

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Thursday 21 May 2015

Periodic Subject Review: Responses to Recommendations Arising
from the Review of Sociology held on 25 and 26 February 2014

Lesley Fielding, Clerk to the Review Panel

Conclusion

The Review Panel highly commends the Subject Area for the overall quality of its provision and the dedication of the staff team in providing a rewarding and supportive student environment. The research-led teaching is a major strength and the Subject Area is to be commended on the wide and varied range of courses made available for the students, although the Review Panel has concerns regarding the sustainability of the current provision. The areas that require attention are listed in the Recommendations below. These have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer. They are ranked in the order of priority.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **recommends** that discussions take place about resources with the School and College to support the achievement of the Subject Area's long term vision for learning and teaching. *[paragraph 2].*

**For the attention of: Vice Principal and Head of College,
Head of School and
Head of Subject**

Response:

Staffing and resources are reviewed via the University's annual planning and budgeting process. Within this context indicators such as staff-student ratios (SSRs) and income contribution are considered, together with potential resource allocation changes and investments. In the 2014/15 financial year, three full-time lecturers have been recruited into the Subject-Area and discussions are on-going as to future priorities, potential areas for investment and resource allocations affecting the Subject-Area.

Recommendation 2:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area gives serious consideration to capping Level 1 student numbers for forthcoming sessions in order to sustain the quality of current levels of provision. *[paragraph 3.5.1].*

**For the attention of: Head of School,
Dean of Learning and Teaching and
Head of Subject**

Response:

In liaison with the Head of School and the Dean for Learning & Teaching, in the 2014/15 academic year a managed enrolment policy for Sociology Level 1A was applied. This allowed students taking a Sociology degree and also those on joint degrees from various

subjects to enrol onto the course, but it limited the extent to which the course was automatically open to students out with the Colleges of Social Sciences and Arts. It did not involve formal capping since students who could not enrol automatically were able to contact the Level 1 Course Administrator to be placed on a waiting list for manual enrolment once the final numbers from CoSS and CoA had been confirmed on the course. This new approach worked well and in 2014-15 approximately 550 students were enrolled, as planned. For 2015/16, a de facto cap of 602 applies since this is the total capacity of the rooms booked for the live and relay lectures.

Recommendation 3:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area reviews its range of assessments across the programmes, utilising the opportunities provided by the Q-Step project in collaboration with the relevant member of the Learning and Teaching Centre, and incorporating alternative methods of assessment such as report writing and reflective diaries. [paragraph 3.3.2].

**For the attention of: Head of Subject,
Director Learning & Teaching Centre and
Director of Q-Step**

Response: Head of Subject

During the 2014/15 academic year, the Honours Convenor (Dr Matt Dawson) prepared and presented a paper at a Sociology subject-Area Staff meeting that proposed a policy whereby further assessment methods beyond essays and exams be accepted and utilised within the Subject Area. This policy was approved by the Subject Area Committee and a further commitment to support for more diverse forms of assessment across the discipline were made. At honours level, such changes require PIP approval and the Honours Convenor is working to ensure courses remain within a 4,000-4,500 word (or equivalent) upper limit on assessment. Furthermore during the 2014/15 academic year, four Honours courses (Class and Stratification, Sociology of Health and Illness, Contemporary Migration and Migration, Multiculturalism and Belonging) adopted new forms of assessment including presentations, reports, projects and reviews.

A further meeting of the Subject Area Teaching & Learning Group was held where it was agreed the Subject will invite a member of the Learning & Teaching Centre to present to staff on alternative assessment methods at the start of the next academic year, prior to and in preparation for when PIP forms have to be submitted for courses running in the 2016/17 academic year.

Response: Learning and Teaching Centre

The Academic Development Unit provides advice and guidance on all aspects of curriculum design. ADU has also been in discussion with the Q-Step project team and have offered support; this is likely to be ongoing in 2015/16. Therefore ADU's primary contact for the College of Social Sciences will meet with representatives of the subject early in the 2015/16 session to discuss how ADU can best support a diversification of assessment methods.

Recommendation 4:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area along with the School and College reviews the Subject Area's staffing structure to identify, if possible and appropriate, where staff appointments and contracts could be increased and/or made permanent to address the SSRs currently being experienced in the Subject Area. [paragraph 3.8.1].

**For the attention of: Vice Principal and Head of College,
Head of School and
Head of Subject**

Joint Response:

The staffing situation in the Subject Area has progressed during the 2014/15 financial year. Four appointments have been made, two permanent, one fixed-term in the first instance and a two-year cover appointment. Dr Alistair Fraser from Hong Kong University will join the subject as a lecturer in Criminology from 01 September 2015 on a permanent contract. The second new permanent position, as lecturer in Sociology will see Mr Neil Davidson transfer from a fixed-term contract. In addition, Dr Dominic Pasura will join the Subject Area on a two-year fixed term contract from 01 August as cover for Dr Francesca Scrinzi and Dr Catherine Happer joins the subject area on a two-year fixed term contract from 01 July as lecturer in Sociology of Media. This last post is directly linked to the new MSc in Media, Communications & International Journalism and is likely to be extended if the course meets recruitment targets.

Welcome though these appointments are, it is worth noting that they represent an uplift of only about 1.0FTE in staffing in the subject area. Given increases in student numbers, this is unlikely to impact significantly on the problems around SSRs identified in the self-assessment report and in the PSR itself.

From a subject perspective therefore, it remains critical that proposals for new posts to address the SSR (and to capitalise on our excellent REF result) continue to be actively explored. are included in the next staffing round in the autumn.

Recommendation 5:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School pursues the possibility of using off-campus teaching accommodation for the Subject Area. *[paragraph 3.8.7].*

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

For information: Director of Estates and Buildings

Response: Head of School and Head of Subject

In February 2015, Court approved the University's new, ten-year estates strategy. Central to these plans is the co-location of the School with the Institute of Health & Wellbeing and the School of Education in a new building on the Western Infirmary site. This project sits within the first wave of the strategy's delivery plan and it is anticipated the School, including all staff and the PGR students based within Subject-Area, will be moved by 2020. As the School's new home is developed, the School continues to seek to manage its existing accommodation and facilities in the most effective manner, whilst also pro-actively seeking new space on campus, where this is available and of a sufficient standard. As part of this work, the School is developing a comprehensive space policy and is investing in maintaining its present estate to suitable standards.

Currently the School's space footprint is not optimal and constraints and limitations are felt across all of the School's Subject Areas. The key space issue affecting the Subject Area concerns Criminology staff and students based in Ivy Lodge, which is presently not able to accommodate all relevant staff and students in accommodation of a suitable size/quality. The School is exploring what options there are to address these issues, whilst aiming to maintain the Subject Area's geographical proximity/clustering.

Recommendation 6:

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject Area arranges for training through the GTA Development Coordinator within the Academic Development Unit of the Learning and Teaching centre on essay marking and feedback for all GTAs. [paragraph 3.3.3].

**For the attention of: Head of Subject,
Head of the Academic Development Unit and
Dean of Learning and Teaching
For information: Dean of Graduate Studies**

Response: Head of Subject/Dean of Learning and Teaching

Dr Teresa Piacentini (Level 1 Coordinator) has been liaising with the Learning and Teaching Service's GTA Development Coordinator, Dr Ming Cheng, for levels 1 & 2. They have discussed promotion (and monitoring uptake) of the statutory training and the development of Sociology's additional, bespoke subject level training for GTAs (on 'Running a Tutorial' and on 'Assessment, Feedback and Evaluation').

Dr Cheng reviewed a wide range of support materials we offer to GTAs (this included a selection of essay guidance notes that teaching staff prepare for Tutors from level 1 and 2, and the material for our own subject level training). She was very impressed by the level of support on offer, and was unable at that point to add to this in terms of further areas of GTA training/support.

Dr Piacentini reviewed examples of good practice from PSRs across the university (Open Studies and Computing Science) to identify areas that could be developed further. However, upon review it is clear we offer a similarly-high level of support to GTAs at Levels 1 and 2.

GTAs are also provided with advice on opportunities to undertake Staff Development Training free of charge. They have been involved in discussions about the development of pre-Honours courses and particularly in the tutorial programme, discussed at the three Level 1 team meetings across the academic year. GTAs have also consulted on the development of the new student questionnaire. Their knowledge of the course is informed by their own research and they bring this to their teaching as a wider set of resources, and are actively encouraged to do so in tutorials and via Moodle.

With respect to GTA support, they are supported by the Course Convenor and Administrator and through these training arrangements referred to above. The Subject Area has just agreed GTA representation in staff meetings to provide a further platform for feedback and input. Informal discussions with GTAs and feedback suggests they feel very well supported, particularly in the areas of additional teaching support material and training. It was evident from discussions with the GTAs at meetings, training sessions and informally that they were aware of the different level of support and preparation required between Levels 1 & 2. GTAs have advised Dr Piacentini that they find the skills they are learning useful.

With respect to support for GTAs in marking, they are given very comprehensive answers which are linked to grading, and have advised they find this helpful. There is also scope for informal discussion around any marking issues with Course convenor/lecturers.

Students' engagement with the feedback process operates at a number of levels: through formal questionnaires, Staff Student Liaison Committees and informal feedback. The new student questionnaire has a section dedicated to tutorials, developed in consultation with GTAs. Overall student feedback is consistently positive about the tutorials; indeed, for many

students the tutorials are what they enjoy most about the course. GTAs also have the opportunity to review students' formal written feedback.

NB Professor Berry and Dr Ferrie are currently organising a workshop with staff who will undertake teaching on the various research methods courses in the coming year. As noted, GTAs have access to courses from the teaching and learning centre. GTA workloads are monitored and are in line with ESRC and AHRC policy.

Response: Head of Academic Development Unit

All GTAs are required to undertake GTA Statutory Training (provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre). This three-hour training session aims to introduce the teaching and learning responsibilities of a GTA at the University of Glasgow, and provide suggestions on how to deal with potential challenges when working as a GTA. Due to the varied assessment practices of different subject, GTA statutory training, while drawing participants' attention to the code of assessment does not provide training on essay marking and feedback. The Academic Development Unit has worked with course convenors to design and deliver subject-specific support for GTAs' assessment and feedback practices with a view that this training then becomes the responsibility of the subject. Dr Ming Cheng, the GTA statutory training coordinator has discussed various aspects of GTA support with the Sociology Level 1 coordinator and they are working together to provide tailored training for Sociology GTAs around assessment and feedback.

Recommendation 7

Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area and School engage at College level to review the content of the generic Research Methods courses as a matter of urgency. [paragraph 3.4.3].

**For the attention of: Head of School,
Head of Subject and
Dean of Graduate Studies**

Response – Dean of Graduate Studies:

I can find no record of this issue being brought to the PGR committee of the College and would welcome further discussion with colleagues on sociology.

The College has invested heavily in buy outs for teaching on quantitative and qualitative methods and social theory. In addition, there is considerable scope for subject input. Apart from dedicated buy outs for Dr Ferrie- the overall course co-ordinator- we have invested in support staff and GTAs from the Big Data centre and from the School of Social and Political Sciences.

Our Research training delivery is in line with ESRC recommendations as set out in the Scottish Graduate School for Social Science: NB Professor Anderson is Chair of the SGSSS and Professor Berry a member of the executive board. We can give our assurances that the University of Glasgow is at the forefront of training in research methods for postgraduates as is evidenced by the increasing number of scholarships awarded to this university from the ESRC sponsored SGSS. NB Professor Berry as a member of the Scottish Deans' committee of the SGSS, has been holding talks with regard to developing Scottish wide research training events. NB We run several MRes programmes based on a combination of College provision and specific subject input.

It is worth pointing out that as a subject area sociology has had access to College funds in order to develop PGR research workshops as part of their annual research training event.*

In addition, sociology has been very successful in the College scholarship competition, which has undoubtedly helped to increase PGR numbers.

Further information: We are also seeking to appointment (at SL /Professorial level) a new Director of Research Training for the College to be in post later this year. We have also developed a new training needs analysis log to evaluate student needs and to allow for greater planning for future RT activities.

Professor Smith sent this e- mail from this year's PGR workshop, but the same applies to the conference, which took place at the time of the review:

Dear Richard,

Many thanks indeed for offering this funding for our annual Sociology and Criminology PGR conference. We are just making arrangements at the moment –We very much appreciate the Graduate School's support with this,

Andy

Recommendation 8:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area reviews the CPD opportunities for GTAs with regard to extending their role, including an exploration of the possibility of providing support to undertake examination marking, and to appoint a senior GTA to mentor the more junior GTAs. *[paragraph 3.8.4].*

For the attention of: Head of Subject and

Head of Graduate Studies

For information: Dean of Learning and Teaching

Response:

GTAs across the Subject Area were consulted with regard to this recommendation. A number of the forms of support, which GTAs said they would welcome have been developed as part of the wider response to this recommendation (in particular: additional guidance and support with regard to marking). It was also established that many GTAs, whose involvement in courses is largely confined to seminar contexts, would appreciate the opportunity to have some experience of lecturing.

It was agreed at Subject level that we would explore the possibility of securing a small amount of resource that would allow GTAs payment for making small lecturing contributions to existing courses, where these were pedagogically-justified, and would benefit students both by introducing new perspectives, and by giving them evidence of the processes of undertaking and analysing social research. Finally, it was established that Staff Development Service courses are, in principle, open to and freely available to GTAs, and these opportunities were publicised to them.

Recommendation 9:

The Review Panel concluded that Level 2 courses required greater coherence and connection to the overall programme and **recommends** that the Subject Area undertakes a review of the Level 2 provision to address these concerns. *[paragraph 3.4.2].*

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Response:

Changes to the Level 2 courses have been approved and will take effect from the 2015/16 academic year. The main alterations to content will be in 2A, which had increasingly lacked any overall linking theme. Whereas Level 1 offers students some examples of the fields in which sociology can provide insights, from 2015, Level 2A will seek to deepen their overall understanding by offering students a systematic overview of the development of the subject and its related disciplines. The introductory lecture, a hitherto underused session, will focus on how the advent of capitalist modernity established the conditions for the emergence of social theory in general. The first section proper will trace the origins of sociology in the Enlightenment. Section 2 will then survey the major figures and concepts associated with Classical Sociology, while Section 3 will explore the work of six key modern thinkers, including two each from the disciplines of Anthropology and Criminology, to ensure that students are exposed to these, before going on to Honours level. It is probable that the actual thinkers discussed will vary from year to year, but the balance between the disciplines will remain constant. 2B, dealing with issues of Identity and Inequality, was previously a more coherent course than 2A and has consequently been subject to far fewer changes. It focuses on aspects of racism, ethnicity and nation, and on gender and sexuality.

Recommendation 10:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area undertakes a review of the taught postgraduate programmes' provision to ensure sustainable student numbers. [paragraph 3.5.3].

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Response:

Dr Matt Dawson (former Sociology PGT Convenor) presented a discussion paper on this topic to the Teaching Away Day following the PSR meetings but prior to the report. Provisional changes were agreed, specifically that optional courses would now be scheduled on a year-on/year-off basis.

The new Sociology PGT Convenor, Dr Matthew Waites (from September 2014), has been monitoring student feedback on this issue. Some students have expressed concern in oral feedback at options not running every year; for example, in the initial induction meeting where option choices are discussed, and in subsequent individual comments. However since the first year of this new arrangement is not yet complete, we do not yet have end of year or end of programme feedback from students. Application and offer numbers have now risen, particularly from international students and, therefore, it will be necessary to review this new arrangement again after the beginning of the 2015/16 academic year, once statistics for new arrivals and programme feedback are available.

Professor Simon Mackenzie, Criminology PGT Convenor, had led teaching group review meetings involving all teaching staff. The Criminology course team have started a process of ongoing review with a view to considering whether some current offerings can be consolidated, and the creation of new optional courses has been effectively suspended while we continue to assess sustainability issues.

Recommendation 11:

The Review Panel concurred with the concerns expressed regarding the level of remuneration to GTAs and **recommends** that consideration be given to the review of the preparation time and payment of GTAs. [paragraph 3.8.3].

For the attention of: Director of Human Resources

For information: Clerk of Senate

Response:

The pay and remuneration arrangements for both hourly paid employees and casual workers engaged as Graduate Training Assistants is detailed in the Extended Workforce Policy which has recently been subject to review and can be found at www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/mgrs-admin/ewp

The extracts listed below are of particular significance to the recommendation:-

For hourly paid employees engaged in tutoring and graduate teaching related activities, this includes being paid agreed appropriate time for preparation, administration and marking in addition to their teaching or class contact time. The table below indicates the amount of time which should be applied to a range of teaching/tutoring and teaching support related activities for which payment should be processed at School/RI/Service level accordingly.

Type of work	Payment	Comments
Demonstrating	1 hour per hour session.	
Tutoring	1 hour per hour of tutoring/ teaching contact time.	An additional 0.5 is normally payable for each hour of tutoring/ teaching contact as outlined below. This additional factor is not payable for repeat tutorial / teaching contact or in situations in which prior preparation is not required.
Preparation	0.5 per hour of tutoring/ teaching contact time is payable for preparation.	It is recognised such time may be utilised for administration or student support related duties instead of preparation. This minimum factor may increase between disciplines and levels of academic work or situations where there is a requirement to undertake preparation, administration and student support related duties.
Development	0.5 per hour of tutoring/ teaching contact time is payable for developing a lecture / course / programme.	This minimum factor may increase for development of an entirely new syllabus or decrease for updating an existing syllabus.
Marking	1 hour for each hour undertaken on marking and feedback related activities including examinations, assessments, projects, coursework, essays, etc.	The reasonable expectations of School/RI/College in terms of scripts marked per hour may vary between disciplines and levels of academic work. Hence the number of hours credited may be linked to the number of scripts (based on an average expected time per script) and not necessarily the “actual time”

spent.

The yellow highlighted sections are particularly significant in terms of this recommendation. Each section with regards to both preparation and marking provision clearly specifies a **minimum** requirement along with a degree of flexibility to the relevant School/RI/College to vary the amount of preparation time and the potential number of scripts to be marked per hour as appropriate to the subject discipline and the requisite level of academic work.

The policy has recently been reviewed and further developed to provide for the complexities of particular subject disciplines at unit level as deemed appropriate by the relevant Head of School/ Course Co-ordinator or Programme Leader. It would therefore appear that this recommendation has been addressed in terms of University policy provision and I would therefore encourage line managers at a local level to apply the policy as appropriate to the complexities of the subject discipline.

Response: School

Rates of GTA remuneration that the School follows are set centrally by University Human Resources and are judged to compare favourable to comparator HEIs. The School has its own local policy for the amount of time GTAs are credited and paid for in regards to preparation time for seminars, which is more generous than that recommended within the University's official GTA policy, providing and paying for one hours' preparation time for each contact hour for the first time a topic is taught.

Recommendation 12:

The Review Panel considered that whilst the Subject Area was addressing Graduate Attributes adequately, they were hidden and, therefore, the Review Panel **recommends** that Graduate Attributes should be made more explicit to the student body to ensure their awareness of this important area of activity. [paragraph 5.6].

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Response:

The Honours Convenor, Dr Matt Dawson, has undertaken to include a more explicit statement about how existing training provided by the subject helps develop the various Graduate Attributes; this will be incorporated in the Honours General Booklet and in future versions of the Honours Guide template for individual optional courses. Dr Lucy Pickering, Dissertations Convenor, has also agreed to provide a more specific focus on Graduate Attributes in the context of the compulsory senior/joint Honours dissertation training sessions in 2015/16.

Recommendation 13:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School and Subject Area revisit the administrative procedures in relation to payment with GTAs in order to clarify the processes. [paragraph 3.8.5].

For the attention of: Head of School

Head of Subject

Response: Head of School and Head of Subject

A School-wide GTA policy document, which includes all relevant procedures affecting the handling of GTAs is currently being finalised and will shortly be considered by the School's Executive Committee. This document and its dissemination will aim to ensure all staff and

registered GTAs are fully aware of the School's GTA policies and processes, including deadlines for the return of information required for payments to be processed, whilst operational responsibility for the delivery of the School's GTA procedures has been allocated to a dedicated and experienced administrative member of staff based within the School's Finance Team.

Recommendation 14:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area reviews and develops a policy with regard to staff availability for students via Moodle and email to manage student expectations. [paragraph 3.6.2].

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Response:

The statement which follows, based on a version originally developed by Robert Gibb and Olive Bredin for use at Level 1, was agreed following discussion of this recommendation as a Subject Level statement to be applied across all course. It is intended to help make clear the reasonable limits and expectations which apply to e-mail correspondence between staff and students. It was agreed that it can be incorporated into Course Guides at all levels and it will be publicised on individual course Moodle sites.

Statement of practice regarding email communication

Class sizes in Sociology have grown considerably across all levels in recent years. The number of e-mail inquiries and questions sent to staff, especially to course convenors and administrators, has grown at a corresponding rate and has become extremely demanding, especially for staff involved in running the most popular courses. The use of smartphones and similar devices with e-mail capability has led to a further growth in the number and frequency of messages which we receive.

In this context, we felt that it was important that we should provide a clear statement about the management of e-mail communication in the context of very large student numbers. Accordingly, in September 2014, following a recommendation from the reviewers during our recent Periodic Subject Review, and taking the very effective practice developed by Dr. Robert Gibb and Olive Bredin as a model, the subject area agreed the following as a statement of practice.

1. Staff in the subject area are here to help you and we are always happy to clarify things which are not clear, ambiguous or uncertain. We are also here to support you in a more general sense, and you should feel free to contact us if you are facing personal or other difficulties which are impinging on your work.
2. We would ask, however, that you do not e-mail course convenors, lecturers or other staff with enquiries about administrative or procedural matters until you have read the relevant course guide and other information with which you have been provided carefully and thoroughly. The answers to the majority of questions which are sent to staff are usually to be found within the relevant course guide(s), which have been prepared to provide you with all of the information you need about class times, venues, assessments etc.
3. If you do send an e-mail to an administrator or course convenor concerning a matter which is dealt with in the course guide, you will receive a standard reply which points you to that document. Remember also that each course has a student forum on its Moodle page, and your classmates may well be able to help answer straightforward questions that you may have.

4. Where questions are raised regarding procedures or regulations which are not addressed in the course guide, the course convenor or administrator will reply to your question and will also post their answer on the relevant course Moodle news forum so that all members of class have access to it.
5. In general, staff will undertake to respond to all relevant and appropriate inquiries in a timely fashion. Where staff are out of the office at conferences or other events they will indicate this through the use of an 'out-of-office' automated reply. Please be aware, though, that staff are not obliged to reply to messages over the weekend, or outside of office hours. As a general guide, staff will seek to respond to all student inquiries within a week. While staff will try to deal with more urgent inquiries as quickly as they can, please do be aware that this will not always be possible, and staff are not expected to be 'on-call' at all times."

Recommendation 15:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area should consult Recruitment and International Office (RIO) and the International Dean (Student Mobility) in revising its approach to student mobility [*paragraph 5.5*].

**For the attention of: Head of Subject
Director of Recruitment and International Office
International Dean (Student Mobility)**

Response: Head of Subject

In line with recommendations contained in the International Study Abroad Handbook an 'international team' consisting of the International Officer, Honours Convenor, and one other colleagues from the Subject Area was convened for 2014/15. This team is intended to perform the administrative requirements of international study and encourage further take-up of the scheme. For the 2014/15 academic year, this included an information session for those considering international study. Those approved for international study increased this year from 3 to 12 (10 international, 2 Erasmus).

Response: Director of RIO

Response: International Dean (Student Mobility)

No contact has been made by the Subject area.

Recommendation 16:

The Review Panel recommends that the Graduate School develops ways of improving the interaction between College representatives and taught postgraduate students to develop clearer and more coherent lines of communication. [*paragraph 5.2*].

**For the attention of: Head of Graduate Studies
For information: Head of School**

Response:

Taught postgraduate students elect class representatives who sit on the School PGT committee. These committees in turn send representatives to the College PGT committee. We are aware that we need to improve communications in this area as student representatives do not always turn up at the College level committee. This issue is currently under review by Professor Paton, Deputy Dean. There are School level events at the beginning of the year which are attended by College staff in a social capacity. There is some

difficulty in organising a College wide event due to the very high numbers, but this is under consideration.

Recommendation 17:

The Review Panel noted that the taught postgraduate community was rather fragmented and considered that this was an area with considerable scope for development. The Review Panel **recommends** the Subject Area explores options in order to develop a cohesive postgraduate community. [paragraph 5.8].

For the attention of: Head of Subject

Response:

Several actions have been taken to 'develop a cohesive postgraduate community' in Sociology, encompassing:

Sociology PGT Events. Specific informal social gatherings were organised in conjunction with events for students to attend. A Sociology seminar and the immediately subsequent Glasgow Human Rights Network annual lecture were advertised with a social gathering for PGT students to discuss these talks in Left Bank bar/restaurant. The Document Human Rights Film Festival at Centre for Contemporary Arts in November provided a setting for a gathering of MSc/MRes Equality and Human Rights students, plus a few other Sociology students, to meet and get to know one another (repeating a practice previously used by Dr Waites when previously PGT Convener); this introduction to a key cultural space was particularly appreciated by international students new to Glasgow, and the event encouraged participation at the festival, including volunteering by some of our students which allows free film entry. A further social gathering after a Sociology seminar for all Sociology PGT students was also organised. Together these events provided several opportunities for students to meet informally.

Moodle. A new Moodle site was created for Sociology PGT students; this operates between programme sites and the School PGT site. The School PGT site has increasingly been used by staff, so is building somewhat more sense of a School PGT community, though students still tend to speak and act on Moodle at a programme level, via programme sites. Sociology and Criminology PGT Conveners exchange information to be shared to Moodle to ensure students from Sociology Criminology know about events of overlapping relevance and interest.

PhD conference. For the first time, PGT students considering a PhD application were invited to attend the annual Sociology PhD conference. We will consider extending this invitation further in the coming year, subject to budget considerations.

Wider events. An increasing amount of information about events has been shared via Moodle. The Sociology Seminar Series in particular is advertised as providing a core focus for students and staff. In practice there are events at a number of levels - University, College, School, Subject, Networks, Centres, Forums etc. (e.g. Gender and Sexualities Forum, SCCJR etc). Students comment on the large numbers of events to participate in, and the number of such events we advertise helps PGT students in Sociology PGT programmes to meet. There is also an active Sociology student society in which both undergraduate and postgraduate students participate. The student experience is thus both multi-dimensional and multi-layered and the extent to which a cohesive Sociology PGT student community can be formed in this general context has limits. However, the measures outlined have been effective in creating a greater sense of cohesion this year.