

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee – Summer Powers

Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies held on 22 and 23 March 2016

Ms Fiona Dick, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor John Briggs	Clerk of Senate and Vice Principal, Panel Convener
Professor Judith George	Open University, External Subject Specialist
Professor Dave Roberts	SRUC (Scotland's Rural College), External Subject Specialist
Professor Nick Hill	Senate Assessor on Court
Ms Gemma Gratton	Student member
Professor Denis Fischbacher-Smith	Adam Smith Business School, Cognate member
Dr Angela Jaap	Learning and Teaching Centre
Ms Fiona Dick	Senate Office and Clerk to the Panel

1. Introduction

1.1 The School of Interdisciplinary Studies (SIS or the School) is one of six Schools within the College of Social Sciences (CSS) which was formed following the restructuring of the University in 2010-11. It is one of the University's smallest Schools. It is located on a multi-institutional rural campus approximately eighty miles south of Glasgow and shares buildings and resource with other institutions co-located on campus and services are provided by the University of the West of Scotland (UWS).

1.2 The previous review of SIS carried out by the University was the Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA) review of Glasgow University, Dumfries Campus, in February 2010. The Review Panel commended SIS for its newly developing vision and strategy, dedicated staff and vibrant learning environment, which was clearly valued by its students and recognised the importance of School plans in improving their external profile and student recruitment and retention. It was noted that following the withdrawal of five undergraduate and five postgraduate programmes in 2011, the replacement programmes in the current provision had been specifically developed to build on the School's interdisciplinary strengths.

- 1.3 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was coordinated by the Chair of the School Learning and Teaching Committee, Dr Stuart Hanscomb, in consultation with key staff members and early drafts were considered by staff and students through meetings, including the Learning and Teaching Committee, School Academic Strategy Forum, and Staff Student Liaison Committee. The final draft was edited by the Head of School, Dr Carol Hill, and then circulated to staff and students for information and comment.
- 1.4 During a pre-meeting held on 15 March 2016 to consider Review Panel members' feedback and comments regarding the SER and supporting documentation provided by the School, the Review Panel agreed that quality processes were being operated effectively.
- 1.5 The Review Panel met with Dr Hill, Dr Stuart Hanscomb, twenty-five members of staff including one probationer and three early career, five Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA), twenty-two undergraduate students from Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 and six postgraduate taught students.

2. Background information

2.1 Students

Student numbers (2015-16) were as follows:

Level	Mode	Headcount	FTE (%)
Undergraduate	F/T	283	99.2
	P/T	2	0.8
	Total	285	
Postgraduate Taught	F/T	21	48.8
	P/T	22	51.2
	Total	43	

2.2 Staffing (2015-16)

Staff	Headcount
Professor	3
Reader	1
Senior Lecturer	3
Senior University Teacher	1
Lecturer	9
University Teacher	7
Research only	6
Graduate Teaching Assistants	6
Administrative/Technical	12

2.3 Range of provision

The following range of provision offered by the School was considered:

Undergraduate (UG):

- MA(Hons) Health and Social Policy;
- MA Primary Education with Teaching Qualification;
- BSc Environmental Science and Sustainability.

Postgraduate (PG):

- MSc Tourism, Heritage and Development ;
- MSc Tourism, Heritage and Sustainability;
- MSc Environmental Science, Technology and Society;
- MLitt Environment, Culture and Communication ;
- MSc Enhanced Practice in Education.

3. Context and Strategy

3.1 Context and Vision

3.1.1 The SER described the integration of the School within the College of Social Sciences (CoSS) following restructuring of the University in 2010-11. This had provided greater visibility, management representation and planning frameworks, to ensure that activities were clearly aligned and contributed to CoSS' and the University's strategic objectives. Review Panel members noted the School's objective to become internationally recognised and meet the highest academic standards, while also serving the social and economic regeneration of the local region and to be a centre of innovative world class interdisciplinary teaching, research and lifelong learning. The Head of School reported that, overall, while the transition from a unit within the Faculty of Arts to the School of Interdisciplinary Studies in CSS had been challenging for teaching staff with specialist interests in humanities' disciplines, most staff viewed the move as positive.

3.1.2 In 2014-15 administrative and technical support staffing resources were increased (3.5FTE) and the School undertook a review of its course portfolio to clarify and develop support provision around the curriculum for academic staff, and to identify programme/course management efficiencies. This took account of the School's practice of concurrent teaching and the need for clarification of the teaching ethos and the roles of administrative staff to facilitate future curricula support needs within the wider context of increasing student numbers.

3.1.3 The Panel welcomed the refocusing of the School's programme provision, which had considered the needs of students during the transition period, and included new initiatives, enhanced teaching facilities and internationalisation, particularly in student and staff activities. However, there was some concern from Review Panel members around the growth of student numbers and in particular the impact on student support, in terms of the shift in academic and administrative responsibilities, and the implications for the student learning experience, and teaching strategies and evaluation. The Head of School noted that there had been, and continued to be, challenges for the School in marketing themselves as a small campus unit, with the pressure to grow student numbers. Despite the site assimilation, staff members were also acutely aware of the logistical requirements around capacity and in particular regarding tutorial group sizes and the need for more Graduate Teaching Assistants. It was noted that these issues were addressed through regular staff meetings, including the School's Academic Strategy Forum. The Head of School also identified one of SIS's biggest challenge as concurrent teaching, due to difficulties getting buy-in from students, and teaching students from a wide and diverse range of experiences and competencies. However, she was confident in the School's ability to accommodate increasing numbers, as she considered staff members to be positive, flexible and determined. The Head of School was also pleased to note that the School had managed to maintain good National Student Surveys (NSS) scores for overall satisfaction.

3.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

3.2.1 It was stated in the SER that an understanding of the School's particular strengths and weaknesses informed their learning and teaching aims '*to be a centre of innovative world class interdisciplinary teaching, research and lifelong learning that reaches the highest academic standard* (from SIS Strategic Plan 2011-16). In realising this vision, the School endeavoured to provide innovative research-led teaching of the highest quality through links between the courses and degrees offered, management of teaching-related provision, a pronounced sense of community and having strong local connections, whilst also being internationalised. Panel members noted the School's integrative approach which included 'hub and spoke', or 'connected nodes', curriculum models, interdisciplinarity within courses and programmes and flexible assessment.

3.2.2 The School's strategic goal was further refined in seeking '*to provide innovative research-led teaching of the highest quality*'. Panel members noted that this was a significant challenge in terms of resourcing and teaching deliverables, which required the School to be interdisciplinary rather than multidisciplinary. The Review Panel took the view that the latter distinction needed to be more carefully articulated and incorporated into the strategic vision, although it was recognised that this was a matter for consideration at college level. While the Review Panel was not

convinced that teaching could be described as research-led, with Research Excellence Framework (REF) returns for research and teaching staff being reported between 20 to 25 percent, as the School did not return as a single Unit of Assessment (UoA) and staff were included in UoAs across two Colleges with which the interdisciplinary nature of their research did not often articulate, teaching was certainly research-informed. The Review Panel noted School plans to make links with potential UoAs much earlier in the cycle and that a number of University Teachers had received teaching innovation awards as a direct result of their research into pedagogy.

- 3.2.3 Panel members were keen to explore with staff members the tension between the strategic objective to become an internationally recognised School with the highest academic standards, while at the same time serving local regeneration in the region in which the School was located. Key staff members who met with the Panel described the expectation to focus on local needs, whilst being assessed on international criteria, and suggested that future activities to resolve this dilemma might usefully focus on local issues (such as flooding) to attract potential funders. However, they considered that there was a danger in being too local, as students' education needed to have a wider reach/relevance. The Head of School also pointed out that students were attracted by the quality of programmes that were research led and informed in accordance with the expectations of a world class university. In this way, the School's international aspirations should be relevant to local stakeholders but needed to be viable and driven by sound pedagogical principles. While acknowledging that sometimes navigating this landscape in maintaining an appropriate balance between local and School presented ongoing challenges and realignment, the School had realised significant successes around articulation of programmes, whilst engaging closely with the wider community (including head teachers) and maintaining the University's world class vision.
- 3.2.4 The SER had stated the School's size and location provided opportunities to develop a sense of *'familiarity among the student body and a sense of place and purpose that is shared by students and staff alike. The value of this goes beyond the intrinsic. We believe that where staff and students share a sense of community it motivates and facilitates learning and that the accessibility of staff enhances their connectivity with students'*. This view was clearly supported by students who met with the Panel, who particularly enjoyed the sense of community and beautiful campus setting. Undergraduate students reported they had been attracted by the University's reputation, the value of tuition fees, and the range of placements and field trips offered. Postgraduate students highlighted the programme choices (which included emerging fields, predicated on future employment, and included flexible module assessments that could be tailored to work) and interdisciplinary approach, which was detailed in the Postgraduate Prospectus. The Review Panel **commends** the School's

success in maintaining its identity and a sense of community during a period of significant challenges due to restructuring.

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

4.1 Admissions, Retention and Success

- 4.1.1 The SER described how the School had experienced a steady growth in student numbers from 2010 onwards due in part to increases in Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funded places and increases in RUK and international numbers. The Panel noted that there had recently been a review of recruitment policy in terms of respective roles and responsibilities of the School and the University's Marketing, Recruitment and International Office (MaRIO), following a vacancy for the School's Recruitment Officer in January 2016. As a result, the School now focussed on undergraduate recruitment within the 'home' and 'regional market', and MaRIO had responsibility for RUK and international UG and PGT recruitment. The Review Panel also noted that School would like to increase its entry tariff in line with University levels, and be more selective for MAPE applicants, and that the change of name from 'BSc Environmental Stewardship' to 'BSc Environmental Science and Sustainability', had resulted in more than double the amount of applications, and the School anticipated moving to greater selectivity for this latter programme as well.
- 4.1.2 The Panel was pleased to note that progression and continuation had continued to improve in line with CoSS rates, despite an increase in student numbers and larger class sizes.
- 4.1.3 There was some confusion regarding a statement in the SER that referred to an increase in the number of full-time postgraduate taught students, as it was agreed from figures provided that there had been a decline over the review period (2010-2015), although there had been an increase since 2013-14. Furthermore, this increase had been attributed to the growth in full-fee paying international students but the evidence suggested a decline in international students, from fourteen in 2010-11 to eight in 2015-16. The Panel noted some concern that with small numbers of postgraduate taught students, it was difficult to provide coherence and sustain growth. However, members had been very impressed with feedback from postgraduate taught students who met with the Panel and who responded very positively regarding the quality of teaching, the range of programmes, and numerous attractions to study at the School. The Review Panel **commends** the strong postgraduate taught provision which emphasises an interdisciplinary approach and includes emerging subject fields, clear links to future employment, and flexible module assessments that were tailored to meet the needs of part-time students in employment.

4.2 Equality and Diversity

4.2.1 Figures provided in the SER highlighted an increasing gender imbalance in the student body with the proportion of male to female students between 20% and 30% across all courses. However, the School recognised the need to support equality and diversity through a series of activities that included: Equality and Diversity training for staff; active promotion of Equality and Diversity within the School through close ties with the Equality and Diversity Unit; and developing systems and procedures to encourage an inclusive environment (which includes working towards an Athena Swan Bronze Award). The Panel noted that equality and diversity training has been undertaken by School Office staff and was integral to induction for new colleagues.

Widening Access Strategy

4.2.2 Panel members were pleased to note an increase in the number of MD20 and MD40 students admitted to the School during the review period. This followed the introduction of the University's first Further Education/Higher Education articulation route in 2012-13, the provision of a Summer School for access that is focused on assessing potential, and close working ties with local schools to support transition and encourage aspiration. The Review Panel **commends** the School's Widening Access strategy, which includes an articulation route with Further/Higher Education.

4.3 Supporting Students in their Learning

Support for transition and induction

4.3.1 The SER described activities around transition and induction including an induction week, summer schools and school outreach activities. It was noted that the School had extended induction activities across first year which currently included AWS and Campus Life Advice Network (CLAN), a peer mentoring support structure introduced in 2013-14, as well as future optional workshops to support students with skills in referencing, presentation, time management, stress management and essay/report writing. It was also noted that the School Office was available to students from Monday to Friday during semester in the provision of support from the administrative team for a one-stop student hub. The SER also acknowledged a lack of English for Academic Practice (EAP) support and that the bridging course for articulating students may be an insufficient preparation for the transition to university education.

Campus Life Advice Network (CLAN)

4.3.2 The Review Panel was interested to hear about an initiative developed by the School in response to feedback which indicated that, although students found it helpful to meet with peers from the same programme for academic discussions, they wanted to meet with students from across the campus for social events. The SER described how the CLAN peer mentoring assigned every undergraduate student to one of three

networks, each comprising 25 students from across the degree programmes and made up of smaller, programme-specific mentoring groups known as SEPTs (Student Experience Peer Teams). However, undergraduate students who met with the Panel reported that although there had been a CLAN ceilidh, they were not aware of any other CLAN related activities. While the Panel was disappointed to find a lack of engagement, particularly as students clearly thought it was a good idea, the Review Panel recognised that this was part of the wider issue of staff workload and a perceived lack of social space for students. This is discussed further in Sections 5.3.4 and 5.3.5 respectively.

Advisers of Studies

- 4.3.3 The School utilised an advising model comprising fourteen academic staff members with roles as Advisers of Study and led by a Chief Advisor. It was currently reviewing the system to devolve some aspects of advising to administrative staff, to allow Advisers to provide students with more information and advice on graduate attributes. Undergraduates who met with the Panel reported that they usually met with their Adviser during Freshers' Week to discuss issues with timetabling and field trip arrangements, but wanted more support with course choices. Although they were aware that more support was available, through the Programme/Course Convenor and tutors, there was some concern regarding a perceived potential conflict for staff who might be involved in their assessment, due to the small size of the School, and students, particularly those on the MAPE programme, were finding it increasingly difficult to get advice from staff. It was noted from meeting with the postgraduate taught students that, although they were not allocated Advisers of Studies, teaching staff were very approachable and provided advice on academic sessions, pastoral matters and course choices.

Course Options

- 4.3.4 The SER stated that the School was aware, through the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and other student feedback forums, that students needed more information on optional courses, particularly during induction week. Panel members noted future plans from 2016-17 for Level One Course Convenors to include details of aims and content in introductory lectures during induction week and, that the School was considering creating short videos on each course that could be made available to students online. However, undergraduate students who met with the Panel expressed the view that some course descriptions were lacking in detail, and, for some, the titles had been misleading. There was also an apparent lack of awareness amongst both the undergraduate and postgraduate taught students who met with the Panel, of their entitlement to sample lectures for multiple courses within initial two week period available before finalising their course selection. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School undertakes a review of course selection procedure to ensure that course descriptors/titles accurately reflect

content, and that students are aware of the various support and information available to help them with their choices.

Access to Staff Members

4.3.5 Level 4 undergraduate students who met with the Panel reported an issue in the provision of dissertation support, and while they acknowledged teaching staff workloads they found that most staff were available to give feedback on assessment on a one-to-one basis. Key staff who met with the Panel confirmed that they enjoyed excellent relationships with their students and endeavoured to provide support to maintain a supportive environment, as this was seen to be a key feature of the School. However, it was noted from student feedback that provision was variable, although generally better for postgraduate taught students, and there was less consistency with undergraduates, especially those on the MAPE programme. The Review Panel **commends** the availability of some staff members to support students despite challenges of increasing student numbers.

Support for International postgraduate students

4.3.6 The Panel welcomed School plans to continue to offer the AWS diagnostic exercise and course to postgraduate students in the current 2015-16 session, in recognition of concerns about the level of support provided to growing cohorts of international postgraduate students with limited skills in academic writing in English and referencing. However, the SER noted a concern regarding the availability of English for Academic Purposes support. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaise with Student Learning Service to provide an appropriate level of support with academic writing and language skills for international postgraduate students, including the potential of utilising expertise available by video-conferencing colleagues at the Gilmorehill campus.

4.4 Student Engagement

External Examiners

4.4.1 The Panel was satisfied that the External Examiners' reports were generally positive, and that criticisms were addressed.

Employability

4.4.2 The data provided by the School regarding employment destinations were not representative of the destination of leavers, as they did not include MAPE students. While the figures did show some improvement in rates of employment since 2012-13, the SER referred to anecdotal evidence which suggested that the School's graduating students were achieving a high level of employment. The Review Panel was interested to note various initiatives offered by the School which included an employability blog, news notice boards, communication via social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, and specialist MAPE/LinkedIn sessions.

Work-based Learning

- 4.4.3 The Panel was impressed by the range of work-based learning opportunities offered to students through the provision of placements, field courses and projects. While all undergraduate degree programmes included placements, the BSc Environmental Science and Sustainability, Tourism Postgraduate Taught courses, and the literature aspect of the MSc Environmental Culture and Communication included field trips (including the Isle of Harris, Field Studies Council, Solway Firth Partnership, Borders Forest Trust, Forestry Commission, Edinburgh Zoo, NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Dumfries and Galloway Council and the Third Sector). It was clear during meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students who met with the Panel that placements and field courses were highly valued and seen as an opportunity to increase self-confidence and develop relationships with teaching staff. Indeed, students wanted more work-based learning opportunities, particularly in Level 1, as there was a perception that this would strengthen the likelihood of being offered other placements, which increased potential for future employment.
- 4.4.4 While the Panel was pleased to note from the SER that the School was currently considering offering more placement provision in response to a perceived shift in needs and expectations of postgraduate taught cohort, there was some concern about the sustainability of current provision. Other issues highlighted by the undergraduate students included the clarity of information regarding placements provided for students (particularly the FAQs) and feedback on placement assessment. The Review Panel **commends** the wide range of work-based learning opportunities (placements, field courses and projects) offered by the School, which were valued by students and seen as beneficial for future employment.
- 4.4.5 Undergraduate MAPE students raised an issue regarding timetabling of their placements, which, for some, had been scheduled beyond the funding/accommodation period. The SER described how a new General Teaching Council Scotland system for placing students in schools has provided the opportunity for the School to streamline school placements still further, and key staff members who met with the Panel, were confident that condensing teaching into a five week period had addressed the problem.

Graduate Attributes

- 4.4.6 The School engaged with graduate attributes, in the development of students' academic abilities, personal qualities and transferable skills across a wide range of learning opportunities. These included: the articulation of graduate attributes within Intended Learning Outcomes and course aims at undergraduate level; flexible assessments tailored to meet specific work needs (particularly part-time students in employment); work placements which were available on all undergraduate programmes and some postgraduate programmes; and guidance from students' Adviser of

Studies. The SER had provided specific examples of graduate attributes from ILOs including a Reflective Work-based Journal that students were required to complete as part of a work placement. School plans to embed the range of graduate attributes in the postgraduate taught programmes to accommodate their expectations were also noted.

- 4.4.7 The Panel explored with staff members if there was anything distinctive about the attributes they expected graduates of SIS to have, how these mapped onto their teaching and whether students were encouraged to reflect on these attributes as part of their learning. Key staff members explained that while there was a particular emphasis on critical thinking, a wide range of graduate attributes was systematically embedded in programme and course aims, ILOs and work placements across the various disciplines. In this way, students were encouraged to continually reflect on different aspects of their scholarship, which also included a lecture, aimed at developing students' understanding of constructive self-reflection/ and the nature and purpose of graduate attributes.
- 4.4.8 The Panel noted that, given the nature of the integrated approach taken by the School, staff might find it more challenging to develop graduate attributes outside of the core programmes offered. However, the Head of School reported that the School took a more holistic approach to graduate attributes, and, although subjects were disparate, there were more opportunities for students to develop and reflect on work skills required due to the School's interdisciplinarity approach and practice of concurrent teaching. The Review Panel **commends** the School's engagement with graduate attributes, which are continually developed across a broad range learning opportunities and which include reflections on practice, to ensure students are equipped for the world of work.

Internationalisation

- 4.4.9 While numbers of outgoing students did not meet the University's strategic target of 20% for 2020, there was a clear effort by the School to foster internationalisation in terms of encouraging outgoing and incoming student mobility, and engagement by staff in the provision of student-focused internationalisation activities. Furthermore, students valued the support and guidance provided by staff, and from the Internationalisation Lead in particular to facilitate outgoing opportunities. Undergraduate students who met with the Panel stated that cost was the main barrier to participation. This was also recognised by the School, who endorsed efforts by the University to establish additional scholarships for outward mobility of varying durations, while simultaneously working to secure local sources of sustainable funding.
- 4.4.10 The School's strategy is to continuously review study exchange agreements, enhancing placement options at postgraduate level and exploring alternative forms of international student engagement. There is also potential for taster mobility sessions, which staff regarded as an

effective way to motivate students and to provide a global perspective/experience. It was also recognised by staff and that staff exchanges were not just opportunities for staff to share research methodologies, but enhanced the learning and teaching experience for students (University of Nankai, China).

Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

Course Evaluation

4.4.11 The Review was disappointed that a substantial number of course evaluations from 2014-15 had not been included in the supporting documentation because they had been mislaid. The Panel noted that the University had recently implemented a policy on electronic course evaluation for gathering student feedback via questionnaires using EvaSys software. The Review Panel **encourages** the School to continue engaging with the University's Course Evaluation Policy, which includes staff attendance on EvaSys training and compliance with course end dates for submission and safe storage requirements.

Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC)

4.4.12 Meetings of Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLC) were held regularly (usually once per semester) to which undergraduate and postgraduate taught students were invited. While students who met with the Panel regarded the SSLC as useful channel for information sharing, they were less convinced in its effectiveness in addressing student issues and providing feedback on actions. Some postgraduate students also highlighted difficulties with attendance as meetings were always scheduled during the day. Panel members noted from the review documentation that the last minutes had been posted to School's Moodle site in October 2013; actions were not being routinely identified in the minutes of meetings; and there was poor attendance by postgraduate taught students. The Review Panel **recommends** the School undertake a review of the operation of the Staff Student Liaison Committees, to improve student engagement, with the postgraduate taught cohort in particular, and ensure that actions are clearly identified, progressed and outcomes reported back to students.

5. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

Reflect on effectiveness of approaches to enhancing the student learning experience

Curriculum Design and Development

5.1.1 The SER noted the provision of viable course options following curricula restructuring had been achieved through the 'hub and spoke'/'connected nodes' model, where courses that were core to one programme could be offered as options for the other degrees. It was noted that, at undergraduate level, this included courses from four Humanities'

pathways (History, Philosophy, Literature and Modern Languages) that are integral to the MAPE programme. The Review Panel **commends** teaching which was mostly delivered in two-hour slots to enable diversity of classroom practice (through lectures, small group work, debates, technology-enhanced learning, and a wide range of seminar practices that include informal presentations, peer review of assignments, debates, and problem-based learning). It was clear from feedback that students also enjoyed and valued this practice.

Concurrent teaching and Interdisciplinarity

- 5.1.2 It was noted from the SER that core courses had been designed to provide parity between discipline-specific core courses, compulsory concurrent streams required for the MAPE and the choice of electives available to each student. This approach ensured that students benefitted from a range of disciplines and approaches to learning, while offering choice and maintaining interdisciplinarity and programme integrity.
- 5.1.3 Postgraduate taught students who met with Panel had a strong sense of interdisciplinarity, which for some had been a motivating factor to study at SIS. However, in meetings with undergraduates, students were less able to articulate their understanding of an interdisciplinary approach, although there was a perception that course content/concurrency was tailored to meet needs of MAPE students. While undergraduates could identify benefits of concurrent teaching, such as encouraging reflective learning and offering more flexibility to change programmes (subject to academic performance), course options were often limited, and, there was a perception that the inclusion of MAPE students on Environmental Science and Sustainability course slowed down teaching delivery.
- 5.1.4 The Head of the School Learning and Teaching Committee reported that staff took every opportunity to explain the concept and purpose of concurrency and interdisciplinarity, and the value of broad based education, through conversations with students and reinforced through prompts in teaching. Despite high level conceptual discussions, there was concern that the School was not getting full engagement from some students, and it was noted that the School was currently seeking funding to develop a conceptual paper on student uptake of concurrency. Key staff members who met with the Panel were very positive about the concurrency model. Key staff also acknowledged the need to articulate to MAPE students, in particular, to ensure that they understood that study was not just about training (i.e. lesson plans) but also about education in a broader sense. Staff also recognised the need to embed the conceptual links and commonalities between the different courses earlier in the student journey. However, staff members were also aware of the significant challenges involved, in terms of student engagement and understanding, due to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students.
- 5.1.5 The Panel sensed there was still some ambiguity around the concept of interdisciplinarity which might be undermining SIS's ability to reflect on

how interdisciplinarity was driving the culture and ethos of the School, recognising the differing needs and understanding of the student cohorts. There appears to be limited course choices regarding the way some Level 3 MAPE had been required to take the L3 multi-disciplinary Victorian Literature, Art and Philosophy course, however, the Panel welcomed School plans for an additional programme in Global Citizenship, which would provide more course options.

Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes

- 5.1.6 The Review Panel noted that statements on course-level Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were provided to students through course handbooks and that ILOs were clear and aligned to the course work and Graduate Attributes.

Assessment

- 5.1.7 The SER described an impressive array of assessment methods which appeared to fit well with the courses provision. The Review Panel **commends** the range of assessment approaches utilised by the School, which are closely linked to Graduate Attributes and employability.

Feedback on Assessment

- 5.1.8 The School offers a range of feedback mechanisms including generic feedback, individual comments on exams (on some courses), feedback vivas, on-line assessments and on-going projects around assessment and feedback (including a LTDF-funded LEAF initiative). The Panel noted student feedback in the supporting documentation provided for the review, which suggested that there was a variety of issues relating to assessment which required addressing, including a lack of clarity of purpose of assessment, the quality and quantity of feedback and timing issues.
- 5.1.9 The Head of School confirmed that students were provided with guidance on feedback on assessment through course and programme handbooks and during lectures, but pointed out that, despite the quality and frequency of information provided, students did not always realise they were getting feedback. The challenge for the School was therefore considering how to bridge this gap. The Head of the School Learning and Teaching Committee reported that while students were not formally asked about their expectations, the School was aware through SSLC and a focus group held in November 2016, of student preferences for feedback. The Panel also noted that the Head of School had recently met with postgraduate students to discuss student expectations on feedback, and had set up a working group to consider the matter further.
- 5.1.10 Among postgraduate taught students there were timing issues related to the receipt of feedback, with some reports of three month delays. There was also some variability in terms of the quality of feedback in terms of consistency of guidance on the handling of subject matter and academic literacy. Members also noted that some courses would only allow submission of assessment by hard copy, which presented difficulties for students commuting large distances. The Review Panel **recommends**

that the School considers the electronic submission of assessed work in a review of the process that is cognisant of the needs of students commuting long distances to the Dumfries campus.

- 5.1.11 Undergraduates who met with the Panel also highlighted issues regarding the consistency of feedback, particularly with essays, and although there were variations in the timeliness and issues relating to the scheduling of feedback, they were aware of the pressure of increasing student numbers on staff workloads. Students were very positive about the Feedback Viva, although the Panel recognised the implication for staff workloads. The Review Panel **commends** the Feedback Viva, which was valued by students, and facilitated learning through reflective dialogue to embed knowledge and consolidate learning. The Review Panel **recommends** the Convener of the School's Learning and Teaching Committee develops a calendar of assessment activities, clarifying bottlenecks/peaks, to clearly identify submission, marking and feedback deadlines for more effective planning, and which is shared with staff and students for transparency. The Review Panel further **recommends** that the School reviews feedback on assessment to develop a consistent approach in the delivery of feedback of assessment, both written and verbal, which should include engagement with the student body.

Good practice

- 5.1.12 The inclusion of a range of examples related to sharing good practice to the wider academic community (e.g. publications, presentations and seminars) in the SER indicated that this was an important issue for the School. The Head of School reported that staff worked collegially to develop good practice, through meetings, such as the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Academic Strategy Forum to review innovative practice. However, the Panel would have liked more detail on how the School identified good practice, the availability of opportunities for staff members to co-teach or peer observe and the links across the University or other institutions on Crichton Campus. These issues are considered further under staff development and the Academic Strategy Forum in Sections 5.2.9 and 5.2.11

5.2 Engaging and Supporting Staff

Early career and probationer training and support

- 5.2.1 The Review Panel met with three Early Career Development Programme (ECDP) participants and one probationary staff member. Although the SER had raised an issue regarding travel to the Gilmorehill campus, staff members clearly valued the PgCAP training provision, which was viewed as appropriate, an opportunity to share good practice, and provided flexibility, in terms of acknowledging prior teaching experience. It was also noted that some PgCAP training was available for participants on the

Dumfries campus by video link and that participants benefitted from the annual Learning and Teaching Conference coordinated by LTC.

5.2.2 The School had confirmed prior to the review visit that the SIS had employed a number of international teaching staff in the last eighteen months and that ECDP was an effective framework for setting objectives aligned to the University's strategic priorities and for enabling participants to understand their career progression. Early career staff on the ECDP were mentored by senior members of academic staff (often Gilmorehill-based) working in their discipline. They undertook, as appropriate, a range of learning opportunities and development activities, and courses/and workshops had been made available through Virtual Learning Environments to provide participating staff flexibility of attendance. It was also clear from the early career/probationary staff who met with the Panel that mentoring support was relevant and appreciated. However, there was some concern regarding issues which included workload, assessment, management and resource:

- It was not clear to early career/probationary staff how the ECDP framework linked with the CoSS Workload Model in respect of specific weightings to teaching, administrative duties and research commitments. In particular, early career staff were not convinced that the workload model was taking account of the School's course teaching practice of two classes per week for two hour sessions and there was a perception that the implications of this effect were compounded for part-time staff;
- Early career staff did not appear to have access to assessment marking sheets, which might explain the issue of a lack of consistency in feedback on assessment experienced by some students considered earlier.

5.2.3 The Panel noted that the University's Workload Model was designed to be transparent, although in practice members were aware that some Schools preferred to anonymise details so that individual staff could not be identified. The Head of School explained that she had consulted with colleagues following concerns about sensitivities from some staff around the current model in relation to individual workloads, and while she was happy to respond to individual staff requests, the School Workload Model was not generally available and visible to staff. However, she agreed with Panel members that it was a positive management tool and a useful mechanism in terms of addressing resource needs. The Head of School expressed surprise that staff had an issue with signing in and out via an in/out board by the entrance to the Teaching Office, as she had assumed that as it had been practice since the campus opened and was standard practice to meet health and safety requirements. However, the Panel advised that staff attendance should only be monitored out-with normal working hours in compliance with fire regulations.

Support and training for Graduate Teaching Assistants

- 5.2.4 The School confirmed prior to the review visit that all new Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) undertook the mandatory training provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre and that lecturers mentored their GTAs through peer observation and feedback, review and discussion of students' evaluations. There were also individual sessions to discuss course aims and ILOs and course materials. The SER and the Head of School had also identified the need to increase the number of GTAs employed by the School in order to support academic staff and maintain provision of small group teaching, which was an important feature for the School.
- 5.2.5 The GTAs who met with the Panel flagged up a number of challenges around their work in relation to their appointment, development and support from staff which included:
- A lack of clarity in relation to appointment and selection process of GTAs, and contractual conditions such work duties, payment rates and hours etc.;
 - Although staff had attended training provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre, there had been no provision of training by the School, which is a Senate requirement in the development of GTAs;
 - GTAs wanted more feedback from staff members.
- 5.2.6 The Panel discussed their concerns with the Head of School about the lack of training and support for GTAs and the need for greater formality and clarity around applications and their roles, to ensure that: new positions were advertised to all eligible students and recent graduates; GTAs were issued with a standard letter, which detailed their conditions of appointment (contact hours, preparation and assessment duties); all GTAs were paid at a uniform rate; regular mentoring and briefing sessions took place with GTAs which ideally would be facilitated by course convenors to support GTAs in developing course material and providing feedback; all course work assessed by GTAs was moderated by staff; GTAs received support from a designated mentor where issues such as managing workloads, developing a portfolio of teaching, and personal and professional development could be discussed; and provision of training workshops specifically tailored to the needs of GTAs. It was noted that GTAs should also be encouraged to participate in appropriate training opportunities elsewhere in CoSS and the wider University.
- 5.2.7 The Head of School acknowledged that the Schools engagement with GTAs had been reactive and ad-hoc but reported that a new system had recently been introduced to ensure that details of new GTA appointments were transparent and staff would be consulted to clarify support requirements. The Panel **recommends** the School develops a clear and

transparent process regarding the appointment, development and support of Graduate Teaching Assistants.

Administrative Support

- 5.2.8 The SER referred to ongoing changes to the School's administration to ensure that current and future curricula and academic support needs were better met. The Head of School confirmed that she was aware of some of the problems experienced by staff who met with the Panel (missing student feedback evaluations, class lists not provided, availability of standard assessment feedback marking sheets and lack of photocopying support), and explained that the School Office had been restructured in the last nine months and was still working towards peak performance. However, she assured the Panel that steps were being taken to address administrative inefficiencies identified through the review. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of School develops a strategy for streamlining effective administrative processes to support teaching delivery.

Staff development

- 5.2.9 The Panel noted that although the challenges of larger class sizes had been identified in the SER, there was no evidence that staff received training on how to effectively deliver to larger classes or develop alternative teaching methods. While the SER had described how staff members were encouraged to undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD), this often required attendance at Gilmorehill with associated time and cost implications. The Panel noted that despite visits from colleagues from Gilmorehill and 'bespoke' training provision from the School, some staff felt disadvantaged due to their location. The Panel took the view that perception of disadvantage was common in such a context, and could be demoralising for staff and although the School had taken useful practical steps in addressing the perceived inequalities, they might want to consider collaborating with another similar unit located closer to achieve critical mass to justify training costs and share experience and good practice.
- 5.2.10 Key staff pointed out that their development needed to match increasing student numbers and that discursive opportunities provided through the School's Academic Strategy Forum (discussed below) and the Learning and Teaching Committee informed debates, and ensured consistency in terms of delivery and the student learning experience. Key staff also appreciated development opportunities offered through the University of Glasgow's Annual Teaching and Learning Conference (LTC) and informal coffee and cake sessions provided by the School.

Academic Strategy Forum

- 5.2.11 The Panel was impressed by the feedback from staff regarding the Academic Strategy Forum, which facilitated the consideration of 'hot topics', including academic practice, curricula, innovation, regulatory

issues and good practice across a diverse range of multi-disciplinary perspectives. The review Panel **commends** the Academic Strategy Forum, which provides staff with opportunities to consider pedagogical issues through constructive discussions and meaningful information sharing.

5.3 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical):

Increasing Student Numbers

- 5.3.1 The SER noted the challenges due to significant increases in student numbers in relation to the sustainability of the teaching model, which included small group teaching, staff support provision and assessment methods, to meet School aspirations to provide an intimate, supportive community. The Head of School reported that while there were many positives aspects of increasing student numbers (alignment of Staff Student Ratios with CoSS, improved course delivery efficiency, and new opportunities for GTAs and research staff), there were some difficulties with teaching delivery (one plus one teaching/tutorial), and some seminar numbers exceeding twenty as small group teaching was promoted by the School. The impact on staffing requirements was further compounded by the requirement for a reduced workload for ECDPs, a lack of GTAs which put pressure on course convenors. It was noted from key staff who met the Panel that the increase in student numbers this session was unexpected, and that, due to the structure of core courses, they had not realised until registration in September 2015. The Head of School acknowledged that the School should have anticipated this increase but was confident that the two new appointments would reduce pressure on staff.
- 5.3.2 However, the Panel took the view that the School needed to consider a more creative approach to cope with demand in the design of workshops and tutorials, and to identify and disseminate existing innovative practices across programmes. The Panel proposed that to support this shift in teaching practice and student mind-set, staff should be provided with a series of progressive sessions which could feature evidenced-based reflection, to support and embed best practice and evaluate any changes made. The workshops would also provide academic staff with opportunities to undertake pedagogic action research on new initiatives, which could be written up or presented at conferences on learning and teaching, and to build on the excellent elements of good practice and creative approaches already present. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaise with the Learning and Teaching Centre to clarify the pedagogical issues, including teaching space and infrastructure requirements, around increasing student numbers and to provide of a series of pedagogical workshops to facilitate discussions with School academic staff. The School might also like to consider the potential opportunities that exist for developing an online/blended learning strategy

for courses as a means of widening student participation and increasing numbers on programmes. The Review Panel further **recommends** that the School develops a strategy for enhancing the student experience, primarily learning provision, by tapping into existing expertise of colleagues at Gilmorehill and elsewhere.

Staff Workload

5.3.3 The Panel took the view that the issue raised previously regarding the visibility of the Workload Model in relation to of early career/probationary and Graduate Teaching Assistants was not one that the School could address in isolation. The School, in consultation with the CoSS, needs to develop a more transparent workload model for use in SIS that is in line with what is equitable across the College and which reflects the University guidance. The Panel also noted guidance provided by Human Resources to ensure early career staff liaised with their line manager to ensure the appropriateness of their workload and that agreed performance objectives were met. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with the College of Social Sciences in a review of the operation of their Workload Model.

Teaching Space

5.3.4 It was noted that following expansion of the School estate through acquisition of Maxwell House and a number of rooms in Rutherford-McCowan, building improvement plans, designed to minimise disruption to students, would be implemented shortly. While the SER had stated that the additional accommodation had gone some way to meeting the increasing number of tutorial and seminar groups and larger class sizes, and would provide state of the art teaching facilities in some rooms, the Panel was concerned to hear that current teaching space and infrastructure still had challenges:

- A shortage of tutorial teaching space;
- Inadequate provision and maintenance of teaching aids (issues updating audio-visual equipment and shortage of white boards/flip charts);
- Computer laboratories that were not big enough to cope with increases in class sizes and computers that were not always reliable;
- Teaching rooms that were often not set up as requested by staff;
- A lack of social space for students.

5.3.5 The SER noted the School shared buildings and resource, including computer laboratories, with other institutions co-located on campus and

some IT and facilities management was provided by University of the West of Scotland (UWS). Following a survey of rooms, resource issues around maintenance and janitorial support had been raised through the Learning and Teaching Committee and staff meetings. The Panel also heard from students that some teaching staff seemed unfamiliar with the operation of teaching equipment. The Review Panel **encourages** the School to consider how teaching space and equipment requirements could be supported in the future.

Library

- 5.3.6 An issue regarding the accessibility of the library in terms of increased opening hours was flagged up both in feedback from the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and during the Panel's meetings with students. However, both undergraduates and key staff reported that campus library provision was good and included full access to the University's main library on Gilmorehill, albeit with a slight time delay. It was noted that the Library was part of Dumfries and Galloway College infrastructure and that provision would be included in upcoming review of UWS services, and the acquisition of Maxwell House had enabled the School to create a quiet reading room for undergraduate and postgraduate students. It was hoped that by encouraging the use of e-books and the provision of in-situ PCs would alleviate perceived shortcomings of the campus Library opening hours.

Information Technology

- 5.3.7 Key staff who met with the Panel had highlighted significant problems with the IT networking and infrastructure which had limited broadband (wifi) connection (400 users). This presented challenges with every software update on Gilmorehill, particularly Moodle. The Head of School confirmed that there was a degree of dissatisfaction with current IT infrastructure provision, which had intensified over the years with increases in student and staff usage. Provision of facilities was further complicated as there was a shared management across two campuses which operated separate policies.
- 5.3.8 However, IT did not seem to be a significant problem for students who met with the Panel, apart from initial log-on and some variability in the quality of video links. The Panel was surprised that this issue was still ongoing, given the School's greater emphasis on use of IT to link with other parts of the University and external resources. While students and staff took a pragmatic approach in finding ways to work around the difficulties, the Panel was concerned that changes in teaching methodologies to cope with increasing numbers, might become increasingly challenging for staff and students.
- 5.3.9 The Head of School noted various challenges during last the last eighteen months and in particular engaging with UWS (who have management

responsibility for IT provision across the Crichton site). However, she was pleased to report that a strategic meeting had been scheduled for May 2016 to consider improvements in the provision of shared infrastructure and services which included Professor Anne Anderson, Vice Principal and Head of College of Social sciences, Mr David Newall, Secretary of Court, and Dr Shirley Turberville, Dumfries Campus Director, with suitable IT representation. The Panel pointed out that the School needed to prioritise the IT issue, and should consider an audit, with appropriate support from the University's IT Service, to clarify the specific issues around the School's IT provision requirements, which could feed into these discussions.

Teaching Garden

5.3.10 The Panel received details regarding the Teaching Garden in advance of the review visit, which described an interactive resource provision for students and members of the public to engage in research on horticulture, botany and ecology, and gain experience in basic plant cultivation techniques and data collection. The garden was included in a tour provided to Panel Members during their visit and was valued by BSc Environmental Science and Sustainability students who met with the Panel. The Panel was also pleased to note School plans to incorporate the Teaching Garden into undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. The Review Panel **commends** the Teaching Garden initiative which provides a focus for teaching ecological skills for students, staff members and members of the public.

Integration to the College of Social Sciences

5.3.11 The SER emphasised the School's keenness to promote a sense of community and while the School was physically remote from the main Gilmorehill Campus, staff worked hard to maintain appropriate connections between themselves and their students with colleagues in CoSS and the wider University. Panel members acknowledged that it was always going to be difficult to link the School with the rest of the University due to its location and were therefore interested to explore with staff and students whether there were perceptions or experience of marginalisation. However, physical isolation did not appear to be an issue with students who met the Panel, although there was a suggestion that the School might consider subsidising a minibus to commute with the main campus due to relative high travel costs of travel by bus and train (£11/16 single fares).

5.3.12 Key staff members who met with the Panel described an element of isolation in terms of staff research interests and would have liked financial support to attend events at the Universities and conferences in general. However, there had been an improvement in recent years and CoSS staff members were very supportive and made efforts to visit or communicate through video links, which staff found very useful in terms of comparing teaching and assessment practice and sharing good practice. The Head

of School reported that the School was strongly integrated, particularly in relation to the support provided by the Head of CoSS the Dean of Learning and Teaching.

6. Academic Standards

- 6.1 The Review Panel considered that provision was aligned to Quality Assurance (QAA) subject benchmarks (Communication, Media, Film and Cultural Studies; Earth Sciences; Education Studies; Health Studies; History; Language, Culture and Societies; and Philosophy), and contained the appropriate Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) level in the programme specifications.

Annual Monitoring

- 6.2 While the Panel Members was concerned to find some variance in the content of the Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), both in terms of level of detail and reflection, it was clear that issues were being identified and addressed. In particular members welcomed a reflection on Graduate Attributes (Earth System Science 2012-13) and a strong emphasis on student feedback. However, the Panel considered that AMRs would benefit from: more details of the 'hot topics' (e.g. how Moodle was, or was not, meeting the needs of the class/student learning); more consistency in reporting and 'closing of the feedback loop' to students; and consideration of how Course Convenors share actions and developments and good practice related to enhancing student learning. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School undertakes a review of its Annual Monitoring process, in compliance with University's guidance available through the Senate Office at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_453751_en.pdf

Accreditation

- 6.3 It was noted from the SER that MAPE was re-accredited unconditionally by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC) in 2013 and received seven commendations, and, in 2015, the programme was subject to an Aspect Review and singled out as a case for good practice. The Review Panel **commends** MA in Primary Education programme's successful reaccreditation in 2013 by GTC, which was the first in Scotland to be reaccredited twice, with no changes or conditions attached.
- 6.4 Members were also pleased to note that following a pilot 'dual certification' placement, by four MAPE students in 2015, they were taking forward a suggestion by General Teaching Council to be the first HEI School in Scotland to seek accreditation of dual certification. The Review Panel **commends** School plans to seek 'dual certification' through the General Teaching Council for Scotland.

7. Collaborative provision

7.1 The SER reported on a variety of links across all programmes and courses with UWS, Dumfries and Galloway College, the Open University in Scotland, Scotland's Rural College and strategic partners National Health Service and Dumfries and Galloway Council. It was noted that the School undertook joint activities through individual Outcome Agreements of the partner institutions including the SFC from 2013-14. Panel members also heard details of numerous national and international collaborative partnerships in discussions with staff and students regarding placements, field courses (Field Studies Council, Solway Firth Partnership, Borders Forest Trust, Forestry Commission and Edinburgh Zoo), staff mobility and visiting lecturers.

8. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

8.1 Key strengths:

- Maintaining a sense of community;
- Strong postgraduate taught provision which emphasises an interdisciplinary approach and employability;
- Widening Access strategy;
- Availability of staff to support students;
- Wide range of work-based learning opportunities offered;
- Engagement with Graduate Attributes;
- Teaching delivery (two hour slots);
- Range of assessment approaches utilised by the School which are closely linked to Graduate Attributes and employability;
- Feedback Viva which facilitated learning through reflective dialogue;
- Academic Strategy Forum;
- Teaching Garden initiative;
- Re-accreditation of MAPE programme and potential dual certification regarding placement.

8.2 Areas for improvement:

- Review of course selection to ensure accuracy of descriptors and communicate support available to students;
- Support with academic writing and language skills for international postgraduate students;
- Operation of SSLC in terms of student engagement, addressing issues and feedback on actions;
- Electronic submission of assessed work to recognise the needs of students commuting large distances;
- Development of a calendar of assessment activities for more effective planning for both students and staff;
- Consistency of approach in the delivery of feedback on assessment, through engagement with the student body;
- Clarification of process for appointment, development and support of Graduate Teaching Assistants;
- Strategy for streamlining effective administrative support processes to support staff teaching;
- Clarification of the pedagogical issues around maintaining the student learning experience;
- Managing the student experience, by identifying and sharing good practice from colleagues at Gilmorehill and elsewhere;
- Review of the operation and transparency of the Workload model;
- Consistency and reflection of annual monitoring process.

8.3 Conclusion

8.3.1 The School has developed considerably in the last couple of years and this was reflected in the growth in student numbers, the consolidation of programmes, and the move away from a liberal arts-based curriculum to one that was more focused on the requirements of the market. The School's overarching strategic goal to 'become an internationally recognised school that reaches the highest academic standards while also serving the social and economic regeneration of the region' was considered a laudable goal but one that had significant implications around staffing requirements and maintaining the student experience. The sustainability of resource provision is dependent on further growth

in student numbers, which will require a shift in the delivery model of learning and teaching currently employed within the School.

- 8.3.2 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialists, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, programmes offered by the School were current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and of practice in its application.

Commendations

Commendation 1

The Review Panel commends the School's success in maintaining its identity and a sense of community during a period of significant challenges due to restructuring [Section 3.2.4].

Commendation 2

The Review Panel commends the strong postgraduate taught provision which emphasises an interdisciplinary approach and includes emerging subject fields, clear links to future employment, and flexible module assessments that were tailored to meet the needs of part-time students in employment [Section 4.1.3].

Commendation 3

The Review Panel commends the School's Widening Access strategy, which includes an articulation routes with Further/Higher Education [Section 4.2.2].

Commendation 4

The Review Panel commends the availability of some staff members to support students despite challenges of increasing student numbers [Section 4.3.5].

Commendation 5

The Review Panel commends the wide range of work-based learning opportunities (placements, field courses and projects) offered by the School, which were valued by students and seen as beneficial for future employment [Section 4.4.4].

Commendation 6

The Review Panel commends the School's engagement with graduate attributes, which are continually developed across a broad range learning opportunities and which include reflections on practice, to ensure students are equipped for the world of work [Section 4.4.5].

Commendation 7

The Review Panel commends teaching which was mostly delivered in two-hour slots to enable diversity of classroom practice (through lectures, small group work, debates, technology-enhanced learning, and a wide range of seminar practices that include informal presentations, peer review of assignments, debates, and problem-based learning) [Section 5.1.1].

Commendation 8

The Review Panel commends the range of assessment approaches utilised by the School, which are closely linked to Graduate Attributes and employability. [Section 5.1.7]

Commendation 9

The Review Panel commends the Feedback Viva, which was valued by students, and facilitated learning through reflective dialogue to embed knowledge and consolidate learning [Section 5.1.11].

Commendation 10

The review Panel commends the Academic Strategy Forum, which provides staff with opportunities to consider pedagogical issues through constructive discussions and meaningful information sharing [Section 5.2.11].

Commendation 11

The Review Panel commends the Teaching Garden initiative which provides a focus for teaching ecological skills for students, staff members and members of the public [Section 5.3.10].

Commendation 12

The Review Panel commends MA in Primary Education programme's successful reaccreditation in 2013 by GTC, which was the first in Scotland to be reaccredited twice, with no changes or conditions attached [Section 6.3].

Commendation 13

The Review Panel commends School plans to seek 'dual certification' through the General Teaching Council for Scotland [Section 6.4].

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the School of Interdisciplinary Studies in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are grouped together by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are ranked in order of priority within each section.

Enhancing the Student Experience

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that the School liaise with Student Learning Service to provide an appropriate level of support with academic writing and language skills for international postgraduate students, including the potential of utilising expertise available by video-conferencing colleagues at the Gilmorehill campus [Section 4.3.6].

For action: Head of School

For information: Student Learning Service

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel recommends that the School undertakes a review of course selection procedure to ensure that course descriptors/titles accurately reflect content, and that students are aware of the various support and information available to help them with their choices [Section 4.3.4].

For action: Head of School

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel recommends the School undertake a review of the operation of the Staff Student Liaison Committees, to improve student engagement, with the postgraduate taught cohort in particular, and ensure that actions are clearly identified, progressed and outcomes reported back to students [Section 4.4.12].

For action: Head of School

Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel recommends that the School reviews feedback on assessment to develop a consistent approach in the delivery of feedback of assessment, both written and verbal, which should include engagement with the student body [Section 5.1.11].

For action: Head of School

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel recommends the Convener of the School's Learning and Teaching Committee develops a calendar of assessment activities, clarifying bottlenecks/peaks, to clearly identify submission, marking and feedback information for more effective planning, and which is shared with staff and students for transparency [Section 5.1.11].

For action: Convener, School Learning and Teaching Committee

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel recommends that the School considers the electronic submission of assessed work in a review of the process that is cognisant of the needs of students commuting long distances to the Dumfries campus [Section 5.1.10].

For action: Head of School

Engaging and Supporting Staff

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel recommends that the Head of School develops a strategy for streamlining effective administrative processes to support teaching delivery [Section 5.2.8].

For action: Head of School

Recommendation 8

The Panel recommends the School develops a clear and transparent process regarding the appointment, development and support of Graduate Teaching Assistants [Section 5.2.7].

For action: Head of School

For information: Vice Principal and Head of College of Social Sciences

Resources for Learning and Teaching

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel recommends that the School develops a strategy for enhancing the student experience, primarily learning provision, by tapping into existing expertise of colleagues at Gilmorehill and elsewhere [Section 5.3.2].

For action: Head of School

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel recommends that the School liaise with the Learning and Teaching Centre to clarify the pedagogical issues, including teaching space and infrastructure requirements, around increasing student numbers and to provide of a series of pedagogical workshops to facilitate discussions with School academic staff [Section 5.3.2].

For action: Head of School

For Information: ADU, Learning and Teaching Centre

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel recommends that the School liaises with the College of Social Sciences in a review of the operation of their Workload Model [Section 5.3.3].

For Action: Head of School

For information: Vice Principal and Head of College of Social Sciences

Academic Standards

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School undertakes a review of its Annual Monitoring process, in compliance with University's Guidance available through the Senate Office at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_453751_en.pdf [Section 6.2].

For Action: Head of School

