

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 15 November 2013

Periodic Subject Review: Update on Responses to Recommendations arising from the Review of Management held on 12 and 13 March 2012

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senate Office

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.

Updated response – October 2013

Management has continued to implement the School's new Workload Model, which incorporated some changes in the weighting for tasks and roles this year as agreed by the School's Executive Committee.

The first iteration of the WLM was published over the summer and it is continually updated.

It has been possible to make some progress towards the harmonisation of workloads by reallocating teaching tasks, and reducing some teaching commitments (e.g. bringing contact time on the MSc programme into line with similar degrees across the School).

Given the size of our overall workload, our average individual load is above the University's notional maximum of 1540 hours. Some colleagues, especially those with key administrative roles, continue to work significantly in excess of this. Other than preventing some colleagues, e.g. those with significant funded research, from undertaking administrative roles there appears little immediate prospect of a solution to this.

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.

Updated response – October 2013

We are introducing objective testing for undergraduate Level 2 in 2013/14 in the form of a multiple choice test worth 40% of the overall course marks. This kind of assessment has worked very well on Level 1 for many years. Extending objective testing to Level 2 will also enable us to maintain our feedback turnaround times given the very large increase in student numbers we have experienced this year.

However, the university has made it very difficult for us to move ahead with our plans for this new assessment method this year as it has been impossible to find accommodation for in-semester assessment like this in the normal timetable. We have to resort to Saturday assessment in multiple venues for Level 1 and 2 objective testing. This has a significant impact on the student experience and has not been well received.

The review of MSc programmes, which is currently underway, is also examining the potential for a wider range of assessment methods and will report back before the end of this semester.

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.

Updated response – October 2013

As part of a School-wide action plan following the publication of the most recent NSS results, we are developing a number of interventions to improve the quality and punctuality of feedback. In consultation with the Head of School, I have agreed that I will personally monitor all Honours courses this year checking the feedback provided and meeting all honours course conveners between the submission of their class assessments and their return to students.

Further measures will be agreed for implementation across the School as a series of specific interventions arising from the NSS action plan are put into practice across the year.

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.

Update – October 2013

We have implemented a revised orientation for PGT programmes, including enhanced preparatory sessions provided by College, and also dedicated sessions on teaching, learning and assessment expectations. MSc tutorials are particularly important in improving and enhancing student understanding of course content and how it is assessed. Our GTAs have also received additional briefing on the requirements of our overseas students in order to extend the student support culture more broadly across the teaching team.

We are also reviewing the potential to increase the English language entry requirements for some of our courses in future.

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.

Update – October 2013

We have continued to operate School policy on this issue, i.e. that individual student requests for permission to record lectures should be supported. We note that the issue of student recording at lectures has just been the subject of discussion at Senate, and so the next School Learning and Teaching Committee meeting will revisit this issue to ensure our practice reflects University policy as appropriate.

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.

Update – October 2013

Following PSR feedback, the UG and PGT Programme Managers were tasked to review all course and programme materials to ensure greater consistency provided to students. In reviewing these processes, a wider review was undertaken, which included the standardisation of written student communication, with a focus on enhancing and assuring greater consistency in content, terminology and style of documentation provided to students. This was undertaken at School level in recognition that Management programmes are part of a wider offer to market, and that many of our students are enrolled in joint degree programmes across the School.