

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee - Friday 15 November 2013

**Periodic Subject Review: Update on Responses to Recommendations arising from the Review of the School of Law held on 1 and 2 March 2012**

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senate Office

*Recommendation 11:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School should resolve the problem pertaining to the variability of marking by staff and ensure that the marking scheme is fully implemented. [paragraph 3.3.2]

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

It is not clear what the evidence base for the comments about implementation of the assessment scheme is. The Code of Assessment has been implemented fully by the School. Grade profiles appear in annual monitoring reports and are discussed by the relevant year committee. Our robust external examining process ensures that our standards are comparable with those of other Russell Group Institutions. The report appears to endorse an apparent student perception that it is more difficult to get a first class degree at Glasgow. The School does not accept that this perception is accurate. In terms of firsts, University wide figures for 2011/12 show that the School, with 22% firsts, was above the University average of 17%. Comparison figures are not available for other Scottish Law Schools, but it might be noted that one of our Externals (from another ancient Scottish University) has expressed the view that we award *too many* firsts.

In summary, we do not consider that there is a problem of undue variability or failure to implement the marking scheme fully.

Further assessment training has been put in place for Tutors on the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice to ensure consistent assessment across the programme.

**Updated response – October 2013****Response – Law Convener:**

There appears to be some confusion here. The recommendation states: The Review Panel **recommends** that the School should *seek a resolution* of this problem [perceptions that the marking scale is not fully utilised] and ensure that the marking scheme is fully implemented. This can be accomplished by presenting the evidence to allay student concerns.

**Further Comments from Assessment School Assessment Officer**

With respect the recommendation as summarised at the end of the PSR is not in the terms suggested by the Convener in his response. It is assumed that a further response is requested in respect of publication of evidence. We will, in future, publish the grade profiles for each assessment as the results for the assessment are published. A review is about to take place of

the exercise of discretion at the honours borderlines, and the data on the honours profile over the last few sessions gathered as part of this will be published to students.

A revised edition of guidance on assessment for academic staff has recently been circulated. This stresses the point that the award of an A1 is not reserved for cases where the student has achieved perfection, but rather for cases where a student has fully met the ILOs for the assessment, and that there should be no upper cap arbitrarily placed by the marker on the top grade to be awarded. In addition, it reminds staff of University guidance to the effect that if a piece of work is judged to be of Grade A standard, the starting point in awarding a grade should be A3.

***Recommendation 18:***

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College of Social Sciences should consult with the School of Law regarding the resourcing of the establishment of a law clinic. [*paragraph 3.4.4*]

For the attention of: **Head of College**

**For Information: SRC Advice Centre**

***Response:***

The School of Law considers that the provision of a law clinic is an option worth exploring although the resource implications are significant. However, the School disagrees with the premise on which the recommendation is based. Paragraph 3.4.4 appears to accept the accuracy of the perception apparently held by some students the University of Strathclyde has a more practical approach to the teaching of law. There is no evidence to indicate that these views are representative of students generally or that the suggested comparison with the University of Strathclyde is valid. Although the School of Law does not have a law clinic it does provide many opportunities for students to practical experience of law notably through a network of placements with Citizens' Advice Bureaux and law centres. Moreover, developments noted earlier around employability and graduate attributes, along with the central activities of the University's Work Related Learning officer, are providing opportunities to raise awareness amongst Law students of a range of placements. We will work with Dr Dickon Copey and colleagues in Careers to ensure that the full range of opportunities are drawn to the attention of our students during 2013/14 and thereafter.

***Updated response – October 2013***

**Comment – Law Convener:**

The recommendation is based on a factually correct record of the panel's discussions with students. It is the panel's responsibility to report such opinions. The recommendation was made with the intention of enhancing the school's competitiveness in the marketplace (or addressing misperceptions). If the school has identified and adopted alternative, less resource intensive, means to achieve the same objective, and these have been promoted to the students (or prospective students) as equally valid approaches to giving them practical experience than would a law clinic, then the recommendation has been addressed.

**ASC was satisfied that this recommendation had been addressed but agreed that practice experience available to students should be clearly highlighted to students.**

### **Updated response – October 2013 from Law Convener:**

The SoL Employability webpages have been completely revamped over the summer and are now live at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/law/students/employability/> . All practical opportunities available to our students will be posted via Twitter on this page and also emailed where appropriate. Opportunities available include those offered via the Law School – ie placements with CAB, CAD, Govan Law Centre and an additional and exclusive opportunity for students to work with the new CAB law practice to deliver law clinics in Bureaux and gain the qualification of approved Lay Representative. Law Students are also alerted to placement opportunities offered via CoSS, Careers Service and occasionally external direct sources – eg Club 21 and individual law firm opportunities. The Glasgow University Law Society (GULS), working in close collaboration with the law school employability team and other interested staff are about to establish a Public Interest sub-committee to develop further opportunities for law students to engage in practical and community-facing projects.

### ***Recommendation 19:***

The Review Panel recommends that the School of Law reviews its current provision at Levels 3 and 4 to identify opportunities to incorporate additional oral assessments. *[paragraph 3.4.3]*

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

### **Response:**

This recommendation has been reviewed by the appropriate year committees and the Undergraduate Committee. We do not propose to incorporate additional oral assessments in level 3 and 4 courses in 2013-14. Oral assessments have both advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages include ensuring that there are robust assessment arrangements which appropriately involve external examiners and also do not create undue burdens on academic and support staff and on external examiners. It is worth noting also that the style of honours teaching in final year allows students to get feedback on their contributions during seminars even though these are not in most cases assessed. Viewing the LLB as a whole, the School of Law considers that the current balance of oral and written assessment is appropriate.

### ***Updated Response – October 2013 (Law Convener):***

There has been an oversight in that the body of the report refers to giving the students more oral presentation experience whereas the summary recommendation refers to assessments. The response of the school to the summary recommendation is understood. Perhaps the School could consider the issue of presentation skills further. My apologies to the School for this oversight.