

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee – Friday 4 October 2019

## Periodic Subject Review: Responses to the Recommendations arising from the Review of Management held on 9 March 2018

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senior Academic Policy Manager

*Student Engagement***Recommendation 3**

The Review Panel recognises the difficulties involved in teaching large classes and **recommends** that, with the support of the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service, the Subject establishes internal mechanisms to develop the capabilities of staff to make greater and more systematic use of effective approaches, including those that are technologically enabled, to the teaching of large classes. [Paragraph 3.4.1]

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject and Director of the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service**  
**For information: The Head of College and the Head of School**

**Joint Response: Subject and Director of LEADS**

*3.1 New learning and teaching spaces.* The response to this recommendation is three-pronged. Long-term, the ASBS is investing in a new business school building and the design of the learning and teaching spaces will enable active participation and team-based teaching across both large and small class teaching. As described in the response to the first recommendation, all staff are contributing to the design of the new teaching and learning spaces and we are confident the new building will enable innovative teaching approaches.

*3.2 Blended learning.* In the intermediate term, our response is to pilot with blended learning formats in order to make the learning experience more flexible, customisable and engaging.

Concretely, the proposal is to introduce blended learning formats for a number of our undergraduate level 1 and 2 courses, which are currently all based on traditional large class lectures and tutorials. The lectures are centred around textbooks and, as such, their primary epistemological purpose is to disseminate knowledge. Student feedback indicates that there is an appetite for change in terms of mode of delivery, which is underpinned by pedagogical research that demonstrates the one-way communication of traditional lectures to be suboptimal in terms of supporting key learning outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

The proposal is to deliver most textbook knowledge via a number of short videos posted on Moodle. The number of lectures will be reduced, and their epistemological purpose changed: rather than disseminating textbook knowledge, they will be used to introduce a business problem relevant to the specific functional discipline (e.g. marketing, operations management, etc.). The tutorials will tie in with the lectures such that students will be working on cases that

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Mulryan-Kyne (2010) Teaching large classes at college and university level: challenges and opportunities. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(2): 175-185, DOI: 10.1080/13562511003620001

refer directly to the business problem outlined in the lecture. Lectures will thus be driven by contemporary topics and business challenges, rather than a textbook narrative.

We hope to be able to pilot this new blended approach in the second semester of next academic year (i.e. 2019/20), but are cognizant of the fact that substantial change is required and that PIP approval processes, including stakeholder consultations, may delay the intervention to 2020/21. It should be noted that Dr Matt Offord has been appointed as Lecturer, with a specific remit to support online and blended learning in Management.

*3.3 Developing capability.* In the short term, Management should follow the recommendation and introduce a mechanism to develop staff capabilities to better engage students in traditional large class settings. To this end, Management's Head of Subject, Dr Thomas Anker, met with the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service (LEADS) in December 2018.

LEADS colleagues were very welcoming and appreciative but expressed that they were not well placed to help the Subject establishing an internal mechanism to develop staff capabilities in larger class student engagement. It was felt that the Subject would have to be the driving force and the suggestion was for the Subject to arrange a workshop where colleagues from Management would share best practice. This could then form the base for developing an internal mechanism for developing staff capability. LEADS would be happy to "top and tail" the workshops but did not see themselves as being well-placed to deliver the main content for workshops on large class student engagement or being instrumental in establishing the mechanism for sustained capability development.

The Subject has taken some steps towards addressing the issue via our Learning and Teaching Forum, e.g. Phil Race<sup>2</sup>, expert consultant and author of several books on effective assessment, learning and teaching in higher education, delivered a session on learning and assessment in large classes (18 February 2018). However, we do not feel well-equipped to develop a comprehensive mechanism without substantial external input from educational experts in student engagement, seeing that the PSR Review Panel highlights this as a weakness in the Subject.

*3.4 Staff reaction.* Finally, when the problem was discussed at a Subject meeting, some staff felt the recommendation was harsh as the responsibility for lack of engagement was placed with individual lecturers and there was insufficient recognition of the fact that the design of most large class learning spaces works as a barrier to large class interaction.

### **October 2019 - Updated Response**

The school has seconded Sarah Honeychurch from LEADS with a brief to support the development of learning and teaching initiatives. In terms of Management, Sarah is working with Alison Gibb (who leads our large PGT programme), Stephanie Anderson (who has been appointed to convene Management level one and two learning and teaching) and Farhad Shafti, who is programme convenor for the MA programme overall in Business and Management. (Examples are given in the Appendix)

### *Assessment and Feedback*

#### **Recommendation 4**

The Panel **recommends** that the Subject review its feedback, assessment and marking procedures in order to ensure consistency and timeliness of approach. [Paragraph 4.2.3]

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

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<sup>2</sup> About Phil Race: <https://phil-race.co.uk/welcome/>

## **Response:**

Management's feedback, assessment and marking procedures are subject to continuous review in terms of sustained dialogue with External Examiners. In addition to this iterative review process, we have instigated additional reviews of feedback, assessment and marking practices.

*4.1. Feedback.* External Examiners generally highlight the high quality of feedback we provide to our students, but also note unsatisfactory discrepancies in terms of some lecturers not providing sufficient written feedback on assignments.

We have developed a two-pronged response to the issue. First, consistency and quality of feedback is now a standing item at all UG and PGT Learning and Teaching Committee meetings. Our academic Assessment Officer is responsible for the item and for ensuring that action is taken to address any quality issues, either by liaising directly with colleagues or directing the matter for the attention of the Head of Subject.

Second, following recommendations from Prof David Nicol, ASBS Teaching Excellence Project Lead, we have reviewed and updated our assignment grading spreadsheet in order to tally with the use of marking rubrics, which is being embedded across the Subject after a successful pilot in 2017/18. This is in response to some markers' concern that the previous feedback boxes did not correspond with the use of marking rubrics. The updated feedback boxes should enhance consistency of marking and feedback when using marking rubrics to articulate the assessment criteria.

*4.2 Assessment.* Our assessment procedures and practices have been or are under review as follows.

The most substantial change is the redesign of our exam paper setting processes. The School has experienced some recurring issues in this area, which have resulted in student complaints. We have now conducted a thorough review of the exam paper setting process and introduced new guidelines and policies (see appendix 1 for a flowchart of the improved review process). The key improvements are more robust mechanisms for formal internal reviews that now take place in a structured fashion both pre and post External Examiner review.

Diversity, relevance and scope of assessment is currently under programme level review for our MBA and undergraduate Business & Management degrees. The aim of the MBA review is to inform a substantial redesign of the entire programme to be launched in 2019/20, whereas the undergraduate review aims at ensuring that assessments employed in the redesigned Honours degree meets the intended programme learning outcomes. There is a special focus on ensuring that we do not over-assess at level 1 and 2 as the new programme has four core classes per year in contrast to the old degree's two core classes per year. SSLCs are being used as the primary mechanism to ensure that the student voice is being reflected in the ongoing review.

*4.3. Marking.* Reports from External Examiners frequently highlight that our marking processes are fair and robust, with very good evidence of consistent second marking and quality assurance. However, moderation of grades has been identified as an area where some improvement is required in terms of ensuring consistency of approach across the Subject. To this end, a recent Subject Meeting focussed on moderation and management of marking teams: examples of best practice were highlighted along with the key points from the official GU guidance on moderation and second marking (Guthrie, 2011, Moderation and Second Marking [https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_216411\\_en.pdf](https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_216411_en.pdf)).

*4.4 ASBS Marking and Feedback Guideline.* A revised version of the School's marking, assessment and feedback guidelines was approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee and released in October 2018. The document is available on the School's SharePoint drive under Business School Policies/Assessment <https://sharepoint.gla.ac.uk/schools/business/Policy/Forms/AllItems.aspx>.

*4.5 GTA Inductions.* In order to better support GTAs in developing professionalism in marking and feedback, Dr Sarah Robinson designed a GTA Induction Programme. This will be outlined in greater detail in response to Recommendation 9.

***October 2019 – Updated Response:***

Colleagues in the subject area are aware of timeliness questions. As standard practice, and with the Director of Learning & Teaching, the school monitors and acts on the established feedback calendar. However, we are aware that this is a partial response. The Management subject area includes a number of courses at honours with a single assessment at the end of the course. I have set all colleagues in the school an objective in the current P&DR to both raise the profile of this question and set out a response:

“For your teaching undertaken in 2019/20, working with or as the course coordinator and the programme convener for each course that you teach, devise and implement a feedback process, which is aligned with the course learning objectives and programme learning goals, to include: offering formative feedback, ensuring that students receive timely formative feedback throughout the duration of the course, and directing part of this as guidance (or feed-forward) towards the course assessment or assessments.

Consistent with University policy, ensure for 2019/20 that students receive feedback on assessments within three weeks of the submission date.”

The subject area teaching team (as mentioned above) will monitor the implementation of this during 2019/20. We will also work with Amanda Sykes to enhance practice regarding timeliness with University-wide initiatives on feedback and assessment.

Adam Smith Business School will continue to use the School Learning & Teaching forum to share this good practice

### **Appendix – Examples of work currently being undertaken within ASBS (Recommendation 3)**

- Following a presentation at one of ASBS Learning & Teaching seminars about Team Based Learning (TBL) by Professor Moira Fischbacher-Smith (VP L&T) and a keynote presentation about TBL at the UofG L&T Conference, ASBS have formed a TBL team and are delivering our first workshops in Semester 1, 2019.
- Courses in Level 1 Business & Management have implemented technology-enhanced active learning approaches for large class sizes (270 approx). These include problem solving tasks set by live clients that is facilitated by Padlet. This format enables students to share their group work to the whole class and receive formative feedback from peers, lecturer staff and external clients in real-time. This approach was informed by a workshop on the importance of formative feedback run by Professor Phil Race for the Management subject group
- The first year course 'Introduction to Marketing' benefited from industry-sponsored prizes, case competitions and dragon den competitions, with very good student engagement.
- The first year course 'Foundations of Finance' benefited from a blended learning format, including use of videos and online multiple-choice exam system. The course also benefited from LEADS for supporting quantitative aspects of the course.
- In the second year course, 'Entrepreneurship', a group project video pitch was designed and successfully implemented. Overall students provided very encouraging and high quality videos.
- Course notes for second year course 'Service and Operations Management' used skeleton style to encourage student interaction and in-class discussion.
- A number of lecturers in Management at ASBS have started using the One Minute Paper (OMP) in classes to increase participation and get a better gauge on students' understanding of key concepts. This has involved trialling a technology based element called YACRS – Yet Another Classroom Response System, to develop Digital OMP (DOMP). This has been presented and discussed at the CABS LTSE conference, at AoM in Boston and published in the Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change in 2018