

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 24 March 2017

**Periodic Subject Review: Responses to the Recommendations
Arising from the Review of English Literature
held on 17 March 2016**

Ms Helen Clegg, Clerk to the Review Panel

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.

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**

Response: (see Rec 2 below)

Assessment and Feedback**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**

Response – Recommendations 1 and 2

Response:

Our vision for the future is to build on the distinctive legacies of our department and discipline in the following ways: sustain excellent performance in L&T and Research-related exercises (ie sustain or improve our recent NSS satisfaction rate of 98%, itself an increase from previous cycle's 90%) by offering flexible and innovative curricula and research-led teaching; by recruiting excellent staff with expertise in a suite of strategic themes, such as Colonial/Postcolonial; Victorian; Modern and Contemporary; Fantasy literatures and Creative Writing, which are growth areas at UG and PGT level. To that effect, we have put together successful business cases for two Chairs, one LKAS Fellowship and a Lectureship. This investment will enable us to capitalise on the distinctiveness of our provision which combines critical and creative strands and expertise in innovative fields, such as Fantasy and Spatial Humanities. These strengths will enable us to recruit RUK and international students, which are strategic priorities for us.

Since the Review, the Subject has held a pre-sessional Away Day, a dedicated Research Forum, an information session with the Director of the Arts Lab, and additional staff meetings with highlighted agenda items related to strategic issues, such as PGT provision, PGR numbers, staffing, and research activity. All meetings were very collegiate and productive, and decisions were made to address these issues. It was decided to align the level of provision at the pre-Honours level with the majority of other Subjects in the College by reducing the number of weekly lectures to 3 on our 1B, 2A and 2B courses; our new generic MLitt in English Literature will be on offer from the coming session (2017-18) with the prospect of maximising numbers while ensuring economy of means (by introducing a 'hub and spoke' model); our PGR numbers remain high, and it was agreed that they represent a success story and speak to the unit's broad expertise and international reputation for research excellence; our Research Forum was particularly useful in identifying common directions and potential for collaboration within the Subject and across School, College and University (partly by introducing to the team the interdisciplinary interests of two new members of staff). Internationalisation remains on the agenda with regular reminders of prospects available to students and staff and the development of new links. We hosted a visit by Professor McNees, of the University of Denver, the academic lead of a new agreement with a 3+1+1 format, whereby English majors from UoD will spend their final year at Glasgow and proceed to Taught Master's study here. A bespoke agreement with the College of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Fudan is under negotiation, and we are also considering prospects of research and L&T collaboration with McGill University under the auspices of the Open Skies initiative led by Professor Fearn.

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

Response:

The matter was discussed at our pre-sessional Away Day and good practice was shared amongst colleagues. The model whereby students presenting are expected to send a brief account of their presentation and ensuing seminar discussion to the tutor/seminar leader via email was considered particularly helpful in terms of continuity and speed of feedback and we agreed to adopt it across the board. The importance of returning feedback to students

promptly was reinforced more generally at the session. To that end, we also agreed to cite the exact date of essay/assignment return on the coursework submission cover sheet.

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

Response:

We collated and circulated for discussion at the first staff meeting of the academic session all colleagues' guidelines/descriptors of the ALG format and compiled a generic document which is now included in our course books and Moodle sites.

Recommendation 5

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

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

Response:

Aropä is used by the School's PGT Training Coordinator and member of our Subject Area (Dr Bryony Randall) to facilitate student contributions to the Research Training Course. Dr Randall presented on the system at our October staff meeting and is our liaison with the LTC, especially Helen Purchase and John Hamer.

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

Response:

A briefing and workshop session was organised for the Level 2 class, and students of all levels were invited to 'Paths from English Literature: A Student-Alumni Roundtable' evening event which we hosted on December 8th (as part of the LTDF-funded project devised by Dr Dick and Dr Kolocotroni). The latter event was hugely successful and attracted approx. 70 students from all four years of our programme and 8 distinguished alumni who spoke generously and informatively about their degree experience and career paths. The event received enthusiastic feedback and will be repeated next year. Notes from the event and the workshops with the Level 2 and Honours classes will inform the English Literature Graduate

Attributes framework which will be included in our handbooks at all levels. Clips from the short films of alumni speaking about their degree experience and paths will be added to our website.

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

Response:

Denise Hooper and Neil Croll of the Widening Participation team were approached further to this recommendation and an informal conversation has been initiated between the Subject, WP, the Transitions Working Group (of which NC is a member) and the College of Arts Retention Office, Dr Susan Stuart. We have no issues with retention of such students in recent years, but we are scoping ways of discreetly supporting progression, including an informal mentoring scheme.

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

Response:

Two sessions to that effect have been scheduled in the last week of term for the benefit of the 2B and Junior Honours classes respectively. An Introduction to Honours document has also been circulated to all students via email.

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

Response – Head of Subject and Head of School:

Perceived uncertainties remain about whether, and if so what, sanctions exist should ECR colleagues not achieve promotion within the timescale established at the beginning of the programme. A salient point, that we are bringing to the attention of the Head of College, is the following apparent mismatch. At

www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/all/pay/ecdp/policy/#d.en.295913

appears the following statement:

'Where an individual is unable to complete ECDP within the specified timescale, the ECDP Board of Review may exceptionally agree to an extension of the timescale for completion of the programme. This is likely to apply in cases where an individual has met the majority of the criteria required for promotion to Grade 9 and is likely to meet the remaining criteria in a period of less than one year.'

This statement seems implicitly to conflict with the 'preponderance' rule at

www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/all/pay/promotion/acpromotion/acadpromo/#d.en.300508

which reads as follows:

'Promotion decisions will be determined on the evidence provided by each applicant and on the extent to which they satisfy a preponderance of the criteria across the range of academic activity applicable to the grade and track.'

The Head of School has raised this apparent mismatch with Head of College and Head of College HR, as it relates to concerns about transparency, parity of procedure and staff empowerment. A clear statement from HR on the implications of non-completion would also be helpful in this context.

Response: HR

The University is committed to ensuring that all new members of early career staff pursuing the Research & Teaching track are appropriately developed and supported, and mentored to enable them to reach Senior Lecturer (Grade 9) level, within a specified timeframe. The programme was originally launched in 2013, and a full review of the programme and its' associated provisions took place during academic year 2015/16, following which it has been refreshed accordingly.

Comprehensive guidance and consistent advice is now available through the HR website www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/all/pay/ecdp/

to ECDP participants, their mentors and those line managers with responsibility for staff pursuing the ECDP programme. Further, a series of well attended induction type events have just taken place which provided the opportunity for each of these stakeholders to receive a full update on the provisions and other related information which may be applicable.

At a College level, a new College ECDP champion has been appointed. Her role has been to work with EOD colleagues and with local School champions and mentors to increase knowledge of the programme. It is felt that moving to a system of two key points in the year for agreeing objectives and development plan has simplified the process considerably. As has it's alignment with PDR in the most recent cycle.

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***

Joint Response – Head of Subject/School/College

GTAs in English Literature and all Subject Areas in Critical Studies are paid in line with GU policies and HR/payroll procedures. Payroll queries are dealt with by the administrative team and the Senior Operations and Finance Administrator attends GTA meetings early in each semester to explain procedures and answer queries.

The College of Arts has set up a working group, with members from all Schools, to undertake a comprehensive review of all matters to do with the role, employment and funding of GTAs. This is expected to report before the start of the next academic year. In the meantime, the

Response - Head of Subject:

The Subject continues to argue for better pay and conditions on behalf of our GTAs despite budgetary restrictions. The two English Literature GTA representatives have regular meetings with the Head of Subject and report fully on matters exercising the cohort. With regard to the specific recommendation, the GTA reps have fielded views which suggest that the rate of pay for preparation should be finessed and that student consultation and further teaching administration time should be revisited. These are issues we will discuss with Conveners, Heads of School Administration and Head of School at the June planning meeting.

Response: HR

The four Heads of School Administration, along with local College HR and central recruitment teams, have mapped out the processes required to support the Extended Workforce Policy to also ensure a standard approach to salary and payment across the College. It remains necessary to have some subject level variations in what is expected but the overall hourly rate is standardised. The Head of College Finance has set up a GTA working group that will review the finance/budget process for GTA type activity. This will attempt to make the resources available clearer earlier in the cycle in order the Subject Areas have a little more time to recruit the necessary GTA/Tutor numbers.

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

Response:

The recommendation is noted for future reference should the need arise. We no longer have Teaching Fellows amongst our staff, and the one colleague on a permanent UT contract has been re-graded (as R&T).

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

Response:

The SCS working group on GTAs agreed in May 2016 that all GTAs in the School would be required to undertake, and be paid for, the E&D essentials training. This was implemented in September 2016. It is an HR requirement for all contracted staff to complete this training, but we extend this to all GTAs in the School, including those on casual worker contracts.

English Literature GTA representatives also note: “Equality and Diversity Essentials online training is geared to outline what can be said and done within the bounds of the law. It does not explain how to help to support our diverse student population. In addition to those offered at the lunchtime sessions, GTAs felt they would benefit from more training on creating inclusive teaching spaces (this has been requested from the Learning and Teaching Centre, but they replied that they do not currently offer a suitable course). We plan to compile a pack of helpful online resources between us to address this.”

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

Response:

The School of Critical Studies follows College and University policies and procedures on First Aid, which ensures that there are a number of registered First Aiders available in the College to ensure cover at all times. There are financial implications to this recommendation as First Aid training is costly. As the University does not require all lecturing staff to be trained first aiders, Critical Studies does not consider that this recommendation is desirable or practicable. The School has offered a workshop on pastoral care this year which GTAs were encouraged and paid to attend.

One of the English Literature GTA reps (Ms Alexandra Campbell) set up a School GTA Moodle site, which has been welcomed by all as a useful development:

<http://moodle2.gla.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=8347>

As noted above, the GTA reps are in regular contact with the Head of Subject and collaborate/report on a number of standard agenda items, which include pay, procedures, training, development. At the moment, we are liaising on the prospect of having Level 2 GTAs facilitate the formation of focus groups in the Subject for the exploratory, fact-finding first phase of a LTDF-funded project which will investigate student anxiety/stress and evaluate online anxiety/stress reduction resources for student support (led by Dr Gardani, Psychology, with input from the Head of English Literature, the Deputy Head of Counselling and Psychological Services and members of the Academic Development Unit and the School of Computing Science).