

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 17 April 2015

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 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.

Updated Response from Acting Head of College – November 2014

The College is in the process of developing an integrated plan for the administrative support of Teaching and Research across the College. This is being led by the College Secretary. The plan will deliver improved administrative support for Teaching in Physics & Astronomy (as well as other schools in the College).

Updated Response from College Secretary – April 2015

Provision has been made in the College Plan for the introduction of additional staff in support of the TRM process and for a Teaching Administrator, possibly to be shared between Physics & Astronomy and Chemistry. Confirmation of these posts will follow completion of the current planning and budgeting round. However, the consultation process regarding realignment of support staff structures with the School has continued. The additional resource, along with a reorganisation of the support staff structures, will provide an enhanced level of support for teaching and learning.