

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 5 October 2018

Updated Responses to the Recommendation 2 and 3 Arising from
the Periodic Subject Review of Accounting & Finance held on 3rd
March 2017

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senior Academic Policy Manager

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that more critical writing and language support should be provided for international students, and that existing support offered by the University (such as the English for Academic Study Unit) should be promoted more widely by the Subject. [Paragraph 3.3.1]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject and The Vice-Principal and Head of College, College of Social Sciences

Response:

In our postgraduate taught induction meetings, we have increased the emphasis given to the importance of this issue generally, and we have made additional efforts to promote the English for Academic Writing courses and support, provided by the College of Social Sciences. The majority of our postgraduate students register for this. We do not at this stage keep records of attendance or on-line completion rates for this college course.

In addition to our increased promotion of the College language unit support, we have directly addressed this issue through modification to some of our own teaching: For MAcc students, the Issues in Accounting Research course has been redesigned to provide students with regular opportunities to make presentations in class, and receive staged summative and formative assessment on their presentations and associated written work. The assessment for this course is now 100% coursework. The language issues is more acute for the MAcc students than for students taking degrees with a bigger “Finance” component. Accounting and accounting assessments typically tend to be quite highly discursive.

We have also addressed this issue by increasing the number of tutorials in many of our postgraduate taught courses, both accounting and finance. We took this step in response to postgraduate taught student requests, made in recent years, for more contact time. The additional tutorial time allows more opportunity for students to express themselves in English in class and receive ongoing support and encouragement to develop their language skills.

Generally our students perform well in their programmes achieving good degree outcomes. This suggests that fundamentally they have or are able to acquire at Glasgow the language skills they need to perform well in our programmes. The Adam Smith Business School admissions committee regularly reviews the admissions criteria for our postgraduate taught students. The trend has been to increase requirements over the years including modest increase in the language requirements.

Response: Vice Principal and Head of College of Social Sciences

Awaited

Minute Extract March 2018

Recommendation 2: This concerned critical writing and language support for international students. ASC noted that no response had yet been received from the Head of College.

October 2018 - Response: Vice Principal and Head of College of Social sciences

Large numbers of AccFin PGT are involved in CoSS activities around critical writing:

- We currently have over 350 (and rising) students signed up to the Developing Your Academic Writing (DYAW) programme that Gayle Pringle Barnes in the College of Social Sciences offers. Critical writing is discussed throughout the programme, with sessions targeting the critical writing skills required in Accounting & Finance courses. Course materials are revised on an ongoing basis in order to ensure they best meets students' writing needs and that they 'fit' with their evolving assessment requirements. Students also have regular opportunities to submit practice writing exercises and to receive feedback from the tutor.
- We also have a programme of eight additional workshops focusing on language development that run alongside DYAW and are delivered by colleagues in English for Academic Study (EAS).

Many students also participate in provision organised by ASBS:

- Advancing English for Business classes are delivered by EAS as part of ASBS support for PGT. These focus on seminar discussion skills.

Students also access classes in different aspects of critical writing provided at University level by LEADS and EAS.

Students are accessing support, but it's important to remember that the development of English language and critical writing skills is a long term process.

Postgraduate taught students

Recommendation 3

In order to comply with the University's Guidelines on Moderation and Second Marking, the Review Panel **recommends** that all postgraduate taught dissertations are double or second-marked. [Paragraph 4.3.3]

For the attention of: The Head of Subject

Response March 2018:

This recommendation has **not** been implemented. The recommendation was discussed at the Adam Smith Business School Learning & Teaching Committee where it was confirmed that the school had been given permission by the Clerk of Senate not to follow the normal requirement that all postgraduate taught dissertations should be double or second-marked.

Prior to receiving that permission, some years ago, second marking of all postgraduate taught dissertations was undertaken by adjunct staff. After receiving the permission the second marking of a substantial sample of postgraduate taught dissertations is undertaken by internal / full-time University of Glasgow academic staff employed in the school.

Whilst continuing with the agreed Adam Smith Business School moderation policy, we have, following the Review Panel's raising of this issue, increased the transparency and rigour of the moderation process.

The moderation continues to be stratified covering all supervisors and the full range of grades, with in addition efforts made to identify and moderate any anomalous grades, including dissertation grades significantly out of line with a student's grades for the taught

element of the degree. We now gather information on the student supervision experience which identifies supervisors and we can use that information to direct additional moderation effort.

The moderation approach taken was carefully explained to the exam-board dealing with the dissertation grades awarded to our 2016/17 postgraduate taught students. The difference between Review Panel's recommendation and our practices was discussed explicitly with external examiners. The external examiners confirmed that the moderation approach adopted worked well and in their view gave high assurance of the quality of the assessment of our postgraduate taught dissertations.

ASC Minute Extract: March 2018

Recommendation 3: In order to comply with the University's Guidelines on Moderation and Second Marking, the Panel had recommended that all PGT dissertations be double- or second-marked. The response indicated that this recommendation had not been implemented because the School had been given permission by the Clerk of Senate not to comply with the normal requirement. Instead strong moderation practices were in place, and this arrangement had been approved by the external examiners.

The Clerk of Senate advised ASC that some years ago, in the face of a very large volume of dissertations and limited staff resource, Accounting & Finance had exceptionally been given permission to rely on moderation and sampling. ASC's view was that given the passage of time since that agreement, it would be timely to review the position. Further information should therefore be sought from Accounting & Finance concerning the volume of dissertations, staffing levels and further detail on the current practice in relation to sampling and moderation, and the training of adjunct staff for marking and report back to the October meeting.

Updated response: October 2018

This issue was recently again discussed at the Adam Smith Business School Learning & Teaching Committee which advised the subject group that it should continue with the school sampling approach as agreed with the Clerk of Senate. It was noted that the situation had not substantially changed since exceptional permission was given by the Clerk of Senate to the Adam Smith Business School and to the Accounting & Finance Subject Group in particular to sample double or second mark PGT dissertations.

The number of PGT students submitting dissertation in 17/18 in Accounting & Finance will be 607 and in 18/19 it will be more than 710 (the currently enrolled number – still rising). In Accounting & Finance we have 37 full time permanent members of academic staff available (excluding two on study leave, and four new members of staff who will join later in the year after the 17/18 dissertations need to be marked and 2nd marked). While the UG workload is relatively stable, the PGT numbers are exceptionally high. There is little or no slack in the subject group work load allocation and when real student numbers for 18/19 are included in the model it will be difficult to keep staff within the 1540 hour work load allocation which builds in agreed research and scholarship time. We may find ourselves needing to breach the model.

We plan in Accounting & Finance to 2nd mark internally a risk based sample of 10% of the PGT dissertation. That sample will cover all supervisors and the range of marks. Furthermore, we will 2nd mark internally any dissertations where the dissertation mark seem anomalous in context of the student's array of marks on taught courses. In addition all dissertation marking sheets, will be reviewed by our PGT dissertations convenor, who will check that the qualitative feedback being provided is in line with the grade awarded and in cases where there is a discrepancy 2nd marking will be undertaken.

As in 16/17 we will fully explain the procedures we are following in respect of PGT dissertation marking and second marking to our PGT exam-board. We have previously received support from our external examiners for our approach to dissertation marking and 2nd marking and they have confirmed that in their view the approach works well and gives appropriate assurance of the quality of the assessment of our postgraduate taught dissertations.