

## Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

### Review of Department of Economics: Thursday 24 January 2008

#### Report Summary

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The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Economics. Reviews of Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA) are internal subject reviews 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\\_104279\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_104279_en.pdf)

Further information about the DPTLA process can be found at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qae/dptla/>

*Italicised words* are explained in a glossary below.

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#### Conclusions

The Review Panel commends the Department on its awareness of its strengths and weaknesses and its willingness to address issues as they arise and, although a number of recommendations have been made, they are made to enhance the quality of the student experience, and the management of teaching and learning. The Panel was impressed by the Department's rapid recovery from a time of intense change and its development into a thriving department, and congratulates the Head of Department whose success in leading the Department to its current position was borne out by the high regard with which staff spoke of him.

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#### Key Strengths

- An open, dynamic and reflective environment supportive of *enhancement* of the student experience.
- Support provided for international students by the Faculty International Officer.
- Cohesion amongst staff, both academic and administrative, who were described as supportive, helpful and friendly by probationary staff and students.
- The range of provision available and its match with market demand as demonstrated by successful recruitment.

- The Department's concern for, and awareness of, the *employability* of its graduates which it promotes through the curriculum and extracurricular initiatives.
- The rapid and strategic development of Postgraduate Taught Provision.
- Successful recruitment of international students to postgraduate taught programmes.
- The Department's international focus with a remarkable 90% of postgraduate taught students from outwith the European Union, a notable number of international staff and links being developed with a number of institutions outwith the UK.
- The Head of Department's leadership skills.

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## Areas to be improved or enhanced<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Assessment and feedback

- a) The range of assessment methods used at Level 1 to be broadened. [paragraph 4.3.5, 4.1.2 and 4.2.1]
- b) Opportunities for students to receive timely, meaningful and useful feedback on their assessed work to be increased. [paragraph 4.3.4]
- c) Existing support and promotion of *enquiry-led learning* across the curriculum to be extended and to be included at Levels 1 and 2. [paragraph 4.4.4 and 4.1.2]
- d) Marks from *study abroad* to be included in the calculation of final grades. [paragraph 5.2]
- e) Advice on *plagiarism* and *Turnitin* to be reviewed for clarity and avoidance of any inadvertent demotivating effect. [paragraph 5.4]

### 2. Student Representation

- a) Student representatives to be invited to participate as full members in the Department's committees, including the Teaching Committee and the Assessment Working Group. [paragraph 6.3]
- b) Mechanisms to be put in place to facilitate the effective operation of the class representative system. [paragraph 6.5]
- c) New methods of communicating actions taken in response to issues raised by students to be investigated, particularly those related to postgraduate taught programmes. [paragraph 6.4]
- d) Staff to be made aware of the role of student representative as defined in The Code of Practice on Student Representation (<http://senate.gla.ac.uk/qa/studentrep/index.html>) and required to facilitate the function of student representatives at all meetings of the relevant classes. [paragraph 6.5]

### 3. Engagement of Students with the Department's Employability related activities

- a) Marketing of career planning provision and opportunities to students to be improved. [paragraph 4.6.1]
- b) Students to be encouraged to think about *employability* from the earliest stages of their studies. [paragraph 4.6.1]
- c) Relevant University Services to be consulted on the proposed development of a graduate network. [paragraph 4.6.3]

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

#### **4. Postgraduate Taught Programmes (minor refinements)**

- a) Programme structures to be reviewed with a view to eliminating possible duplication of content and ensuring flexibility of choice. [paragraph 4.4.1]
- b) Compulsory/optional status of research methods course to be reviewed. [paragraph 4.4.3]

#### **5. Tutorial Provision**

- a) Courses, particularly those at postgraduate level, to be restructured to include a tutorial type element, i.e. smaller group sessions with a high level of student participation. [paragraph 4.4.2]

#### **6. Management and Support of Staff and Teaching Fellows**

- a) Rates of payment of *GTAs/Teaching Fellows* to be reviewed to ensure consistency with other institutions. [paragraph 4.8.5]
- b) Staff to ensure that new teaching fellows have a clear understanding of what is expected of them on each course. [paragraph 4.8.6]
- c) Responsibility for academic staff *performance and development review* to be distributed amongst senior staff. [paragraph 2.7]
- d) Steps to be taken to address the gender balance amongst staff. [paragraph 4.8.1]

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## **Glossary of terms/acronyms used**

### **Employability**

Employability is about more than being able to get a job after University. It is about acknowledging and being able to articulate achievements, understanding and personal attributes that will contribute to success both during, and after, University.

### **Enhancement**

The University has adopted the Quality Assurance Agency's definition of 'enhancement' which is - 'the process of taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities.'

### **Enquiry-led Learning or Enquiry-based Learning**

The University of Manchester's Centre for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning describes Enquiry-Based Learning as "an environment in which learning is driven by a process of enquiry owned by the student". It can include various forms of teaching, such as problem based learning, small scale investigations, projects and research, that encourage students to take responsibility for their learning experience. It is also the subject of the University's strategic aim set out in the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2006-10, which is for the University to "be renowned internationally for enquiry-led learning in a knowledge culture shaped by the richness and diversity of our research environment."

### **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 department. They are paid an hourly rate by the University.

### **Performance and Development Review (staff)**

Performance and Development Review is a scheme that provides all employees with opportunity to discuss important information about their job, to give and receive constructive

information and feedback, and establish any relevant learning and development needs. It also provides a mechanism through which individual job responsibilities and contributions can be linked to department / faculty strategic objectives.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined as the submission or presentation of work, in any form, which is not one's own, without acknowledgement of the sources. Special cases of plagiarism can also arise from one student copying another student's work or from inappropriate collaboration.

### **Student Representation**

Student Representation involves the election by groups of students of one or more of their number to represent their views and opinions in meetings at departmental, faculty or University level. There are many activities and fora where the input of student representatives provides valuable feedback to the University on the quality of the student experience.

### **Study abroad**

Study abroad is a term that is often used to refer to several programmes that offer opportunities for students to study in a European University, or one further afield, for a term, semester or year as part of their undergraduate degree programme. (The University's "Study Abroad Programme" is specifically designed for visiting students who elect to come to the University of Glasgow.)

### **Turnitin**

Turnitin is a remotely hosted, web based service that compares submitted material, e.g. a student's essay, with a wide range of sources and produces an originality report. It is intended to be a tool which can support students in their understanding and avoidance of plagiarism and can be used to quickly and efficiently locate sources of material in cases of suspected plagiarism. Turnitin originality reports can be used to highlight to students, with real examples, the exact meaning of the term plagiarism.