

## University of Glasgow

### Academic Standards Committee – Friday 4 October 2013

#### Periodic Subject Reviews 2012-13: 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.

Seven reviews were conducted during 2012-13 and the following abbreviations are used to refer to particular reviews:

Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences Graduate School: Postgraduate Taught Programmes <sup>1</sup>	MVLSPGT
Veterinary Medicine	VetMed
Engineering	Eng
Education	Educ
Modern Languages and Cultures <sup>2</sup>	SMLC
Celtic and Gaelic	C&G
Politics <sup>3</sup>	Pol
Centre for Open Studies <sup>4</sup>	CfOS

#### 2. Main themes

In total, 70 recommendations were made following 6 reviews, 59 of which were subject-specific (see Appendix 1). None of the recommendations indicated significant issues for concern. All recommendations were grouped under the follow categories:

- **Resources for Learning and Teaching** (25 recommendations)
- **Assessment** (9 recommendations)
- **Recruitment** (6 recommendations)
- **Learning Opportunities** (6 recommendations)
- **Curriculum** (6 recommendations)
- **Aims/ILOs** (5 recommendations)
- **Student Support** (5 recommendations)
- **Strategic Aims** (5 recommendations)
- **Maintaining Standards** (2 recommendations)
- **Quality Enhancement/Assurance** (1 recommendation)

<sup>1</sup> Postponed from late 2011-12 to early 2012-13 and did not include PGT for Dentistry and Life Sciences which had been reviewed in 2009-10 and 2011-12 respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Modern Languages and Cultures and Open Studies had originally been scheduled for review during 2011-12 but was deferred to 2012-13 with permission from SFC.

<sup>3</sup> Subject to final endorsement through ASC Summer Powers.

<sup>4</sup> Postponed from 2011-12. The report from the review of Open Studies is subject to endorsement by ASC and will be included in the Annual Statement for 2013-14

The overall distribution of recommendations was similar to the previous session with the exception of student support and quality enhancement/assurance categories, which were both significantly reduced (from 20% to 7% and 13% to 1% respectively). There was also an increase in the number of recommendations regarding strategic aims (five), which has not previously featured as a distinct category in this summary.

21 recommendations were identified as having potential for wider application across the University. These are summarised below for consideration by Academic Standards Committee.

### ***Resources for Learning and Teaching*** (6 recommendations)

The recommendations grouped under this category highlighted the need to: provide training opportunities and support for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and new staff members; ensure that tutorials were meeting the needs of international undergraduate students; meet additional teaching space requirements, and the provision of resources to address ongoing issues with MyCampus.

#### ***Training and support for GTAs and new staff members***

Two recommendations related to the support and provision of training opportunities for GTAs. Of these, one recommendation sought engagement with GTAs through Annual Monitoring, Course Review and representation at Staff Student Liaison Committee, to support the development of their role by facilitating a dialogue around teaching requirements/best practice and providing opportunities for feedback on their performance to evaluate their teaching (Pol) . Another recommendation highlighted the role of GTA statutory training and GTA professional development sessions, provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre, to support their development and the potential of regular meetings for GTAs, to provide a forum to share good practice and discuss concerns, which could be convened by a senior GTA (Eng).

Details of good practice in relation to GTAs is available on the Learning and Teaching Centre website<sup>5</sup> including a mentoring scheme that included GTAs (School of Education), opportunities to discuss teaching practice and approaches to assessment (Management) and regular 'coffee morning' meetings to discuss teaching requirements/best practice (Pol). A PGR student from School of Critical Studies has also organised a GTA Network which launched with a GTA Symposium on 16 September 2013 and there are plans to have more events to support GTAs in the Colleges of Arts and Social Sciences.

The Learning and Teaching Centre has recently created a structured 'Developing as a Teacher' (DAT) programme which will be offered from January 2014. The programme aims to explore key issues in teaching practice, promote discussion amongst early career researchers, tutors and demonstrators to create a sense of community, facilitate early career teachers to engage in reflective practice and support career development and encourage participants to seek formal recognition of their teaching practice through Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (AF HEA). It is hoped that by keeping the DAT programme within the Learning and Teaching Centre; the common focus of supporting an AF HEA application; and the wider target audience of 'early career researchers' rather than simply GTAs, that participation and engagement will grow and that the University will gain valuable Associate Fellows of the HEA at GTA and postdoctoral researcher level. This, in turn, will enhance the student learning experience at the University of Glasgow.

There was also a suggestion to liaise with a representative from the Learning and Teaching Centre to discuss any possible adaptations that could be made to the University's mandatory

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<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/goodpracticeresources/examplesofgoodpracticeattheuniversityofglasgow/#studsup>

Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) provision, to better suit the needs of the School and in particular its overseas provision (Eng). There is now ongoing discussion between LTC and the subject area regarding overseas provision to make sure that probationary staff members are able to access equivalent provision. A working group to review PGCAP was approved at EdPSC in December 2012 which includes in its remit to specifically address the issue of existing or planned College provision that could be more effectively integrated into the programme.

### ***Needs of international undergraduate students***

The need for additional support for international undergraduates, to ensure that provision was meeting the needs of this particular student cohort was included in a recommendation in a review of tutorials, that also highlighted the need to reduce tutorial class sizes for honours students (Pol). Support for international students is considered in Student Progression/Support section below.

### ***Teaching space requirements***

Accommodation issues were highlighted in relation to Politics, who were struggling to meet the needs of high student numbers. In particular the largest lecture theatre available could not accommodate pre-honours classes and tutorial rooms were too small for honours class sizes. A Management of Teaching Space Project Board<sup>6</sup> had been established in 2011 to identify hot spots and responding to timetabling issues and is chaired by Secretary of Court. A report by Mr Newall on 29 January 2013 acknowledged various problems including a general increase in student numbers and detailed an action plan to strengthen the Central Timetabling Team, a new approach to room allocation for 2013-14, the potential of additional teaching spaces and a timetable of key actions required. To deal with the specific issue, Politics Level 2 were now offering class recordings by replaying recorded lectures that included teaching staff (lecturers/GTAs) to enhance the learning experience.

### ***MyCampus***

While acknowledging that there had been some improvements to MyCampus, one recommendation sought reassurance from the University's Senior Management Group for continued investment to ensure that MyCampus enhances, rather than frustrates, the student and staff experience (MVLSPGT). A process improvement manager had been appointed in July 2013 to promote the effective use of the system to make the best use of staff time.

### ***Assessment*** (4 recommendations)

These recommendations were mainly concerned about feedback on assessment in terms of quality, clarity of timescales including prompt communication in the event of delays, the provision of guidance to ensure that students recognised and made best use of assessment feedback provision of feedback that is consistent and informed by good practice (VetMed, Eng, SMLC, Pol).

The University's Assessment Policy<sup>7</sup> approved by Senate in May 2012 includes principles on feedback on assessment that reflect these recommendations and Schools and Colleges have been working towards the principle of three week turnaround. National Student Survey 2013 results suggest that there are some signs of improvement in the assessment and feedback category,. However, it would seem necessary that assessment and feedback should continue as a key initiative for the University, particularly in relation to the development of students' understanding and usage. Meanwhile there was currently a range of innovative activities across-campus that included the use of feedback diaries, formative feedback sheets and reflective journals. ASC is asked to note that details of these and other examples of good practice, guidelines and resources on assessment and feedback, including case studies, are available on the Learning and Teaching Centre website<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://sharepoint.gla.ac.uk/services/courtoffice/mtspjproject/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_192549\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_192549_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/goodpracticeresources/assessmentandfeedback/index.html>

### ***Learning Opportunities*** (4 recommendations)

The recommendations proposed enhancing learning opportunities through virtual learning environments (Moodle)(SMLC), work placements (Eng), study abroad (Eng) and the monitoring of project teams to ensure diversity and balance (Eng).

During an annual review of the Learning and Teaching Strategy Action Plan, it was reported that there had been an increase in Moodle usage, from existing users and areas that previously used alternative VLEs. There was also evidence that support roles/mechanisms to encourage consistency in terms of practice were having a positive effect.

One recommendation welcomed the establishment of a Working Group to review placements that would:

- be cognisant of the University's new Work Based and Placement Learning Code of Practice;
- roll-out an across-school subject model, that was considered by the panel as effective in identifying placements and liaising with students;
- liaise with the University's Work Related Learning Development Adviser based in the Careers Service.

Work-based and Placement Learning Code of Practice is currently under revision. Action plans include the provision of guidelines for the delivery of work related learning (WRL) and were considered by the LTC on 19 September 2013. Details on WRL had been communicated to staff through individual College symposiums presented in 2012-13.

In addition, the International Steering Group was currently developing a Student Mobility Action Plan.

### ***Student Progression/Support*** (3 recommendations)

These recommendations related to the provision of additional support for students offered to pre-honours (Pol) and overseas students (Eng) and the review of induction arrangements to address the varying needs of different student cohorts (Eng).

A report by the Student Service Enquiry Team (SSET) to Student Support and Development Committee (SSDC) in March 2013 indicated a 25% increase in service usage resulting from the establishment of an additional frontline support team during registration and enrolment 2012-13. Feedback obtained indicated that satisfaction with the service continued to increase and that the waiting times at peak periods had been reduced from previous years. There continues to be a high demand, with a notable increase in enquires from student and parents of students in crisis. Proposals for 2013-14 include:

- integration of the temporary registration and enrolment team function, as part of SSET 'business as usual' operations;
- consideration of increasing staff numbers, particularly at peak times and reviewing the general team operation;
- a review of the areas of support provided to students relating to finance and tuition fees, with a view to offering more 'point of enquiry' resolution to students, so that their enquiries could be addressed more promptly.

The new Advisory System was fully implemented in 2012-13 and would be reviewed in 2015-16. The Chief Advisers Sub-Committee (CASC) had held Adviser Training sessions coordinated by Student Services/ Student Representative Council and offered a 'Crisis Support Training' session in March 2013 and that subsequent training sessions would now be offered on a drop-in basis.

International Student Support's (ISS) annual report to the SSDC in March 2013 highlighted a 25% increase in international students over the last two years and confirmed that immigration was the main advisory topic. A new ISS pilot initiative offering visa application support to students extending their Tier 4 visas experienced high demand, particularly from students in the Adam Smith Business School. Although ISS had engaged a team of six assistants to help with basic information and support, students using the service were requiring a higher level of support than anticipated. Most appeared unwilling to follow the guidance themselves at information sessions (and the ISS written guidance), preferring instead that the application be completed by the Adviser rather than themselves. This resulted in the International Student Adviser responsible for the pilot project team, providing a secondary full check for all students using the service and impacting on the workloads of other staff.

The International Orientation and Welcome Programmes organised by International Student Support (ISS) in September 2013 attracted higher numbers of registration and attendance. In total 1461 registered online for Orientation and many others who had not registered were also welcomed. Full final statistics for the Welcome Programme (Airport and Welcome Desk) were not yet available, but the number of students met at the airport and provided with transport to their student residence or Main Campus was 1184, a 59% increase from last session. Callers to the Welcome Desk on Level 1 of the Fraser Building also appear to be up on last year.

Also, a mandarin speaking Mental Health Advisor has been appointed through the Counselling and Psychological Services in 2012-13 and is based in the Adam Smith Business School.

#### **Curriculum** (1 recommendation)

It was recommended that students feed into the process of course development through the Staff Student Liaison Committee, to provide students with the opportunity to contribute their own perspective in creating or critiquing course descriptors/ILOs (Pol).

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

This recommendation related to the development of Postgraduate Taught programmes that are responsive to students needs and build on the strength of the Subject (Pol). Following restructuring of the University, Colleges collaborated with the Recruitment and International Office on strategic programme development and continue to review approaches in relation to communication, information and knowledge exchange and how to best use intelligence. A list of Principles of Good Practice for Devolved Admissions<sup>9</sup> which had been prepared by the Devolved Admissions Working Group had been agreed by Senate in December 2012. Other activities in relation to admissions are revisions to the Admissions Policy were being considered for 2014 entry and the longer term.

#### **Quality Enhancement/Assurance** (1 recommendation)

It was recommended that a Postgraduate Taught student representative be included on the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SMLC).

Senate Office will be liaising with Schools in the near future to prompt arrangements for the election of student representatives and would remind Heads of Schools of the requirements for PGT as well as UG and PGR representation on SSLC.

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

It was recommended that there was more consistency in the approach in the communication to students of assessable Intended Learning Outcomes (Pol).

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/academic/recentpolicyagreements/devolvedadmissions/>

Whilst consistency of intended learning outcomes will always be a challenge with multiple authors, learning outcomes should be articulated in accordance with Learning and Teaching Centre guidelines available through the Senate Office<sup>10</sup>. The Learning and Teaching Centre is offering a workshop on writing aims and intended learning outcomes 23 January 2014 in addition to bespoke support sessions on an ad-hoc basis.

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

Academic Standards Committee is asked **to note** this overview of the recommendations, in particular in relation to assessment and feedback which should remain a key priority 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 2013/Summer Powers and to note the University level action already in progress as outlined above.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/progdesign/ilosguidelines/>

## Other Recommendations

The following recommendations were subject-specific but noted here for information:

### *Resources Learning and Teaching (19)*

- Consideration of how transport between Garscube and Gilmorehill campuses can be improved, including possible approaches to the local bus operator and the SRC (VetMed).
- Discussion regarding the use of room 202 with Estates and Buildings to identify how improvement in access could be made (C & G).
- Identification of a more effective method for the classification of books in order that no books utilised by the Subject Area should be removed without their approval (C & G).
- Review of the information provided to students detailing the key administrative contacts, their respective responsibilities and the appropriate methods to enquire (e.g. in person, telephone and email contact details) (SMLC).
- Articulation of the planned moves of MVLS staff to other sites, in order that future plans for the movement of programmes and teaching can be more clearly communicated to staff and students (MVLSPGT).
- Consideration of the future operation of the mentoring system, so that, firstly, its purpose and, secondly, the respective responsibilities of both staff and students, are clearly articulated and properly implemented. This may involve training and personal development for staff acting as mentors (VetMed).
- Liaison with School of Social and Political Sciences in the provision of discipline-specific training for Graduate Teaching Assistants which complements the generic training provided by Learning and Teaching Centre, in compliance with Senate Regulations (Pol).
- Discussion with areas such as the Learning and Teaching Centre and Human Resources, to consider how best to promote the hosting of training, development and networking events for staff at the Garscube campus (VetMed).
- Maintenance issues in the Rankine Building be undertaken as a priority and the system of providing information on computer accessibility currently available in the reception of the Rankine Building should also be established in the James Watt Building (South) (Eng).
- Address the temperature control problems experienced in the Ilay and Jarrett Lecture Theatres which result in an environment which is not conducive to effective learning and teaching (Eng).
- Continues to progress the work the School is undertaking to achieve, as far as possible, consistent School-wide procedures and documentation (Eng).
- Reduction of the staff student ratio, liberating staff to be more creative and to spend more effort in the provision and enhancement of the student learning (Pol).
- Review of handbooks for all courses to make them more consistent in terms of presentation of general student information (C & G).
- Review of IT and IT support to identify: the range of difficulties being encountered by staff and students; possible process improvements for the use of current IT resources and the realistic level of staffing required to support these; and any possible further efficiencies to be achieved in the use of the resources shared by the School and Research Institute at Garscube (VetMed).
- Review of the balance of its MSc and MRes programmes, or considers alternatives means of providing projects for MRes students (MVLSPGT).
- GTA and UNLT pay and recognition is reviewed by the School and College to ensure the processes operated by the School are in line with University policy such that GTA and UNLT staff receive fair recompense for the quantity, and quality, of work they deliver (SMLC).
- Reflection on the current research leave strategy, in order to identify potentially difficult periods and to ensure that a relatively even balance between teaching commitments and research level is maintained for staff (C & G).
- Support for scholarship for staff on University Teacher/Senior University Teacher contracts, in order to facilitate access to promotion (MVLSPGT).

- Additional resources identified to support the overseas developments in the short term both to address the concerns about the impact on staff workload in Glasgow and the other operational issues relating to University of Glasgow Singapore. In addition, the Panel recommends that the Head of College be invited to clearly identify the benefits of the collaboration to the School. (Eng).

#### *Strategic Aims (5)*

- Further integration of the Language Centre within the School on an academic and administrative basis to realise fully the potential benefits of the merger. (SMLC).
- Development of a future vision for the Small Animal Hospital that recognises its role in teaching, clinical research and income generation and that is shared and understood by all staff in the School (VetMed).
- Clear vision of how postgraduate teaching will evolve, with a comprehensive strategy and expected timescales (MVLSPGT).
- Address resourcing concerns; gain a better understanding of College and School strategies; and support the Head of Subject to develop, with colleagues, a plan for development of the subject which draws on its strengths and the opportunities afforded it in the new organisational structure (Pol).
- Review of the sustainability of provision and develop a strategic approach to development of new (or maintenance of existing) language provision to meet market demands and support the strategic development of the School (SMLC).

#### *Assessment (5)*

- Review of essay submission that could include electronic submission of all written work through Turnitin, Moodle or similar (Pol).
- Clarification of policy in relation to the electronic submission of work and convey this clearly to the students (C & G).
- Liaison with the Senate Office on any proposed changes to examination duration to ensure that they comply with the regulations set down by Senate. (Eng).
- Review of submission dates for course work at Levels 1, 2 and Honours with a view to staggering these dates to alleviate the pressure on staff in providing feedback on such a large quantity of work (C & G).
- Review forms of assessment for Levels 1 and 2 to extend the range of assessments at Levels 1 and 2 (C & G).

#### *Recruitment (5)*

- Consideration of the implementation of a 'soft deposit' scheme to improve conversion rates, whereby those accepting an offer were required to place a deposit to secure their place, but where the College still had discretion to hold a place open without a deposit where this was considered justifiable. The process would require to be rigorously tested in MyCampus prior to introduction in order to avoid the problems already experienced by students making payments via MyCampus (MVLSPGT).
- Support the publication of a Gaelic-only leaflet outlining the programmes available in order to maximise the potential audience reached by the University (C & G).
- Increase schools liaison activity by utilising the services of female students to speak to school pupils about their experiences with a view to encouraging more females to take up the study of Engineering (Eng).
- Review of programme if there was no marked improvement in recruitment to the MLitt Celtic Studies for entry in 2013/14 (C & G).
- Review recruitment targets to determine whether they are achievable and realistic in view of the capacity of existing estate, staffing, project provision and likely demand (MVLSPGT).



### *Curriculum (5)*

- Liaison with course lecturers to ensure the inclusion of sufficient subject-specific examples, particularly for the mandatory Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in Social Sciences courses, to meet the needs of Politics students in cross-discipline teaching provision (Pol).
- Engagement with internal and external stakeholders to develop a strategy and plan for embedding applied learning (employability) and reflection (PDP) within the Graduate Attribute framework. Where appropriate the approach adopted should involve the Careers Service, Club 21, the Politics Society, potential employers and alumni, together with good practice initiatives in the College of Social (Pol).
- Revision of the content of the final taught year of the MSci to ensure that the requirements of the QAA and of the University Calendar in relation to the award of Masters degrees are satisfied (VetMed).
- Reflection on the risks attendant on effecting too much change at one time, particularly given that BVMS3 students will not have taken the revised form of BVMS1 and 2 before a decision is taken to accelerate the implementation of BVMS3, (VetMed).
- Consideration of introducing appropriate mechanisms for ensuring its curricula are matched to students' prior knowledge, to permit maximum engagement with programme material (MVLSPGT).

### *Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (4)*

- Articulation of transferable skills to students, via Programme Aims/Intended Learning Outcomes through links with initiatives and good practice available in the School of Social and Political Sciences, College of Social Sciences and the Learning and Teaching Centre (Pol).
- Consideration of how best to engage students in an understanding of assessment criteria applying to the demonstration of ILOs, whether through clearer dissemination of information or through the structuring of the instruments of assessment themselves (VetMed).
- The provision of clear and consistent guidelines across the College to encourage feedback from students on all programmes and to use this to inform changes to course and programme content and structure in line with the University's course and programme approval procedure (MVLSPGT).
- Review of the current Veterinary Biosciences Knowledge ILOs, particularly at Level 4 in consultation with the Learning and Teaching Centre (VetMed).

### *Student Progress/Support (2)*

- Reflection on how to ensure that the Gaelic-speaking environment developed and nurtured by the Subject Area continues to be adequately supported particularly in view of the relocation of the office of the Gaelic-speaking administrator staff member (C & G).
- Consideration of how best to feedback to students on their progress throughout the full programme of clinical rotations (VetMed).

### *Learning Opportunities (2)*

- Work towards delivery of weekly oral classes, or to providing equivalent provision, to achieve the desired aims of confident and independent graduates. If the School opts to develop 'equivalent provision' the School should engage with the student body to ensure that students consider that it is of equal value to weekly oral classes (SMLC).
- Explore options to promote the beginner's Gaelic class specifically to SMLC students (C & G).

### *Maintaining Standards (2)*

- To ensure that the documentation prepared in connection with the forthcoming accreditation visit clearly communicates the rationale for BVMS curriculum change and reflects the careful process of consultation undertaken as well as giving detailed information on the

timetable for implementation and on the process of trialling new features of the curriculum (VetMed).

- Review of the current practice of External Examiners' reports being submitted to each School and Research Institute within the College, and that central examination of the reports by the Graduate School be considered (MVLSPGT).