

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 4 October 2019

**Periodic Subject Review: Updated Responses to Recommendations
1 and 3 Arising from the Review of Physics & Astronomy held on 15
February 2018**

Mrs Catherine Omand, Senior Academic Policy Manager

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that the School continue to review possible means of alleviating the administrative burden currently carried by academic staff. The Panel is not able to recommend resource investments per se, but would stress the need for this aspect of administrative support to be considered from a strategic perspective so as to create capacity for the learning and teaching developments identified elsewhere in this report. The Panel also notes that the College is currently conducting a comprehensive review of support services, and this may impact on the School's response to this recommendation. [Paragraph 4.3.2]

**For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: The Head of College, Dean of Learning and Teaching**

Response:

A comprehensive review of administrative support at University and College level is currently being undertaken. In particular, the College review of Professional Services is examining the provision of teaching administrative support and the School is fully engaged with that review process. Following completion of the College review, the School will create a Working Party to consider and, where appropriate, implement its recommendations as quickly and smoothly as possible. In the meantime, the School has continued to make improvements in its administrative and technical support for teaching – with additional (initially fixed-term) technician and teaching administrative support posts appointed, or their fractional FTEs increased. We also continue to negotiate with the College on the issue of appointing a Teaching Administrator – recognising that we are currently the only School in the College without this position.

October 2019: Updated response from Head of College of Vice Principal

The School and the College have now agreed to the appointment of an L&T administrator in the School and this post will be filled in time for the start of the next semester. The College has also invested in additional resource to support L&T activities in the School, in the form of additional MPA staff (1.1 FTE) and additional Technical Resource to support UG and PGT laboratories.

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel recommends that the School review the training provided to demonstrators in relation to:

their supporting undergraduate labs, with particular emphasis on promoting problem-solving techniques for the students both in completing the labs and in being assessed by interview. [Paragraph 4.1.9]

their assessment of the undergraduate labs, with particular emphasis on achieving consistency in the amount of feedback provided to students, the provision of feedback that will identify to students how they can improve their grades (including how to achieve the highest grades), and the delivery of adequate preparation for their conducting of interviews. The demonstrators' view (paragraph 4.3.6) was that statutory GTA training was of limited value in relation to labs, as the focus was more on classroom based teaching and the Panel notes that some work is already underway on these matters in the College of Science and Engineering. [Paragraph 4.2.9]

**For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: The Dean of Learning & Teaching
Dr Nathalie Sheridan, LEADS**

Response:

Laboratory demonstrations are carried out by postgraduate students, postdoctoral research staff and academic staff. For several years it has been challenging to find enough demonstrators for the laboratories and for supervisions. Going forward, our Laboratory Heads will meet annually to ensure that a consistent set of criteria are being used for training of all demonstrators. In particular, demonstrators that carry out marking through oral interviews will receive specific training on the conduct of these interviews to ensure that they are carried out consistently and fairly. Laboratory Heads will continue to monitor marking consistency amongst all demonstrators (something that is already being carried out).

October 2019 - Updated response from LEADS

We have created a resource for schools to use in their GTA training. This resource can be tailored to the school's needs, and it supports school staff in preparing their GTAs for teaching. It can be as long as a one-day training, or as short as the staff feel is appropriate for their GTAs. The resource covers an explanation of the UKPSF and then covers some of the most common areas of working as GTA, including designing a session, teaching different sized groups, the role of technology in the classroom, assessment and feedback, and diversity and inclusion in the classroom. Each slide is populated with relevant information that fits a general audience and then can be amended to fit the varying roles of GTAs across the university. It also includes easy to navigate links to all relevant university guidelines and webpages and can be amended to include the pages and information that is most relevant to the programme. There are notes and a mini script that those trained to deliver the training can follow to help foster discussion of the various topics covered. Contact LEADS-enquiries@glasgow.ac.uk