

**UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW**

**Academic Standards Committee - Friday 30 May 2008**

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:  
Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Review of  
Educational Studies held on 30 April and 1 May 2007**

**Mrs Marjory Wright, Clerk to the Review Panel**

**May 2008**

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

*Conclusions*

The Review Panel concluded that the provision of Educational Studies was of a high quality overall. The students who met with the Panel were articulate and their satisfaction with the quality of their educational experience and with the standard of programmes and courses offered by both Departments was evident. The Panel was impressed by the progress that had been made since the merger of the then Department of Education with St Andrew's College in 1999. Under the leadership of Dr Christine Forde, staff who had originally been employed by St Andrew's College had undergone a significant culture change in a relatively short period of time, and a high proportion of the Department's staff was now research active. The Department had come through some difficult times and had emerged as an integrated team of staff, fully committed to the provision of high quality research-informed programmes and courses and to the expansion of international recruitment.

The Panel found evidence of strong partnership with local authorities, the Scottish Executive Education Department and professional and statutory bodies. The Departments of Educational Studies and Curriculum Studies were alert to the changing needs of local authorities and the needs of the profession in general and were in a strong position to take advantage of emerging opportunities. There was also evidence of co-operation between the two Departments. Staff of the Department of Educational Studies valued the leadership provided by Professor Bruce Carrington and it was pleasing to note that he was working closely with Dr Forde to build on the Department's earlier achievements. Staff clearly viewed the DPTLA review as being complementary to the Department's own review of its provision, procedures and processes that had been ongoing since September 2006.

The Panel was particularly impressed by the innovative and creative ways with which the Department used Moodle and by the students' engagement in Moodle and there was clear evidence that engagement in virtual learning had enhanced the learning process for students.

**Recommendations to the Department/Faculty and University Officers**

The recommendations interspersed in the report, and summarised below, are made in the spirit of encouragement in order to enhance the already high standards in the

Department of Educational Studies. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the corresponding sections of the report, and are ranked in order of priority.

### *Recommendation 1*

- i. The Review Panel recognised that part-time and distance education, together with the additional commitments of mature students, did not lend itself readily to a formal gathering of staff and students at regular intervals and therefore **recommends** that all programme teams introduce a mechanism to respond to and act on issues raised by students. (*Paragraph E.3*)
- ii. The Panel further **recommends** that, where a traditional SSLC is not practicable, the Department institute a twice-yearly virtual SSLC by means of Moodle and summarise the discussion, decisions and identified action in the form of a minute or report which should be accessible on-line to present and future students. (*Paragraph E.3*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

### *Response:*

The Department acknowledges the crucial part played by SSLCs in programme enhancement and improvement. During the 2007/8 academic session, virtual SSLCs will be established on all part-time and distance programmes, along the lines suggested above. Their operation will be closely monitored by the Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee (DTLC). Reports from each SSLC, whether virtual or traditional, will be tabled for discussion at the appropriate Board of Studies. The implementation of SSLC action plans will be scrutinized by the DTLC, as an integral part of the process of Annual Programme Monitoring and Review.

### *Recommendation 2*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department standardise its policy on the provision of feedback to students and that staff compliance with the policy be monitored to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to benefit from timely written feedback. (*Paragraph F.3*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

### *Response:*

The Department is wholly in accord with this recommendation and, as the Review Panel acknowledges, has already taken various steps to improve the quality of written feedback on submitted work and the management of the process of assessment. For example, a calendar of assessment and submission dates was introduced at the beginning of the current academic year.

The need for timely written feedback, both formative and summative, is recognised by the vast majority staff. Notwithstanding this, however, the Department acknowledges students have occasionally faced unacceptable delays in the receipt of such feedback. The Department is currently seeking to ensure that written feedback is normally made available to students within six weeks of submission. To ensure staff compliance with the policy, the following measures are currently being introduced:

- An assessment database will be established to enable programme leaders and support staff to track submitted work more effectively;

- In future hand-back dates, as well as hand-in dates, will be publicised in course handbooks and on student notice boards; and
- Students' views on the quality and timeliness of written feedback will be actively sought through the SSLCs.

### *Recommendation 3*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department introduce a standard template for the preparation of its programme and course handbooks and refers the Department to the central guidance provided on the Senate Office website (<http://senate.gla.ac.uk/academic/guidelines/handbook.html>). The template should include reference to the facilities offered by the Effective Learning Adviser. (*Paragraph C.6.10*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

### *Response:*

Staff will be required to utilise a standard template for programme and course handbooks and to ensure that such documentation is both accurate and up-to-date. To address issues raised by the Review Panel about, for example, the accuracy and consistency of some handbooks, or the dearth of information provided on the Code of Assessment and its applications at programme or course level, the Departmental Administrator will be invited to assume overall responsibility for auditing handbooks, disseminating exemplars of good practice and for reporting to DTLC about developments in this area.

### *Recommendation 4*

The Panel had noted that some longstanding courses now appeared to attract relatively few students and **recommends** that, whilst reviewing its postgraduate taught provision the Department also give careful consideration to the viability of such courses and their continuing relevance to the current and future climate within which the Faculty as a whole is operating. (*Paragraph C.4.3*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

### *Response:*

The Faculty has recently embarked (Summer, 2007) on a radical review of its PGT provision under the leadership of Professor Penny Enslin (Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning) and Professor Alison Phipps (Head of the Graduate School). The Department is strongly committed to improving the coherence and viability of its own provision and continues to make a major contribution to this ongoing faculty-wide review. For example, during the summer 2007, a small group of senior departmental staff made an initial attempt to identify areas of overlap, under-recruitment and potential development. Subsequently, the Head of Department and Professor Eric Wilkinson (the Faculty's representative on the Academic Standards Committee), have been actively involved in the work of the review group. It is envisaged that the first stage of the rationalisation of PGT provision across the Faculty will be completed ahead of the 2008/9 session.

*Recommendation 5*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department and Faculty give very serious consideration to making an administrative appointment rather than an academic appointment when a staff vacancy next occurs. (*Paragraph C.6.20*)

**Action: The Head of Department/the Dean of the Faculty of Education**

*Response Head of Department:*

The Department accepts that an additional administrative appointment would do much to enhance its existing support structures. For example, it would allow the Departmental Administrator to focus on issues of finance, planning and human resource management, whilst the additional administrative appointment would assume responsibility for quality assurance, programme enhancement and student support. This objective could be achieved at minimum cost by (1) upgrading an existing administrative post from a Grade 5 to a Grade 6; and (2) by creating a new, junior secretarial post (Grade 3).

The Head of Department will cost this proposal and discuss its implications with the Dean. The realisation and the timing of any such staffing provision is subject to the Department's and the Faculty's overall financial position.

*Response Dean:*

We will continue to keep staffing under review and try to secure the optimum balance between administrative and academic activity.

*Recommendation 6*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University explore the impact that salary differentials between the School and University sectors have on the recruitment of senior staff to the Faculty of Education with a view to considering whether particular initiatives are required to make key Education posts more attractive to senior staff in the School sector. (*Paragraph C.6.25*)

**Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Education /  
the Director of Human Resources**

*Response: Head of Department*

This will be kept under review and the Faculty has been moving towards seconded partnership arrangements which hopefully will ameliorate the difficulties.

*Response: Dean*

The Faculty finances preclude this but we are having ongoing discussions with HR.

*Response Director of Human Resources:*

Awaited

*Recommendation 7*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University remain alert to the changing needs of the Faculty of Education in its Estates planning and that Central Room Bookings staff be made aware of the difficulties caused by late notification of teaching venues

and of the importance of minimising the number of teaching venues allocated to courses delivered in block format. (*Paragraph F.4*)

**Action: The Director of Estates & Buildings**

*Response:*

Awaited

*Recommendation 8*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department's study leave scheme be as accessible to University Teachers as to other academic staff. (*Paragraph C.6.21*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Response:*

During 2006/7, the issue of study leave was discussed at various departmental staff meetings and the DMG. It was agreed that measures would be put in place during the current session to ensure that the Department's study leave policy mirrored that of the University. As a result of this decision, the departmental scheme is now equally accessible to University Teachers and other academic staff.

*Recommendation 9*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department ensure that all GTAs attend the statutory training provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre, irrespective of their level of teaching experience prior to entering the Higher Education sector. (*Paragraph C.6.23*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Response:*

The Department places a high value on the training of GTAs and acknowledges that GTAs should normally be required to take part in the statutory programme offered by the Learning and Teaching Centre (LTS).

However, it also takes the view that appropriate account should be taken of an assistant's training needs and prior teaching experience when admitting them to such programmes: a 'one-size fits all' approach is neither conducive to professional learning nor staff morale! Some GTAs in the Department already hold teaching qualifications and would benefit from a shortened training course similar to the one which is currently available to professionally-qualified, hourly-paid staff (see Recommendation 10).

The Head of Department will contact the Director of LTS to discuss this issue and to find a way forward.

*Recommendation 10*

The Panel believes that additional insight into the Learning and Teaching strategy of a Higher Education Institution could potentially enhance the contribution made by hourly-paid staff who already held a teaching qualification and therefore **recommends**

that the University give consideration to introducing a short course for hourly-paid staff who fall into this category. (*Paragraph C.6.24*)

**Action: The Director of the Learning & Teaching Centre**

*Response:*

The Learning and Teaching Centre has considered this recommendation and reached the following conclusions:

- The Learning and Teaching Centre recognises the Panel's concerns however it does not at present have adequate resources to support the introduction of a short course for hourly-paid staff holding a teaching qualification.

The Learning and Teaching Centre has determined the following strategies for dealing with this problem:

- In March 2008, the Learning and Teaching Centre advertised for a new Senior Lecturer (to replace Professor Bob Matthew who left the University of Glasgow at the end of December 2007). Interviews will be held in May 2008. One of the Senior Lecturer's responsibilities will be to design and deliver online learning programmes on academic practice (including reference to the Learning and Teaching strategy as appropriate) to supplement the Centre's existing face-to-face taught course provision (for details of existing provision see <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/taughtcourses/>). Once the new online provision is available, the Director of the Learning and Teaching Centre will advertise its existence to all teaching staff, including hourly paid staff via an e-mail to Heads of Departments. It is not possible to provide a precise date by which new online learning programmes on academic practice will be available as the timescale for their development is subject to the successful appointment of a suitable member of staff.
- To provide all relevant staff with a development opportunity, the Learning and Teaching Centre organised a Learning and Teaching Conference in March 2008 for all staff interested in learning, teaching and assessment. The Vice-Principal, Learning, Teaching and Internationalisation mailed all University of Glasgow staff on the postmaster's mailing list to invite them to attend the conference (for which no fee was charged). The conference was also advertised via the University's newsletter and the University's events diary. A second annual conference will be held in 2009 (date to be confirmed) and will be advertised to all staff via the mechanisms used to promote the 2008 conference.
- The Learning and Teaching Centre's website provides a range of useful reference material which could be helpful to hourly paid staff. The Learning and Teaching would encourage the Department to promote these resources to its hourly paid teaching staff. Full details of the resources available are provided at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/goodpracticeresources/>

*Recommendation 11*

The Review Panel **recommends** that steps be taken to eliminate the water penetration on the top floor of the St Andrew's Building. (*Paragraph C.6.15*)

**Action: The Director of Estates & Buildings**

*Response:*

Roof repairs at the St Andrew's Building (LM07/101) are included in our Asset Maintenance programme. £100,000 for 07/08 and £100,000 for 08/09.

*Recommendation 12*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department consider the merits of installing an additional photocopier. (*Paragraph C.6.16*)

*C.6.16 A number of staff advised the Review Panel of the need for additional photocopying facilities. The Panel therefore recommends that the Department consider the merits of installing an additional photocopier.*

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Response:*

This will be considered within the overall financial planning of the department.

*Recommendation 13*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department explore with Estates and Buildings whether it might be possible to provide a dedicated notice board for the Fundamentals of Education courses on the main campus since the students who undertake these courses are largely based on the main campus. (*Paragraph C.6.17*).

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Response:*

The Fundamentals of Education Course Leader, Dr Burns, is currently involved in negotiations with Estates and Buildings about this issue.

*Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office*

*Last modified on: Tuesday 20 May 2008*