

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Review of Department of Statistics: 11 and 12 February 2010

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Statistics. Reviews of *Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment* (DPTLA) are internal subject reviews focused on the quality of provision as experienced by students. The review looks at the range of programmes, course content, the teaching methods employed, assessment, facilities and much more.

The full report of the review is available publicly at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_173370_en.pdf

Further information about the DPTLA process can be found at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/psr/>

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Review Panel was impressed by the dedication and progressive attitude of staff and *graduate teaching assistants* within the Department, and with the focus on *research-led teaching*. The undergraduate students who met with the Panel were enthusiastic and very positive about their learning experience and the sense of community fostered by the Department. A number of recommendations have been made to support staff in enhancing the quality of the student experience and the management of teaching and learning in the Department.

Key Strengths

- Wide ranging and challenging suite of programmes offered by the Department, which is one of only a few UK departments which continue to offer a Single Honours degree in Statistics;
- *Accreditation* of programmes by the Royal Statistical Society for the courses undertaken by the majority of students;
- *Research-led teaching* with an emphasis on *enquiry-led learning*, reflecting a strong tradition of multi-disciplinary research of international renown;
- Committed approach to students' learning experience that includes many examples of good practice and innovation in the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment in a mathematically intensive environment;
- Exemplary feedback by undergraduates and GTAs on staff support;

- Effective mobilisation of resources to maintain high standard of provision, despite significant increase in student numbers at the start of 2009-10;
- The Department's concern for, and awareness of *employability* of its graduates, which it promotes through its strong links with potential employers;
- Strong links with the University of Bologna;
- Valued and effective tutorial and laboratory provision;
- Informative, easy to navigate website that included a video on student experiences;
- The informal and supportive approach by the Department to its staff and students, inculcating a warm and friendly atmosphere that facilitated social interaction.

Areas to be improved or enhanced¹

1. Feedback on Assessment

- a) Assessment feedback processes to be reviewed as planned to improve the timescales for and the quality of the feedback provided to students. [paragraph 4.3.3]

2. Work Placements

- a) The variety of work placement activities available for students should continue to be developed to *enhance* learning and *employability* and enrich the student learning environment. [paragraph 4.4.3]

3. Computer Laboratories

- a) Shared resources to be reviewed with a view to maximising student access to computer laboratories. [paragraph 4.8.12]

4. Internationalisation

- a) Plans to promote, support and facilitate outgoing student mobility to be continued including consideration of the viability and appropriateness of shorter term *study abroad*. [paragraph 4.7.4]

5. Probationary Training

- a) Specific probationer training for Statistics staff should be discussed in detail at College level and with the Learning and Teaching Centre with a view to replacing certain aspects of the generic *New Lecturer and Teacher Programme*. [paragraph 4.8.8]

6. University Restructuring

- a) The identity of the Department and the Single Honours degree to be maintained during the University restructuring process possibly by retaining a Head of Subject. [paragraph 4.8.1]
- b) All teaching staff to continue active participation in their areas of research strength regardless of the structure that might develop during restructuring. [paragraph 4.8.2]
- c) Further consideration to be given to expanding provision into the *taught postgraduate* area through establishing an MSc in Statistics and joint MSc in areas of mutual interest. [paragraph 4.5.4]
- d) The level and quality of administrative support to be maintained in the future merged school including as it enhances academic performance. [paragraph 4.8.4]

¹ Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the full report that contain the relevant discussion.

7. Succession Management

- e) Longer term *succession management* planning should take account of the national shortage of statisticians and bring forward plans for the appointment of the replacement Chair of Statistics. [paragraph 4.8.5]

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Accreditation

Accreditation is a 'seal of approval' given to a programme by a professional body, association or other organisation. It has potential benefits for students such as a recognised fast-track route for graduates seeking professional status or exemption from certain professional examinations.

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment or DPTLA

The University has a six yearly cycle of review of the departments within it. The DPTLA is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the quality of the provision delivered by departments.

Employability

Employability is about more than being able to get a job after University. It is about acknowledging and being able to demonstrate achievements, understanding and personal attributes that will contribute to success both during, and after, University.

Enhancement

The University has adopted the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) definition of 'enhancement' which is - 'taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students'.

Enquiry-led Learning or Enquiry-based Learning

The University of Manchester's Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning describes Enquiry-Based Learning as "an environment in which learning is driven by a process of enquiry owned by the student". It can include various forms of teaching, such as problem based learning, small scale investigations, projects and research that encourage students to take responsibility for their learning experience.

Graduate Teaching Assistant or GTAs

Graduate Teaching Assistants, Tutors and Laboratory Demonstrators are students, usually research students, who assist with teaching in the form of tutorials, labs and other activities that are part of undergraduate programmes in the department. They are paid an hourly rate by the University.

New Lecturer & Teacher Programme or NLTP

Probationary staff are required to complete this programme run by the Learning and Teaching Centre. It comprises two Masters level modules:

- i. Academic Practice in Higher Education (taught module),
- ii. Developing a Portfolio of Academic Practice (assessment module).

Successful completion of the programme leads to the award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and to full practitioner status of the *Higher Education Academy* (HEA).

Postgraduate Taught or PGT

Postgraduate Taught refers to taught programmes at postgraduate level, usually Masters.

Research-led Teaching

Research-led Teaching can mean different things in different disciplines. Broadly speaking, the term refers to the ways that the current research of staff can positively influence and support student learning and promote the development of research skills and attributes in students.

Study abroad

Study abroad is a term that is often used to refer to several programmes that offer opportunities for students to study in a European University, or one further afield, for a term, semester or year as part of their undergraduate degree programme. (The University's "Study Abroad Programme" is specifically designed for visiting students who elect to come to the University of Glasgow.)

Succession Management

Succession management is about planning for the development of key people in an organisation and their replacement when they move on and having strategies in place to ensure smooth changeovers.