University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 17 April 2015

Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of Classics held on 4 December 2014

Mrs Catherine Omand, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Tom Guthrie	Professor of Private Law, Convener
Professor Richard Alston	Royal Holloway, University of London, External Subject Specialist
Dr Ming Cheng	Academic Development Unit, Learning and Teaching Centre
Mr Caelum Davies	Students' Representative Council, Student Panel member
Dr Robert Maslen	School of Critical Studies, Cognate member
Dr Duncan Ross	Economic and Social History, Senate Assessor on Court
Mrs Catherine Omand	Senate Office, Clerk to the Panel

Observer:

Dr Angela Japp	Academic Development Unit, Learning and Teaching Centre

1. Introduction

1.1 Classics' is one of six Subjects in the School of Humanities, College of Arts. The College was formed in 2010, when a major restructuring exercise reshaped the University from nine Faculties to four Colleges.

1.2 The Subject last underwent internal review in May 2008 as the Department of Classics when it was one of thirteen Departments and Schools within what was previously the Faculty of Arts. The outcome of that review was very positive with no concerns regarding the quality of provision and the Panel having been impressed with the level of commitment shown by staff. One of the main recommendations had been in relation to lack of accommodation. These issues were addressed in 2012 with the Subject securing access to a number of seminar rooms as well as postgraduate study space. Other changes arising from the last review included an evaluation of undergraduate provision which concluded with an introduction of a core course and reconfiguration of PGT provision.

1.3 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was initially drafted by Professor Matthew Fox (Head of Subject 2008-12) and completed by Dr Ian Ruffell (Head of Subject 2012-14). All staff, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and students had been given an opportunity to comment on the SER prior to submission. Two open focus groups moderated by GTAs had been held with some commentary arising from those included within the report.

1.4 The Review Panel met with Dr Ian Ruffell, Head of Subject, Dr Jeremy Huggett, Head of School, eight members of staff, four probationary members of staff, five undergraduate students from Levels 1 and 2, two Postgraduate Taught students and six GTAs. Unfortunately, no Honours' students met with the Panel.

2. Background information

2.1 Students

Student numbers (2014-15) were as follows:

Students (Classics, Latin and Greek)	**Headcount**	**FTE**
Level 1	249	73.70
Level 2	79	29.51
Level 4	51	31.72
Level 5	1	10.33
Study Abroad	1	
Undergraduate Total	381	145.26
Postgraduate Taught	25	

2.2 Staffing

The staff resource as at 4 December 2014 was as follows:

Staff	**R/T**	**Temporary**	**Research only**
Professor	3		
Reader	1		
Senior Lecturer	1		
Lecturer	2	1	
University Teacher	0.1	1	
Teaching Assistant		1	
Research Associate			2
Total staff	**7.1**	3	2

2.3 Range of provision

The following range of provision offered by the School was considered:

- MA Classics (Classical Civilisation) (Single and Joint)
- Latin (Single and Joint)
- Greek (Single and Joint)
- MLitt Classics

3. Context and Strategy

3.1 It was evident to the Panel that the Subject had a strong sense of community providing a very supportive environment. Staff made themselves available to students and, from discussion with the undergraduate and postgraduate students, were highly responsive. The Panel **commends** the Subject for providing a very strong student-focussed environment.

3.2 The Panel recognised and welcomed the recent research success achieved by the Subject. However, there was concern that the success in securing research grants was having an adverse impact on learning and teaching due to increased workload this was placing on staff, particularly for a small subject area. In addition, a number of experienced staff members were taking research leave to fulfil research commitments, leaving high workloads and levels of responsibility on more junior staff. At the meeting with staff, it was confirmed that new staff had had a steep learning curve but that they were gaining valuable experience. The Head of Subject highlighted that, due to the unpredictable nature of securing research funding, it was difficult to incorporate research activity into strategy and this had consequential impact on teaching delivery.

3.3 From the SER and, from discussion with the Head of Subject, it was evident that the Subject was undertaking a number of commendable learning and teaching developments, but it was unclear to the Panel whether there was an overarching vision for future growth in terms of range of provision and development. The Panel was unsure how strategic aims were identified and negotiated in relation to the demands on the School. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject develops a coherent strategic vision in terms of future growth and range of provision, working with the Head of School to produce a plan for realising this.

3.4 From the SER and with discussion with the Head of Subject and School, there was a sense of disenfranchisement following restructuring and that there was a lack of clarity in relation to roles and responsibilities within the School. It was unclear to the Panel what relationship the Subject had with the School. From discussion with the staff, it was evident that lines of communication between the School and the Subject were unclear with staff unsure of the relationship with the School and how priorities within the School had been reached. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School further develops a School identity by introducing appropriate inter-Subject forums to allow for discussion of common issues and provide opportunities for staff to meet with other colleagues.

Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

3.5 From the SER and documentation, it was unclear to the Panel as to whether the Subject had devised an overall learning and teaching strategy or strategy for curriculum development and how these fitted with the School's strategy. At the meeting with the Head of Subject and Head of School, the Panel was advised that Subjects had responsibility for the strategic development of teaching, whilst the School developed overarching strategy to which all Subjects were invited to contribute, such as interdisciplinary development; Classics was currently examining the potential of co-teaching with Archaeology.

3.6 The Panel acknowledged that the Subject had been experimenting with various teaching methodologies; however there appeared to be no formal records of strategic or planning discussion in relation to Learning and Teaching development. The Head of Subject assured the Panel that course reflection did take place, resulting in developments such as those made in pre-Honours and Honours, the introduction of a wider range of assessment and securing resources for the transfer of knowledge had all been widely deliberated. However, following restructuring, it had been understood

that all meetings and annual monitoring were only to be recorded at School level and indeed, that formal Subject meetings were not to take place. The Panel advised that formal records were necessary to evaluate and support changes made and to enable new incoming staff to familiarise themselves with overall strategy and processes. The Panel **recommends** that the School re-instates formally recorded Subject meetings of course reflection and learning and teaching developments which should facilitate dialogue between Subject and School.

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

4.1 *Admissions, Retention and Success*

4.1.1 The Panel **commends** the Subject for its success in widening access; one of the five students who met with the Panel had entered via the access programme and advised that she had chosen to study Classics after meeting the Head of Subject at the University's Open Day. The student concerned was very enthusiastic and advised the Panel that she had been well supported and was enjoying her studies, although she also highlighted that the language element of the course was extremely difficult and suggested additional would be useful for beginners. (*please also refer to 4.7.4*).

4.1.2 A number of students who undertook a Classics degree had originally entered the University as part of another degree programme, but had chosen Classics as an optional course and converted during their studies. At the meeting with staff, it was acknowledged that one of the potential advantages of increasing interdisciplinary teaching was that this would raise the Subject's profile. The Panel suggests that the Subject and School, in discussion with the Recruitment and International Office (RIO), consider further ways to promote Classics' programmes, clearly identifying and articulating the skills acquired to potential UG and PGT students.

4.1.3 From the SER and documentation provided, the Panel noted the low retention rates and substantial reduction of student numbers between beginner and intermediate stages in the languages. The Subject recognised that it experienced some difficulty in relation to retention within the language provision, particularly Greek. Latin and Greek were not normally taught in secondary schools and were therefore not easy to market. In addition, they were considered difficult but necessary languages to study in relation to Classics. Pass rates in the languages were also low, but the External Subject Specialist highlighted that this was an issue experienced across all institutions.

4.1.4 The Panel sought the undergraduate students' views as to why there might be a problem with retention. They indicated that it was likely to do with the level of difficulty of the language courses. They also highlighted that these courses were timetabled for 9 am, four times a week, and suggested that this might be another reason for low attendance. At the meeting with staff, the Panel was advised that although attendance was worse at pre-Honours, there was also a dip in Honours attendance prior to assignment submission deadlines. The Panel suggested staggering pre-Honour deadline submission dates to address this.

4.1.5 The Head of Subject reported that recent focus had been on revising the MA Classics and that, although changes had been made in the language provision, such as changes in assessment with the introduction of the weekly Latin quizzes and changes to the core Greek text book, he acknowledged that a more substantial review was now required. The Review Panel agreed and **recommends** that attention be given to restructuring language provision with a

view to providing a more progressive learning environment and improve retention.

4.2 *Effective Feedback Mechanisms*

4.2.1 From the SER and from the meetings with the Head of Subject and staff, it was evident that the Subject was highly responsive to student feedback both formally and informally. The Staff:Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) appeared to work well, meeting once a semester, and was consulted on all new proposed courses and changes to courses. Good practice was also disseminated at SSLC. The Panel **commends** the Subject's responsiveness to student feedback.

4.3 *Employability*

4.3.1 From speaking with the Level 1 and 2 students, it was evident that they were not fully aware of how employability was built into the curriculum and the skills acquired. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject clearly articulate the transferable skills acquired, such as those attained in the core Travel course, and communicate these to all students.

4.4 *Equality and Diversity*

4.4.1 From the SER, the Panel noted that all staff had undertaken Equality and Diversity training.

4.4.2 The Panel, although acknowledging the benefits of the core Travel course, had concerns in relation to Equality and Diversity, as students with a disability or those with financial restraints or dependents might be unable to participate. From discussion with staff, it was acknowledged that adjustments had been made for students who needed it. However, these had been on an *ad hoc* basis and the Panel considered a more systematic approach was necessary. The Panel **recommends** that the Subject and School ensure the core Travel Course complies with the University's equality and diversity policies (*please also refer to 4.6.2*)

4.5 *Graduate Attributes*

4.5.1 The Panel was impressed with the development of the Iris project and welcomed that it was to be developed into a course "Latin in the Classroom" to be introduced Session 2015-16. This would make a major contribution to the Subject's graduate attributes provision as well as complimenting the School's "Humanities in the Classroom" course in which the Subject already participated.

4.6 *Internationalisation*

4.6.1 The SER identified issues in relation to the promotion of study abroad. This was raised at the meeting with the undergraduate students who acknowledged that they had been made aware of study abroad opportunities but that it had not been actively promoted. One student advised that she had dependents and therefore would not be able to participate in study abroad initiatives. The Panel highlighted the University's strategy to encourage students to participate in study abroad opportunities and further discussed the potential with the Head of Subject and Head of School and at the meeting with staff. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject and School work with the Dean of International Mobility to consider ways to promote interest in study abroad by highlighting the benefits and removing barriers to student mobility.

4.6.2 The Panel recognised that the three-week core Travel course gave students the opportunity to travel abroad and this was a **commendable** student learning experience. However, the Level 1 and 2 undergraduate students that met with

the Panel indicated that they believed the course was only available to Single Honours students. This was discussed further at the meeting with staff, where it was highlighted that Joint Honours students were permitted to undertake the course but that, due to restricted funding, it had to be privately financed. The Panel suggested that this should be clarified to address this Level 1 and 2 student misconception. Furthermore, the Panel was unconvinced whether the course could be classified as "core" when it was not compulsory for Joint Honours students. The Panel therefore **recommends** that consideration be given to providing alternative provision to give all students access to the core skills gained by the Travel course, possibly the introduction of a number of shorter trips. Additional sources of funding should also be investigated at both Subject and School level. Alternatively, Intended Learning Outcomes should be differentiated between Single and Joint provision.

4.7 *Supporting Students in their Learning*

4.7.1 It was evident to the Review Panel, from the meeting with the Head of Subject, staff and both UG and PGT students, that the Subject placed great emphasis on providing the best support to students. The Panel **commends** the strong sense of community and supportive and responsive environment provided. The Undergraduate students highlighted that staff made themselves available, were very responsive to email queries and provided opportunities to meet when requested. The Panel recognised that the 'open door' policy worked very well for students but queried whether not having 'office hours' created higher workloads for staff. At the meeting with students, it was evident that students contacted staff for all types of queries and not just academic which further increased workload. In addition, GTAs provided the same service, often seeing students in their own time, which was unpaid. No measures were in place to monitor this time and the Panel therefore suggests that 'office hours' be considered for all staff, or at least for GTAs, and **recommends** that GTAs be properly remunerated for their contact time with students (*please also refer to 5.4.8*).

4.7.2 Extensive course documentation was made available to students on Moodle including how to reference, assessment criteria and deadlines and the Code of Assessment grading system. Students were also provided information informally during classes. At the meeting with staff, the Panel suggested that standard processes should also include reminding students of assessment criteria when assignments were handed out. The Panel also noted that the descriptors in the Code of Assessment could be difficult to interpret and **recommends** that the Subject develops explicit Schedule A grade descriptors in relation to Classics in order to assist students to gain a better understanding of what was expected from them.

4.7.3 At the meeting with the students, satisfaction was expressed with Library facilities, but there was some frustration over restricted access to limited copies of reading material, and the Panel learned that students had requested more materials to be provided on-line. From the SER and from discussion with staff, it was evident that the Subject was aware of this and that effort was being made to provide more e-books and resources. In addition, the Subject used the Library's *Talis Aspire* software which allowed for reading material to be regularly updated and provided accessibility to electronic resources. The Subject had invested substantial time ensuring resources had been digitised for the 'Reading List' access to ensure students had access to important source collections. The Panel recognised this as **good practice**.

4.7.4 The students highlighted that staff were very supportive but suggested that it would be useful if beginners were given additional support in Latin 1A and 1B. The mix of student learning levels in Latin 1A was highlighted as being very broad, ranging from no language experience at all to students who had taken 'A' level Latin. Those with no experience in Latin felt at a disadvantage. This was further discussed at the staff meeting where it was reiterated that the language courses were very difficult, particularly for beginners, and that different textbooks had been experimented with to help with the transition from Level 1 to Level 2. Additional reading and web based support had also been provided during the summer. It was highlighted that, due to accommodation issues, classes in Latin Level 1 had been timetabled for 9 am which had not been helpful in enhancing the popularity of the course. The Panel **recommends** that the Subject considers the provision of further support for language learning, particularly for beginners, possibly additional on-line resources to support beginners in Latin and Greek and address the concerns of students with no previous language experience.

4.8 *Student Engagement*

4.8.1 Innovative assessment had been introduced to encourage student reflection on their learning development such as the Level 2 portfolio, peer assessment and the core Travel course.

4.8.2 The Panel **commends** the Staff-Student Alexandrian Society which met fortnightly and included a range of informal social activities as well as invited speakers and the production of an annual play.

4.9 *Transition and Induction*

4.9.1 At the meeting with the PGT students, the difference between the UK and US educational systems was highlighted. It was suggested that better information and support could be provided to international students. In the case of one student, he had applied and been accepted for the MLitt in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, which had not run since 2011. He recognised that the error had originally been caused by accessing an old web page and a breakdown of communication. Following discussion of possible options and research opportunities, alternative provision had been mutually agreed. He also advised that the Research and International Office had been very helpful in assisting him with finding off campus accommodation. The Panel reflected that perhaps more options could have been made available, if Classics collaborated more with other Subjects within and beyond the School. The Panel **recommends** that Classics explores with the Head of School possibilities for interdisciplinarity to provide more flexibility and opportunities for potential PGT students. Furthermore, the Panel **recommends** that the School consults with RIO to establish appropriate support mechanisms for international students before and after arrival.

5. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

5.1 *Learning and Teaching*

5.1.1 From the SER and from discussion with the Head of Subject, it was evident to the Panel that the Subject has been very responsive to introducing technology to enhance learning and teaching. The Subject Area was the first to introduce the use of VLE in Arts and now fully utilised Moodle. Moodle was used to provide course and assignment information, linkage to on-line resources and for online submission of all coursework essays. At Honours level, some courses used 'blended learning' which provided an opportunity for forum

discussions to be held. A full online version of the pre-Honours Classical Civilisation programme was also being developed as part of the Blended and Online Development (BOLD) initiative. For a number of years, the Subject has routinely recorded all pre-Honours lectures available via Moodle and from 2014 has been using Echo360 personal capture. The Subject also used *Talis Aspire* (Library Reading List service) in addition to online journal articles and e-books. The use of *Aropa* was partially pioneered by the Subject for the peer review of essays, and it was currently looking at using *Mahara* to support the Level 2 portfolio assessment. Since the introduction of assessed presentations, digital video cameras have been used to provide a means to moderate and for consultation by External Examiners. The Review Panel **highly commends** the e-learning initiatives undertaken by the Subject to enhance learning and teaching.

5.1.2 From the small group of undergraduate students that met with the Panel, it was indicated that the students did not use the recently introduced on-line student forum, the 'Student Voice'. It was acknowledged that as the Subject was small, most feedback was received from student representatives either via email or face-to-face.

5.2 *Assessment and Feedback*

5.2.1 The Panel **commends** the wide range of assessment which included: self-defined essay question, coursework essay, examination group work, oral presentation, seminar contribution, portfolio work, on-line discussion as well as blended learning. The quantity and quality of assessment and feedback was consistently praised in the External Examiners' reports.

5.2.2 At the meeting with the Head of Subject, the changes made in Levels 1 and 2 of the MA Classics programme were discussed. He advised that the amendments to assessment and introduction of e-learning had had a positive impact on the student experience but were considered more labour intensive for staff.

5.2.3 At the meeting with the undergraduate students, particular attention was drawn to the portfolio assessment. The students advised the Panel that this ensured students worked consistently and ensured that notes were organised and provided an opportunity for personal reflection as well as reflection on the learning outcomes.

5.2.4 Initially to address an issue with attendance in Greek 1A and 1B, the assessment was altered from a single class test to a series of weekly short ten-minute quizzes in class. This was well received by students as it provided weekly feedback to students and ensured a more consistent approach to study. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject for being responsive and addressing an issue as well as providing a more stimulating and productive method of assessment.

5.2.5 The undergraduate students highlighted an issue with a recent Latin 2 examination where the students had not felt adequately prepared for the examination. This was discussed further at the meeting with staff. As a result, the Panel advised that the nature of assessment and expected outcomes should be made clear to students prior to its undertaking.

5.2.6 The undergraduate students who met with the Panel advised that they found peer assessment to be very helpful in developing a better understanding of grade descriptors as well as providing formative feedback. The Panel **commends** the use of peer assessment.

5.2.7 At the meeting with staff, it was brought to the attention of the Panel that students regularly received informal feedback along with more formal formative feedback within the University-specified three-week period from submission. This was confirmed at the meeting with the undergraduate students, who acknowledged that they received feedback following Moodle online submission and that individual feedback was given by staff if requested. Most feedback was received well within the University's 3-week return policy. The Panel recognised this as **good practice**.

5.2.8 One of the PGT students suggested that presentations could be considered unfair as some students were simply more confident in public speaking than others. However, the importance of this activity/assessment in relation to employability as part of a necessary skill set was recognised.

5.3 *Curriculum Design*

Undergraduate

5.3.1 The Panel considered the MA Classics to incorporate a good mix of history and literature with flexible Honours provision. The courses dealing with ancient politics and gender were highlighted as being particular strengths. The Panel recognised that the Subject had recently reviewed the MA Classics introducing core elements to the programme such as the Travel course. The Panel further recognised additional workload issues experienced by small subject areas, particularly recent pressure placed on staff by increased research activity; the Panel suggests that the Subject reviews staff workloads and seeks further potential for bringing together core elements thereby reducing the number of courses offered. The Panel encouraged the Subject to have regular broad discussion on curriculum design at Subject meetings *(please also refer to 3.3)*

5.3.2 It was evident from the SER and from discussion with the Head of Subject that curriculum design had so far focussed on the MA Classics (Classical Civilisation) and that attention would now be given to Greek and Latin. The Head of Subject indicated that plans for this were already in place. (*please also refer to 4.6.4*)

5.3.3 From discussion with the undergraduate students, it was evident that Latin 1A and 1B for beginners were very intensive and difficult courses. The students suggested that the level of difficulty should be highlighted in the prospectus and course information.

Taught Postgraduate

5.3.4 The SER highlighted that the Subject only offered one MLitt programme: the MLitt in Classics. MLitts in Ancient Drama, Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, and Receptions of Classical Antiquity had recently been withdrawn. A new MLitt programme in Ancient Cultures (a joint project with Archaeology, Theology and Religious Studies, Open Studies (Egyptology) and Celtic & Gaelic) has been approved and would be offered from Session 2015/16. The Panel welcomed the development of a 'hub and spoke' model involving other disciplines. This would provide the Subject with a good recruitment opportunity.

5.3.5 The Panel noted that 40 credits of the MLitt could be made up of beginner language courses in Latin or Greek. The Panel was concerned that since these were lower level courses there should be at least 150 credits at Level 11. The current credit total for the MLitt was 180. To be compliant with the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) regulations, the Panel **recommends** the Subject consider increasing the overall credit to 190. This could possibly be achieved by either amending a current course credit or by

adding an additional 10-credit course. Alternatively, the Subject reviews the Intended Learning Outcomes and summative assessment to ensure that these are consistent with SCQF11.

5.3.6 The Head of Subject acknowledged that a number of Honours courses were shared with the postgraduate cohort but with different assessment. The Panel suggests that the Subject explore a more explicit skill set for the PGT cohort. This would ensure that graduates who have already completed the undergraduate programme were not at risk of repeating material. This would also provide an additional pathway to PhD study.

5.4 Engaging and Supporting Staff (including Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs))

Probationary/Early career staff

5.4.1 All four probationary staff had applied to undertake the Teaching and Supervision courses (TSC) and/or Certificate in Academic Practice but where awaiting confirmation for a commencement date. The Panel also noted that there had been no formal School or Subject induction programme but had received informal support on a day-by-day basis by colleagues and the Head of Subject. It was noted that there had been no opportunities to meet new lecturers in other disciplines and new staff did not feel part of the School. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School arranges a formal induction event for all new staff across the School to introduce them to relevant School and University procedures (*please also refer to 5.6.1*)

5.4.2 The probationary staff confirmed that as part of the Early Career Development Programme (ECDP) they had a reduced teaching load. Those staff given extra responsibility had considered this as an opportunity to gain relevant experience, becoming familiar with processes and procedures, although it had a significant impact on time and effort. One probationary member of staff had undertaken the role of Examinations Officer at a time when the predecessor was on research leave and School administrative staff had been new and therefore could only provide limited support, with the result that the Examinations Officer had no guidance or proper support. It was confirmed that a number of administrative tasks had to be carried out by academic staff due to the limited experience of newly appointed support staff. However, the new School administrative staff were considered excellent and pro-active and support was expected to improve in future.

5.4.3 All agreed that the workload model provided by the Head of Subject was transparent and helpful. If possible, research active staff had reduced teaching loads to ensure workload was more manageable. Staff were unaware if there was a School workload model.

GTAs

5.4.4 The GTAs who met with the Panel had a range of experience of study at Glasgow, with 4 of the 6 participants having studied at UG level or completed Masters. The GTAs present confirmed that they had felt well supported by staff and course conveners and specifically requested that they wished to record their thanks to the Subject team for the support provided. There had been no instances of imbalance between studies and teaching. There was a sense of community among the GTAs and this was helped by the recent provision of PGT study space. The Panel welcomed this.

5.4.5 The GTAs had received statutory training from the Learning and Teaching Centre, although they still considered themselves to have been ‘in at the deep end’ to an extent that no training could adequately prepare them for. There had

been no formal Subject/School training but informal meetings were held with the Head of Subject. In addition, the staff 'open door' policy included GTAs, who could approach staff if they had any concerns regarding classes, marking or teaching. Informal weekly meetings were held but these were voluntary.

5.4.6 In terms of assessment, the Course Convener double marked any assessed work undertaken by the GTAs and there was also a chance to discuss assessment with the Course Convener. There was training for addressing essay/examination questions but not generic training on how to assess and mark. The GTAs had been given experience of new and creative ways of teaching and assessing and had engaged with student presentations and portfolios. One GTA, who had not previously studied at Glasgow, felt that she would have liked additional support to help her familiarise herself with course and assessment requirements. She felt that, to some extent, knowledge of teaching and learning practices within the Subject was assumed in GTAs. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School introduces a more formal induction programme for GTAs which should include training on assessment requirements, marking and provision of information on processes and procedures.

5.4.7 One GTA had previous experience of there being an on-site administrator and had noticed a negative impact caused by all administrative staff having been relocated to a single site. It had become less clear which administrator should be contacted when there was an issue and, in general, the physical distance between administrative and academic staff was not ideal. As a result, most GTAs now contacted the course convener rather than the School administrative support team if advice was needed.

5.4.8 At the meeting with the GTAs, one small issue was highlighted: most GTAs gave their email address to the students and would respond to queries accordingly. However, when a question arose which was more complex, this was relayed to the Course Convener, but it was unclear whether it was the GTA's responsibility to establish contact again with the student who had posed the question. The Panel suggests that appropriate procedures be established and considered as part of the formal training, as recommended under item 5.4.6. The Panel also queried whether the GTAs were properly remunerated for work undertaken outside formal teaching. The Review Panel **recommends** the College HR Manager should clarify the position on remuneration for all work undertaken by GTAs and ensure this position is effectively communicated to Schools and Subjects.

5.5 Intended Learning Outcomes

5.5.1 At the meeting with the undergraduate students, they confirmed that they were aware of learning objectives, particularly due to the portfolio assignment which encouraged reflection on the course and what was being learnt as well as peer assessment. Good information was also provided on the Moodle site.

5.6 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)

5.6.1 With restructuring, the Subject no longer had dedicated administrative support with the centralisation of all administrative staff across the School to improve efficiency. As a consequence, the Head of Subject advised that academic staff had increasingly taken on additional administrative duties, including the Head of Subject carrying out basic office management-type tasks. From discussion with staff, it was clear that new academic staff were unfamiliar with administrative processes that should now be standardised across the School.

It was also problematic that there was no central reception/office space for visitors to the Subject to be received, with the consequence of academic staff being disturbed for basic tasks such as to receive post, give directions to rooms, etc. At the meeting with staff, it was highlighted that additional administrative pressure had been placed on the Subject due to recent staff appointments both academic and administrative. However, with staff settling into their new positions, the School administrative support was praised as helpful and efficient. To alleviate some of the issues raised, the Panel **recommends** that the School creates a staff handbook and/or webpage containing guidance on generic administrative processes and procedures across subjects, identifying central administrative staff roles and responsibilities.

5.6.2 The Panel was advised, at the meeting with the undergraduate students, that there had been issues in relation to classroom allocation and that a single course had been taught in a number of different locations across campus. The Panel heard that either the Head of Subject or lecturer would inform students of any changes to the timetable and/or room bookings and not a member of administrative staff. This should be addressed as per the recommendation made under 5.6.1.

5.6.3 The Panel welcomed the expansion into the basement to provide a large PGT study space and research project facilities. This space had been well received and promoted a sense of community among the PGT students.

5.6.4 The undergraduate students indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of course handbooks and information provided on-line. E-learning resources were recognised by the undergraduate and postgraduate students as very useful, although availability of more books on the short-loan basis in the library would be welcomed. *(please also refer to 4.7.3)*

5.7 Work Based Learning

5.7.1 The Panel **commends** the innovative used of outreach initiatives such as the 'Iris Project' whereby students taught Latin in 3 primary schools in a low income area in the East End of Glasgow. *(please also refer to 4.5.1)*

6 Collaborative provision (where applicable)

There was no collaborative provision within the Subject.

7 Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

7.1 Key strengths

The following key strengths were noted:

- Strong community and supportive and responsive environment provided for UG and PGT students and for GTAs.
- Commitment to the students and provision of a high quality student experience which is reflected by the high NSS student satisfaction rates.
- Commitment to the provision of research-led teaching.
- Good and open communication between the academic and student body.
- Effective Staff:Student Liaison Committee.
- Effective Staff:Student Society.

- Innovative assessment, including peer assessment, reflective portfolio and weekly quizzes.
- Feedback on assessment.
- Willingness to engage with e-learning initiatives.
- Engagement with outreach programmes, in particular, the Iris Project that was to evolve into a credited course “Latin in the Classroom”.
- Success in widening participation initiatives and Access provision.
- Using the practice of peer observation to support staff and GTAs.
- Provision of good PGT study space.

7.2 Areas for improvement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for improvement:

- Review language course provision; the grouping of wide range of previous experience and consider diversifying and/or provide additional support, possibly on-line support.
- In principal, the core Travel course was commendable as it clearly enhanced the student experience, but it was questionable if the course could be classified as ‘core’ when it was not available to all students. Consideration should be given to providing alternative provision to give all students access to core skills gained through the course. Additional sources of funding should also be investigated at both Subject and School level. Alternatively, Intended Learning Outcomes should be differentiated between Single and Joint provision.
- Record and document Subject meetings and processes to assist with strategy, curriculum development, dialogue with School and to inform new staff.
- Articulate grade descriptors to be more subject-specific which would ensure greater transparency and enhance peer assessment processes.
- Ensure Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are effectively and consistently communicated, that the objectives and the nature of assessment are transparent to students, and that employability elements are embedded in all programmes, particularly at Levels 1 and 2.
- Map range of Honours courses to range of core critical transferable skills.
- Review the MLitt Classics to provide a more explicit skill set for the PGT cohort, ensuring an appropriate pathway to PhD study was provided.
- Ensure both UG and PGT students are aware of course availability across the School.
- Enter dialogue with the School and College to consider ways in promoting Study Abroad opportunities, highlighting the benefits to the students.
- The School of Humanities to consider ways of building a School identity, ensuring better integration of staff across subjects and investigate opportunities for further interdisciplinary activities.
- The School to articulate administrative processes and procedures.
- The School to provide more formalised GTA mentorship and support.
- The School to provide induction provision for new staff which should include a range of up-to-date information such as appropriate University/College/School

documentation, role and responsibility of staff, administrative processes and procedures, staff handbook, workload model and minutes/notes of meetings to ensure staff are well informed in carrying out both academic and non-academic duties.

- The School to ensure robust application processes are in place and that all publicly available material was accurate. Establish good induction and transition support, particularly for international students.

8 Conclusion and recommendations

The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialists, **confirmed** that, at the time of the Review, programmes offered by the School were current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and of practice in its application.

The Review Panel observed a successful, dedicated and hard-working Subject that provided a very strong student-focussed environment. The Panel was impressed with both the support given to students and its responsiveness to student feedback. The Panel was further impressed with the e-learning initiatives adopted to enhance learning and teaching, despite already high staff workloads.

The Panel recognised that, as a small sized subject, Classics was under considerable pressure to maintain a range of teaching and research, however, there appeared to be no plan for sustainable phased learning and teaching development. Therefore the Subject should develop a coherent strategic vision, in terms of future growth and range of provision, working with the Head of School to produce a phased plan for realising its vision. Particular attention should be given to reviewing language provision and how marketing could be enhanced for all programmes.

The Panel further identified that the relationship between the Subject and the School of Humanities and with other subject areas within the School required attention; through the School building interdisciplinary relationships between all the subject areas, provision of formal support for new staff and GTAs and establishment of generic guidance on administrative processes and procedures.

Commendations

The Review Panel commends Classics on the following, which are **listed in order of appearance** in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel commends the provision of a very strong student-focussed environment [Paragraph 3.1]

Commendation 2

The Review Panel commends Classic's success in widening access [Paragraph 4.1.1]

Commendation 3

The Panel commends the use of peer assessment. [Paragraph 4.1.6]

Commendation 4

The Panel commends the Subject's responsiveness to student feedback. [Paragraph 4.2.1]

Commendation 5

The Panel recognised that the three-week core Travel course gave students the opportunity to travel abroad and, in principal, commends this student learning experience. [Paragraph 4.6.2] (*but see Recommendation 4*)

Commendation 6

The Panel commends the strong sense of community and supportive and responsive environment provided. [Paragraph 4.7.1]

Commendation 7

The Panel commends the Staff-Student Alexandrian Society which met fortnightly and included a range of informal social activities as well as invited speakers and often produced an annual play. [Paragraph 4.8.2]

Commendation 8

The Review Panel highly commends the e-learning initiatives undertaken by the Subject to enhance learning and teaching. [Paragraph 5.1.1]

Commendation 9

The Panel commends the wide range of assessment including: self-defined essay question, coursework essay, examination group work, oral presentation, seminar contribution, portfolio work, on-line discussion as well as blended learning. [Paragraph 5.2.1]

Commendation 10

The Review Panel commends the Subject for being responsive and addressing an issue with attendance as well as providing a more stimulating and productive method assessment. [Paragraph 5.2.4]

Commendation 11

The Panel commends the use of peer assessment. [Paragraph 5.2.6]

Commendation 12

The Panel commends the innovative used of outreach initiatives such as the 'Iris Project' whereby students taught Latin in 3 primary schools in a low income area in the East End of Glasgow. [Paragraph 5.7.1]

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the Subject in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are **grouped together** by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are **ranked in order of priority within each section**.

For the attention of Classics

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject develops a coherent strategic vision in terms of future growth and range of provision, working with the Head of School to produce a plan as to how to achieve this. [Paragraph 3.3]

For Action: Head of Subject

For information: Head of School

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel recommends that attention be given to restructuring language provision with a view to providing a more progressive learning environment, possibly improving retention. [Paragraph 4.1.5]

For Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 3

In relation to the MLitt Classics, to be compliant with the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) regulations, the Panel recommends the Subject consider increasing the overall credit to 190. This could possibly be achieved by either amending a current course credit or by adding an additional 10-credit course. Alternatively, the Subject reviews the Intended Learning Outcomes and summative assessment to ensure that these are consistent with SCQF11. [Paragraph 5.3.5]

For Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 4

The Panel recommends that consideration be given to providing alternative provision to give all students access to the core skills gained by the Travel course, possibly the introduction of a number of shorter trips. Additional sources of funding should also be investigated at both Subject and School level. Alternatively, Intended Learning Outcomes should be differentiated between Single and Joint provision. [Paragraph 4.6.2]. In addition, the Panel recommends that the Subject and School ensure the core Travel course complies with the University's equality and diversity policies. [Paragraph 4.4.2]

For Action: Head of Subject and Head of School

Recommendation 5

The Panel recommends that the Subject considers the provision of further support for language provision, particularly for beginners, possibly introducing additional on-line resources to support beginners to Latin and Greek and address the concerns of students with no previous language experience. [Paragraph 4.7.4]

For Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 6

The Panel noted that the Code of Assessment could be difficult to interpret and recommends that the Subject develops explicit Schedule A grade descriptors in relation to Classics in order to assist students to gain a better understanding of what was expected from them. [Paragraph 4.7.2]

For Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 7

No measures were in place to monitor workload in relation to the 'open door' policy and the Panel therefore suggests that 'office hours' be considered for all staff but recommends for GTAs. The Panel further recommends that GTAs be properly remunerated for their contact time with students. [Paragraph 4.7.1]

For Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 8

In relation to employability, the Review Panel recommends that the Subject clearly articulate the transferable skills acquired, such as those attained in the core Travel course, and communicate these to all students. [Paragraph 4.3.1]

For Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject and the School work with the Dean of International Mobility to consider ways to promote interest in study abroad by highlighting the benefits and removing barriers to student mobility. [Paragraph 4.6.1]

For Action: Head of Subject and Head of School

For information: Dean of International Mobility

Recommendation 10

The Panel recommends that Classics explores with the Head of School possibilities for interdisciplinarity to provide more flexibility and opportunities for potential PGT students. Furthermore, the Panel recommends that the School consults with RIO to establish appropriate support mechanisms for international students before and after arrival. [Paragraph 4.9.1]

For Action: Head of Subject and Head of School

For Information: Recruitment and International Office

For the attention of the School of Humanities

Recommendation 11

The Panel recommends that the School re-instates formally recorded meetings of Subject course reflection and learning and teaching developments which should facilitate dialogue between Subject and School. [Paragraph 3.6]

For Action: Head of Head of School

For information: Head of Subject

Recommendation 12

The Panel recommends that the School arranges a formal induction event for all new staff across the School to introduce them to relevant School and University procedures. [Paragraph 5.4.1] In addition, the Panel recommends that the School creates a staff handbook and/or webpage containing guidance on generic administrative processes and procedures across subjects, identifying central administrative staff roles and responsibilities. [Paragraph 5.6.1]

For Action: Head of Head of School

For information: Head of Subject

Recommendation 13

The Review Panel recommends that the School further develops a School identity by introducing appropriate inter-Subject forums to allow for discussion of common issues and provide opportunities for staff to meet with other colleagues. [Paragraph 3.4]

For Action: Head of Head of School

For information: Head of Subject

Recommendation 14

The Review Panel recommends that the School introduces a more formal induction programme for GTAs which should include training on assessment requirements, marking and provision of information on processes and procedures. [Paragraph 5.4.6]

For Action: Head of Head of School

For information: Head of Subject

Recommendation 15

The Review Panel recommends that the School establishes appropriate support mechanisms for international students before and after arrival. [Paragraph 4.9.1]

For Action: Head of Head of School

For information: Head of Subject

For the attention of College HR

Recommendation 16

The Review Panel recommends the College HR Manager should clarify the position on remuneration for all work undertaken by GTAs and ensure this position is effectively communicated to Schools and Subjects. [Paragraph 5.4.8]

For Action: College HR Manager

For information: Head of Subject