



## Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

### Review of the Scottish Literature held on 23 March 2016

#### Report Summary

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The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the subject area of Scottish Literature. *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\\_484835\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_484835_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.

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#### Conclusions

Scottish Literature holds a unique position in terms of Scottish, UK, and global contexts due to its status as the sole academic unit dedicated wholly to teaching and research in Scottish literature. This provides a core distinctive strength in its offering that is reinforced by a small but strong team of staff who are committed to providing a positive, stimulating, and supportive learning environment for their students. Given this position and the high quality of the provision on offer in Scottish Literature, the Panel had expected to find a more sustained and developed outward-looking approach to collaboration and partnerships. Several of the recommendations below are made with a view to encouraging this. The Subject demonstrates excellent responsiveness to student feedback and was highly praised by the students who met with the Review Panel. This is confirmed by impressive *NSS* satisfaction rates (whichever subject group the Subject is reported in). In its *SER*, the Subject articulated a very clear, coherent, and distinctive set of pedagogical aims and strategies, and throughout the review, the Panel was pleased to find good evidence of the Subject being engaged in a continual process of reflection and evaluation with regard to all aspects of their practice.

## **Key Strengths (Commendations)<sup>1</sup>**

### **Context and Strategy**

- The positivity expressed by the students who met with the Panel confirmed the success of Scottish Literature in providing an excellent learning experience for its students and the Panel commends the Subject for this. [Paragraph 4.2.3]
- Maintaining the scope and diversity of its teaching portfolio with its small cohort of teaching staff. [Paragraph 2.3.2]
- The online provision developments as indicators of the Subject's innovative approach to course design and delivery and its responsiveness to and support of the University e-learning strategy. [Paragraph 5.4.1]

### **Enhancing the Student Experience: Internationalisation and Placement Learning**

- The Co-ordination of the *Principia Consortium* initiative which brings benefits of internationalisation to the student community and provides opportunities for the development of partnerships with other institutions [Paragraph 2.3.3]
- Engagement with Placement Learning and commends their 'Memorialising Scottish Literature and Culture' course as an excellent example. [Paragraph 5.1.5]

### **Enhancing the Student Experience: Student support**

- The excellent support for students who are preparing for entry into Honours level study. [Paragraph 4.4.1]
- The GTAs for their awareness of accessible and inclusive teaching practice. [Paragraph 4.3.2]
- The School Disability Officer's membership of the School Learning and Teaching Committee to ensure that all Learning and Teaching Initiatives take full account of the requirements of all students whatever their specific needs. [Paragraph 4.3.1]

### **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Assessment and Feedback**

- The clearly reflective and innovative approach to continuous enhancement of assessment practices. [Paragraph 5.5.1]

### **Enhancing the Student Experience: Recruitment**

- The proactive approach to recruitment, particularly in terms of awareness and engagement with school curriculum and teachers and encourages the Subject to continue this effort. The Panel also urges that the School support the Subject in these initiatives. [Paragraph 4.2.2]

## **Areas to be improved or enhanced**

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the full report that contain the relevant discussion.

## **Enhancing the Student Experience**

### *Study Abroad*

- With the support of the School, explore the possibilities around the opportunities for short period of study abroad, with a range of preferred partners (to assure duty of care can be discharged) where there are opportunities for wider comparative studies that can be related back to the study of Scottish Literature. [Paragraph 5.1.4]
- The Convener was concerned to hear feedback that a University regulation might be blocking study abroad opportunities and, therefore, recommends that the *Senate Office* clarify the Subject area's concerns and review University regulations on outside papers. The conclusions of this review should be shared with the Head of Subject and the Head of School. [Paragraph 5.1.2]

### *Graduate Attributes*

- Consider ways to engage other students with the outputs from the 'Memorialising Scottish Literature and Culture' course for added learning experience. [Paragraph 4.5.2]

## **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Assessment and Feedback**

- Review the assessment feedback form for currency and agree a consistent practice for its use. This should be done in full consultation with the students. [Paragraph 5.6.3]

## **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Range of provision**

### *Interdisciplinary teaching*

- The School should review the potential for new collaborative courses given examples of courses between subjects working well elsewhere. [Paragraph 4.2.9]
- Considerations related to financial administration should not be an obstacle to interdisciplinary teaching and, noting from subsequent clarification that mechanisms for the transfer of funding for courses with shared ownership or teaching were agreed and in place at College level, the Panel recommends that the Head of College Finance review these mechanisms with the Head of School to establish whether the reported barriers to collaboration within the College were a matter of perception or could be resolved by adjusting the relevant administrative processes. [Paragraph 4.2.10]

### *Postgraduate Taught Provision*

- Explore and give consideration to alternative models of postgraduate taught provision including those that might appeal to alternative markets of potential students. For example, as well as exploring the potential to contribute to the development of the School of Critical Studies "Hub and Spoke" model of PGT provision [see para 4.2.6], consideration might include possibilities for joint programmes either internally to the University or with national or international partners, alternative modes of delivery such as those involving the accumulation of credit over longer periods, and investigation of new potential markets that might find alternative formats more accessible. It was suggested that the Subject's stated intention to develop their MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) offering in future could contribute to this. [Paragraph 4.2.8]

### *Course material*

- Reference to the Academic Writing Skills Programme and other support available through University Services should be highlighted in course handbooks or in the Scottish Literature *Moodle* as a permanent source of the information and an easy reference point for students. [Paragraph 4.4.2]

### **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Graduate Teaching Assistant Support**

- Evaluate GTA training provision to identify whether there is scope to improve its structure and to ensure the support GTAs receive is timely and helps them be fully prepared for teaching before they begin. [paragraph 5.7.8]
- Noting that the staff and the GTAs value the autonomy the GTAs are given, the Review Panel recommends that the Subject and GTAs explore the structures that support GTAs working autonomously, including possible options for a more formal arrangement for GTA photocopying and communication of such arrangements to ensure that they are clear to all GTAs. [Paragraph 5.7.9]
- The Senate Office forward comments on GTA contracts to Human Resources for information. [Paragraph 5.7.9 & 5.8.1]

### **Glossary**

#### **Graduate Attributes**

[Graduate attributes](#) are the skills, knowledge and qualities or attitudes developed by individuals through their programme of study that they will use to contribute effectively in work or other aspects of society in the future.

#### **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.

#### **Moodle**

Moodle is the University's supported Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

#### **National Student Survey (NSS)**

The NSS is a national initiative that has been conducted annually since 2005. The survey asks students in their final year of a programme to provide feedback on their student learning experience. There are 22 questions in all, this can be found at:

<http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>

#### **Periodic Subject Review (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.

### **Principia Consortium**

The Principia Consortium is a group of select US Colleges and Universities who have collaborated with the University of Glasgow to offer students enrolled in their Honours programmes a unique international Study Abroad opportunity at the University of Glasgow.

### **Self Evaluation Report (SER)**

A Self Evaluation Report is a document prepared by the Subject(s)/School in advance of a PSR Review. Its purpose is to provide the Review Panel with an insight into the Subject(s)/School's view of itself, its strengths and areas it would wish to develop. It is normally prepared by the Head of School in conjunction with other staff but students should also be offered the opportunity to comment on whether or not it reflects the Subject(s)/School they know.

### **Senate Office**

The Senate Office oversees the University's compliance with national and international quality assurance and enhancement requirements and has responsibility for academic governance and its coordination, developing and implementing a range of policies and processes and supporting Senate and University Committees. The Senate Office provides a range of academic services to staff and students across the University and to a number of external bodies as well as members of the public.