University of Glasgow

Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

Review of Classics held on 4 December 2014

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Subject area of Classics. *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_419593_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 Panel was impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and students, and with the firm focus on excellence in teaching and support for students. The student groups were enthusiastic and positive, and a credit to the School.

The Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, the programmes offered by the Subject were current and valid in the light of developing knowledge and practice within the subject area. The School demonstrated a number of strengths, as well as an awareness of the areas requiring improvement. The most substantive of these are reflected in the commendations and recommendations below.

Key Strengths (Commendations) [1]

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

1. **Supporting Students in their Learning**

   - The strong sense of community and supportive and responsive environment provided. [Paragraph 4.7.1]

   - The Staff-Student Alexandrian Society which met fortnightly and included a range of informal social activities as well as invited speakers and often produced an annual play. [Paragraph 4.8.2]

2. **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching**

   - E-learning initiatives undertaken by the Subject to enhance learning and teaching. [Paragraph 5.1.1]

   - The wide range of assessment including: self-defined essay question, coursework essay, examination group work, oral presentation, seminar contribution, portfolio work, on-line discussion as well as *blended learning.* [Paragraph 5.2.1]

   - Innovative use of *outreach initiatives* such as the 'Iris Project' whereby students taught Latin in 3 primary schools in a low income area in the East End of Glasgow. [Paragraph 5.7.1]

   - The use of *peer assessment.* [Paragraph 5.2.6]

   - For being responsive and addressing an issue with attendance as well as providing a more stimulating and productive method assessment. [Paragraph 5.2.4]

3. **Enhancing the Student Learning Experience**

   - The Subject's responsiveness to student feedback. [Paragraph 4.2.1]

   - The three-week core Travel course giving students an opportunity to travel abroad. [Paragraph 4.6.2] (*but see Equality and Diversity section below*)

   - Classic's success in *widening access* [Paragraph 4.1.1]

Areas to be improved or enhanced

1. **Supporting students in their learning**

   - Consider the provision of further support for language provision, particularly for beginners, possibly introducing additional on-line resources to support beginners to Latin and Greek [Paragraph 4.7.4]

   - The Panel noted that the *Code of Assessment* could be difficult to interpret and recommends that the Subject develops explicit Schedule 'A' grade descriptors in relation to Classics in order to assist students to gain a better understanding of what was expected from them. [Paragraph 4.7.2]

   - No measures were in place to monitor workload in relation to the 'open door' policy and the Panel therefore suggests that 'office hours' be considered for all staff, at least for *GTAs.* The Panel further recommends that GTAs be properly remunerated for their contact time with students. [Paragraph 4.7.1]

Transition and Induction

- Explore with the Head of School possibilities for interdisciplinarity to provide more flexibility and opportunities for potential PGT students. [Paragraph 4.9.1]

- The School establishes appropriate support mechanisms for international students before and after arrival. [Paragraph 4.9.1]

2. Enhancing the Student Experience

Admissions, Retention and Success

- Attention to be given to restructuring language provision with a view to providing a more progressive learning environment, possibly improving retention. [Paragraph 4.1.5]

Equality and Diversity

- In relation to the Travel course, consideration to be given to providing alternative provision to give both Single and Joint Honours' students access to the core skills gained; possibly the introduction of a number of shorter trips. Additional sources of funding should also be investigated at both Subject and School level. Alternatively, *Intended Learning Outcomes* should be differentiated between Single and Joint provision. [Paragraph 4.6.2]. The Panel further recommends that the Subject and School ensure the core Travel course complies with the University's equality and diversity policies. [Paragraph 4.4.2]

Employability

- In relation to *employability*, the Review Panel recommends that the Subject clearly articulate the transferable skills acquired, such as those attained in the core Travel course, and communicate these to all students. [Paragraph 4.3.1]

Internationalisation

- The Subject and the School work with the *Dean of International Mobility* to consider ways to promote interest in study abroad by highlighting the benefits and removing barriers to student mobility. [Paragraph 4.6.1]

3. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

Curriculum Design

- In relation to the MLitt Classics, to be compliant with th*e Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) r*egulations, the Panel recommends the Subject consider increasing the overall credit to 190. This could possibly be achieved by either amending a current course credit or by adding an additional 10-credit course. Alternatively, the Subject reviews the *Intended Learning Outcomes* and summative assessment to ensure that these are consistent with SCQF11. [Paragraph 5.3.5]

Resources for Learning and Teaching

- Provide a formal induction event for all new staff across the School to introduce them to relevant School and University procedures. [Paragraph 5.4.1] In addition, the Panel recommends that the School creates a staff handbook and/or webpage containing guidance on generic administrative processes and procedures across subjects, identifying central administrative staff roles and responsibilities. [Paragraph 5.6.1]

Engaging and Supporting Staff (including GTAs)

- Introduce a more formal induction programme for GTAs which should include training on assessment requirements, marking and provision of information on processes and procedures. [Paragraph 5.4.6]

- College HR Manager should clarify the position on remuneration for all work undertaken by GTAs and ensure this position is effectively communicated to Schools and Subjects. [Paragraph 5.4.8]

4. Context and Strategy

- Develop a coherent strategic vision in terms of future growth and range of provision, working with the Head of School to produce a plan as to how to achieve this. [Paragraph 3.3]

- The School re-instates formally recorded meetings of Subject course reflection and learning and teaching developments which should facilitate dialogue between Subject and School. [Paragraph 3.6]

- The School further develops a School identity by introducing appropriate inter-Subject forums to allow for discussion of common issues and provide opportunities for staff to meet with other colleagues. [Paragraph 3.4]

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Blended Learning
Use of face-to-face teaching and on-line learning

Code of Assessment

The University's Code of Assessment is designed to provide a fair and rational means of assessing students' performance. It provides instructions to staff on how assessment should be designed and carried out. It sets out verbal descriptions of each of the eight grades from A to H. Students' work is judged against these descriptions in terms of how well they have met the stated intended learning outcomes of the course or other assessed component and the corresponding grade is awarded. A guide to the Code of Assessment for students is available from the Senate Office website.

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.

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.

Outreach

Providing services to populations who might not otherwise have access to those services

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.

Peer assessment

Is a process whereby peers grade assignments or tests based on provided criteria. It is a practice that is considered to improve the students understanding of course materials as well as marking, assessment and feedback procedures.

SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework promotes lifelong learning in Scotland. The Framework includes all mainstream qualifications in Scotland and provides support to learning providers and employers. It provides a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities and thereby makes the relationships between qualifications clearer. It clarifies entry and exit points, and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors and increase the opportunities for credit transfer. In these ways it assists learners to plan their progress and minimise duplication of learning.

Widening Access or Widening Participation

The objective of widening participation is to develop, implement, co-ordinate and monitor initiatives which further: the increased recruitment of students to Higher Education from those areas and groups where there is low participation; the provision of educational support for all students once they have entered the University in order to improve student retention and to facilitate the successful completion of students' programmes of study; and the flexible provision of learning opportunities. More information can be found at the Widening Participation at Glasgow website. http://www.gla.ac.uk/wideningparticipation/.