

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee – Friday 13 November 2015

**Periodic Subject Review: Updated Responses to  
Recommendations 4, 5 and 11 arising from the Review of  
Computing Science held on 13 and 14 February 2014**

Mrs Catherine H Omand, Clerk to the Review Panel

***Learning and teaching resources******Recommendation 4***

The Review Panel recommends that the College reviews the effectiveness of current administrative and technical support arrangements for the School and where appropriate, takes action to provide more effective support. [Paragraph 6.8]

**For Action: Head of College**

**For information: Head of School**

***Response:***

Provision has been made in the College Plan for the introduction of additional staff in support of the Transforming Research Management (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, is aimed at providing an enhanced level of support for learning and teaching.

In furtherance of the University's TRM project, the College has been progressing a phased implementation for research support structures in line with the other Colleges and University Services.

***Updated Response – November 2015***

Support for the School's Research Portfolio will be enhanced through implementation of Phase 2 of the TRM process.

***Recommendation 5***

The Review Panel recommends that the College, School and IT Services should discuss developing a sustainable upgrading model that will secure appropriate PC facilities with adequate storage capacity, higher specifications and on a shorter replacement cycle for Computing Science laboratories. [Paragraph 6.6]

**For Action: Head of College**

**For information: Head of School, Director of IT Services**

***Response:***

A Working Group has been established by IPSC. This will allow the effectiveness of current student machine specification and replacement cycles to be examined in order to facilitate

the introduction of improvements. Members of the IT Operations Group represent the College on this Working Group.

**Updated Response – November 2015**

Information Policy and Strategy Committee has requested that a Working Party of the Technical Resource Group reviews the University wide provisioning of student compute facilities.

**Recommendation 11**

The Review Panel recommends that the School consult the Recruitment and International Office and the Dean of International Mobility in revising their approach to student mobility [Paragraph 8.4]

**For Action: Head of School**

**For information: Director of Recruitment and International Office/  
Dean of International Mobility**

**Response:**

Our Exchange Coordinator has worked hard to make mobility a more attractive and accessible option to our students. Our Software Engineering coordinator has also developed a plan for our Software Engineering students to spend a year in industry between their third and fourth years, and this has been agreed by College and the Senior Adviser. I have supported a number of initiatives in the area of International Mobility but I also need to stress the interactions between this recommendation and the previous proposals, as a new Head of School I have chosen to prioritise other areas at least in the short term.

**Updated Response: November 2015**

Significant improvements have already been made in student mobility, starting from the appointment of a new exchange students' co-ordinator from November 2013. This document describes these improvements.

**Outward mobility**

**Student data**

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/4	2014/5	2015/6
enquiries about outgoing exchange	5				11	24	-
applications for outgoing exchange	0	0	0	1	5	8	-
successful outgoing exchange	0	0	0	0	1	1	7

New processes have been introduced to encourage outward student mobility:

- Workshops for Computing Science students are now held every October to assist students in preparing their applications – the first of these was held in October 2014, when 14 students attended.
- The CS Study Abroad Moodle page was significantly updated in January 2014, and has been moved out of the 'level 1' space into the 'general CS' space, so as to be visible to more students.

- The CS Study Abroad Moodle page now describes a clear process for students to follow in applying for study abroad, together with guidance for students in preparing their application.
- An efficient online appointment booking system has been developed that makes it easy for interested students to make appointments with Dr Purchase, the School's Student Mobility co-ordinator.

### **The timing of exchanges for outgoing CS students:**

Up to (and including) 2014/15, it was only possible for Computing Science Honours students to study abroad in level 2, since the level 3 Computing Science curriculum includes two courses that are compulsory requirements for British Computer Society accreditation.<sup>1</sup>

Level 2 exchanges are often difficult to arrange, since the students have to apply before the end of first semester of first year (when most first year students have not found their feet at Glasgow yet, let alone thought about going somewhere else). In addition, these level 1 students have to apply on the basis of their school results, and, in the university-wide competition for exchange places, are assessed against second year students who already have results from first year to demonstrate their competence.

The new unaccredited 'Informatics' Honours degree (introduced in session 2014/5) now makes it possible for level 3 Honours students to study abroad. Once this degree title becomes more established as a suitable degree for graduates seeking employment in the computing industry, we anticipate that more students will be willing to change their degree programme to an 'Informatics' degree so as to permit a study abroad year.

In addition, changes to our curriculum (introduced in session 2014/5) which allow students to take Honours courses in either level 3 or level 4 will make it easier for outgoing Informatics students to still complete the mandatory Honours courses, even if they are unable to be matched in their host university when studying abroad in level 3.

### **Potential host universities**

Two CS students undertook short internships in the school in summer 2015, researching universities that have suitable match to our CS curriculum. They identified several generic problems which arise over many of our international partners with respect to outgoing level 2 CS exchanges – in particular regarding the programming language taught in first year, and incoming students being prevented from taking core courses in second year since many universities expect incoming students to be third year or above. Ten universities were investigated, each of which provides some extent of suitable course matching: this information will be given to students interesting in outgoing exchange to assist them with their university choice and application.

Two level 1 CS students went to Radboud University (one of our CS Erasmus partners) to attend their Science Faculty Study Abroad Week in February 2015, together with students from Uppsala, Leuven and ETH Zürich. The students reported that they did not think that the courses were appropriately matched, and we intend to investigate the suitability of continuing this agreement.

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<sup>1</sup> Combined Honours students taking Computing Science as one of their options have always been able to study abroad in level 3, since the combined honours degree is not accredited.

## Inward mobility

### Student data

	2012/13 and before	2013/4	2014/5	2015/6 (semester 1 only)
incoming students studying CS subjects	no data available	47	36	17
CS credits taken by incoming students		1280	1800	470

New processes have been introduced to encourage inward student mobility:

- New web pages were created in January 2014 for incoming students, listing the courses available to them, and the process that they need to follow to get approval for enrolling in CS courses. Importantly, these pages are available to students before their arrival – that is, they do not require potential incoming students to already have access to Moodle.
- An online appointments system has been set up to facilitate meetings with Dr Purchase, to enable timely enrolment on CS courses at the start of semester.

The Science-without-Borders programme has boosted the number of incoming students significantly (6 in 2013/4, 17 in 2014/5).

There are some CS curriculum issues affecting incoming mobility:

- All our semester 1 courses (except four first and second year courses) are examined in May. This is problematic for students who are only here for one semester (September to December) and January entry students. This is particularly difficult for incoming students in their third or fourth year of study who are looking for higher level courses to take (and indeed, who need higher level courses in order to graduate at their home institution). Currently, this restriction is widely advertised to all incoming students who wish to study CS subjects.

Our Teaching Committee is looking into options to address this problem. Their concerns include:

- setting additional assessment for exchange students in December increases both academic load and administrative load;
- moving the May exams to December gives little time for students to revise for the exam;
- moving the May exams to December gives little time for students to reflect on their semester 1 assessment feedback in preparation for the exam.
- Incoming students typically want to do courses that span year levels, and from other subjects; this is often impossible to timetable and so we have to tell the students that they simply cannot take some of the courses that they wish to do. In particular, restrictions on our lab sizes (especially at level 2) often results in visiting students not being able to take their desired courses.

Despite this, all incoming students report having had a very profitable time here at Glasgow; every year we have one or two students who seek permission and make arrangements to stay on for an additional year.