

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 30 May 2008

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:
Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Review of
Politics held on 14 March 2007**

Mr Jim Craig, Clerk to the Review Panel

May 2008

Conclusions and recommendations

The Politics Department approached this review in a positive and constructive manner affording the Panel its full and ready cooperation. This was entirely consistent with its robust approach to quality assurance issues internally and its commitment to enhancing the learning experience of its students. While confirming the integrity of its academic standards it demonstrated a readiness to adopt non-traditional forms of learning and assessment, and its development of the Politics General compulsory component of the Honours curriculum, the importance attached to participation in Level 1 tutorials, and the weight attributed to the oral presentation and defence of the Honours dissertation considerably enriched the learning experience and the value of the degree.

The recommendations interspersed throughout this report and summarised below are made in the spirit of support and encouragement to the Department. They are ranked below in order of priority and include references back to the sections from which they are derived.

Recommendation 1

The responsibilities of assessment officer and quality assurance officer be delegated to other members of staff in the Department at the earliest opportunity. [Section C.6.5]

For the attention of the **Head of Department**

Response:

A new Quality Office was appointed with effect from 1 September 2007. The responsibilities of Assessment Officer have been divided between the Quality Officer, the Honours Coordinator and the Director of Postgraduate Studies (taught courses). The Head of Department retains responsibility for convening the Examination Boards

Recommendation 2

The Department should consider whether the current guidelines governing return times for essays are sufficiently effective, and whether it might be appropriate to introduce a limiting timeframe that would represent something closer to a commitment to students. [Section C.3.6]

For the attention of the **Head of Department**

Response:

The Department decided to indicate to students that assessed work would be returned within three weeks of the deadline date. This commitment will be included in all course guides from session 2008 - 2009

Recommendation 3

The Department should consider adopting a policy that, at least at Level 2 and above, each student essay will be returned individually by a member of staff who had marked it. [Section C.3.6]

For the attention of the **Head of Department**

Response:

The Department decided that at Level 1 and Level 2 (where there are a total of 600 students), special tutorials be devoted to feedback, with tutors responsible for marking being present. Tutors have Office Hours when students can also talk to them individually, and they are encouraged to do so. At Level 3, Honours and PGT it is already the case that students have individual access to their teachers to discuss any matters, including feedback on assessed work.

Recommendation 4

The notes on assessment which were included in course guides should be amended to focus on the grades (divided into bands) and their correspondence with the verbal descriptions of performance relative to ILOs; and that they should make clear that the numerals in the scale of 1 to 22 are used only as a tool for aggregating discrete assessment results. [Section C.3.7]

For the attention of the **Head of Department**

Response:

The necessary amendments will be made to the course documentation for the session 2008-09, and lecturers and tutors have been asked to deal with assessment procedures at the outset of each course.

Special training sessions on assessment procedures were initiated for all staff members to aid this process

Recommendation 5

The Department consider how it might incorporate a closer focus on personal development planning in its plans to increase student awareness of course learning outcomes. [Section C.4.4]

For the attention of the **Head of Department**

Response:

This matter has been discussed at Staff Meetings, and the Quality Officer has been charged with investigating appropriate means of putting this recommendation into effect bearing in mind that the Department has 900+ students and a staff: student ratio of 1:25 and that no extra resources have been made available to aid the personal development programme. Each student has a personal tutor, and it may be that this is

the mechanism, by which the recommendation can be implemented. This matter is to be further discussed at the department's teaching review on 11 June

Recommendation 6

The Department should continue its efforts to develop a useful workload model capable of demonstrating where adjustments are required to achieve a fair distribution of teaching and administrative responsibilities while maintaining the quality of these in a research intensive environment. [Section C. 6.5]

For the attention of the **Head of Department**

Response:

The Department has a reasonably sophisticated workload model, which is currently under review. The recommendations of the working party reviewing this will be implemented in the session 2008-09

Recommendation 7

The International and Postgraduate Service be advised of the Department's experience that some students admitted to its Masters programmes have had an insufficient command of English to participate fully, and have tended to affect adversely the quality of the learning experience of other students. [Section C. 5.2]

For the attention of the **Head of the International and Postgraduate Service**

Response:

The standard entry requirements for entry to the Masters programmes in Politics include English language for non-native speakers (IELTS 6.5 with no subtest under 6 or TOEFL -ibt 92). These are the levels recommended for entry to postgraduate Masters programmes by the University's EFL Unit.

IPS already include information on pre-sessional English language courses with all offer letters but in addition will e-mail all applicants to the Politics Masters programme to encourage them to take the 5-week pre-sessional course.

Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office

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