

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee - Friday 24 May 2013

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:  
Update on Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the  
Review of Urban Studies 15 and 16 March 2010****The Committee previously noted:**

*'Recommendation 1 sought development of a subject specific learning and teaching strategy, and while the response relating Undergraduate provision was accepted, it was agreed that an update on the Head of Subject's forthcoming development of a strategy for PGT should be requested for November 2012'.*

This is the only remaining action from the 2010 DPTLA

**Response****1. Educational Philosophy**

The educational philosophy that informs Urban Studies' PGT provision was developed as part of the PGT review process:

*'We aim to promote the social scientific understanding of cities in the UK and globally. In particular, graduates of our programmes understand the economic underpinnings of urban development, the processes and institutions of urban governance, and the relationships between places and urban society. Urban education at Glasgow is fundamentally informed by internationally credible research and graduates will appreciate the value of research based urban analysis and understandings, and will be themselves skilled in research'.*

*'We recognise the need for well informed specialists to contribute to the development and management of cities, so our programmes provide for professional education in spatial planning, housing, real estate, transport, urban regeneration, and urban public policy as distinct but related fields. Our graduates are empowered to make a contribution to improving the economic competitiveness and the quality of life of cities, and to social justice in urban contexts, and are aware of their ethical responsibilities as urban professionals'.*

*'We deliver our programmes to the highest academic standards and strive to exceed students' expectations by the provision of education that is stimulating, contemporary, and relevant. The emphasis on improving cities means that we are always engaged with policy and practice, by involving policy makers, practitioners and professional bodies in programme oversight and delivery, and through direct exposure to urban problems and contexts'.*

*'We aim to provide programmes that are inclusive in their design and delivery, meeting the needs of international and UK students, and those following full time, part time and modular study routes. We recognise the value of inter-professional education on core urban issues and problems and offer flexible degree structures that can accommodate a diverse range of student interests and career aspirations'.*

## **2. PGT Development Strategy**

Starting in the spring of 2012, we developed a new strategy to review PGT programmes in Urban Studies and to develop a set of new and revised programmes from 2013-14.

The review process provided a framework and timetable for the development of PGT teaching in Urban Studies, as recommended by the DPTLA.

The strategic aims of the review were:

- To internationalise PGT by introducing new degrees and courses, and thereby increase the appeal of programmes in global markets.
- To discontinue elements of programmes which were not recruiting strongly
- To improve efficiency in the use of academic staff time and reduce administrative load by:
  - withdrawing courses, especially options which attract only small numbers of students
  - designing simpler degree structures where possible
  - Allowing the possibility of some degree routes to use existing courses taught elsewhere as options and adopting a shared methods course at School level.
- To allow articulation with a proposed new interdisciplinary MSc in Transport (now under development) and other PG courses available in the School of Social and Political Sciences, to promote flexibility and choice
- To protect the professional accreditation of the Real Estate, Planning and Regeneration (REPR) and Housing Studies programmes.

The review was informed by the statement of educational philosophy and the timetable of actions was driven by the need to secure University approval for new and revised programmes for implementation from 2013-14.

The review process comprised two half day sessions involving all staff; the establishment of a review team which altogether met on 8 occasions; a further subject-wide meeting to agree on overall concepts and structures; the appointment of 5 task groups each of which met several times to prepare programme and course specifications, plus numerous other bi- and multi-lateral problem solving sessions.

## **3. Outcomes**

Extensive revisions have now been carried out to the Aims and Learning Outcomes of all programmes and of almost all courses in our portfolio.

In structural terms the outcomes are:

- ASC approval of three new degrees: the MScs in Global Cities, International Planning Studies, and International Real Estate,
- ASC approval of amendments to all continuing degrees.
- The planned withdrawal of eight degrees (all variants/routes within the Housing or Public Policy Programmes)

- Across the new and continuing degrees there are two completely new courses, seven new courses that are replacements for courses which will be withdrawn, and 15 new courses that are the result of either merger or division of existing courses<sup>1</sup>.

So from 2013-14 Urban Studies PGT will operate around five main programmes, some of which contain multiple MSc degrees. Each degree has its own specialist content (usually 60 credits), but also draws on a common menu of foundation courses (also usually 60 credits):

1. Real Estate Planning and Regeneration ('REPR') (7 named degrees)
2. PGDip/ MSc Housing Studies;
3. MSc Public and Urban Policy;
4. MSc Global Cities;
5. MRes Public Policy Research and MRes Urban Research.

We hold professional accreditations for REPR (from the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) and for Housing Studies (from the Chartered Institute of Housing). Positive discussions are underway with RICS and CIH in relation to their accreditations of the revised programmes. RTPI has already confirmed approval of the changes to existing degrees and will accredit the new MSc in International Planning Studies. We are moving to a new phase of our relationship with RTPI, with the imminent signing of a Partnership Agreement which will strengthen the depth of the relationship.

In 2013 we were successful in gaining 25 funded places on the Real Estate degrees per annum for three years through bidding to a Scottish Funding Council initiative.

#### **4. PGT Delivery Strategy**

The delivery strategy has eight elements:

- Extensive liaison has already taken place with marketing staff in the university with a view to effectively promote the new and revised programmes.
- The timetabling of PGT delivery has been completely redesigned, moving away from predominantly block teaching to half day clauses stretching over several weeks. This has been undertaken for a mix of pedagogic and student experience reasons.
- Responsibilities for the co-ordination and delivery of courses are in the process of being reallocated among staff, particularly as there have been a number of changes to personnel as well as to courses.
- Operational tasks including programme academic leadership, exams/ assessment, student support/ advising, QA/compliance, interface with MPA staff and liaison with professional bodies are currently clustered with 4 PGT Programme Directors each taking responsibility for all these functions for their programmes. From 2013-14 these tasks will be disaggregated across programmes among a wider group of staff in order to share work more fairly and to gain advantage from specialisation.
- Specialisation will provide a response to the recommendation to formalise QA procedures, with the appointment of staff member with a specific QA brief. He/she will attend all teaching team meetings and act as the interface between College and School and Urban Studies (subject).
- Leadership on Good Practice in Teaching and Learning will also be allocated to a lead academic staff member, whose brief will include the review of existing practice, including student views on teaching approaches, communication of good practice

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, all new degree programmes have been approved by the ASC. Some very minor amendments are required to a handful of course specifications following comments from College.

through scheduled good practice workshops, and the provision of individual advice to colleagues.

### **5. *Looking Ahead***

Progress with the delivery of the revised PGT suite, and the associated changes to operational responsibilities, will be monitored by the management group within Urban Studies.

Active consideration will be given during 2013-14 to revisiting those PGT courses which have not been touched by the recent review process, to ensure their currency and suitability.

Further internationalisation of PGT is being actively pursued through Urban Studies' involvement in the emerging Glasgow-Nankai Graduate School (for launch in 2014). Current discussions centre on the provision of a degree in Urban Planning. A working group within the College is in the process of formation to develop the aims, learning outcomes and course proposals of 120 credits of new programme to be delivered on-site in China.