



## Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

### Review of School of Chemistry held on 5 March 2015

#### Report Summary

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The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the School of Chemistry. *Periodic Subject Review* is an internal subject review 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\\_419592\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_419592_en.pdf)

Further information about the PSR process can be found at:

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

*Italicised words* are explained in a glossary below.

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#### Conclusions

The Panel was impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and students, and with the firm focus on excellence in teaching and support for students. The student groups were enthusiastic and positive, and a credit to the School.

The Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, the programmes offered by the School were current and valid in the light of developing knowledge and practice within the subject area. This was supported by the *accreditation* of many of the programmes by the Royal Society of Chemistry.

The School demonstrated a number of strengths, as well as an awareness of the areas requiring improvement. The most substantive of these are reflected in the commendations and recommendations below.

## Key Strengths (Commendations)<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

- The care taken to develop the designated degree and on the positive impact on the student experience [Paragraph 5.1.3].
- For providing a supportive and inclusive environment for staff and on the achievement of the *Athena Swan award* [Paragraph 5.3.9].

### 2. Supporting Students in their Learning

- Providing an open, friendly and supportive environment, which is highly valued by its students [Paragraphs 3.1.3 and 4.3.12].
- Commitment to supporting students with Wednesday afternoon sporting commitments [Paragraph 4.3.13].
- The School's involvement in a range of interesting and useful recruitment activities [Paragraph 4.1.1].

### 3. Enhancing the Student Learning Experience

- Research-based teaching developments in relation to laboratory work [Paragraph 4.3.14].

## Areas to be improved or enhanced

### 1. Supporting students in their learning

- If desired by the School and considered feasible, the School re-introduce a system whereby all students are offered enrolment meetings with their *Adviser of Studies*, in order to prevent difficulties with unsuitable course choices and levels. This is embedded practice elsewhere in the University and the School could draw on this experience [Paragraph 4.3.11].
- The School to ensure all undergraduate students are prepared for writing a dissertation by introducing a compulsory element of essay work, either via the *Frontiers of Chemistry* course or a revision to an existing course to include an essay element, or by means of an essay marking exercise [Paragraph 4.3.7].
- Provide out-of-hours access to the Branch library for all taught postgraduate students [Paragraph 5.4.7].
- Work with the *Learning & Teaching Centre* to develop appropriate, structured training of *Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)* for their demonstration duties. GTAs must have practiced the related laboratory experiments prior to demonstrations. GTAs should also be provided with feedback on their performance and receive clear guidance on marking to ensure consistency with the other markers. [Paragraph 4.3.5].

### 2. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

#### *Curriculum Design*

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

- Review the current extent of organic chemistry provision and, if appropriate, takes steps to improve the balance of options available to students. [Paragraph 5.1.6].
- Give consideration to embedding the development of mathematical skills, with a chemistry application, throughout the undergraduate curricula. Consideration should be given to means of identifying the varying skill levels in first year in order to tailor mathematics teaching, and further supporting their learning [Paragraph 4.3.3].
- Review Nuclear Magnetic Resonance teaching at levels three and four and, if appropriate, takes action to remove unnecessary duplication of material. [Paragraph 5.1.7].

#### *Resources for Learning and Teaching*

- Work with the College to reach a mutually acceptable position in relation to the provision of teaching support. In this respect, it would be appropriate to review the person specification and remit for the proposed Teaching Administrator post and, if possible, engage an experienced Teaching Administrator on short secondment from elsewhere in the College to consider the feasibility and suitability of the proposal. This would help to build the evidence base for future support. [Paragraph 5.4.2].

#### *Recruitment*

- Discuss with the College and the *Recruitment & International Office*, with a view to producing video testimonials of the current postgraduate students for use in recruitment to the Masters programmes [Paragraph 4.1.6].

### **3. Context and Strategy**

- Renew its dialogue with College Management with a view to forming a clear vision for the future shape of the School that is aligned to the College's strategic plans for the future. This should include consideration of the physical estate and the School's plans for growth. School, College and University engagement is critical in order to support the School's vision. [Paragraph 3.1.5].

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

### **Accreditation**

Accreditation is a 'seal of approval' given to a programme by a professional body, association or other organisation. It has potential benefits for students, such as a recognised fast-track route for graduates seeking professional status or exemption from certain professional examinations.

### **Advisers of Studies**

Advisers of Studies play an important role in the support of students in respect of academic matters and, where necessary, help with any social or personal issues.

### **Athena SWAN Awards**

Athena SWAN Awards recognise success in developing employment practices to further and support the careers of women in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine in higher education.

### **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 subject/school. They are paid an hourly rate by the University.

### **Learning and Teaching Centre**

The Learning and Teaching Centre is a University Service whose role is to “help implement and develop the University’s Learning and Teaching strategy, identify, assess and disseminate new developments and good practice which serve to enhance the student learning experience, and will work with colleagues throughout the University to bring about change”.

### **Periodic Subject Review or PSR**

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

### **Recruitment and International Office (RIO)**

The Recruitment and International Office (RIO) provides applicants, parents and teachers with a single point of contact for information and advice on the range of programmes available at the University of Glasgow. The Service also develop, implement, co-ordinate and monitors widening participation initiatives within the University and with other partners. The Recruitment and International Office (RIO) is situated in the Fraser Building.