

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 3 October 2014

Periodic Subject Review: Updated on Response to Recommendation 4 arising from the Review of School of Physics and Astronomy held on 13 and 14 February 2012

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senate Office

Recommendation 2

The Panel **recommends** that Estates and Buildings address two pressing issues regarding accessibility for disabled students and staff of the School: access to the Common Room in the Kelvin Building (as recommended in the 2006 DPTLA); and access to the University Observatory. [*para 3.8.18*]

For the attention of: **Estates and Buildings**For information: **Head of School*****Response: Estates and Buildings***

University Observatory – Access improvement works to this building were completed during summer 2012, this made provision for a new ramped approach at the main entrance, automated entrance doors and provision of a new disabled toilet.

Kelvin Building – Access improvement works required to this building have been debated in the past however they would require significant changes to the building. This can be reviewed in the future.

Response – Head of School

As part of the first phase of the Observatory refurbishment a wheelchair ramp has been installed providing access to the building for disabled users and a new disabled toilet facility has been installed.

The passenger lift in the Kelvin Building is small and antiquated with manually operated double doors. Wheelchair users are unable to operate the lift on their own and require assistance. The floor area is insufficient for a wheelchair user to turn round and the lift does not meet modern standards for disabled access. Even so, with assistance, wheelchair users still can access the lecture theatres and teaching labs on levels 2, 3 and 4 of the Kelvin Building and the School office on level 5. However, the common room and all rooms on level 6 are completely inaccessible as these can only be reached by narrow stairs.

Several schemes have been proposed in recent years to replace the main passenger lift with one which meets modern standards for disabled access in order to provide unassisted access to the main teaching areas and for a separate and additional one-floor lift to provide direct access to the common room. However, these schemes have not proceeded due to very considerable costs involved.

The School of Physics and Astronomy strongly supports the principles of improving access to the public areas of the Kelvin Building and to the common room in particular. It strongly endorses the recommendation of the PSR panel that Estates and Buildings address this issue.

Updated response from Estates and Buildings – October 2013

The issue of disability access to the Common Room and other rooms on level 6 is understood and in the past options of new lifts have been considered. The relocation of the common room is not an easy alternative as locations are not readily available. As part of the campus estate strategy we will be looking at key investments across the estate and from this we will develop asset plans for all major buildings. I would suggest that when we do this work we take the opportunity to comprehensively review facilities in Kelvin as part of the asset plan.

Updated response from School – February 2014

The School noted ASC's agreement that further consideration was required to try and address the issue of accessibility for disabled students and staff, and that a space audit should be requested in order to try and identify alternative space.

In autumn 2013 the Head of School, in collaboration with the School Accommodation Officer and Superintendent, issued to all staff and PGR students an accommodation questionnaire seeking input on the state of Kelvin Building and plans for its redevelopment - not only in relation to disability access (although this was identified as a priority) but in the wider context of the Campus Redevelopment Plan. The School's Management Team and Research and Strategy Committees discussed the questionnaire responses in October and November 2013 and the Accommodation Officer presented an overview of its results for discussion at our Research and Teaching Staff Forum in December 2013.

These consultations and discussions formed the basis of a draft proposal for significant - and prompt - redevelopment of the Kelvin Building. The School has communicated this proposal to Estates and Buildings as part of the ongoing consultation on the Campus Redevelopment Plan (and specifically as an alternative to re-siting Physics and Astronomy in a new building). Options for solving the current disabled access issues were included as part of the proposal. The consensus view of the Management Team, Research and Strategy Committee and Research and Teaching Staff Forum was to favour the installation of appropriate disabled access to the existing Common Room, accomplishing the necessary structural alterations as part of the overall renovation of the building.

Response from Director of Estates and Buildings – March 2014

I would first like to thank the School for their proactive approach in considering the opportunities of Kelvin Building, this is extremely helpful. I can also confirm that all the major buildings including the Kelvin Building are being considered as part of the Estate Strategy. Following consultation and with detailed input from Court and SMG a draft Estates Strategy will be presented to Court in June. This will set the priorities for investment including the relocation of schools and where schools are not moving the refurbishments of retained properties. It is therefore possible that in a relatively short period of time there should be a clearer view on the investment in the estate after which it will be more appropriate to review this matter.

Response from director of Estates and Buildings – October 2014

The development of the estate strategy is ongoing and priorities for investment are currently being considered with the intention that outline proposals will go to Court on the 8 October 2014.

The issue of provision of accommodation in Kelvin building has been identified both through the report from the Committee and business cases developed by the College and separate representation by the SRC. A report can be provided to the November meeting of Academic Standards Committee

Recommendation 4

The Panel **recommends** that the School continue to engage in dialogue with the College to consider the case for the introduction of dedicated teaching administration. [*para 3.8.5*]

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

For information: **Head of College**

Response:

The School notes that it is out of step with many other Schools in the University which have a dedicated teaching administrator. There are many tasks which are currently carried out by academic staff which could be more efficiently carried out by a teaching administrator, releasing academic time for research and scholarship. These tasks include timetabling of classes, room bookings, recording and following up student absences, monitoring tier 4 student attendance and engagement, processing course assignments and results, inputting and updating course information in PIP, organising and taking the minutes of exam boards, organising and taking the minutes of Teaching Committee meetings. At present these tasks are split between many different people including Classheads, Labheads, Advisors of Studies, the School Examination Officers, the School Convenor of Learning and Teaching, University Teachers, PGR and PGT Convenors, Head of School Administration and various secretarial staff.

The School will therefore continue to engage in dialogue with the College on the issue of dedicated teaching administration, although current constraints on the College budget mean that the appointment of an additional teaching administrator for 2013-14 appears unlikely. Consequently the School will continue to explore ways of improving its provision of teaching support with its existing complement of administrative staff, while seeking to maintain our Research Group structure and the highly effective and efficient secretarial support that underpins it.

Updated Response from Head of College – October 2013

Like the School, the College does not wish academic staff to spend their time carrying out tasks that can be done more efficiently by a teaching administrator. Led by the College Secretary, it is seeking a College wide solution to making the most efficient use of support staff. Progress is slow but forward. It is anticipated that Physics & Astronomy will benefit along with other Schools in the College. It is hoped that the new system will be in place before the start of the 2014-15 session.

Updated Response – May 2014

A shared teaching administrator position (shared between Physics & Astronomy and Chemistry - an arrangement that the schools believe could work well, if separate provision for each school is not possible) was identified as an aspirational post in the 2014-15 College of Science and

Engineering budget, approved by the College Management Group for presentation to the Principal in April 2014. However, it is still unknown whether this additional post will be approved, due to other evolving factors around the overall financial position of the University; if it is approved then we are unlikely to know that until the autumn, once the student numbers for 2014 are better known.

Updated Response incoming Acting Head of College – October 2014

In my initial conversations with Heads of School, the lack of dedicated School teaching administrators has been raised as an issue and consequently teaching administration is on the agenda where this has been identified as an issue. However, with other developments, it is not appropriate to deal with this in isolation. Other changes in administrative support are planned such as the University-wide support of the 'Transforming Research Management project' where a paper is expected to come to the next Senior Management Group meeting. Following that, the detailed approach at College level will be developed. I am determined that this will address administration for teaching as well as for research. As this will be an integrated College wide approach, it will inevitably take longer than a local fix, but will be more robust and joined up.