

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 30 September 2016

Report on Items approved under Summer Powers

Mrs R Cole, Clerk to the Committee

1. Proposals Approved under Fast-Track Procedures

Academic Standards Committee is invited to **note** that the following new programme proposals were recommended by the relevant Fast-Track Approval Group (see **Appendix 1**) and **approved** by the Convener of Academic Standards Committee and Clerk of Senate under Summer Powers for introduction in session 2016-17:

College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences

MSc Advanced Surgery

College of Social Sciences

International Masters in Children's Literature, Childhood Culture & Media (commencing in 2017-18)

LLB LLM with Specialisms

MRes/MSc in Global Migrations & Social Justice (commencing in 2017-18)

MSc Education with Pathways (commencing in 2017-18)

MSc Tourism, Environment & Sustainability (commencing in 2018-19)

2. Items Carried Forward from 2015-16 Programme Approval Groups

The following new programmes were approved under Summer Powers for introduction in September 2016 following completion of actions requested by the relevant Semester 2 PAG:

College of Arts

MLitt Art History: Inventing Modern Art, 1768-1918

College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences

Master Veterinary Public Health (DL)

Master Public Health (DL)

MSc Bioinformatics, Polyomics & Systems Biology

MSc Global Mental Health (DL)

MSc Primary Care (DL)

College of Science & Engineering

BEng Electronics & Electrical Engineering (UESTC, Glasgow) 2 plus 2

MSc Structural Engineering

College of Social Sciences

BA Community Development (Hons)

3. Items Approved Under Summer Powers

3.1 *Periodic Subject Review Reports*

The reports of the following Reviews were approved under summer powers subject to some minor amendments. The finalised reports are provided in **Appendix 2**.

Subject	ASC Reviewers
Dental School	Douglas McGregor Charlotte Methuen
English Language	Maria Jackson Raymond McCluskey
English Literature	Gordon Curry Anna Morgan-Thomas
School of Interdisciplinary Studies	Niall MacFarlane Helen Stoddart
School of Mathematics & Statistics	Anna O'Neill Allison Orr
Scottish Literature	Bob Hill Anna O'Neill

3.2 *Validations offered at Edinburgh Theological Seminary*

The following programme was approved to run from session 2016-17 for six years. The report is provided in **Appendix 3**.

Bachelor of Theology (BTh) (by Distance-Learning)

Fast-Track Approval Groups - Summer 2016

The membership and dates of the individual Fast-Track Approval Group meetings which considered the proposals outlined in section 1 are noted below for information:

Fast-Track Approval Group for the College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences - Meeting held on 29 June 2016

Membership

Professor Bob Hill (Convener), Professor Douglas MacGregor, Dr Helen Stoddart

Proposal considered:

MSc Advanced Surgery

Fast-Track Approval Group for the College of Social Sciences - Meeting held on 25 July 2016

Membership

Dr Gordon Curry (Convener), Dr Charlotte Methuen, Dr Alison Parrett (vice Dr Maria Jackson)

Proposals considered:

International Masters in Children's Literature, Childhood Culture & Media

LLB LLM with Specialisms

MRes/MSc in Global Migrations & Social Justice (commencing in 2017-18)

MSc Education with Pathways

MSc Tourism, Environment & Sustainability (commencing in 2018-19)

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Summer Powers 2016

**Periodic Subject Review: Review of Dental School held on 17 March
2016**

Mrs Lesley Fielding, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Dr Donald Spaeth	Dean (Learning and Teaching), College of Arts
Professor Mark Hector	University of Dundee, External Subject Specialist
Professor Jim Anderson	School of Veterinary Medicine, Cognate member
Dr Cathy Bovill	Learning and Teaching Centre
Ms Mhairi Harris	Student member
Professor Karen Lury	Senate Assessor on Court
Mrs Lesley Fielding	Senate Office and Clerk to the Review Panel

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Dental School is one of three professional Schools within the School of Medicine, College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences. The College was formed in 2010, when a major restructuring exercise reshaped the University from nine Faculties to four Colleges.
- 1.2 The Dental School has a major interface with a number of health boards, particularly NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde and NHS Education for Scotland, which is relevant to teaching delivery due to the large volume of clinical work undertaken by dental students and the significant amount of NHS revenue provided through the Additional Cost of Teaching (ACT) funding stream which supports delivery of the BDS curriculum.
- 1.3 The School last underwent internal review in March 2010 prior to restructuring. The Review Panel commended the Head of the Dental School and the Senior Management Team for their effective management ability, positive attitude and ethos of education. Additionally, the School was commended for the sense of community that was evident.
- 1.4 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was compiled by the Head of the Dental School, in association with a PSR Steering Group, which was comprised of key academic and administrative staff. All staff and student Class Representatives were given the opportunity to review and comment on the SER and the later draft was discussed by the Dental School Executive, Glasgow Dental Student Society Committee and with open meetings for both staff and students to provide final feedback.
- 1.5 The Review Panel met with Professor Jeremy Bagg, Head of Dental School, Professor Alan Jardine, Head of School of Medicine, Dr Aileen Bell, Director of Dental Education, Professor Jill Morrison, Dean of Learning & Teaching, College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, thirty members of staff, one probationary member of staff, 24 Undergraduate students from all levels of the BDS programme and six Postgraduate Taught students.

2. Background information

2.1 Students

Student numbers for the 2015-16 session were as follows:

BDS 1	78	
BDS 2	74	
BDS 3	92	
BDS 4	85	
BDS 5	94	
Undergraduate Total	423	
Postgraduate Taught	13	12.5

2.2 Staffing

Academic staff	53	
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2.3 The Staff: Student ratio for taught students in 2016-17 is 1:8.3.

2.4 Range of provision

The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Dental School:

Undergraduate

- Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS)

Postgraduate

- MSc Endodontics
- MSc Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery
- Doctorate in Clinical Dentistry (Orthodontics)

3. Context and Strategy

3.1 Context and Vision

3.1.1 As identified in the SER, the Dental School's very clear vision was to 'produce high quality dental graduates to enter the workforce and serve the general population.' The Review Panel was entirely satisfied that the Dental School clearly adhered to the University's Learning & Teaching Strategy and considered that the Dental School offered a robust, holistic provision which had been recently monitored by its appropriate review body, the General Dental Council in 2013.

3.1.2 The SER also provided a full and informative description of the Dental School's interface with the NHS and the associated funding and highlighted that Dentistry has an annual student intake dictated by the Scottish Government and funding which is matched by Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The SER also outlined the various tensions that were created due to the different focuses of the NHS and the University.

- 3.1.3 In the meeting with the Head of the Dental School, Head of the School of Medicine, the Director of Dental Education and from the SER, the Review Panel noted that the Dental School had undergone a period of substantial change including the development of a new curriculum and new Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), as required by the General Dental Council. The University restructuring had also had significant impact on the Dental School. As outlined in the SER, prior to restructuring, the Dental School was a separate entity with a unique identity which was a key factor in promoting the School within a competitive Higher Education market. A direct effect of restructuring was the reduced visibility of the Dental School through its amalgamation into the School of Medicine. The Panel had noted this with concern; however, at the meeting with the Dean of Learning & Teaching for the College of MVLS, the Panel was pleased to learn that the senior management in the College of MVLS had agreed to an amendment of the title of the School of Medicine to the School of Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing.
- 3.1.4 Whilst the Panel welcomed this decision by the College of MVLS and considered it a pivotal step in acknowledging the important role of the three professional schools within the School of Medicine, it was evident that the Dental School's integration and the obligation to adopt College, School and University structures had presented a number of substantial challenges. These individual issues have been addressed in other areas of the report, however, the Panel perceived a number of disparities between the School of Medicine and the Dental School. Due to the Dental School students undertaking invasive, irreversible procedures on patients, high levels of supervision with high staff:student ratios were required which, whilst a positive experience for the students, limited the time for the Dental School to undertake other activities such as research. This had implications for the cost of delivery of programmes, postgraduate programmes in particular. Hence, the Dental School's primary source of funding was through its teaching.
- 3.1.5 The Review Panel considered the Dental School had responded to restructuring in an innovative and resourceful manner, ensuring the maintenance of standards and engaging with both the School of Medicine and the College of MVLS. In order to avoid the loss of momentum on key issues through the School and College reporting structures, the Dental School had developed strategies to ensure key issues were addressed at Dental School level with the effective use of existing groups such as the Dental Executive Committee. However, the Panel had concerns regarding the sustainability of this strategy in the long term, particularly in relation to clinical and postgraduate provision (discussed in more detail at 4.1.4). In order to safeguard and secure the excellent work undertaken by the Dental School, the Review Panel **recommends** that discussions take place with the College and School of Medicine to clarify reporting structures in order to minimise overlap, to avoid issues in Dentistry being overlooked and to improve communication between committees in the Dental School and those in the College and School of Medicine.
- 3.1.6 The Review Panel discerned from the SER and meetings with staff and students that the exemplary leadership of the Head of the Dental School has been pivotal to the ongoing success of the Dental School and considered that, in the event of a change of leadership, the current system may not be sustainable. Therefore, the Panel **recommends** that the Dental School should engage in succession planning to ensure continuity of leadership.

3.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

The Review Panel noted that the teaching provision was closely aligned with the University's Strategic plan 2015-20. The Review Panel considered that the Dental School undertook this provision in an exemplary manner offering holistic provision that was monitored and approved by its appropriate external review body, the General Dental Council, in 2013. The Dental School had created a stimulating and supportive environment for students. The standard of provision was evidenced by the Dental School's consistently high position in various published league tables of UK dental schools and the Dental School's inclusion as the top option for dentistry in the 2016 Complete University Guide.

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

4.1 Admissions, Retention and Success

- 4.1.1 The Dental School's admissions for undergraduate applicants are handled locally whilst applications for postgraduate programmes are handled by the Marketing, Recruitment & International Office (MaRIO). The undergraduate admissions target was set by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) based on projected dental workforce requirements. In the preceding three sessions, the target intake for Home/EU/RUK students was reduced from 87 in 2012-13 to 67 in 2014-15.
- 4.1.2 To offset the financial impact of this reduction the Dental School was permitted to increase the number of international students from 3 in 2012 to 11 in 2014. The Scottish Government had imposed stringent conditions on the international students which required them to be under a 'closed loop' agreement which required the students to return to their home country after graduation and to pay a proportion of the NHS ACT costs. These conditions have complicated the recruitment of international students and intensified the tensions between meeting the various requirements of the College, SFC and Scottish Government whilst ensuring equitable treatment of students applying to the Dental School.
- 4.1.3 It stated in the SER that, since the last review, the Dental School's involvement with widening participation had developed substantially through involvement with the Reach Programme. The Review Panel was pleased to meet a student who had applied through the widening participation route. The student had commenced the programme in fourth year of school and attended a summer school during fifth year. The student advised the Panel that this had been a positive experience and offered the opportunity to meet other students and to experience the BDS timetable. The Review Panel **commends** the Dental School's participation and proactive approach to Widening Participation.
- 4.1.4 The Dental School offers a modest number of postgraduate taught programmes and the Review Panel noted, from both the SER and meetings with students and staff, that the numbers of students enrolled to these programmes was very small. Additionally, it was evident that the management of postgraduate provision and pastoral care required for international postgraduate students was disproportionate in terms of time when compared to the undergraduate programme. Due to the intensiveness of support and staff time required, the Panel explored the sustainability of the current postgraduate provision on an FEC funding model and noted that the postgraduate programmes provided useful additional income and conformed with the University's Strategic Plan.
- 4.1.5 The Panel discussed the process for developing new postgraduate programmes within the Dental School and noted that new programmes were introduced within existing additional resources, as is the practice within MVLS. The Panel

recommends that the College, School of Medicine, in conjunction with the Dental School should, in reviewing new and current programmes, balance potential income against competing demands upon staff resources.

- 4.1.6 Staff advised the Panel that, whilst they considered there was a potential market in which to increase postgraduate student numbers, there were a number of prevailing challenges. In order to sustain any increase in postgraduate student numbers, it would be essential for the Dental School to further develop existing facilities. The Panel noted that the clinical accommodation component would be the most expensive element, in addition to extra nursing support. However, if there was a further reduction in undergraduate numbers, this would possibly release clinical space for increased postgraduate provision.
- 4.1.7 The postgraduate students intimated to the Panel that they would welcome a programme which provided three years of clinical experience to qualify them to sit relevant clinical specialist examinations at the Royal Surgical Colleges. Staff supported this suggestion and considered there was a viable market for such a programme especially among international students. Further to this, the Panel learned that the Dental School had considered the introduction of a two year programme with a third year of clinical attachment. However, there were impediments due to the clinical placement year being categorised as employment, which would pose difficulties in relation to visas for international applicants. Additionally, such programmes would be more expensive due to the inclusion of NHS provision.
- 4.1.8 In order to determine whether increasing postgraduate provision would be cost-effective, the Dental School's core courses had been converted into University-based cluster teaching and a business plan was being developed for each programme which would indicate what additional resources would be required. Similarly, the Panel noted that the School was investigating the potential market for a postgraduate programme in Endodontics which could also be offered as Continuing Professional Development for home students.
- 4.1.9 The Review Panel considered there were a number of qualities present in the Dental School that would contribute to the development of further postgraduate programmes. The Dental Hospital's reputation and the base of research expertise available would be attractive to potential students, in addition to a wide range of provision through bespoke programmes (non-clinical) and the availability of community based projects. However, the Panel accepted there were a number of factors impeding further development of the current postgraduate provision at this time. In order to enable the Dental School to capitalise on their excellent teaching and clinical resources, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Dental School, where possible, explore existing links for potential to extend current provision and build a wider postgraduate portfolio.
- 4.1.10 The Review Panel noted the Dental School's excellent retention and progression rates.

4.2 Equality and Diversity

- 4.2.1 As outlined in the SER, the General Dental Council (GDC) agreed that the Dental School met the three requirements in relation to Equality and Diversity as outlined in the GDC's Standards for Education document. The Review Panel noted from the SER that all staff undertook the University's on-line training programme on Equality and Diversity. The Panel was pleased to note that the Dental School committees all have Equality and Diversity as a standing agenda item which is evidenced by the clear efforts of the Dental School and student

body to create an inclusive environment through the supply of a 'quiet room' which was used for a range of activities from quiet contemplation/prayer to hosting social events where no alcohol was served. non-alcohol social events. The Panel noted that the students received teaching on Equality and Diversity Law through the Ethics, Professionalism and Law courses and through community placements. The Panel **commends** the Dental School for the establishment of the Professionalism and Ethics Study Club – All Years (PESCA Y), which brought staff and students together for the discussion of current aspects of ethics and professionalism.

4.2.2 The Panel was pleased to note that the School of Medicine, in preparation for the Athena SWAN charter, was enhancing staff mentoring as a key element of its Athena SWAN action plan.

4.3 Supporting Students in their Learning

4.3.1 Both the undergraduate and postgraduate student groups expressed their appreciation for the support provided by the staff throughout the Dental School, citing the strong sense of community, excellent mentoring programme and approachability of staff. The level of support, as also outlined in the SER, was evident from the pastoral support provided to students and also in the role of the Dental School Student Support Group which identifies students who may be struggling and initiates a support network. The Panel **commends** the Dental School on the high level of support provided to students and, in particular, the Dental School Student Support Group

4.3.2 The Review Panel noted from both the SER and interactions with staff and students that the mentoring system was an essential and worthwhile component of student support provided by the Dental School. The mentoring afforded opportunities to meet with their mentor three times per session throughout their studies. The undergraduate students universally expressed their appreciation of the mentoring system and its role in developing their ability to reflect on what they had learned and their learning needs. The Panel **commends** the mentoring system as an invaluable element in developing student life skills.

4.3.3 Some of the undergraduate students had expressed reservations regarding the assignment of non-academic staff as mentors, viewing this as a disadvantage compared to those students assigned an academic member of staff. The Review Panel explored this with both the Head of the Dental School and staff and was reassured that there were no disadvantages to the students. The role of mentor related to the development of life skills and not clinical aptitude and both academic and administrative staff received the same mentoring training. Further to discussions with staff, the Panel established that mentoring was undertaken by MPA staff on a voluntary basis but was not included in their job descriptions. Although the Panel understood that the Dental School highly valued the contribution of MPA staff, it feels that the nature of the role needs to be clear and transparent, for the sake of both staff and students. Therefore, the Panel **recommends** that the Dental School should consult with College HR regarding whether it would be appropriate to include the mentoring role in the relevant MPA job descriptions, in order for staff to continue in the role. The School should also clarify to students the non-clinical nature of mentoring, whether provided by MPA or academic staff.

4.3.4 As outlined in the SER, due to the loss of the staff member responsible for the mentoring programme, there had been some difficulties with the programme due to an absence of firm leadership and insufficient time for the training of new mentors. Due to its integral role within the BDS programme, the Dental School had invited the Learning & Teaching Centre to assist in a review of this

provision. The Panel supported this move, however, considered that there were other issues, such as staff recruitment, that needed to be addressed as part of the review. Therefore, the Panel **recommends** that the Dental School and School of Medicine review support mechanisms for the mentoring programme to ensure that the difficulties identified with regard to leadership and training are addressed.

- 4.3.5 The Review Panel explored with students whether there was a sense of 'isolation' due to the geographical distance between the Dental School and the main campus. The students considered they were not disadvantaged by the geographical separation and provided examples of involvement with the main campus. This geographical separation was offset by the strong sense of identification among students and staff with the Dental School, appreciating the strong collegiate and family atmosphere. The Review Panel **commends** the Dental School for creating this strong sense of community.
- 4.3.6 With regard to University facilities, the students advised that they used the library on campus, but commented that, with regard to other facilities, students were required to physically go to the University to book a number of services. The Panel noted that due to the requirements for NHS staff to give six weeks' notice to cancel a clinic, it was difficult to attend development opportunities as the College tended to give only two weeks' notice of such events. The Panel suggests that the College and School; investigate means of making it easier for Dental School staff and students to participate in events through online booking and advanced notification of upcoming events.
- 4.3.7 The students reported that documentation was available for all years of the BDS programme and supporting information provided as to what students needed to do to achieve all the ILOs. There was the practice whereby lecturers advised students, at the beginning of a lecture, what ILOs would be addressed. This information was also available on Moodle.
- 4.3.8 As noted from the SER, the Dental School's student progression and retention rates had been consistently high over a number of years with almost all the Dental School's graduates securing employment. The Review Panel was pleased to note that the Dental School continued to develop Graduate Attributes with the introduction of a Graduate Attributes week in BDS 5 which offered students, among other things, Personal Development Planning.
- 4.3.9 The undergraduate students were familiar with the issue of graduate attributes and were confident that they had developed the requisite graduate attributes throughout the programme. The students considered that, due to the mentoring system, their ability to reflect on issues was well developed whilst involvement in different areas, such as the student committees, promoted additional transferrable skills. The undergraduate students deemed the information on graduate attributes distributed by the main campus was not helpful and commented that the Dental School was better positioned to assist students in this area. There was a sense among the students that the University, in general, was less aware of the requirements for dentistry and cited the GDC's learning objectives as being better designed for dentistry than those supplied by the University. The Panel considered that, as the delivery and support of these objectives impacted most on the students, this awareness reflected the success of the Dental School in implementing the learning objectives.
- 4.3.10 Students had confidence that any weaknesses in their performance would be detected by the school through their reflective work and clinical skills which were reviewed by the Year head.

4.4 Student Engagement

4.4.1 The Panel explored with students how the Dental School ensured that students undertook all necessary clinical work. The students advised that if a deficit in clinical practice was identified, additional clinical work could be undertaken through the outreach clinics to redress this. The students were of the view that undertaking clinical practice within the Dental School was more difficult due to the lack of a patient base and the service's vulnerability to patients failing to attend. The External Subject Specialist queried whether NHS managers prioritised student clinics when referring patients. Additionally, the students reported that due to a perceived shortage of available nursing staff, students felt they had to undertake nursing tasks thus reducing the time for clinical practice.

4.5 Effectiveness of Student feedback mechanisms

4.5.1 Further to discussions with students and staff the Review Panel was confident that the Dental School processes fully addressed issues of concern. The undergraduate students expressed satisfaction with the feedback mechanism through the Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) with updates on the resolution of issues reported to students.

4.5.2 The Panel discussed the National Student Survey (NSS) results for 2015 with staff and noted that due to the small numbers of students, a small number of negative responses would impact substantially on the NSS results. The Panel was pleased to note the proactive manner in which the Dental School fully engaged with these responses, with the Dental Education Committee's engagement with the process to ensure that areas of concern were fully addressed.

4.5.3 The postgraduate students advised the Review Panel that there was no formal process for student representation within the Dental School. Due to the small numbers of students and the close working relationship with their supervisor, issues were raised directly with their course coordinator and the students were satisfied that their concerns were fully addressed. However, the Panel was later informed that there was student representation on the Postgraduate Management Committee as well as on the Information Services Committee and the Library Committee. The Panel **recommends** that the Dental School undertake steps to ensure that the postgraduate students are made aware of the formal processes for student representation.

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

5.1 Learning and Teaching

5.1.1 Curriculum Design

5.1.1.1 The existing BDS curriculum was introduced in 2004 in response to a critical review of the previous curriculum by the GDC. The previous curriculum, as stated in the SER, was judged to place insufficient emphasis on integrated teaching, holistic care, teamwork and early clinical experience. The new curriculum was constructed to address these issues, whilst simultaneously ensuring that current approaches were used for the delivery of clinical education and assessment.

5.1.1.2 The undergraduate students were unanimously positive about the curriculum. As the BDS curriculum involved approximately 20 weeks of clinical teaching in outreach settings, the Panel asked students about the primary care visits. For the BDS1, 2 and 3 students, these placements were undertaken through the Childsmile programme. Whilst appreciative of the experience, the students

advised that placements which took place prior to the Childsmile lectures were more useful as the lectures were then more relevant. This, however, was not always possible due to the difficulties in securing and organising the appropriate number of places. The students were not concerned about the absence of suitable work placements and did not view this as being detrimental to their degree, particularly in view of the outreach clinics which are described at 5.1.1.3. The students expressed confidence in the Dental School's ability to address any issues that arose in connection with placements.

- 5.1.1.3 As noted in the SER, the BDS 5 students undertake a substantial proportion of their teaching in outreach clinics. These outreach clinics are located in areas where a particular clinical need has been identified and are entirely funded by central government via NHS Education for Scotland (NES). At their meeting with the Panel the students were unanimously positive regarding the outreach programme which was viewed as an essential element of the BDS. The exposure to a dental practice-like environment was viewed as invaluable and provided the opportunity to catch up on any incomplete component of a student's clinical training. Students advised the Panel that they would welcome involvement with the outreach clinics at an earlier stage in the BDS programme.
- 5.1.1.4 As noted in the SER, the BDS curriculum is largely prescriptive which offers very little choice to students. To address this, the Dental School offers students in year 4 of the BDS programme the opportunity to select an elective period project in a subject of their choice. The Dental School had endeavoured to develop the elective options by establishing institutional links and international partnerships to widen the range of options available to the students. The students were positive regarding the elective programme and satisfied that most choices were accommodated. The Review Panel considered that the elective programme offered students an invaluable opportunity for extracurricular activities and **commends** the Dental School on the development work undertaken on their elective programme.
- 5.1.1.5 The students would welcome the opportunity to undertake Study Abroad or Erasmus opportunities as offered by other universities. However, in the meeting with the Head of the Dental School, the Panel learned that such exchanges were not permitted due to concerns that overseas placements could result in gaps in a student's curriculum. There were further concerns regarding language issues in clinical settings.
- 5.1.1.6 The Dental School offers three postgraduate programmes, which are primarily focused on the international market. The Review Panel noted from the SER that two postgraduate programmes, the Masters in Primary Dental Care and Fixed and Removable Prosthodontics had been suspended due to the retirement of key staff and low recruitment. The Panel also noted that a new postgraduate Masters in Oral Sciences would be offered from 2016-17 as part of the Clinical and Medical Sciences cluster of postgraduate programmes within MVLS.
- 5.1.1.7 The postgraduate students who met with the Review Panel expressed their overall satisfaction with the curriculum. Students advised, however, that the Research Methods and Statistics course, in its present form, was insufficient for their needs and expressed the preference for more in-depth teaching to enhance their understanding of the subject. The Panel was pleased to learn that the Director of PG Affairs planned to review the postgraduate provision in coordination with the Dental Executive Committee with the intent to align the scope, value and processes with the Undergraduate programme. The Panel suggests that the Dental School include, for review, the Research Methods and Statistics course in light of the postgraduate students' suggestions.

5.1.2 Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes

5.1.2.1 The Panel noted that central to the BDS curriculum was Constructive Alignment which began with the development of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) published by the GDC. In response to the introduction of a new set of outcomes called Preparing for Practice, the Dental School had undertaken a major mapping exercise to ensure correspondence with the new GDC outcomes which had been commented on favourably by External Examiners. The Panel considered that this process was exemplary and **commends** the Dental School for this work and supports plans to extend assessment blueprinting to PGT programmes.

5.1.3 Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching

5.1.3.1 The Review Panel was pleased to observe the impressive and innovative technological developments during the guided tour of the Dental School and as described in the SER. The Panel observed students performing work on Patient Simulators (Phantom Heads), and demonstrating CPR with the use of an Automated External Defibrillator. Students were appreciative and enthusiastic about the benefits of the technology offered as outlined below. Whilst the success of technology was variable as evidenced with the 3D model and Echo 360, the Panel **commends** the Dental School on the proactive approach of staff in enhancing the student experience through the development of technology.

5.1.3.2 The undergraduate students were most complimentary with regard to the Flipped Classroom which requires students to undertake preparatory work in advance of the Practical Clinical Class which allows for more practical work to be undertaken during the practical class itself. The students found this feedback based learning approach more productive and appreciated the benefits that this method of teaching offered. Access to videos demonstrating different clinical operative techniques was available, via Moodle, both before the practical clinical skills session with the phantom heads and after the session for further review, consolidation and final revision before performing the task on patients in the clinic. The Panel considered this was high functioning education and was pleased to note that this was being rolled out throughout the Dental School. The Review Panel was most impressed with this innovation and **commends** the Dental School on this development. The Panel suggests that the Dental School should demonstrate the Flipped Classroom to relevant areas within the University and considers this an example of good practice.

5.1.3.3 The Panel noted the positive developments with regard to the introduction of the electronic system for recording assessment of clinical dental procedures, Longitudinal Integrative Foundation Training Undergraduate to Postgraduate Pathway (LIFTUPP), designed to replace the paper-based Record of Clinical Assessment and Feedback (ReCAF). LIFTUPP would be used by all students from session 2016-17. The students were positive, overall, about the system and considered it was an effective method of interacting with the clinician and a useful tool in highlighting areas where additional clinical work was required. LIFTUPP is also used for the recording of work undertaken on Phantom Heads available in the clinics should students' patients fail to attend for their appointments and in due course will also be extended to the Pre-Clinical Skills Course. As noted in the SER, 'the marking scheme is based on the degree of independence with which students are able to perform procedures and written feedback is mandatory where grades fall below pre-set thresholds.' (4.2.5 p35) A few students held the view that, as assignments graded 3 or below required comment, some clinicians would rate a student 4 and above to avoid having to

do so. The Review Panel suggests that the Dental School consider introducing the requirement whereby feedback is provided for all grades.

5.1.3.4 The Review Panel were most impressed by the demonstration of the 3D anatomical model of the head and neck which provided students the opportunity to experience, among other things, spatial awareness of anatomical structures. The Panel noted that this technology had been a major investment with significant support from the NHS Education for Scotland. However, as noted in the SER and from meetings with staff and students, staff had displayed reluctance to engage with this technology, despite the availability of drop-in training sessions. Students appreciated the potential benefits of this technology, but agreed, unanimously, that it was under-utilised. The Panel noted the practical limitations associated with the 3D model due to the small numbers (15) who could view the 3D version at one time. Therefore, the Panel welcomed the Dental School's plan for the introduction of a 2D version which students could download on their personal devices and use as a study aid. The Dental School had invested in additional computers in the lecture theatres and other teaching facilities which should facilitate students' ability to access this technology. However, the Panel considered that the 3D model, if fully utilised, was a valuable teaching asset and **recommends** that the Dental School reflects on other methods of encouraging staff to fully engage with, and to utilise, this technology.

5.1.3.5 As stated at 5.1.3.1, the Review Panel was most impressed with the level of engagement in developing innovative and exciting technology within the Dental School which offered an enriched learning experience to students. The Panel noted the participation of the very active members on the College Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching group. In order to provide additional support to enable further development and full utilisation of these innovations, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Dental School discuss how best to build on this good practice.

5.1.4 Assessment

5.1.4.1 The Dental School employed a wide range of assessment methods which were aligned to the ILOs for Knowledge and the application of knowledge, practical application of knowledge and demonstration of clinical competence and habitual performance of clinical skills. The assessment methods employed included written formats such as Single Best Answer Multiple Choice and Multiple Short Answer. Assessment of practical application of knowledge included structured clinical and clinical science assessment and preclinical Skills Assessment. Demonstration of clinical competence included Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE) and Clinical Competence Assessments. Oral assessment was also demonstrated through group presentations.

5.1.4.2 The Review Panel was most impressed with the Dental School's practice of assessment blueprinting which was undertaken to confirm the proper alignment of assessment methods and the adequacy of ILO sampling. The Panel considered that assessment blueprinting was a model of good practice and **commends** the Dental School for this excellent practice.

5.1.5 What/How do students receive feedback on assessed work

5.1.5.1 The Review Panel noted that the feedback process was praised by both students and External Examiners. The undergraduate students expressed overall satisfaction with the feedback provided by staff, and commented that, although it was not possible for staff to provide feedback on all formative

assessments, this was offset by staff availability during clinics to provide oral feedback. Indeed the students stressed that the interaction in clinics with the clinicians and patients provided the most valuable form of feedback. The Panel considered that the Dental School made good use of formative feedback that involved self-assessment as a way to enhance the ability to self-assess.

5.1.5.2 The Panel noted that dentistry has very high contact hours with constant feedback provided by staff in clinics. With regard to the students issues surrounding feedback; the Panel applauds the Dental School's response to this issue through the development of a strategic focus on how feedback was provided which outlined education days and meetings between students and their year coordinators.

5.1.5.3 Whilst the postgraduate students were generally appreciative of the feedback provided they commented on some inconsistencies particularly in relation to core courses and expressed a preference for written feedback instead of verbal feedback. The Panel **recommends** that the Dental School review the current method of providing feedback to postgraduate students.

5.2 Engaging and Supporting Staff

5.2.1 The Panel met with one member of probationary staff who was in the second year of the Early Career Development Programme. From their discussion, the Panel learned that whilst the probationer had a full workload the line manager and Head of the Dental School had been very supportive and aided the development of the individual.

5.2.2 The Panel explored the promotions criteria for staff and what support was provided by the School with regard to individual career development. Staff informed the Panel that Clinical academic staff who held honorary Speciality Registrar (StR) contracts with the NHS had specialist training and the standard NHS review programme called the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) which worked well. However, some difficulties arose due to the delay between the end of the ARCP and linking into the University's P&DR process. This affected clinical lecturers, as they were uncertain regarding their future employment until the end of a fixed term.

5.2.3 The Review Panel had noted from the SER the challenges that University Teachers encountered in relation to career development. The Panel raised this issue with staff who confirmed that they faced difficulties in satisfying the University criteria for promotion. Some University Teachers had successfully gained promotion to Senior University Teachers. However, as outlined in the SER, the Panel was aware that work was underway to revise the criteria for promotion under the leadership of the Vice Principal (Academic & Educational Innovation) and it was hoped that this would resolve these challenges.

5.2.4 The Review Panel explored the issue of 'isolation' with staff and discerned that, whilst staff had a strong sense of identity within the Dental School, they also had interaction with the main campus, although on a practical level this was more complicated due to the restrictions of the Dental School's clinical schedule. However, the Panel noted that, in relation to the School of Medicine and the College of MVLS, there was a sense of 'invisibility' and being 'out of the loop' among the staff group. Similarly, staff considered that this applied to the wider University as evidenced by the development of University systems which were not compatible with those of the Dental School.

5.2.5 The Review Panel had noted from the SER the unique nature of the professional programmes which, with the fixed curricula, integrated timetables and clinical placements were often not compatible with the requirements of the

generic University systems. Administrative staff advised that it had been necessary to develop 'workarounds' to enable the Dental School processes to be integrated with those of the University. This demanding and time consuming process was then further compounded by the impact of these modifications on other University systems such as the Workload Model. It was evident to the Panel that a number of the University systems were not compatible with those of the Dental School. In view of the requirements of the professional programmes, as outlined above, the Review Panel **recommends** that the College, School of Medicine and the Dental School continue to engage with Student Lifecycle Support & Development to discuss the Dental School's current systems with a view to identifying methods to improve compatibility and integration with the University systems, where this would improve the staff and student experience.

5.3 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)

- 5.3.1 The Review Panel was concerned to learn of difficulties that restructuring had presented in the area of the teaching of life sciences. Key factors that had impacted on the availability of life sciences subject specialist staff included the redeployment of teachers to research institutes and the loss of a number of School of Life Sciences (SoLS) staff due to retirement and resignation. In order to deliver the required teaching, non-subject specialist staff from the Dental School undertook significant amounts of this teaching during 2015-16 which was not in alignment with the Dental School's quality enhancement agenda. The Panel noted, from the SER, that the School of Medicine and SoLS were working to address the shortfall in life sciences subject specialist staff through the University Planning and Budgeting round to bid for staffing resources. The Panel would hope that this issue will be resolved in the near future and **recommends** that an update report be submitted on the status of life sciences teaching within the Dental School.
- 5.3.2 The Review Panel noted both from the SER and from discussions with staff the challenges that a heavy teaching load presented within a research-driven environment. Hence, due to the high level of teaching required by the Dental School, the appointments of University Teachers were found to be more advantageous than the appointment of research active staff. However, it was evident that the teaching driven focus of the Dental School was at odds with the research driven focus of the College. As noted in 3.1.4, the requirements of the Dental School were very specific in view of the clinical and teaching commitments required to successfully deliver the BDS programme.

6. Academic Standards

- 6.1 The Review Panel noted that the approach to academic standards was obviously taken very seriously, as reflected in the General Dental Council report. The examiner training and calibration processes were robust and ensured standards of marking evidenced by the description of the 'safe beginner' as the aim for all students upon graduation.
- 6.2 The Review Panel noted the highly positive nature of the External Examiner reports. The External Examiners expressed their satisfaction with the Dental School's processes, particularly standard setting, feedback and the level of support offered to students.

7. Collaborative provision

7.1 The Dental School is involved in a number of collaborative arrangements which are Scottish Government funded and administered by NHS Education for Scotland (NES). These include the outreach programmes which provide clinical teaching in outreach settings for BDS 5 students. For BDS 1, 2 and 3, there are health visitor, nursery and primary care visits linked to the national oral health improvement programme Childsmile.

7.2 As outlined in the SER, from 2017, the Dental School will admit up to five students annually from the International Medical University (IMU) Dental School in Kuala Lumpur to enter Year 3 of the BDS programme, following successful completion of 2.5 years of study in Phase 1 of the Dentistry Programme at IMU.

8. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

8.1 Key strengths

The Panel identified a number of strengths:

- Excellent staff-student relationships, evident from the strong sense of community
- Well supported, appreciative and articulate student body
- Effective quality assurance and quality enhancement procedures.
- Excellent assessment including blue printing and standard-setting
- Excellent Intended Learning Outcomes
- Widening Participation
- High progression rates and employability.
- Technological innovations

8.2 Areas for improvement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for improvement:

- Postgraduate provision

8.3 Conclusion

The Review Panel guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist confirmed that, at the time of the Review, programmes offered by the Dental School were current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and of practice in its application.

The Panel was extremely impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the committed, skilled staff and with the firm focus on excellence in teaching and support for students. The Panel considered the Dental School to be among the best Units reviewed by Panel members in terms of their provision in areas including teaching, student rapport and feedback. The student groups were enthusiastic and positive, and a credit to the School.

The School demonstrated a number of strengths, as well as an awareness of the areas requiring improvement. The most substantive of these are reflected in the commendations and recommendations below.

Commendations

The Review Panel commends the Dental School on the following, which are **listed in order of appearance** in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel **commends** the Dental School's participation and proactive approach to Widening Participation. [Paragraph 4.1.3]

Commendation 2

The Panel **commends** the Dental School for the establishment of the Professionalism and Ethics Study Club – All Years (PESCA Y), which brought staff and students together for the discussion of current aspects of ethics and professionalism. [Paragraph 4.2.1]

Commendation 3

The Panel **commends** the Dental School on the high level of support provided to students and, in particular, the Dental School Student Support Group. [Paragraph 4.3.1]

Commendation 4

The Panel **commends** the mentoring system as an invaluable element in developing student life skills. [Paragraph 4.3.2]

Commendation 5

The Review Panel **commends** the Dental School for creating the strong sense of community for students and staff. [Paragraph 4.3.5]

Commendation 6

The Review Panel considered that the elective programme offered students an invaluable opportunity for extracurricular activities and **commends** the Dental School on the development work undertaken on their elective programme. [Paragraph 5.1.1.5]

Commendation 7

The Review Panel considered that this process of constructive alignment against GDC ILOs was exemplary and **commends** the Dental School for this work and supports plans to extend assessment blueprinting to PGT programmes. [Paragraph 5.1.2.1.]

Commendation 8

The Review Panel **commends** the Dental School on the proactive approach of staff in enhancing the student experience through the development of technology. [Paragraph 5.1.3.1.]

Commendation 9

The Review Panel was most impressed with the innovative use of the Flipped Classroom and **commends** the Dental School on this development. [Paragraph 5.1.3.2]

Commendation 10

The Panel considered that assessment blueprinting was a model of good practice and **commends** the Dental School for this excellent practice. [Paragraph 5.1.4.2]

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the Dental School in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are **grouped together** by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are **ranked in order of priority within each section**.

Recommendation 1

In order to safeguard and secure the excellent work undertaken by the Dental School, the Review Panel **recommends** that discussions take place with the School of Medicine and College to clarify reporting structures in order to minimise overlap, to avoid issues in Dentistry being overlooked and to improve communication between committees in the Dental School and those in the College and School of Medicine [Paragraph 3.1.5]

The Panel **recommends** that the College and School of Medicine, in conjunction with the Dental School should, in reviewing new and current programmes, balance potential income against competing demands upon staff resources. [Paragraph 4.1.5]

For action: Head of College, Head of School of Medicine, Head of Dental School

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Dental School should engage in succession planning to ensure continuity of leadership. [Paragraph 3.1.6]

For action: Head of Dental School

For information: Head of School of Medicine

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Dental School, where possible, explore existing links for potential to extend current provision and build a wider postgraduate portfolio. [Paragraph 4.1.9]

For action: Head of Dental School

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College, School of Medicine and the Dental School continue to engage with Student Lifecycle Support and Development to discuss the Dental School's current systems with a view to identifying, where possible, methods to improve compatibility and integration with the University systems. [Paragraph 5.2.5]

For action: Head of College, Director, Student Lifecycle Support & Development, Head of School of Medicine, Head of Dental School

Recommendation 5

The Panel noted, from the SER, that the School of Medicine and SoLS were working to address the shortfall in life sciences subject specialist staff through the University Planning and Budgeting round to bid for staffing resources. The Panel would hope that this issue will be resolved in the near future and **recommends** that an update report be submitted on the status of life sciences teaching within the Dental School. [Paragraph 5.3.1]

For action: Head of School of Medicine, Head of Dental School

Recommendation 6

Whilst the postgraduate students were generally appreciative of the feedback provided they commented on some inconsistencies particularly in relation to core courses and expressed a preference for written feedback instead of verbal feedback. The Panel

recommends that the Dental School review the current method of providing feedback to postgraduate students. [Paragraph 5.1.5.3]

The Panel **recommends** that the Dental School undertake steps to ensure that the postgraduate students are made aware of the formal processes for student representation. [Paragraph 4.5.3]

For action: Head of Dental School

Recommendation 7

The Panel **recommends** that the Dental School and School of Medicine review support mechanisms for the mentoring programme to ensure that the difficulties identified with regard to leadership and training are addressed. [Paragraph 4.3.4]

For action: Head of School of Medicine, Head of Dental School,

Recommendation 8

The Panel recommends that the Dental School should consult with College HR regarding whether it would appropriate to include the mentoring role in the relevant MPA job descriptions, in order for staff to continue in the role. The School should also clarify to students the non-clinical nature of mentoring, whether provided by MPA or academic staff. [Paragraph 4.3.3]

For action: Head of Dental School

Recommendation 9

The Panel noted the participation of the very active members on the College Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching group. In order to provide additional support to enable further development and full utilisation of these innovations, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Dental School discuss how best to build on this good practice. [Paragraph 5.1.3.5]

For action: Head of Dental School, Head of TELT, College of MVLS

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel considered that the 3D model, if fully utilised, was a valuable teaching asset and **recommends** that the Dental School reflects on other methods of encouraging staff to fully engage with, and to utilise, this technology. [Paragraph 5.1.3.4]

For action: Head of Dental School

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Summer Powers 2016

Periodic Subject Review: English Language held on 11 March 2016

Mrs Ruth Cole, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Frank Coton	Vice Principal (Academic and Educational Innovation), Panel Convener
Professor Susan Fitzmaurice	University of Sheffield, External Subject Specialist
Dr Sheila Kidd	School of Humanities, Cognate member
Mr Sven Maier	Student Panel Member
Professor Paul Younger	Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Jane MacKenzie	Learning and Teaching Centre

1. Introduction

- 1.1 English Language is located in the College of Arts, as one of four subject areas in the School of Critical Studies.
- 1.2 In the REF 2014, English at Glasgow (incorporating English and Scottish Language and Literature) was ranked first in Scotland and third in the UK. The National Student Survey (NSS) 2015 showed an overall satisfaction rating of 91% for the study of English at Glasgow.
- 1.3 The majority of English Language staff are based in a terrace of Victorian houses in University Gardens at the Gilmorehill campus, and the administrative staff are located across two sites in University Gardens and one in the Square. A range of accommodation across the campus is allocated for teaching, though the subject also benefits from the two key resources of the STELLA (Software for Teaching English Language and Literature and its Assessment) Digital Humanities Lab and the GULP (Glasgow University Laboratory of Phonetics), both located in University Gardens.
- 1.4 Student numbers for 2015-16 are as follows:

Undergraduate	
Level 1A	319
Level 1B	301
Level 2A	80
Level 2B	81
Honours	188
Postgraduate Taught	8

- 1.5 English Language has 17 members of teaching and research staff (13.6 FTE). Academic administrative support is drawn from the School of Critical Studies.
Range of provision
- 1.6 The subject area offers one undergraduate degree which can be taken as a single or joint honours programme. Currently one PGT programme is offered, the MSc English

Language and English Linguistics, though this did not run in sessions 2013-14 and 2014-15. The MSc provides research training that is ESRC accredited.

- 1.7 The Review Panel therefore considered the following range of provision offered by English Language:

Undergraduate

MA in General Humanities
MA Honours in English Language (Single)
MA Honours in English Language (Joint)

Postgraduate

MSc English Language and English Linguistics

Context of current PSR

- 1.8 The previous review of English Language was the Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA) review, which took place in February 2009. That review concluded that English Language provided high quality teaching in a welcoming and supportive environment, where the enthusiasm of staff for research and teaching was strongly communicated to, and shared by, the students.

Self Evaluation Report

- 1.9 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) for the current review was led by Professor Jennifer Smith, the Head of Subject, with contributions from members of staff from both English Language and the School of Critical Studies. Feedback was invited in a variety of formats from students, GTAs and staff and a draft of the document was circulated widely for comment.

Review visit

- 1.10 During the one day visit (11 March 2016) the Review Panel met with: The College Dean (Learning & Teaching), Dr Don Spaeth; the Head of the School of Critical Studies, Professor Jeremy Smith; the Head of Subject, Professor Jennifer Smith; and 11 other members of academic and administrative staff. The Panel also met with 12 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), six postgraduate students and 16 undergraduate students. All the meetings were extremely positive, and those with the GTAs, PGT students and undergraduate students were particularly lively and informative.

2. Context and Strategy

- 2.1 The teaching of English has a long history at the University of Glasgow, with a department of English Language formally established in 1948. Prior to University restructuring in 2010, English Language existed as a Department in its own right and contributed to the School of English and Scottish Language and Literature (SESLL).
- 2.2 The SER referred to the importance of English Language's position as part of the School of Critical Studies, in maintaining the links fostered by SESLL (this represented the relevant unit for REF and subject benchmarking), but the SER also highlighted broader links existing across the College and wider University.

Vision for future development

- 2.3 In discussion with the Head of School and Head of Subject, the Review Panel explored the subject area's vision for future development. The place of English Language in contributing to other degrees (e.g. English Literature) was established

but, given the breadth of coverage of English Language, there was the potential and the willingness to further links with a number of different areas of the University, in the Arts and Social Sciences, as well as some areas from the Sciences (e.g. Psychology). This would to some extent be driven by developments in the discipline itself, and also would continue to reflect the research being undertaken by staff within the Subject Area. The Panel noted that there was strength and breadth in that research, with two members of staff having acted on sub-panels for the recent REF. In the longer term, the subject area was looking forward to connections that it was hoped would arise from co-location with colleagues across the College of Arts following the campus redevelopment.

Proposed renaming of Subject Area

- 2.4 One key future development was the proposed renaming of the subject area as English Language and Linguistics. This was intended to give a better representation of the breadth of the subject so that it would be more recognisable nationally and internationally. The Head of Subject described to the Review Panel how the English Language curriculum encompassed significant breadth at Levels 1 and 2 but then allowed students to pursue their own areas of interest in the later stages of their degree. A broad grounding in the subject allowed them to make pertinent connections throughout their studies.

Honours restructuring

- 2.5 Another significant current development was that English Language was in the process of restructuring its Honours programme with a view to introducing in 2016-17 courses of 20 credits rather than 30 credits, to come in line with a standard credit structure for the College of Arts. Over the course of the Review it became clear to the Review Panel that this process of restructuring had been embraced by the Subject Area as a positive opportunity for reflection on many aspects of the undergraduate programme (see further at paragraph 4.4).

PGT provision

- 2.6 English Language currently offered one postgraduate taught programme, the MSc English Language and English Linguistics. It was running in 2015-16 with eight registered students but in the previous two sessions it had not recruited the required minimum number. The Review Panel discussed with the Head of School and Head of Subject the place of PGT provision within English Language. It was noted that Glasgow graduates of English Language tended to progress to the MPhil (R) or MRes rather than a taught masters as the undergraduate programme prepared them well to embark on research and, for Glasgow graduates, there would be some repetition in the MSc as currently constituted. There was variability in what graduates from other universities had covered in terms of research skills so it was necessary for the MSc to cover some of these basics. English Language did not have sufficient resources to be able to present a different masters level programme geared towards Glasgow graduates. Several of the PGT students that the Panel met said that they were hoping to progress to a PhD and confirmed that they saw the masters programme as providing the relevant preparation for research. The external subject specialist on the Panel noted that the challenges associated with graduates coming from a variety of disciplines and different institutions and thus differing levels of background knowledge were familiar from her own institution.
- 2.7 The Review Panel discussed with the Head of School and Head of Subject the sustainability of the current programme and the scope for broadening PGT provision, either through developing new optional components from a common core or by drawing in material from different parts of the School or the wider University. The

Head of Subject advised that there had been dialogue with the Marketing, Recruitment and International Office (MaRIO) about the scope for such possible future developments. A proposed programme with the School of Education had not recruited. MaRIO colleagues had provided advice about potential markets overseas, for example in China and India. However, staff recognised that for a small department, pursuing this kind of development would represent a very significant commitment. The Panel suggested that College-level support might be available to assist with this. The Panel also noted that markets evolved over time and demand from South East Asia, for example, may just be starting to grow. Targeting specific institutions with which Glasgow already had links was most likely to be fruitful and from this start the subject's profile in the region could develop.

- 2.8 There was strategic significance to English Language's MSc programme, as this facilitated ESRC accreditation. While accreditation had continued on the strength of the MPhil programme while the MSc did not run, it was uncertain that this would be viable in the future. The Head of Subject expressed the view that to lose accreditation would be to 'remove yourself from the game'.
- 2.9 Staff were open about the fact that they did not fully understand the factors affecting recruitment to the current MSc, noting that marketing of the programme for 2015-16 had not been any different from that in previous years. Of the eight students currently registered, seven were international. It was clear to the Review Panel that there was aspiration within the Subject to increase student numbers. At the meeting with key staff it was noted that if they were successful in their bid for an additional member of staff, recruitment to PGT would be a focus of the new role. The Head of Subject also advised the Panel that in the coming year there would be a full review of the issues relating to PGT provision.
- 2.10 Recognising the strategic importance of ESRC accreditation which is linked with its current PGT programme, the Review Panel **recommends** that English Language proceed with its planned review of PGT provision with a view to establishing this on a sustainable footing, investigating opportunities for shared provision across the School and College, and exploring strategies for strengthening recruitment.

3. Enhancing the Student Experience

Recruitment to undergraduate study

- 3.1 The recruitment of undergraduate students to the study of English Language at the University was highlighted in the SER as an on-going challenge, an issue that had also been prominent in the DPTLA in 2009. The SER noted that in the last three years there had been a decrease in the number of Level 1 students (2013: 1a 374, 1b 374; 2014: 1a 352, 1b 341; 2015: 1a 319, 1b 301) though Level 2 numbers had in fact increased.
- 3.2 The majority of undergraduates came from Scotland, where the study of English Language was not a formal part of the school curriculum; thus attracting applicants to the study of the subject was particularly challenging. A number of recent awareness-raising initiatives undertaken by the subject were described in the SER. For example, in partnership with Education Scotland, staff had been involved in the development of materials about place names in Scotland to be delivered in schools. English Language had also contributed to the SQA Scots Language Award (introduced in August 2014) which it was hoped might foster interest in the study of English Language.
- 3.3 Some of the undergraduate students who met with the Review Panel spoke about the lecture at Open Day which had opened their eyes to what the study of English Language was. Several of the students told the Panel that they had not come to

Glasgow intending to study English Language or even really understanding what it was about, but they had been 'won over' by the passion and enthusiasm of the staff in Level 1 and by the breadth of the subject matter covered. The students' view was that the proposed renaming of the subject area to English Language and Linguistics would be very positive in terms of awareness-raising for potential applicants. It was clear that even English teachers had a patchy understanding of what was covered in English Language at Glasgow. The Panel suggested that there might be scope for the subject to host events for teachers, which would potentially have a bigger impact than individual visits to schools. Key staff told the Panel that they hosted occasional events for teachers, although CPD activity generally had somewhat fallen away since restructuring.

- 3.4 English Language had no policy on the use of social media as part of a strategy on recruitment. The Head of Subject acknowledged that there was scope to develop this, noting that the current twitter feed had an internal focus. There was also interest in developing an enhanced web presence. Key staff noted that such activities were, unfortunately, relatively low on their priorities given their intense workloads. It was clear that significant efforts went in to making Open Days successful including opening the STELLA and GULP labs. There was discussion about how to optimise the impact of such events, for example by involving current students or recent graduates, and making contact after the event with those who had attended.
- 3.5 Noting the enthusiasm of the undergraduates that attended the Review (see paragraph 4.1), the Panel asked them whether they would be willing to have some involvement in recruitment. Other areas of the University involved current students in school visits and Open Days, and in some cases this activity was credit-bearing. The undergraduates responded very positively to the suggestion that there was the possibility of such activity in English Language and immediately recognised the potential value for them in terms of developing graduate attributes. Key staff were pleased to hear about this reaction but noted that finding a way of including credit-bearing activity in the new Honours curriculum could be challenging. Even so, the Panel noted that there might be SRC recognition of such activities for inclusion on the student transcript.
- 3.6 The Review Panel **recommends** that English Language, in conjunction with the School, continue its efforts to promote recruitment to the undergraduate study of English Language at Glasgow, exploring means of: involving current students and recent alumni in this task; harnessing social media and the internet; and following up contacts made at Open Days.

Progression

- 3.7 The SER noted the very healthy progression rates for English Language students: of those students taking Level 1 in their first year, approximately 90% continued to take English Language Level 2, and approximately 80% taking English Language Level 2 progressed to Honours. However, some students elected not to take English Language Level 1 until their second year, which meant that they were then unable to take English Language Level 2, and progression to Honours depended on a very good performance in Level 1. The ideal was for students to take English Language Level 1 in first year but the fact that this did not happen appeared to be linked in part to a lack of understanding of in-coming students about the subject area. This highlighted the importance of communicating to students at the outset what was covered by English Language. There was a role here for Advisors of Study but their input was limited.
- 3.8 The SER highlighted the emphasis placed in English Language on supporting students to progress through the different stages of their studies. The Review Panel noted that all prospective Honours students attended an individual meeting with the

Honours convener in the spring of second year. The undergraduate students who met the Panel spoke about the fact that from an early stage in their studies staff highlighted where topics would lead to in Honours, referring also to their own research where appropriate. The students appreciated this approach and felt that it laid the foundations for real rapport between staff and students, indicating the hope that students would pursue the subject. Staff confirmed that they sometimes 'looked forward' in the course of a lecture series or at the end, and that more information on how the topic would be developed at a later stage was included in course documentation. Students in Level 1 and Level 2 were also invited to information sessions on the next stages in the subject. (See commendation at paragraph 3.17.)

Equality and Diversity

- 3.9 The SER noted that the School Disability Officer belonged to the School's Learning and Teaching Committee, promoting awareness of relevant issues and embedding equality and diversity in the consideration of developments in learning and teaching. The Review Panel **commends** this approach to mainstreaming Equality and Diversity. Equality and Diversity was included in the School's GTA training programme.
- 3.10 The Review Panel noted the accessibility issues associated with English Language accommodation in University Gardens, in common with many of the other older parts of the University estate.

Supporting Students in their Learning

- 3.11 The SER described various forms of support offered to students at different stages of their time at the University, both for those completing a full degree and for visiting students. In the meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students it was very clear to the Review Panel that the students felt well supported. They described staff as friendly, encouraging, approachable and very responsive to their requests for help and willing to offer one-to-one time on request. A number of the undergraduates who came to Glasgow with little background knowledge of English Language said that staff made the subject accessible so they did not feel at a disadvantage. The students believed that staff were focused on supporting them to achieve their full potential. The comment was made that English Language was somewhere that students wanted to be 'a part of', with a very positive atmosphere existing between students and teaching and administrative staff, this being established at a very early stage with key staff being introduced to students in person at lectures.

PGT

- 3.12 The Review Panel discussed with PGT students their experience of studying at Glasgow so far. While they were all enjoying the programme, some of the students who had not previously studied at Glasgow said that the system was very different from that at their previous institutions and that the start of the course had appeared to be disorganised, with a lack of clarity about what was expected of them. The Panel noted that similar comments were made in the feedback gathered in advance of the PSR. There had been problems with some courses not being available and classes not being in the correct rooms. However, on reflection, the students wondered if their sense of disorientation arose mainly from the expectations they had brought with them from their previous education. There had been a week-long induction programme but this had involved a great deal of information to take in in a short period of time and they felt that it had taken them a longer period to adjust to postgraduate study at Glasgow.
- 3.13 Recognising the broad range of educational backgrounds from which PGT students come, the Review Panel **recommends** that English Language review its induction

and orientation process, particularly for those who have not previously studied at Glasgow, to cover the structure of the programme and what is expected of the students, and to support continuing orientation throughout the early stages of the programme.

Attendance monitoring

- 3.14 Staff told the Review Panel that attendance was monitored at workshops/seminars in Levels 1 and 2 and at Honours lectures. Those with poor attendance were contacted, though staff felt that there was less time to do this now than there had been in the past and the comment was made that any technological tools that could assist with this activity would be welcome. It was noted that the level of activity on Moodle was also a useful indicator of the degree to which students were engaging with their studies. The SER explained that the monitoring of attendance was considered to be an important general support mechanism for students in English Language though there were also some sessions that were considered very important for students to attend because of the nature of the material covered, for example classes at which plagiarism was discussed. Feedback from students gathered in advance of the PSR indicated that they viewed the monitoring of attendance positively.

Advising system

- 3.15 A new advising system had been introduced in 2015-16. Staff told the Review Panel that it appeared to be well organised but it was too early to say what impact there would be, if any, on student retention. There was anecdotal evidence that some students regretted that advisers were less likely to have a relevant subject specialist background, but the intention was that they should be more experienced at providing non-subject related advice and support. The view of staff was that at Honours, the Honours Convener was an obvious first point of contact and, more generally in English Language, administrative staff dealt very effectively with a wide range of queries. It was noted that currently there was no Senior Adviser from the School of Critical Studies, but an appointment was anticipated.

Student Engagement

- 3.16 The SER outlined a range of activities offered by English Language in order to enhance student engagement in their studies, including supporting the choice of honours dissertation topic to be in an area of the student's own interest despite possible workload implications for staff. Reflecting on a number of different aspects of the subject area's approach to their students (e.g. students being encouraged to attend research seminars, SSLC minutes being provided to all) the Panel concluded that there was a strong culture of promoting student engagement in English Language.
- 3.17 The Review Panel **commends** English Language for its success in engaging students in their studies, through embedding at an early stage connections with the Honours curriculum and with staff's own research, and through the evidently inclusive attitude of staff. (See also paragraph 3.8)

Graduate Attributes

- 3.18 The SER noted a number of initiatives providing students with opportunities to develop graduate attributes in the course of their undergraduate studies, though the Review Panel's view was that there appeared to be a strong focus on research-related skills. Enhancing Academic Skills in English Language (EASEL) was a programme for Honours students focusing on a range of academic topics but also on the development of transferable skills and career planning. At PGT, employability was embedded in the training delivered at School level.

- 3.19 The Review Panel was pleased to note at the meeting with undergraduates how quickly they identified the potential for developing graduate attributes through possible future involvement in recruitment activities.

Student mobility

- 3.20 The University's strategic target was for at least 20% of students to experience a period of outward mobility. At the meeting with key staff the Review Panel heard that approximately 11% of English Language students in junior honours were involved in student mobility in the current session and that applications for study abroad in 2016-17 had increased. Staff were aware of the barriers to mobility such as the additional expense for students who usually lived at home in term time. The Head of Subject spoke about the fact that the College now had a group of preferred partners. There was a discussion with the Panel about the known benefits of a period of study abroad. English Language staff made great efforts to promote outward mobility and large numbers of students attended the initial information sessions but many dropped away with time. There was a lot of work involved in arranging a suitable curriculum for English Language students. There was a discussion with the Head of School and Head of Subject about the increasing range of experiences being promoted by the University and being made available at overseas institutions, such as summer schools, and the potential for raising the profile of such activities to students in English Language.
- 3.21 The Review Panel **recommends** that English Language continue to explore the range of possible means for students to benefit from an international experience during the course of their studies at Glasgow, including options available to students for whom the traditional session-long or semester-long experiences would be impracticable.

4. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

Curriculum Design

- 4.1 The undergraduate students told the Review Panel that staff were passionate about what they were teaching, as if everything they taught they found fascinating and wanted students to as well. The approach to teaching was inclusive, with students feeling strongly that staff genuinely wanted them to continue with the subject. The view expressed by the undergraduates was that the wide range of courses meant that there was something for everyone. (See commendation at paragraph 3.17)
- 4.2 Students coming in at Level 1 had a range of different backgrounds: Scottish students who had no formal background in English Language; English students who might have studied English Language at A or AS level; and international students with a wide range of possible background knowledge. This created some issues for the curriculum in Levels 1 and 2. Of the undergraduates who met the Review Panel, a number had undertaken some previous study of the subject before coming to Glasgow, including A Level English Language, while some had come with no prior knowledge. Of those who had studied the subject previously there were two views: on the one hand that there was quite a lot of overlap in first year with what they had been taught before and, on the other, that while there was overlap the lectures quickly took them beyond what they were familiar with, including early reference to staff's own research in the relevant topic. The students reflected that such differences in background knowledge were not unique to English Language as there was, in any event, something of a gap between the skills and knowledge of those who had previously taken Advanced Highers compared to those with only Highers.
- 4.3 As noted above (paragraph 3.7) students sometimes elected to take Level 1 English Language in second year and if they then decided that they wished to take English

Language to Honours they required high grades. The undergraduates reflected on this, feeling that there was a large jump from Level 1 to Level 2, so to progress directly from Level 1 to Honours was very challenging. The Review Panel heard from one student who had done this whose view was that, while challenging, it was achievable. The Head of School and Head of Subject raised the possibility of students with A Level English Language being admitted direct into second year, but they noted that there were important core skills taught in Level 1 that would not necessarily have been covered in A Level, depending on the exam board.

Restructure of Honours curriculum

- 4.4 As noted at paragraph 2.5, English Language had been undertaking a review of its Honours curriculum with a view to introducing the revised structure in 2016-17. The review had been prompted by the College-wide move to a standard framework of 20-credit, rather than 30-credit, courses. The SER described this as a positive exercise which had presented the subject with the opportunity to reflect on the current research interests of staff, the best way of developing graduate attributes, and recent developments in the subject area. At the meeting with key staff, the Review Panel heard that this had been a challenging process. While there had been the opportunity to develop new courses, staff had been careful to ensure that they did not allow a proliferation of them. The undergraduate students told the Panel that they had been consulted as part of the review process. It was clear that they were positive about the proposed changes as they believed that the new structure would offer more choice and flexibility.
- 4.5 The Review Panel was pleased to note from the SER that a working party was now in place to review English Language Levels 1 and 2 following on from the changes being made at Honours, but also to take account of changing patterns of recruitment and the range of prior knowledge of entrants.

Qualitative methods teaching

- 4.6 The PGT students who met with the Review Panel spoke positively about their studies. However, those taking the 'ESRC' route, which involved two courses from the Social Sciences Research Methods Programme (Statistics 1 and Qualitative Methods) had experienced problems. They said that they had encountered difficulties getting staff to respond to their concerns, and course evaluations had not been completed. The students' view was that as these were generic courses for Social Scientists they were not well suited for the English Language programme and that it would be better to have practical sessions in the subject area's own lab. They also felt that there was a lack of guidance on the course from lecturers. The Head of School and Head of Subject acknowledged that ideally this material would be delivered within English Language, but this was not feasible with such low student numbers.
- 4.7 The Review Panel **recommends** that the Deans of Learning and Teaching in Arts and Social Sciences consider and then implement an approach that achieves best alignment between the generic coverage of statistics and qualitative measures provision and the specific needs of Arts PGT programmes.

Undergraduate seminars

- 4.8 A number of the pre-Honours undergraduate students who met with the Review Panel raised a concern about the seminars, some feeling that tutors were not always well prepared or comfortable with the subject matter, relying solely on the accompanying booklet. Some had also experienced unevenness in the material covered: in one week finding that the session was very rushed and in another that the material seemed to have been covered in the first 20 minutes. The Panel suggested

that this merited some investigation by English Language, particularly in view of the GTAs' comments about how well prepared they felt for seminars (see paragraph 4.25).

- 4.9 Some of the PGT students told the Review Panel that they had found it confusing to have different members of staff delivering classes on the same course and struggled at the time to see the cohesion. Generally though the group felt that by the end of the course they had gained a helpful overview of the subject matter informed by different perspectives, including insights from the lecturers' own research. This indicated to the Panel that clearer sign-posting at the start of such courses might be helpful.

Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes

- 4.10 ILOs were set out in the relevant documents and were generally appropriate, though it was noted that at Level 1 these were embedded within the text and could have been more prominent in order to make them easier for students to identify. The PGT handbook stated that assessment was against ILOs, but did not state what these were.

Assessment

- 4.11 The SER described a range of formative and summative assessments used in English Language. Formative exercises were available on Moodle for Level 1 students and the introduction of similar exercises at other Levels was anticipated. The use of Moodle in this way was beneficial for students in receiving quick feedback and less input was required of staff.
- 4.12 The undergraduate students raised a concern that when they sat the end of course examination on English Language 1A they had received no feedback on any written work. On 1B they had had some short essay practice but still felt that they needed more preparation for essay writing. However, they also acknowledged that very useful essay plans were made available for first years on Moodle. The Review Panel suggested that English Language should consider whether any feedback on written work could be provided at an earlier stage.
- 4.13 The undergraduate students referred to the diverse components of assessment made available on some Honours courses, saying that they felt that these methods supported the deep understanding of the subject matter needed at this level and contrasted this with less varied assessments that they had experienced in other subject areas. They accepted that for some English Language courses, the assessments were generally written essays as this reflected the nature of the relevant subject matter. The students also referred to an exercise where they gathered their own data as part of a group exercise and then wrote it up, which they had found to be helpful preparation for writing their dissertations. They also made particular reference to the assessment for Sociolinguistics having been changed for the current session in response to feedback that had been given by the previous cohort.
- 4.14 The Review Panel learned that English Language was broadening the range of assessments as part of the revision of the Honours curriculum. Some courses were maintaining the more traditional combination of coursework and final exam whereas others were introducing a more varied pattern including lab reports and small research projects. Some courses would have no exam. The external examiners had been consulted on the proposals and had responded very positively to the increasing diversity of assessment. The undergraduate students and GTAs who met the Panel had also been consulted and were enthusiastic about the proposed changes. Staff told the Panel that they recognised the importance of evaluating the new assessments in due course.

- 4.15 The Review Panel **commends** English Language for the approach adopted in reviewing assessment as part of the wider review of the Honours curriculum. The diversification of assessment schemes was ambitious and wide-ranging, and resulted from careful planning and consultation.

Feedback on assessment

- 4.16 The Review Panel noted that NSS scores in relation to feedback on assessment were lower than scores for other aspects of the student experience (58% agreed with the statement 'feedback on my work has been prompt', 75% with the statement 'I have received detailed comments on my work'). The Head of Subject said that this had been something of a surprise as the staff considered that feedback was thorough and prompt. Key staff also felt that the NSS scores did not match what students themselves had told staff. This was now a strategic issue in the College of Arts, with an Action Plan in place. Because staff suspected that the low scores in part reflected the fact that students did not always recognise what constituted feedback, the statement 'this is feedback' was now included on returned work, and the various forms in which feedback was provided had been explained on Moodle (including, for example, staff availability in office hours, e-mail responses from staff). Across English Language the format of feedback on submitted work had been standardised in the current session, with a set of common headings as well as open comments. Students would be asked at the next staff--student liaison committee meeting for their views on these changes.
- 4.17 It was hoped that these recent developments would have a positive impact on NSS scores concerning assessment feedback in 2016. The Head of School described to the Panel how, more broadly, they were engaging students in thinking about enhancing their academic skills particularly at Honours, asking students to reflect on their own academic practice by using a variety of resources, e.g. a video exploring aspects of plagiarism, and staff discussing what an essay was for, how they go about marking it and what they were looking for. The GTAs felt that the resource made available on Moodle on how to write for English Language ('Good Style, *A Guide to Writing Essays and Examinations in English Language*') was excellent. This was provided shortly before students started writing their first essays. The GTAs also told the Panel about a new seminar in Level 2 on how to prepare for exams, which included a discussion of marking criteria.
- 4.18 The submission and return of assessed work was now carried out entirely electronically, with feedback provided on Moodle through comments that were superimposed on the work. This process had not gone entirely smoothly, with students sometimes submitting the wrong item, and the system at times having been unable to accept submissions. Key staff and the GTAs referred to the frustrating limitations of marking in Moodle. There was a lack of flexibility in inserting comments and once 'sticky notes' were attached to the text, they could not be moved and it was then no longer possible to reveal what had been written under the note. Staff felt that the system was out-dated, laborious to use and excessively time-consuming, which in itself was likely to mean that the feedback provided was less comprehensive than it might otherwise have been.
- 4.19 The Review Panel **recommends** that the VLE Governance Board is asked to consider the limitations of providing feedback within Moodle and, if appropriate, to identify other more effective means of facilitating the provision of feedback to students on their assessed work.
- 4.20 The Review Panel discussed with the Head of Subject and Head of School the extent to which students appeared to engage with the feedback provided. There was a feeling that students were primarily concerned with their grade and rarely approached staff for more explanation of the comments provided. Time could usefully be spent in

the seminar following the return of work reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of submissions. The Head of Subject told the Panel that students were asked to assess sample submissions, looking for strengths and weaknesses in the work. This appeared to be a valuable exercise.

- 4.21 Both the undergraduate and postgraduate students who met with the Review Panel said that the feedback they received on assessment was helpful and was returned promptly. The postgraduate students said that on receipt of written feedback they were able to seek further feedback from staff directly, and commented that after receipt of feedback on semester 1 work they had felt more confident in approaching their work in semester 2. One exception to this was the postgraduates who were taking the Social Sciences Statistics course. They said that the feedback on their work did not appear to follow the rubric and was variable in quality.

Engagement with the Code of Assessment and Assessment Policy

- 4.22 The SER confirmed that English Language was in full compliance with the Code of Assessment and the University's Assessment Policy. The Review Panel was particularly impressed with the willingness of the subject area to extend the range of assessments to be used in the revised honours curriculum.

Engaging and Supporting Staff

Probationer and early career support

- 4.23 At the time of the Review, English Language did not have any staff on the Early-Career Development Programme (ECDP). The SER outlined the process in place to support participants on the ECDP as appropriate, through line manager and an assigned mentor.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

- 4.24 The SER noted that GTAs in English Language completed the University's statutory training and the subject area's own programme. The School of Critical Studies also offered training. The Review Panel met with a very engaging and enthusiastic group of 12 GTAs. They explained that they taught at Levels 1 and 2, and some also taught at Honours. They said that they felt supported and well prepared for their work but that they also appreciated the fact that they were given some autonomy as they became more experienced. This meant that they were able to develop a variety of skills and experience which they believed would be of great value when seeking employment.
- 4.25 At Level 1, GTAs had meetings with the relevant lecturer every two weeks which helped them to prepare for tutorials and ensure that they aligned with what was being delivered in lectures. At Level 2 the meetings were less frequent. Both groups stated that they were provided with resources which explained what they were expected to cover in the tutorials. They said that as the materials were made available in good time, they were able to clarify things in advance so that when they came to delivering tutorials they felt well prepared. They found the conveners approachable and willing to answer questions. While they were gradually given more challenging work, they felt that this was never more than they could cope with.
- 4.26 The PGT students who met with the Panel commented positively on the opportunity to shadow current GTAs. The Panel believed that the subject area's supportive culture was reflected in the attitude of the GTAs themselves: they noted that as the material had stayed largely unchanged from the previous year those who had acted as tutors then were able to help new GTAs by reflecting on what had worked well.

- 4.27 The GTAs confirmed that they received feedback on their work, through student feedback that had been collated by staff. Overall, they said that they felt their work was valued.
- 4.28 A number of GTAs reported that they had had the opportunity to lecture to Honours students on their own areas of research. They very much appreciated being offered this opportunity and the fact that staff supported them in preparing for this role.
- 4.29 The GTAs were involved in the marking of coursework and some exams. Again they described this activity as being well supported. They said that at Level 1 very clear marking guidelines were provided and they attended a seminar on marking. They began by being involved in moderation or second marking and then progressed to being first markers.
- 4.30 The GTAs raised the issue of not being able to offer formal 'office hours'. This was a frustration because it was natural that students approached them with queries arising from material covered in seminars, particularly approaching assessment deadlines, and they were willing to provide the help sought. As it was currently, the GTAs did respond to queries but were not paid for this time.

The Review Panel **recommends** that English Language clarify to students the role of GTAs and, in particular, the fact that queries arising from seminars should be directed to the course convener rather than to the GTA.

- 4.31 The Review Panel **strongly commends** English Language for the exemplary support and development of its GTAs (including opportunities offered to PGT students to shadow GTAs), and for the additional opportunities offered to GTAs such as lecturing on their own areas of research.

Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)

- 4.32 The SER highlighted a number of issues concerning teaching accommodation, including the inflexibility of the room booking system which meant insufficient and sometimes inadequate accommodation being available.
- 4.33 The undergraduate students told the Review Panel that in one two-hour session on Sociolinguistics in semester 1 they had been required to break after one hour and move to a different teaching room for the second hour. They said that they were aware of staff unhappiness with some of the teaching accommodation provided. They also felt that on a number of occasions the accommodation provided was not fit for purpose, citing rooms in the Alexander Stone Building where no tables were provided for a class test. They also said that teaching rooms were often either too cold or excessively hot, and sometimes classes were in rooms with no natural light, which felt claustrophobic. The GTAs also referred to instances where the accommodation provided was not fit for purpose, for example a seminar group that had been booked in a lecture theatre. The configuration of seating hindered student interaction and this had undermined the purpose of the session. A more suitable location had, however, been provided in semester two. Staff told the Panel that students had reported that timetabling sometimes meant they were unable to get from one class to the next in a timely fashion so that they would choose to attend only one of the two. Staff expressed their concern at the direct impact on the student experience of inadequate teaching accommodation. The Convener of the Review Panel acknowledged that there were many issues with the current estate but encouraged students to alert staff to the particular problems that they were encountering in order that they should be taken into account in future campus developments.
- 4.34 Staff members referred to the timetabling difficulties, stating that while timetabling staff were helpful, the requirements of the system were complex and this required much administrative time to navigate. They also expressed great anxiety about

whether appropriate teaching space would be made available to support the new Honours structure as they were aware that the pressures on teaching space on campus would not be alleviated in the short term. The Head of Subject advised the Review Panel that a dialogue was already on-going with central room bookings, alerting them to the requirements of the new courses.

- 4.35 While staff were mainly located in 12 University Gardens, the SER referred to the fact that teaching took place across the campus and that the location of classes sometimes changed from week to week. Reference was made at the meetings with staff and students to the fact that there was no dedicated space for English Language students. While the undergraduates spoke about staff being welcoming and creating a sense of 'belonging' they felt the absence of dedicated study/social space for them. They contrasted first and second year, where they did not get to know many people, with Honours where many of their classes took place in University Gardens, which they believed contributed to the feeling of subject identity. The postgraduates had access to study space in the Alexander Stone Building and the PG Hub in the Square but said that these spaces were not used to 'hang out' as a cohort.

Administration

- 4.36 The SER referred to the fact that administrative staff for English Language were located in three different locations and that this brought challenges and inefficiencies. The Review Panel noted, however, that feedback from students and the external examiners on the administrative support for English Language was extremely positive. The Head of School and Head of Subject both believed that this success was a product of very hard work by the committed administrative team, including the member of staff who had twice received the Administrator of the Year award. The Head of School, Head of Subject and key staff referred to the proliferation of administration throughout the year, with most communication being undertaken by e-mail. There was a sense of regret at the loss of face-to-face contact, particularly as teaching staff, administrators and students were not physically located close together. At the key staff meeting there was reflection on the fact that there were only just enough staff to cover the various administrative roles. Outward facing roles were time consuming (i.e. enquiries from outwith the University). There was a general discussion about what created the administrative burden, with the Review Panel convenor noting that a recent benchmarking exercise had found that at Glasgow there was a higher burden associated with teaching administration than at other Russell Group universities; this was being investigated. Key staff referred to the pressure that these tasks placed on their ability to deliver high quality teaching and maintain their research.

Technology-enhanced Learning and Teaching

- 4.37 The Review Panel enjoyed having the opportunity to visit the two dedicated English Language labs, STELLA and GULP. These labs were used for the teaching of students at all levels including the introduction of research activities. Specialist software was in use for a range of courses, some having been developed by Glasgow staff. The undergraduate students spoke positively about being able to use the labs outwith class time however they noted that the computers in the STELLA lab were extremely slow, with logging on taking as much as 15 minutes. While they recognised that the lab was potentially a very valuable resource, they were much less likely to use it because of the difficulty of using the computers. The GTAs also reflected these frustrations to the Panel and said that there was a direct negative impact on the learning experience for the students. It was the understanding of the Head of Subject that, according to the standard renewal cycle, the computers were due for imminent upgrade.

- 4.38 The Review Panel **recommends** that English Language ensure that upgrading of the computers in the STELLA lab is pursued in accordance with the standard upgrading cycle, in order to ensure that this valuable learning and teaching resource is optimised.
- 4.39 The students also found it frustrating that they were asked to leave the labs at 5 o'clock. Staff explained that this was because students could not be left in unstaffed buildings. The Review Panel noted that the University was hoping to move to less restricted student access on campus as technology for monitoring student safety improved.

5. Academic Standards

External Examining

- 5.1 The Review Panel noted the extremely positive nature of external examiner reports. These indicated that the externals had been consulted on proposed changes and that their comments had been taken on board and responded to. The reports confirmed that the externals fully supported the recent curriculum developments.

Student Feedback

- 5.2 The students who met with the Review Panel said that generally staff were very accessible and responsive, and that staff–student liaison committee (SSLC) meetings were effective in that staff were open to suggestions from students, and that where problems were raised there was a rapid response. The students felt that they were informed of changes and generally kept up to date with what was happening in the subject area. Minutes from SSLCs were made available on Moodle and it was clear to the Panel that these meetings were positive in tone, with time spent talking about the different courses rather than being a forum for complaints.
- 5.3 The Review Panel **commends** English Language for the open and responsive attitude of staff, demonstrated through effective consultation and rapid response to feedback or requests for support, attested to by students, GTAs and external examiners.

6. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths

- Highly committed academic and administrative staff
- Teaching that is embedded in a strong research culture
- Exemplary training, support and development of GTAs

Areas for improvement

- Sustainability of PGT provision
- Direct recruitment at UG level

Conclusion

The members of the Review Panel very much enjoyed their engagement with English Language. A lasting impression was formed of a subject area where staff effectively communicate passion for their subject, and students feel welcomed into a vibrant learning community.

The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, programmes offered by English Language were

current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and of practice in its application.

Commendations

The Review Panel commends English Language on the following, which are listed in order of appearance in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel **commends** English Language's approach to mainstreaming Equality and Diversity, specifically through the School Disability Officer's belonging to the School's Learning and Teaching Committee, promoting awareness of relevant issues and embedding Equality and Diversity in the consideration of developments in learning and teaching.

[Paragraph 3.9]

Commendation 2

The Review Panel **commends** English Language for its success in engaging students in their studies, through embedding at an early stage connections with the Honours curriculum and with staff's own research, and through the evidently inclusive attitude of staff.

[Paragraph 3.17]

Commendation 3

The Review Panel **commends** English Language for the approach adopted in reviewing assessment as part of the wider review of the Honours curriculum. The diversification of assessment schemes was ambitious and wide-ranging, and resulted from careful planning and consultation. Staff demonstrated to the Panel an awareness of the importance of evaluating these changes following implementation in 2016-17.

[Paragraph 4.15]

Commendation 4

The Review Panel **strongly commends** English Language for the exemplary support and development of its GTAs (including opportunities offered to PGT students to shadow GTAs), and for the additional opportunities offered to GTAs such as lecturing on their own areas of research.

[Paragraph 4.31]

Commendation 5

The Review Panel **commends** English Language for the open and responsive attitude of staff, demonstrated through effective consultation and rapid response to feedback or requests for support, attested to by students, GTAs and external examiners.

[Paragraph 5.3]

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the subject area in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are **ranked in order of priority**.

Recommendation 1

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

The Review Panel recommends that English Language, in conjunction with the School, continue its efforts to promote recruitment to the undergraduate study of English Language at Glasgow, exploring means of: involving current students and recent alumni in this task; harnessing social media and the internet; and following up contacts made at Open Days.

[Paragraph 3.6]

Recommendation 2

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

Recognising the strategic importance of ESRC accreditation which is linked with its current PGT programme, the Review Panel **recommends** that English Language proceed with its planned review of PGT provision with a view to establishing this on a sustainable footing, investigating opportunities for shared provision across the School and College, and exploring strategies for strengthening recruitment.

[Paragraph 2.10]

Recommendation 3

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

Recognising the broad range of educational backgrounds from which PGT students come, the Review Panel **recommends** that English Language review its induction and orientation process, particularly for those who have not previously studied at Glasgow, to cover the structure of the programme and what is expected of the students, and to support continuing orientation throughout the early stages of the programme.

[Paragraph 3.13]

Recommendation 4

For the attention of: **Deans of Learning and Teaching, Arts and Social Sciences**
For information: **Head of Subject**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Deans of Learning and Teaching in Arts and Social Sciences consider and then implement an approach that achieves best alignment between the generic coverage of statistics and qualitative measures provision and the specific needs of Arts PGT programmes.

[Paragraph 4.7]

Recommendation 5

For the attention of: **Chair of the University VLE Governance Board**
For information: **Head of Subject**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the VLE Governance Board is asked to consider the limitations of providing feedback within Moodle and, if appropriate, to identify other more effective means of facilitating the provision of feedback to students on their assessed work.

[Paragraph 4.19]

Recommendation 6

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

The Review Panel recommends that English Language ensure that upgrading of the computers in the STELLA lab is pursued in accordance with the standard upgrading

cycle, in order to ensure that this valuable learning and teaching resource is optimised.

[Paragraph 4.38]

Recommendation 7

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

The Review Panel **recommends** that English Language continue to explore the range of possible means for students to benefit from an international experience during the course of their studies at Glasgow, including options available to students for whom the traditional session-long or semester-long experiences would be impracticable.

[Paragraph 3.21]

Recommendation 8

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

The Review Panel **recommends** that English Language clarify to students the role of GTAs and, in particular, the fact that queries arising from seminars led by a GTA should be directed to the course convener rather than to the GTA.

[Paragraph 4.30]

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Summer Powers 2016

Periodic Subject Review: Review of English Literature held on 17 March 2016

Ms Helen Clegg, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Moira Fischbacher-Smith	Assistant Vice Principal (Learning & Teaching), Panel Convener
Professor Susan Bruce	Keele University, External Subject Specialist
Dr Carl Goodyear	Senate Assessor on Court
Mr David Guthrie	Student member
Dr John Richards	School of Culture and Creative Arts, Cognate member
Dr Amanda Sykes	Learning and Teaching Centre
Ms Helen Clegg	Senate Office, Clerk to the Panel

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Subject of English Literature ('the Subject') is one of four subjects that make up the School of Critical Studies ('the School'), the others being English Language, Scottish Literature and Theology & Religious Studies. The School of Critical Studies is one of four Schools in the College of Arts. The Schools and College were formed in 2010, when a major restructuring exercise reshaped the University from nine Faculties to four Colleges.
- 1.2 The Subject last underwent full internal review in March 2009 as the Department of English Literature, when it was one of three Departments in the Faculty of Arts' School of English and Scottish Language and Literature. The outcome of that review was positive in terms of student satisfaction, staff commitment and the quality of provision. Indeed, the Panel at that time noted that the Department appeared to downplay its strengths and achievements, which the Panel considered to be substantial.
- 1.3 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was produced by Dr Vassiliki Kolocotroni (Head of Subject) with input from Professor Jeremy Smith (Head of School), Subject and School Learning & Teaching conveners, members of academic and administrative staff, Graduate Teaching Assistants and student representatives.
- 1.4 The Self Evaluation Report offered a large amount of information about the Subject's activities, though tended to be descriptive rather than reflective. The Review Panel was impressed by the examples of good practice indicated in the report though considered that more evidence to support them would have been useful.
- 1.5 The Review Panel met with Dr Vassiliki Kolocotroni (Head of Subject), Professor Jeremy Smith (Head of School), Dr Wendy Anderson (College Deputy Dean of Learning & Teaching), twenty three members of staff, five early-career staff members, four Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), eight Postgraduate Taught students and nineteen undergraduate students across all levels. One further undergraduate student provided written comments.

1.6 The School is located mainly at numbers 4 and 5 University Gardens on the Gilmorehill Campus, although some staff members are located at Lilybank Gardens (the Creative Writing team) and The Square (the Postgraduate Office). Accommodation includes a dedicated teaching/social space and the STELLA laboratory at 13 University Gardens which is accessible to all School members. Some staff offices are large enough for small group teaching, but most do not have disabled access.

2. Background information

2.1 Students

Student numbers for the current session are as follows:

Level 1	375
Level 2	301
Honours (level 3 and 4)	428
Ordinary (level 3)	22
Undergraduate Total	1126
Postgraduate Taught	89
Total students	1215

2.2 Staffing

The Subject's academic staff, represented as FTEs, are as follows:

Professor	4.4
Senior Lecturer	9.5
Lecturer	11.2
University Teacher	0.5
Total FTEs	25.6

Additionally, the Subject has a full time Subject Administrator and a full time Administrative Assistant, as well as access to the School's administrative teams.

2.3 Range of provision

The following range of provision offered by the Subject was considered as part of the review:

- MA (Hons) English Literature (Single)
- MA (Hons) English Literature (Joint)
- MA General Humanities
- MLitt Creative Writing
- MLitt Fantasy
- MLitt Modernities
- MLitt Victorian Literature

The Subject also convenes the intercalating BSc (MedSci) (Hons) in Medical Humanities.

3. Context and Strategy

3.1 Context and Vision

- 3.1.1 The Subject's overall range of provision was similar to that offered at the time of the last review, with an additional Masters programme being introduced – the MLitt Fantasy, which was believed to be the only degree of its kind worldwide. Reform of the Honours programmes was also underway and, in addition to the standardisation of credits, these would include new courses in creative writing. The Head of Subject indicated that this was a much-demanded development, with prospective applicants frequently asking at Open Days about creative writing opportunities. She added that the Subject had gone through a period where creative writing had become a distinct unit, focused on postgraduate provision, but that there were now clear efforts to integrate it into the undergraduate curriculum with provision already embedded into Levels 1 and 2. It was hoped this would have a positive impact on recruitment and equip students with scholarly and critical skills and enhance their creative engagement. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject on its commitment to the development of creative writing in the curriculum.
- 3.1.2 The Subject's objectives were listed in the SER. These included the development and delivery of innovative, inspiring and sustainable programmes, provision of a first-class student experience, and support for students in achieving and articulating their critical and creative expertise. The Subject sought to deliver excellence as standard in teaching and learning, improve its performance in the National Student Survey, and expand its international portfolio.
- 3.1.3 The Panel asked the Head of Subject about the distinctiveness of the Subject's provision. She stated that the Subject's vision was rooted in its legacy and pedigree, its outstanding scholars in the creative world, and its dedicated teachers. She added that the Subject's commitment to small-group teaching, despite the challenges this presented, was also a distinctive aspect and one highly valued by students and staff alike. The staff group made it clear that the preservation of small group teaching at all levels was a priority, as small groups were ideal for engaging in teaching and providing meaningful feedback. Staff recognised that students valued the personal interest in their learning that was afforded by this format. They added that small-group teaching was only possible because of the excellent group of GTAs teaching level 1 and 2 classes; GTAs were reported to undertake around three-quarters of level 1 and 2 teaching, apart from lectures. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject on its commitment to small-group teaching despite the challenges presented by this.
- 3.1.4 The Panel was interested to hear more about the Subject's vision for the future, as this was unclear from the SER. The staff group reported that the Subject's strategic plans over the last two years had focused on Honours reform and credit standardisation, and that larger issues had been shelved as a result. They told the Panel that work on these reforms had required a huge amount of time and effort, and had resulted in a number of implications for staff – for example, additional teaching loads for all staff would result, although no additional funding would be available. Staff reported several initiatives they would like to focus on – for example, developing the Medical Humanities provision, expanding PGT provision by offering new pathways, exploring collaboration opportunities with the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery – but could not spend time doing so at present. Although staff were positive about

the reforms, and were confident improved provision would be offered as a result, there were concerns about the increased workload and the potential impact on learning and teaching. Additionally, staff felt the additional workload might make it difficult to recruit new staff. The Head of Subject acknowledged these concerns and agreed the task had taken a great deal of staff time. However, she added that it had given the Subject an excellent opportunity to consider its priorities and decide where to concentrate its future efforts. She believed the reformed curriculum that had been arrived at was excellent and the task overall had been constructive. The Head of School added that some staff workloads were “incredible” and that a workload management policy was in development.

- 3.1.5 The Panel considered that the Subject would be assisted in achieving its aspirations if it could develop a more succinct and clear vision for the future direction of the Subject. Although commendable and achievable objectives had been set for the short term, there was a lack of clarity in terms of long-term vision. It was evident that there were constraints in terms of staffing resource, primarily as a result of the substantial effort being focused on the reform of the Honours programmes, but the Panel believed that these constraints were limiting the Subject’s strategic vision and its ability to ensure all Subject staff were working towards the same goals. The Panel also believed that the Subject was significantly under-selling its strengths, as it had in the previous review. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject forms a clear vision for its future shape and direction, aligned to the School’s and College’s strategic plans for the future and capitalising on the ambition articulated by staff in relation to internationalisation, PGT and cross University collaborations.
- 3.1.6 The Panel heard unanimous praise from both student groups in relation to the approachability and supportiveness of staff. It was reported that any student could approach staff members with questions or problems and they would be given appropriate help and support. Students valued this greatly and a strong sense of community was apparent. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject on providing such an open, friendly and supportive environment for its students.
- 3.1.7 It was noted from the SER that the Subject had a high staff:student ratio compared to comparable subject areas in other Russell Group institutions, though the Panel saw no evidence that this was adversely affecting the student experience.

3.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

- 3.2.1 The Panel noted that the Subject’s aims were in line with the College Learning & Teaching Plan, but without a clear vision for the subject area it was not clear how these aims would be achieved. It was also unclear which of the activities described in the SER were considered to be strategic priorities for the Subject.
- 3.2.2 The Subject’s strategy included an expansion of its international portfolio, and several examples of how this might be achieved were provided in the SER. These included the development of three new Erasmus agreements, and ongoing discussions regarding possible bespoke links with institutions in India, China and Canada. The Head of School added that the use of technology was facilitating links with universities in India and Scandinavia, with videoconferencing being used to share teaching and promote interaction between learners. He reported that there was interest from some students at the University of Delhi, arising from the shared teaching, in coming to

Glasgow. There was a possibility that this might develop into an exchange scheme but that a robust support system for incoming and outgoing students would need to be established first.

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

4.1 Admissions, Retention and Success

- 4.1.1 It was evident that the Subject concentrated a good deal of effort on attracting applicants through open days and visit events. In the SER it was noted that a large group of student volunteers played a key part in recruitment activity, advising and speaking to potential applicants and their parents. Student-produced films were also used for recruitment and were also available on social media.
- 4.1.2 The Subject's commitment to widening participation was evident from the SER and from the meeting with undergraduate students. The Widening Participation Summer School had been extended and enriched, leading to a large number of registered participants. Around half went on to enrol in the Subject. The Summer School was designed and taught by three GTAs, and participant feedback had been extremely positive. The Panel sought information on the support mechanisms in place for students who enrolled with the Subject after completing the Summer School. At the meeting with undergraduate students, the Panel heard from one of the students that the Summer School was instrumental in her decision to study in the Subject area. She reported being impressed by the commitment and passion of staff, enjoyed having the opportunity to hear visiting speakers, and felt very well supported in the transition from Summer School to full-time study. She believed a good deal of care had been taken in ensuring the process was as robust and supportive as possible. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject for the care taken to ensure the Widening Participation Summer School is as interesting and encouraging as possible, and that appropriate support is in place for Summer School students transitioning to full-time study. The Head of Subject added that more tailored support could be provided to students once registered for full-time study, but this would need to be agreed with the students as the Subject did not wish to highlight the Summer School students as requiring extra support. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject make contact with the Widening Participation team to discuss support for students joining study from the Summer School.
- 4.1.3 The Subject was also involved in a mentoring partnership scheme with two secondary schools with low university entry rates. This involved two visits to the University for students preparing for their Advanced Higher English dissertations. Student mentors gave guidance on locating and scrutinising source material, and discussed the dissertation content. As well as providing useful advice for school pupils, the mentors gained mentoring and classroom experience.
- 4.1.4 A Creative Writing course was to be added to the International Summer School, with the aim of attracting international students to the undergraduate programme. This would be accompanied by the addition of new creative writing options at Honours levels.
- 4.1.5 The staff raised concerns about PGT recruitment, noting that sometimes programmes did not run because of small student numbers. This meant that applicants accepting a place on those programmes had to be offered an alternative which may not appeal to them as strongly. In turn, the dormant

programmes never had the chance to become established and attract larger student numbers. The staff were unclear as to why minimum numbers were in place, stating that they might receive a small number of outstanding applicants but be unable to accommodate them on the programme they wished to follow. It was hoped that the move to a PGT 'hub and spoke' system with a number of specialist pathways would help resolve this situation. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject hold an event (such as a Subject away-day or facilitated workshop) to discuss the possibilities for the development of PGT provision and the management of student numbers and develop an approach to this that is sustainable and fits with the School and College targets and priorities.

- 4.1.6 It was reported in the SER that, on average, 86% of Home/EU students in the Subject progressed from level 1 to level 2. From level 2 to 3, the figure was 108.5% (exceeding 100% due to inward transfers). The figure increased to 250% from level 3 to 4, due to Erasmus and Junior Year Abroad students joining Honours.
- 4.1.7 The latest available figures showing graduates' first employment destinations indicated that 38% of English and Scottish literature graduates had found full time employment, and 19% had moved into further full time study. This last figure was a reduction from around 25% in the previous two years, and the Subject suggested that financial challenges posed by fee increases were a factor. Around 9% had not found employment.
- 4.1.8 The Panel noted that the proportion of first class Honours degrees was high (33% in 2014). The Head of Subject was asked to comment on this. She suggested that one reason was likely to be the change in the relative weightings of examinations and continuous assessment, as students tended to perform better in continuous assessment. She also stressed the high quality of the Honours cohort given the progression threshold of a B grade in year 2.

4.2 Equality and Diversity

- 4.2.1 The SER contained very little information on equality and diversity issues. It was reported that Disability Officers within the School and subject were advised about the needs of individual students registered with the Disability Service. It was also noted that the Subject's distance learning provision (at postgraduate level) was particularly suited to students with disabilities, and from overseas. The Subject indicated it intended to use some of the techniques used in its distance learning provision to support students on campus.
- 4.2.2 It was reported in the SER that the GTA training included a session on equality and diversity issues and that the GTAs were invited to complete the University's 'Equality and Diversity Essentials' online course. The Review Panel **recommends** that, given the amount of teaching undertaken by GTAs, the University's 'Equality and Diversity Essentials' online course be mandatory for GTAs, and that the GTAs are paid for the time taken to complete the course.

4.3 Supporting Students in their Learning

- 4.3.1 The Widening Participation Summer School was a key means of supporting students in the transition from secondary school to university, and feedback on the summer school had been extremely positive. Additionally, the Subject had

spent a year redesigning its Level 1 courses, paying particular attention to the move from school to university.

- 4.3.2 The undergraduate students in the later years of their degree stated that the transition from year 2 to year 3 had been challenging. The Subject provided pre-Honours induction sessions, giving information on course content, student requirements and sources of information for students. Additionally, the Subject had acted on student feedback about the lack of connection between the Subject and the student body, and had held an Honours-wide social event. This had been very successful and further events were planned. The undergraduate student group said they would value having a lecture at which Honours course conveners gave a presentation about their course, in order to help students choose their options. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject formally organises an event for students approaching Honours, at which course conveners provide information about their courses, in order to assist students in selecting their Honours options.
- 4.3.3 Postgraduate inductions were also in place, which included presentations from the School and Subject, as well as detailed introductions from the relevant Programme Conveners and a welcome 'bring your own' lunch. It was reported in the SER that feedback on the induction was very positive and was found to be an important part of cohort building at an early stage. The postgraduate student group echoed this, though suggested the early stages of their study could be improved by having a list of all students and their programme of study available in order that students could identify their peer group.
- 4.3.4 Ongoing study support was described in the SER and included writing and study skills assistance provided by the Student Learning Service, in-class guidance on essay preparation and revision strategy, and formative writing exercises. The Subject's Moodle pages also provided a range of resources for student use. Additionally, the GTAs had identified student needs in particular areas and offered drop-in sessions, for example, on referencing. Postgraduate students were provided with Research Skills training and an academic writing workshop. For the Victorian Literature and Modernities programmes, a Dissertation Symposium was held, where students could receive detailed feedback from staff and peers before embarking on the formal writing up period.
- 4.3.5 Support mechanisms were in place to monitor attendance and performance of students, and any student deemed 'at risk' would receive an email from the relevant tutor followed by, if necessary, a further email from the Course Convener or Head of Subject. Learning and teaching methods (such as group work and Moodle discussion forums) also offered support to students, and staff operated an open-door policy as well as office hours when students could approach them for support. Staff also offered a weekly consultation hour where students could seek pastoral support. The undergraduate student group spoke highly of the office hours system and open door policy. They said they could use these options to clarify any aspect of teaching they had not understood, to raise any concerns, or to seek pastoral support.
- 4.3.6 Specific support was in place for international students. For example, alternative assessment was available to visiting students in order that they could attend for one semester without any requirement to stay for examinations. Social events were organised, to help international students meet and integrate with their classmates.
- 4.3.7 Students enrolling from the Widening Participation Summer School also received particular support. Specific bursaries and scholarships were

available, and a student orientation event was organised where the students could meet with current students and advisers. Students joining from the Summer School were monitored and supported as they progressed through their degree, and the GTAs involved in the Summer School also taught Level 1 classes, which had been found to make a positive contribution to the transition and the students' sense of belonging. It was noted that additional, specific support was also in place for care leavers.

- 4.3.8 The advising system had been restructured in 2015, with a small Arts Advising Team now being in place for students across the College, instead of particular School staff acting as Advisers. In the SER it was reported that the Subject's Learning and Teaching Administrators were often students' first point of contact, and that they also alerted the Arts Advising Team to any student who appeared to be struggling either academically or personally. The undergraduate students reported that the Advising Team system did not work as well as the previous system whereby their Adviser would have had a clear understanding of their programme of study. Some reported not having had any contact with an Adviser so far in the session. The students stated that they could speak to any staff member about any concerns they had, so they did not feel neglected in any way, but they made it clear they preferred the previous advising system.
- 4.3.9 It was clear from the student meetings that all students particularly valued the open-door policy of staff within the School. Students reported that they were encouraged to speak to any staff member about any issue they experienced in their studies, and that they had found them immensely approachable, supportive and helpful. The Panel was impressed by the approachable and supportive staff. This environment was highly valued by students and **commended** by the Review Panel.

4.4 Student Engagement

- 4.4.1 It was evident to the Panel that the student groups were highly engaged in their learning. Students reported that learning material was interesting and challenging, and valued the individual skills and expertise of staff. In particular, they enjoyed seeing staff perform their own work, for example, through the use of dramatic readings and performances. The Panel noted that the range of learning and teaching methods was excellent, and a number of unusual and interesting formats were used – for example, performances as described above, 'open mic' sessions, debates, poetry readings and film screenings. Survey feedback indicated that students commended staff for their 'passionate' and 'stimulating' lectures. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject on the interesting range of learning and teaching methods, and staff commitment to these, which clearly has the effect of engaging students with the material and enhancing their enjoyment of the subject.
- 4.4.2 It was stated in the SER that the Subject promoted students' intellectual freedom and independence of mind, as well as offering a historical breadth of material. It was clear from discussion with the student groups, and particularly the Creative Writing students, that this was highly valued.
- 4.4.3 For tutorial and seminar work, the Subject offered students the opportunity to discuss the material in Autonomous Learning Groups (ALGs), and through individual and group oral presentations. Small group teaching was considered by the Subject to be a particular strength, and a continuing priority going forward. The undergraduate students agreed that small-group teaching was highly valued, though presented mixed views about ALGs. Some students found them very useful and believed the Subject should encourage their use

as much as possible. However, others reported less positive experiences, noting that practice was variable, and often depended on the guidance of the tutor involved. It was noted that there was sometimes resistance from students and, without the full commitment of all members, ALGs would not work effectively, particularly if students simply failed to turn up to group meetings. The staff group acknowledged that ALGs did not always work well, though noted some ALGs were naturally evolving, particularly among students living locally. However, this could also have the effect of excluding students who lived further away or had other responsibilities. The Review Panel **recommends** that, if the Subject intends to pursue the use of Autonomous Learning Groups, clear guidance is given to students to ensure they understand the benefits, structure and requirements of such groups in order to promote engagement. Moreover, a consistent approach is required from staff in explaining and actively supporting the practice of ALGs if the benefits are to be fully appreciated and realised.

- 4.4.4 New Honours courses in creative writing had been introduced in response to student demand, and students could also complete their dissertation in creative writing. Informal feedback on the new courses had been very positive, and a number of current Honours students were pursuing postgraduate opportunities in creative writing.

The development of graduate attributes and employability

- 4.4.5 The development of graduate attributes was embedded throughout the curriculum, with an emphasis on developing intellectual, critical, creative and professional skills. The Subject had been working on curriculum development in this regard and was piloting a project focused on framing skills as graduate attributes and raising awareness of graduate attributes. It was hoped that the initiative would be rolled out across the College of Arts as best practice after being extended beyond the pilot group.
- 4.4.6 Students had the opportunity to take the Honours course 'Humanities in the Classroom'. It was designed for students interested in a career in teaching or education. The course included a placement period within a school, college or educational charity, lectures by visiting speakers, lesson planning, and reflective learning. The course assisted students in deciding whether to pursue a career in education, and offered useful skills for progression to a teaching qualification. Even for those not proceeding to a teaching career, the transferable skills gained (such as presentation and organisational skills, and reflective practice) were considered to be very beneficial.
- 4.4.7 Creative Writing students were provided with a range of employability measures to assist them in engaging with the literary and creative industries. For example, writers, agents, publishers and broadcasters were invited to give guest presentations, and students were required to complete an editorial project from conception to launch. Creative Writing students also took a course, Editorial & Publishing, which included weekly visits by publishers in an effort to help students have their work published.
- 4.4.8 The postgraduate students on programmes other than Creative Writing believed that the majority of employability and careers advice available tended to focus on students intending to move into academia. However, they added that they were free to attend any of the events organised for and by the Creative Writing group. They found the events very interesting and refreshing, and believed they helped build a positive social community. It was reported that the students had set up a Facebook page which listed all upcoming

events including speaker events, performances, film series, etc. An email was also sent containing the same information, as not all students used Facebook.

- 4.4.9 The undergraduate students in their Honours years told the Panel that they had recently received a lecture about graduate attributes, but had not been familiar with the term prior to that. They reported that little information about possible career opportunities was provided, and felt they would benefit from the use of guest speakers on this matter, throughout their studies. They reported that students in Theatre, Film and Television received a substantial amount of careers guidance and they would welcome a similar approach. They reported that careers fairs were often not relevant to them.
- 4.4.10 It was stated in the SER that a pilot project was underway with regard to graduate attributes and skills for employment. This would be rolled out to further years. The Review Panel **recommends** that the work being undertaken at Honours level with regard to the embedding of graduate attributes, and raising students' awareness of graduate attributes, be implemented at all levels of provision. This work should be undertaken during 2016-17 and be implemented fully by 2017-18.

Internationalisation

- 4.4.11 It was noted that undergraduate students had the opportunity to take their junior Honours year abroad, and interest in the scheme was strong. An annual information event was held for students interested in pursuing their Junior Honours year abroad, and a dedicated Moodle page set up. Support was given to interested students throughout the process, and those going abroad were invited to speak to the new applicants about their experience on returning. The Review Panel **commends** this informative and supportive approach. It was stated in the SER that the students who went abroad for their junior Honours year were overwhelmingly positive about the experience. Two new agreements had recently been completed and a range of locations across Europe and worldwide were available. The Subject also welcomed incoming students annually, and the staff group reported that the quality of class discussions and the student experience was improved as a result. They added that many of the incoming Erasmus students returned to the Subject for postgraduate study.
- 4.4.12 The Head of Subject advised that the Subject was currently considering new teaching partnerships with institutions in China and Canada.

The effectiveness of feedback mechanisms

- 4.4.13 It was stated in the SER that mechanisms within the Subject for student feedback were in operation, including School Staff/Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings, at which a student representative from each level of each Subject was present. School-level matters, such as annual monitoring, course and programme changes with a School-level impact, and learning and teaching initiatives, were typical business at these meetings. A Subject-level SSLC was also in operation, with each seminar group electing a representative. Discussions focused on Subject-related matters, including course and programme design. Creative Writing had a separate SSLC, to allow for specific discussions to take place about its particular content and structure in response to feedback. Minutes of all SSLC meetings were available for all students and staff to consult. It was reported that action was normally taken immediately (where appropriate) or in the following academic year. The Subject saw student feedback as a valuable means of informing improvement of the students' learning experience and development of the curriculum.

- 4.4.14 Students were informed about changes and initiatives in several ways. They were consulted on course and programme proposals, which were also discussed at SSLC meetings, and other matters were posted on Moodle as well as being emailed to students. Students reported that they also set up class Facebook groups. The open, approachable environment in the Subject also allowed for much informal discussion of issues.
- 4.4.15 Course questionnaires were also used as a student feedback mechanism, containing multiple choice questions and space for free comment in line with the University's new Course Evaluation policy. In addition to these, the Subject asked Level 2 students to complete a 'traffic light questionnaire' in order to gauge what aspects of provision students would like more of (or indeed less). The forms used by the Subject and School contained a section for reporting how previously-raised issues had been resolved.
- 4.4.16 NSS results were discussed at Subject meetings, and views fed back to the School Executive and Learning & Teaching Committee. A Subject Area Action Plan was then devised for inclusion in the College plan. Discussions took place each year to discuss the actions taken as a result.

5. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

5.1 Learning and Teaching

Curriculum Design

- 5.1.1 The Subject stated in the SER that it was in the process of restructuring its Honours provision in line with College credit standardisation to 20-credit courses. The revised provision would go forward for approval in 2016-17, and take effect in 2017-18. This timescale was agreed in order to allow adequate time to ensure students – particularly those following a joint Honours programme - would not be disadvantaged. It was reported in the SER that the process of Honours reform had given the Subject the opportunity to completely review its course provision. This had led to the planned introduction of new courses to take account of staffing changes and areas of expertise. It was noted that curriculum review would extend beyond the planned implementation of Honours revisions in 2017-18.
- 5.1.2 The Subject provided a number of examples of enhancement and development of the curriculum. For example, the reform of Honours described above would allow Honours students to choose from a greater variety of options. Additionally, final examinations would be removed from junior Honours courses, a change which was expected to be welcomed by students and to improve the profile of Honours classifications achieved.
- 5.1.3 Three new Honours courses in creative writing had been introduced following consultation with students. The Head of Subject explained that creative writing opportunities had been desired by undergraduate students who, until now, could only pursue creative writing at the dissertation stage. The undergraduate student group were very positive about this development, and stated that they were very keen to have the opportunity to take these courses.
- 5.1.4 It was reported in the SER that the Subject made great efforts to keep material engaging and, to support this, offered a wide range of reading and discussion groups, 'work in progress' seminars, competitions and guest speaker events. These were valued very highly and it was apparent from the meetings with students that they substantially enhanced the student experience. The Review Panel **commends** this.

- 5.1.5 The undergraduate students made very positive comments about the content of the courses they studied. One suggestion for consideration by the Subject was that more detailed poetry work would be useful. Students stated that they would like to study the different forms and types of poetry, rather than simply analysing a piece. They considered that this would be very useful early in their studies. The Subject is encouraged to discuss this possibility further with students in order to inform the ongoing review of Honours.
- 5.1.6 Staff reported that a key strength of the Subject was the opportunity for staff to develop courses and programmes based on their own research areas. This had led to the introduction of the MLitt Fantasy programme, which was the only programme of its kind worldwide. Staff involved in this programme reported that students were very engaged and were delighted with the range of material they could cover.
- 5.1.7 Revisions were planned to the PGT programme structures, with a move to a 'hub and spoke' model, allowing students to either graduate with a generic degree or with a specialised pathway. This was expected to have the benefit of attracting students who did not wish to follow a specialist route, as well as creating more flexibility to introduce and run new pathways, even with small student numbers.
- 5.1.8 Students on the MLitt Modernities indicated that their second semester was rather prose-focused, and that they would welcome a mix similar to that of the first semester. The Subject is encouraged to discuss this possibility further with students and decide whether changes should be made for next session. Students on the MLitt Fantasy programme were extremely positive about the content of their programme, and about the very clear structure and objectives. They reported having to read several novels each week. They recognised that all of the reading material was relevant, and stated that it opened up new avenues of work they would not otherwise have explored, but the volume meant they found it difficult to engage fully with the content. They had spoken to the Programme Convener about this concern and reported he was considering how it might be addressed.
- 5.1.9 The staff group considered that one of the strengths of the undergraduate provision was the breadth of material covered, and stated that this was often remarked upon by students and external examiners.

Intended Learning Outcomes

- 5.1.10 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were made explicit in course and programme documentation, which was provided to all students, as well as on Moodle sites. Documentation was reviewed annually. It was stated in the SER that all ILOs were related to at least one form of assessment and this was a clear requirement of all new courses being proposed and approved.

Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching

- 5.1.11 The Subject reported that Moodle was used extensively in all years. Moodle sites included teaching notes, topics for further research, discussion points and other relevant materials.
- 5.1.12 The distance learning MLitt in Creative Writing was delivered by video-conferencing and Moodle. Workshops, seminars and other events were at set times, but were recorded for students to watch at their convenience. It was noted that students also set up their own Facebook groups.
- 5.1.13 A new initiative with the University of Delhi had recent been introduced, whereby English Literature courses could be shared by video-link between

Glasgow and Delhi. As well as lectures, real-time Q&A sessions have been offered via Skype.

- 5.1.14 The Subject reported it was trialling PeerWise, a question databank to which students submitted questions. The setting and answering of questions by students themselves was expected to be a valuable study resource.

5.2 Assessment and Feedback

- 5.2.1 The Subject employed a range of assessment methods including essays, seminar presentations, examinations and dissertations. At Honours levels, there was additional variety and, in addition to the mode of assessment listed above, students were also assessed via annotated bibliographies, poetry anthologies, close readings, etc. A document describing the various assessment types was provided to Honours students to assist them in understanding the requirements and purpose of each. Most methods were used to provide both formative and summative assessment and feedback. The undergraduate students reported that they particularly enjoyed the more unusual forms of assessment, such as annotated bibliographies and mini-conferences.
- 5.2.2 Examinations were used throughout undergraduate study and, following feedback from External Examiners, examination durations had been shortened. As noted above, examinations would be removed from junior Honours but would still be a feature of senior Honours. The undergraduate students generally supported this move, stating that they put a good deal of time and effort into continuous assessment and did not feel it was weighted sufficiently highly at present. The students believed continuous assessment more appropriately demonstrated their skills, though some reported that they preferred examinations and believed they were still a relevant means of assessment.
- 5.2.3 For Creative Writing students, discipline-specific assessment criteria were used, focusing on the value of the application of critical and creative skills in creating work. It was explained in the SER that understanding of this approach, as well as recognition of experimental forms of writing, made the Creative Writing discipline distinct from English Literature.
- 5.2.4 It was stated in the SER that students received feedback on coursework within fifteen working days, and on oral presentations within one week. A standardised feedback form was used, containing a grade and commentary. Students were given documentation explaining what they should expect in terms of the timeliness and type of feedback provided. It was also made clear to students that they would likely receive informal feedback in a number of ways (for example, at seminars, or through dissertation supervision), not only through the more formal mechanisms.
- 5.2.5 The undergraduate students were generally content with the timeliness and content of feedback they received, though stated it could be variable depending on the staff member. They reported that not all staff members provided feedback on presentations, and they considered this to be very important, even though the presentation was often a small element of the assessment. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject takes steps to ensure that all students delivering assessed presentations receive feedback on the presentation, in line with the Subject's statement that feedback on presentations will be provided within one week.
- 5.2.6 The undergraduate students added that the quality and quantity of feedback from staff was variable, with some markers providing more detailed comments

than others. They also reported that they would appreciate feedback that indicated to them how they could improve their grades. They said that the criteria for each grade were sometimes vague and it was not always evident to students what they needed to do to improve and achieve a higher grade. A small number of students also suggested that feedback on the eventual Honours classification their grades indicated would be useful, as this was difficult for them to calculate. The staff group explained that the use of peer assessment assisted students in understanding how their grades were arrived at, and how they could be improved. However, it was added that not all students had the opportunity to carry out peer assessment, because of the workload involved in organising and monitoring it. The Panel suggested that Aropä (a web-based system designed to support peer review activity) could be used effectively with large numbers of students and the workload implication would be minimal. A lecture could be provided by the Student Learning Service to explain to students how to use Aropä and provide guidance on reviewing other students' work. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject make contact with the Learning & Teaching Centre for guidance on using Aropä to facilitate student peer assessment.

- 5.2.7 In English Literature 1B and 2B, detailed feedback on essays was emailed to students a week before the essays were returned. It was reported in the SER that students had unanimously welcomed this and that, although staff workload was increased, it was considered very worthwhile given the benefit to students that had been observed. The undergraduate student group supported this view.
- 5.2.8 Creative Writing students received oral and written feedback, as well as one to one tutorials throughout the year. In the SER it was explained that the role of trial and error, and consequently the importance of ongoing feedback, were key to the student's development as a writer.
- 5.2.9 The postgraduate student group reported that they were impressed by the substantial amount of careful, thorough feedback on their work and also by how promptly it was provided – sometimes within one week. The MLitt Fantasy students told the Panel that one-to-one sessions were available for feedback provision and that staff were open to discussing students' work at any time. The MLitt Modernities students added that they received two sets of feedback, as their work was double marked. They found this very valuable.
- 5.2.10 Feedback was provided to students on their written examinations in two ways. Firstly, generic feedback on exam performance across the group was provided by email to all students together with their grade. Secondly, students were able to request sight of the External Examiners' comments on each question attempted.

Code of Assessment

- 5.2.11 The Subject adhered to the University Code of Assessment, and the School Learning & Teaching Committee had produced a staff handbook to ensure staff were up to date with, and adhering to, regulations.

5.3 Engaging and Supporting Staff

Probationer and Early Career development support

- 5.3.1 A number of staff members were currently participating in the Early Career Development Programme (ECDP). These staff members were assigned a mentor and career objectives were drafted with line managers. The School of Critical Studies had also appointed an ECDP Champion to facilitate liaison

between the College of Arts ECDP Champion, Human Resources staff and School colleagues. It was reported in the SER that there was 'considerable disquiet' about the ECDP, with concerns in particular surrounding the lack of consistency of treatment and expectations. Early career staff might expect to be reviewed under the probationary process, the EDCP, or Performance & Development Review, and this caused a great deal of anxiety.

- 5.3.2 Staff members on the ECDP were required to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP), and were assigned a senior staff member as a mentor. Informal support and advice was available from other staff members.
- 5.3.3 Early career staff reported that their workload during teaching period was very high, and not all of them received a reduced teaching load. They also reported that the experience of the ECDP had been a negative one, which had not assisted them in developing their careers. They reported that the ECDP was a punitive process, with particular markers requiring to be met by prescribed times which were considered to be unachievable. There were serious concerns among early career staff about the consequences of not meeting the requirements – for example, being demoted or even dismissed. The early career staff also noted that they were treated inconsistently depending on their contract type, with the Teaching Fellows being ineligible for the PgCAP or other training that could help career progression. It was reported that the processes were not transparent and it was difficult to obtain clear answers to queries. Staff within the Subject and School had been offering guidance and advice to early career staff, helping them negotiate the process. The Head of School confirmed he was aware of the issues and that the process was extremely difficult for staff to navigate. The Head of School added that Human Resources staff within the College of Arts had become overwhelmed and that the amount of bureaucracy in the process was unmanageable, particularly as the large number of parties involved meant that staff did not know who to contact. This was creating huge amount of stress and confusion for all staff involved. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of Subject and Head of School raise with the Head of College and Human Resources the issue of the profound disquiet being expressed by staff participating in the ECDP, so that consistent advice and guidance can be provided to those staff members and their mentors.
- 5.3.4 Despite the concerns relating to the ECDP, all of the early career staff said they felt supported by the Subject in running their classes, and felt they could ask for support from a range of staff members besides their allocated mentors.
- 5.3.5 The early career staff on Teaching Fellow contracts reported that they did not have mentors allocated, and did not have induction. They believed induction would have been helpful, for example, in familiarising them with University processes, understanding acronyms, and so on. They believed there had been an assumption that they had not needed guidance as they had completed their PhD studies at the University. They added that they had been employed for two months before being paid, which had been very problematic. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject liaise with the Learning & Teaching Centre in order to ensure access to support for scholarship is provided for staff on Teaching Fellow contracts, and that induction and mentoring for these staff is also provided.
- 5.3.6 Early career staff advised that staff within the Subject gave them guidance and assistance in writing research applications, and gave feedback. They felt supported and encouraged by staff in this regard.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

- 5.3.7 Training for GTAs was provided at the beginning of the academic session. This included the University's mandatory GTA sessions, and the School's own training which comprised five hour-long sessions. Within the Subject, regular briefing sessions were run, as well as training sessions on marking. The Subject also provided a GTA shadowing programme, whereby a prospective GTA would be paired with an experienced GTA and shadow at least two small-group classes. GTAs were mentored throughout the year and this was reinforced by teaching team meetings. It was reported in the SER that feedback from GTAs undertaking training had been positive. Creative Writing GTAs received specific training, undertaking a course in Practical Pedagogy, which trained them in teaching creative writing. The course also allowed those GTAs to teach a syllabus developed by themselves, with their teaching being observed and evaluated. The GTAs explained that, although they were given set texts to teach, they also had access to additional resources and could organise and design their own teaching.
- 5.3.8 The GTA group reported that they would be keen to undertake additional training – for example, to help them provide pastoral care for students, in first aid and, as noted in paragraph 4.2.2 above, equality and diversity. They added they would appreciate a dedicated Moodle site for GTAs. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject gives GTAs the opportunity to register for First Aid training and any other training course relevant to the provision of pastoral care, and investigates the feasibility of introducing a dedicated Moodle site for its GTAs to gather and consult resources, and discuss teaching.
- 5.3.9 The staff group praised the GTAs very highly, noting that small-group teaching – a priority within the Subject – could not be continued without them, as they taught around three-quarters of classes (other than lectures) at levels 1 and 2. The staff considered the GTAs to be a key part of the Subject's teaching team and valued their contributions enormously. They explained that undertaking this teaching gave the GTAs essential experience for future employment, and allowed them to teach a broad range of material rather than focusing only on their own research interests. Staff reported that they offered as much support to GTAs as possible (for instance, through weekly drop-in sessions and advice on marking), but expressed concern that, for budgetary reasons, the amount of support they could offer was reducing.
- 5.3.10 The GTAs reported that that did feel like valued members of the teaching team, and that there was a sense of collegiality within the Subject. However, they advised that the amount of paid support time with colleagues to discuss content and teaching had reduced to one half-hour session per week. They did not consider this to be sufficient. The paid preparation time of half an hour per class was also not considered sufficient, given the material that might need to be read in preparation, nor the paid time allocated to marking. There had also been issues regarding GTAs not being paid on time. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject discusses with the School/College the various issues relating to payment of GTAs for preparation and marking time, and the timeliness of payment, with Human Resources, in order that GTAs are fully supported in their preparation and are paid on time.

Ongoing support and development

- 5.3.11 All staff members underwent Performance Development & Review (PD&R) to identify training and support need, and student evaluations were monitored to ensure any necessary action was taken with regard to staff performance.

Support for staff was available through other University Services including Human Resources, the Equality & Diversity Unit, and the Learning & Teaching Centre.

- 5.3.12 It was reported in the SER that the PD&R process had caused concern among staff, who felt that the process and related strategies did not capture the overall performance of staff, focusing rather on financial indicators. This was considered to undervalue learning and teaching engagement.

5.4 Resources for Learning and Teaching

Staffing

- 5.4.1 It was noted that, due to research leave and management commitments, staffing was currently presenting a challenge. The Head of Subject reported that, even with a full complement of staff, the Subject was arguably understaffed, with the student:staff ratio being higher than in most other Russell Group institutions.
- 5.4.2 A particular concern raised in the SER relating to staffing was the relocation of Subject administrators to a central office, and other administrators to different locations across campus. The Subject was reported to have been disadvantaged by the loss of a dedicated Subject-area office and communication was said to suffer.

Accommodation and equipment

- 5.4.3 The Panel was given a tour of the Subject's accommodations and viewed some small group teaching rooms.
- 5.4.4 The Subject reported in the SER that there were difficulties in using the University's Central Room Booking system, and that the quality of teaching rooms was often poor. Tutors had reported being allocated rooms which were poorly ventilated, uncomfortable and inadequately equipped. In some cases, there were insufficient seats. The loss of the Charles Wilson lecture theatre had led to allocation of an alternative which was a substantial distance away.
- 5.4.5 The lack of postgraduate study space, and the quality of available space, across the College of Arts was said to be repeated complaint by students. A PG Hub had been established but the Subject believed that further action was needed.
- 5.4.6 While the Subject's distance learning provision was very positively received, it was noted that resources (such as web-cams and microphones) were lacking and this meant the Subject could not take advantage of the large capacity for growth in that area.

6 Academic Standards

- 6.1 The Panel noted that there was a good deal of excellent teaching in the Subject's provision and that quality assurance procedures appeared to be in line with University policy and were applied effectively. It was clear that the staff members the Panel met were engaged in excellent teaching and were committed to ensuring the student experience was of the highest quality.
- 6.2 The Subject adhered to the University's processes for course and programme approval. Course and programme proposals were discussed in detail at Subject level, then by the School's Learning & Teaching Committee. Consultation took place with students and external examiners. The Subject had welcomed the simplified approval process introduced University-wide in

2015-16 and the changes to be introduced in 2016-17. These gave more authority to Schools and Colleges to approve proposals.

- 6.3 Annual Monitoring Reports were completed each year for all courses. The Subject reported that it favoured a 'holistic' Annual Monitoring system, and produced reports following team meetings. Guidance on this had been produced for staff by the School Quality Officer.
- 6.4 In addition to professional validation, External Examiners played an important role in ensuring standards were maintained, through scrutiny and feedback, and providing a means of comparison with other institutions. Comments made by External Examiners were taken into account in various processes (examination paper setting, marking, curriculum review) and acted upon. External Examiners' reports had been generally positive about the Subject and its provision, and had praised the high quality of students' work.

7 Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

7.1 Key strengths

The following key strengths were noted:

- Commitment of staff to ensuring the student experience is high quality and engaging, in particular through the use of small-group teaching
- Good student support mechanisms, with helpful, approachable staff
- Innovative learning, teaching and assessment methods, and provision of meaningful feedback
- Supportive approach to recruitment, particularly through the Widening Access Summer School
- Commitment to research-led teaching
- Commitment of, and support for, the highly-valued group of GTAs
- The provision of an interesting and valuable programme of social and career-related events

7.2 Areas for improvement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for improvement:

- The clarity of the Subject's vision, and its strategic objectives in moving towards this vision
- Support for early career staff
- Additional training for GTAs, including Equality & Diversity, and pastoral support, training, and additional support for GTAs in terms of teaching advice, preparation and marking time
- Further embedding of graduate attributes at all levels of provision
- A consistent approach to provision of feedback to students

7.3 Conclusion

The Panel was impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and students, and with the firm focus on excellence in teaching and support for students. The student groups were enthusiastic and positive, and a credit to the Subject.

The Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, the programmes offered by the Subject were current and valid in the light of knowledge and practice within the subject area.

The Subject demonstrated a number of strengths, as well as an awareness of the areas requiring improvement. The most substantive of these are reflected in the commendations and recommendations below.

Commendations

The Review Panel commends the Subject on the following, which are listed in order of appearance in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject on its commitment to the development of creative writing in the curriculum [*Paragraph 3.1.1*].

Commendation 2

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject on its commitment to small-group teaching despite the challenges presented by this [*Paragraph 3.1.3*].

Commendation 3

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject on providing such an open, friendly and supportive environment for its students [*Paragraphs 3.1.6 and 4.3.9*].

Commendation 4

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject for the care taken to ensure the Widening Participation Summer School is as interesting and encouraging as possible, and that appropriate support is in place for Summer School students transitioning to full-time study [*Paragraph 4.1.2*].

Commendation 5

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject on the interesting range of learning and teaching methods, and staff commitment to these, which clearly has the effect of engaging students with the material and enhancing their enjoyment of the subject [*Paragraph 4.4.1*].

Commendation 6

An annual information event was held for students interested in pursuing their Junior Honours year abroad, and a dedicated Moodle page set up. Support was given to interested students throughout the process, and those going abroad were invited to speak to the new applicants about their experience on returning. The Review Panel **commends** this informative and supportive approach [*Paragraph 4.4.11*].

Commendation 7

The Subject made great efforts to keep material engaging and, to support this, offered a wide range of reading and discussion groups, 'work in progress' seminars, competitions and guest speaker events. These were valued very highly and it was apparent from the meetings with students that they substantially enhanced the student experience. The Review Panel **commends** this [*Paragraph 5.1.4*].

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the Subject in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The recommendations

have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are grouped together by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are ranked in order of priority within each section.

Strategy and Vision

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject forms a clear vision for its future shape and direction, aligned to the School's and College's strategic plans for the future and capitalising on the ambition articulated by staff in relation to internationalisation, PGT and cross University collaborations [*Paragraph 3.1.5*].

Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School, Head of College

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject hold an event (such as a Subject away-day or facilitated workshop) to discuss the possibilities for the development of PGT provision and the management of student numbers and develop an approach to this that is sustainable and fits with the School and College targets and priorities [*Paragraph 4.1.5*].

Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School, Head of College

Assessment and Feedback

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject takes steps to ensure that all students delivering assessed presentations receive feedback on the presentation, in line with the Subject's statement that feedback on presentations will be provided within one week [*Paragraph 5.2.5*].

Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that, if the Subject intends to pursue the use of Autonomous Learning Groups, clear guidance is given to students to ensure they understand the benefits, structure and requirements of such groups in order to promote engagement. Moreover, a consistent approach is required from staff in explaining and actively supporting the practice of ALGs if the benefits are to be fully appreciated and realised. [*Paragraph 4.4.3*].

Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject make contact with the Learning & Teaching Centre for guidance on using Aropā to facilitate student peer assessment [*Paragraph 5.2.6*].

Attention: Head of Subject

Information: Head of School, Director of Learning & Teaching Centre

Graduate Attributes

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the work being undertaken at Honours level with regard to the embedding of graduate attributes, and raising students' awareness of graduate attributes, be implemented at all levels of provision. This work should be undertaken during 2016-17 and be implemented fully by 2017-18 [*Paragraph 4.4.10*].

**Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School**

Student support

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject make contact with the Widening Participation team to discuss support for students joining study from the Summer School [Paragraph 4.1.2].

**Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School, Widening Participation Team**

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject formally organises an event for students approaching Honours, at which course conveners provide information about their courses, in order to assist students in selecting their Honours options [Paragraph 4.3.2].

**Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School**

Support for GTAs and Early Career Staff

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of Subject and Head of School raise with the Head of College and Human Resources the issue of the profound disquiet being expressed by staff participating in the ECDP, so that consistent advice and guidance can be provided to those staff members and their mentors [Paragraph 5.3.3].

**Attention: Head of Subject & Head of School
Information: Head of College, Director of Human Resources**

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject discusses with the School/College the various issues relating to payment of GTAs for preparation and marking time, and the timeliness of payment, with Human Resources, in order that GTAs are fully supported in their preparation and are paid on time [Paragraph 5.3.10].

**Attention: Head of Subject, Head of Human Resources (College of Arts)
Head of School, Head of College
Information: Director of Human Resources**

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject liaise with the Learning & Teaching Centre in order to ensure access to support for scholarship is provided for staff on Teaching Fellow contracts, and that induction and mentoring for these staff is also provided [Paragraph 5.3.5].

**Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School, Director of Learning & Teaching Centre**

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel **recommends** that, given the amount of teaching undertaken by GTAs, the University's 'Equality and Diversity Essentials' online course be mandatory for GTAs, and that the GTAs are paid for the time taken to complete the course [Paragraph 4.2.2].

**Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School; Director of Equality & Diversity Unit**

Recommendation 13

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject gives GTAs the opportunity to register for First Aid training and any other training course relevant to the provision of pastoral care, and investigates the feasibility of introducing a dedicated Moodle site for its GTAs to gather and consult resources, and discuss teaching [*Paragraph 5.3.8*].

Attention: Head of Subject
Information: Head of School

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Summer Powers 2016

Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies held on 22 and 23 March 2016

Ms Fiona Dick, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor John Briggs	Clerk of Senate and Vice Principal, Panel Convener
Professor Judith George	Open University, External Subject Specialist
Professor Dave Roberts	SRUC (Scotland's Rural College), External Subject Specialist
Professor Nick Hill	Senate Assessor on Court
Ms Gemma Gratton	Student member
Professor Denis Fischbacher-Smith	Adam Smith Business School, Cognate member
Dr Angela Jaap	Learning & Teaching Centre
Ms Fiona Dick	Senate Office and Clerk to the Panel

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The School of Interdisciplinary Studies (SIS or the School) is one of six Schools within the College of Social Sciences (CSS) which was formed following the restructuring of the University in 2010-11. It is one of the University's smallest Schools. It is located on a multi-institutional rural campus approximately eighty miles south of Glasgow and shares buildings and resource with other institutions co-located on campus and services are provided by the University of the West of Scotland (UWS).
- 1.2 The previous review of SIS carried out by the University was the Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA) review of Glasgow University, Dumfries Campus, in February 2010. The Review Panel commended SIS for its newly developing vision and strategy, dedicated staff and vibrant learning environment, which was clearly valued by its students and recognised the importance of School plans in improving their external profile and student recruitment and retention. It was noted that following the withdrawal of five undergraduate and five postgraduate programmes in 2011, the replacement programmes in the current provision had been specifically developed to build on the School's interdisciplinary strengths.
- 1.3 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was coordinated by the Chair of the School Learning and Teaching Committee, Dr Stuart Hanscomb, in consultation with key staff members and early drafts were considered by staff and students through meetings, including the Learning and Teaching Committee, School Academic Strategy Forum, and Staff Student Liaison Committee. The final draft was edited by the Head of School, Dr Carol Hill, and then circulated to staff and students for information and comment.
- 1.4 During a pre-meeting held on 15 March 2016 to consider Review Panel members' feedback and comments regarding the SER and supporting documentation provided by

the School, the Review Panel agreed that quality processes were being operated effectively.

- 1.5 The Review Panel met with Dr Hill, Dr Stuart Hanscomb, twenty-five members of staff including one probationer and three early career, five Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), twenty-two undergraduate students from Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 and six postgraduate taught students.

2. Background information

2.1 Students

Student numbers (2015-16) were as follows:

Level	Mode	Headcount	FTE (%)
Undergraduate	F/T	283	99.2
	P/T	2	0.8
	Total	285	
Postgraduate Taught	F/T	21	48.8
	P/T	22	51.2
	Total	43	

2.2 Staffing (2015-16)

Staff	Headcount
Professor	3
Reader	1
Senior Lecturer	3
Senior University Teacher	1
Lecturer	9
University Teacher	7
Research only	6
Graduate Teaching Assistants	6
Administrative/Technical	12

2.3 Range of provision

The following range of provision offered by the School was considered:

Undergraduate (UG):

- MA(Hons) Health and Social Policy;
- MA Primary Education with Teaching Qualification;
- BSc Environmental Science and Sustainability.

Postgraduate (PG):

- MSc Tourism, Heritage and Development ;
- MSc Tourism, Heritage and Sustainability;
- MSc Environmental Science, Technology and Society;
- MLitt Environment, Culture and Communication ;
- MSc Enhanced Practice in Education.

3. Context and Strategy

3.1 Context and Vision

- 3.1.1 The SER described the integration of the School within the College of Social Sciences (CoSS) following restructuring of the University in 2010-11. This had provided greater visibility, management representation and planning frameworks, to ensure that activities were clearly aligned and contributed to CoSS' and the University's strategic objectives. Review Panel members noted the School's objective to become internationally recognised and meet the highest academic standards, while also serving the social and economic regeneration of the local region and to be a centre of innovative world class interdisciplinary teaching, research and lifelong learning. The Head of School reported that, overall, while the transition from a unit within the Faculty of Arts to the School of Interdisciplinary Studies in CSS had been challenging for teaching staff with specialist interests in humanities' disciplines, most staff viewed the move as positive.
- 3.1.2 In 2014-15 administrative and technical support staffing resources were increased (3.5FTE) and the School undertook a review of its course portfolio to clarify and develop support provision around the curriculum for academic staff, and to identify programme/course management efficiencies. This took account of the School's practice of concurrent teaching and the need for clarification of the teaching ethos and the roles of administrative staff to facilitate future curricula support needs within the wider context of increasing student numbers.
- 3.1.3 The Panel welcomed the refocusing of the School's programme provision, which had considered the needs of students during the transition period, and included new initiatives, enhanced teaching facilities and internationalisation, particularly in student and staff activities. However, there was some concern from Review Panel members around the growth of student numbers and in particular the impact on student support, in terms of the shift in academic and administrative responsibilities, and the implications for the student learning experience, and teaching strategies and evaluation. The Head of School noted that there had been, and continued to be, challenges for the School in marketing themselves as a small campus unit, with the pressure to grow student numbers. Despite the site assimilation, staff members were also acutely aware of the logistical requirements around capacity and in particular regarding tutorial group sizes and the need for more Graduate Teaching Assistants. It was noted that these issues were addressed through regular staff meetings, including the School's Academic Strategy Forum. The Head of School also identified one of SIS's biggest challenge as concurrent teaching, due to difficulties getting buy-in from students, and teaching students from a wide and diverse range of experiences and competencies. However, she was confident in the School's ability to accommodate increasing numbers, as she considered staff members to be positive, flexible and determined. The Head of School was also pleased to note that the School had managed to maintain good National Student Surveys (NSS) scores for overall satisfaction.

3.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

- 3.2.1 It was stated in the SER that an understanding of the School's particular strengths and weaknesses informed their learning and teaching aims '*to be a centre of innovative world class interdisciplinary teaching, research and lifelong learning that reaches the highest academic standard* (from SIS Strategic Plan 2011-16). In realising this vision, the School endeavoured to provide innovative research-led teaching of the highest quality through links between the courses and degrees offered, management of teaching-related provision, a pronounced

sense of community and having strong local connections, whilst also being internationalised. Panel members noted the School's integrative approach which included 'hub and spoke', or 'connected nodes', curriculum models, interdisciplinarity within courses and programmes and flexible assessment.

- 3.2.2 The School's strategic goal was further refined in seeking '*to provide innovative research-led teaching of the highest quality*'. Panel members noted that this was a significant challenge in terms of resourcing and teaching deliverables, which required the School to be interdisciplinary rather than multidisciplinary. The Review Panel took the view that the latter distinction needed to be more carefully articulated and incorporated into the strategic vision, although it was recognised that this was a matter for consideration at college level. While the Review Panel was not convinced that teaching could be described as research-led, with Research Excellence Framework (REF) returns for research and teaching staff being reported between 20 to 25 percent, as the School did not return as a single Unit of Assessment (UoA) and staff were included in UoAs across two Colleges with which the interdisciplinary nature of their research did not often articulate, teaching was certainly research-informed. The Review Panel noted School plans to make links with potential UoAs much earlier in the cycle and that a number of University Teachers had received teaching innovation awards as a direct result of their research into pedagogy.
- 3.2.3 Panel members were keen to explore with staff members the tension between the strategic objective to become an internationally recognised School with the highest academic standards, while at the same time serving local regeneration in the region in which the School was located. Key staff members who met with the Panel described the expectation to focus on local needs, whilst being assessed on international criteria, and suggested that future activities to resolve this dilemma might usefully focus on local issues (such as flooding) to attract potential funders. However, they considered that there was a danger in being too local, as students' education needed to have a wider reach/relevance. The Head of School also pointed out that students were attracted by the quality of programmes that were research led and informed in accordance with the expectations of a world class university. In this way, the School's international aspirations should be relevant to local stakeholders but needed to be viable and driven by sound pedagogical principles. While acknowledging that sometimes navigating this landscape in maintaining an appropriate balance between local and School presented ongoing challenges and realignment, the School had realised significant successes around articulation of programmes, whilst engaging closely with the wider community (including head teachers) and maintaining the University's world class vision.
- 3.2.4 The SER had stated the School's size and location provided opportunities to develop a sense of '*familiarity among the student body and a sense of place and purpose that is shared by students and staff alike. The value of this goes beyond the intrinsic. We believe that where staff and students share a sense of community it motivates and facilitates learning and that the accessibility of staff enhances their connectivity with students*'. This view was clearly supported by students who met with the Panel, who particularly enjoyed the sense of community and beautiful campus setting. Undergraduate students reported they had been attracted by the University's reputation, the value of tuition fees, and the range of placements and field trips offered. Postgraduate students highlighted the programme choices (which included emerging fields, predicated on future employment, and included flexible module assessments that could be tailored to work) and interdisciplinary approach, which was detailed in the Postgraduate Prospectus. The Review Panel **commends** the School's success

in maintaining its identity and a sense of community during a period of significant challenges due to restructuring.

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

4.1 Admissions, Retention and Success

4.1.1 The SER described how the School had experienced a steady growth in student numbers from 2010 onwards due in part to increases in Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funded places and increases in RUK and international numbers. The Panel noted that there had recently been a review of recruitment policy in terms of respective roles and responsibilities of the School and the University's Marketing, Recruitment and International Office (MaRIO), following a vacancy for the School's Recruitment Officer in January 2016. As a result, the School now focussed on undergraduate recruitment within the 'home' and 'regional market', and MaRIO had responsibility for RUK and international UG and PGT recruitment. The Review Panel also noted that School would like to increase its entry tariff in line with University levels, and be more selective for MAPE applicants, and that the change of name from 'BSc Environmental Stewardship' to 'BSc Environmental Science and Sustainability', had resulted in more than double the amount of applications, and the School anticipated moving to greater selectivity for this latter programme as well.

4.1.2 The Panel was pleased to note that progression and continuation had continued to improve in line with CoSS rates, despite an increase in student numbers and larger class sizes.

4.1.3 There was some confusion regarding a statement in the SER that referred to an increase in the number of full-time postgraduate taught students, as it was agreed from figures provided that there had been a decline over the review period (2010-2015), although there had been an increase since 2013-14. Furthermore, this increase had been attributed to the growth in full-fee paying international students but the evidence suggested a decline in international students, from fourteen in 2010-11 to eight in 2015-16. The Panel noted some concern that with small numbers of postgraduate taught students, it was difficult to provide coherence and sustain growth. However, members had been very impressed with feedback from postgraduate taught students who met with the Panel and who responded very positively regarding the quality of teaching, the range of programmes, and numerous attractions to study at the School. The Review Panel **commends** the strong postgraduate taught provision which emphasises an interdisciplinary approach and includes emerging subject fields, clear links to future employment, and flexible module assessments that were tailored to meet the needs of part-time students in employment.

4.2 Equality and Diversity

4.2.1 Figures provided in the SER highlighted an increasing gender imbalance in the student body with the proportion of male to female students between 20% and 30% across all courses. However, the School recognised the need to support equality and diversity through a series of activities that included: Equality and Diversity training for staff; active promotion of Equality and Diversity within the School through close ties with the Equality and Diversity Unit; and developing systems and procedures to encourage an inclusive environment (which includes working towards an Athena Swan Bronze Award). The Panel noted that equality and diversity training has been undertaken by School Office staff and was integral to induction for new colleagues.

Widening Access Strategy

4.2.2 Panel members were pleased to note an increase in the number of MD20 and MD40 students admitted to the School during the review period. This followed the introduction of the University's first Further Education/Higher Education articulation route in 2012-13, the provision of a Summer School for access that is focused on assessing potential, and close working ties with local schools to support transition and encourage aspiration. The Review Panel **commends** the School's Widening Access strategy, which includes an articulation route with Further/Higher Education.

4.3 Supporting Students in their Learning

Support for transition and induction

4.3.1 The SER described activities around transition and induction including an induction week, summer schools and school outreach activities. It was noted that the School had extended induction activities across first year which currently included AWS and Campus Life Advice Network (CLAN), a peer mentoring support structure introduced in 2013-14, as well as future optional workshops to support students with skills in referencing, presentation, time management, stress management and essay/report writing. It was also noted that the School Office was available to students from Monday to Friday during semester in the provision of support from the administrative team for a one-stop student hub. The SER also acknowledged a lack of English for Academic Practice (EAP) support and that the bridging course for articulating students may be an insufficient preparation for the transition to university education.

Campus Life Advice Network (CLAN)

4.3.2 The Review Panel was interested to hear about an initiative developed by the School in response to feedback which indicated that, although students found it helpful to meet with peers from the same programme for academic discussions, they wanted to meet with students from across the campus for social events. The SER described how the CLAN peer mentoring assigned every undergraduate student to one of three networks, each comprising 25 students from across the degree programmes and made up of smaller, programme-specific mentoring groups known as SEPTs (Student Experience Peer Teams). However, undergraduate students who met with the Panel reported that although there had been a CLAN ceilidh, they were not aware of any other CLAN related activities. While the Panel was disappointed to find a lack of engagement, particularly as students clearly thought it was a good idea, the Review Panel recognised that this was part of the wider issue of staff workload and a perceived lack of social space for students. This is discussed further in Sections 5.3.4 and 5.3.5 respectively.

Advisers of Studies

4.3.3 The School utilised an advising model comprising fourteen academic staff members with roles as Advisers of Study and led by a Chief Advisor. It was currently reviewing the system to devolve some aspects of advising to administrative staff, to allow Advisers to provide students with more information and advice on graduate attributes. Undergraduates who met with the Panel reported that they usually met with their Adviser during Freshers' Week to discuss issues with timetabling and field trip arrangements, but wanted more support with course choices. Although they were aware that more support was available, through the Programme/Course Convenor and tutors, there was some concern regarding a perceived potential conflict for staff who might be involved in their assessment, due to the small size of the School, and students, particularly

those on the MAPE programme, were finding it increasingly difficult to get advice from staff. It was noted from meeting with the postgraduate taught students that, although they were not allocated Advisers of Studies, teaching staff were very approachable and provided advice on academic sessions, pastoral matters and course choices.

Course Options

- 4.3.4 The SER stated that the School was aware, through the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and other student feedback forums, that students needed more information on optional courses, particularly during induction week. Panel members noted future plans from 2016-17 for Level One Course Convenors to include details of aims and content in introductory lectures during induction week and, that the School was considering creating short videos on each course that could be made available to students online. However, undergraduate students who met with the Panel expressed the view that some course descriptions were lacking in detail, and, for some, the titles had been misleading. There was also an apparent lack of awareness amongst both the undergraduate and postgraduate taught students who met with the Panel, of their entitlement to sample lectures for multiple courses within initial two week period available before finalising their course selection. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School undertakes a review of course selection procedure to ensure that course descriptors/titles accurately reflect content, and that students are aware of the various support and information available to help them with their choices.

Access to Staff Members

- 4.3.5 Level 4 undergraduate students who met with the Panel reported an issue in the provision of dissertation support, and while they acknowledged teaching staff workloads they found that most staff were available to give feedback on assessment on a one-to-one basis. Key staff who met with the Panel confirmed that they enjoyed excellent relationships with their students and endeavoured to provide support to maintain a supportive environment, as this was seen to be a key feature of the School. However, it was noted from student feedback that provision was variable, although generally better for postgraduate taught students, and there was less consistency with undergraduates, especially those on the MAPE programme. The Review Panel **commends** the availability of some staff members to support students despite challenges of increasing student numbers.

Support for International postgraduate students

- 4.3.6 The Panel welcomed School plans to continue to offer the AWS diagnostic exercise and course to postgraduate students in the current 2015-16 session, in recognition of concerns about the level of support provided to growing cohorts of international postgraduate students with limited skills in academic writing in English and referencing. However, the SER noted a concern regarding the availability of English for Academic Purposes support. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaise with Student Learning Service to provide an appropriate level of support with academic writing and language skills for international postgraduate students, including the potential of utilising expertise available by video-conferencing colleagues at the Gilmorehill campus.

4.4 Student Engagement

External Examiners

- 4.4.1 The Panel was satisfied that the External Examiners' reports were generally positive, and that criticisms were addressed.

Employability

- 4.4.2 The data provided by the School regarding employment destinations were not representative of the destination of leavers, as they did not include MAPE students. While the figures did show some improvement in rates of employment since 2012-13, the SER referred to anecdotal evidence which suggested that the School's graduating students were achieving a high level of employment. The Review Panel was interested to note various initiatives offered by the School which included an employability blog, news notice boards, communication via social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, and specialist MAPE/LinkedIn sessions.

Work-based Learning

- 4.4.3 The Panel was impressed by the range of work-based learning opportunities offered to students through the provision of placements, field courses and projects. While all undergraduate degree programmes included placements, the BSc Environmental Science and Sustainability, Tourism Postgraduate Taught courses, and the literature aspect of the MSc Environmental Culture and Communication included field trips (including the Isle of Harris, Field Studies Council, Solway Firth Partnership, Borders Forest Trust, Forestry Commission, Edinburgh Zoo, NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Dumfries and Galloway Council and the Third Sector). It was clear during meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students who met with the Panel that placements and field courses were highly valued and seen as an opportunity to increase self-confidence and develop relationships with teaching staff. Indeed, students wanted more work-based learning opportunities, particularly in Level 1, as there was a perception that this would strengthen the likelihood of being offered other placements, which increased potential for future employment.
- 4.4.4 While the Panel was pleased to note from the SER that the School was currently considering offering more placement provision in response to a perceived shift in needs and expectations of postgraduate taught cohort, there was some concern about the sustainability of current provision. Other issues highlighted by the undergraduate students included the clarity of information regarding placements provided for students (particularly the FAQs) and feedback on placement assessment. The Review Panel **commends** the wide range of work-based learning opportunities (placements, field courses and projects) offered by the School, which were valued by students and seen as beneficial for future employment.
- 4.4.5 Undergraduate MAPE students raised an issue regarding timetabling of their placements, which, for some, had been scheduled beyond the funding/accommodation period. The SER described how a new General Teaching Council Scotland system for placing students in schools has provided the opportunity for the School to streamline school placements still further, and key staff members who met with the Panel, were confident that condensing teaching into a five week period had addressed the problem.

Graduate Attributes

- 4.4.6 The School engaged with graduate attributes, in the development of students' academic abilities, personal qualities and transferable skills across a wide range of learning opportunities. These included: the articulation of graduate attributes within Intended Learning Outcomes and course aims at undergraduate level; flexible assessments tailored to meet specific work needs (particularly part-time students in employment); work placements which were available on all undergraduate programmes and some postgraduate programmes; and guidance

from students' Adviser of Studies. The SER had provided specific examples of graduate attributes from ILOs including a Reflective Work-based Journal that students were required to complete as part of a work placement. School plans to embed the range of graduate attributes in the postgraduate taught programmes to accommodate their expectations were also noted.

- 4.4.7 The Panel explored with staff members if there was anything distinctive about the attributes they expected graduates of SIS to have, how these mapped onto their teaching and whether students were encouraged to reflect on these attributes as part of their learning. Key staff members explained that while there was a particular emphasis on critical thinking, a wide range of graduate attributes was systematically embedded in programme and course aims, ILOs and work placements across the various disciplines. In this way, students were encouraged to continually reflect on different aspects of their scholarship, which also included a lecture, aimed at developing students' understanding of constructive self-reflection/ and the nature and purpose of graduate attributes.
- 4.4.8 The Panel noted that, given the nature of the integrated approach taken by the School, staff might find it more challenging to develop graduate attributes outside of the core programmes offered. However, the Head of School reported that the School took a more holistic approach to graduate attributes, and, although subjects were disparate, there were more opportunities for students to develop and reflect on work skills required due to the School's interdisciplinarity approach and practice of concurrent teaching. The Review Panel **commends** the School's engagement with graduate attributes, which are continually developed across a broad range learning opportunities and which include reflections on practice, to ensure students are equipped for the world of work.

Internationalisation

- 4.4.9 While numbers of outgoing students did not meet the University's strategic target of 20% for 2020, there was a clear effort by the School to foster internationalisation in terms of encouraging outgoing and incoming student mobility, and engagement by staff in the provision of student-focused internationalisation activities. Furthermore, students valued the support and guidance provided by staff, and from the Internationalisation Lead in particular to facilitate outgoing opportunities. Undergraduate students who met with the Panel stated that cost was the main barrier to participation. This was also recognised by the School, who endorsed efforts by the University to establish additional scholarships for outward mobility of varying durations, while simultaneously working to secure local sources of sustainable funding.
- 4.4.10 The School's strategy is to continuously review study exchange agreements, enhancing placement options at postgraduate level and exploring alternative forms of international student engagement. There is also potential for taster mobility sessions, which staff regarded as an effective way to motivate students and to provide a global perspective/experience. It was also recognised by staff and that staff exchanges were not just opportunities for staff to share research methodologies, but enhanced the learning and teaching experience for students (University of Nankai, China).

Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

Course Evaluation

- 4.4.11 The Review was disappointed that a substantial number of course evaluations from 2014-15 had not been included in the supporting documentation because they had been mislaid. The Panel noted that the University had recently

implemented a policy on electronic course evaluation for gathering student feedback via questionnaires using EvaSys software. The Review Panel **encourages** the School to continue engaging with the University's Course Evaluation Policy, which includes staff attendance on EvaSys training and compliance with course end dates for submission and safe storage requirements.

Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC)

4.4.12 Meetings of Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLC) were held regularly (usually once per semester) to which undergraduate and postgraduate taught students were invited. While students who met with the Panel regarded the SSLC as useful channel for information sharing, they were less convinced in its effectiveness in addressing student issues and providing feedback on actions. Some postgraduate students also highlighted difficulties with attendance as meetings were always scheduled during the day. Panel members noted from the review documentation that the last minutes had been posted to School's Moodle site in October 2013; actions were not being routinely identified in the minutes of meetings; and there was poor attendance by postgraduate taught students. The Review Panel **recommends** the School undertake a review of the operation of the Staff Student Liaison Committees, to improve student engagement, with the postgraduate taught cohort in particular, and ensure that actions are clearly identified, progressed and outcomes reported back to students.

5. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

5.1 Reflect on effectiveness of approaches to enhancing the student learning experience

Curriculum Design and Development

5.1.1 The SER noted the provision of viable course options following curricula restructuring had been achieved through the 'hub and spoke'/'connected nodes' model, where courses that were core to one programme could be offered as options for the other degrees. It was noted that, at undergraduate level, this included courses from four Humanities' pathways (History, Philosophy, Literature and Modern Languages) that are integral to the MAPE programme. The Review Panel **commends** teaching which was mostly delivered in two-hour slots to enable diversity of classroom practice (through lectures, small group work, debates, technology-enhanced learning, and a wide range of seminar practices that include informal presentations, peer review of assignments, debates, and problem-based learning). It was clear from feedback that students also enjoyed and valued this practice.

Concurrent teaching and Interdisciplinarity

5.1.2 It was noted from the SER that core courses had been designed to provide parity between discipline-specific core courses, compulsory concurrent streams required for the MAPE and the choice of electives available to each student. This approach ensured that students benefitted from a range of disciplines and approaches to learning, while offering choice and maintaining interdisciplinarity and programme integrity.

5.1.3 Postgraduate taught students who met with Panel had a strong sense of interdisciplinarity, which for some had been a motivating factor to study at SIS. However, in meetings with undergraduates, students were less able to articulate their understanding of an interdisciplinary approach, although there was a perception that course content/concurrency was tailored to meet needs of MAPE

students. While undergraduates could identify benefits of concurrent teaching, such as encouraging reflective learning and offering more flexibility to change programmes (subject to academic performance), course options were often limited, and, there was a perception that the inclusion of MAPE students on Environmental Science and Sustainability course slowed down teaching delivery.

- 5.1.4 The Head of the School Learning and Teaching Committee reported that staff took every opportunity to explain the concept and purpose of concurrency and interdisciplinarity, and the value of broad based education, through conversations with students and reinforced through prompts in teaching. Despite high level conceptual discussions, there was concern that the School was not getting full engagement from some students, and it was noted that the School was currently seeking funding to develop a conceptual paper on student uptake of concurrency. Key staff members who met with the Panel were very positive about the concurrency model. Key staff also acknowledged the need to articulate to MAPE students, in particular, to ensure that they understood that study was not just about training (i.e. lesson plans) but also about education in a broader sense. Staff also recognised the need to embed the conceptual links and commonalities between the different courses earlier in the student journey. However, staff members were also aware of the significant challenges involved, in terms of student engagement and understanding, due to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students.
- 5.1.5 The Panel sensed there was still some ambiguity around the concept of interdisciplinarity which might be undermining SIS's ability to reflect on how interdisciplinarity was driving the culture and ethos of the School, recognising the differing needs and understanding of the student cohorts. There appears to be limited course choices regarding the way some Level 3 MAPE had been required to take the L3 multi-disciplinary Victorian Literature, Art and Philosophy course, however, the Panel welcomed School plans for an additional programme in Global Citizenship, which would provide more course options.

Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes

- 5.1.6 The Review Panel noted that statements on course-level Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were provided to students through course handbooks and that ILOs were clear and aligned to the course work and Graduate Attributes.

Assessment

- 5.1.7 The SER described an impressive array of assessment methods which appeared to fit well with the courses provision. The Review Panel **commends** the range of assessment approaches utilised by the School, which are closely linked to Graduate Attributes and employability.

Feedback on Assessment

- 5.1.8 The School offers a range of feedback mechanisms including generic feedback, individual comments on exams (on some courses), feedback vivas, on-line assessments and on-going projects around assessment and feedback (including a LTDF-funded LEAF initiative). The Panel noted student feedback in the supporting documentation provided for the review, which suggested that there was a variety of issues relating to assessment which required addressing, including a lack of clarity of purpose of assessment, the quality and quantity of feedback and timing issues.
- 5.1.9 The Head of School confirmed that students were provided with guidance on feedback on assessment through course and programme handbooks and during lectures, but pointed out that, despite the quality and frequency of information

provided, students did not always realise they were getting feedback. The challenge for the School was therefore considering how to bridge this gap. The Head of the School Learning and Teaching Committee reported that while students were not formally asked about their expectations, the School was aware through SSLC and a focus group held in November 2016, of student preferences for feedback. The Panel also noted that the Head of School had recently met with postgraduate students to discuss student expectations on feedback, and had set up a working group to consider the matter further.

- 5.1.10 Among postgraduate taught students there were timing issues related to the receipt of feedback, with some reports of three month delays. There was also some variability in terms of the quality of feedback in terms of consistency of guidance on the handling of subject matter and academic literacy. Members also noted that some courses would only allow submission of assessment by hard copy, which presented difficulties for students commuting large distances. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School considers the electronic submission of assessed work in a review of the process that is cognisant of the needs of students commuting long distances to the Dumfries campus.
- 5.1.11 Undergraduates who met with the Panel also highlighted issues regarding the consistency of feedback, particularly with essays, and although there were variations in the timeliness and issues relating to the scheduling of feedback, they were aware of the pressure of increasing student numbers on staff workloads. Students were very positive about the Feedback Viva, although the Panel recognised the implication for staff workloads. The Review Panel **commends** the Feedback Viva, which was valued by students, and facilitated learning through reflective dialogue to embed knowledge and consolidate learning. The Review Panel **recommends** the Convener of the School's Learning & Teaching Committee develops a calendar of assessment activities, clarifying bottlenecks/peaks, to clearly identify submission, marking and feedback deadlines for more effective planning, and which is shared with staff and students for transparency. The Review Panel further **recommends** that the School reviews feedback on assessment to develop a consistent approach in the delivery of feedback of assessment, both written and verbal, which should include engagement with the student body.

Good practice

- 5.1.12 The inclusion of a range of examples related to sharing good practice to the wider academic community (e.g. publications, presentations and seminars) in the SER indicated that this was an important issue for the School. The Head of School reported that staff worked collegially to develop good practice, through meetings, such as the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Strategy Forum to review innovative practice. However, the Panel would have liked more detail on how the School identified good practice, the availability of opportunities for staff members to co-teach or peer observe and the links across the University or other institutions on Crichton Campus. These issues are considered further under staff development and the Academic Strategy Forum in Sections 5.2.9 and 5.2.11

5.2 Engaging and Supporting Staff

Early career and probationer training and support

- 5.2.1 The Review Panel met with three Early Career Development Programme (ECDP) participants and one probationary staff member. Although the SER had raised an issue regarding travel to the Gilmorehill campus, staff members clearly valued the PgCAP training provision, which was viewed as appropriate, an

opportunity to share good practice, and provided flexibility, in terms of acknowledging prior teaching experience. It was also noted that some PgCAP training was available for participants on the Dumfries campus by video link and that participants benefitted from the annual Learning and Teaching Conference coordinated by LTC.

5.2.2 The School had confirmed prior to the review visit that the SIS had employed a number of international teaching staff in the last eighteen months and that ECDP was an effective framework for setting objectives aligned to the University's strategic priorities and for enabling participants to understand their career progression. Early career staff on the ECDP were mentored by senior members of academic staff (often Gilmorehill-based) working in their discipline. They undertook, as appropriate, a range of learning opportunities and development activities, and courses/ and workshops had been made available through Virtual Learning Environments to provide participating staff flexibility of attendance. It was also clear from the early career/probationary staff who met with the Panel that mentoring support was relevant and appreciated. However, there was some concern regarding issues which included workload, assessment, management and resource:

- It was not clear to early career/probationary staff how the ECDP framework linked with the CoSS Workload Model in respect of specific weightings to teaching, administrative duties and research commitments. In particular, early career staff were not convinced that the workload model was taking account of the School's course teaching practice of two classes per week for two hour sessions and there was a perception that the implications of this effect were compounded for part-time staff;
- Early career staff did not appear to have access to assessment marking sheets, which might explain the issue of a lack of consistency in feedback on assessment experienced by some students considered earlier.

5.2.3 The Panel noted that the University's Workload Model was designed to be transparent, although in practice members were aware that some Schools preferred to anonymise details so that individual staff could not be identified. The Head of School explained that she had consulted with colleagues following concerns about sensitivities from some staff around the current model in relation to individual workloads, and while she was happy to respond to individual staff requests, the School Workload Model was not generally available and visible to staff. However, she agreed with Panel members that it was a positive management tool and a useful mechanism in terms of addressing resource needs. The Head of School expressed surprise that staff had an issue with signing in and out via an in/out board by the entrance to the Teaching Office, as she had assumed that as it had been practice since the campus opened and was standard practice to meet health and safety requirements. However, the Panel advised that staff attendance should only be monitored out-with normal working hours in compliance with fire regulations.

Support and training for Graduate Teaching Assistants

5.2.4 The School confirmed prior to the review visit that all new Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) undertook the mandatory training provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre and that lecturers mentored their GTAs through peer observation and feedback, review and discussion of students' evaluations. There were also individual sessions to discuss course aims and ILOs and course materials. The SER and the Head of School had also identified the need to increase the number of GTAs employed by the School in order to support

academic staff and maintain provision of small group teaching, which was an important feature for the School.

5.2.5 The GTAs who met with the Panel flagged up a number of challenges around their work in relation to their appointment, development and support from staff which included:

- A lack of clarity in relation to appointment and selection process of GTAs, and contractual conditions such work duties, payment rates and hours etc.;
- Although staff had attended training provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre, there had been no provision of training by the School, which is a Senate requirement in the development of GTAs;
- GTAs wanted more feedback from staff members.

5.2.6 The Panel discussed their concerns with the Head of School about the lack of training and support for GTAs and the need for greater formality and clarity around applications and their roles, to ensure that: new positions were advertised to all eligible students and recent graduates; GTAs were issued with a standard letter, which detailed their conditions of appointment (contact hours, preparation and assessment duties); all GTAs were paid at a uniform rate; regular mentoring and briefing sessions took place with GTAs which ideally would be facilitated by course convenors to support GTAs in developing course material and providing feedback; all course work assessed by GTAs was moderated by staff; GTAs received support from a designated mentor where issues such as managing workloads, developing a portfolio of teaching, and personal and professional development could be discussed; and provision of training workshops specifically tailored to the needs of GTAs. It was noted that GTAs should also be encouraged to participate in appropriate training opportunities elsewhere in CoSS and the wider University.

5.2.7 The Head of School acknowledged that the Schools engagement with GTAs had been reactive and ad-hoc but reported that a new system had recently been introduced to ensure that details of new GTA appointments were transparent and staff would be consulted to clarify support requirements. The Panel **recommends** the School develops a clear and transparent process regarding the appointment, development and support of Graduate Teaching Assistants.

Administrative Support

5.2.8 The SER referred to ongoing changes to the School's administration to ensure that current and future curricula and academic support needs were better met. The Head of School confirmed that she was aware of some of the problems experienced by staff who met with the Panel (missing student feedback evaluations, class lists not provided, availability of standard assessment feedback marking sheets and lack of photocopying support), and explained that the School Office had been restructured in the last nine months and was still working towards peak performance. However, she assured the Panel that steps were being taken to address administrative inefficiencies identified through the review. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of School develops a strategy for streamlining effective administrative processes to support teaching delivery.

Staff development

5.2.9 The Panel noted that although the challenges of larger class sizes had been identified in the SER, there was no evidence that staff received training on how to effectively deliver to larger classes or develop alternative teaching methods.

While the SER had described how staff members were encouraged to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD), this often required attendance at Gilmorehill with associated time and cost implications. The Panel noted that despite visits from colleagues from Gilmorehill and 'bespoke' training provision from the School, some staff felt disadvantaged due to their location. The Panel took the view that perception of disadvantage was common in such a context, and could be demoralising for staff and although the School had taken useful practical steps in addressing the perceived inequalities, they might want to consider collaborating with another similar unit located closer to achieve critical mass to justify training costs and share experience and good practice.

- 5.2.10 Key staff pointed out that their development needed to match increasing student numbers and that discursive opportunities provided through the School's Academic Strategy Forum (discussed below) and the Learning and Teaching Committee informed debates, and ensured consistency in terms of delivery and the student learning experience. Key staff also appreciated development opportunities offered through the University of Glasgow's Annual Teaching and Learning Conference (LTC) and informal coffee and cake sessions provided by the School.

Academic Strategy Forum

- 5.2.11 The Panel was impressed by the feedback from staff regarding the Academic Strategy Forum, which facilitated the consideration of 'hot topics', including academic practice, curricula, innovation, regulatory issues and good practice across a diverse range of multi-disciplinary perspectives. The review Panel **commends** the Academic Strategy Forum, which provides staff with opportunities to consider pedagogical issues through constructive discussions and meaningful information sharing.

5.3 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical):

Increasing Student Numbers

- 5.3.1 The SER noted the challenges due to significant increases in student numbers in relation to the sustainability of the teaching model, which included small group teaching, staff support provision and assessment methods, to meet School aspirations to provide an intimate, supportive community. The Head of School reported that while there were many positive aspects of increasing student numbers (alignment of Staff Student Ratios with CoSS, improved course delivery efficiency, and new opportunities for GTAs and research staff), there were some difficulties with teaching delivery (one plus one teaching/tutorial), and some seminar numbers exceeding twenty as small group teaching was promoted by the School. The impact on staffing requirements was further compounded by the requirement for a reduced workload for ECDPs, a lack of GTAs which put pressure on course convenors. It was noted from key staff who met the Panel that the increase in student numbers this session was unexpected, and that, due to the structure of core courses, they had not realised until registration in September 2015. The Head of School acknowledged that the School should have anticipated this increase but was confident that the two new appointments would reduce pressure on staff.
- 5.3.2 However, the Panel took the view that the School needed to consider a more creative approach to cope with demand in the design of workshops and tutorials, and to identify and disseminate existing innovative practices across programmes. The Panel proposed that to support this shift in teaching practice and student mind-set, staff should be provided with a series of progressive sessions which could feature evidenced-based reflection, to support and embed

best practice and evaluate any changes made. The workshops would also provide academic staff with opportunities to undertake pedagogic action research on new initiatives, which could be written up or presented at conferences on learning and teaching, and to build on the excellent elements of good practice and creative approaches already present. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaise with the Learning and Teaching Centre to clarify the pedagogical issues, including teaching space and infrastructure requirements, around increasing student numbers and to provide of a series of pedagogical workshops to facilitate discussions with School academic staff. The School might also like to consider the potential opportunities that exist for developing an online/blended learning strategy for courses as a means of widening student participation and increasing numbers on programmes. The Review Panel further **recommends** that the School develops a strategy for enhancing the student experience, primarily learning provision, by tapping into existing expertise of colleagues at Gilmorehill and elsewhere.

Staff Workload

- 5.3.3 The Panel took the view that the issue raised previously regarding the visibility of the Workload Model in relation to of early career/probationary and Graduate Teaching Assistants was not one that the School could address in isolation. The School, in consultation with the CoSS, needs to develop a more transparent workload model for use in SIS that is in line with what is equitable across the College and which reflects the University guidance. The Panel also noted guidance provided by Human Resources to ensure early career staff liaised with their line manager to ensure the appropriateness of their workload and that agreed performance objectives were met. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with the College of Social Sciences in a review of the operation of their Workload Model.

Teaching Space

- 5.3.4 It was noted that following expansion of the School estate through acquisition of Maxwell House and a number of rooms in Rutherford-McCowan, building improvement plans, designed to minimise disruption to students, would be implemented shortly. While the SER had stated that the additional accommodation had gone some way to meeting the increasing number of tutorial and seminar groups and larger class sizes, and would provide state of the art teaching facilities in some rooms, the Panel was concerned to hear that current teaching space and infrastructure still had challenges:

- A shortage of tutorial teaching space;
- Inadequate provision and maintenance of teaching aids (issues updating audio-visual equipment and shortage of white boards/flip charts);
- Computer laboratories that were not big enough to cope with increases in class sizes and computers that were not always reliable;
- Teaching rooms that were often not set up as requested by staff;
- A lack of social space for students.

- 5.3.5 The SER noted the School shared buildings and resource, including computer laboratories, with other institutions co-located on campus and some IT and facilities management was provided by University of the West of Scotland (UWS). Following a survey of rooms, resource issues around maintenance and janitorial support had been raised through the Learning and Teaching Committee and staff meetings. The Panel also heard from students that some teaching staff seemed unfamiliar with the operation of teaching equipment. The Review Panel

encourages the School to consider how teaching space and equipment requirements could be supported in the future.

Library

- 5.3.6 An issue regarding the accessibility of the library in terms of increased opening hours was flagged up both in feedback from the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and during the Panel's meetings with students. However, both undergraduates and key staff reported that campus library provision was good and included full access to the University's main library on Gilmorehill, albeit with a slight time delay. It was noted that the Library was part of Dumfries and Galloway College infrastructure and that provision would be included in upcoming review of UWS services, and the acquisition of Maxwell House had enabled the School to create a quiet reading room for undergraduate and postgraduate students. It was hoped that by encouraging the use of e-books and the provision of in-situ PCs would alleviate perceived shortcomings of the campus Library opening hours.

Information Technology

- 5.3.7 Key staff who met with the Panel had highlighted significant problems with the IT networking and infrastructure which had limited broadband (wifi) connection (400 users). This presented challenges with every software update on Gilmorehill, particularly Moodle. The Head of School confirmed that there was a degree of dissatisfaction with current IT infrastructure provision, which had intensified over the years with increases in student and staff usage. Provision of facilities was further complicated as there was a shared management across two campuses which operated separate policies.
- 5.3.8 However, IT did not seem to be a significant problem for students who met with the Panel, apart from initial log-on and some variability in the quality of video links. The Panel was surprised that this issue was still ongoing, given the School's greater emphasis on use of IT to link with other parts of the University and external resources. While students and staff took a pragmatic approach in finding ways to work around the difficulties, the Panel was concerned that changes in teaching methodologies to cope with increasing numbers, might become increasingly challenging for staff and students.
- 5.3.9 The Head of School noted various challenges during last the last eighteen months and in particular engaging with UWS (who have management responsibility for IT provision across the Crichton site). However, she was pleased to report that a strategic meeting had been scheduled for May 2016 to consider improvements in the provision of shared infrastructure and services which included Professor Anne Anderson, Vice Principal and Head of College of Social sciences, Mr David Newall, Secretary of Court, and Dr Shirley Turberville, Dumfries Campus Director, with suitable IT representation. The Panel pointed out that the School needed to prioritise the IT issue, and should consider an audit, with appropriate support from the University's IT Service, to clarify the specific issues around the School's IT provision requirements, which could feed into these discussions.

Teaching Garden

- 5.3.10 The Panel received details regarding the Teaching Garden in advance of the review visit, which described an interactive resource provision for students and members of the public to engage in research on horticulture, botany and ecology, and gain experience in basic plant cultivation techniques and data collection. The garden was included in a tour provided to Panel Members during their visit and was valued by BSc Environmental Science and Sustainability

students who met with the Panel. The Panel was also pleased to note School plans to incorporate the Teaching Garden into undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. The Review Panel **commends** the Teaching Garden initiative which provides a focus for teaching ecological skills for students, staff members and members of the public.

Integration to the College of Social Sciences

- 5.3.11 The SER emphasised the School's keenness to promote a sense of community and while the School was physically remote from the main Gilmorehill Campus, staff worked hard to maintain appropriate connections between themselves and their students with colleagues in CoSS and the wider University. Panel members acknowledged that it was always going to be difficult to link the School with the rest of the University due to its location and were therefore interested to explore with staff and students whether there were perceptions or experience of marginalisation. However, physical isolation did not appear to be an issue with students who met the Panel, although there was a suggestion that the School might consider subsidising a minibus to commute with the main campus due to relative high travel costs of travel by bus and train (£11/16 single fares).
- 5.3.12 Key staff members who met with the Panel described an element of isolation in terms of staff research interests and would have liked financial support to attend events at the Universities and conferences in general. However, there had been an improvement in recent years and CoSS staff members were very supportive and made efforts to visit or communicate through video links, which staff found very useful in terms of comparing teaching and assessment practice and sharing good practice. The Head of School reported that the School was strongly integrated, particularly in relation to the support provided by the Head of CoSS the Dean of Learning & Teaching.

6. Academic Standards

- 6.1 The Review Panel considered that provision was aligned to Quality Assurance (QAA) subject benchmarks (Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies; Earth Sciences; Education Studies; Health Studies; History; Language, Culture and Societies; and Philosophy), and contained the appropriate Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) level in the programme specifications.

Annual Monitoring

- 6.2 While the Panel Members was concerned to find some variance in the content of the Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), both in terms of level of detail and reflection, it was clear that issues were being identified and addressed. In particular members welcomed a reflection on Graduate Attributes (Earth System Science 2012-13) and a strong emphasis on student feedback. However, the Panel considered that AMRs would benefit from: more details of the 'hot topics' (e.g. how Moodle was, or was not, meeting the needs of the class/student learning); more consistency in reporting and 'closing of the feedback loop' to students; and consideration of how Course Convenors share actions and developments and good practice related to enhancing student learning. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School undertakes a review of its Annual Monitoring process, in compliance with University's guidance available through the Senate Office at:

www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_453751_en.pdf

Accreditation

- 6.3 It was noted from the SER that MAPE was re-accredited unconditionally by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC) in 2013 and received seven commendations, and, in 2015, the programme was subject to an Aspect Review and singled out as a case for good practice. The Review Panel **commends** MA in Primary Education programme's successful reaccreditation in 2013 by GTC, which was the first in Scotland to be reaccredited twice, with no changes or conditions attached.
- 6.4 Members were also pleased to note that following a pilot 'dual certification' placement, by four MAPE students in 2015, they were taking forward a suggestion by General Teaching Council to be the first HEI School in Scotland to seek accreditation of dual certification. The Review Panel **commends** School plans to seek 'dual certification' through the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

7. Collaborative provision

- 7.1 The SER reported on a variety of links across all programmes and courses with UWS, Dumfries and Galloway College, the Open University in Scotland, Scotland's Rural College and strategic partners National Health Service and Dumfries and Galloway Council. It was noted that the School undertook joint activities through individual Outcome Agreements of the partner institutions including the SFC from 2013-14. Panel members also heard details of numerous national and international collaborative partnerships in discussions with staff and students regarding placements, field courses (Field Studies Council, Solway Firth Partnership, Borders Forest Trust, Forestry Commission and Edinburgh Zoo), staff mobility and visiting lecturers.

8. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

8.1 Key strengths:

- Maintaining a sense of community;
- Strong postgraduate taught provision which emphasises an interdisciplinary approach and employability;
- Widening Access strategy;
- Availability of staff to support students;
- Wide range of work-based learning opportunities offered;
- Engagement with Graduate Attributes;
- Teaching delivery (two hour slots);
- Range of assessment approaches utilised by the School which are closely linked to Graduate Attributes and employability;
- Feedback Viva which facilitated learning through reflective dialogue;
- Academic Strategy Forum;
- Teaching Garden initiative;
- Re-accreditation of MAPE programme and potential dual certification regarding placement.

8.2 Areas for improvement:

- Review of course selection to ensure accuracy of descriptors and communicate support available to students;
- Support with academic writing and language skills for international postgraduate students;

- Operation of SSLC in terms of student engagement, addressing issues and feedback on actions;
- Electronic submission of assessed work to recognise the needs of students commuting large distances;
- Development of a calendar of assessment activities for more effective planning for both students and staff;
- Consistency of approach in the delivery of feedback on assessment, through engagement with the student body;
- Clarification of process for appointment, development and support of Graduate Teaching Assistants;
- Strategy for streamlining effective administrative support processes to support staff teaching;
- Clarification of the pedagogical issues around maintaining the student learning experience;
- Managing the student experience, by identifying and sharing good practice from colleagues at Gilmorehill and elsewhere;
- Review of the operation and transparency of the Workload model;
- Consistency and reflection of annual monitoring process.

8.3 Conclusion

8.3.1 The School has developed considerably in the last couple of years and this was reflected in the growth in student numbers, the consolidation of programmes, and the move away from a liberal arts-based curriculum to one that was more focused on the requirements of the market. The School's overarching strategic goal to 'become an internationally recognised school that reaches the highest academic standards while also serving the social and economic regeneration of the region' was considered a laudable goal but one that had significant implications around staffing requirements and maintaining the student experience. The sustainability of resource provision is dependent on further growth in student numbers, which will require a shift in the delivery model of learning and teaching currently employed within the School.

8.3.2 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialists, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, programmes offered by the School were current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and of practice in its application.

Commendations

Commendation 1

The Review Panel commends the School's success in maintaining its identity and a sense of community during a period of significant challenges due to restructuring [Section 3.2.4].

Commendation 2

The Review Panel commends the strong postgraduate taught provision which emphasises an interdisciplinary approach and includes emerging subject fields, clear links to future employment, and flexible module assessments that were tailored to meet the needs of part-time students in employment [Section 4.1.3].

Commendation 3

The Review Panel commends the School's Widening Access strategy, which includes an articulation routes with Further/Higher Education [Section 4.2.2].

Commendation 4

The Review Panel commends the availability of some staff members to support students despite challenges of increasing student numbers [Section 4.3.5].

Commendation 5

The Review Panel commends the wide range of work-based learning opportunities (placements, field courses and projects) offered by the School, which were valued by students and seen as beneficial for future employment [Section 4.4.4].

Commendation 6

The Review Panel commends the School's engagement with graduate attributes, which are continually developed across a broad range learning opportunities and which include reflections on practice, to ensure students are equipped for the world of work [Section 4.4.5].

Commendation 7

The Review Panel commends teaching which was mostly delivered in two-hour slots to enable diversity of classroom practice (through lectures, small group work, debates, technology-enhanced learning, and a wide range of seminar practices that include informal presentations, peer review of assignments, debates, and problem-based learning) [Section 5.1.1].

Commendation 8

The Review Panel commends the range of assessment approaches utilised by the School, which are closely linked to Graduate Attributes and employability. [Section 5.1.7]

Commendation 9

The Review Panel commends the Feedback Viva, which was valued by students, and facilitated learning through reflective dialogue to embed knowledge and consolidate learning [Section 5.1.11].

Commendation 10

The review Panel commends the Academic Strategy Forum, which provides staff with opportunities to consider pedagogical issues through constructive discussions and meaningful information sharing [Section 5.2.11].

Commendation 11

The Review Panel commends the Teaching Garden initiative which provides a focus for teaching ecological skills for students, staff members and members of the public [Section 5.3.10].

Commendation 12

The Review Panel commends MA in Primary Education programme's successful reaccreditation in 2013 by GTC, which was the first in Scotland to be reaccredited twice, with no changes or conditions attached [Section 6.3].

Commendation 13

The Review Panel commends School plans to seek 'dual certification' through the General Teaching Council for Scotland [Section 6.4].

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the School of Interdisciplinary Studies in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are grouped together by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are ranked in order of priority within each section.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that the School liaise with Student Learning Service to provide an appropriate level of support with academic writing and language skills for international postgraduate students, including the potential of utilising expertise available by video-conferencing colleagues at the Gilmorehill campus [Section 4.3.6].

For action: Head of School

For information: Student Learning Service

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel recommends that the School undertakes a review of course selection procedure to ensure that course descriptors/titles accurately reflect content, and that students are aware of the various support and information available to help them with their choices [Section 4.3.4].

For action: Head of School

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel recommends the School undertake a review of the operation of the Staff Student Liaison Committees, to improve student engagement, with the postgraduate taught cohort in particular, and ensure that actions are clearly identified, progressed and outcomes reported back to students [Section 4.4.12].

For action: Head of School

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel recommends that the School reviews feedback on assessment to develop a consistent approach in the delivery of feedback of assessment, both written and verbal, which should include engagement with the student body [Section 5.1.11].

For action: Head of School

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel recommends the Convener of the School's Learning & Teaching Committee develops a calendar of assessment activities, clarifying bottlenecks/peaks, to clearly identify submission, marking and feedback information for more effective planning, and which is shared with staff and students for transparency [Section 5.1.11].

For action: Convener, School Learning & Teaching Committee

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel recommends that the School considers the electronic submission of assessed work in a review of the process that is cognisant of the needs of students commuting long distances to the Dumfries campus [Section 5.1.10].

For action: Head of School

Engaging and Supporting Staff

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel recommends that the Head of School develops a strategy for streamlining effective administrative processes to support teaching delivery [Section 5.2.8].

For action: Head of School

Recommendation 8

The Panel recommends the School develops a clear and transparent process regarding the appointment, development and support of Graduate Teaching Assistants [Section 5.2.7].

For action: Head of School

For information: Vice Principal and Head of College of Social Sciences

Resources for Learning and Teaching

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel recommends that the School develops a strategy for enhancing the student experience, primarily learning provision, by tapping into existing expertise of colleagues at Gilmorehill and elsewhere [Section 5.3.2].

For action: Head of School

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel recommends that the School liaise with the Learning & Teaching Centre to clarify the pedagogical issues, including teaching space and infrastructure requirements, around increasing student numbers and to provide of a series of pedagogical workshops to facilitate discussions with School academic staff [Section 5.3.2].

For action: Head of School

For Information: ADU, Learning & Teaching Centre

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel recommends that the School liaises with the College of Social Sciences in a review of the operation of their Workload Model [Section 5.3.3].

For Action: Head of School

For information: Vice Principal and Head of College of Social Sciences

Academic Standards

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School undertakes a review of its Annual Monitoring process, in compliance with University's Guidance available through the Senate Office at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_453751_en.pdf [Section 6.2].

For Action: Head of School

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Summer Powers 2016

Periodic Subject Review: Review of School of Mathematics & Statistics held on 17 and 18 March 2016

Mrs Catherine Omand, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Neal Juster	Senior Vice Principal, Panel Convener
Professor David Leslie	University of Lancaster, External Subject Specialist
Professor Niall MacKay	University of York, External Subject Specialist
Professor Quintin Cutts	School of Computing Science, Cognate member
Ms Una Marie Darragh	Student member
Dr Duncan Ross	Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Michael McEwan	Learning and Teaching Centre
Mrs Catherine Omand	Senate Office and Clerk to the Review Panel

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The School of Mathematics & Statistics was formed in 2010, following University restructuring, bringing together the Department of Mathematics and the Department of Statistics. It is one of seven schools of the College of Science & Engineering. Mathematics was last reviewed in February 2009 and Statistics in February 2010. Both Departments were commended for the quality of provision and conscientious approach to student support. All recommendations arising from the Departmental Reviews were satisfactorily addressed.
- 1.2 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was prepared by a small steering group, composed of academic and administrative staff across the School chaired by the School's Learning & Teaching Convener, Professor John McColl. All staff had been invited to provide comments in relation to learning and teaching. Dr Angela Jaap, from the Academic Development Unit, had been invited to facilitate focus groups with Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and other tutors and demonstrators and with student representatives on the Student-Staff Liaison Committees. A final draft was uploaded onto Moodle to provide all staff and students an opportunity to comment on it, prior to the final submission to the Review Panel. Students who met with the Panel confirmed that they had been made aware of the Periodic Subject Review process and the SER had been made available to them, with some of the students contributing to it.
- 1.3 The Review Panel met with the Head of School, Professor Adrian Bowman, the Learning and Teaching Convener for Mathematics, Professor Tara Brendle, 14 Mathematics students, 10 Statistics students, 3 2+2 students, 5 Postgraduate Taught students, 23 members of staff (including senior and junior academics with a range of responsibilities, as well as administrative and IT staff), 7 GTAs, 4 probationary/early career staff and the Dean (Learning & Teaching) for the College of Science & Engineering. Unfortunately, Professor McColl was on sick leave at the time of the review and was therefore unable to meet with the Panel.

2. Background information

2.1 The School has a total of 81 members of staff (77.45 FTE), with 57 academic staff (55.75) across Applied Mathematics, Pure Mathematics and Statistics. Most academic staff are research active and the School is ranked 8th in the UK for research intensity.

2.2 Student numbers for 2014-15 were as follows

	FTEs
Mathematics (UG)	662
Statistics (UG)	200
PGT	27

The School normally has 600-700 students (200+ FTEs) in Level 1 and approximately 150 (100 FTEs) in Levels 3 and 4. The large number in Level 1 reflects the level of service teaching undertaken by the School. There was a total of 84 international students in Session 2015-16.

2.3 The School offers a substantial range of provision:

	MSci	BSc (Hon)	MA (Hon)	BSc	BEng/MEng (with School of Engineering)	Collaborative	PGT	MRes
Mathematics	9	15	2	1	1 ¹	2 2+2 BSc Hon	2 ²	
Statistics	3	4		2	1 ³	1 double degree and 1 2+2 BSc Hon	6 ⁴	1

A total of nine programmes are to be phased out: 8 Mathematics Undergraduate programmes and 1 MSc in Statistics. Please refer to Appendix 1 for full details.

3. Context and Strategy

3.1 Context and Vision

3.1.1 From the SER, and from discussion with the Head of School, the main strategic objective for the School was to remain broad based, offering a wide range of degree programmes, covering the main areas of Pure Mathematics, Applied Mathematics and Statistics. The School endeavoured to maintain a balance of staff appropriate to the workloads experienced by the different areas (SER, 2.1.2, page 3). At the initial meeting with the Head of School, the Panel was advised that teaching provision and student employability were central to the School's strategy and the breadth of provision reflected this, including collaborative provision. There were plans to further develop and enhance MSc activity. There had been significant staff changes during the last eight years, mainly due to a large number of retirements, with new international appointments having been made. It was considered that this had enhanced provision. The Review Panel was satisfied with this vision, acknowledging the

¹ Two core courses

² also provision of courses for the Scottish Mathematical Sciences Training Centre (SMSTC)

³ One core course

⁴ As Mathematics, courses provided for SMSTC. Two of the MSc are joint: one with Computing Science (3 optional courses and 1 with the Adam Smith Business School – 6 core courses)

substantial range of degree programmes available, including several new MSc programmes, three new collaborative undergraduate degrees (two with Chinese institutions, one with Bologna in Italy) and a new programme in Statistics offering a work placement year. The Panel **commends** the vision and effort by the School in its breadth and range of provision, although it recognised that student numbers were limited in relation to collaborative provision.

- 3.1.2 As a consequence of restructuring, the Review Panel acknowledged that the School had relatively recently been established and inquired as to how well the School was functioning, integrating the two subjects. The Head of School advised that there was a strong overall commitment to the provision of good teaching and restructuring had provided opportunities to share good practice, as well as strengthening research groups. However, it was acknowledged that it needed time to embed further. The School had only been functioning as a School for 5 years, but both the School and the College were developing strong collegiality.
- 3.1.3 The Panel queried as to why the School had separate Subject Learning & Teaching Committees (LTC). The Head of School clarified that these were formally sub-committees of the School LTC and this had been considered the most appropriate structure to address detailed teaching requirements for each subject. The Panel was advised that the Conveners of both subject LTCs, Professor Brendle and Dr Evers, worked closely together, benefitting from the exchange of ideas. Such exchanges fed into School strategy at the School Learning & Teaching Committee and Staff Student Liaison Committees. Merging of some systems, such as the on-line assessment in Mathematics, had not taken place as the software was not suitable for Statistics, which was better supported by the bespoke Moodle system designed. However, the School had been successful at merging a number of processes, such as the combined examination system. The Review Panel **commends** the work undertaken, to date, in merging some processes but, whilst acknowledging the distinctiveness between the subject areas, the Panel **recommends** the School continues to develop a strategic approach to quality enhancement, adopting a more systematic approach to the sharing and dissemination of good practice between colleagues in Mathematics & Statistics.
- 3.1.4 The Head of School was asked what the School's strategy was in relation to Postgraduate Taught provision. Professor Bowman confirmed that the capital cost of PGT provision was considerable, with interest in Mathematics small compared to Statistics, where there was a stronger market potential. Resourcing of PGT provision was not upfront which caused anxiety as existing School staff carried the increased teaching and assessment burden. There was also limitation in relation to project supervision and how many students could be allocated per member of staff. However, there were significant plans for expansion at MSc level under a data Analytics banner and a PhD with integrated study was also being put in place. Additional 2+2 arrangements may also be pursued.
- 3.1.5 The Review Panel was aware that, due to substantial University estates' plans, the building the School was based in was to be demolished. Discussions were underway in relation to both temporary and long-term accommodation. At the meeting with the Head of School, Professor Bowman confirmed that the move was unsettling and there was concern regarding the impact this would have on the student experience. Both Professor Bowman and Professor Brendle were members of the Project Board overseeing the potential move of Mathematics & Statistics and Estates & Buildings had given

reassurance that re-location would only take place if the School was satisfied that the accommodation provided met their needs. The Student Representatives Council (SRC) Mathematics & Statistics representatives (both incoming and outgoing) had also been included in project board meetings and consulted with. Estates & Buildings had given assurance relocation would be delayed if the School was not satisfied. It is anticipated that the School would move in December 2016.

3.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

- 3.2.1 From the SER and, in discussion with the Head of School, it was evident that the School was undertaking a number of learning and teaching initiatives. The Panel **commends** the School for the level of innovation being introduced, transforming how undergraduate Mathematics & Statistics was taught. The Panel had been impressed by the quality and commitment of the early career staff that they had met with. It was evident that these new members of staff were enthusiastic, bringing new ideas on how to improve teaching which was clearly enhancing provision. The Panel **recommends** that the School consider mechanisms for ensuring that all staff developing and introducing new methods of teaching continue to be recognised.
- 3.2.2 The Panel discussed with the Head of School how all staff were encouraged to engage with learning and teaching enhancement and how teaching was arranged as different teaching styles could cause variation in experience (please see comment raised by students under 4.4.7). Professor Bowman confirmed that the School sought to build and develop enhancements across the School with discussion and feedback taking place at Learning & Teaching Committees as well as through open staff discussion. The recent appointment of two University Teachers reflected the School's commitment to teaching.
- 3.2.3 In addition to the increase in international students, the recent international staff appointments gave students an opportunity to experience different perspectives in relation to educational, cultural and scientific backgrounds. Careful consideration would also be given to future appointments, ensuring there was good coverage across Applied Mathematics, Pure Mathematics and Statistics.
- 3.2.4 The School undertook a substantial level of service teaching in Levels 1 and 2 Mathematics, but it was unclear to the Panel as to how the School liaised with other disciplines. The Panel therefore **recommends** that the School considers establishing a more formal relationship with 'client' subjects and Engineering to discuss teaching provision and possible alternative ways to support students from outside of the School (please also refer to recommendation under 5.1.1).

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

4.1 Admissions, Retention and Success

- 4.1.1 At the meeting with the Mathematics students, the benefit of the flexible degree structure at the University of Glasgow was highlighted. A few of them had been undecided on what they wished to study on entering university and the flexibility gave them an opportunity to decide whilst at university. A couple of the students indicated that they had originally entered the University to study other subjects but had switched to Mathematics. A couple of students from the UK, but outside of Scotland, highlighted that they had not been aware of the flexible degree structure and that the University should promote

this aspect more in recruitment material and Open Days. It was also noted that one of the English students had been discouraged from applying to Scottish institutions due to the additional year of study, without recognition of the benefit of flexibility and range. However, one student highlighted that flexibility between Colleges was less so, as some Colleges now had specific requirements for progression. The Panel **recommends** that the Senate Office bring the issue of recruitment material to the attention of the Marketing, Recruitment and International Office (MaRIO) and the issue of limited flexibility of choice between Colleges to Academic Standards Committee.

- 4.1.2 The Panel was advised at the meeting with staff that recruitment to Statistics was different to Mathematics. As Mathematics was taught at School, it obtained wider, general interest, whilst Statistics was more subject-specific with students entering via Mathematics or from students with a particular interest in the subject. As such, the School catered for a diverse range of student.
- 4.1.3 The number of outreach activities was considered **impressive** by the Panel. This included the Schools Maths Challenge and Masterclasses arranged with local schools and week-long taster events held for fifth and sixth year secondary school children applying for University. The School participated in the University's Access Summer School organised over several weeks by Marketing, Recruitment & International Office (MaRIO). The School had advised the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) when it was developing the syllabus of the new Statistics Advanced Higher. The School had also hosted a workshop for teachers to assist with the delivery of the new course. The School planned to introduce further activities for teachers and pupils. (SER 3.1.3, page 8)
- 4.1.4 The Mathematics students highlighted the difficulty for new students navigating *MyCampus* with it being unclear how to choose subjects. New students appeared unaware of what type of support, both academic and pastoral, should be provided by their Adviser of Studies with experience of support varying. Some students indicated that advice had to be sought rather than received. The Panel anticipated better support following the review of the Adviser of Studies system (please see 4.3.7).
- 4.1.5 The PGT students who met with the Panel advised that they had chosen Glasgow as it had either been recommended by friends or because of the University's reputation. The structure of the programme was also a main consideration. One of the international PGT students advised the Panel that one of the attractions of studying at Glasgow had been the size of the Muslim community. However, lack of a prayer room within the School and variety of food available on campus had been disappointing. The Panel agreed to bring this feedback to the attention of Student Support Services.
- 4.1.6 The Panel discussed with the staff, the high number of First Class degrees awarded in Mathematics and Statistics (37%) as compared to the College average of 25%. The staff affirmed that the large number of combined students and students from the 2+2 programmes were particularly strong and capable students. The Panel noted the very positive comments made by the External Examiners on the quality of the Level 4 projects which demonstrated excellence. The staff were confident that they were providing their students good grounding in Mathematics and Statistics with a degree which was well respected.

4.2 Equality and Diversity

- 4.2.1 A number of processes appeared to be in place to ensure the University's equality and diversity policy was adhered to. All staff had been encouraged to complete the Equality & Diversity Essentials training course, of which 84% of staff had completed at the time the SER had been written (SER, 3.2.1, page 11). Professor Brendle had also co-organised an Unconscious Bias Training Workshop at the International Centre for Mathematical Sciences in Edinburgh.
- 4.2.2 It was noted that the School was currently preparing an application for an Athena SWAN Bronze award, recognising the importance of an appropriate gender balance. (SER, 2.1.3, page 4)
- 4.2.3 The School recognised that, as the student population diversified, it was likely that more students would have additional requirements. The School had noticed an increase in the number of students with a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome or Autism and as a result the School's Disability Officer had arranged a lunchtime lecture for all staff to be given by a speaker from the National Autism Society. (SER, 3.2.3, page 12). At the meeting with staff, it was confirmed that information on disability was downloaded from MyCampus by the administrative staff and was provided to academic staff. Staff confirmed that the School offered training and, if additional support was required, the Disability Service could be contacted for advice. The Panel was satisfied that the School was addressing equality and diversity effectively.

4.3 Supporting Students in their Learning

- 4.3.1 The role and use of Help Rooms was discussed at the meeting with the Head of School. It was noted that these were led by Level 5 students and had initially been introduced to provide extra support for Mathematics Honours students. Those students who had used the help rooms had benefitted greatly, although they were under-utilised. Attendance had improved during Semester 2 of this Session, due to changes made to the timetable. The MacSoc (Maclaurin Student Society) has also run a voluntary help room for Level 1 and 2 students since Session 2014-15 and the success of these were being monitored. Feedback from the students had been excellent, but there was concern that the volunteers may not have the appropriate knowledge and therefore, the SRC School representative was hoping to organise some training for the volunteers.
- 4.3.2 From the SER (3.3.2, page 14), the School was exploring the possibility of replacing Level 2 tutorials with help rooms to address issues with engagement. The Statistics students confirmed that they found the help rooms useful, particularly during the examination period. However, the Review Panel expressed caution regarding the removal of the one-to-one link between tutor and student provided within a tutorial setting and that further consideration should be given as to why students were not engaging with the tutorial and what would incentivise students to attend. (please see 4.4) Tutorials were also useful for providing valuable feedback on assessment. If students were getting sufficient feedback elsewhere, the purpose of the tutorial should be amended to provide alternative learning opportunities for the students. This is discussed in more detail at 4.4.
- 4.3.3 At both the meetings with the Mathematics and Statistics students, the students emphasised a sense of belonging to the School, with staff considered approachable and friendly. Staff had always made themselves available whenever emailed. The Mathematics students highlighted that the element of belonging was more heightened when entering Level 3, particularly

as access was given to the staff and student common room at this level. The Statistics students advised that it was more difficult approaching staff in Levels 1 and 2, due to the large class sizes and therefore more anonymity. Students from the 2+2 programmes confirmed that they had been well supported on arrival at the School. The PGT students also confirmed that staff were approachable, friendly and supportive.

- 4.3.4 At the meeting with the Statistics students, the Panel sought feedback on the Maths Skills test. The students advised that it was useful as it allowed students to refresh their skills. It was considered particularly valuable for students who had entered University with Higher level mathematics rather than Advanced Higher or A level. Students from outside of the UK found it beneficial as it provided good feedback and gave them confidence that their ability matched requirements. Some frustration was caused by the way marks were calculated; if a mistake was made, a mark of zero was awarded, without highlighting where the error took place. Students were given 3 opportunities to correct before having to commence the test again. Those entering with Highers tended to find the test more difficult. It was suggested alternative provision could be made for those students who passed the test early in the year. Overall, the students considered the test served a valuable purpose and was worth undertaking.
- 4.3.5 Professor Bowman highlighted that, although the staff:student ratio had recently decreased, it was still high when compared with the Russell Group benchmark. The School had introduced a number of teaching, research and administrative initiatives to remove some pressure, and recent appointments had also alleviated this to a degree. The new appointments had been based on teaching ability as well as research.
- 4.3.6 At the meeting with the Head of School, the Panel inquired as to why Mathematics held 'Office Hours', whilst Statistics offered 'Open Door' to support students and whether the School had considered adopting one policy. It was noted that Mathematics had tried 'Open Door' but it had not worked, mainly due to the difference in student numbers. Mathematics staff each offered 2-3 hours Office Hours per week, depending on class. Students were also able to make an appointment with a member of staff if unable to make Office Hours. The students that the Panel met with were satisfied with these arrangements.
- 4.3.7 The Panel noted from the SER (Section 3.3.4, page 15) that the School planned to review the Adviser of Studies system to ensure greater consistency of advice. The current system of one Senior Adviser of Studies with all full-time members of staff acting as Advisers of Students was considered counter-productive as it prevented staff from gaining experience and therefore impeded confidence. A more defined and dedicated group of Advisers with continued support from the Administrative and IT team was being considered. At the staff meeting, the staff highlighted the invaluable support provided by their Senior Adviser of Studies, but the Panel acknowledged the level of work this must create for this individual. The Panel **commends** the School's careful review of the Advising system in order to provide a more responsive service to their students, whilst recognising the practical challenges the School faced in introducing a smaller number of Advisers.

4.4 Student Engagement

Tutorials

- 4.4.1 The issue of low Level 2 tutorial attendance was discussed throughout the Review with both staff and students and possible reasons why students were not engaging were explored. At the meeting with the Head of School, a number of issues were highlighted including: timetabling constraints, suitable room allocation, large classes, where often there could be a 15:1 student:demonstrator ratio and lack of one-to-one consultations. The Panel further noted that assignment marking and feedback to students was not necessarily provided by the same tutor.
- 4.4.2 At the meeting with the Mathematics students, the Panel was advised that the quality of tutorials varied. The least useful style was when a tutor 'lectured' questions at the board with little interaction with the students. Tutorials normally comprised of the tutor going through a number of questions and the level of usefulness was based on what questions were covered within the specified timescale. This could be unhelpful if the students did not need assistance with these specific questions or the student had fallen behind and had not yet attempted these questions beforehand. Students who had to travel to Glasgow advised that it was often easier and, more time efficient, to work through the problems at home rather than attend the tutorial. Some tutorials were also considered too large, covering too wide a range of ability. It was suggested that it would be useful if students were advised on the questions to be covered in advance of the tutorial.
- 4.4.3 The Statistics students advised that the tutorials did not work due to insufficient time allocated with normally one hour allocated for 10 questions. Students experienced difficulty with different questions and there simply was not sufficient time to cover all the questions. The Statistics students believed that attendance was higher for the Level 2 workshops. Students in Levels 3 and 4 were more likely to approach staff during 'open hours', if they were experiencing problems.
- 4.4.4 At the meeting with the early career staff, one of the members of staff advised that, although he had taught Level 3 and 4, at the beginning of the semester, the students had been invited to indicate what they had wanted to obtain from the tutorial. Based on their comments, teaching had been amended accordingly. Throughout the semester, an opportunity for changing the tutorial had been given to the students. Attendance had been satisfactory, and although it had dipped in the middle of the session, this was considered normal.
- 4.4.5 The Panel considered the role of tutorial as a useful learning and teaching resource and therefore a high risk to remove from the curriculum. The Review Panel, whilst sympathetic to constraints caused by infrastructure and aware that limited student engagement in mathematics tutorials was a universal problem and not restricted to Glasgow, **recommends** that the School considers further ways to engage students within tutorials. The Panel further **recommends** the School takes into consideration some of the suggestions raised by the students, in relation to breadth of style as well as good practice already established within the School (such as co-opting the students with tutorial design).
- 4.4.6 The PGT students indicated a preference for additional tutorials. Currently one was held every 2 weeks and this was considered insufficient. The PGT students also indicated that they would welcome more group work.

Lectures

4.4.7 Variation in lecture technique was brought to the attention of the Panel by the Mathematics students, with some more engaging than others. Students had concerns that some lecturers were over reliant on their notes with students perceiving this as limiting the benefit of the class. Accommodation was also highlighted as having an impact on lecture attendance which could either be too large or too small. Students considered face-to-face contact important, but in larger classes this was often not possible.

Employability and Graduate Attributes

4.4.8 The limited number of students taking part in the Erasmus scheme was discussed with the Head of School. Professor Bowman advised that the scheme was well publicised and the skills gained by participation promoted. Students who had participated had been invited to speak to students about their positive experiences. However, the language barrier was still considered to be the main reason for non-participation. The Panel encouraged the School to continue with its efforts to increase participation.

4.4.9 At the meeting with the Mathematics students, employability and graduate attributes being attained were recognised, such as group work, presentation and communication skills. However, both the undergraduate and postgraduate Mathematics students, the Panel met with, had the impression that there was limited opportunity for group work, particularly when compared to other courses. The undergraduate students recognised the benefit of study groups, and arranged these themselves, although some anxiety was expressed in relation to the potential of plagiarism when studying together. Some Level 1 students had developed a Facebook page to discuss mathematics and provided hints. The PGT students that the Panel met with, advised that this aspect was not well integrated into the curriculum with general skills recognised only in the 'professional skills' course. More workshops on report writing and research would be welcomed as well as more group work. It was suggested that this could possibly be undertaken in tutorials, if specific tasks were set. The Review Panel, whilst acknowledging that students were obtaining a range of graduate attributes, considered these tended to be specific to particular programmes or tailored courses. The Panel **recommends** that the School considers ways of ensuring graduate attributes are embedded throughout the curriculum, in a manner which is clearly identifiable to the students.

4.4.10 It was clearly evident to the Panel that Statistics provided a professional environment to its students, offering a range of opportunity to learn professional skills, in particular, the MSci (Work Placement) Statistics. The Panel agreed that this was an innovative and excellent addition to the School's portfolio, providing relevant industrial training. The Panel considered the use of Away Days which brought together students from the previous cohort with the current cohort with invited guest speakers and employers as **good practice**.

4.4.11 The Panel **commends** the use of the Maths Ambassador Scheme. This provided students with an opportunity to experience teaching and to explore an educational issue as part of an extended report, exposing the student to literature on Mathematics Education and learning and teaching in general. A weekly log book encouraged the students to reflect on learning (SER, pages 17 & 18, 3.4.3).

4.5 Effectiveness of Student feedback mechanisms

- 4.5.1 At the meeting with the Mathematics and the Statistics students, satisfaction was expressed that the School responded to student feedback with students encouraged to complete end of course questionnaires. The Statistics students confirmed that changes had been made to Semester 2 teaching following feedback given at the end of Semester 1. At the staff meeting, it was confirmed that it was School policy to provide feedback from course evaluation both in class and on Moodle. However, during discussion with the students and staff, it became apparent to the Panel that, sometimes when the School had considered it had responded to an issue raised, the student perception was different (please see 4.5.3 and 4.5.4).
- 4.5.2 The students advised that some lecturers sought informal feedback near the beginning of the course, with a view to amending course delivery if required, but this was not standard practice. At the final meeting with the Head of School, it was acknowledged that Level Heads also received copies of course evaluation to take action as necessary. The Review Panel **commends** both the formal and informal course feedback mechanisms in place and **recommends** that the additional informal mechanism for obtaining feedback at the beginning of the course used by some members of staff be considered for adoption across the School.
- 4.5.3 The Panel sought clarification at the staff meeting as to whether there was a School mechanism in place for resolving potential issues. It was confirmed that students were encouraged to bring any issues to the attention of their class representative for discussion at the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC). Minutes from SSLC were placed on Moodle. Alternatively, issues could be highlighted at 'Office Hours'. The Head of School dealt with complaints involving particular members of staff. If there was a perceived problem with a course, the Head would discuss with the teaching team/individual concerned to identify the level of the problem and often a workshop or focus group would be held with students for feedback. However, from the minutes of the SSLC, it was not apparent to the Panel as to how the School closed the feedback loop and the Panel **recommends** that, where action was taken to resolve issues, this should be clearly evidenced and communicated to the students ensuring closure of the feedback loop.
- 4.5.4 Those students who were class representatives advised that they attended the Staff Student Liaison Committee held each semester and would follow up or chase up issues raised by the students. In relation to the closure of the feedback loop, it was confirmed that most issues had been acted upon. One issue appeared unresolved this year, in relation to standard provision of solutions following tutorials. The Mathematics students would like to see this made compulsory and part of School policy as not all staff provided solutions. This was discussed further at the staff meeting, where it was confirmed that it was not School policy to provide solutions; although many staff did so, some staff had good reasons for not doing so. The Panel **recommends** that the reasons for not introducing a standard policy on the provision of solutions should be clearly communicated to students, including an explanation of why, in some instances, it was beneficial not to receive them, thus ensuring closure of the feedback loop.
- 4.5.5 The Statistics students advised that class representation was less effective in Levels 1 and 2 due to the size of classes. Level 3 and 4 students were also more confident and more likely to approach the class representative when an issue arose. It was noted that students voted for their class representative and

that class representatives had established Facebook pages for students to voice their concerns.

- 4.5.6 At the meeting with staff, it was highlighted that the School held focus group meetings called “Town Hall” meetings which encouraged both staff and students to come together to discuss issues. The Panel **commends** the use of focus group meetings which encouraged both staff and students to discuss specific topics.

5. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

5.1 Learning and Teaching

Curriculum Design

- 5.1.1 The SER stated that the School regularly reviewed all degree programmes to ensure content reflected the range of knowledge and skills required by its graduates. (SER page 22, 4.1.1). Both the Mathematics and Statistics Honours programmes, as well as Level 2 courses, had been substantially revised in 2012-13. Mathematics Level 1 was currently undergoing a major review with an emphasis on how to balance the requirements of students who would only take one or two years of Mathematics with those who would specialise in the subject. It was anticipated that the new arrangements would be implemented from 2017-18. Following which the School would commence a new cycle of reviews, with Level-2 courses following in 2018-19, Level 3 the following year, and so on. The Review Panel **commends** the attention the School was giving to curriculum design but, due to the level of service teaching provided in Level 1, the Panel **recommends** that client Subjects are given an opportunity to provide feedback in any review undertaken.
- 5.1.2 It was noted that students had been consulted in the curriculum reviews via student representatives and SSLC. Feedback had also been sought throughout the first year of implementation and would continue to be sought from students to monitor the success of the revisions. Time students spent on coursework was also being monitored. The Panel **commends** the student consultation undertaken during curriculum reviews and continued consultation following introduction of revisions made.
- 5.1.3 The large number Level 1 and 2 Mathematics classes was discussed with the staff. It was queried as to how a sense of identity and belonging could be instilled, particularly when a substantial number took the course as part of other disciplines, which brought additional challenges. At the staff meeting, it was indicated that all students were treated the same and the Panel queried whether or not this was the most suitable way of treating the diverse student population. It was acknowledged that students from a non-mathematics background tended to struggle with the mathematical content but were offered additional support. This was predominantly by undertaking the Skills test and the use of ‘Office Hours’. The Panel accepted the range of support given was good but queried how motivation was addressed and what practices could be introduced to address this. (Please refer to recommendations made under 3.2.4 and 5.1.1)
- 5.1.4 The Panel queried what lessons had been learnt from the review of Level 2 that would benefit the review of Level 1. The staff verified that the mix of assessment offering on-line and traditional types of assessment would likely be adopted for Level 1.

5.1.5 The Statistics staff advised that they had been consulted in the re-design of Levels 1 and 2 Mathematics. Level 1 Mathematics was more general, but Statistics and Mathematics were more clearly aligned in Level 2.

5.1.6 PGT students shared some UG courses as well as PGT courses only. The PGT students enjoyed the shared courses as it made them feel more included in University life.

Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes

5.1.7 In relation to the School's approach to Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), the Review Panel was satisfied that these had been given careful consideration in terms of skills and knowledge acquired.

Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching

5.1.8 The Panel was impressed and **highly commends** the use of technology to deliver learning and assessment. It was noted from the SER (4.1.5, page 23) that the School had a leading and promoting role for technology-enhanced learning and teaching with projects funded by national initiatives, such as the continuing Scottish Mathematical Sciences Training Centre (SMSTC), an EPSRC-funded consortium, as well as past initiatives including the Computers in Teaching Initiative (CTI) and Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP). The introduction of Teleform, for scanning coursework submission, marking and feedback was recognised as an excellent innovation which had significantly streamlined the process.

5.1.9 The Panel was impressed with the introduction of continuous assessment in Mathematics Level 2 and the introduction of the weekly or fortnightly on-line assessment using WebAssign. In response to Mathematics good practice using online assessment with WebAssign, Statistics had built on its longstanding but now outdated bespoke quiz system to develop an innovative assessment system based on Moodle quizzes which gave similar functionality to WebAssign.

Assessment

5.1.10 A wide range of assessments including report writing, coding and use of software packages, presentations, poster presentations and extended essays was practiced, although this depended on the programme of study.

5.1.11 The School was steadily transforming formative coursework assessment. The Panel was pleased to note that the Level 2 Mathematics teaching team (including academic and support staff) had received a University Teaching Excellence Award from the College of Science and Engineering in 2014 and from the University in 2015 for WebAssign.

5.1.12 Writing and Presenting Mathematics was a compulsory course undertaken by Level 3 Single Honours Mathematics students. Professional Skills, Data Analysis and Advanced Data Analysis courses were available to Statistics students, both providing a range of skills.

5.1.13 The Panel **commends** the effort to combine two exam processes into one. This was a streamlined, semi-automated process used for the initial recording of continuous assessment and examination marks, grading, informing progress decisions and finalising degree awards.

5.1.14 At the final meeting with the Head of School, the projects undertaken at Level 4 and Level 5 (undergraduate Masters) were discussed. This assessment had been highly rated by the External Examiners and the Panel queried how the School promoted this valuable resource. It was noted that

the project was credited differently between Statistics and Mathematics (and combined degree programmes) with 30 credits awarded for the Statistics project compared to 20 credits for Mathematics. The main reason for the difference was that the project was a major element of final year assessment in Statistics which included analysis of scientific data. The Panel **recommends** that the School considers offering a showcase event for Final Year undergraduate students, such as a poster presentation and/or talk session of their projects or conference, thus providing an opportunity for both the students to display their work as well as provide a platform for the School to highlight a major success.

What/How do students receive feedback on assessed work?

- 5.1.15 At the meeting with Mathematics students, the on-line software WebAssign was commented favourably on as a useful tool for revision and understanding solutions to calculations. At the meeting with staff, it was confirmed that WebAssign allowed for students to receive their mark instantly. The students were given an opportunity to have two further attempts when an incorrect answer was given. Hints were provided when a student indicated that they did not know the answer. Solutions were given following the deadline of the assessment. The Panel was impressed with this initiative, although noted at the meeting with the Statistics students that they found feedback could be more limited in Levels 1 and 2 as compared to Levels 3 and 4, although this depended on the lecturer. A couple of minor technical issues were also noted in relation to loss of marks due to typing errors which caused frustration.
- 5.1.16 The class quizzes also provided an opportunity to provide formative feedback to the students.
- 5.1.17 The Statistics students highlighted that the mark for class tests were returned quickly, but since the paper was not returned, it was unclear where mistakes had been made and how to improve. After the class test had been undertaken, the lecturer would go over common mistakes made. The Statistics students the Panel met with confirmed that they were aware that they could have access to examination papers if requested.

5.2 Engaging and Supporting Staff

Probationer and early career support

- 5.2.1 The Head of School advised the Panel that career paths were available for University Teaching staff. Under the new Early Career Development Programme (ECDP) operated by the University, promotion to grade 9 was expected after around five (from grade 8) or eight (from grade 7) years' experience. Specific objectives had been set to guide this process.
- 5.2.2 The Panel **commends** the mentoring arrangements adopted for all new members of staff. The mentor was from among more experienced staff and took an interest in the member of staff, including observation of teaching and giving constructive feedback. It was noted at the meeting with early career staff that whilst their teaching was observed, no opportunity was given for them to observe others teaching. This was discussed further at the final meeting with the Head of School. He agreed that peer review did not take place beyond early year career staff, but was being trialled in Mathematics. Following a review, the School planned to adopt this more widely. The Panel fully endorses the introduction of peer review for all staff and **recommends** that the School considers a reflective and structured process for staff, including established academics, with

parameters established which would allow the School to recognise excellent teaching, promote good teaching practice as well as provide developmental and supportive measures.

- 5.2.3 At the meeting with probationer and early career staff, the Panel was advised that they had felt well supported by the School. Prior to arrival, they had been advised on teaching they would be expected to undertake and given course material, including lecture notes and assignment requirements. The Panel **commends** this level of support provided to new staff prior to arrival.
- 5.2.4 One of the early career staff who was on a University Teacher contract advised that his contract was on a temporary basis, meaning that he was unable to participate on the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) programme. In addition, the Panel recognised the lack of security this offered this well respected member of staff. This was discussed further at the final meeting with the Head of School where it was confirmed that the matter was under discussion with the College.
- 5.2.5 Another member of the early career staff had found the number of students higher than originally anticipated and consequently had found lecturing challenging, but agreed that it would be easier next session. It was confirmed that teaching loads had been reduced in accordance with University guidelines for early career staff.
- 5.2.6 Those staff that had participated on the PGCAP had found it to be very useful, even when they had undertaken similar training in their previous institutions. They have found discussion on student learning and the focus on assessment insightful. One other member of staff commented that he was still waiting to start the PGCAP but due to limited numbers, had been unable to do so. Another member had undertaken a previous programme at a previous institution and therefore had applied for a fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) instead. The Panel acknowledged the frustration of not being able to access the PGCAP on entering the University. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Academic Development Unit gives consideration to introducing further cohorts to allow all new members of staff to enrol on the PGCAP when they first commence at the University.
- 5.2.7 The Panel was advised that the School had been receptive to new ideas from staff as long as Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were met. Consequently, new assessment methods had been introduced. It was noted that whilst most staff were receptive, others were not. The Panel **recommends** that staff should be encouraged to consider new teaching and assessment techniques, taking into consideration the evolving educational landscape. (*Please see 3.2.1*)
- 5.2.8 The early career staff had felt well received by the students and considered the students to be hard working. It was acknowledged that lectures were well attended (approximately 70%) but tutorial attendance varied. (*Please see 4.4.2*)

Graduate Teaching Assistants

- 5.2.9 The GTAs who met with the Panel advised that they were well supported and that they had been given appropriate training and advice. They were made aware of students with special requirements, in advance. The Head of Year also provided an end-of-session update which included discussion on what could be improved. If a GTA had an idea on how to improve the

course, the first point of contact would be the lecturer and it was confirmed that they felt listened to. It was noted that some had been involved in changing laboratory material. GTAs participated in the generic university training and also observed classes before taking tutorials themselves. Questions and solutions were provided a week in advance. In relation to low tutorial attendance, in earlier discussions, the GTAs suggested improved attendance may be brought about by tutorial attendance contributing to the final mark. GTAs were not invited to School meetings. The Panel **commends** the level of support provided to their GTAs and suggests that it would be worthwhile inviting GTAs to the School's yearly teaching team meetings.

- 5.2.10 Main GTA duties included the supervision of Level 1 laboratories (one GTA for every 40 students) and demonstrating for Level 2 tutorials (one for every 14 students). The Head of Course provided support to GTAs by providing a run through laboratory and worked through an examination. Arrangements for teaching were flexible with GTAs able to decide on teaching style. Statistics GTAs were peer reviewed with tutors providing feedback. GTAs were also evaluated by the students and provided with the feedback. Informal feedback was also provided by more senior GTAs. The Panel **commends** the use of peer observation in Statistics to help Graduate Teaching Assistants develop their teaching skills and **recommends** that Mathematics considers adopting this good practice.
- 5.2.11 Most GTAs had applied to become tutors with the expectation of having 2-4 contact hours per week. The GTAs indicated they were satisfied with the number of contact hours given. Marking was undertaken most weeks, laboratories for Mathematics and workshops for Statistics. The Statistics GTAs were given a session on marking and feedback from more experienced tutors and general information on the University was provided to non-University of Glasgow graduates. The Panel **recommends** that any additional information provided to Statistics GTAs should also be provided to Mathematics GTAs.

5.3 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)

Academic staff

- 5.3.1 At the meeting with staff, the Panel discussed whether staff identified with the School, particularly since there had been a recent turnover of staff. Staff highlighted the benefits new colleagues had brought to the School with different perspectives on learning and teaching. Staff discussed teaching informally and the Common Room was identified as a useful space for such discussion. Formal discussion took place at the Learning & Teaching Committees. The examples of the new combined examination system and on-line assessment were highlighted as developments undertaken at School level, working alongside IT and teaching administrative staff.
- 5.3.2 At the meeting with the Head of School, the Panel was advised that the School Management Committee held Away Days to examine particular issues and how to tackle these as a School. The School remains concerned about its Staff-Student Ratio (SSR) although this had fallen over the past two years, at 18.0, it still remained high, particularly when compared against comparable institutions.

Administrative staff

- 5.3.3 The Review Panel considered the use of and support given by the administrative and IT staff as **highly commendable**. The development of procedures not only freed up academic staff time, but provided good student support. It also provided a community, where the importance of all staff contribution to learning and teaching was identified. The Panel was particularly impressed with the creative support the administrative team provided Advisers of Studies in relation to enrolment queries and the support provided for on-line assessment. The current Head of School Administration had commenced in 2012 and, at the time of appointment, had reviewed the administrative function and strategically reviewed which tasks could be taken away from academics.
- 5.3.4 The Head of School confirmed that the School had a well-functioning administrative team, providing additional support to academics within existing resources. The Panel suggested that the School continued to review workload to ensure administrative staff were not overloaded.

Postgraduate Students

- 5.3.5 The PGT students advised that, although they shared some classes with undergraduate students, they had additional facilities, such as access to their own study room, their own PGT library and had out-of-hour access to the Mathematics building.

6 Academic Standards

Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

- 6.1 The Panel was confident that the procedures in place to set and maintain academic standards were appropriate. The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialists, confirmed that the programmes offered by the School remained current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application.
- 6.2 The School followed standard university procedures such as Annual Monitoring, Course and Programme Approval and External Examining. The External Examiners comments indicated that the School actively responded to suggestions made. The Review Panel noted some excellent comments, particularly in relation to the support the School offered their students and the work produced in relation to the Honours and Masters' project work.
- 6.3 The Panel considered the use of annual meetings of teaching teams to review the year which included a review of the action plans from student course evaluation as **good practice**.
- 6.4 The Statistics degrees were accredited by the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) thus meeting RSS requirements.
- 6.5 As discussed under 3.1.3 and 3.2.1, whilst the Panel recognised that the School was still settling following restructuring in 2010, a more formal and systematic approach to enhancement would be beneficial, ensuring that mechanisms were in place for peer review, support and for sharing good practice whenever possible. A more structured process would provide the School with an opportunity to recognise excellent teaching as well as provide a mechanism to develop and support staff.
- 6.6 During the discussion with staff, the Panel noted that student names were used during Examination Boards. The School was reminded that it was University

policy that the review of students work should be anonymised where practical⁵ and therefore the Panel **recommends** that this standard procedure was adopted at Examination Boards.

7 Collaborative provision

7.1 The School offered three new collaborative degree programmes which appeared to be successful, although recruitment was currently low. The intention was to develop further bilateral links with Chinese and other universities, using the Bologna partnership as an exemplar.

Supporting staff in transnational context

7.2 The collaborative provision had enhanced internationalisation, but it was noted at the meeting with the Head of School, that the cultural and educational differences between China and the UK, in particular, had required sustained effort to establish the programmes. Initially, initiatives had been driven by individual members of staff with research connections; however further expansion was now supported at College level. The Panel was advised that the students on the 2+2 programmes were very dynamic from which the School benefitted, but numbers were relatively small.

Supporting students

7.3 At the meeting with the Mathematics and Statistics students, the 2+2 students confirmed that they had been well supported by the School on arrival. Induction had been informative and staff had been friendly and approachable. They found the skills test useful to provide reassurance on their ability (as discussed under 4.3.4). It was suggested that the University could provide an overview of facilities and services and provide a general induction in relation to culture and language as well as academic issues. There was a perception of the 2+2 students as 'separate' from the student community as they joined the University and School two years after the other students and they expressed a wish for more social opportunities for making new friends. It was suggested that the MacSoc might usefully assist with integration.

8 Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

8.1 Key strengths

The Review Panel identified the following areas as good practice:

- Innovative practices being introduced to enhance learning and teaching
- Highly motivated and respected administrative staff, assisting academic staff in the support of students in their learning
- Review of the Adviser of Studies system to ensure consistent student support
- Introduction of the innovative MSci (Work Placement) in Statistics providing relevant industrial training
- Impressive outreach activity
- Good Transnational Educational activities
- Use of technology to enhance learning and teaching as well as assessment and feedback

⁵ University Calendar, Code of Assessment, Gen 16.58

- Support given to new and early career staff
- Support given to GTAs

8.2 Areas for improvement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for improvement:

- A more systematic approach to quality enhancement to ensure:
 - procedures in place to review and evaluate new developments
 - dissemination of good practice across the School
 - consistency of provision and support for students
 - consistency of provision and support for staff
 - consistency of support for GTAs
 - to assist with the promotion and identity of the School
- A review of tutorials to ensure student engagement. Tutorials should be a valuable commodity for student learning
- Graduate attributes and employability more fully integrated into the curriculum
- To include all staff, including 'client' subjects, in curriculum review and development

8.3 Conclusion

It was evident to the Panel that the School provided a supportive and friendly learning environment, managing to take into account two distinct subject areas, with Statistics being a smaller and cohesive subject with a strongly engaged student body and Mathematics, covering a substantial range of programmes and therefore dealing with a bigger and more diverse student population. From the meetings undertaken as part of the Review, the Panel had a general sense of a coherent, engaging School for its staff, students and GTAs. The School was committed to providing a wide range of degree programmes whilst undertaking a number of initiatives to enhance learning and teaching provision. The School was strongly committed to outreach activities as well as further developing its international portfolio. The School was responsive to student feedback having established good feedback mechanisms and linking this to other quality processes such as annual monitoring and annual teaching reviews. The previous six years has seen a great deal of change and transition for the School and the Review Panel commends the School for its excellent practices and encourages it to continue its excellent work in enhancing the student learning experience.

Commendations

The Review Panel commends the School of Mathematics & Statistics on the following, which are listed **in order of appearance** in this report:

Commendation 1

The Panel **commends** the vision and effort by the School in its breadth and range of provision, although it recognised that student numbers were limited in relation to collaborative provision. [Paragraph 3.1.1]

Commendation 2

The Review Panel **commends** the work undertaken, to date, in merging some processes, such as the combined examination system, whilst acknowledging the distinctiveness between the subject areas. [Paragraph 3.1.3 and 5.1.13]

Commendation 3

The Panel **commends** the School for the level of innovation being introduced, transforming how undergraduate Mathematics and Statistics was taught. [Paragraph 3.2.1]

Commendation 4

The Panel **commends** the School's careful review of the Advising system in order to provide a more responsive service to their students, whilst recognising the practical challenges the School faced in introducing a smaller number of Advisers. [Paragraph 4.3.7]

Commendation 5

The Panel **commends** the use of the Maths Ambassador Scheme. [Paragraph 4.4.11]

Commendation 6

The Panel **commends** both the formal and informal course feedback mechanisms in place [Paragraph 4.5.2] (but please see Recommendations 7 and 8)

Commendation 7

The Panel **commends** the use of focus group meetings which encouraged both staff and students to discuss specific topics. [Paragraph 4.5.6]

Commendation 8

The Panel **commends** the attention the School was giving to curriculum design and **commends** student consultation undertaken during curriculum reviews and continued consultation following introduction of revisions made [Paragraphs 5.1.1 and 5.1.2]

Commendation 9

The Panel was impressed with and **highly commends** the use of technology to deliver learning and assessment. [Paragraph 5.1.8]

Commendation 10

The Panel **commends** the mentoring arrangements adopted for all new members of staff. [Paragraph 5.2.2]

Commendation 11

The Panel **commends** the level of support given to new staff prior to arrival. [Paragraph 5.2.3]

Commendation 12

The Panel **commends** the level of support provided to their GTAs and the use of peer observation in Statistics to help Graduate Teaching Assistants develop their teaching skills. [Paragraph 5.2.9 and 5.2.10]

Commendation 13

The Review Panel considered the use of and support given by the administrative and IT staff as **highly commendable**. [Paragraph 5.3.3]

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the School in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are **grouped together** by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are **ranked in order of priority within each section**.

For the attention of the School of Mathematics & Statistics

Quality enhancement

Recommendation 1

The Panel **recommends** the School continues to develop a strategic approach to quality enhancement, adopting a more systematic approach to the sharing and dissemination of good practice between colleagues in Mathematics and Statistics. [Paragraph 3.1.3]

For Action: Head of School

Recommendation 2

The Panel **recommends** that the School consider mechanisms for ensuring that all staff developing and introducing new methods of teaching continue to be recognised. [Paragraph 3.2.1]. The Panel further **recommends** that staff should be encouraged to consider new teaching and assessment techniques, taking into consideration the evolving educational landscape. [Paragraph 5.2.7]

For Action: Head of School

Recommendation 3

The Panel fully endorses the introduction of peer review for all staff and **recommends** that the School considers a reflective and structured process for staff, including established academics, with parameters established which would allow the School to recognise excellent teaching, promote good teaching practice as well as provide developmental and supportive measures. [Paragraph 5.2.2]

For Action: Head of School

Tutorials

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel, whilst sympathetic to constraints caused by infrastructure and aware that limited student engagement in mathematics tutorials was a universal problem and not restricted to Glasgow, **recommends** that the School considers further ways to engage students within tutorials. The Panel further **recommends** the School takes into consideration some of the suggestions raised by the students, in relation to breadth of style as well as good practice already established within the School (such as co-opting the students with tutorial design). [Paragraph 4.4.5]

For Action: Head of School

Graduate Attributes

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel, whilst acknowledging that students were obtaining a range of graduate attributes, these tended to be specific to particular programmes or tailored courses. The Panel **recommends** that the School considers ways of ensuring graduate attributes are embedded throughout the curriculum, in a manner which is clearly identifiable to the students. [Paragraph 4.4.9]

For Action: Head of School

GTA support

Recommendation 6

The Panel commends the use of peer observation used in Statistics to help Graduate Teaching Assistants develop their teaching skills and **recommends** that Mathematics considers adopting this good practice. In addition, the Panel **recommends** establishing more formal aspects to GTA support to ensure both sets of GTAs received the same level of assistance. [Paragraph 5.2.10]. The Panel **recommends** that any additional information provided to Statistics GTAs should also be provided to Mathematics GTAs. [Paragraph 5.2.11]

For Action: Head of School

Enhancing the Student Experience

Recommendation 7

The Panel **recommends** that the School considers offering a showcase event for Final Year undergraduate students, such as a poster presentation and/or talk session of their research projects or conference, thus providing an opportunity for both the students to display their work as well as provide a platform for the School to highlight a major success. [Paragraph 5.1.14]

For Action: Head of School

Feedback and closing the feedback loop

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends** that, where action was taken to resolve issues, this should be clearly evidenced and communicated to the students. [Paragraph 4.5.3]. The Panel **recommends** that the reasons for not introducing a standard policy on the provision of solutions should be clearly communicated to students, including an explanation of why, in some instances, it was beneficial not to receive them, thus ensuring closure of the feedback loop. [Paragraph 4.5.4]

For Action: Head of School

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that the additional informal mechanism for obtaining feedback at the beginning of a course used by some members of staff be considered for adoption across the School. [Paragraph 4.5.2]

For Action: Head of School

Service teaching

Recommendation 10

The Panel **recommends** that the School considers establishing a more formal relationship with 'client' subjects and Engineering to discuss teaching provision and possible alternative ways to support students from outside of the School [Paragraph 3.2.4]. The Panel **recommends** that client subjects are given an opportunity to provide feedback in any review undertaken. [Paragraph 5.1.1]

For Action: Head of School

Examination Board procedures

Recommendation 11

The Panel **recommends** that the standard practice of student anonymity should be applied at Examination Boards, where practical, following University policy. [Paragraph 6.6]

For Action: Head of School

For the attention of the Academic Development Unit, Learning & Teaching Centre

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Academic Development Unit gives consideration to introducing further cohorts to allow all new members of staff to enrol on the PGCAP when they first commence at the University. [Paragraph 5.2.6]

For Action: Director of Learning & Teaching Centre and Head of Academic Development Unit

For Information: Head of School

For the attention of Marketing, Recruitment & International Office

Recommendation 13

The Panel **recommends** that the Senate Office bring the issue of recruitment material to the attention of the Marketing, Recruitment and International Office and the issue of limited flexibility of choice between Colleges to Academic Standards Committee. [Paragraph 4.1.1]

For Action: Clerk of the Panel

For Information: Head of School

**Periodic Subject Review: Review of School of Mathematics & Statistics held on
17 and 18 March 2016**

Programmes of Study

Undergraduate – Mathematics

MSci in Applied Mathematics ♣
MSci in Applied Mathematics and Statistics ♣ Φ
MSci in Applied Mathematics and another subject [being phased out]
MSci in Mathematics ♣
MSci in Mathematics and Statistics ♣ Φ
MSci in Mathematics and another subject
MSci in Pure Mathematics
MSci in Pure Mathematics and Statistics Φ
MSci in Pure Mathematics and another subject [being phased out]
MA (Honours) in Mathematics ♣
MA (Honours) in Mathematics and another subject
BSc (Honours) in Applied Mathematics ♣
BSc (Honours) in Applied Mathematics and Statistics ♣ Φ
BSc (Honours) in Applied Mathematics and Accounting [being phased out]
BSc (Honours) in Applied Mathematics and Finance [being phased out]
BSc (Honours) in Applied Mathematics and another subject [being phased out]
BSc (Honours) in Mathematics ♣
BSc (Honours) in Mathematics and Statistics ♣ Φ
BSc (Honours) in Mathematics and Accounting
BSc (Honours) in Mathematics and Finance
BSc (Honours) in Mathematics and another subject
BSc (Honours) in Pure Mathematics
BSc (Honours) in Pure Mathematics and Statistics Φ
BSc (Honours) in Pure Mathematics and Accounting [being phased out]
BSc (Honours) in Pure Mathematics and Finance [being phased out]
BSc (Honours) in Pure Mathematics and another subject [being phased out]
BSc in Mathematics
BEng/MEng (School of Engineering) – 2 core courses

Undergraduate – Statistics

MSci in Statistics Φ
MSci in Statistics with Work Placement Φ
MSci in Statistics and another subject
BSc (Honours) in Statistics Φ
BSc (Honours) in Statistics and another subject
BSc (Honours) in Statistics and Accounting
BSc (Honours) in Statistics and Finance
BSc in Statistics
BSc in Statistical and Mathematical Studies
BEng/MEng in Biomedical Engineering (School of Engineering) – 1 core course

Postgraduate Taught – Mathematics

MSc in Applied Mathematics

MSc in Mathematics

Courses for the Scottish Mathematical Sciences Training Centre (SMSTC)

Postgraduate Taught – Statistics

MRes in Advanced Statistics Φ

MSc in Biostatistics Φ

MSc in Environmental Statistics Φ

MSc in Social Statistics Φ [being phased out]

MSc in Statistics Φ

MSc in Data Science (School of Computing Science) – 3 optional courses

MSc in Financial Modelling (Adam Smith Business School) – 6 core courses

Courses for the Scottish Mathematical Sciences Training Centre (SMSTC)

Collaborative Provision – Mathematics

BSc (Honours) Applied Mathematics – 2+2 Degree with the Northwestern Polytechnical University, China

BSc (Honours) Mathematics – 2+2 Degree with the Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, China

Collaborative Provision – Statistics

BSc (Honours) Statistics & Laurea in Scienze Statistiche (Classe L41) – Double Degree programme with the University of Bologna, Italy Φ

BSc (Honours) Statistics – 2+2 Degree with the Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, China Φ

♣ programme accredited by the Institute of Mathematics and its Applications (IMA)

Φ programme accredited by the Royal Statistical Society (RSS)

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Summer Powers 2016

Periodic Subject Review: Review of Scottish Literature held on 23 March 2016

Ms Jane McAllister, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Frank Coton	Vice Principal (Academic and Educational Innovation) Panel Convener
Dr Sarah Dunnigan	University of Edinburgh, External Subject Specialist
Dr Duncan Ross	Senate Assessor on Court
Ms Debbie White	Student member
Professor Bill Sweeney	School of Culture and Creative Arts, Cognate member
Dr Michael McEwan	Learning and Teaching Centre
Ms Jane McAllister	Senate Office and Clerk to the Panel

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 Scottish Literature is the smallest of four subjects in the School of Critical Studies in the College of Arts. The College and School were formed in 2010, when a major restructuring exercise reshaped the University from nine Faculties to four Colleges. Previously, Scottish Literature formed part of the School of English and Scottish Language and Literature (SESL) alongside the subject areas of English Language and English Literature. SESL was formed in 1996 to facilitate co-ordination and collaboration between the subject areas. Scottish Literature is also home to the Centre for Robert Burns Studies which was established in 2007.
- 1.1.2 Scottish Literature is the sole academic unit, nationally and internationally, dedicated wholly to teaching and research in Scottish Literature. The Subject Area places importance on the preservation of its unique position and its individual identity whilst maintaining links with cognate subject areas and making a significant contribution to academic and support activities in the wider College.
- 1.1.3 The Subject last underwent internal review in February 2009. The outcome of the review was positive with the Review Panel having been impressed by the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff, the focus on research-led teaching and the enthusiastic and articulate students that they met. A number of recommendations were made and the Subject Area successfully addressed these to the extent that some have been recognised as strengths in this review, for example, the variety of assessment and articulation of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs).
- 1.1.4 Preparation of the Scottish Literature Self Evaluation Report (SER) was led by the Head of Subject, Dr Rhona Brown, supported by a PSR Working Group. Staff and students were regularly updated on progress via dedicated meetings, subject area meetings, class announcements and other communications. Students and GTAs were involved via Student Focus Groups. A draft SER was made available on the Subject's general moodle site and comments received were incorporated into the final report. The students who met with the Panel confirmed that they had been consulted and invited to comment on the draft SER before it was finalised.

1.1.5 The Review Panel met with the Head of Subject, Dr Rhona Brown, the Head of School, Professor Jeremy Smith, and the Dean (Learning and Teaching) for the College of Arts, Dr Don Spaeth. They also met with 6 members of academic and administrative staff, including one early career member of staff, 8 undergraduate students and 5 Graduate Teaching Assistants.

2. Background information

2.1 Staff

Scottish Literature is a small subject area with 7 members of staff: 3 full-time professors, 3 full-time Lecturers and 1 0.6 FTE University Teacher.

The staff:student ratio is 15.2 which is in line with University of Glasgow and Russell Group averages.

2.2 Students

Student numbers for 2015-16 are summarised as follows:

Individuals enrolled on one or more courses at each level		Form of Study	
		class enrolment	visiting/erasmus/exchange
Level 1	98	58	40
Level 2	60	53	7
Level 4 (Junior & Senior Hons)	112	56	56

2.3 Range of Provision under Review

- MA in General Humanities
- MA Honours in Scottish Literature (Single)
- MA Honours in Scottish Literature (Joint)
- JYA course for Principia Consortium - 'The Scottish Enlightenment: Ideas and Influence'

2.3.1 Scottish Literature does not currently contribute to or offer PGT courses. Previous PGT programmes recruited unsustainably low numbers of students over a number of years and were withdrawn. The Subject has taken a strategic decision to prioritise its Postgraduate research offering and has been successful with this approach. Research provision does not form part of this review.

2.3.2 The Scottish Literature undergraduate programme covers all aspects of Scottish Literature from the early medieval period to the twenty-first century. Students received a broad, chronological grounding in levels 1 & 2 then, in honours, specialise in medieval, early modern and Renaissance literature, eighteenth-century literature and popular Enlightenment, Scottish travel writing, textual editing and the memorialisation of Scottish culture and literature as well as modern and contemporary Scottish literature. The Review Panel noted an absence of Victorian Literature at honours level. This was acknowledged by the Head of Subject who confirmed that the Subject was seeking to address the absence [see para 5.2.3]. The Panel agreed that the Subject was providing comprehensive coverage from first to fourth year with clear, developmental progress between first and second year, and leading into specialist study at Honours level. Scottish Literature is **commended** for maintaining the scope and diversity of its teaching portfolio with its small cohort of teaching staff.

- 2.3.3 Scottish Literature makes a significant contribution to Junior Year Abroad (JYA) provision, teaching alongside colleagues in Scottish History, Archaeology and Celtic and Gaelic on the “Introduction to Scottish Culture” course. They also provide a Level 4 course on the Scottish Enlightenment for a large group of visiting students from the Principia Consortium (42 students in 2015-16). The Principia Consortium was founded by Scottish Literature and is a group of select US Colleges and Universities who collaborate with the University of Glasgow to offer students enrolled in their Honours programmes an international Study Abroad opportunity at the University of Glasgow. The Review Panel **commends** Scottish Literature for their co-ordination of the Principia Consortium initiative which brings benefits of internationalisation to the student community and provides opportunities for the development of partnerships with other institutions.
- 2.3.4 Scottish Literature has recently developed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) entitled ‘Robert Burns: Poems, Songs and Legacy’. This was launched in 25 January 2016, the anniversary of Burns’ birth and had achieved approximately 7500 enrolments to date. This is discussed further in section 5.4 Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching.

3. Context and Strategy

- 3.1.1 From the SER and their meetings with staff and students, the Review Panel concluded that Scottish Literature has fully engaged with the University Strategy 2015-2020 and has clearly aligned its own strategies with the needs and priorities highlighted therein.
- 3.1.2 The Review Panel discussed the Subject’s position within the School with the Head of School and the Head of Subject. The conversation indicated that good relationships had been established within the school structure and that some opportunities for collaborative working were being explored. The Head of School reported that each of the subject areas had strong views on their individual strategic aims. The School’s aim was to provide a supportive framework, e.g. through common workload model and sharing best practices and policies, to allow the subject areas to work together effectively while allowing them to thrive individually.
- 3.1.3 The Review Panel gathered a sense of excellence from the SER and the documentation. The staff who met with the Panel were proud of the subject area’s distinctiveness and were focussed on preserving the Subject’s identity. The Panel, however, would have expected to see more evidence of this being balanced by a sustained and developed outward-looking approach, using the unique position as the only academic unit dedicated to the study of Scottish Literature in the world and the record of excellent teaching and research to take the lead in defining the subject globally. The Panel recognised the Centre for Burns Studies as an example of a confident, global-scale initiative and encouraged the Subject to reflect on its aspirations for its future global position and to consider how expansion into other modes of provision might enhance this.

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

- 4.1.1 The Review Panel confirmed that the Subject was very successful in developing and sustaining a positive, stimulating and supporting learning experience across its undergraduate provision. It was evident that, since the last review, some highly positive strategies for enhancing the student learning experience had been implemented. For example, the review and revision of the honours programme, incorporating review of ILOs and restructuring to 20 credit courses, the introduction of a variety of assessment methods including seminar evaluation exercises and the development of placement learning opportunities.

4.2 Admissions, Retention and Success

Recruitment

- 4.2.1 The Review Panel noted that undergraduate numbers were healthy and well-sustained over the three year period where data had been provided.
- 4.2.2 The Review Panel also noted that the Subject had identified recruitment as an area for action in its SER. The issues of concern were stated as the lack of visibility of being a named Higher or A-Level in the secondary school curriculum and changes to the College of Arts Advising System that had reduced the Subject's direct contact with new students. The Head of Subject reported that the Subject was responding to this with a sustained effort in school related activity. For example, colleagues were working to ensure that Scottish texts were included in the school curriculum, joint talks with English Literature were given at open days and there was consideration of opportunities for recruitment and outreach offered via the widening participation agenda. The Panel **commended** the Subject's proactive approach to recruitment, particularly in terms of awareness and engagement with school curriculum and teachers and encourages the Subject to continue this effort. The Panel also urges the School of Critical Studies to support the Subject in these initiatives. The Panel observed that students were likely to be the best advocates for the Subject and could be a great help in relating to school pupils, as part of general recruitment as well as through formal activities such as the Top Up programme. The Head of School highlighted the School wide initiative (based in English Literature), Humanities in the Classroom¹. This was a course that could be taken with a work placement based in an educational establishment, providing opportunities for students to further raise the profile of their subject while pursuing their own learning. [see also para 5.4.2]

Progression

- 4.2.3 The Review Panel was impressed by the success of Scottish Literature in maintaining a good level of progression in terms of student numbers from the larger Level 1 & 2 classes through into Honours level. The students who met with the Panel reported that they had come into the Subject from a variety of routes, including a number who had changed their intended study programme after early experience of the Subject at Level 1. The reasons reported were: falling in love with the subject; the sense of being an individual in a smaller subject area; appreciation of the course structure which they considered to be very well thought out; clarity of expectation in terms of assessment and performance. The positivity expressed by the students who met with the Panel confirmed the success of Scottish Literature in providing an excellent learning experience for its students and the Panel **commends** the Subject for this.

Postgraduate Taught Provision

- 4.2.4 The Review Panel heard that the Subject was continuing to discuss potential for developing PGT programmes. They had previously been involved in a number of programmes that were withdrawn due to very low student numbers. The staff who met with the Panel described a similar picture in other institutions involved in the study of Scottish Literature in across Scotland. As a result of this, a strategic decision had been taken to concentrate on Postgraduate Research which was a recognised strength.
- 4.2.5 While noting that the Subject was very successful in recruiting PGR students, the Review Panel queried whether the absence of a PGT "bridge" had any effect. The staff reported that there were research masters programmes (MPhil, MLitt (research)) available that fulfilled this function. It was also reported that their experience had shown the research pathway to be more attractive to students, particularly given the

¹ www.gla.ac.uk/coursecatalogue/course/?code=ENGLIT4051

Subject's excellent track record in obtaining funding via AHRC, Carnegie and College Scholarships.

- 4.2.6 The Review Panel accepted that offering a full postgraduate taught programme would take up a disproportionate amount of time for the small group of Scottish Literature staff. The Panel asked if there had been any consideration of the potential to offer PGT level provision in other modes or formats. The Head of Subject reported that the School of Critical Studies was considering a hub and spoke model for PGT provision and indicated that Scottish Literature would be keen to contribute to this [see para 4.2.8].
- 4.2.7 The staff who met with the Review Panel reiterated that the decision to focus on PGR had been a strategic one responding to subject area strengths and low PGT recruitment. They expressed doubt about whether the PGT market in arts and humanities still existed. The Convener acknowledged that the UK market had reduced but reported that demand from Asia continued to be supported by a growth of interest in cultural studies and the expectation that graduates will have undertaken some postgraduate study. It was noted that, in Scotland, only the Universities of Aberdeen and Stirling still offered PGT programmes in Scottish Literature, and internationally only Guelph University, Ontario and Simon Fraser University, Vancouver were involved. The Panel asked if there had been consideration of a joint Masters with one of these international institutions suggesting that the opportunity to study Scottish Literature in Scotland with the high calibre of staff available and the unique and distinctive position of the Subject [see para 1.1.2] could be very attractive. It was reported that, while there were some staff and student exchanges with Simon Fraser University, there had been no discussion of more formal partnership activity. The Panel noted that the Academic Collaborations Office was available to provide advice and guidance on all aspects of academic collaborations.
- 4.2.8 The Review Panel accepted that the Subject's decision to withdraw from PGT provision had been thoughtful, reasoned and strategic; however, it was the Panel's view that some form of postgraduate provision would be beneficial to the future health of the Subject through its contribution to the external profile of the Subject and the potential influence of PGT graduates. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject explore and give consideration to alternative models of postgraduate taught provision including those that might appeal to alternative markets of potential students. For example, as well as exploring the potential to contribute to the development of the School of Critical Studies "Hub and Spoke" model of PGT provision [see para 4.2.6], consideration might include possibilities for joint programmes either internally to the University or with national or international partners, alternative modes of delivery such as those involving the accumulation of credit over longer periods, and investigation of new potential markets that might find alternative formats more accessible. It was suggested that the Subject's stated intention to develop their MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) offering in future could contribute to this.

Collaboration/ Irish & Scottish Literature post

- 4.2.9 The Review Panel noted that a shared post in Irish & Scottish Literature had been redefined as English Literature only. The Panel requested some clarification on this situation. The Head of School explained that the post had been a School appointment intended to encourage collaboration and closer working. It had been designed with a 40/60 split between Scottish Literature and English Literature. The post holder had been responsible for a split course which had worked well for a year after which the course evolved, according to the research interests of the post holder, resulting in a closer alignment to English Literature rather than Scottish Literature. The Head of School expressed disappointment with this outcome and agreed with the Review Panel's **recommendation** that the School should review the potential for new

collaborative courses given examples of courses between subjects working well elsewhere. The Head of School expressed the hope that the proposed co-location of the College of Arts as part of the forthcoming campus developments would promote interdisciplinarity, as the physical space and grant support offered through “Arts Lab” had demonstrated.

4.2.10 The Review Panel queried opportunities for collaboration with other subject areas and schools within the University, e.g. Celtic and Gaelic. The Head of Subject reported a number of activities aimed at building the “Scottish Studies” portfolio, citing the example of the Junior Year Abroad (JYA) provision which was now being operated via the Centre for Scottish and Celtic Studies². The Panel welcomed these activities and suggested that working with others was a good way of moving into new spaces while minimising the risks. It was recognised that there were opportunities to be explored with other schools and subject areas and noted that the 20 credit standardisation across the College had removed a significant obstacle. The Head of School and the staff who met with Panel expressed concerns regarding other structural barriers to collaborative teaching, such as financial transfers and the mechanisms for funds to follow staff working across subject areas. The Review Panel agreed that considerations related to financial administration should not be an obstacle to interdisciplinary teaching and, noting from subsequent clarification³ that mechanisms for the transfer of funding for courses with shared ownership or teaching were agreed and in place at College level, the Panel **recommended** that the Head of College Finance review these mechanisms with the Head of School to establish whether the reported barriers to collaboration within the College were a matter of perception or could be resolved by adjusting the relevant administrative processes.

4.2.11 There was further discussion of potential with Film, Theatre and TV studies and Music. The Review Panel were assured that the Subject viewed “literature” in all its forms as part of their remit and included expertise in Scottish drama and song among its own staff. The Panel and the staff also discussed the potential for students to engage in activities related to but outside the study of literature, for example, creative writing or performance. The staff strongly expressed the view that the Subject was engaged in the activity of literary criticism and critical analysis rather than the creative process.

4.3 Equality and Diversity

4.3.1 Scottish Literature demonstrates excellent awareness and responsiveness to equality and diversity issues. The SER described robust processes for the dissemination of information from the University Disability Service and feedback questionnaires include a section which explicitly draws attention to staff handling of diversity issues. The Review Panel particularly **commends** the School Disability Officer’s membership of the School Learning & Teaching Committee to ensure that all Learning and Teaching Initiatives take full account of the requirements of all students whatever their specific needs.

4.3.2 One of the GTAs who met with the Review Panel raised a concern that there had been delays in information coming through from the Disability Service, which they were aware had impacted on their ability to make necessary adjustments in good time. It was noted that the delay in the information coming through was not necessarily indicative of a process problem but could be a delay in the student reporting to the Disability Service. The Panel was assured that protocols for communicating this

² The Centre for Scottish and Celtic Studies was established to bring together academics from across the University to create a focus for research and teaching in the history, literature and culture of Scotland and the Celtic world.

³ Clarification provided post review visit by the Dean of Learning and Teaching and College Secretary.

information were in place and operating effectively. The Review Panel **commended** the GTAs for their awareness of accessible and inclusive teaching practice. It was reported that the University had recently agreed to develop an Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy to guide and advise staff and it was hoped that the GTAs would also find it helpful. Their comments on the policy as it developed would be welcomed.

- 4.3.3 The students who met with the Review Panel expressed the view that the Subject provided outstanding support for all groups of students with specific needs. Those with personal experience confirmed that Scottish Literature staff had been much more responsive to all issues raised than other areas.

4.4 Supporting Students in their Learning

- 4.4.1 Scottish Literature is committed to supporting students in their learning and the SER and supporting documentation provided ample evidence of good practice including support for students at all key transition points. The Review Panel would particularly **commend** the excellent support for students who are preparing for entry into Honours level study. Compulsory one-to-one interviews are conducted with students at the entry point to both junior and senior honours to plan and then confirm their two-year course package. There is also a taught component to the dissertation focussing on how to devise structure and present a research project. The students who met with the Panel confirmed that this reflected their experience and that staff could be approached for support at any time. They also praised staff for being particularly good at listening to and accepting feedback.

Writing support

- 4.4.2 The Review Panel noted from the SER that Scottish Literature students were encouraged to complete the Academic Writing Skills Programme's online diagnostic exercise on entry, and to make use of the services of Effective Learning Advisers and the Writing Centre throughout their studies. The Subject welcomed the expansion of the Writing Centre's provision but highlighted in its Action Plan that more needed to be done to publicise these services to students. The students who met with the Panel confirmed that they had been given information about the Writing Centre and other support services verbally at induction and at other times throughout the session. They were also aware that they could approach a tutor if they had an issue with academic writing practice and that they would be given some advice and possibly referred to other available services. The Panel considered this as further evidence of the excellent support provided by Subject and **recommended** that reference to the Academic Writing Skills Programme and other support available through University Services should be highlighted in course handbooks or in the Scottish Literature Moodle as a permanent source of the information and an easy reference point for students.

4.5 Graduate Attributes

- 4.5.1 Scottish Literature identified its approach to graduate attributes as one of its strengths. The SER described how the honours curriculum redesign had been used as an opportunity to embed graduate attributes across the honours curriculum to foreground them more clearly and to raise awareness amongst the students. The Review Panel agreed that the Subject's diverse range of assessment and teaching methods also supported students in achieving and articulating their graduate attributes.
- 4.5.2 The contribution to developing graduate attributes of the placement learning aspects of the 'Memorialising Scottish Literature and Culture' course was identified as excellent practice [see para 5.1.5]. The Review Panel understood that, for good reason, there was a cap of 20 students on this course and enquired whether this disadvantaged

students who were not able, or chose not, to participate. The Head of Subject acknowledged that, while the intended learning outcomes were clearly identified across the range of courses and did represent a coherent set of graduate attributes, there was still work to do in ensuring the skills element in other courses was as well-defined as in the “Memorialising” course. The Panel discussed how the professional learning gained through the ‘Memorialising’ course might be transferred to those who had not participated. Suggestions were made that some type of event where students presented their work with their reflection on the experience overall might be beneficial to both sides. Some concerns were expressed regarding copyright issues that might be involved in doing this; however, the Panel suggested that there could be learning to be gained from overcoming these restrictions. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject consider ways to engage non-participating students with the outputs from the ‘Memorialising Scottish Literature and Culture’ course for added learning value.

- 4.5.3 The students who met with the Review Panel and had not participated in the ‘Memorialising’ course, or had not yet had the opportunity, confirmed that they were prompted and encouraged to think about their future study and work throughout the curriculum and that there was regular discussion of the skills being gained and their transferability.
- 4.5.4 The Review Panel noted that a placement-based dissertation option was under development as was a ‘Textual Editing’ honours course which would assist students to develop specialist skills useful in the publishing industry. The Panel encourages the Subject to continue to develop opportunities related to graduate attributes as they are identified.

4.6 Effectiveness of Student Feedback Mechanisms

- 4.6.1 The Review Panel noted that a variety of robust and effective feedback mechanisms were in place and that the Subject appeared to respond very quickly and thoughtfully to any issues raised. There was clear evidence in the documentation where student consultations had resulted in the implementation of changes, for example, the extension of seminar evaluations to Level 1 courses. In the Panel’s view, this demonstrated that the Subject is proactive and supportive in relation to the needs, requirements and concerns of its student body.
- 4.6.2 The students who met with the Review Panel agreed that staff were very good at listening and accepting feedback. In terms of the communication of responses, some considered that there was scope for improvement. Others of the group considered that they did receive responses and reported that they had experienced change being made within a week of an issue being raised at Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC). This supported the Panel’s initial view that the SSLC was operating effectively.
- 4.6.3 The Review Panel congratulated the staff on the excellent NSS results they had achieved but noted the confusion around the subject grouping that Scottish Literature had been allocated to. It had been included in English Studies for some time and then moved to Comparative Literature and last year had been included with Celtic and Gaelic in the Celtic Studies group. The Subject, School and Dean of Learning & Teaching were all working to resolve this and the Panel encouraged them to continue to work towards a steady position to allow continuity and to give as much visibility to Scottish Literature within the group as was possible.

5. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

5.1 Learning and Teaching

Study abroad

- 5.1.1 The low uptake of study abroad opportunities had been discussed at the previous review and was again a topic of discussion. This issue is widely recognised across the University and not particular to Scottish Literature, however, the Review Panel suggested it might be a useful space to explore in terms of strengthening the Subject's outward looking and partnership activities. The Head of Subject reported that study abroad opportunities had been under discussion as part of the Subject's response to the University strategy. She expressed the view that all staff agreed that the experience was of tremendous value to the individual. The Panel noted that staff found the difficulty of sourcing Scottish Literature courses at institutions beyond Scotland to be an insurmountable barrier. One student who had applied to study abroad agreed with this, reporting that while the Subject had been very supportive the destination institution had not been. The Panel took the view that the focus should be less on matching curriculum and more on defining an experience that complemented the programme as a whole. It was suggested that a comparative study, of literature or other cultural topic, would enrich the experience of the student, and of the community on their return.
- 5.1.2 The Review Panel accepted that a year away from the subject of a degree programme was unrealistic and queried whether shorter forms of study abroad had been considered. Staff reported the understanding that there were barriers that prevented shorter trips. These were: the School of Critical Studies requiring study abroad to be undertaken for a full year; and University regulations on the permitted percentage of papers outside the degree subject. The Head of School confirmed that the School did not currently have any opposition to shorter periods abroad, though there may have been historically. The Review Panel Convener was concerned to hear feedback that a University regulation might be blocking study abroad opportunities and, therefore, **recommends** that the Senate Office clarify the Subject area's concerns and review University regulations on outside papers. The conclusions of this review should be shared with the Head of Subject and the Head of School.
- 5.1.3 The students who met with the Panel confirmed that they had been told about study abroad but reported that they did not find it attractive given their view that Scottish Literature at Glasgow was the best place to study the discipline. They were asked if they had thought about the opportunities and benefits of gaining a different perspective and responded that the mix of students from different backgrounds within the subject area was sufficient to bring different perspectives to discussions. The Panel members, reported personal knowledge of students for whom the study abroad experience had been an opportunity to reassess their interests and aspirations and had positively influenced their future study/work. It was thought that it might be beneficial to highlight similar experiences to the Scottish Literature students to encourage them to give more consideration to study abroad.
- 5.1.4 As a result of the discussion and notwithstanding the limited interest of the current students who met with the Panel, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject, with the support of the School, explore the possibilities around the opportunities for short period of study abroad, with a range of preferred partners (to assure duty of care can be discharged efficiently) where there are opportunities for wider comparative studies that can be related back to the study of Scottish Literature.

Placement learning

- 5.1.5 The Review Panel was impressed by the Subject's engagement with Placement Learning and **commended** their 'Memorialising Scottish Literature and Culture' course as an excellent example. The wealth of experience developed through the set up and delivery of this course had been recognised by the College in the appointment of Dr Mackay as College Placement Officer to provide advice and guidance to colleagues across the College.
- 5.1.6 The Review Panel heard that students on the 'Memorialising Scottish Literature and Culture' course were required to apply for a place on the project that best suited their interest. Currently, there were projects available with the Hunterian Museum, the Edwin Morgan Archive, the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum and the Royal College of Surgeons and Physicians, Glasgow. Staff were working on growing the number of placement partners in a gradual way to allow them to ensure that placements were relevant, that students had productive work to do and that there was potential for an assessed project element. It was important to keep assessment methods flexible to accommodate different types of output and this meant that each arrangement required a significant amount of reflection and preparation.
- 5.1.7 Staff confirmed that the operation of the 'Memorialising' course was administratively intensive and, therefore, numbers were currently capped at 20. This represented approximately half the honours cohort. While noting that this proportion could grow as the number of placement partners built up year on year, the Review Panel was concerned about the opportunity for students who did not take part in the course to develop professional skills. This is discussed in more detail under Graduate Attributes at paragraph 4.5.2 & 3.
- 5.1.8 It was noted that student feedback to date had been overwhelmingly positive including statements such as "this is the best thing at Honours". The students who met with the Review Panel and had experienced the 'Memorialising' course this session reported that there had been an issue with placements at one of the partners. They explained that they had been asked to make presentations on objects that were not linked to Scottish culture in any way and relate them back to their study of Scottish Literature. After the initial challenge, the students involved had all succeeded in completing their task with creative thinking and some support from the Subject staff. As the discussion moved on, the students agreed that the challenge had been worthwhile and had made them look at their subject from a completely different perspective. In some cases, it also led them to topics for dissertation and gave useful insight into potential future careers. Staff commented that innovative assessment could panic students initially and they were aware of the need to support students through the familiarisation process. The Panel did not wish to make a recommendation here but suggested that a formal written agreement setting out the Subject's expectations of each placement provider might be useful. The College of Arts Dean of Learning & Teaching subsequently informed the Panel that a College agreement was in place and had been published as part of the College's Placement Toolkit.

Reading Party

- 5.1.9 The Review Panel noted that students from across the year groups had the opportunity to attend a weekend Reading Party in Arran, and that the feedback on the event was very positive. The Panel enquired how the Reading Party was perceived by students who were not able to attend. The students who met with the Panel reported that those who had not attended had not experienced any negative impact because it was a standalone event that did not contribute to or impact on any classes following the trip. There were also opportunities to take part in other shorter trips and events. The students who met with the Panel reported that the Scottish Literature Society had

been very good at arranging events and expressed a hope that it would be re-established soon. There had been a hiatus between the previous organisers graduating and someone new coming forward to take it on.

Autonomous Learning Groups

5.1.10 Scottish Literature uses Autonomous Learning Groups throughout the programme, in order to foster student independence and build personal and professional confidence away from the classroom. The students who met with the Review Panel spoke positively about their experience of Autonomous Learning Groups. They explained that small groups of students receive questions related to the current topic from their tutor then meet outside scheduled class time to discuss them. The students appreciated the flexibility of these groups and reported that they sometimes helped to establish ongoing study/discussion groups after the particular tasks were completed. They acknowledged that attendance did sometimes fall off but there was no feeling of carrying the weight of non-participating members because there was no formal output of assessed work.

5.2 Curriculum Design

5.2.1 The Review Panel noted that the Subject had recently carried out a thorough review and redesign of courses at honours level including the reshaping of provision into 20 credit blocks (from 30 credits). The Panel heard that the Subject had fully engaged with all stakeholders, particularly students, throughout the process. The students who met with the Panel confirmed that there had been much consultation on the curriculum review over a period of a year and a half and that they had also been asked for feedback on the implementation of the changes. The students considered that the implementation had been well managed and reported that there had been no disruption to their programmes of study.

5.2.2 The students who met with the Panel reported that the coverage of the subject was very good and well balanced. They were aware of progression through the levels and recognised that honours material was building on levels 1 and 2. The staff were praised for their inclusion of women authors in the curriculum which the students perceived to be more systematic than in other areas. This was demonstrated by the way that the absence of women's contribution was always acknowledged to indicate that it was not simply an oversight. The Panel encourages the Subject to maintain its awareness of the visibility of female authors and to strive for an inclusive and well-integrated mix of authors across all courses. The External Subject Specialist highlighted the "Beginnings to Early Modern" course as a good example.

5.2.3 The External Subject Specialist noted the absence of a course covering late Victorian material. The Head of Subject confirmed that was the case and explained that the course had been in need of refreshing following the departure of the member of staff with late Victorian expertise. The Subject was aware of the gap and was seeking alternatives to replace the course.

5.2.4 Overall the Review Panel's view was that the curriculum redesign had had a very positive and beneficial outcome, allowing students a greater range and diversity of courses at Honours level, and broadening the ways in which student learning was encouraged and developed.

5.3 Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes

5.3.1 The Review Panel considered that the extensive review of intended learning outcomes (ILOs), as part of the curriculum review, had produced clarity and cogency across all courses. This was reflected in feedback questionnaires which demonstrate sound student awareness and understanding of course expectations and demands. The

Head of Subject reported that staff mark to ILOs and refer to them in feedback to reinforce their purpose and function. The Graduate Teaching Assistants who met with the Panel also demonstrated excellent awareness of ILOs at course level.

5.4 Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching

- 5.4.1 The Review Panel noted that, as a contribution to the University's E-learning Strategy, Scottish Literature had developed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) entitled 'Robert Burns: Poems, Songs and Legacy'. This was launched on 25 January 2016, the anniversary of Burns' birth, and had achieved approximately 7500 enrolments to date. Work was to continue in 2016-17 to develop further online options on Burns' life and work. These would be built into a 'Blended' Honours option for Scottish Literature students with online components and traditional seminars; and a wholly online, fee-paying, distance-learning option. The Panel **commended** the Subject's online provision developments as indicators of the Subject's innovative approach to course design and delivery and its responsiveness to, and support of, the University e-learning strategy.
- 5.4.2 The Panel was interested to hear the Subject's experience to date with University support for online initiatives. The Head of Subject reported that the time commitment and logistics involved had been challenging and more than the initial expectation. She commented that support could be better co-ordinated but expected this to improve as experience was gained by all involved. The Panel enquired if the Subject had considered developing a mini MOOC for school pupils, suggesting it could be used as an introduction to the discipline and as a useful recruitment vehicle for full-time study [see also para 4.2.2].

5.5 Assessment

- 5.5.1 The Review Panel **commended** the Subject's clearly reflective and innovative approach to continuous enhancement of assessment practices. The range and variety of practices seen across the assessment portfolio at both formative and summative levels was impressive. Assessments were tailored to individual modules and Honours options, and provided a stimulating diversity of tasks which was sensitively adapted to different learning styles.
- 5.5.2 The SER listed the following types of assessments being used: critical essays of varying lengths; monitored coursework in class time; the preparation and editing of textual editions; critical exercises, analysing both primary and secondary texts (such as in Annotated Bibliographies); critical evaluations of unseen manuscript material; reflective Seminar Evaluations; creative writing and translation exercises; close-reading exercises under examination conditions; traditional, closed-book examinations; the preparation of catalogues, virtual archives and exhibitions; placement-based project work; book reviews; and comparative essays. Formative assessment was provided through: analysis and discussion of texts, genres and literary movements in groups led by tutors; student-led seminar discussion; Autonomous Learning Groups and projects; one-to-one discussions of placement research projects and exercises.
- 5.5.3 The Convener of the Panel queried the extent to which examinations were still in use. The staff expressed the view that there was still a place for traditional essay based examination papers, reporting that examinations were still used at level 1 & 2 but only in around half of honours courses. This provided students with diverse learning styles ample opportunity to demonstrate their individual strengths.
- 5.5.4 The students who met with the Review Panel were asked to comment on their experience of the range of assessment across their courses. They highlighted seminar evaluation exercises as one distinctive example of assessment practice. In these exercises, students choose four seminars on which to write a reflective piece

developing in-class discussions and forming their own independent readings of texts. At the end of the semester, the collection of four seminar evaluations could be used as a portfolio of notes for the final assessment. The students who met with the Panel confirmed that they found this activity valuable in helping them to explore and form their ideas and as useful preparation for examinations. It was an opportunity to reflect on the discussion in class and to explore the aspects that had interested them personally. The Panel noted that the Subject had responded to the very positive feedback on seminar evaluation exercises by considering extending this style of assessment to level 1.

5.5.5 Staff reported that they were investigating the use of technology to support examinations and that an online, timed, close reading exercise was being introduced. In terms of administering examination papers, staff reported that they were looking at Moodle, scanning scripts and at the services offered via Teleform software to improve efficiency. The Review Panel encouraged the Subject to ensure they were fully involved in wider discussions in this area, noting that IT Services were looking at technology to support the examination process end-to-end.

5.6 Engagement with the Code of Assessment and Assessment policy

5.6.1 The Subject was fully aware of and responsive to developments in Assessment Policy. The Subject was also mindful of the need to support its Graduate Teaching Assistants with ongoing training in feedback and assessment practice.

Feedback on Assessment

5.6.2 The students who met with the Panel reported that they understood the assessment descriptors and the expectations of each piece of assessed work. They confirmed that they received feedback via feedback sheets. Generally, their opinion was that the feedback was of good or outstanding quality and that it guided them towards achieving the intended learning outcomes and improving their performance. However, there was some variation in the feedback given and in the way in which the feedback sheet was used by different markers.

5.6.3 The Review Panel discussed the assessment feedback sheet with the staff and reported the comments made by the student group. Staff also found the feedback sheet useful but agreed there was scope for refreshment as it had not been updated since a review by the external examiner two years previously. The Review Panel **recommended** that the Subject review the assessment feedback sheet for currency and agree a consistent practice for its use. This should be done in full consultation with the students.

5.7 Engaging and Supporting Staff

5.7.1 The Review Panel formed a strong impression that all staff members were actively involved in Subject, School and College initiatives and have, indeed, served as a model of good practice in several examples, particularly in recognising the need for personal and professional development for undergraduate students in the College of Arts. There has been recognition of Scottish Literature staff in Administrative and Teaching Excellence Awards (Ms McLaughlin and Dr Brown) and in appointment to College positions (Dr Mackay, College Placement Officer)

Probationer and early career support

5.7.2 One member of staff had been in the first cohort of the Early Career Development programme (ECDP). She reported having been very well supported by her mentor but that it had been a rather chaotic experience overall. It was acknowledged that this had been in the early days of the programme and that matters seemed to be improving,

particularly with better communications. The wider staff group approved of the aims of the ECDP but agreed that it needed some work. The Review Panel noted that the Academic Development Unit which had responsibility for the ECDP had also gone through periodic subject review this session and was looking forward to addressing recommendations arising.

- 5.7.3 The Review Panel noted that the Subject had been supportive of participation in the ECDP and had provided good opportunities to take on responsibilities. The Panel was pleased to hear that a good balance had been struck between the remission of workload to allow time to complete ECDP objectives and the need to take on responsibilities to gain the experience needed to achieve them. It was also noted that there was no training for mentors of new staff but given the experience of the current cohort of staff, it was considered unnecessary at this time.

University Teacher

- 5.7.4 It was noted that the University Teacher was an extremely valued member of staff who had been instrumental in the development of the new Level 1 course, the Principia Consortium and the MOOC.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

- 5.7.5 The Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who met with the Review Panel were very positive about their role and welcomed the opportunity to teach and develop their skills. They also commented that refreshing their knowledge of the wider subject was of benefit to their research as was the potential for generating new ideas from interactions with students.
- 5.7.6 The GTA role in Scottish Literature was to support seminars and tutorials. The topics covered in these followed the Lecture programme but the GTAs were given certain amount of freedom to bring their own expertise to bear in terms of the specific focus.
- 5.7.7 The Review Panel noted the degree of autonomy over the specifics of tutorials that was given to, and appreciated by, the GTAs. The Panel asked staff how this and the GTAs' general performance was monitored. The Course Convener monitored the resources and topics posted by GTAs on the seminar group Moodle to ensure they were not off topic and would intervene if they were alerted to issues. Staff viewed the degree of autonomy as a good opportunity for career skills development.
- 5.7.8 The GTAs who met with the Review Panel confirmed that there were a range of training opportunities available and that they had participated in the University's statutory training and additional training provided by the School of Critical Studies. The GTAs who met with the Panel had preferred the School specific training that covered the topics of leading groups, directing discussion and giving feedback. [Dr Mackay and Dr Brown had been involved in the development of this School-wide training.] There was some criticism that training had not taken place until after the GTAs had started teaching and the Panel heard that the current group of GTAs had responded by undertaking some peer-to-peer support activities. The Panel praised the GTAs for their independent approach but questioned whether it was indicative that some element of training was misaligned. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject evaluate GTA training provision to identify whether there is scope to improve its structure and to ensure the support GTAs receive is timely and helps them be fully prepared for teaching before they begin.
- 5.7.9 The Review Panel asked whether the GTAs felt part of the wider teaching team and heard from the GTAs that their views on courses were taken on board and that they were consulted on changes to courses and assessment methods. The GTAs who met with the Panel discussed differences in their individual contractual situations that

meant they had varying levels of access to facilities. The need to pay for their own printing and photocopying was cited as an example and clarification was given that GTAs had to have over a certain number of hours to qualify for a contract and, therefore, a staff card that would allow them to use the Subject's pull printing accounts. Staff confirmed that they were happy for their own cards to be borrowed at any time. The Panel recognised that the photocopying/printing issue stemmed from the underlying contractual situation which was beyond the control of the Subject and outwith the remit of the review. The Panel agreed to **recommend** that Human Resources be made aware of these comments [see para 5.8.1]. Noting that the staff and the GTAs value the autonomy the GTAs are given, the Review Panel also **recommends** that the Subject and GTAs explore the structures that support GTAs working autonomously, including possible options for a more formal arrangement for GTA photocopying and communication of such arrangements to ensure that they are clear to all GTAs.

5.7.10 The GTAs were aware of recently introduced opportunities for new GTAs to shadow someone with experience. This development was welcomed and expected to be very helpful. The Review Panel also discussed the observation of GTA teaching with staff. Staff agreed it was a good idea and a continuation of the practice of upcoming GTAs observing the teaching of staff and experienced GTAs. Staff reported that good teaching practice was discussed in meetings of the course team and GTAs were encouraged to approach the course conveners should any further advice or mentoring be needed. The GTAs also received feedback and advice on marking. The students who met with the Panel were in agreement that the GTAs performed well and had particular praise for those were able to bring all the class into discussions.

5.8 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)

Graduate Teaching Assistants

5.8.1 The GTAs who met with the Review Panel raised concerns regarding their pay and contracts. They reported that there had been changes to the balance of the payment, in terms of time for preparation and for marking, which had not been communicated very well and had led to some confusion for them. They expressed the view that the allocation of 30 minutes preparation for every hour of teaching was extremely limited and did not allow them to be as prepared as they would like. The time allocated for marking was also limited. Staff commented that the estimation of three essays per hour was reasonable for an experienced academic but not for a GTA. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Senate Office forward comments on GTA contracts to Human Resources for information. [see also para 5.7.9]

Learning and Teaching Space

5.8.2 Staff and students who met with the Review Panel reported dissatisfaction with the allocation of rooms for their classes. Various issues led the students who met with the Panel to report the perception that, because they were generally smaller, their classes were expected to fit into the "left over" spaces after the larger classes were accommodated. Staff reported that an instance of a two hour class being allocated to different rooms for each hour. The Panel agreed that this was unreasonable and encouraged the Subject to continue to push back any such illogical decisions for reconsideration. The Convener clarified the timetable modelling approach and reported that a workstream had been established to look at space planning and the possibility of using other sites adjacent to campus.

5.8.3 The students who met with the Review Panel noted that very few of their classes were located within Scottish Literature premises even at honours level. They expressed the view that this was one of the few things that they would have changed about their

experience. However, they did report that the blinds in the Scottish Literature seminar (Room 101) were not effective enough at blocking light to enable projected material to be viewed. The Panel suggested that this should be easily fixed and suggested that the ineffective blinds in Room 101, 7 University Gardens be drawn to the attention of Estates & Buildings via the University's report fault page⁴ with a request that the issue be rectified as soon as possible.

6. Academic Standards

6.1.1 The Review Panel considered that Scottish Literature had a variety of robust and effective procedures in place which ensure that the Subject is engaged in a continual process of self-reflection and self-evaluation with regard to academic and pedagogical practice.

Currency and Validity of Programmes

6.1.2 The Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, the programmes offered by the School were current and valid in the light of developing knowledge and practice within the subject area.

7. Collaborative provision

7.1.1 The SER reported that Scottish Literature had no formal collaborative provision. However, the Review Panel considered that the Subject was involved in a number of activities that could be defined as collaboration and that contribute to the University's reputation worldwide. The Principia Consortium [see para 2.3.3] and Junior Year Abroad provision were notable examples. These initiatives bring benefits of internationalisation to the student community and provide opportunities for the development of partnerships with other institutions.

8. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

8.1 Key strengths

The Review Panel identified the following areas as key strengths:

- The Subject's unique global position as the only academic unit solely dedicated to teaching and research in Scottish Literature
- Creation of a supportive and nurturing learning community throughout undergraduate provision, reflected in highly positive student feedback
- Comprehensive coverage of the subject from first to fourth year with clear, developmental progress between first and second year, and leading into specialist study at Honours level
- Diversity of assessment methods at both formative and summative levels, accommodating a diversity of learning styles
- Research-led teaching practices
- Engagement with alternative learning and teaching practices as exemplified in placement learning aspects of the Memorialising Scottish Culture course
- Excellent engagement with, and contribution to, University strategies
- Significant and early contribution to the University's e-Learning Strategy through the development of the 'Robert Burns: Poems, Songs and Legacy'

⁴ https://ebhelpdesk.mis.gla.ac.uk/helpdesk/htdocs/common/default_gl.php

MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) and the plans to continue development into blended learning options.

- A strong cohort of Graduate Teaching Assistants who demonstrate reflective and insightful teaching practice and are mutually supportive
- A highly articulate and motivated group of undergraduate students who communicate a passion for their subject and were clearly inspired by the staff and teaching they were experiencing
- Awareness of need to influence curriculum development in the school sector as a means of promoting the subject for the general good and for strengthening the potential for future recruitment to undergraduate programmes

8.2 Areas for improvement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for improvement:

- Postgraduate Taught Provision
- Collaboration with other subject areas, within the University and beyond
- Consideration of shorter formats of Study Abroad, engaging with wider cultural study

Specific recommendations addressing these areas for work are listed below, as are a number of further recommendations on particular matters.

9. Conclusion

9.1.1 Scottish Literature holds a unique position in terms of Scottish, UK, and global contexts due to its status as the sole academic unit dedicated wholly to teaching and research in Scottish literature. This provides a core distinctive strength in its offering that is reinforced by a small but strong team of staff who are committed to providing a positive, stimulating, and supportive learning environment for their students. Given this position and the high quality of the provision on offer in Scottish Literature, the Panel had expected to find a more sustained and developed outward-looking approach to collaboration and partnerships. Several of the recommendations below are made with a view to encouraging this. The subject demonstrates excellent responsiveness to student feedback and was highly praised by the students who met with the Review Panel. This is confirmed by impressive NSS satisfaction rates (whichever subject group the Subject is reported in). In its SER, the Subject articulated a very clear, coherent, and distinctive set of pedagogical aims and strategies, and throughout the review, the Panel was pleased to find good evidence of the Subject being engaged in a continual process of reflection and evaluation with regard to all aspects of their practice.

9.2 Commendations

The Review Panel commends Scottish Literature on the following, which are listed **in order of appearance** in this report:

Commendation 1

Scottish Literature is commended for maintaining the scope and diversity of its teaching portfolio with its small cohort of teaching staff. [Paragraph 2.3.2]

Commendation 2

The Review Panel commends Scottish Literature for their co-ordination of the Principia Consortium initiative which brings benefits of internationalisation to the student

community and provides opportunities for the development of partnerships with other institutions [Paragraph 2.3.3]

Commendation 3

The Panel commends the Subject's proactive approach to recruitment, particularly in terms of awareness and engagement with school curriculum and teachers and encourages the Subject to continue this effort. The Panel also urges that the School support the Subject in these initiatives. [Paragraph 4.2.2]

Commendation 4

The positivity expressed by the students who met with the Panel confirmed the success of Scottish Literature in providing an excellent learning experience for its students and the Panel commends the Subject for this. [Paragraph 4.2.3]

Commendation 5

The Review Panel particularly commends the School Disability Officer's membership of the School Learning and Teaching Committee to ensure that all Learning and Teaching Initiatives take full account of the requirements of all students whatever their specific needs. [Paragraph 4.3.1]

Commendation 6

The Review Panel commends the GTAs for their awareness of accessible and inclusive teaching practice. [Paragraph 4.3.2]

Commendation 7

The Review Panel particularly commends the excellent support for students who are preparing for entry into Honours level study. [Paragraph 4.4.1]

Commendation 8

The Review Panel was impressed by the Subject's engagement with Placement Learning and commends their 'Memorialising Scottish Literature and Culture' course as an excellent example. [Paragraph 5.1.5]

Commendation 9

The Panel commends the Subject's online provision developments as indicators of the Subject's innovative approach to course design and delivery and its responsiveness to and support of the University e-learning strategy. [Paragraph 5.4.1]

Commendation 10

The Review Panel commends the Subject's clearly reflective and innovative approach to continuous enhancement of assessment practices. [Paragraph 5.5.1]

9.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support Scottish Literature in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are **grouped together** by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are **ranked in order of priority within each section**.

Postgraduate Taught Provision

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject explore and give consideration to alternative models of postgraduate taught provision including those that might appeal

to alternative markets of potential students. For example, as well as exploring the potential to contribute to the development of the School of Critical Studies “Hub and Spoke” model of PGT provision [see para 4.2.6], consideration might include possibilities for joint programmes either internally to the University or with national or international partners, alternative modes of delivery such as those involving the accumulation of credit over longer periods, and investigation of new potential markets that might find alternative formats more accessible. It was suggested that the Subject’s stated intention to develop their MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) offering in future could contribute to this. [Paragraph 4.2.8]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject
For information: The Head of School

Graduate Teaching Assistant Training and Support

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject evaluate GTA training provision to identify whether there is scope to improve its structure and to ensure the support GTAs receive is timely and helps them be fully prepared for teaching before they begin. [paragraph 5.7.8]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject
For information: Learning & Teaching Centre Academic Development Unit

Recommendation 3

Noting that the staff and the GTAs value the autonomy the GTAs are given, the Review Panel recommends that the Subject and GTAs explore the structures that support GTAs working autonomously, including possible options for a more formal arrangement for GTA photocopying and communication of such arrangements to ensure that they are clear to all GTAs. [Paragraph 5.7.9]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel recommends that the Senate Office forward comments on GTA contracts to Human Resources for information. [Paragraph 5.7.9 & 5.8.1]

For the attention of: Senate Office
For information: The Head of Subject

Study Abroad

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject, with the support of the School, explore the possibilities around the opportunities for short period of study abroad, with a range of preferred partners (to assure duty of care can be discharged) where there are opportunities for wider comparative studies that can be related back to the study of Scottish Literature. [Paragraph 5.1.4]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject
For information: The Head of School

Recommendation 6

The Convener was concerned to hear feedback that a University regulation might be blocking study abroad opportunities and, therefore, recommends that the Senate Office clarify the Subject area’s concerns and review University regulations on outside papers. The conclusions of this review should be shared with the Head of Subject and the Head of School. [Paragraph 5.1.2]

For the attention of: Senate Office
For information: The Head of Subject & the Head of School

Graduate Attributes

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject consider ways to engage other students with the outputs from the 'Memorialising Scottish Literature and Culture' course for added learning experience. [Paragraph 4.5.2]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject

Interdisciplinary teaching

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel recommends that the School should review the potential for new collaborative courses given examples of courses between subjects working well elsewhere. [Paragraph 4.2.9]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: The Head of Subject

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel agreed that considerations related to financial administration should not be an obstacle to interdisciplinary teaching and, noting from subsequent clarification that mechanisms for the transfer of funding for courses with shared ownership or teaching were agreed and in place at College level, the Panel recommends that the Head of College Finance review these mechanisms with the Head of School to establish whether the reported barriers to collaboration within the College were a matter of perception or could be resolved by adjusting the relevant administrative processes. [Paragraph 4.2.10]

For the attention of: The Head of Finance, College of Arts
For information: The Head of Subject & the Head of School

Administrative matters

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject review the assessment feedback form for currency and agree a consistent practice for its use. This should be done in full consultation with the students. [Paragraph 5.6.3]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel recommends that reference to the Academic Writing Skills Programme and other support available through University Services should be highlighted in course handbooks or in the Scottish Literature Moodle as a permanent source of the information and an easy reference point for students. [Paragraph 4.4.2]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Summer Powers 2016

Report of the Validation Event for the Bachelor of Theology (BTh) (by Distance-Learning) held at Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS) on 17 May 2016

Cover Sheet

Robbie Mulholland, Clerk, Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary

Brief Description of the Paper

The attached paper is a report of a validation event seeking approval for the introduction of the BTh (by Distance-Learning) at ETS, commencing in September 2016.

Action Requested

Academic Standards Committee is asked to **approve** the introduction of the BTh (by Distance-Learning) at ETS, commencing in September 2016.

The Committee is also asked to **note** the recommendations made by the validation panel and the remainder of the report.

Recommended Person/s responsible for taking the action(s) forward

Edinburgh Theological Seminary.

Resource Implications

None.

Timescale for Implementation

The first cohort of students will commence the BTh (by Distance-Learning) at ETS in September 2016.

Equality Implications

None.

Report of the Validation Event for the Bachelor of Theology (by Distance-Learning) held at Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS) on 17 May 2016

Present:

University of Glasgow (UoG) Validation Panel:

Professor John Briggs, Clerk of Senate and Vice Principal
Dr Amanda Sykes, University Teacher, Learning and Teaching Centre

Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS):

Reverend Iver Martin, Principal, (for item 1)
Professor John Angus MacLeod, Vice Principal (Programme Team Leader)
Ms Heather Watson, Administrator
Ms Ruth Smith, Technical Support Administrator

Attending: Mr Robbie Mulholland, Clerk

1. Introduction

The event had been organised to consider a proposal from ETS that the University of Glasgow validate a distance-learning option for the Bachelor of Theology (BTh). The BTh programme (along with the MTh (by research) and the MTh in Scottish Church History and Theology) were already validated by the University. The main purpose of the event was to establish that the overall experience of BTh distance-learning ('off-campus') students would be equivalent to that enjoyed by BTh 'on-campus' students. This was particularly important with respect to teaching delivery, learning resources, student feedback and support services.

2. Tour of Facilities

The validation panel ('the Panel') met briefly with Rev Martin, Principal, Professor MacLeod (Vice Principal and Programme Team Leader) and key support staff before being conducted on a tour of the classrooms and facilities which would support the distance-learning mode of delivery.

The Panel was advised that the proposal was based on a model of remote learning which would give off-campus students an equivalent student learning experience to those on campus. Three classrooms had been adapted to accommodate the IT facilities (based on Big Blue Button (BBB) technology) which would support the programme. The facilities would allow the programme to be delivered from lecture room to student desktop.

The classrooms were fitted with cameras to record the lecture and large monitors which allowed facial recognition of off-campus students by staff. Off-campus students would have the ability to interact with both the lecturer and the rest of the class (both those in the room and those off-campus). Off-campus students would therefore access the lecture remotely from their desktop at exactly the same time as on-campus students were physically attending the lecture.

Students admitted onto the programme would be given information before they registered regarding the use of BBB on their desktop. In addition, students would be given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the technology during the Induction Programme. Technical support would be provided to both off-campus students and staff by the Technical Support Administrator.

The Panel was satisfied with the technical support that was in place to support the new IT system.

[Further details regarding the main features of BBB technology are attached as Appendix A].

3. Meeting with Programme Team Leader and Key Support Staff

3.1 Programme rationale

The Programme Leader outlined the rationale behind the development of the programme and explained that a distance learning option would help address a perceived gap in theological education provision. In particular, it would help students who lived some distance from ETS or were unable to move to Edinburgh for family or financial reasons to undertake study. It also offered students who had experienced illness or have a disability an alternative avenue into learning. The Panel acknowledged that the proposal represented an innovative approach to learning and was in keeping with the institution's strategic ambitions to extend its provision in the UK, Europe and beyond.

3.2 Admissions

The Panel noted that there would be a limited number (between 5 and 10 students) admitted to the distance-learning option in the first cohort and that this was partly due to the technical limitations of the IT system (ie bandwidth and server capacity). Entry qualifications to the BTh would be the same for both on-campus and off-campus students. Furthermore, every applicant would be interviewed as part of the admissions process. The Panel **recommended** that ETS should also consider adopting an admissions procedure similar to the University's which involved a tariff system. This involved a guaranteed entry tariff and a minimum entry tariff and would help manage student numbers equitably in the event the new programme was over-subscribed in future.

3.3 Student Experience

3.3.1 Learning Environment and Materials

The Programme Leader stressed the importance that both groups of students should enjoy an equitable learning experience with regard to the learning environment and programme materials. Curriculum content would be the same for both groups and off-campus students would receive the same learning materials as on-campus students (via Moodle.) Off-campus students would be able to interact with both the lecturer and the class (both on-campus and off-campus students) in real-time audio and video. Furthermore, on-campus students would be able to interact with off-campus students in both audio and video, depending on their seat in the lecture room. Off-campus students would have the same data on their PCs as would appear on the Smartboard. Both on-campus and off-campus students would be given a Library Resource Policy document which would include:-

- An introduction to the ETS Online Library Catalogue
- An introduction to the ETS Electronic Library research resources available via Moodle
- An expectation that they would purchase the main textbooks recommended by Course Organisers
- An expectation that they would make use of appropriate local library resources where possible

- An explanation of the Inter-Library Loan system through the Theological Libraries Users Group (THUG) whereby books could be shared at no cost other than postage, and
- Information on the role of the ETS Assistant Librarian in scanning and e-mailing attachment course materials in line with copyright requirements.

The Panel also suggested that ETS consider extending its use of Moodle as a forum for student enquiries with a view to reducing the necessity for staff to answer every query received individually.

3.3.2 Attendance

ETS recognised the benefits that students gained from informal interaction with their peers outwith class time and would encourage distance-learning students to spend at least one week per semester in physical attendance on campus. The Panel considered, however, that both groups would benefit considerably from meeting each other right at the outset of the programme and **recommended** that ETS should consider making attendance at the Induction Programme a *strong expectation* rather than an option for both groups.

Each class would always have on and off-campus students in it and both groups would be expected to be 'present' during each contact hour. The Panel **recommended** that attendance at every class by both on-campus and off-campus students be made a *requirement* with the only acceptable reason for non-attendance being if a student could demonstrate 'good cause'.

In recognition that external factors (such as internet downtime) might occasionally prevent off-campus students from participating in a class, each lecture/seminar would be recorded and made available to this group for a limited period. The Panel **recommended**, that in the interests of parity, access to recordings should be made available to both on-campus and off-campus students. The Panel considered that its recommendation with regard to class attendance, if implemented, would reduce the likelihood that the lecture replay facility was used inappropriately by students. The Panel noted that the main aim of the replay facility was to allow students to review and reinforce particular aspects of lectures and seminars and must not be seen as a substitute for actual attendance at classes.

3.3.3 Student Support

Off-campus students would be appointed a Director of Studies who would liaise with them formally via BBB technology with the same frequency as that afforded to on-campus students (and less formally as required).

The Panel agreed that distance-learning students should have the same access to advising opportunities as on-campus students and **recommended** that ETS should consider giving off-campus students the same *informal* advising opportunities as on-campus students.

Access to module lecturers and course organisers would also be possible by phone, email and/or BBB technology.

The Panel noted that off-campus students requiring advice from the ETS Disability Officer would have the same level of support as on-campus students. The Programme Leader was also considering incorporating advice on dyslexia awareness within the admissions interview. The Panel acknowledged that

increasing pastoral demands were being placed on institutions across the sector as the number of students reporting mental health issues continued to grow.

3.3.4 Student Feedback

The Panel noted that distance-learning students would be able to participate in Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings via Skype technology. Furthermore, Course Quality Questionnaires and Student Satisfaction Questionnaires would be amended to include questions on distance-learning and its impact on the student learning experience for all students.

3.3.5 Assessment

The Panel heard that all off-campus students would submit coursework assignments in the same way as on-campus students – via Moodle/Turnitin. Assessment feedback would take place as with on-campus students via email and Assessment Feedback forms. Additionally, off-campus students would receive feedback via BBB/Skype technology for face-to-face feedback.

Off-campus students would normally sit class tests and examinations at ETS, failing which an arrangement would be put in place with a local education institution (or other appropriate organisation e.g. British Council office) to invigilate exams. The Panel **recommended** that in the event of examinations being undertaken off-campus, ETS should ensure that the potential implications of different time-zones were taken account of in respect of exam arrangements. The Panel also **recommended** that ETS require off-campus students to be responsible for any expenses incurred as a result of special exam arrangements.

3.4 Technical Support

It was noted that a new post had been created recently within ETS to provide technical back-up for both students and staff. In the event of internet downtime or PC failure a high specification audio (MP3) link would be utilised. System security was essential and the Panel was satisfied that ETS had satisfactory measures in place in this regard.

3.5 Marketing

The Panel noted that the BTh (by Distance-Learning) was currently being advertised by ETS as commencing in September 2016 'subject to validation'. The Panel observed that in the event of the proposal being validated by the University that ETS should ensure that any publicity materials which referenced the University should be sent to the Academic Collaborations Office. The University was obliged, under the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education to review materials published by its validated institutions prior to publication.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Panel agreed to recommend to the Academic Standards Committee of the University of Glasgow that the BTh (by Distance-Learning) should be validated as an award of the University of Glasgow for six years with effect from September 2016.

The Panel made a number of recommendations which are noted below. Further details and context for these can be found in the earlier sections of this report (referenced in square brackets.)

Recommendations:

1. The Panel **recommended** that ETS should also consider adopting an admissions procedure similar to the University's which involved a tariff system. [3.2]

2. The Panel considered that both groups of students (on and off-campus) would benefit considerably from meeting each other right at the outset of the programme and **recommended** that ETS should consider making attendance at the Induction Programme a *strong expectation* rather than an option for both groups. [3.3.2]
3. The Panel **recommended**, however, that attendance at every class by both on-campus and off-campus students be made a *requirement* and the only acceptable reason for non-attendance would be if a student could demonstrate 'good cause'. [3.3.2]
4. The Panel **recommended**, that in the interests of parity, access to recordings should be made available to both on-campus and off-campus students. [3.3.2]
5. The Panel agreed that distance-learning students should have the same access to advising as on-campus students and **recommended** that ETS should also consider giving off-campus students the same *informal* advising opportunities as on-campus students. [3.3.3]
6. The Panel **recommended** that in the event of examinations being undertaken off-campus, ETS should ensure that the potential implications of different time-zones were taken account of in respect of examinations. [3.3.5]
7. The Panel also **recommended** that ETS require off-campus students to be responsible for any expenses incurred as a result of special exam arrangements. [3.3.5].
8. **Post-validation event recommendation:** It is recommended that ETS ensure that its lecture and seminar recording arrangements comply with the University's Lecture Recording Policy (see URL below):
www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_359179_en.pdf

Appendix A

Summary of the Main Features of the Big Blue Button Technology Supporting the BTh (by Distance-Learning)

- The model of remote learning is intended to give off-campus students the same learning experience as students on-campus
- ETS will offer the programme from lecture room to desktop
- Off-campus students will login to their live class via Moodle at the same time as the other students on campus
- Off-campus students will receive the same learning materials as on-campus students via Moodle
- Off-campus students will be able to interact with real-time audio, video and data
- Off-campus students will be seen by the lecturer (real time video)
- Off-campus students will be able to see the lecturer (real time video)
- Off-campus students will be able to hear the lecturer and other students (on and off-campus) during lectures and discussions (real time audio)
- Off-campus students can interact with the lecturer (real time audio and video) and on-campus students (real time audio) during lectures and discussions
- Off-campus students will have the same data on their PC as appears on the Smartboard (real time data)

- The number of off-campus students will be limited to between 5 and 10. This number will enable facial recognition by staff via large monitors in each classroom
- Off-campus students will liaise with their Director of Studies via Skype-type technologies
- Off-campus students will submit assessments in exactly the same way as on-campus students – via Moodle/Turnitin
- Off-campus students will receive assessment feedback using Moodle and personal conversation using Skype-type technologies
- Off-campus students will be expected to sit exams on the ETS campus or failing that undertake them at local institutions approved by ETS and
- On-campus staff and off-campus students will receive appropriate training on the new system

Appendix B

Validation Event for the Bachelor of Theology (by Distance-Learning) held at Edinburgh Theological Seminary (ETS) on 17 May 2016

Timetable:

14.00 Arrival

Introductions and tea/coffee

14.15 Brief Tour of Classrooms and Relevant Facilities for BTh (by Distance-Learning) by Professor MacLeod, Vice Principal and Programme Team Leader

14.45 Meeting with Programme Team Leader and Key Support Staff

To discuss the proposal, rationale, operational considerations, the student experience, assessment, feedback etc.

16.15 Depart