

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee – 23 March 2018

Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Periodic  
Subject Review: Review of School of Psychology held on 1  
February 2017

Jane McAllister, Clerk to the Review Panel

The Review Panel concluded that, across the School of Psychology, there is a clear culture of pedagogical development with commitment to enhancing provision. The School articulates a keen interest in, and positive strategies for, enhancing the student experience. There is a strong sense of community between the staff and students as well as involvement in the wider University; as demonstrated by the alignment of initiatives to University strategy and the valuable contribution made by individual members of staff to University projects. The Review Panel makes a small number of recommendations where it sees opportunities for the School to further enhance its provision in Learning and Teaching but these are set against the Panel's overall view of the School of Psychology as a highly successful academic unit.

*Curriculum Review*

**Recommendation 1**

The Review Panel **recommends** that, as part of the next stage of its ongoing curriculum review, the School gives attention to student workload, support, the competitive aspects at Level 2, and the potentially different experiences of students on the various degree pathways. There should be detailed discussion with the student body at the outset to explore perceptions and ensure that effective solutions are identified. The relevant Deans (Learning and Teaching) should also be consulted. [Paragraph 3.1.7 - 3.1.10]

**For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School  
For information: Deans (Learning and Teaching) for Arts, Science &  
Engineering and Social Sciences**

**Response:**

Our teaching management and teaching development groups have both had this as a continued focus of their meetings since the PSR in February 2017 in relation to the ongoing curriculum review. Within these discussions and with input from students we agreed that it was important to focus on the two pre honours years together and to aim to improve the coherency and community building activities between these years to address this issue rather than to just focus on Level 2 alone. Our teaching management group which meets approximately monthly and includes two undergraduate student representatives and two graduate teaching assistants have discussed potential options to address issues of competition and workload extensively across this time. We have also formally engaged in discussion with students through the pre honours SSLC meetings across the year since the review and more informally through small group student representative meetings just with

year heads. We have also utilised moodle and slido to poll student opinion of a range of possible options in moving forward. Outcomes have included changes to both delivery of content and assessment structures. We have focused on the integration of more group work, including the introduction of a group project, to help support students in the transition into university at level 1 and in an attempt to build greater feelings of community rather than competition at level 2. We have also amended the structure of the weekly assessments associated with the laboratory practicals based on input from the students and this change has been very positively received when put in practice in this academic year. We are now progressing to exploring with level 2 students potential ways to reframe the language of the progression requirements to move away from the focus on a B2 grade outcome, these discussions are currently at the level of informal meetings between the pre honours course leads and student representatives.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School maximises the opportunities presented by the curriculum review for staff to undertake research and scholarship based on the developments arising from the curriculum review. For example, through designing a multi-dimensional evaluation of current provision to enable improvements to be measured. This would be subject to appropriate ethical approvals. [Paragraph 4.1.8 & 4.4.3]

**For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School**

#### **Response:**

This year the school introduced a number of day long writing workshops around pedagogical research and scholarship in an effort to build collaborations across staff in the school. These sessions focused on strategic developments in teaching generally and within the curriculum review specifically within the school and aimed to encourage reflection activities and academic outputs in relation to these developments. In addition several group planning meetings were held in preparation for the 2018 LTDF call for bids, again to facilitate staff collaborations and to strategically focus on priority areas emerging from the curriculum review. This has led to the development of two collaborative applications for large bids and four group applications for small bids. The school is also hosting a one day workshop open to internal and external partners on the changes we have embedded across our research methods provision and the reflections we have made on this practice which will be held on March 9th. In addition key members of the school teaching team Dr Jason Bohan and Dr Larissa Szymanek are leading on a cross university initiative evidencing the experiences of Graduate Teaching Assistants who play an integral role within our ongoing developments.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School should extend its curriculum review to postgraduate taught provision, and that this review should include consideration of elective choices (in relation to information and balance of workload) and other support for students at key transition points. The Panel does not expect this recommendation to be addressed immediately but to follow the final stage of the undergraduate curriculum review, unless it can be reasonably accommodated in staff workload sooner. In the meantime, and in time for postgraduate students arriving in September 2017, the Panel encourages the School to pay particular attention to induction information and transition support within the current parameters of the programme structures and course offerings. This might be informed by student input on the issues faced, and on the design of induction materials and transition support. [Paragraph 3.1.15]

**For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School**

### **Recommendation 4**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School prioritise consideration of feedback on assessment, for both coursework and examinations, in forthcoming curriculum review and Teaching Development Group meetings; contributing to current efforts to improve assessment and feedback across the College and the University. [Paragraph 4.2.2-4.2.4]

**For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School**

### ***Response to Recommendation 3 & 4:***

Over the summer a full day workshop with input from LEADs was held which focused on a review of teaching with a particular focus on assessment and feedback and workload across our L3 honours provision and the three MSc conversion programmes in which we are involved. Colleagues from the School of Education were invited to participate in this event as we collaborate with them on two of our three masters conversion programmes and we were keen to encourage coherency and collaboration across enhancements within these provisions. The outcome of this event and several follow up subsequent meetings has been a complete revision of assessment and feedback across both the L3 and masters conversion provision to move away from dependency on high stake endpoint final exams with generic feedback to a broad range of progressive assessments that allow students to build a portfolio of graduate skills, receive continuous feedback and meet all the accreditation requirements of the professional body.

Students have been involved in the discussions at each stage as they evolved and have been incredibly positive about the changes which they see as very welcome developments particularly the move away for high stake exams. We also moved this year to including Graduate Teaching Assistants in the development of lab materials for pre honours classes,

as they are often dealing with a lot of the face to face contact with students. This was a very successful process as they provided really useful insight into developing student friendly materials from a completely different perspective. Building on other developments within the school in relation to the introduction of R we have expanded this to use R into our own administrative processes to help generate individualised feedback for the exams this year. The lack of individualised feedback on exams was an area of repeated students dissatisfaction within evasys and NSS across the past number of years.

Induction sessions and a number of other social sessions across the academic year have also been introduced to better support the masters conversion students. Our psychology student society continues to play an essential role in helping to build our sense of community across both UG and PG and we are working closely with them in contributing financially and with speakers to their own seminar series. We jointly ran a full week of activities with the Psychology Society around the topic of student mental health in the first semester of this academic year which was open to all UG and PG psychology students again with the aim of both supporting our students with these issues specifically but also in helping encourage participation across all levels within our learning community.

### *Student partnership*

#### **Recommendation 5**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School engage the students in a detailed dialogue regarding feedback on assessment to explore the reasons behind dissatisfaction and to attempt to identify a mutually satisfactory solution. [Paragraph 4.2.5]

**For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School**

#### **Recommendation 6**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School consider how they might involve students in development work from the very early stages, to assist with pinpointing issues and problem solving. [Paragraph 3.4.3]

**For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School**

### **Joint response to Recommendations 5 and 6**

We have continued to build on our strong relationships with our vibrant Psych Society and the Psychology Student Representatives to inform all proposed developments. We have utilised the Staff Student Liaison Committees to both gain insight into perceived challenges and to receive feedback on which of a number of proposed solutions might best work to everyone's mutual satisfaction. We currently have two Senior Lecturers Dr Jason Bohan and Dr Kevin Wilson Smith working directly with students across the school on a feedback and assessment campaign with the aim of increasing dialogue and awareness about assessment and feedback within the school. Emerging outcomes from these discussions at this point include a number of student and staff collaborative workshops on issues including: exam assessment and feedback and utilising feedback on your dissertation for publication and dissemination to other audiences. Other initiatives include a poster campaign featuring current students which have links to video clips embedded in the

posters. Within this video clips which students give their advice on how best to utilise the different kinds of feedback received within the school. Over the summer period in 2017 we also piloted new L1 /L2 laboratory teaching materials with students to receive their input prior to delivery within this academic year. The rich and detailed input they provided was hugely helpful in enhancing our provision and a number of the elements embedded are receiving very positive feedback from our current students.

#### *Advisers of Studies*

##### **Recommendation 7**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Chief Advisers of Studies for the College of Science and Engineering and the College of Arts meet with the Senior Adviser from Psychology to consider how the particular advising needs of the MA students in Psychology might be met. [Paragraph 3.3.6]

**For the attention of: The Senior Adviser (School of Psychology)**  
**For information: The Chief Adviser of Studies (Science and Engineering)**  
**The Chief Adviser (Arts)**

##### **Response:**

This meeting is scheduled for March 14<sup>th</sup> 2018.

#### *College Review of Administration*

##### **Recommendation 8**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Psychology's operational relationships with the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology (based jointly in the College of Science and Engineering and the College of MVLS) be explicitly considered by the administrative review in the College of Science and Engineering.. [Paragraph 4.4.12]

**For the attention of: The Vice Principal and Head of College of Science and Engineering**  
**For Information: The Vice Principal and Head of College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences**

##### **Response:**

I agree that the School's specific situation will be considered during the review. I have copied in the two co-chairs of the review.

## *Guidance on Promotion Criteria*

### **Recommendation 9**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University's Recognising Excellence in Teaching Working Group provides additional practical guidance on progressing with promotion criteria including advice on gathering evidence of impact, finding opportunities to present work, and ethics in scholarship. [Paragraph 4.4.3]

**For the attention of: The Convener of the RET WG  
For information: Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic  
Development Service**

### **Response:**

The University's Recognising Excellence in Teaching Working Group discussed this at their meeting in December 2017. Members of the working group acknowledged that on the R&T track there are benchmarking statements and established ways of assessing outputs for the REF but that there aren't the same established reference points and processes for the LTS track. Working group members agreed that it would be helpful to provide guidance for evaluating and evidencing the range of outputs on the LTS track. The Director of LEADS, Dr Matthew Williamson has already begun circulating opportunities for conferences where scholarship might be presented but it was agreed that more could be done. A sub-group of the working group was formed to progress these two issues further and will report back in April 2018. Meanwhile, The Assistant Vice Principal (Learning & Teaching) will take forward a proposal to create a new University Ethics Committee for Scholarship applications and will also report to the Working Group in April 2018.

## *Graduate Teaching Assistants*

### **Recommendation 10**

The Review Panel **recommends** that GTAs are given sufficient notice of teaching materials for laboratories to allow them to organise and schedule their preparation. [Paragraph 4.4.6]

**For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School**

### **Response:**

All materials were released in the week prior to lab this year, considerable curriculum developments are still ongoing hence the relatively short time frame. Moving forward we would envisage all materials being available prior to the start of each semester. We also planned the labs in L1 and L2 so that each week started with the labs led by the course leads who then provided everyone teaching on the labs with a summary of how the lab had run and any potential questions to be aware of. In addition we now have a vibrant slack forum supporting those who are delivering our L1 and L2 labs where experiences, good practice and questions can be shared and this appears to have been working well. We have also increased the academic staffing across the labs so that GTAs are often supported by two members of academic staff within the lab. And as discussed earlier this year we took the decision to include GTAs in the development of the lab materials to both provide us with

another perspective on their contents but also to increase their sense of engagement and ownership of the materials.

#### **Recommendation 11**

The Review Panel noted that the issue of GTA payments was frequently raised in PSRs and **recommends** that this point is flagged to Academic Standards Committee for noting. This point should also be referred, for information, to Dr Angela Jaap, who is leading a review of the GTA role and support for that role, and to the Assessment & Feedback Working Group, which is looking at the contribution of GTAs to assessment and feedback. [Paragraph 4.4.7]

**For information: The Convener and Clerk of Academic Standards Committee  
Dr Angela Jaap<sup>1</sup>, Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service  
The Convener and Clerk to the Assessment and Feedback Working Group**

#### ***Response from the Convenor of A&FWG and Dr Nathalie Sheridan (LEADS):***

This recommendation is for information for the Convenor of A&FWG (conveniently also the Convenor of the Psychology PSR). GTA payments and the support for GTAs generally is something that A&FWG is working on in response to concerns raised at the working group, and given similar concerns at Academic Standards Committee and EdPSC. The project to review support for GTAs was delayed in starting because the project lead, Dr Angela Jaap was unwell for several months before leaving the University. Dr Nathalie Sheridan is now leading the project and has been working with a range of stakeholders across the University to look at this issue. The remit of that project includes making recommendations on GTA pay and GTA training to both support GTAs generally, and to further our efforts in improving feedback on assessments. We have a timeline to report back within the current academic session (2017-18).

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that Dr Jaap has left the University and that her role has been taken over by Dr Nathalie Sheradin.