University of Glasgow

Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

Review of School of Computing Science held on13 and 14 February 2014

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the School of Computing Science. *Periodic Subject Review* is an internal subject review 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_357278_en.pdf

Further information about the PSR process can be found at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/periodicsubjectreview/

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Review Panel recognised that the School was well established and had a worldwide reputation within the subject area. The Review Panel observed a highly successful, dedicated and hard-working School that aimed to provide the best learning and teaching environment for their students. The Panel was most impressed with the links the School had established with industry and with Secondary Schools and was highly impressed by the quality of the students it had met with. The Panel recognised that, as a medium sized School, it was under pressure to cover a diverse range of teaching and research and therefore the main area for improvement was for the School to establish a clear vision and strategy for growth: what range of activity would best suit the School and what overall target should be set in relation to student population. Strategy would need to be built into the College of Science and Engineering plans for growth and it was therefore important for the School to demonstrate to the College its potential and the benefit this would provide both the College and University. It was recognised that due to the current flux in student numbers, the School may have to initially establish

controls to allow its plan to develop and to enable the School to maintain its research excellence.

Key Strengths (Commendations) [1]

1. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

- The use of industrial assignments. [Paragraph 4.5.1]
- The high standard of publishable MSci projects. [Paragraph 3.5]

Curriculum Design, Development and Content

- The strong links with industry and *employability*. [Paragraph 4.6.5]
- The two practices introduced to strengthen relationship with secondary schools: the credit-bearing 'Computing Science in the classroom' where students act as classroom assistants and tutors promoting both Computing Science and the University; the development of a nationwide *Continuing Professional Development (CPD)* programme for teachers, funded by the Scottish Government. [Paragraph 4.6.6]

Resources for Learning and Teaching

- The excellent balance of teaching and research that the School had achieved which provided an excellent student experience. [Paragraph 6.8]
- The high level of support provided to the *Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)* and also the quality and dedication of the GTAs. [Paragraph 6.20]

2. Supporting Students in their Learning

- The good practice of providing the introductory week for Masters' programmes which includes *formatively assessed* revision sessions where students are able to transfer to another programme as appropriate. [Paragraph 4.8.5]
- The practice of providing a *bridging course* as well as a mock examination to University of Glasgow Singapore (UGS) students. [Paragraph 4.8.7]

3. Enhancing the Student Learning Experience

Recruitment

- The high quality student intake which was evident at the meetings with the students and with the Graduate Teaching Assistants. [Paragraph 3.5]
- The School's success in diversifying programmes and recruiting undergraduate and postgraduate students from a wide variety of backgrounds. [Paragraph 4.7.1]

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

Areas to be improved or enhanced

1. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

Assessment

- The School reviews both the scale and timing of assessments, including examinations, to ensure the assessment load on staff and students is appropriate and optimally phased. [Paragraph 4.5.3]

Feedback

- The School puts in place measures to ensure the consistency of feedback to students on assignments both in relation to timescale and quality in accordance with the *University's Assessment Policy*. [Paragraph 4.5.4]

Student mobility

- The School consult the *Recruitment and International Office (RIO)* and the *Dean of International Mobility* in revising their approach to student mobility [Paragraph 8.4]

Extending good practice

- The School builds on its existing activities for sharing good practice in teaching across the School to encourage further developments of teaching, engaging both staff and students with the process. [Paragraph 5.2]

Curriculum Design

- GTAs and students are made more aware of consultation processes and the mechanisms through which they can contribute to these, to encourage more direct engagement from the students. [Paragraph 4.6.2]

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

- The School and the *Learning and Teaching Centre Academic Development Unit* work together to continue to develop *ILOs* that appropriately reflect the distinctive nature of different programmes even when there are common elements. The School should also be supported in developing effective mechanisms to ensure that the mapping of these ILOs onto assessment type is clearly communicated to students. [Paragraph 4.4]

Resources for Learning and Teaching

- The College considers the space limitations currently experienced by the School as a result of the loss of previous laboratory space in the Boyd Orr Building and gives consideration to identifying and developing additional accommodation for current as well as future provision. [Paragraph 4.7.2]

- The College reviews the effectiveness of current administrative and technical support arrangements for the School and where appropriate, takes action to provide more effective support. [Paragraph 6.8]

- The College, School and IT Services should discuss developing a sustainable upgrading model that will secure appropriate PC facilities with adequate storage capacity, higher specifications and on a shorter replacement cycle for Computing Science laboratories. [Paragraph 6.6]

- Timetabling and room booking problems experienced to be drawn to the attention of the Director of Estates and Buildings to inform the ongoing developments in support of improved timetabling and room booking. [Paragraph 4.7.3]

2. Supporting students in their learning

- The School considers its approach to teaching and how it will maintain quality of support provided to students at a different operative scale, particularly as staff will be under additional pressure from the Singapore intake. [Paragraph 4.7.1]

- The School pays particular attention to the support given to the UGS students in their transition to studying at the University of Glasgow at the end of the first year of operation in Singapore. [Paragraph 4.8.8]

- A review of both UG and PG handbooks to ensure the best presentation of information is used consistently in both handbooks. [Paragraph 4.8.2]

3. Context and Strategy

- The School develops a coherent strategic vision in terms of future growth and range of provision, working with the Head of College, to produce a phased plan as to how to reach its vision. [Paragraph 4.7.2]

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Continuing Professional Development or CPD

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can be defined as learning activity that is: self-financing; developmental; and vocationally relevant. A wide range of activities are included, from conferences, seminars, very short courses (even lunchtime meetings) to credit-rated and award bearing programmes such as MBAs, MScs and other more traditional postgraduate taught (PGT) courses spread over a number of months/years for part-time students. They are normally undertaken by professionals who are already in work but are open to other interested people.

Bridging course

Bridging courses are for people who haven't covered the subject matter normally expected for starting a specific Degree course (or similar) but who are of a suitable academic standard.

Dean of International Mobility

The Dean leads the development of the University's Student Mobility Strategy: intended to promote the benefits of study abroad and work experience for home students; providing opportunities to experience a variety of ideas, cultures, and education systems. This also prepares students to be "global citizens"; maximising recruitment opportunities of talented students.

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.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment refers to assessed work where feedback is given to help the student improve their learning and their performance. The work may or may not contribute to the student's final grade for the course.

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 subject/school. They are paid an hourly rate by the University.

Induction

Induction is a series of events planned by the University, Colleges, Schools, Subjects and the Student's Representative Council to welcome new students and provide them with information to prepare them for their studies and the forthcoming year at University. Events usually take place during the first week of the academic year.

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs describe what all students should be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes when they successfully complete the course or programme that the ILOs relate to.

Learning and Teaching Centre

The Learning and Teaching Centre is a University Service whose role is to "help implement and develop the University's Learning and Teaching strategy, identify, assess and disseminate new developments and good practice which serve to enhance the student learning experience, and will work with colleagues throughout the University to bring about change".

Periodic Subject Review or PSR

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

Recruitment and International Office (RIO)

The Recruitment and International Office (RIO) provides applicants, parents and teachers with a single point of contact for information and advice on the range of programmes available at the University of Glasgow. The Service also develop, implement, co-ordinate and monitors widening participation initiatives within the University and with other partners. The Recruitment and International Office (RIO) is situated in the Fraser Building.

University Assessment Policy

The University Assessment Policy sets out the principles that underpin the way assessment is undertaken in this institution and outlines the roles and responsibilities that inform assessment practices. Staff are asked to read and reflect on the policy and to use it to inform the design or redesign of assessment at course and programme level.