

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 28 May 2010

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:
Responses to the Recommendations arising from the Review of
Department of Scottish Literature held on 24 February 2009

Ms Helen Clegg, Clerk to the Review Panel

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 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**

Response:

The Department will revisit its ILOs and the issue of transferable skills at a full departmental meeting occurring soon to look over the documentation and rubric of all UG programmes.

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**

Response:

The Department will continue to build in variety of assessment to programmes. However, in consultation with students following the DPTLA report, students in Scottish Literature report their view that the Department currently provides a very satisfactory range of assessment. The Department will maintain variety of assessment as an issue at the top of its teaching agenda.

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**

Response:

The HOD would like to observe that the assumption that academics are qualified to teach presentation skills is something that is open to question. Only the HOD has experience in the formal teaching and assessment of teaching and presentation skills. He will discuss with colleagues how from 2010-2011 presentation skills will be taught and how students might be given greater opportunity to demonstrate such skills. At a DPTLA consultation meeting with students in April 2010, the student view was expressed that co-chairing seminars at honours level (with members of staff) might be a useful way of extending the emphasis on student presentation skills without increasing student anxiety about their already busy workload. The Department is now giving serious consideration to such provision.

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**

Response:

The HOD and Department feel that plagiarism in Scottish Literature is perhaps more easily detectable than in some other subject or programme areas. They do not feel that 'Turnitin' use would currently be of much help, but they will continue to monitor the situation.

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**

Response – Head of Department:

Having consulted students, one another and also colleagues in English Language, the Department strongly believes that English Language 1 is an appropriate prerequisite to Single Honours Scottish Literature. However, the Department will seek to find ways to strengthen its articulation of the linkage between English Language 1 and the Scottish Literature Honours programme.

Response – Dean:

The requirement for study of English Language 1 is a matter for the departments concerned and the L & T Committee of the School of Critical Studies from 1 August 2010. It would not, in my view, be appropriate for the Faculty/College to take the lead on curriculum change in the programmes of individual subjects unless there was a clear and present risk to the student experience. Any changes agreed will go through the relevant Faculty/College committees in the normal way.

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**

Response:

The Department continues to keep its MLitt Scottish Literature programmes in withdrawn mode and will do so for the foreseeable future. The MLitt in Scottish Studies (taught with the Departments of Celtic and History) will continue to be taught in 2010-2011; however, the Department shares the concern of the DPTLA panel that the numbers recruited to this programme represent an unviable situation. The Department of Scottish Literature will discuss with the Dean / Head of College and colleague departments in the programme the possibility of withdrawing this provision from 2011-12.

It might also be noted that the MLitt in Scottish Literature (distance- taught) was once a very vibrant programme and might be again, especially in relation to the North American student market. However, if the Department were to explore the reinitiation of this programme, additional or redirected resource, as well as a strong marketing plan, would be required.

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**

Response:

The HOD and Department do not find it immediately clear how they can engage any more fully than they already do with Faculty-wide issues and initiatives. For a small Department, Scottish Literature is very well represented on Faculty committees and in the student advising process 50% of the Department is engaged on behalf of the Faculty, either at

undergraduate or postgraduate level. However, the Department will keep at the forefront of its attention these Faculty matters.

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**

Response:

Scottish Literature GTAs are represented at the staff-student liaison committee and via the School of English and Scottish Language and Literature Teaching and Quality Assurance Committee. The Department takes the strong view that it would be invidious to have GTA representation at its regular Departmental meetings. This is because postgraduate matters sometimes of a highly confidential nature are discussed in this forum, and GTAs very frequently are in close contact with these postgraduates both as colleagues and as friends.

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**

Response:

In future, the HOD will provide PD and R for the one postdoctoral GTA in the Department. However, the HOD would like to alert Senate and the Panel to a potentially anomalous and problematic situation here. The Department would be providing PD and R for part-time staff when technically more 'senior' full-time but probationary staff have PD and R withheld from them until completion of probation. The HOD feels that HR should be aware of the potential employment issues which might arise from this situation.

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**

Response – Head of Department:

The Department will take all available steps to make sure that this is the case.

Response – Director of Human Resources:

Hourly paid (atypical) staff do not routinely get access to IT/Library as there are licensing implications, particularly in relation to IT applications.

The usual way to address a strong need for access to IT is for the department where the person works deals with this on a case by case basis and pays the licensing fee when they do it.

For the Library, they only need to provide a letter to the person and the Library will usually give access.

Response – Head of Library:

The situation is that a Staff ID card is required to access university services, including the Library. Staff ID cards are issued on the basis of Pay Roll/HR records and are produced by Human Resources. I presume that the onus here is on the Faculty of Arts/Human Resources to regularise the position of these individuals who should be University-employed staff.

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**

Response - Dean:

This recommendation as it stands is not easy to respond to, as the term 'postdoctoral student' has no meaning. If the Report is describing postgraduate research students, then the Alexander Stone Building has been refurbished, and a CAPEX bid for the creation of additional study space submitted. It should be noted that this is unlikely to be funded in the current environment.

Response – Department:

The Department will have such discussion as is necessary in future with the Dean / Head of College so as to meet as fully as possible with this recommendation.

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**

Response:

The Department would like to reiterate the difficulties of sending students abroad, in the light of the recently renewed Academic Structures à propos both the pattern of the teaching year and the requirement for the assessment of all programmes at the end of the academic year in which these were taken / taught. The Department would also like to draw attention to the financial disincentive to accommodate Erasmus students within its programmes. However, the Department will continue to explore means of overcoming these difficulties.

Additionally the Department would like to add that it takes Equality and Diversity issues very seriously as per discussions with the Review Panel. At a Departmental meeting during 2009-2010, the Equality and Diversity Officer gave a presentation to the Department on these issues which will remain an area of serious consideration for the Department.