

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 24 November 2017

Matters Arising

Mrs Ruth Cole, Clerk to the Committee

2.1 *Update on Progress on the Recommendations Arising from the Academic Review of Glasgow International College (GIC) held on 26 March 2015 (ASC/2016/20)*

JAMB was advised at its meeting on 25 May 2017 that progress had been made on addressing Recommendation 1 (*Transition*) from the Academic Review. For example, GIC had now introduced a process of compulsory mentoring and transition had been made a core compulsory activity for all foundation students where previously voluntary sessions had been run at lunchtimes. Moreover, Jenny Deane has informally reviewed the first year of the delivery of the transitions and mentoring support, and has made some enhancements in light of experience. It was agreed however that insufficient time had passed to allow a fully informed position on this and that the report to Academic Standards Committee should be delayed until November 2018 when a more comprehensive view could be taken. Meanwhile, transitions support is regularly discussed between GIC and CoSS, and increasingly so with MVLS and Science & Engineering and is the subject of discussion at JAMB. We would like to propose that a report would also be submitted to the UoG/GIC Joint Strategic Management Board at the same time.

2.2 *Interim Responses to College Annual Monitoring Summaries for 2015-16 (ASC/2016/46)*

In response to ASC's request for a further update from Estates & Buildings regarding refurbishment of teaching space and timetabling, the following has been provided by Mrs Ann Allen, Director:

In 2015/16 the decision was taken to use a portion of the 'Teaching Infrastructure' budget to fund the refurbishment of a number of rooms to support active learning, some of these being TEAL (technology-enhanced active learning) spaces. The aims of this pilot were:

- to provide a trial of the kinds of spaces, equipment and interior design intended to be deployed in the Learning & Teaching Hub;
- to inform decisions on the detailed design and specification for the new learning spaces;
- to aid staff in developing their delivery in an active learning environment.

This programme, including provision of support for staff and evaluation of the spaces, was initially led by a somewhat informal but representative group comprising:

- Assistant VP: Learning & Teaching
- Dean of Learning & Teaching (Arts)
- Dean of Public Engagement
- SRC rep
- LEADs rep
- AVIT reps
- Estates staff
- HLM architects

Plans and designs for the spaces were also shared with the School of Education and School of Medicine, given the location of a number of rooms.

This programme of refurbishment of teaching spaces on a pilot basis has continued through 2016/17 with similar objectives. Latterly this activity is being conducted with the oversight of the L&TH Learning Spaces workstream.

Alongside this programme of 'pilot spaces' an annual survey of centrally-managed teaching rooms is conducted to assess the standards of spaces, this information then being used to develop a maintenance plan. Where significant work is required in a room (e.g. new fixtures and fittings) then provision for active learning is prioritised.

The workstream is now turning its attention to a five-year plan for the refurbishment of teaching spaces across the existing estate in order to ensure that both old and new teaching spaces are of similar quality and that both traditional and evolving pedagogies are supported. In devising this plan due account will be taken of the outcomes of the evaluation of recently refurbished rooms.

2.6 Audit Reports on Course Approval Activity (ASC 2017/10)

Following receipt of the reports at the May 2017 meeting, ASC had requested a short further response from Arts indicating the degree to which the documents (proposal documentation, minutes, consultations) had been adequately completed.

The following update has been provided by Mr M Hastings, Head of Academic and Student Administration, College of Arts:

Despite close oversight of School Boards of Studies, there were some problems caused by inexperience. It has become clear that more support and training is needed for convenors and clerks of Boards when they take up these roles. A Course Approval Moodle has been created to address this and our QA officer will provide regular training. Typical problems included missing details on assessments (e.g. word count on written assignments, duration of exams), wording of aims and ILOs not in keeping with Senate guidelines, wordy Short Descriptions, misunderstanding of technical terms (e.g. 'associated programmes'), failure to note responses to consultation comments and incomplete consultation documentation. We remain concerned about the loss of College-level oversight of course approval in light of the large number of joint MA degrees in our College that cut across School lines, but acknowledge the improvement in local responsiveness created by the devolution of Boards to School level. Our new Course Approval Moodle and training will aim to sustain consistency across joint programmes. An additional concern is that HR and Heads of School need to update job descriptions to include the substantial workload now assigned to convenors and clerks of School Boards.

2.7 Progress Report on Issues Relating to GTAs (ASC/2017/2.1)

Dr Nathalie Sheridan (LEADS) has provided the following progress report in relation to the proposed project considering the role, training and support of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs):

Project Leads

- Dr Nathalie Sheridan
- Dr Amanda Sykes

Background

Issues around GTA provision have been noted in Periodic Subject Reviews over the years, in conversations with colleagues from Senate, RSIO, LEADS, School Administration, GTA coordinators and the GTAs themselves, and these issues at large seem to remain persistent despite efforts being made by various stakeholders. In 2014 a survey attempted to scope GTA provision across the institution, unfortunately the data does not permit us to confidently make conclusions about the situation. Additionally, this is now three years ago and we can assume a change in the GTA cohort such that a follow up could not be used for data triangulation.

However, the survey and other communication has highlighted some patterns that seem to need addressing (this picture will be clearer once results from the LTDF study and hopefully the USIF project come in). Issues can be divided into the following sections:

- GTA experience
- Training and Provision
- Administrative Processes
- HR Processes

To try improving issues an institution-wide project was initiated under the guidance of Prof M Fischbacher-Smith.

Sub-Projects

The LTDF project will explore the GTA experience from the GTA point of view, we aim to map who our GTAs are, the various roles they hold, and the forms of provision and support they obtain at school level, as well as identifying concerns they may have.

The University Services Innovation Fund (USIF) bid (in application) aims to cover the administrative sides around the GTA experience, and to identify good practice, support, recognise administrators in their efforts, and explore institution-wide experiences of GTA coordinators (administrative and academic).

It would be very helpful to also collaborate with HR (vision) and obtain advice, and maybe offer insights (particularly from the USIF bid) to try and join up processes where and if necessary. Collaboration has not yet been ascertained.

Aims & Outcomes

The overall aim of the conjoined projects, in conjunction with the good practice paper created by colleagues in Senate, is to develop an institution-wide Code of Practice for our GTA community, which establishes standards that are applicable across all schools but leaves enough room for school (and research institution) –specific needs. This is why we hope to secure the USIF funding as the input of administrators and their experience is crucial. It is currently anticipated that the Code of Practice will be finalised by December 2018.