

# UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

## Academic Standards Committee - Friday 29 May 2009

### Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Report of the Review of Department of Scottish Literature held on 24 February 2009

Ms Helen Clegg, Clerk to the Review Panel

#### Review Panel:

Professor Neal Juster	Vice Principal (Strategy & Resources), Convener
Professor Rory Watson	University of Stirling, External Subject Specialist
Mr Gareth Webb	Students' Representative Council
Professor Alan Weir	Department of Philosophy, Cognate Member
Professor Eleanor Gordon	Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Vicky Gunn	Learning and Teaching Centre
Ms Helen Clegg	Senate Office (Clerk)
Dr Ralph Jessop	Dumfries Campus (Observer)

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background Information

- 1.1.1 The Department of Scottish Literature, formed in 1971, is based in the Faculty of Arts, and is home to the Centre for Robert Burns Studies, which was formed in 2007.
- 1.1.2 The Department operates as part of the School of English and Scottish Language and Literature (SESLL) together with the Departments of English Language and English Literature. The three Departments had agreed to form SESLL in 1996, and benefitted from the resulting co-ordination of matters of mutual concern (such as the RAE and the monitoring of teaching provision across the three departments). It also allowed for the sharing of best practice. The Head of Department reported that the SESLL structure worked well, and was more effective as part of the wider faculty, particularly in terms of communication. The staff group agreed that the SESLL structure was effective in facilitating collaboration and innovation with colleagues, but reported that the Department's individual identity within SESLL was equally important. Its uniqueness and international reputation defined it, and its standing as an individual department allowed it to determine its own intellectual emphasis.
- 1.1.3 The Department is located at 7 University Gardens, with access to one teaching room, two IT suites and a small library for use by Honours and postgraduate students, and staff.

- 1.1.4 The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) had been prepared by the Head of Department and the Departmental Administrator. It was not clear if there had been consultation with students or other staff in the production of the document. Additionally, the Panel agreed that the document gave a narrative, rather than reflective, account of the Department's activity, and did not appear to engage with the University's diversity agenda. There were also a number of typographical errors evident. The Panel suggested that the document be revised in the light of the above comments, in order to accurately represent the diversity of practice and the Department's desire to enhance teaching.
- 1.1.5 The Panel met with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Head of Department, 6 key staff members, one probationary staff member, 3 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)/hourly paid staff, and 12 undergraduate students. No postgraduate students were available due to the distance-learning nature of the programme, but comments had been invited by email and one response was received.
- 1.1.6 The Department has a total of 7 staff, which comprises 6 full-time academic staff and one full-time secretary. There are also 6 Graduate Teaching Assistants and one Post-Doctoral Teaching Assistant.
- 1.1.7 Student numbers for Session 2008-09 are as follows:

<b>Students</b>	<b>Headcount</b>
Level 1	82
Level 2	26
Level 3	36
Honours	44
<b>Undergraduate Total</b>	<b>188</b>
Postgraduate Taught	5
Postgraduate Research*	25

\*(for information only - research is not covered by the Review)

- 1.1.8 The Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Department. A full list with notes is attached as Appendix 1.
- MA Single Honours in Scottish Literature
  - MLitt in Scottish Literature (Distance Taught)

The Department contributes to the following *joint* degree programmes offered with other departments or other institutions:

- MA Joint Honours in Scottish Literature and another subject
- MLitt in Scottish Studies (in collaboration with the Department of History)

The Department also contributes to the following degree programmes offered by other departments or other institutions:

- MLitt in Medieval Scottish Studies (Lead Departments: Celtic Studies and History)
- MLitt in Enlightenment, Romanticism and Nation (Lead Department: English Literature)

## 2. Overall aims of the Department's provision and how it supports the University Strategic Plan

The Self-Evaluation Report set out the overall aims of the Department's provision. The Panel was content that these aims were in line with the University's Strategic Plan, particularly its aim to "deliver excellent teaching, providing up-to-date critical perspectives on the subject through drawing upon staff research". The Panel noted that all members of academic staff were research active and produced research of international significance.

The Head of Department stressed the 'uniqueness' of the Department, it being the only Department of Scottish Literature in the UK, and believed this could offer real advantages in terms of recruitment.

## 3. An Evaluation of the Student Learning Experience

### 3.1 Aims

The aims of the Department's programmes are detailed in the associated Programme Specifications and are in line with the Department's Learning and Teaching Strategy as well as the subject benchmark statement. The programme specifications are publicly available through the University website.

### 3.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

3.2.1 The Intended Learning Outcomes for programmes and courses are outlined in the Programme Specifications, on Moodle, and in the Course Handbooks distributed to all students.

3.2.2 The Panel noted from the SER that, as well as inclusion in Course Handbooks, ILOs were discussed through lectures, seminars and feedback. The student group displayed a good understanding of them and stated that they were referred to throughout each individual course and for revision purposes.

3.2.3 One aspect of learning that did not appear explicit in the ILOs was that of transferable skills. In some cases it was not clear how these were being enmeshed into the curriculum and assessment. Discussion with the Head of Department and the student and staff groups reassured the Panel that transferable skills were generally part of the curriculum, but it was considered that perhaps the ILOs did not fully reflect this. This was an issue that had been raised at the previous DPTLA review in 2003 and therefore the Panel **recommends** that the Department revisit the ILOs for its courses and programmes and amend them in order to make transferable skills explicit within them.

### 3.3 *Assessment, Feedback and Achievement*

#### Assessment Methods

- 3.3.1 It was stated in the SER that a wide range of assessment methods were in operation. However, the Panel noted that the majority of assessment was through essays and formal examinations. The Panel noted especially an apparent lack of assessed oral presentations, beyond the chairing of seminars at Honours level. The Head of Department did not envisage opportunities to arise which would increase this, given the move more towards virtual learning environments. However, the Panel felt strongly that additional variety could be introduced, and **recommends** that the Department give further consideration to ways in which the range of assessment methods could be varied.
- 3.3.2 Regarding the chairing of seminars at Honours level, the student group stated that they were satisfied with this approach. They appreciated the greater variety of topics discussed and believed that the students' discussions were more effective than in years 1 and 2 when seminars were tutor-led. They considered that, in years 1 and 2, students were less likely to have the confidence to lead a discussion, but by Honours their confidence had grown. However, students did not recall receiving a great deal of guidance on presentation skills. The Panel **recommends** that more formal teaching on, and assessment of, presentation skills be included in the curriculum, in order to ensure all students have the required skills to confidently give presentations and chair seminars.
- 3.3.3 At Honours levels, all work was double marked. The Panel understood the justification for this but was concerned about the additional workload this placed on the small number of staff. The possibility of peer-assessment was raised and the Head of Department stated that this had been discussed for postgraduate students but, to date, not for undergraduates.
- 3.3.4 The Panel noted that, at Honours, the amount of assessment undertaken through written examinations had been reduced over time and continuous assessment now made up around 40% of the total assessment. The Head of Department expressed some discontent with this, suggesting that it could be argued students were not being well enough prepared for examinations. He would be raising the issue with staff in order to look at the overall picture and ensure the Department was not unusual within the Faculty in this respect. The undergraduate students, however, were happy with the current balance. They appreciated having less pressure at Honours level, and the knowledge that, by examination time, they had already secured a certain amount of credit. Additionally, they appreciated the greater amount of feedback that came with coursework assessment.
- 3.3.5 It was noted that the Honours dissertation could be completed over the summer months between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years. There were mixed feelings amongst the student group about this approach. Whilst there was no interruption of focus as regards attending classes or completing other coursework, there was also no opportunity to take on paid employment during the dissertation period. This left students with financial difficulties when they commenced 4<sup>th</sup> year. Additionally, some stated it could be rather isolating, although they confirmed that they still received the necessary support from their supervisor and could arrange

meetings throughout the summer period. In academic terms, it was felt that having completed the dissertation prior to starting 4<sup>th</sup> year gave additional knowledge and confidence, cancelling out any disadvantage there might be from taking certain classes after submitting the dissertation.

#### Plagiarism

3.3.6 With the move to a higher proportion of continuous assessment resulting from the review of the curriculum in 2006, the Panel were keen to know how the Department was detecting plagiarism. The Head of Department stated that the knowledge and experience of teaching staff, and internet book searches, appropriately detected cases of plagiarism, as staff were acutely aware of the works likely to be plagiarised. He added that there was, at present, no plan to introduce specialist software for this purpose as it was not considered necessary. The Panel, however, believed that the significant amount of assessment undertaken through coursework did necessitate extra safeguards. This was particularly the case now that other students' work was so readily available on various websites. For this reason, the Panel **recommends** that the Department give serious consideration to the adoption of the Turnitin software for the more formal, systematic detection of plagiarism.

3.3.7 Students reported that the seriousness of plagiarism had been emphasised to them regularly, through their Handbooks, the Departmental website, and also through a lecture at the beginning of the year. They stated that, even if the lecture was missed, the information was emphasised in such a way that it was impossible to overlook. The Panel commended the amount of emphasis being placed by the Department on raising awareness of plagiarism.

#### Feedback

3.3.8 Undergraduate students stated they were happy with the quality and timing of feedback they received. They stated that they received timely, constructive feedback and were always invited to contact their tutor for further information. However, on occasion, work was not returned quickly enough to influence the next piece of work, although it was acknowledged that this was generally due to University vacation periods.

3.3.9 Staff reported that, at levels 1 and 2, they aimed to return coursework and feedback comments within three weeks. This was longer at Honours due to all work being double marked, and the lack of availability of staff could extend the return period.

### 3.4 *Curriculum Design, Development and Content*

#### Undergraduate

3.4.1 The curriculum is designed to allow progressive and sequential learning, moving from introduction to the subject at level 1 to a much wider and deeper understanding at Honours level. Given that Honours students at both levels 3 and 4 chose from the same pool of courses, the Panel was keen to know how students were seen to progress academically between levels 3 and 4. The Head of Department stated that courses did build on one another, and that analysis had shown students in the middle of their

third year were performing as they would in fourth year. He noted that students were developing their skills continually and, by the end of fourth year, were notably skilled in literary criticism.

- 3.4.2 The Panel noted from the SER that, in 2005-06, the number of Honours options was reduced. This had been jointly a result of retirement/departure of staff, and of a desire to maximise efficiency. The new courses that were introduced were deepened to ensure theoretical and historical focus were not lost. This change to the curriculum had been considered necessary by the Department as the degree had been largely unchanged for almost twenty years.
- 3.4.3 The Head of Department took the view that the balance of lectures, seminars and tutorials was appropriate, though acknowledged that students tended to express a desire for more lectures. This had so far been resisted, due to the wish to encourage students to engage more with the subject. The Panel shared this perspective.
- 3.4.4 Some students felt that, given that the degree was in Scottish Literature, there should have been less emphasis on the language aspect, although most conceded that the Scots Language teaching had been useful. However, they raised the issue that English Language 1 was a compulsory course for entry to the Scottish Literature programme. There was no clear understanding as to why this was the case, and students did not feel it was particularly relevant or that it added to their understanding. The Head of Department explained that, traditionally, English Language had been studied for 'philological roundness' but recognised that this had been questioned in recent years. He acknowledged that the degree could be completed without this course, but added that he believed it trained students in ways they perhaps did not explicitly realise. The Panel **recommends** that the Department give consideration to this issue again, with a view to either removing the compulsory status of English Language 1, or to offering a clear rationale for its compulsory inclusion in the programme.

#### Postgraduate

- 3.4.5 The Panel noted from the SER that the full-time MLitt in Scottish Literature had been suspended for the time being due to declining numbers. The distance-learning programme continued, albeit with a small number of students. The Panel was concerned that an excessive amount of staff time and effort was being expended for a very small number of students, and that this could be used more effectively. The Head of Department generally agreed, although suggested that, with additional resource, taught postgraduate numbers could be increased to around 20. There was, he noted, some reluctance to withdraw from the existing postgraduate programmes, despite the small numbers. The staff group echoed these sentiments, explaining that the PGT programmes were distinctive degrees that should be promoted, but acknowledging that the amount of effort for so few students was not sustainable. It was suggested that a designated person was needed who could develop existing materials and create demand – particularly for the distance learning programme – but that this task could not be performed within the existing staff due to workload constraints. The Panel **recommends** that the Department undertakes a review of its postgraduate provision, with a view to potentially withdrawing MLitt programmes that are under-recruiting and developing more attractive alternatives if appropriate.

### 3.5 *Student Recruitment*

- 3.5.1 Entry to the Department's undergraduate programme is through the Faculty entry system. The Department had strong links with schools and the SER reported that staff members regularly went out to give talks to school pupils, as well as answering individual queries. The Panel commended the Department's committed approach to working with schools.
- 3.5.2 Although it was reported in the SER that level 1 intake numbers were fairly static, it was noted that there had been a significant reduction in the level 2 intake for the current session. The Head of Department stated that there had been no clear reason for this and that close attention would be paid to the situation to assess whether it was a temporary issue or something that required further investigation.
- 3.5.3 It was reported in the SER that there was anecdotal evidence of Advisers of Study throughout the Faculty advising against (or failing to mention) the study of Scottish Literature. This might be having a negative impact on progression figures. The Head of Department stated that letters had been sent to Advisers of Study reminding them that Scottish Literature was an option for students, and he noted that this would need to be re-emphasised. However, he recognised that the situation might be difficult to change in the light of long-held views, and the Faculty admission system.

### 3.6 *Student Progression, Retention and Support*

- 3.6.1 As noted in 3.5.2 above, the number of students progressing from level 1 to level 2 had been of concern in the current session and would be monitored. However, generally, progression rates were robust and, beyond the current year anomaly, the Panel had no concerns.
- 3.6.2 The Department monitors student attendance through seminar attendance sheets and student mark-sheets. Where a progress issue is identified, the student is requested to attend a meeting with the Convener. Any additional support needs are identified and discussed. The Head of Department stated that the small size of the Department made it possible to promptly identify and individually support any student experiencing difficulties. The GTAs group confirmed that they took attendance at tutorials and had the support of staff in following up problematic attendance. The Panel commended the individual, personal approach taken by the Department in dealing with such issues.
- 3.6.3 The Department prided itself in its approachable and supportive manner, and the student participants emphasised this as one of the Department's main strengths. Every effort was made to advise and support students, not just in times of difficulty, but as a matter of course throughout students' study. Staff members were spoken of by students as being approachable, enthusiastic and helpful at all times. It was firmly believed that the small size of the Department was instrumental in this, as it fostered a sense of identity and belonging. Students stated that they had no difficulty in securing assistance from staff and GTAs when needed.
- 3.6.4 The GTAs group stated that, on occasion, they might notice a student struggling with written work, particularly in cases where English was not the student's first language. In this event, they would refer the student to the Arts Faculty's Writing Skills Workshops.

- 3.6.5 It was noted from the SER that the Department had a small number of students each year requiring extra support on the basis of disability. These were handled with discretion and sensitivity, and it was ensured that University policy was observed with regard to, for instance, allowing additional time for examinations, or for lectures to be recorded. Students who had required this assistance reported that they had received very fair, sensitive treatment and were fully satisfied.
- 3.6.6 The staff group reported that, in the interest of facilitating the move from undergraduate to postgraduate study, or from postgraduate study to research, they offered a good deal of support. This took the form of help with making applications for study or for funding. A meeting was held each January to let students know of potential opportunities, and a diary with the relevant deadline dates was distributed. This effort had led to a number of successful applications to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Carnegie Trust, and was commended by the Panel.

### 3.7 *The Quality of Learning Opportunities*

- 3.7.1 Student participants expressed their satisfaction with the quality of their learning opportunities and with the Department as a whole. They praised the enthusiasm of the staff and the GTAs, and stated that they were a source of inspiration to students. The Panel was satisfied that this gave a true reflection of their experiences.
- 3.7.2 Students particularly appreciated the opportunities they had to benefit from staff's own research interests, and from the quality of that research.
- 3.7.3 The Panel referred to the recommendations made as a result of the last DPTLA review, held in 2003, and noted that several of the same issues arose on this occasion. The Panel therefore wish to know how the Department had engaged with the comments made in 2003. The Head of Department stated that, although some of the points were Faculty-wide issues (such as those relating to finance, workload models, admissions, the Code of Assessment) rather than Departmental ones, some others had been addressed, for instance, through the introduction of more varied assessment methods, and the review of the undergraduate curriculum. The Panel recognised that some issues were beyond the remit of individual Departments. However, it **recommends** that the Department increase its efforts to engage fully with Faculty-wide issues and initiatives in order to benefit more effectively from these.

### 3.8 *Resources for Learning and Teaching*

#### Staffing Resources

- 3.8.1 Given the small size of the Department, and the resultant small number of academic staff, the Panel wished to know whether staff felt this was problematic. It was reported in the SER that administrative and research commitments were a source of strain, rather than teaching commitments, and that plans to expand research capabilities (specifically through the Centre for Robert Burns Studies) would most likely necessitate the appointment of an additional academic staff member.
- 3.8.2 However, the small size of the Department was considered a strength by all groups. It enabled one-to-one assistance, more focussed teaching,



and fostered a sense of belonging. The GTAs group stated that the small department allowed for good social as well as professional interaction.

- 3.8.3 Additionally, staff believed that the small size of the Department, and the result that they necessarily took on a variety of responsibilities, was advantageous in that staff gained a range of experiences early in their careers. They noted that they had responsibilities other colleagues on the New Lecturers and Teachers Programme did not have. However, this did come at the expense of publishing their own research and staff conceded that, with teaching and administration workloads, it could sometimes be difficult to find sufficient research time.
- 3.8.4 It was reported in the SER that there was excellent teaching support provided by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). The GTAs took on teaching at levels 1 and 2 and those whom the Panel met appeared to greatly enjoy the challenge. They were very satisfied with the level of support they received from their allocated mentor and from other staff, and with the level of feedback they received on their performance. Although teaching did detract from the time the GTAs had available for their own research, they firmly believed that the experience of teaching the subject enhanced their research, as it allowed them to reflect more fully on the topics being taught early in the programme.
- 3.8.5 The Panel heard that GTAs did not attend staff meetings, but did receive a copy of minutes. Additionally, the postgraduate representative was a GTA, although this was coincidental. GTAs confirmed that they were not involved in course or programme reviews, or with the Teaching Committee, nor had they been involved in the preparation of materials for the DPTLA review. They stated that their views might be requested informally. The Panel **recommends** that the Department give consideration to making GTA representation a formal part of the membership of Departmental committees.
- 3.8.6 The GTAs group confirmed that they had not been involved in Performance Development and Review (PD&R). Although they were at liberty to request this, the Panel believed there should be a formal mechanism for GTAs to receive PD&R, in order to give GTAs the context of how career issues are discussed and how to engage with professional development. The Panel therefore **recommends** that the Department include GTAs in the Performance Development and Review structure.
- 3.8.7 One member of hourly-paid staff stated that, due to his contract status meaning he did not have a University staff number, he was not able to access certain University facilities such as the library and some IT facilities without producing a letter from the Head of Department. This sometimes made it difficult for him to carry out tasks in the most effective way. The Panel **recommends** that the Department take steps to ensure hourly-paid staff are able to access essential services such as the library and IT with the same ease as University-employed staff.
- 3.8.8 The Department had one full-time secretary, and it was reported that her workload was considerable, even with shared administrative support from SESLL.
- 3.8.9 The probationary staff member reported that, on joining the Department, he had been allocated a reasonably small workload. He was now Convener of two courses as well as being an Adviser of Study. Additionally, he was developing a new course. Given the small size of

the Department, he had expected his workload to rise significantly. The Adviser of Study role in particular took up a good deal of time, with responsibility for advising 120 undergraduate students.

3.8.10 It was reported that the New Lecturers and Teachers Programme (NLTP) had been found to be useful. Initially it had appeared to be over-long at 1.5 days per semester, but new staff later came to appreciate the value of the 1.5 days. The opportunity to network with colleagues in similar circumstances was also considered useful. In addition to the formal training, mentoring was available to probationary staff, and this was reported to work well within the Department, with the mentor (and other staff) being approachable at all times.

3.8.11 The Panel noted that the Faculty of Arts was proposing to pilot a workload model and this would be rolled out imminently.

#### Physical Resources

3.8.12 The Panel was given a short guided tour of the Department and noted that the building was also used by the Department of History of Art. The one dedicated teaching room in the building was, it was noted, centrally booked, rather than for the exclusive use of Scottish Literature. One resource considered by the Panel to be excellent was the departmental library, although the Head of Department reported that this may necessarily be lost in future in order to accommodate AHRC post-doctoral students. The Panel **recommends** that every effort be made to accommodate the post-doctoral students elsewhere, in order to retain the departmental library. This might potentially involve the relocation of the rooms belonging to History of Art. The Dean should initiate discussions with the Director of Estates and Buildings.

3.8.13 The Head of Department reported that, although staff tried to be as accommodating as possible to students with disabilities, the physical layout of the building did not allow disabled access. Where issues had arisen in the past, the Department had worked with Central Room Bookings to ensure all classes were held in accessible rooms.

3.8.14 The SER reported that Moodle was in use for all programmes, providing course information and up-to-date guidance, as well as a forum for group discussion. However, staff reported that students tended not to use the discussion forums, other than when specific tasks were set. It appeared to be seen more as a repository for information rather than a teaching tool.

## 4. Maintaining the Standards of Awards

### Benchmark Statement and Other Relevant External Reference Points

4.1 It was noted in the SER that the undergraduate programme specifications were prepared with reference to the QAA Benchmark Statement for English. No relevant Benchmark Statement existed for postgraduate provision, but programme specifications were informed by statements on postgraduate provision from the Advanced Humanities Research Council.

### External Examiners

4.2 It was stated in the SER that External Examiners were one of the main ways in which the Department ensured standards were maintained, through providing a means of comparison with other institutions.

- 4.3 External Examiners had been generally very positive about the Department and its teaching, and comments made had informed course and programme changes.

## 5. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience

### Programme Enhancements

5.1 The Department's commitment to research-led teaching was considered to be one of its main strengths, with many of the course texts being produced by departmental staff. The student group also praised this, and reported that they benefitted from not only the published work of staff, but also their ongoing research interests.

5.2 The Department participated in the ERASMUS scheme and the Head of Department reported that there was a large number of incoming students. However, none were outgoing. The Head of Department stated that, with the introduction of the split diet (that is, the requirement for courses to be assessed within the year in which they are taught), this had rendered the scheme impracticable. The student group confirmed this, stating that there would be unacceptable financial implications in having to return to Glasgow to sit the examinations. Additionally, lack of ability in European languages was an obstacle. The Head of Department recognised that some changes in the programme structure (such as a revision of the lengths of courses being undertaken) could solve this problem, but was uncertain that this major upheaval would be worthwhile in view of the very small number of students who would decide to take part in ERASMUS as a result. The Panel **recommends** that the Department revisit the possibilities for the encouragement of outgoing students, and examine the feasibility of these in order to ensure students were not prevented from benefitting from the ERASMUS scheme.

5.3 The GTAs group reported on the annual trip to Arran, attended by Honours and Postgraduate students, which was an academic and social event with the aim of introducing Honours students to the world of postgraduate study. The GTAs believed this was an excellent initiative which offered an opportunity Honours students would not otherwise receive. The Panel commended this initiative.

### Personal Development Planning (PDP)

5.4 The Panel noted from the SER that the Faculty was, at present, constructing a policy on PDP for undergraduate students. It was hoped that this could be extended to postgraduate students in future.

### Student Feedback Opportunities

5.5 The Department's Staff-Student Liaison Committee meets regularly and previous minutes showed that a variety of issues were dealt with in this way.

### Annual Course Monitoring

5.6 The Head of Department stated in the SER that he was seeking to initiate the more detailed analysis of Annual Course Monitoring Report results. Whilst this would be time-consuming, he believed the benefits would justify the additional work.

## 6. Summary of Perceived Strengths and Areas for Improvement in Learning and Teaching

### *Key Strengths*

- The approachability and enthusiasm of staff and GTAs which was reported to inspire and excite student interest for the subject
- The quality of support provided to students and the individual attention given when required, particularly where students are experiencing difficulty
- The uniqueness of the Department and its international reputation for high quality research
- The Arran trip which brought together undergraduate and postgraduate students, and inspired progression to postgraduate study and research
- The emphasis placed on raising awareness of plagiarism issues amongst students
- The committed approach to schools recruitment and the activities undertaken to further this
- The assistance and support given to students applying for further study or research funding

### *Areas to be Improved or Enhanced*

- The explicit development of transferable skills, with clear guidance to students regarding these
- The provision of taught postgraduate programmes
- Engagement with the University's Equality and Diversity agenda
- The variety of assessment methods
- Engagement with Faculty-wide issues
- The systematic detection of plagiarism
- The availability of study abroad opportunities
- The formal inclusion of GTAs within committee structures

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

The Panel was impressed with the enthusiasm and dedication of staff and GTAs within the Department, and with the focus on research-led teaching. With both staff and students citing it as a strength, the small size of the Department appeared to be of great benefit, allowing for a more personalised approach as well as a varied, if at times heavy, workload for staff. The student group were articulate and enthusiastic, showing a real interest in the subject, and were a credit to the Department.

The Department demonstrated a number of strengths, as well as an awareness of the areas requiring improvement. The most substantive of these are reflected in the recommendations that follow.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. They have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are not ranked in any particular order.

### **Intended Learning Outcomes**

#### *Recommendation 1*

The Panel **recommends** that the Department revisit the Intended Learning Outcomes for its courses and programmes and amend them in order to make transferable skills explicit within them. [*Paragraph 3.2.3*]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### **Assessment**

#### *Recommendation 2*

The Panel felt strongly that additional variety in assessment methods could be introduced, and **recommends** that the Department give further consideration to ways in which the range of assessment methods could be varied. [*Paragraph 3.3.1*]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 3*

The Panel **recommends** that more formal teaching on, and assessment of, presentation skills be included in the undergraduate curriculum, in order to ensure all students have the required skills to confidently give presentations and chair seminars. [*Paragraph 3.3.2*]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 4*

The Panel **recommends** that the Department give serious consideration to the adoption of the Turnitin software for the more formal, systematic detection of plagiarism. [*Paragraph 3.3.6*]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### **Curriculum Design and Content**

#### *Recommendation 5*

The Panel **recommends** that the Department again give consideration to the requirement for students to complete the English Language 1 course, with a view to either removing its compulsory status, or to offering a clear rationale for its compulsory inclusion in the programme. [*Paragraph 3.4.4*]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department; The Dean of Faculty**

### **Postgraduate Taught Provision**

#### *Recommendation 6*

The Panel **recommends** that the Department undertakes a review of its postgraduate provision, with a view to potentially withdrawing MLitt programmes that are under-recruiting, and developing more attractive alternatives if appropriate. [Paragraph 3.4.5]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### **The Quality of Learning Opportunities**

#### *Recommendation 7*

The Panel **recommends** that the Department increase its efforts to engage fully with Faculty-wide issues and initiatives in order to benefit more effectively from these. [Paragraph 3.7.3]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### **Resources for Learning and Teaching**

#### *Recommendation 8*

The Panel **recommends** that the Department give consideration to making GTA representation a formal part of the membership of Departmental committees. [Paragraph 3.8.5]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 9*

The Panel therefore **recommends** that the Department include GTAs in the Performance Development and Review structure. [Paragraph 3.8.6]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 10*

The Panel **recommends** that the Department take steps to ensure hourly-paid staff members are able to access essential services such as the library and IT with the same ease as University-employed staff. [Paragraph 3.8.7]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department; The Director of Human Resources; The Head of the Library**

#### *Recommendation 11*

The Panel **recommends** that, rather than house new post-doctoral students in the existing Departmental Library, every effort be made to accommodate the post-doctoral students elsewhere, in order to ensure this valuable library resource is retained. This might potentially involve the relocation of the rooms belonging to History of Art. The Dean should initiate discussions with the Director of Estates and Buildings. [Paragraph 3.8.12]

For the attention of: **The Dean of Faculty**

**Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience**

*Recommendation 12*

The Panel **recommends** that the Department revisit the possibilities for the encouragement of outgoing ERASMUS students, and examine the feasibility of these in order to ensure students are not prevented from benefitting from the ERASMUS scheme. *[Paragraph 5.2]*

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**