

College of Science & Engineering

Learning & Teaching Plan

Background

The first three years of the College have been dominated by a number of issues:

- Establishing new effective structures in the College and in the merged schools.
- Significant efficiency savings, involving some extensive UG programme revisions.
- The introduction of MyCampus and problems with room bookings.
- The introduction of many new PGT programmes.
- The introduction of TNE programmes at SIT and now at UESTC.

There have also been constraints, particularly associated with lack of robust data.

Plans

In an overview of strategic issues, the College identified the following as of highest priority: Efficiency, Recruitment, Internationalisation and Student experience, with Retention also important.

Recruitment. The key challenge for Scottish/EU applicants is controlling intake to match the funded numbers. A key goal for the College is to balance intake by School. With the bar for an unconditional offer now set at AAAA/AAABB there should be opportunity to exercise the required control for 2014 entry. That will form the foundation for much better control and modelling of student numbers, leading to greater predictability of class sizes, facilitating planning in all schools.

Efficiency. There is considerable scope for continued efficiency savings. Programmes and courses with small numbers should be withdrawn unless justified for good academic reasons. More good practice can be shared, as exemplified by the recent work on project management and assessment, and administrative processes can be streamlined as MyCampus becomes established and reliable.

Retention. This has had lower visibility in the past two years, largely because of lack of progression data. As this becomes available, it will be important to assess performance and take appropriate action to meet the institutional KPI (94% L1 to L2 progression). Retention impacts on league tables and is of increased importance in the context of the growing numbers of WP students.

Student Experience. As measured by NSS and league tables, there is variation in performance across the College, and there is evidence that this is having an impact on recruitment. For example, Computing Science and Psychology have consistently good, top 10 ratings. They both lead in terms of the conversion (> 20%) of applications into firmly accepted offers. By contrast, Chemistry is the lowest ranked Science subject and has the lowest application conversion rate (13%). There is clearly opportunity to identify and share best practice. Within this, I also want to explore degree classification percentages, with their impact on 'added value', and teaching excellence. There are plans for a layer of excellence awards at College level, which I welcome.

Internationalisation. There is overlap in responsibility in this area with the International Dean. Student mobility is increasingly seen as an important ingredient in the learning experience and the University's policy is that an international experience is available to all students who seek it. The University is working to increase exchange opportunities but schools are best-placed to facilitate and encourage their students' mobility. Being responsive to incoming exchange students will also encourage fee-paying incoming study-abroad students, with potential for future PGT recruitment.

The future learning environment. With technology and access to online resources, this is rapidly changing, and gives the opportunity to optimise the effectiveness of contact hours. For our predominantly professional and lab-based programmes, the campus-based learning experience is likely to remain the preferred, high-quality mode of delivery. There is considerable good practice (as exemplified by TEA) and opportunity to share this, encouraged by College-level events/activity.

Measuring success. This will include: on-target recruitment and number of room change requests, reduction in the number of small-enrolment courses/programmes, progression rates, NSS ratings, degree classifications, mobility and international recruitment numbers.