

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 28 January 2022

Overview of College Annual Monitoring Summary 2020-21: College of Social Sciences

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1. Introduction

The report contains information from the College of Social Sciences Postgraduate Annual Monitoring Summary. It should be noted that the School Postgraduate Annual Monitoring Summary for the Adam Smith Business School was not completed in time for inclusion in the CAMS and will be reported separately to the March meeting of ASC. As agreed previously, the College Annual Monitoring Summary for MVLS will be reported to the March meeting of ASC.

The Colleges of Arts and Science & Engineering merged their Undergraduate and Postgraduate Summaries into a single reporting point which was submitted to ASC in November 2021.

The College of Social Sciences PGT annual monitoring summary has been reviewed by the Senate Office to identify any common themes, including what worked well and issues that require further consideration. The themes identified are presented below. Following its consideration of the College Annual Monitoring Summary, ASC is asked to confirm that the themes identified below are an accurate reflection of the issues raised by the College. The Senate Office will then seek updates and responses from the relevant sources to these University-wide matters.

Areas that worked well have also been identified in the College Summary. These have been broken down into themes and will be sent to Academic & Digital Development (ADD) for wider dissemination.

2. What worked well

There were a number of common themes reported in the What Worked Well section of the College Summary. These themes, however, also feature in the themes for attention. These areas included the following:

- Flexibility and adaptability of staff
- Online engagement and assessment
- Student performance
- Student and External Examiner feedback

2.1 Flexibility and adaptability of staff

“Despite continued growth in key programmes in the School, staff continued to deliver high-quality provision across programmes as evidenced by continued overall positive student feedback and supportive external examiner comments.” (School of Law)

“LLM: Staff were congratulated by students and by external examiners for the work performed over the year. Academic co-operation in collectively pooling expertise to adapt all of the School’s LLM courses to online teaching contributed to the successful running of the programme, despite the restrictions imposed by University guidance. Despite the flattening

of the grade profile this year, the grades awarded were endorsed by External Examiners and praise was given at the Exam Board for the way in which the examining process had been conducted.” (School of Law)

“Staff collegiality in response to the pandemic (across academic and administrative levels) proved to be high and staff responded quickly and beyond expectations to support each other and students.” (School of Law)

“In summary, the knowledge and approachability of staff is welcomed, as is good constructive alignment in terms of formative assessments preparing students for the summatives. Students also value interactions with peers.” (Academic & Digital Development)

2.2 Online Engagement and Assessment:

“Online provision: The transfer of course materials and teaching online has been successful. In some cases, supported by a Learning Technologist, others from having a blended approach already in place.” (School of Education)

“Assessment: formative assessment (used to give students next steps) and summative approaches were well received by students.” (School of Education)

“Despite the loss of extensive face-to-face contact, the technology facilitated high levels of group engagement and discussion.” (School of Interdisciplinary Studies)

“While online teaching continued to pose challenges for both staff and students, online provision appeared to become more embedded across most Subjects in AY2020-21, and most students appeared to adapt well to the shift.” (School of Law)

2.3 Student Performance

“Student Attainment – Students attaining high standards in their assessments in many courses and dissertation projects.” (School of Education)

“Despite the loss of extensive face-to-face contact, the technology facilitated high levels of group engagement and discussion.” (School of Interdisciplinary Studies)

2.4 Student and External Examiner Feedback

“Positive Student Feedback – Feedback from students in terms of overall satisfaction indicates high levels of satisfaction in many courses.” (School of Education)

“General course satisfaction has been very high and specific areas have been commended – for example, zoom technology has generally worked well.” (School of Interdisciplinary Studies)

“Diploma in Legal Practice: Excellent levels of satisfaction were reported by students across all courses on the programme. Praise was given for both the staff, the structure and format of the courses and the materials provided. Accessibility of students to the Course Director and Deputy Director was provided readily through Zoom appointments.” (School of Law)

“LLM: Staff were congratulated by students and by external examiners for the work performed over the year. Academic co-operation in collectively pooling expertise to adapt all of the School’s LLM courses to online teaching contributed to the successful running of the programme, despite the restrictions imposed by University guidance. Despite the flattening of the grade profile this year, the grades awarded were endorsed by External Examiners and praise was given at the Exam Board for the way in which the examining process had been conducted.” (School of Law)

“External Examiners also expressed satisfaction with the performance of different programs (evidenced through EE reports and Exam Boards of Study minutes).” (School of Law)

“The external examiner, in their report, commented on the well-structured programme with appropriate ILOs, which were constructively aligned with the assessments. It was also noted that the teaching, learning and assessment methods were varied, and staff lead by example. Also noted: good alignment between the feedback on a piece of work and the marking scheme, robust moderation, and marking taking account of the full 22-point scale.” (Academic & Digital Development)

“In SSLC, across level 3 courses, the representatives reported that the general atmosphere was very good and tutors were very knowledgeable and approachable. Representatives reported that all masters students were happy with their experience and had found it useful to check in with peers on Phase 4 to check their parity in terms of progress.” (Academic & Digital Development)

3. Themes for University attention

The issues identified within the main Social Sciences summary had common issues identified in other College summaries. The general issues identified related to the following themes:

- *Staff Workload and Welfare
- *Suitability and quality of teaching spaces/timetabling
- *University systems
- *University Communication
- Online exams
- *IT Equipment
- Admissions – increased student numbers
- Student Conduct
- Student Welfare
- Quality Procedures

*Issues raised in previous summaries

3.1 Staff Workload and Welfare

“Workload Allocation – needs increased to accommodate extra workload resulting in transition to online provision (TESOL).” (School of Education)

“Staffing – more subject specific support required (TESOL).” (School of Education)

“The issue of staff workload has been raised in a number of courses, and we are aware of this continuing to be an issue at the start of the 2021/22 session. Our students are academic staff, a number of which have significant teaching commitments. While some schools seem supportive of their staff participating in PGCAP, there is an ongoing issue of some managers not recognising the need for participants to study beyond the timetabled contact hours.” (Academic & Digital Development)

“Staff Wellbeing – concern about increased workload for staff and issues arising from working from home (ES).” (School of Education)

3.2 Suitability of Teaching spaces and timetabling

“Assistance to the PG.Dip team to secure appropriate accommodation. This issue has been reported many times and urgent action is required.” (School of Law)

“Administrative Issues – at the start of the academic session the registration process, room bookings and online timetabling systems need to be improved.” (School of Education)

3.3 University Systems

3.3.1 IT Support

“ICT Support Systems – adequate ICT support for staff required e.g. more learning technologists (MScEd) (ES) (MScME).” (School of Education)

“Consistent Guidance - having many technological options makes staff spend a lot of time trying different things and gives students a more disparate experience (IE).” (School of Education)

3.3.2 EvaSys

“We do not have adequate administrative support to manage EvaSys, i.e. We have only one staff member who is trained in using EvaSys, which creates a bottleneck in the system. This has created problems over the last two academic sessions in that courses ending in semester 2 were not surveyed, as that member of staff had to prioritise other work (in 2019/20) and has been off on long-term sick leave (in 2021/22).” (Academic & Digital Development)

3.3.3 Library

“Library Resources – investment needed for online materials to be provided for students and managing copyright regulations (CLL) (TESOL).” (School of Education)

3.4 University Communication

“Communication – communication from the centre needs to be timelier and more consistent (ES).” (School of Education)

3.5 Online Exams

“Analysis of the grade impact of the move to online exams would be beneficial. While genuine student achievements over this difficult period are to be welcomed, the increase in cases being referred for suspected plagiarism or collusion is a cause for concern. The general trend of a flattening of grades seen in conjunction with online 24 hour, open book assessments requires further evaluation.” (School of Law)

3.6 IT Equipment

“Some of the Academic & Digital Development Team are using their own personal home computers to work in the absence of an up to date, reasonably spec'd laptop provided by the institution (and office desktop computers are also several years old). Appropriately high-spec laptops are necessary given the flexible working required during a pandemic and to deliver a high-quality experience, especially for live online classes.” (Academic & Digital Development)

3.7 Admissions – increased student numbers

“The above concerns about rapidly increasing student numbers expressed to College must also be raised at University level.” (School of Social and Political Sciences)

3.8 Student Conduct

“Concerns were raised about plagiarism procedures. It was noted that several months often pass between when cases are reported to Senate and the interview. Some Subjects stated that they are addressing this at PGT level by increasing the amount of information and

research/writing training that students are given, but concerns remain about the formal process.” (School of Social & Political Sciences)

3.9 Student Welfare

“Increased reporting of racism experienced by Chinese students within the context of the pandemic.” (School of Social & Political Sciences)

3.10 Quality Procedures

“The University requires a better approach for providing the information needed to generate Quality Monitoring information and Reports. The forms available are often located in different systems, the forms themselves are not readily compatible with editing and the procedures are contained in numerous separate documents, which can lead to confusion and considerable unnecessary time being spent on establishing what the requirements are. The information on the University website on quality monitoring is hard to navigate and would benefit from being amalgamated into a more streamlined set of materials. Additional consideration should be given to the timetabling of procedures for reporting which need to align with when information is available and with when disseminating the outcome of review would be most useful to Schools.” (School of Law)

4. Temporary Course changes

This element of the CAMS was incomplete, therefore the CQ&EO for Social Sciences will contact the relevant Schools on this issue and provide an update to the March meeting of ASC.