

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 6 October 2017

Report from the Meeting of the Joint Board of the University of Glasgow and Edinburgh Theological Seminary held on 27 April 2017

Robbie Mulholland, Clerk to the Joint Board

1. The BTh Distance-learning Pathway

The Board was advised that no students had registered for the BTh by distance-learning in session 2016/2017. Part-time students, however, found the flexible attendance pattern offered by the distance-learning option to be useful in that it enabled them to take the BTh on a flexible, blended-learning basis attending the ETS campus on alternate weeks. The Board noted that informal feedback from students regarding the programme had been very positive albeit formal feedback from the student satisfaction questionnaire process was not yet available. Future questionnaires would be amended to include questions relating to the distance-learning option.

2. ETS Impact Goals

The Board noted that UoG and ETS staff had met recently to discuss a draft proposal from ETS to introduce a Gaelic and Gospel module. However, due to a combination of circumstances, the module would not be introduced until 2018-2019. This was partly due to a lack of the necessary staff resources in the Celtic and Gaelic Subject Area at UoG and also an anticipated reduction in the number of students wishing to take the proposed course in the coming session.

3. Higher Education Review (HER) (Alternative Providers) Action Plan

The Board was advised regarding progress on the three recommendations made by the Higher Education Review (HER) (Alternative Providers) at the ETS review in September 2016, as follows:

- **Recommendation 1:** *Strengthen the process for internal moderation of marks in order to ensure consistency and transparency*

The ETS General Assessment Policy had been revised to ensure that a more robust and transparent process was adopted in respect of moderation. The updated policy would be considered by the Board of Studies and circulated to course organisers.

- **Recommendation 2:** *Formalise oversight of placement provision in order to ensure the quality of learning opportunities and to ensure any risks are mitigated.*

The Board heard that ETS offered two types of placement and that only one type was offered as an elective within the BTh curriculum. The ETS Placement Policy was being updated to clarify the types of placement available and the extent to which formal oversight was required in each case. Consultation with students had taken place regarding this issue and it was hoped that the revised Placement Policy would be implemented in the second semester of 2016/2017.

- **Recommendation 3:** *Develop and implement an annual cycle of professional development opportunities for staff to support the Seminary's Five Year Plan.*

The Board was informed that an informal process for professional staff development was already in place at ETS and now a formal staff development policy was being brought forward. The policy, which would include details of an annual staff development programme, would be submitted to both the Seminary Board and Joint Board for approval.

4. Mission Centre

The Board was informed that work to establish a Mission Centre on floors 6 and 7 of the ETS building was underway and a small working group had been established to examine matters relating to staff recruitment and finance. No decisions regarding staff recruitment would be made until further discussions regarding finance had taken place but ETS was cautiously optimistic that the project would come to fruition.

5. Proposed Timetable for the Re/validation of the BTh and MTh Degrees

The Board received a proposed timetable for the re/validation of the current BTh and MTh programmes and also the proposed new MTh in Missiology. The timetable would enable the review of all programmes at the same validation event (preferably early in 2018). This took account of the fact that the report from the re/validation event would need to be submitted to the Academic Standards Committee no later than May 2018. The Clerk would contact ETS to establish a mutually suitable date in due course. Members were also aware that a Partnership Review would need to be undertaken this year and would likely take place in September 2017. This would be organised internally within the University and would not involve the participation of ETS staff.

6. Proposed MTh in Missiology

The Board considered a Statement of Intent (SOI) for a proposed MTh in Missiology. The Committee noted that the proposal had been amended to start in September 2018, rather than the previously suggested date of September 2017. Following consideration of the SOI, the Board agreed to **recommend** to ASC that it give in-principle approval for the introduction of the Master of Theology in Missiology at ETS with effect from September 2018. The Board noted that if ASC approved the recommendation, then ETS could advertise the introduction of the new programme, with the proviso that it was 'subject to validation'.

[Clerk's note: The May 2017 meeting of ASC approved the introduction of the Master of Theology in Missiology at ETS commencing in September 2018, subject to validation].

7. Exit Award

At the last meeting of the Board, it was noted that a student had withdrawn from the BTh after one year of study and was eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education. The Board had requested that the award be made with the word 'Theology' in brackets, such that the award would read Certificate of Higher Education (Theology). The Clerk had obtained advice from the Senate Office which confirmed that the proposed nomenclature was acceptable and complied with existing University practice regarding exit awards. The Clerk would draw this to the attention of the upcoming ETS Board of Examiners so that it could make the necessary arrangements regarding the student's award.

The Senate Office would arrange to update references to undergraduate exit awards within the ETS section of the 2017-18 University Calendar as appropriate.

8. Convener's Business

The Convener gave an update on the University's campus redevelopment. Recent developments included the vacating of the former Mathematics and Statistics Building on University Gardens which was being demolished to make way for the construction of the Learning and Teaching Hub. Mathematics and Statistics was the first School to move to the former Western Infirmary site and would be housed, for the time being, in a temporary modular building.

9. Matters Remitted from the ETS Senate

The Board **considered and approved** a request from ETS that three BTh students be awarded credits on the basis of previous study, as detailed below:

Student 1 - 30 credits (London School of Theology)

Student 2 - 15 credits (Highland Theological College, University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI))

Student 3 – 45 credits (Highland Theological College, University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)).

10. New members of Staff (Associate University Lecturers)

Details of two new members of staff to be approved as Associate University Lecturers (AUL) were **received** by the Board. It was noted that neither member of staff had a Masters level qualification, although both were currently studying towards this qualification. The Board **agreed** that approval of these members of staff as AULs would be subject to them successfully completing Masters level study. ETS would arrange to submit their updated CVs to a future meeting of the Board for approval.

11. Any Other Business

A member drew the Board's attention to recent media reports that suggested a number of institutions in England were offering three-year degrees as condensed two-year fast track programmes and enquired whether this was a model the University had given consideration to. The Convener noted that the University had no plans to move away from the existing four-year degree programme and observed that, in general, the fast track model tended to encourage fact-gathering learning at the expense of self-directed learning and critical reflection.