

**UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW**

**Academic Standards Committee - Friday 17 November 2006**

**Update on Recommendations Arising from the DPTLA Review of Psychology held on 11 March 2005**

**Ms J McAllister, Academic Policy Manager, Senate Office**

At its meeting on 13 January 2006, Academic Standards Committee received the responses to the recommendations contained in the Report of the Review of Departmental Teaching, Learning and Assessment for the Department of Psychology. The Committee noted that the responses to Recommendations 4 and 14 were inconclusive and considered that further input from the Learning and Teaching Centre was required to take the matters forward at University-wide level. Below is an update report which has been considered by the Convener of the Review Panel who is satisfied all recommendations have now been addressed.

**Recommendation 4:**

The Panel **recommends** that the Department examine how to address the level of basic skills demonstrated by Level 1 students on entry to the University, in conjunction with the Faculty's Effective Learning Adviser. (*Paragraph F.1*)

**Action:** Head of Department  
Effective Learning Adviser for the Faculties of Science

*Initial Response - Head of Department:*

We are exploring ways of improving basic skill levels of Level 1 students in conjunction with the Effective Learning Adviser. However, the approach we believe has to be a whole class approach where basic skills are targeted through the normal curriculum and where the Effective Learning Adviser acts as a consultant. We have built basic essay writing skills, note taking and literature searches into our Level 1 tutorial structure in order to tackle the skills deficit.

*Initial Response - Effective Learning Advisers*

With our faculty entry system this issue is not solely one for the Department of Psychology. The Student Learning Service (SLS) provides workshops on relevant topics, and also one-to-one appointments, which are open to all students. The effective learning advisers do provide in-course sessions on a variety of topics for large lecture groups in 1<sup>st</sup> year, for example essay writing for biology 1 students; however, it can be counter-productive to provide similar sessions when there is a large overlap in cohort between courses.

We are happy to meet with the Psychology 1 teaching team to discuss alternative appropriate means of addressing the perceived lack of unspecified learning skills. In order to help first year psychology students we need to know what qualities are desired in their formative work. Any general assistance that we can provide needs to be in conjunction with full and appropriate feedback on formative work by subject tutors. One method of achieving a uniform quality of feedback is to use a feedback pro-forma

on which both subject content as well as general skills are included. Advice and training for such a scheme should be sought from the SLS.

*Response - October 2006*

Dr Shona Johnston, the Effective Learning Adviser with responsibility for Psychology met with Prof Paddy O'Donnell to further discuss the recommendation 4 in the DPTLA report. Below is way forward that has been agreed between the SLS and the Departments

The Department's interpretation of the recommendation is that there is a demand from Level 1 students, possibly more so in science, for help in the skills for structured essay writing, and to some extent note taking. The demand is not universal but is concentrated in the smaller subset of students who struggle with the nature of essay writing in Psychology. It has also to be remembered that about 40% of Level 1 Psychology students are in the Science Faculty and most of these will benefit from the special learning support offered to Biology 1 students.

The main problem is how to get the help to this target group. They do not immediately identify themselves as needing help and, even if they do so, often are reluctant to admit what they see as weakness. In our meeting we decided to use the return of the first essay as the trigger point for help and to make the help available by having a presence of SLS staff in the Psychology lab and through the availability of sign on help sessions.

Dr Johnston agreed to contact the Department with the view to scheduling sign-in sessions late November or early December 2006, and to publicise the facility amongst Level 1 Psychology students.

**Recommendation 14:**

The Panel **recommends** that the Teaching and Learning Centre consider introducing a further session of teaching observation for probationary staff within the New Lecturer and Teacher Programme. (*Paragraph E.3*)

**Action:** Director, Teaching and Learning Service

*Initial Response:*

This needs to be discussed further within TLS (and the new LTC), because of parity and equity issues for the participants of the NLTP and workload issues for the staff of TLS. The introduction of Peer Observation of Teaching (Recommendation 15) within the department may negate the need for additional support from TLS. This is to be discussed further with the department.

*Response - October 2006*

Discussions are underway within the Learning and Teaching Centre (previously Teaching and Learning Service) about how many peer observations it is practical to have in workload terms to have within the New Lecturer Teaching Programme (NLTP). There are currently two observations in the programme. The NLTP is currently under review by a team chaired by Professor John Briggs (Senate Assessor on Court) and until the outcomes of the review are known it is not possible to make commitments to the inclusion of further peer observation sessions. Clearly the recommendations contained within DPTLA reports will be part of evidence that Professor Briggs and his team will consider during the review.

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*Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office*

*Last modified on: Wednesday 8 November 2006*