

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee – Friday 13 November 2015

**Periodic Subject Review: Updated Responses to  
Recommendations 5, 7, 11 and 13 arising from the Review of  
Theology and Religious Studies held on 6 March 2014**

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senate Office

**Recommendation 5:**

The Panel recommends TRS develop innovative ways of encouraging internationalisation of the student experience including increasing opportunities for outward learning experiences for example through shorter experiences such as dissertation research visits and restructuring honours courses structure to facilitate longer exchanges. The Subject should consult Recruitment and International Office and the Dean of International Mobility in revising their approach to student mobility. *[paragraph 3.6.3]*

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject**  
For information: Recruitment and International Office, Dean of International Mobility*

**Response:**

Through the Erasmus and Study Abroad Coordinator, Charlotte Methuen (also now Head of Subject for TRS), TRS has engaged with the consultations on student international mobility set up by Jim Murdoch. TRS is currently exploring a range of possibilities for closer links with Mainz (through one of the proposed Erasmus hubs), Sophia University in Japan, and Stellenbosch and University of Cape Town in South Africa.

In the opening lectures at level 2, as part of the careers presentation, a strong emphasis was laid on the value of study abroad experience for future careers perspectives. In line with the experience across the college, applications for study abroad and Erasmus in 2015/16 rose significantly in TRS. Five students (four joint honours, one single honours) will be studying abroad (one in Chile, one in the USA, two in Canada and one in Germany). This is up from none in 2014-15 and three (one single, two joint) in 2013-14 (one USA, one Canada, one Czech Republic). A further student applied for 2015-16 and was provisionally accepted, but has not achieved the necessary grades.

The revision of honours courses to one-semester, 20-credit courses will make it possible for students to go abroad for one semester only. This is expected to increase take-up. In order for this to be possible, however, it will be necessary for all assessment of semester 1 courses to be completed at the end of semester 1, which, given the constraints on the Christmas examination diet, is likely to have significant implications for modes of assessment of semester 1 courses.

**Updated Response: November 2015**

We are still working on this. Charlotte Methuen will be on the Erasmus visit to Mainz in November. Scott Spurlock is exploring links with Stellenbosch and the University of Cape Town. We hope that the new pattern of 20-credit Honours courses will encourage students to apply to study abroad for one semester, and we will be encouraging students to apply for the year abroad programme in 2016-17 on this basis.

It would be very helpful to have examples of good practice in this area to see what other subject areas, particularly in Arts, are doing to support student mobility.

*[Senate Office response:*

*Following receipt of this update, areas of good practice in relation to student mobility previously identified from PSR have been brought to the attention of the Subject.]*

**Recommendation 7:**

The Panel recommends that TRS reflect on the extent and quality of support provided to GTAs to ensure that they are appropriately trained, inducted and provided with sufficient guidance and ongoing feedback and support to carry out their duties. *[paragraph 3.8.6]*

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

**Response:**

The School of Critical Studies as a whole has been undertaking a review of provision for GTAs, including appointment, training and support. Meanwhile, an informal shadowing scheme continues to operate in TRS; this will be put on a more formal footing with the introduction of new procedures in 2015/16. Course conveners have been encouraged to meet regularly with GTAs. The Head of Subject will hold a debriefing meeting with all GTAs after the examination period and new procedures will be implemented School-wide moving into the next academic session.

**Updated Response: November 2015**

The informal shadowing scheme has been integrated into the Schools GTA training.

**Recommendation 11:**

The Panel recommends that TRS review the timeliness of materials being made accessible on Moodle, especially where this is to support students with a disability, to ensure the approach supports student learning. *[paragraph 3.6.4]*

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

**Response:**

TRS would submit that it is not always possible for course materials to be made available in advance of classes, particularly when a course is being taught for the first time. When this is the case, all students should be made aware of the fact, and in these cases, staff have been asked to explain the situation to students.

For repeat courses, when materials already exist, these are best distributed via Moodle and not via e-mails which are heavy on staff time. For this purpose, TRS would suggest that it would be useful to have a category of Moodle enrolment which would allow its members to see designated "hidden" resources on Moodle. At present, it is only possible either to make all teaching materials to all students via Moodle in advance, which pedagogically is not always desirable, or to enrol students with a disability access to these materials as a non-editing staff member, which gives them access to all hidden materials (including, for instance, tutorial times which have not yet been updated or are not yet on general release; this caused some confusion in one course).

**Updated response: November 2015**

Where possible, materials are being made available to all students in advance of the class. (NB: There was never any suggestions that materials should be made available only to students with disabilities: it was simply a question of timing.)

**Recommendation 13:**

The Panel recommends TRS review the available University-wide resources to ensure that students in Theology and Religious Studies benefit from the broad-range of student learning support mechanisms available beyond the subject. [paragraph 3.6.5]

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

**Response:**

TRS staff are aware of the value of these resources, and students speak very highly of the support offered. However, TRS (and no doubt other parts of the university) would be greatly helped in their endeavour to raise awareness of these provisions if better publicity materials were produced by the learning and teaching support unit, including posters, and links to the course programme which could to be posted on class Moodles. It would also be helpful if a learning and teaching unit staff member might be available to offer a 5-minute presentation on the courses available in the week before reading week.

**Updated Response – Learning and Teaching Centre: November 2015**

The Student Learning Service (SLS) is more than happy to visit TRS to present services available, although all relevant information is on its website at [www.gla.ac.uk/services/sls/](http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/sls/). A presentation by the SLS is also given to Level 1 students at induction and posters are displayed across campus and publicity materials are circulated to Heads of School Administration. It is useful if Subject Areas could provide a relevant contact for the SLS to liaise with and to discuss more targeted information.