

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 13 February 2015

Periodic Subject Review: Responses to Recommendations Arising from the Report of the Review of the Centre for Open Studies held on 11 and 12 March 2013

Recommendations

A number of recommendations had been made, many of which concern areas that the Centre had itself highlighted for further development prior to the review or in the SER.

The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer. They are listed in the order of appearance in this report.

Recommendation 1

With a view to ensuring adequate representation of the Centre on key management bodies of the University, the Review Panel **recommends** that the following bodies consider including representation of the Centre for Open Studies as part of their annual review of membership at their meetings during session 2013-14: University Services Management Group; the Learning and Teaching Committee. The Panel further recommends that, once revisions to the governance of Senate are complete, that there be a link between Senate and the Centre. [Paragraph 1.5]

[Action: Clerk of Senate, Chairs of USMG & LTC]

Joint Response:

The Centre is now represented on the University Services Management Group and the Learning and Teaching Committee. In addition, the Director of Centre now has a standing invitation to attend the Council of Senate, and may participate in its meetings in all respects other than in voting.

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Director of the Centre for Open Studies raise the matter of representation on the School of Education's Learning and Teaching Committee with the Head of School and Head of College during session 2013-14. In conjunction with this, the Centre should constitute its own Learning and Teaching Committee, including student representation, as soon as possible. [Paragraph 1.5]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

For information: Head of School of Education, Head of College of Social Sciences]

Response:

The Centre's Learning and Teaching Committee was formally constituted and held its first meeting on 16 October 2013, and now meets regularly five times per annum. The Committee includes student representation. However, the relationship between the Centre for Open Studies and the School of Education has changed since the PSR, with only half the number of BEd electives running in academic year 2014-15, and none thereafter due to the phasing out of the BEd degree. In addition, the Centre is currently exploring the best mechanism to ensure effective scrutiny and approval of its provision at the College level, and is investigating the possibility of establishing a short courses, or

modular, board of studies, which would include representatives from across the Colleges. Consequently, representation on the Learning and Teaching Committee for the School of Education may no longer be appropriate.

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel endorses the Centre's commitment to, and support, Equality and Diversity. To that end, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Director of the Centre for Open Studies pursue, with the Director of Estates and Buildings and staff responsible for room bookings, adequate learning and teaching accommodation for all Open Studies students, that is accessible to students who are wheelchair users and/or those with limited mobility. In the meantime, the Centre should identify specific needs and negotiate with Central Room Bookings and request that these specific needs be given priority in the booking process. [Paragraph 4.6.5, 4.8.1 and 1.2]

**[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies
For information: Director of Estates and Buildings, Central Room Bookings]**

Response:

A meeting took place on 6 November 2014 with Estates and Buildings colleagues to consider the Centre's space requirements, including the need for accessible teaching accommodation. These matters are the subject of ongoing discussions with Estates and Buildings. Meanwhile, the Centre continues to be allocated certain teaching accommodation which is difficult to access by wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. A process has thus been implemented so that when the Centre is alerted to the fact that a student may have accessibility requirements the location of a class is checked to ensure that it is accessible, and if it isn't a request is submitted to central timetabling to change to an alternative, accessible room.

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel considers the currently allocated Art Room to be unfit for purpose due to its size and its lack of accessibility for students with limited mobility. The Panel **recommends** that accommodation of suitable size and accessibility be identified and refitted in consultation with the Centre within the next six months. [Paragraph 4.6.5 and 4.8.1]

**[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies
For information: Head of College of Social Sciences,
Director of Estates and Buildings]**

Response:

This matter was discussed with Estates and Buildings Colleagues at the meeting on 6 November 2014 (see the response to recommendation 3 above). Suitable accommodation has not yet been identified and this issue is the subject of ongoing discussions between the Centre and Estates and Buildings.

Recommendation 5

While recognising the challenges of frequent changes in staffing at senior levels at the Centre, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Centre develop a business plan and development strategy incorporating a clearly articulated vision for the future of the Centre. A draft plan should be circulated to staff for consultation and a final version be sent to the Secretary to Court, within six months of the publication of this report. [Paragraph 4.7.3]

**[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies, Secretary to Court
For information: Deputy Secretary to Court]**

Response:

A draft plan was produced by the previous Director of Centre for Open Studies in August 2013, however it is not clear if this document got beyond the initial consultation stage. Subsequently a review of the Centre has been undertaken by the new Director (appointed September 2014), and a revised strategy for the Centre will be fully implemented by academic year 2015-16.

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that consideration be given to the enrolment process in MyCampus for the Centre's students to ensure it is more fitted to the nature of the courses offered and the needs of the students/learners, and that staff at the Centre receive adequate support and training in the use and development of MyCampus to accommodate the needs of the Centre as soon as possible after the publication of this report. [Paragraph 4.5.7]

[Action: MyCampus Team and key staff at the Centre]

Response:

Although there have been developments to MyCampus which have helped to make processes more efficient, for example the system can now process refunds and concessions without leaving outstanding balances on student accounts, it is clear that MyCampus cannot be developed to support the enrolment needs of the Centre. A business case to develop an online enrolment system within MyCampus was submitted to Student Lifecycle Support and Development in June 2014, however the outcome of this was that such a development would be very expensive, and there is insufficient resource to support it. As an alternative the Centre is now exploring the possibility of purchasing an off-the-shelf online enrolment system and, subject to gaining agreement regarding the acceptance of online payment, will implement such a system before the start of the 2015/16 academic year. It is understood that MyCampus will continue to hold student records information for the Centre, and such information will be automatically uploaded to MyCampus from the enrolment system, or inputted manually if this is not possible.

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** the constitution of a Strategy Advisory Group at the Centre, upon publication of this report, in order to assist with development strategy and future planning as well as advising on quality enhancement and assurance. [Paragraph 6.4]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

Response:

There was an initial meeting of this group in August 2013, however due to the departure of the previous Director this group has fallen into abeyance. The new Director is currently considering the optimal membership for this group, and it will be reconstituted in 2015.

Recommendation 8

The Panel **recommends** that a Quality Officer for the Centre be identified during session 2013-14. [Paragraph 6.5]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

Response:

The Centre now has a Quality Officer in post.

Recommendation 9

The Panel **recommends** that clearly articulated information on pathways be made available to students to guide them through flexible learning, and that these be disseminated to students and staff to allow for greater clarity about the range of learning available. [Paragraph 4.6.1]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

Response:

Information about pathways through the Centre's learning provision has now been articulated in both print and online publicity materials. The Centre is currently reviewing the organisation of its provision to make it easier for learners to progress through flexible pathways, and this will be reflected in updated print and publicity material for the 2015/16 academic year.

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that information for staff and students be made clearly available regarding the integrity and robustness of courses and the process of development and approval for courses at the Centre. [Paragraph 5.1]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

Response:

As part of their induction process all staff are now made aware of the quality assurance arrangements governing Open Studies courses, including the processes for the development and approval of courses. This information is also included in tutor handbooks. Students are informed of the quality assurance arrangements via the course information sheets and programme handbooks which are provided for all Certificate of Higher Education courses.

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel **recommends** that students be made fully aware of the Intended Learning Outcomes for all courses offered at the Centre *prior* to registration. [Paragraph 4.2]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

Response:

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and course aims are now made available online for every Certificate of Higher Education course prior to registration. Hard copy course information sheets for Certificate of Higher Education students, which clearly outline course aims, ILOs and modes of assessment, are sent out upon registration, and these documents are also accessible on the website. For the 2015/16 academic year ILOs for all courses will be included in course listings on the website.

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel **recommends** that further development of feedback, turnaround and assessment processes take place, ensuring that feedback and turnaround of assessments are completed in a timely manner, in accordance with the University's Code of Assessment and Assessment Policy and that only sample double-marking on assessments take place to ease the burden on staff. [Paragraph 4.3.8]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

Response:

This recommendation was implemented during academic year 2013-14. The tutor handbook now clearly states the turnaround of assessments is three weeks, in line with University regulations. Monitoring to ensure compliance with this policy is continuing throughout 2014/15. In addition, only sample double marking of assessments now takes place.

Recommendation 13

The Review Panel recognises the support provided by the Centre for hourly-paid GTAs. The Panel **recommends** that further information for GTAs be provided regarding quality assurance of the learning experience. [Paragraph 4.8.1]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

Response:

The Centre has taken a proactive approach to involving tutors in quality assurance processes. There is now a programme of events in place for tutors which explains how the Centre fits within the wider structure of the University, what its current academic affiliations are, what is expected of tutors, what support is provided for tutors, and the timing of key quality assurance processes throughout the academic year (including course proposals and approvals).

Recommendation 14

The Review Panel **recommends** that GTAs be provided with bespoke training by the Centre that complements the nature of the programmes offered. [Paragraph 4.8.1]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

Response:

The centre's Languages Programme regularly offers tailored tutor-training sessions in relation to particular language teaching issues. The Centre has recognised this approach as good practice, and now offers an annual timetable of training events for all its tutors. During 2014-15 this has included sessions on Moodle, assessment, and supporting students with disabilities. The Centre for Open Studies also works collaboratively with the Learning and Teaching Centre to provide opportunities for all tutors to meet together to share best practice on a regular basis.

Recommendation 15

The Review Panel **recommends** that additional accommodation for GTAs be sought in order to accommodate the high number of staff employed in this capacity. The provision of additional accommodation should not reduce existing accommodation for key staff at the Centre. [Paragraph 4.8.2]

[Action: Director, Centre for Open Studies]

For information: Head of School of Education, Head of College of Social Sciences]

Response:

The Centre is unable to provide additional accommodation for part-time tutors within existing resources. However, a working group has now been established to consider ways in which the existing tutor base can be used more effectively and space maximised.

Recommendation 16

The Review Panel was disappointed by the lack of provision of out-of-hours catering for students and staff at the Centre, noting that such provision had been a recommendation at the DPTLA Review of 2006. The Panel **recommends** that out-of-hours catering facilities be made available to students and staff at the Centre and that profitability should not be the primary consideration. Discussion about opening the STAC café out of hours should take place between the Centre and Hospitality Services upon publication of this report. [Paragraph 4.8.4]

**[Action: Clerk of Senate; Director, Centre for Open Studies
For information: Director of Hospitality Services]**

Joint Response:

Hospitality Services have now provided an additional vending machine within the St Andrew's Building which contains sandwiches and snacks.

Recommendation 17

The Review Panel **recommends** that consideration be given by the University Court, to re-locating the Centre for Open Studies on the main campus of the University as part of the campus re-development plans associated with the acquisition of the Western Infirmary site. Such a re-location would place the Centre more centrally, allowing it to be a more visible sign of the University's engagement with the wider community. [Paragraph 4.8.3]

[Action: Secretary to Court]

Response:

The Centre will be a key partner in the development and delivery of a public education programme to support the relocation of The Hunterian to Kelvin Hall. The Centre is very keen to relocate to Kelvin Hall as soon as space is available. Indications are that this is likely to be during the early part of phase two of the project.