TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS – Level 2 Mathematics Team

Graduation Ceremony: 30 June at 4.00 pm

Vice-Chancellor:

Graduation is the time at which we recognise the achievements of our students, and it is appropriate that, at this point, we also recognise the achievements of the staff who have supported and encouraged them towards their successes.

The University of Glasgow has a long and distinguished tradition of learning and an established reputation for the high quality of teaching that it offers to its students. The University recognises Teaching Excellence through awards presented to colleagues who have made an outstanding contribution to teaching and student support. I will shortly invite you, Vice Chancellor, to present a Teaching Excellence Award to **the Level 2 Mathematics Team**. Before I do so, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you, and those present, the reasons for which **the Team** is to be recognised in this way.

The provision of feedback to students is a core part of an academic's job: students need to understand where gaps and errors in their understanding occur, and how these are to be filled and rectified, if they are to complete their degree programmes successfully – as the students graduating here today have done. But the provision of such feedback is a challenging problem for staff, especially in large first and second year classes.

To give you an idea of the magnitude of the task, more than 400 students, registered on over 70 different degree programmes, take three or more courses in Level 2 Mathematics. This award shows how a variety of methods, including online assessment, has been adopted to address this challenge and improve the level of feedback by a large factor without changing the content of the course. A typical second year student now receives feedback on over 200 questions in semester 1, compared with only 12 in the past. The project uses a mixture of a commercial system, provided by the publisher of the recommended textbook, with scanning technology to assist the marking, return and record-keeping for assignments that are assessed by hand.

The introduction of this approach in 2013–14 produced a marked improvement in student engagement and performance. For example, it halved the number of students who were spending very little time on private study, for whom the outlook was bleak. This in turn has raised the number of students who are able to progress to Honours and increased the number of A and B grades. To quote Cal Davies, a mathematics student who is currently SRC VP for Education: "Through their use of innovative and modern assessment practices along with rapid feedback through the scanned feedback sheets; the team has ensured that we are all working a lot more outside of class and that work is genuinely productive and helpful."

The improvements in students' performance have continued into the current academic year and the School has successfully introduced the same methods into Level 1, where some classes contain over 600 students.

This award is to a team drawn from many groups within the School, without whom this project would not have been possible.

- Academic staff have revised existing material and developed new material for the online assessment.
- IT support have developed a system for the automated recording of marks, which now handles about 2000 pieces of individually marked work each week.
- Office staff adapted quickly and enthusiastically to the changes in procedures that had to be introduced and provided excellent frontline support to students.

The team plans to extend this project. Lecturers will receive rapid feedback on marks so that they can see what students are finding difficult and address these topics in subsequent lectures. Similar feedback to Advisors of Studies will enable them to identify students at risk in time for remedial action. The School of Engineering may also be able to adopt aspects of the approach for trans-national education in China, thus providing benefits across the College and far beyond.

Vice Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to invite you to present a Teaching Excellence Award to **Drs Christina Cobbold, Steve Roper, Liam Watson, Misha Feigin and Andrew Wilson on behalf of the Level 2 Mathematics Team.**