

Draft Report from the Student Advisory Needs Working Group

December 2008

Introduction

The Vice Principal for Learning & Teaching and Internationalisation and the Clerk of Senate established a Student Advisory Needs Working Group in 2007 to consider and review Student Advisory Needs. The remit and membership of the Working Group and an explanation of our working methods is contained in Appendix 1. The work of this group has overlapped with that of other working groups and projects and this report aims to bring together conclusions from these groups with our considerations. We believe this approach is the best way to put our recommendations into a student centred context and also provides an opportunity to examine the interface between the academic advisory services and other student services. In our work we have consulted with individuals involved in the Retention Working Group, the 'Hub' Student Services Project (SSP), the Student Lifecycle Project and have examined the work done by the Students' Representative Council (SRC) on student perception of the current advising system and reviewed the evidence provided by the 1st year student experience surveys and the National Student Survey (NSS) surveys. We have also investigated changes to the advising system at the University of Edinburgh and have reviewed the work being done in other institutions (Appendix 2).

Our underlying approach has been to view student advisory needs from the perspective of the student journey from the initial decision to consider the University of Glasgow as a place to study, through the degree programme and graduation, to continued links with the University as an alumnus (Appendix 3). However this report focuses on the needs of on-course students, particularly on *student advisory needs*, and we provide alternative recommendations on ways to meet those needs. Further consultation and consideration is required on a number of key issues.

What key advisory functions are to be performed?

In the University of Glasgow, the term 'Adviser of Studies' has been linked to a group of named individuals within Faculties who have a general remit that might loosely be defined as giving advice to students on academic and pastoral matters. We discuss this advisory system in some depth below. However, student advisory needs are met by a range of other services and individuals located in designated University services, in faculties, departments and the SRC. Information and advice can also be found on websites and in a variety of publications provided by departments within University services, faculties, departments and the SRC. In fact there is a superabundance of advice to students as can be seen from the two mapping exercises that have been undertaken to date.

The mapping exercise undertaken by us is included in the appendices (Appendix 3). This was an attempt to capture all the sources of advice and guidance open to students from their first introduction to the University as potential applicants to their graduation and alumni status. Our map is not comprehensive but it does indicate that a student may have to negotiate with a range of services to access advice.

In the course of our work we also discovered that a separate mapping exercise focussed on central student service provision had already taken place as part of the 'Hub' SSP. The project's Business Transformations Task Group (BTTG) (now replaced by the Student Services Management Group) has developed key

'navigation categories' in the form of a Student Services Information Directory under the headings of: Study, Health & Wellbeing, Accommodation, Money, Jobs & Frontline, Computing, International, Sports & Social and Campus Information. In the initial development of this project we found it interesting to note that neither Advisers nor faculties nor academic departments featured in the Directory. As part of current work we are examining how the advising services provided within faculties can fit with the categories developed by the SSP and are writing a 'cheat sheet' for the use of the 'Hub' front-line staff.

In many ways this initial failure to link advice provided by University and SRC services and that provided primarily by the Advisers of Studies and others in the departments encapsulates the key problem for our group: how to ensure that in the interface between the work provided by Departments in University Services, Faculties and the SRC, student advisory needs are met and students know where they can go to for the advice they need.

(Please note the Student Directory is now available online at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/students/> - it is not clear that all staff in the University, including Advisers, have been informed of this Directory as a source of advice. Neither have students been alerted to its existence at this stage.)

Recommendation 1:

The Working Group has recommended to the Director of the 'Hub' SSP that a meeting be arranged with Advisers of Studies at an early stage to provide them with a brief orientation on the range of services that will be available from the 'Hub' from January 2009, and to seek their assistance in 'road testing' the Student Services Directory, both to ensure that they find the information comprehensive and useful, and to ascertain that arrangements for communication between the 'Hub' frontline staff and Advisers of Studies is sufficiently robust to ensure that Advisers are made aware when an advisee is seeking advice on a matter that could potentially have an impact on that individual's studies.

The following scenarios are indicative of the kinds of advice that students may need to access. The list is not exhaustive.

Student A is living at home. A quarrels with parents and wants to move out. A becomes unhappy and neglects studies, misses tutorials, and fails an exam.

Student B is hardworking but is finding it difficult to cope with the volume of work in subject X. B concentrates efforts on subject X which B passes with a good grade but scrapes through subjects Y and Z.

Student C works hard but only achieves B grades. C is accustomed to achieving A grades at school and does not know how to achieve better grades at University.

Student D wants to change course, as the course for which D applied is not quite what was anticipated.

Student E is finding it difficult to manage financially and has taken a job which takes up so much time that E's studies are now being affected.

Failing an exam has led E to contemplate leaving the University as E is now depressed and unable to cope.

Student F is a single parent who finds the time-table at University difficult to balance against available child-care.

Student G is looking to rent a flat.

Student H is wondering what to do after graduation and how to set about finding a job.

The above examples demonstrate that, from the perspective of the student, he/she might need advice from a variety of sources e.g. accommodation, guidance on progress regulations and possibly counselling in the case of student A. Advice on study techniques and time management would be needed in the case of student B, as well as advice on the implications of performance, for example, in gaining entry to honours. Student E would require advice on finances, hardship funds, counselling or health services as well as advice on study techniques to catch up and implications of performance in relation to progress through the degree regulations. Advice might be more straightforward for students G and H, but in all cases the student needs to know where to go to find good, consistent and accurate advice. In The University of Glasgow, advice sources are in fact spread quite widely amongst a range of individuals. Colleagues in the Careers Service, for example, might automatically assume that they would be the first point of call for student H. Student E might think that the best course of action is to go directly to Student Counselling without informing academic staff. Student C might think that their Adviser of Studies is the appropriate person from whom to seek advice. Sometimes a student will get the right person and sometimes not.

The SRC offers support and services on a wide variety of topics and all of the above-mentioned students could benefit from utilising those resources.

It had been suggested that performance development planning (PDP) should become part of the portfolio of activities performed by Advisers of Studies, although Advisers themselves have rejected this suggestion on the grounds of lack of expertise and lack of time. Nonetheless, the employability and PDP agenda need to be addressed and resourced.

The Working Group is also conscious that different types of students may have different advisory needs: undergraduate and postgraduate students; home and international students; research students; students with disabilities. It is therefore difficult to capture the full range of functions to be performed.

The table below indicates where students can, under our present structures, turn to for advice.

1	Advice on the curriculum	What do I have to do to get a degree? What is my range of options? (The answer to this question will vary depending on how structured the degree regulations are). Can I study abroad? Can I change my course?	Adviser of Studies; Programme Directors (PGT)
2	Advice on performance in studies	How can I improve my grade? Why did I fail my exam? I don't understand xxx: who can help me?	Course Coordinator; relevant

			teaching staff
3	Advice on University of Glasgow procedures	How do I register? How do I complain about something? How do I appeal against an academic decision? How do I apply for hardship funds?	'Hub' Services; Adviser of Studies; SRC Advice Centre
4	Other extra-curricular advice	How can I find accommodation? Where do I pay my council tax or am I exempt? What sports can I get into?	'Hub' Services; SRC Advice Centre
5	Pastoral Services	A life event has had an impact on me and my studies: where can I get help? Who can I talk to? How will the effects of this event affect my studies	Adviser of Studies; Specialist Support Services; SRC Advice Centre
6	References	Who do I approach for an academic reference once I have graduated?	Adviser of Studies; relevant teaching staff

How can these key functions be delivered effectively?

In order to provide an effective advice system certain *key principles* should be agreed.

- It should be readily comprehensible to students.
- Internal lines of communication between those offering advice to students should be clear and open which means that there should be clarity of roles and a robust referral system.
- Advice needs to be consistent, up-to-date and accurate.
- An advising system, offered from whatever sources, should subscribe to the Declaration and Statement of Core Values of the National Academic Advisory Association (NACADA) (full text in Appendix 5).¹ In particular an effective advising system subscribes to the core values as provided by NACADA:
 - Advisers are responsible to the individuals they advise.
 - Advisers are responsible for involving others, when appropriate, in the advising process.
 - Advisers are responsible to higher education.
 - Advisers are responsible to their educational community.
 - Advisers are responsible for their professional practices and for themselves personally.

¹ NACADA promotes and supports quality academic advising in institutions of higher education in the USA to enhance the educational development of students. Since 2007, NACADA and the Higher Education Academy have jointly sponsored an annual International Conference on Personal Tutoring and Academic Advising which has been hosted by UK Universities.

Recommendation 2:

The University of Glasgow should accept the NACADA principles as underlying principles for all individuals responsible for advising students. The NACADA Declaration and Statement of care values should be disseminated and integrated into the training programmes for all staff responsible for the delivery of advisory services to students.

Recommendation 3:

The Working Group **recommends** that a referral system is established (whether electronic or tangible) to assure the effective exchange of relevant non-confidential information between the student support services and Advisers, for example the use of a referral card system. In order to achieve this, the University support services, namely the Front Line Desk Student Support Officers, and SRC support services will require electronic access to the contact details of all Advisers, including those who are not on the University payroll.

Recommendation 4:

All students should be provided with information regarding the sources and the types of advice provided by Advisers of Studies and Student Services and the SRC. The information should be sufficiently clear that should a student initially approach the wrong agency, that agency can easily redirect the student to a more appropriate one.

The Working Group was concerned that there was no mechanism in place to ensure consistency of advice to students.

The 'Hub' Student Services Project has designed a new web-based information service which was intended to be more user-friendly, intuitive and comprehensive. A student clicking on 'council tax' would be directed to a number of websites offering information, eg the Registry or SRC website. The Student Service Information Directory is now live as noted above. The Directory will be updated regularly to ensure accuracy of the information provided.

In the course of our work, we have reviewed some of the excellent handbooks for students that Advisers of Studies have prepared for the benefit of their students in the absence of a centrally provided source of information. Some of these are extremely comprehensive. Most of them duplicate the information that is now provided by the Student Services Information Directory. It is important that students receive consistent and accurate advice. The student survey cited below suggests that students do not always believe that they have received accurate advice. Consistency and accuracy will be best achieved by directing students to the Directory rather than duplicating information in handbooks or by duplicating advice taken from the Directory. For example, in several faculties the Advisers' role is stated to be giving advice on financial matters. That advice can now be found in the Directory.

As noted above, we have already recommended that Advisors of Studies be invited to 'road test' the Directory to ensure that all relevant advice is covered. Once this road testing is complete, the directory should remain a single existing source of advice for students on all matters excluding academic and individual pastoral concerns.

Recommendation 5:

Information provided should be consistent and up-to-date. To achieve this Advisers of Studies should discontinue the practice of creating handbooks containing information provided by Student Services. The main source of information should be the website for the Student Services Directory which will be maintained and updated on an ongoing basis. However, if required, a hard copy of the information should be made available to students who request it.

What are student views on the Advisory Service at the University of Glasgow?

The NSS results for the last three years suggest that some 1 in 4 students are dissatisfied with the level of academic support and advice at The University of Glasgow. The table below shows the percentage of students who either agreed or strongly agreed with each statement for the whole institution. The satisfaction level for both these statements has been below the institutional KPI of 80% for three successive years, although it has shown gradual improvement.

	2008	2007	2006
Statement	% agree (4 or 5)	% agree (4 or 5)	% agree (4 or 5)
I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies	75%	73%	60%
Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices	70%	67%	65%

It must be acknowledged, as one Chief Adviser pointed out to us, that there is a difference 'between course-specific support (e.g. where did I go wrong in my ...exam?) and generic advising (ie general curriculum and pastoral matters)'. There is also a difference between advice on curriculum and pastoral issues and more general advice (e.g. where do I go to find accommodation?). However students will not necessarily be aware of the distinction and we should not expect that a student be familiar with internal demarcation issues.

In 2007, the SRC published its findings from the *Glasgow University SRC Adviser of Studies Research Report November 2007*. As its name suggests, this was a report on the advising system rather than a more general report on student advisory needs. Nonetheless, its findings are helpful:

- There exists a very high level of awareness of who respondents' respective adviser of studies is, at 97%. However, awareness is lower amongst Education students (87%).
- The most common perception of the role of the Adviser was 'to help with any problems in your course' (41%), with other common views being 'to provide guidance on life at University' (35%) and 'advice about course selection' (33%).
- Almost all students (97%) were aware that they could contact their advisor by e-mail, with 84% aware that they could do so face to face. However, only 53% were aware that they could contact their Adviser by phone.

- Slightly over half of students found it Very Easy to contact their Adviser (60%), although a minority of 11% found it either Difficult or Very Difficult, particularly in the Engineering, LBSS and Medical faculties.
- 61% of respondents had previously had their Adviser initiate contact with them, Science students were most likely to have experienced this at 71%, however, only 29% of engineering students and 38% of LBSS students had a similar experience.
- The most common reason for contacting an Adviser of Studies was for registration/course approval (85%), followed by advice on course choices/changes (72%).
- 94% of students who had attempted to contact their Adviser had received information/advice relating to their enquiry. The only notable exception to this figure was in the Medical faculty at 84%.
- Just over half of students found the information/advice they received to be Very Helpful (52%), although 18% found it to be Quite Unhelpful or Very Unhelpful.
- 77% of students believe that an Adviser of Studies system to be Quite or Very Effective, with 23% believing it to be Quite or Very Ineffective. This rating of ineffectiveness is particularly high in Engineering (33%), Medicine (34%) and LBSS (41%).
- The most cited reason for the system being effective was that it provided good guidance (47% of those who felt it was effective to an extent), with other common reasons being that it was easy and accessible (29%) and being a good safeguard for things going wrong (23%).
- The most cited reason for the system being ineffective was that it failed to provide satisfactory information (35% of those who felt it was ineffective to an extent), with other common reasons being that it was difficult to get in contact with their Adviser (28% and that their Adviser did not seem interested in their queries (22%).

Suggestions as to how the system could be improved included:

- More scheduled meetings/more contact
- Trained Advisers/better informed
- Advisers that are related to a student's specific course
- Better communication

The 2008 1st Year Student Experience Survey (2007 results in square brackets) suggests that students want or need more advice than they are currently receiving as the following results demonstrate:

- I am receiving sufficient advice and support with my studies Agree 59% [66%], Not Sure 26% [21%] Disagree 15% [13%]
- Good advice is available when I need to make study choices Agree 64% [65%], Not sure 26% [24%] Disagree 10% [11%]

The Retention Working Group (report April 2008) held focus groups with staff and students and found that:

- The provision of Advising for first year students appears to vary widely across faculties. Some students may never meet with a member of staff on a one-to-one basis during their first year. There are disparities in whether individual or group advising is offered; the number of scheduled meetings during the session; the availability of Advisers when needed at other times; the quality of advice given. There appears to be some confusion over the role of Advisers in non-academic matters. The period immediately after Semester 1 exams was seen as a crucial time when a one-to-one meeting with an Adviser would be helpful.
- There is a widespread perception among staff that Advisers of Studies, as well as personal tutors and first year teaching staff, get very little recognition for this work within the culture of the University.

These findings suggest that students value meetings with Advisers and, from the perspective of retention, the crucial times when students need academic advice appear to be at the start of the session and part way through the year, after the first set of exams/assessments has taken place. It is clearly beneficial to the student to have the face-to-face contact with their Adviser. The findings also suggest that at the moment students see their Adviser as the first point of contact for a range of issues.

What can be learned from others?

The Leeds Model

The Leeds model for personal tutoring provides a detailed and structured approach with aims and guidelines clearly set out in the website (<http://leedsforlife.leeds.ac.uk/model.html>). Each School is permitted to offer personal tutoring in different ways reflecting different disciplines, but clear guidelines are provided in relation to frequency of meetings, structure of meetings and their purpose (hard copy is Appendix 6).

At Leeds the Student Service Information Desk (SSID) and website (akin to our 'HUB' development) provides a simple source for advice on Student Services. A web-based system provides the means of communication between services and a means of getting feedback on performance.

A Student Support Network Development Programme provides a series of short workshops as a forum for staff with a responsibility to students covering matters such as "Support Services as Referral Agencies"; "Supporting Student Safety and Victims of Crime"; "Support for Students with Mental Health Issues" and others.

The Leeds model is comprehensive, appears to be well resourced and is systematic. Personal tutors are all members of academic staff. We have been unable to ascertain whether all members of the academic staff are expected to undertake the role and what the Staff/Student ratio is.

University of Sheffield

Sheffield has a unified Student Service Department with a number of sections; student administration, registry, student support and guidance, multi-faith chaplaincy, English language teaching and student health and well-being. The Student Services

Department offers training and workshops to academic and non-academic staff who have a responsibility for supporting students. Workshops and sometimes facilitated discussion forums, are offered in dealing with difficult student situations, students in crisis, supporting students with mental health difficulties etc.

University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh removed the honorarium paid to Directors of Studies in 2006-07 as part of the pay and modernisation agenda. Directors of Studies are currently line managed by Heads of Schools but this has not resolved the issue of consistency in the quality of the student experience and, like this University, Edinburgh has been undertaking a wide-ranging review of academic and pastoral support for students. The University of Edinburgh does not at present have a centralised student support facility and there has been mutual benefit in sharing experience. The project group has not yet reported formally but we understand that the essence of their recommendations will include the need for an overarching Student Services support network of staff, headed up by a Director of Student Support, and significant changes to the management of the 'educational adviser' system.

Review extent to which current provision matches identified requirements

Existing Structures

1. Student Services

Mrs Lowther attended a meeting of the Working Group to explain the thinking behind the 'Hub' SSP. The 'Hub' SSP is not merely a relocation of services, but aims to create synergy between student centric departments by locating key student services and functions and on-line links to others in one building. The 'Hub' will house staff currently in the Registry, International and Postgraduate Service (IPS), Recruitment and Participation Service (RAPS) and the Careers Service. The accommodation in the 'Hub' is open-plan, with a large student area, meeting rooms and meeting pods, and information on all student services will be available on-line via a bank of PCs. The 'Hub' is due to open for business on 16 December 2008.

Front-line Student Support Officers have been recruited and are currently being trained. The job purpose of these officers is:

'To be part of a team of 6 to 8 members of staff, reporting to a Team Leader, providing a 'one stop shop' for students... Team members will be the first point of contact for existing students, prospective students, graduates and other visitors... Team members will be required to develop an excellent knowledge of all student services and issues affecting students.'

It may be that the opening of the 'Hub' will provide the opportunity for a further review of Student Support Services. If this is the case, the Working Group would recommend consideration of the approaches taken by the Universities of Leeds and Sheffield which appear to offer a more integrated structure.

Recommendation 6:

A review of University student support services should be undertaken in light of the whole spectrum of student advisory needs, with a view to streamlining services under a service head. (see also Recommendation 10)

2. Advisers of Studies

It appears that the last review of advising in the University of Glasgow was conducted by the then Clerk of Senate, Professor Whitehead. His draft report on the responsibilities of Advisers appears not to have been taken forward and reported to Senate. We have not been able to ascertain why this was the case.

His report on the advising system made several recommendations:

- The central importance of the advising system was reaffirmed.
- Advising was to be an assignable duty with the Chief or Principal Adviser responsible for identifying potential Advisers. NB the report did not make clear in any particular case who had the authority to assign the duty.
- Advising should be recognised as service for the purpose of promotion.
- The system of central allocation of Adviser posts should be replaced by a ring fenced cash allocation to faculties.
- Advising should be a component of department and faculty workload models and each faculty should be free to determine the appropriate advisee/adviser ratio for its needs. Probationer staff should not be appointed as Advisers and faculties could appoint full-time professional Chief Advisers.
- Senior Advisers' honorarium should be replaced by a superannuable salary component. Other Advisers should continue to receive an honorarium in recognition of the additional time and responsibility.
- New Advisers should undergo formal training in both pastoral and curricular aspect of the job. A new Standing Committee of Chief Advisers, reporting to Senate via the Education Committee should be established to oversee this training and acting as a formal channel for informing the Senate on the state of the Advising system.

The responsibilities of Advisers were set out being:

- The provision of advice and information on academic matters.
- The approval of a student's curriculum.
- Monitoring performance and progress of students.
- Providing pastoral care to students.
- Implementing procedures for student absences or withdrawals.
- Assisting in maintaining student records.
- Providing students with references for employers etc.

Although this report was not taken forward formally, many of the recommendations are followed in the University today, notably the devolved aspect of advising.

Advising is essentially a faculty matter and there are wide variations in the approach to advising across the faculties (See Appendix 7).

There is no institutional oversight of advising and this was highlighted in the 2004 April ELIR Report which stated:

'The team was, however, unable to find evidence that the work of Advisers, including the effectiveness of induction and training, was evaluated in a systematic manner. In particular, there was little evidence of routine feedback from students regarding the operation of the Adviser system. The team's discussions with students showed that students' views varied widely, and the team considered that there would be advantage in investigating the reasons for this variety. It also showed that some students would welcome the opportunity to contribute to an evaluation of a system which is regarded as making an important contribution to promoting effective learning. The team found no university-led mechanisms for gaining a clear central oversight of the system. Although chief Advisers meet regularly, and issues raised and outcomes discussed appear to be routed appropriately within the University, there is no individual or committee responsible for the advising system across the University as a whole with a consequent lack of institutional-level monitoring of the system. The team noted that the VP (LT/Clerk of Senate) shared some of its concerns.'

The Working Group saw evidence of good practice in each faculty and many students appear to be satisfied with the level of support offered, but the inescapable conclusion from a range of evidence is that the level of support is inconsistent across faculties and even within faculties. Some Advisers are conscientious and dedicated and give good advice, whilst others appear to view advising as an additional chore. This is partly due to the general feeling across Advisers that the advising function is not perceived as valued within the University, but also because there is no general University oversight of the advising function nor any apparent reporting structures. In addition, the advisee/adviser load varies across the faculties with some instances of Advisers having loads of up to 120 students.

One additional factor, which was not such a key issue at the time of the Whitehead report, has been the rapid rise in the number of postgraduate students in the University. The advising system currently in place is in reality a system for advising undergraduate students. Postgraduates are more than likely to be advised on curriculum and other academic matters by the programme convener or by the Head of Graduate School or other departmental and faculty staff or the International Postgraduate Office. However, where there is evidence of 'best practice' across the Undergraduate programmes this should be transferred across to the relevant and appropriate member of staff who is fulfilling an advisory capacity with postgraduate taught students.

Review of current advising systems

Appendix 7 demonstrates the differences in approach taken in faculties to the Adviser of Studies service.

(1) Structure and Nomenclature

We have Advisers, Senior Adviser, Chief Advisers and one Principal Adviser in the University. The structure is confusing and we recommend simplification.

Recommendation 7:

The term Chief Adviser should be used to designate an individual having overall responsibility for the advising function for a particular degree or set of degrees. The term Adviser of Studies should apply to others.

In terms of structure, advising services differ across the faculties. In LBSS there are three distinct advisory services for the three undergraduate degrees: LLB, BAcc and MA(SocSci). By contrast, FIMS, PS and IBLs share a common undergraduate advising system supporting the BSc which is well resourced from contributions from the faculties. (NB the website suggests that the Science Support Service is part of University Services but this, in fact, is not the case). The Working Group believes that it is sensible to have advising systems based around a specific cohort of students who are pursuing the same qualification, despite different faculty structures, since students have expressed a wish to have as their Adviser a person from a related field of study. For these reasons, and also because we believe that it would be artificial to separate academic from pastoral issues, we are not convinced that the introduction of a team of specialised educational advisers currently under consideration at the University of Edinburgh is a sensible solution for The University of Glasgow.

Recommendation 8:

Advising systems should be built around each programme of study and Advisers drawn from amongst staff contributing to these programmes.

Students have also expressed a preference to have as their Adviser a member of the academic staff from the subject area of their own studies. For some students, this does not present a problem. However, for students pursuing degrees offered across a range of different departments (or even faculties) this is more difficult to achieve. In the science faculties, students are initially advised by the Principal Adviser or a Senior Adviser and, once the direction of studies is agreed, they are assigned to an Adviser in their area of intending study. The Faculties of Arts and LBSS do not follow this pattern and a student in these faculties might be advised by a member of staff from a wholly different department. Students appear to have greater levels of satisfaction under the science faculties' model.

Recommendation 9:

Consideration should be given in the Faculties of Arts and LBSS to devising a system, akin to that operating in the science faculties, whereby students can be advised by academic staff from their area of intended study.

(2) Funding/payments to Advisers

There are currently 204 paid Advisers of Studies in the University and Appendix 8 shows their distribution throughout the faculties. Current payments to Advisers from central provision costs £322,200 per annum. In addition, some faculties buy out the time of some Advisers. The Principal Adviser for the faculties of science appears to be a full-time post. The Faculty of Arts has a 50% buy-out for the Chief Adviser and there is a £5000 buy-out of the Chief Adviser's (MA SocSci) time in LBSS. Therefore, the costs of the current advising system are difficult to estimate in full.

At the same time, there are Advisers who are unpaid for their work. For example, in Nursing, Advisers do not receive an honorarium for their work and there is only one

paid Adviser in Dentistry. In the Vet School, a scheme of personal tutors has been introduced to support and advise students. Personal tutors do not receive an honorarium for their work.

We met with Ann Johnstone and Christine Barr who explained that the issue of the honorarium was not addressed during the modernisation process at The University of Glasgow. By contrast at the University of Edinburgh the Director of Studies honorarium was removed as part of the pay modernisation agenda in Session 2006-07. Only clinicians receive an honorarium since they are not on the University payroll. The function of advising students was subsumed into the role descriptions of all academic staff at Grade 8 and above. Advising became an assigned task with the Head of School managing the process. We have information to suggest that this scheme has not resolved the issue of consistency in the quality of the student experience and, in recent months, a project team has been undertaking a wide ranging review of academic and pastoral support for students. The review has not yet reported formally but it is understood that it is likely to recommend 'the need for an overarching Student Services support network of staff, headed up by a Director of Student Support, with overall strategic responsibility for student services provision and their interface with academic services, supported by a cadre of senior managers'. The review is also expected to recommend that the Director of Studies system ceases in its current format and is replaced by a new, professional role of Education Adviser to be based in Schools but managed from the central Student Services network.

As noted above, we have not recommended such a move but, if the Edinburgh model is to be followed, we would recommend the creation of a project team to review the entirety of provision of student advising services, tied into any review of University student support services more generally.

Recommendation 10:

The University of Glasgow should continue to consider different structures of advising in light of work being undertaken by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) Working Group on International Benchmarking of Student Support Services. Any review of student support services should include review of the advising service.

Some of the Advisers, particularly those who have performed the task successfully for a number of years, believe that the honorarium ought to be consolidated into their salaries. However, it is also clear that some Advisers do not take their role as seriously as others and performance is mixed. The immediate cost of consolidation of the honorarium into the salaries of existing Advisers would amount to £230,366. The longer-term costs would however be greater because of future rises in pension costs.

Closely related to the issue of the honorarium for Advisers is the question of whether the time devoted by Advisers to advising forms part of the departmental workload model. It is clear that some HoDs view the function of advising, because it attracts the honorarium, as being outside departmental workload models. In other departments, advising is seen as one of the many administrative tasks to be performed by staff and is integrated into the workload model.

The Working Group believes these issues need to be resolved and several possible options exist:

1. Continue to pay the honorarium to Advisers of Studies and accept that this function is not part of departmental/faculty workloads. The benefit of this approach is that the honorarium is justified by the fact that some staff are providing a service to students over the normal expectation of their current post. The downside is that advising is not seen as a central part of the departmental/faculty functions. The Working Group (see below) believes that current advising loads in some faculties are too high. We recommend a ratio of approximately 1:50 students which would mean that the costs of the current provision would double.
2. As above but, after a period of time of successful service as an Adviser, consolidate the payment into the salary of the member of staff. We have not modelled the costs of this but it is likely to be significant in the longer term. This model of consolidation is that used for Heads of Department.
3. Discontinue the payment of the honorarium altogether. This would have the benefit of a considerable annual saving but it might also reinforce the message that the University of Glasgow does not value the work of Advisers. If this option is agreed, departmental and faculty workloads must account for the work performed by Advisers of Studies. HR would be asked to review the current job descriptions of staff to ensure that there is an expectation for all staff that they may be called upon to act as Advisers of studies as part of their tasks. This option may appear to be the least desirable for current Advisers, since it seems to leave the function of advising students unrewarded. There is currently a perception that advising students is not something rewarded by The University of Glasgow. However many Advisers are unaware, including some Chief Advisers, that University of Glasgow promotion criteria make reference to the advising function as one of the criteria for promotion. Incorporating the advising function into job descriptions would reinforce its central importance within the University.

Recommendation 11:

The Working Group believes that the honorarium for Advisers of Studies should be discontinued with the expectation that all members of academic staff on or above level 8 who show the necessary skills and attributes may be asked to contribute to advising. In light of this, the role of Adviser of Studies must be consolidated into departmental workload models. We do recognise that some Advisers have consistently done far more than could be expected from the small honorarium that they receive. Therefore, we believe that in the transition from the existing system to the new one, Chief Advisers should be able to recommend such Advisers for a one-off additional increment in pay that should be consolidated into that Adviser's salary. Thereafter, the recognition of the role within departmental workload models will suffice. A similar solution should be found for Chief Advisers in consultation with Deans. Faculty Recognition and Reward criteria should be amended to take account of all duties and responsibilities that may be assigned to staff within the workload model, including recognition of successful members of the advising team.

Recommendation 12:

The introduction of an Annual Advising Excellence Award should be considered, administered by the Chief Advisers Sub Committee in liaison with the Learning and Teaching Centre. Nominations should be requested from students and endorsed by the relevant Chief Adviser. In addition to rewarding

Advisers and providing recognition for their work, this might be a way of spreading good practice.

Staff Student Ratio

There is no University standard for this ratio. However, it is the view of the Working Group that a University wide acceptable ratio should be agreed. We accept that the function of the Adviser might be different across the faculties but we believe that if the role is to be meaningful to students and manageable for staff that an agreed ratio should be enforced. A ratio of 1:25 appears to us a sensible ratio although it should be reviewed in the next few years as the Student Information System is rolled out. Advisers need to have time to allocate to the advising function but they require a caseload that allows them to develop their expertise.

Recommendation 13:

A staff: student ratio of 1:25 be established as the norm for advising functions.

NB: The Working Group has also noted that some faculties have introduced systems of personal tutors or mentors for students. We have not investigated these systems in any depth, but we believe that Deans should be encouraged to share advice on these systems as there appears to be some good practice which could usefully be shared across the University.

(3) Reporting lines

There are wide variations in reporting lines across the faculties. There are two issues here. The first is how Advisers report internally within faculties and the second relates to institutional reporting and oversight. We consulted with the Director of the Senate Office in this matter. Given that the advising system is devolved to faculties, an appropriate model might be that of the Associate Dean Learning & Teaching model. Associate Deans report to Deans. A reporting line could be created between the Chief Adviser and the Dean or an Associate Dean, thereby giving the Dean 'ownership' of the system for his/her Faculty.

Recommendation 14:

Given the different structures within faculties, it is not possible to recommend a uniform model for reporting. The Working Group does recommend however that the Chief Adviser is part of relevant teaching, Quality Enhancement and oversight committees within faculties. Deans will be invited to advise on appropriate reporting lines.

More urgent is the need for institutional oversight. The 2004 ELIR report, quoted above stated that no overall oversight of the advising system in the University could be discerned and there was no mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the advising system and the training received by Advisers. Our consultations with Senior/Chief Advisers have indicated a desire to have a formal mechanism for regular meetings.

The Student Support and Development Committee (SSDC), chaired by the Clerk of Senate, recently reviewed its remit. It is a forum to address and monitor, at a strategic level, matters affecting student support and development. It may establish

whatever sub-committees as needed. In the past it has had a Chief Advisers Sub Committee. The Sub Committee has met occasionally but we have seen no formal remit for the Committee.

Recommendation 15:

The Chief Advisers Sub Committee should be asked to establish a remit to cover the need to evaluate advising systems and to devise and monitor an appropriate scheme of training for Advisers. The Committee should also receive reports from faculties in a three yearly cycle to evaluate the effectiveness of training, the effectiveness of the advising system including the collation of information of feedback from advisees and a regular review of Advisers' responsibilities and terms and conditions. The committee should be convened by the Clerk of Senate, and include all Chief Advisers, representatives from the SRC, University Services and the Learning and Teaching Centre.

Recommendation 16:

The Chief Advisers Sub Committee should be convened at an early date to consider the implications of the present report.

(4) Training

At present, training for Advisers is organised by the Senior Adviser in the faculty or faculties. Training is usually provided by the circulation of handbooks and by meetings to discuss issues on an informal and formal basis. As noted above, the ELIR 2004 report noted the absence of a University wide system to monitor the effectiveness of this training. The Working Group believes that a system of regular training be established for Advisers and we have seen good examples of the training provided elsewhere; for example at the Universities of Leeds and Sheffield. The Working Group believes that a mandatory training programme be devised for existing and new Advisers addressing all informational, relational and conceptual aspects of advising including sections relating to the development of a new student 'Hub' and the implementation of the new Student Information System. The Chief Advisers Sub-Committee should address the issue of developing a scheme of training as a priority and thereafter monitor and review training.

Recommendation 17:

A scheme of training for Advisers should be developed by the Chief Advisers Sub Committee in conjunction with the Learning and Teaching Centre and Staff Development Service, which builds in monitoring its effectiveness and a feedback process and should thereafter be kept under revision.

(5) Functions

There is no single statement of functions of Advisers of Studies or of Chief Advisers. The Working Group believes that the University should have a uniform statement of functions. The Working Group has devised a recommended statement of functions and this can be found in Appendix 10 of this report.

Recommendation 18:

The proposed statement of functions and responsibilities should be discussed within the Chief Advisers Sub-Committee and amended as appropriate. However, the Working Group strongly believes that, although there may be differences in approach between faculties, an agreed set of responsibilities and duties must be devised and shared with students so as to enable students to understand the role of the advising system in the University.

(6) Meetings with students

It is clear that students value the advising system. It is also clear that students appreciate having a named member of staff to whom they can turn to discuss issues arising – even if they never have to turn to an Adviser for assistance. The Working Group strongly believes that this personal link should be maintained and that students should be allocated to a named Adviser. There is a wide variety of practice across the University in the frequency of meetings between Advisers and students. The current loads carried by Advisers means that regular face to face meetings are not possible. However, the Working Group believes that, in particular first year students, should meet on a face to face basis with their Adviser at least twice during the first session. The purpose of these meetings would not necessarily be to advise on curriculum choice – that can be effected by group advising sessions, by post or by electronic means – but as part of the induction of students into the University learning community. The University of Leeds has devised specific guidance around the purpose of these meetings and both students and staff are given guidance as to their function.

Recommendation 19:

Advisers of Studies should be proactive in setting up, twice a year, face to face meetings with their Year 1 advisees and thereafter students should meet with their Advisers at least once per session. These appointments should be structured and consideration should be given to integrating the PDP process into advising meetings. In addition, Advisers should make known to students the times at which students can attend without an appointment and advise students as to how appointments can be made.

(7) Student Progress

In some faculties the task of monitoring student progress and retention is a function of the advising service. At present, there is no system in place whereby Advisers are informed routinely about the performance of their advisees and often issues cannot be addressed timeously. The student lifecycle system currently under review should provide Advisers with information about student progress to enable Advisers to monitor their cohort of students.

Optimum means of identifying change

We have been asked to identify the optimum means of managing identified change as part of the work of the Working Group. The Group is however aware that a great deal of change is currently taking place which will impact on the way students are currently advised across a range of issues.

The 'Hub' Student Services Project

The 'Hub' SSP is discussed above. We have made recommendations in relation to those developments.

In addition to those recommendations we would also suggest that the Chief Advisers Sub-Committee arranges to meet with the Team Leader of the front-line Student Support Officers. whose job purpose is:

To be part of a team of 6 to 8 members of staff, reporting to a Team Leader, providing a 'one stop shop' for students...Team members will be the first point of contact for existing students, prospective students, graduates and other visitors...Team members will be required to develop an excellent knowledge of all student services and issues affecting students..

Although the University and the SRC have worked in partnership to offer Student Information Points and the SRC has run the Advice Centre, to date there has been no single point of contact for students to access the range of student services and many of the questions raise by students with their Adviser of Studies might more readily be answered by the Support Officers in the 'Hub'. Advisers may see a diminution in their workload in this respect.

For the most part, Advisers with whom we discussed the 'Hub' SSP welcomed the move to consolidate services. However, concern was expressed that Advisers of Studies might be unaware of problems facing an advisee if the student saw a Support Officer about an issue which might impact on the advisee's studies. From the case studies set out above, it is clear that a query about, for example, accommodation, might be part of a wider set of issues facing a student. There is no planned mechanism for communication between Student Support Officers and Advisers of Studies. Where a student raises a routine query with a Support Officer, the lack of an interface is not problematic. However, Support Officers need to be aware that some issues might need to be brought to the attention of an Adviser and suggest to the student that he/she should make an appointment to see the Adviser of Studies or offer to contact the Adviser on the student's behalf or direct the student to the SRC advice desk. The Working Group has agreed to develop a 'cheat sheet' for the use of the Support Officers to alert them to the need to inform an Adviser of Studies in relevant cases. Effective lines of communication need to be put into place between 'Hub' staff and Advisers.

Recommendation 20:

The Chief Advisers Sub Committee should meet as a mater of urgency to discuss the interface between Advisers and the front line Student Services Officers team. Clear lines of communication need to be established which reflect the confidentiality of the student whilst ensuring that issues of concern to students are not lost between different student support services.

Recommendation 21:

Establish good contact between Advisers and the Student Lifecycle Project to ensure course choice and Adviser communication aspects of project are developed.

Student Lifecycle Project

The Student Lifecycle Project aims 'to transform the way the University administers, utilises and manages student information and delivers high quality services to students'. The Student Lifecycle Project Board has recently selected a supplier to implement the new Student Information System over the next 1-2 years. This system will be implemented across all faculties within the University and will radically alter the way that student records are stored, edited and viewed. The most significant changes of relevance to Advisers of Studies are likely to be in the areas of assessment, attendance monitoring, course selection and student-adviser communication. The introduction of Gradebook technology means that any student essays, reports, class tests, project work, exams etc can be graded and recorded online. In addition, rules can be set to highlight students whose performance drops below a certain level. This may help Advisers to monitor the academic performance of their advisees across a range of diverse departments and courses. Similarly, attendance can be recorded and monitored for individual students by course (including tutorials, labs and lectures) and triggers set to alert Advisers of poor attendance. Course selection rules can also be designed to automatically authorise appropriate course selections. This may reduce Advisers of Studies' workloads and leave them to focus on only exceptional course choice combinations. In addition, as part of the new system, all staff and students will have their own web portals. Portals will enable advisees to communicate with their Advisers via web messaging and for Advisers to send alerts to their advisees.

Our consultations with Advisers suggested that there is some scepticism about the new Student Information System and its ability to deliver all the proposed benefits. In addition there are some concerns, which we share, that a technology-driven solution might dilute the student learning experience. In faculties and on programmes where students have a range of choices in course selection, for example, an Adviser will still need to offer advice on good or sensible selections or to warn students of the consequences of their choices. Some members of the Working Group are not sufficiently confident that a central records system will be robust enough to be able to pick up some of the subtleties of student choice. In addition, all the evidence we have seen points to a stated student preference to have a named contact, preferably within their own subject area, with whom they could meet face-to-face. Evidence from Advisers suggests that when offered the opportunity to have such meetings, many students decline to take up the offer. Nonetheless, the Working Group is convinced that the personal contact that a good Adviser of Studies brings does enhance the student experience.

There is on-going work on the student life cycle project and the Working Group has taken the view that we should not replicate the work done elsewhere. However we believe strongly that Chief Advisers be involved in devising any new systems.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The Working Group has recommended to the Director of the 'Hub' SSP that a meeting be arranged with Advisers of Studies at an early stage to provide them with a brief orientation on the range of services that will be available from the 'Hub' from January 2009, and to seek their assistance in 'road testing' the Student Services Directory both to ensure that they find the information comprehensive and useful and to ascertain that arrangements for communication between the 'Hub' frontline staff and Advisers of Studies is sufficiently robust to ensure that Advisers are made aware when an advisee is seeking advice on a matter that could potentially have an impact on that individual's studies.

Recommendation 2:

The University of Glasgow should accept the NACADA principles as underlying principles for all individuals responsible for advising students. The NACADA Declaration and Statement of care values should be discussed as part of training programmes for all staff responsible for delivery of advisory services to students.

Recommendation 3:

The Working Group **recommends** that a referral system is established (whether electronic or tangible) to assure the effective exchange of relevant non-confidential information between the student support services and Advisers, for example the use of a referral card system. In order to achieve this, the University support services, namely the Front Line Desk Student Support Officers, and SRC support services will require electronic access to the contact details of all Advisers, including those who are not on the University payroll.

Recommendation 4:

All students should be provided with information regarding the sources and the types of advice provided by Advisers of Studies and Student Services and the SRC. The information should be sufficiently clear that should a student initially approach the wrong agency, that agency can easily redirect the student to a more appropriate one.

Recommendation 5:

Information provided should be consistent and up-to-date. To achieve this Advisers of Studies should discontinue the practice of creating handbooks containing information provided by Student Services. The main source of information should be the website for the Student Services Directory which will be maintained and updated on an ongoing basis. However, if required, a hard copy of the information should be made available to students who request it.

Recommendation 6:

A review of University student support services should be undertaken in light of the whole spectrum of student advisory needs, with a view to streamlining services under a service head. (see also Recommendation 10)

Recommendation 7:

The term Chief Adviser should be used to designate an individual having overall responsibility for the advising function for a particular degree or set of degrees. The term Adviser of Studies should apply to others.

Recommendation 8:

Advising systems should be built around each programme of study and Advisers drawn from amongst staff contributing to these programmes.

Recommendation 9:

Consideration should be given in the faculties of Arts and LBSS to devising a system, akin to that operating in the science faculties, whereby students can be advised by academic staff from their area of intended study.

Recommendation 10:

The University of Glasgow should continue to consider different structures of advising in light of work being undertaken by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) Working Group on International Benchmarking of Student Support Services. Any review of student support services should include review of the advising service.

Recommendation 11:

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