was the issue of the capability of the University's IT provision and the level of technical support for the IT infrastructure. The College, however, has now appointed a Innovative Learning Officer and a Web and E-learning Officer to support these types of developments and the issue will be reviewed accordingly.

### ***Recommendation 9***

The Review Panel recommends 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. [paragraph 3.9.16]

**For the attention of: Head of College, College of Social Sciences  
For Information: Director, Estates and Buildings**

### ***Response***

Significant work was undertaken in the Clydesdale Bank Lecture Theatre over the summer of 2012 to update its physical appearance and ICT equipment, and to provide power sockets for student use. The design was carefully chosen to reflect the University's corporate identity and now provides a much better, more contemporary learning environment.

### ***Recommendation 10***

The Panel **recommends** that the Subject area formalise the engagement of GTAs in the annual monitoring and review of courses to benefit from their direct delivery and engagement with students. [paragraph 4.3]

**For the attention of: Head of Subject**

### ***Response***

The engagement of GTAs has been formalised through the following actions: GTAs are fully involved in the relevant Teaching Team meetings for each programme; there is now enhanced training for new GTAs and additional support provided by academic staff particularly with

respect to marking and assessment to help support the continuous improvement of these activities; the current Management MSc Review is consulting widely with GTAs given their importance in delivering our PGT programmes across large student groups. The MA Review planned for 2013/14 will do similarly.

***Recommendation 11***

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject area review their practice and ensure they are compliant with the University policy on GTA payment. [paragraph 3.9.4]

**For the attention of: Head of Subject**

***Response***

Compliance with University policy on GTA payments has been audited and found to be strong in terms of key processes such as terms of engagement and number of hours worked. It is true that each of the three Subject Areas in the School had different rates of pay for similar work, and so a new School-wide policy regarding payments to all GTAs has been developed in order to ensure continuity in the level of payments across tutorials, marking, meetings etc. From 2013/14 there will also be a new system of time-sheets with which GTAs will record all their teaching, marking, preparation and meetings with students. These will be submitted at the end of each month for checking and processing before a fixed payment deadline. We will continue with our practice of providing GTAs with Learning Agreements setting out the nature of the duties they have agreed to undertake, and will use this opportunity to provide full information about the new recording and financial arrangements.

***Recommendation 12***

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject review the course and programme handbooks to ensure greater consistency of content, terminology and style. [paragraph 3.8.10]

**For the attention of: Head of Subject**

***Response***

School PGT and UG Programme Managers have asked to harmonise course and programme materials in conjunction with other processes to ensure improved consistency of activity across the School, following the information on good practice provided by Senate.