



Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

Review of the School of Psychology held on 1 February 2017

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the School of Psychology. *Periodic Subject Review* (PSR) 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_549194_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 noted from the *Self-Evaluation Report* (SER), the School's strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching to provide 'a world class student learning experience that equips students to be psychologically literate global citizens, who are able to apply their knowledge of psychology and their associated skills and attributes to problem solving and interacting with the everyday world around them. The Review Panel heard this vision articulated throughout the visit by the staff with whom they met. The Panel was impressed by the engagement of staff with the School's strategic aim, and particularly with the widespread focus on the application of skills in the wider world. The Review Panel concluded that, across the School of Psychology, there is a clear culture of *pedagogical* development with commitment to enhancing provision. The School articulates a keen interest in, and positive strategies for, enhancing the student experience. There is a strong sense of community between the staff and students as well as involvement in the wider University; as demonstrated by the alignment of initiatives to University strategy and the valuable contribution made by individual members of staff to University projects.

Commendations, Key Strengths and Good Practice¹

Commendations are presented separately from examples of good practice, with the former being used to identify innovative and exemplary activities for wider dissemination.

Enhancing the Student Experience: Supporting Students in their Learning

- The School's pastoral support of its students, including its efforts to integrate new undergraduate students making the transition into University study [3.3.3].

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Curriculum Design and Development

- Embedding of research methodologies throughout the curriculum to support students in becoming investigative, reflective learners [4.1.12];
- The School's commitment to reflection and enhancement; and its response in establishing the twin committees of Teaching Management and Teaching Development. It is suggested that similar structures might be of interest to other academic units where the scale of provision permitted separate committees [4.1.1].

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Engaging and Supporting Staff

- The integration and strong sense of community between research and teaching staff within the School. This inclusive team ethos fostered by the School extends across all grades and categories of staff, including administrative and technical staff [4.4.2].

The Review Panel identified the following key strengths and areas of good practice.

Enhancing the Student Experience: Supporting Students in their Learning

- The systematic use of course evaluation summary and response documents to record and communicate responses to student feedback [3.4.2].

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Curriculum Design and Development

- The holistic approach to review of the undergraduate programme [4.1.5 – 8].

Enhancing the Student Experience: Student Engagement

- The use of *Peer-Assisted Learning*, particularly in the level of engagement demonstrated by the students that the Panel met [3.3.8].

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Engaging and Supporting Staff

- The strong vision of excellent teaching provision and the engagement of staff in making that vision reality [2.5.1, 2.5.2 & 4.4.2];
- The School's engagement with the *Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme*, and its encouragement of all staff and *Graduate Teaching Assistants* (GTA)s to apply [4.4.3 & 4.4.8].

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

Areas to be improved or enhanced

The Review Panel made a number of recommendations where it identified opportunities for further enhancement.

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Curriculum Design and Development

- As part of the next stage of its ongoing curriculum review, the School gives attention to student workload, support, the competitive aspects at Level 2, and the potentially different experiences of students on the various degree pathways. There should be detailed discussion with the student body at the outset to explore perceptions and ensure that effective solutions are identified [3.1.7 - 3.1.10];
- The School maximises the opportunities presented by the curriculum review for staff to undertake research and scholarship based on the developments arising from the curriculum review [4.1.8 & 4.4.3];
- Curriculum review should include *postgraduate taught* provision, which should include consideration of elective choices (in relation to information and balance of workload) and other support for students at key transition points. In the meantime, and in time for postgraduate students arriving in September 2017, the Panel encourages the School to pay particular attention to induction information and transition support within the current parameters of the programme structures and course offerings. This might be informed by student input on the issues faced, and on the design of *induction* materials and transition support [3.1.15];
- The School prioritise consideration of feedback on assessment, for both coursework and examinations, in forthcoming curriculum review and Teaching Development Group meetings; contributing to current efforts to improve assessment and feedback across the College and the University [4.2.2-4.2.4].

Enhancing the Student Experience: Student Engagement

- The School engage the students in a detailed dialogue regarding feedback on assessment to explore the reasons behind dissatisfaction and to attempt to identify a mutually satisfactory solution [4.2.5];
- Consideration of how the School might involve students in development work from the very early stages, to assist with pinpointing issues and problem solving [3.4.3].

Enhancing the Student Experience: Supporting Students in their Learning

- The Chief Advisers of Studies for the College of Science and Engineering and the College of Arts meet with the Senior Adviser from Psychology to consider how the particular advising needs of the MA students in Psychology might be met [3.3.6].

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Engaging and Supporting Staff

- *Graduate Teaching Assistants* (GTAs) should be given sufficient notice of teaching materials for laboratories to allow them to organise and schedule their preparation [4.4.6];
- The issue of GTA payments should be flagged to *Academic Standards Committee* for noting and also referred to the *Assessment and Feedback Working Group*, which is looking at the contribution of GTAs to assessment and feedback [4.4.7];
- The University's *Recognising Excellence in Teaching Working Group* should provide additional practical guidance on progressing with staff promotion criteria including advice on gathering evidence of impact, finding opportunities to present work, and ethics in scholarship [4.4.3];
- The School of Psychology's specific situation in operating across two Colleges should be explicitly considered by the administrative review in the College of Science and Engineering [4.4.12].

Glossary

Academic Standards Committee (ASC)

The Academic Standards Committee is a sub-committee of Education Policy and Strategy Committee (EdPSC), a key functional committee of the University. The role of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) is to assist EdPSC in its implementation of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, through assurance and enhancement of the quality of educational provision and through maintenance of standards. ASC reports to EdPSC, and also approves proposals for undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree programmes on behalf of EdPSC and Senate.

Assessment and Feedback Working Group (AFWG)

The Assessment and Feedback Working Group has the primary aim of making a step change in our approach to assessment and feedback to improve our practice, as evidenced by Periodic Subject Review reports and other mechanisms, and substantially improve the student experience of assessment and feedback, as measured by the *National Student Survey* (NSS) in particular. The group will use an evidence-based approach to understand and improve current practice and behaviours. It will draw on best practice from both within the University and from across the Higher Education sector and facilitate adoption of this practice within the 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.

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/>

Peer Assisted Learning or PAL

PAL is a weekly group meeting for students on a given course, attended voluntarily but officially recommended by the subject/school, and led by a "facilitator" who is a student who has done the course previously. The content discussed may be anything that seems relevant and important to the groups, from administrative details through deeper implications of the course material to study skills and any aspect of how to be a successful student.

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.

Postgraduate Taught or PGT

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

Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme (RET)

Recognising Excellence in Teaching is the University of Glasgow's Continuing Professional Development framework, which aims to provide development opportunities as well as professional recognition of expertise in teaching and supporting learning. There are four categories of recognition: Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow and staff can apply via a structured programme of support consisting of workshops, peer groups and teaching observations that assist participants to write their application.

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.