

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 2 October 2015

**Periodic Subject Review: Updated Responses to
Recommendations 7 and 15 Arising from the Review of Sociology
held on 25 and 26 February 2014**

Ms Catherine Omand, Senate Office

Recommendation 7

The 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 SGSS 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 M.Res 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

Updated response – October 2015

The issues raised by students during the Review, and reflected in this recommendation, refer to courses which are taken by both PGR and PGT students. We have further discussed these issues with the Head of the Graduate School and have considered what next steps might be helpful, whilst recognizing that the provision and arrangement of these courses falls outside of the remit of the subject area itself. Some of the central concerns which have been expressed by our students in the past relate to the difficulty of communicating problems and concerns about the courses to staff who convene them; in the last year, however, arrangements for convenorship have changed and informal feedback suggests that the new arrangements have led to improvements in that regard. The Head of the Graduate School reports that the forthcoming appointment of a new Director of Postgraduate Training at senior level will also be significant in this respect.

The Head of the Graduate School has also asked that we try to provide more detailed information about the specific issues which have been of concern to students. Therefore, and in order to gauge how things have gone this year, we have agreed that our current PGT Director will seek to undertake a short evaluation with the soon-to-complete PGT cohort with regard to their experience of these courses, and we will provide feedback from that exercise directly to the Head of the Graduate School and, as appropriate, to the incoming Director of Postgraduate Training.

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.

Updated Response – October 2015

Response: Director of RIO

The challenge presented by a higher number of incoming students than outgoing is one that is common across most discipline areas and cannot be addressed in isolation. That being said, the number of Sociology students studying abroad has increased dramatically in the last year as subject promotion and support, in-conjunction with central promotion, has been increased. Sociology contributed for the first time to an Information Session in October 2014 for interested students and subsequently we have two successful Erasmus applications for Sociology students in 2015-16 and currently out in 2014-15.

It is imperative going forward that Sociology work with the College and the central Study Abroad and Exchange team within the Recruitment and International Office to promote study abroad opportunities and link effectively to central sources of information. The College of Social Sciences now have their own International pages with content that links to the Study Abroad and Exchange central pages that can also be highlighted to students. A new Agreement Proposal process is also now in place to allow new agreements to be established easily which can support the identification of suitable partners across Europe.

It is also worth noting that the International Dean: Mobility is currently working with the Study Abroad and Exchange team to implement a series of consultations within Schools around a range of measures to enhance the mobility offer to students.

Response: International Dean Mobility

One of the key aspects for enhancing mobility is to try to increase short-term mobility at the same time as pushing semester/sessional exchanges. I'd be more than happy to come over to Sociology to discuss some recent possibilities that have arisen, plus discuss how to increase participation rates on ERASMUS exchanges (where there seems to be much scope for development). We have also secured cash for short 'study visits' to European partners for UG students in years 1 and 2, and this may also be of interest.

Response: Subject

As reported in our initial response, the subject formed an 'International Team' following from the recommendations of the original report, and this led over the last year to a four-fold increase in the number of students taking advantage of opportunities to study abroad (albeit from a low starting point). We intend to build on this strategy in the coming year. We have also, subsequently, been in contact with the Director of International Mobility, and intend to invite him to address a staff meeting in the coming session with a view to helping raise awareness about the range of opportunities available to students, and in order to inform our practice as we go about planning towards the new University target of 20% annual student mobility.