



## Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

### Review of the Information Studies held on 7 February 2017

#### Report Summary

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The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the subject area of Information Studies (formerly known as the Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII)). *Periodic Subject Review* (PSR) 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\\_549192\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_549192_en.pdf)

Further information about the PSR process can be found at:

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

*Italicised words* are explained in a glossary below.

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#### Conclusions

Information Studies, a small well-established unit, offers a wide range of popular undergraduate and *postgraduate taught* programmes, with strong industrial and professional links to enhance employability. The Review Panel noted that provision had undergone significant expansion with new postgraduate taught programmes developed strategically by identifying gaps in the market. Strategic objectives at School and University level also included a consolidation of the Masters programmes with defined and accredited options, and at undergraduate level, now offered as single honours, a focus on employability, through the development of *Intended Learning Outcomes*. The Review Panel concluded that despite significant challenges of increasing student numbers and staffing shortfalls, the Subject had continued to build on its strengths, in a re-development and expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, had aligned research with teaching, and had included innovative *pedagogical tools* to enhance provision. The Review Panel were particularly impressed by the quality of support provided by dedicated staff members, whose efforts were being used most effectively and clearly appreciated by students who valued the community atmosphere.

## **Commendations, Key Strengths and Good Practice<sup>1</sup>**

Commendations are presented separately from examples of good practice, with the former being used to identify innovative and exemplary activities for wider dissemination.

### **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Curriculum Design and Development**

- The *Peer Observation* of Teaching Scheme to facilitate coordinated peer reporting on teaching practice and encourages *continued professional development* [4.1.1].

### **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Engaging and Supporting Staff**

- The Subject's use of Senior Honours-level students as *laboratory demonstrators*, which was clearly valued by participating students, who reported that the experience had increased their confidence and communication skills, consolidated and enriched their learning experience, and enabled them to interact with students from other levels [4.4.9].
- Engagement with the *Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme*, which encouraged applications from all staff including *Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)/student laboratory demonstrators* [4.4.10].

The Review Panel identified the following key strengths and areas of good practice.

### **Enhancing the Student Experience: Supporting Students in their learning**

- The availability of teaching and administrative staff members to support students in their learning, despite the challenges resulting from increasing student numbers [3.3.1].
- The Subject's wide range of *work-based learning* opportunities offered to students and the focus on *graduate attributes* embedded throughout the curriculum [3.3.3].

### **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching**

- The use of technology-led teaching through *Moodle* in a *blended model*, which builds on student knowledge to facilitate productive learning and support student engagement [4.1.8].

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

## Areas to be improved or enhanced

The Review Panel made a number of recommendations where it identified opportunities for further enhancement. The Head of Subject commented that the review had been timely given the Subject's recent transition and that the recommendations would enable the Subject's strategic objectives.

### Enhancing the Student Experience: Supporting Students in their Learning

- A review of course handbooks to ensure that students are aware of support and resources available, and have a clearer understanding of relevant policies and regulations, in particular the *Code of Assessment*, moderation of work by external examiners and assessment undertaken on *Study Abroad* [3.3.5].

### Enhancing the Student Experience: Student Engagement

- A review of the operation of *Staff Student Liaison Committee* meetings, to ensure actions are clearly identified and progressed, and outcomes reported to students on-line, through Moodle/Facebook and the *Student Voice* [3.4.1].

### Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Assessment and Feedback

- A review of current feedback procedures focusing particularly on the quality and consistency and timing of feedback, with a view to ensuring that students have appropriate feedback to help guide and inform their next assessment [4.2.3].
- Production of an *assessment and feedback calendar*, which should document assessment and feedback activities for all programmes across a full session (2017-18) [4.2.4].
- Adoption of a more strategic approach to feedback on assessment, with a view to increasing the amount of *formative assessment* compared to *summative assessment*, particularly for *postgraduate taught students* [4.2.5].
- *Plagiarism/Similarity checking* software (i.e. URKUND), as a learning and development tool to help students develop citation and referencing skills, should be utilised on a more consistent and routine basis, in accordance with Senate Office regulations (available on website <http://senate.gla.ac.uk/calendar/current/02-feesandgeneral.pdf> ) [4.2.10].
- Utilisation of *Board of Examiners' Meetings* minute template (available at [http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_196809\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_196809_en.pdf)) in accordance with University policy, and ensure that roles and responsibilities regarding the uploading of examination results are clearly articulated to relevant staff members [4.2.11].

### Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Learning and Teaching

- The Subject continues to follow guidance available on the Senate Office website to ensure continuous monitoring and enhancement of provision, and identification of good practice through *annual monitoring*, in accordance with Senate Office guidance:

(<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/annualmonitoring/#tabs-2>) [4.1.4].

- Expansion and promotion of *Study Abroad* opportunities to meet the University's strategic objective of 20% of students having an international experience by 2020, and to ensure the accuracy of information available to students [4.1.9].

#### **Enhancement in Learning and Teaching: Engaging and supporting staff**

- A review of staff workload management and adoption of the College *workload model* to help plan teaching staff work effectively and to bring about greater transparency for all staff (particularly early career) regarding roles and responsibilities [4.3.3].
- Engagement with early career staff to ensure the provision of appropriate guidance and support in relation to the *Early Career Development Programme* [4.4.6].
- To ensure that *GTA*s receive appropriate support and development, including local training through the School of Humanities, in line with University requirements [4.4.8].

#### **Context and Strategy: Strategic Approach to Enhancing Learning and Teaching**

- The Subject, in liaison with the Head of School, continue with plans to develop its five-year learning and teaching strategy, which addresses various objectives (School, College, University) to expand and enhance provision of a quality student learning experience [2.4.4].

## *Glossary*

### **Annual Monitoring (of courses)**

Annual Monitoring is a process undertaken at the end of each session by Course or Programme Leaders designed to encourage reflection on the operation of course and programmes – what went right, what could be improved, what students did and didn't like etc. – with a view to enhancing the student experience next year. The work done by the course or programme leaders is followed by a full reporting process through Schools and Colleges to Senate, with responses being made, as appropriate, at each level. The reporting procedure is designed to ensure that issues arising from monitoring are properly considered and responded to, and that enhancements and the sharing of good practice are promoted. Annual monitoring reports are reviewed by Periodic Subject Review Panels as part of the documentation provided by the Subject(s)/School.

### **Assessment Feedback Calendar**

Assessment feedback calendars are an administrative improvement to course documentation to communicate specific details of what kinds of assessment will be used e.g. formative, summative, by staff or peers, etc. and when feedback on assessment will be given, and is provided to students at the start of term.

### **Blended Learning**

Use of face-to-face teaching and on-line learning.

### **Board of Examiners**

Boards of Examiners are appointed by the University to ratify the results of the assessment procedure and comprise of Examiners, and the appropriate Assessment Officer(s) under the convenership of the Head of School or Research Institute (or his or her nominee). Examiners for the scheme include Internal Examiners and External Examiners. Internal Examiners can be members of academic staff who teach the course, other members of academic staff appointed by the Head of School and other individuals whose services are to be employed in the assessment process (e.g. Honorary Lecturers, Research Fellows Category A, Graduate Teaching Assistants, staff from Associated Institutions, etc.). External Examiners are appointed by Court on the recommendation of the Head of School or Research Institute and in accordance with the criteria and procedures agreed by the Senate.

### **Code of Assessment**

The University's Code of Assessment (implemented 2002-03) is designed to provide a fair and rational means of assessing students' performance. It provides instructions to staff on how assessment should be designed and carried out. It sets out verbal descriptions of each of the eight grades from A to H. Students' work is judged against these descriptions in terms of how well they have met the stated intended learning outcomes of the course or other assessed component and the corresponding grade is awarded. A guide to the Code of Assessment for students is available from the Senate Office website.

## **Continuing Professional Development or CPD**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can be defined as learning activity that is: self-financing; developmental; and vocationally relevant. A wide range of activities are included, from conferences, seminars, very short courses (even lunchtime meetings) to credit-rated and award bearing programmes such as MBAs, MScs and other more traditional postgraduate taught (PGT) courses spread over a number of months/years for part-time students. They are normally undertaken by professionals who are already in work but are open to other interested people.

## **Early Career Development Programme (ECDP)**

The Early Career Development Programme is a development framework to support career progression for staff, which focuses on core developmental activities aligned to relevant promotion criteria. The framework includes Learning Themes developed through analysis of the relevant promotion criteria and in consultation with a range of stakeholders and a range of development activities. The Framework structure also supports all ECDP participants seeking out learning opportunities that may be relevant to their own discipline and can support the completion of a particular element within the ECDP Development Framework.

## **Formative Assessment**

Formative assessment refers to assessed work where feedback is given to help the student improve their learning and their performance. The work may or may not contribute to the student's final grade for the course.

## **Graduate Attributes**

[Graduate attributes](#) are the skills, knowledge and qualities or attitudes developed by individuals through their programme of study that they will use to contribute effectively in work or other aspects of society in the future.

## **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.

## **Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs**

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs describe what all students should be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes when they successfully complete the course or programme that the ILOs relate to.

## **Laboratory Demonstrators**

To demonstrate use of practical equipment (including where relevant, software packages), experiments, exercises, techniques and/or processes that may form an element of an undergraduate course of study in line with specific learning objectives, set by others. To oversee students carrying out such experiments, exercises etc and offer assistance as appropriate.

## **Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service (LEADS)**

LEADS 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'.

## **Moodle**

Moodle is the University's supported Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

## **Pedagogical Tools**

A pedagogical tool is anything that a person uses to learn or teach. Traditionally, pedagogical tools include items such as worksheets, textbooks, handouts and hands-on models. As people have learned more about the way individuals learn, however, educators and students have branched out to other types of pedagogical tools. Technology has played a major role in this advancement, with students and teachers now using tools such as websites or mobile device applications.

## **Peer Observation**

Colleagues observe fellow peers in order to identify different types of activity and provide feedback and support as necessary.

## **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.

## **Plagiarism (Similarity Checking)**

Plagiarism is defined as the submission or presentation of work, in any form, which is not one's own, without acknowledgement of the sources. Special cases of plagiarism can also arise from one student copying another student's work or from inappropriate collaboration.

## **Postgraduate Taught or PGT**

Postgraduate Taught refers to taught programmes at postgraduate level, usually Masters.

## **Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme (RET)**

Recognising Excellence in Teaching is the University of Glasgow's Continuing Professional Development framework, which aims to provide development opportunities as well as professional recognition of expertise in teaching and supporting learning. There are four categories of recognition: Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow and Principal Fellow and staff can apply via a structured programme of support consisting of workshops, peer groups and teaching observations that assist participants to write their application.

## **Staff:Student Ratios (SSRs)**

The Staff:Student Ratio describes the number of students to each member of staff, either in the Subject/School, College or University.

## **Student Voice**

Student Voice is an online forum for students and their student representatives to communicate and discuss their learning experience. It exists to promote discussion, engagement between students, their representatives and academic units, and to allow academic units to demonstrate action in response to student feedback. All UofG students automatically have access to Student Voice via the MyGlasgow Student Portal.

## **Study abroad**

Study abroad is a term that is often used to refer to several programmes that offer opportunities for students to study in a European University, or one further afield, for a term, semester or year as part of their undergraduate degree programme. (The University's "Study Abroad Programme" is specifically designed for visiting students who elect to come to the University of Glasgow.)

## **Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment refers to assessed work that contributes to the final grade for the course/programme. Summative assessments may include an element of formative assessment.

## **Workload Model (Staff)**

A workload model is a means of describing the workload of all members of staff and should be used by Schools to ensure that staff workloads are manageable and allocated fairly with different types of work appropriately distributed.