



Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Review of Department of Mechanical Engineering: Wednesday 25 and Thursday 26 February 2009

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Mechanical Engineering. 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_125475_en.pdf

Further information about the *DPTLA* process can be found at:

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

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Review Panel commends the Department on its awareness of and willingness to address issues as they arise. A number of recommendations have been made to support staff in enhancing the quality of the student experience, and the management of teaching and learning in the Department. The Panel welcomed the Department's engagement with current University priorities, e.g. enhancing student *retention*, and its endeavours to meet the challenges of addressing them. The Panel felt that the *Self Evaluation Report* could have given a better overview and impression of the strategic direction of the Department, which would have given the Panel and departmental staff a clearer framework for discussion. However, the discussions with the Head of Department, and staff and students of the Department satisfied the Panel that the Department was generally reflecting on its practices in teaching, learning and assessment and was seeking to engage students as partners in improving the student experience.

Key Strengths

- The commitment of staff to improving the student experience
- The full *accreditation* of all programmes by the *Institution of Mechanical Engineers* (IMechE) that contributes to the employability of graduates
- Consideration and support for initiatives aimed at improving student *retention*
- The attention and responsiveness of the Department to students
- Excellent levels of consultation with industry by means of the Industrial Liaison Committee ensuring relevance of programmes is maintained
- The recent development of a number of Postgraduate Taught (PGT) programmes and the successful recruitment of students to them

- Collaborations with other institutions and departments and the willingness to extend these and embark on new initiatives
- The consultation process employed in preparing the *Self Evaluation Report*
- Examples of good practice in seeking ongoing dialogue and feedback with students using *Moodle*
- Cohort Activity Days
- ‘100%’ assessment tests which were considered to be a good example of assessment for learning and highly valued by students
- Valued and effective tutorial provision

Areas to be improved or enhanced¹

1. Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes

- a) Review *programme specification* and update where necessary, to ensure that they are consistent in format, and in the way *Intended Learning Outcomes* (ILOs) are expressed. [Paragraph 4.1.2 and 4.2.2]
- b) Ensure that the information provided to students on *ILOs* explains clearly how assessment activities, both *formative* and *summative*, align with the *ILOs*. [Paragraph 4.2.2 and 4.1.2]

2. Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

- a) Review and amend the assessment of the Department’s *Postgraduate Taught* (PGT) programmes to ensure that all provide a range of assessment methods. [Paragraph 4.3.4]
- b) Consider implementing further additional or improved mechanisms for increasing student awareness and understanding of the opportunities to receive feedback that are offered by the Department. Consult students to determine the most valuable types of feedback to ensure that students are able to obtain maximum learning benefit from the feedback they receive and to ensure that the responses the students give to assessment and feedback related questions in student satisfaction surveys are as informed, and therefore as useful, as possible. [Paragraph 4.3.1]

3. Curriculum Design, Development and Content

- a) As a matter of priority to the Department and Faculty, continue to pursue a means to satisfy the requirements of the IMechE for management or professional studies in a way that is relevant and satisfying to the students throughout the programmes. The Department should also continue to monitor student satisfaction with the provision as changes are implemented. [Paragraph 4.4.5]
- b) Reconsider whether the title of the “Advanced Control Engineering” accurately reflects the course content and take forward the appropriate approval procedures to make the necessary changes. Consider also whether there are any other courses in a similar position within the Department’s provision. [Paragraph 4.4.6]

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

4. Student Progression, Retention and Support

- a) Advisers of Studies to ensure that all their students have the opportunity to meet with them at least once a year in a private setting to offer support of a pastoral nature, and that first year students meet up with their advisers on two occasions. Consider the optimal timing of such meetings in relation to student drop-out and providing support during the first year of study. [Paragraph 4.6.7 and 4.6.8]
- b) Faculty to offer a second induction session for *Postgraduate Taught* (PGT) students arriving in January. [Paragraph 4.6.10]

5. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Student Learning Experience

- a) Update the annual course review forms in line with the standard proformas provided by the University (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qae/annualmonitoring/>) as a matter of priority to ensure that comments are gathered on the relevant, current issues [Paragraph 6.7]

Student Feedback

- b) Clarify procedures for dealing with the results of student feedback questionnaires and communicate the Department's policy to all staff to ensure that the results and any actions taken in response are effectively communicated back to students. Similar procedures should also be put in place to communicate more widely actions taken in response to issues raised at *Staff:Student Liaison Committees*. [Paragraph 6.4 and 6.5]
- c) Consider extending the practice of regular, ongoing dialogue with students as widely as possible. [Paragraph 6.2]

6. Quality of Learning Opportunities

- a) The University to take account of the ability of departments to allow time for revision before examination periods when the effectiveness/success of the new academic year structure is reviewed. [Paragraph 4.6.13]

7. Departmental Planning, Management and Organisation

- a) Develop a Departmental Strategy under the umbrella of a Faculty Strategy. [Paragraph 4.8.2]
- b) Identify strategic priorities for development and investment in teaching and learning on an annual basis for discussion with the Dean and the Faculty Management Group as part of the University's annual planning and budgeting cycle and this is carried out as a matter of priority. [Paragraph 4.8.6]
- c) Review the management and committee structure to promote two-way communication between the Department's leaders and its staff. Consider widening the membership of the Teaching Committee and increasing its focus on strategy. [Paragraph 4.8.2]
- d) Implement a full *workload model* in accordance with any available Faculty guidance to ensure that roles and workload are balanced for all staff including the Head of Department. [Paragraph 4.8.1]

- e) Formalise a means of promoting staff development in teaching, learning and assessment and consider establishing an annual Learning and Teaching Review Day where issues could be raised, discussed and good practice shared. Also consider using *Performance and Development Reviews* (P&DR) or an Annual Review Day to recommend, and encourage staff to attend, relevant *Continuing Professional Development* (CPD) opportunities. [*Paragraph 5.3*]
- f) Consider how the experience of successful innovation in learning and teaching could be shared across the Department with a view to inspiring enthusiasm and wider uptake by staff members. [*Paragraph 4.7.3*]

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Accreditation

A number of taught degree programmes delivered within the University of Glasgow are accredited by professional and statutory bodies. Accreditation of a programme has potential benefits for students. For example, in some disciplines, accredited programmes may provide a recognised fast-track route for graduates seeking professional status, whilst in others, graduates may be granted exemption from certain professional examinations.

Continuing Professional Development or CPD

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can be defined as learning activity that is: self-financing; developmental; and vocationally relevant. A wide range of activities are included, from conferences, seminars, very short courses (even lunchtime meetings) to credit-rated and award bearing programmes such as MBAs, MScs and other more traditional postgraduate taught (PGT) courses spread over a number of months/years for part-time students. They are normally undertaken by professionals who are already in work but are open to other interested people.

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment or DPTLA

The University has a six yearly cycle of review of departments within it. The DPTLA is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the quality of the provision delivered by departments.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment refers to assessed work where feedback is given to help the student improve their learning and their performance. The work may or may not contribute to the student's final grade for the course.

Institute of Mechanical Engineers or IMechE

The Institution of Mechanical Engineers is a professional engineering institution in the UK. The undergraduate courses in the Department are accredited by IMechE; they provide the educational base for those who seek to become Chartered Mechanical Engineers.

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs describe what all students should be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes when they successfully complete the course or programme that the ILOs relate to.

Moodle

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

Performance and Development Review or P&DR

Performance and Development Review is a scheme that provides all University 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.

Postgraduate Taught or PGT

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

Programme Specifications

Programme specifications are documents that aim to provide the core factual information about a programme of study to a range of stakeholders, including students or potential students, e.g. Level of award, number of credits, programme aims, intended learning outcomes, etc.

Retention

Retention refers to the continuation and progression of a student at the University of Glasgow.

Self Evaluation Report

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

Staff:Student Liaison Committee or SSLCs

Staff:Student Liaison Committees are departmental committees which provide a formal opportunity for Student Representatives to discuss matters with, and give feedback to their Department.

Summative assessment

Summative assessment refers to assessed work that contributes to the final grade for the course/programme. Summative assessments may include an element of formative assessment.

Workload Model (Staff)

A workload model is a means of describing the workload of all members of staff and should be used by Departments to ensure that staff workloads are manageable and allocated fairly with different types of work appropriately distributed.