University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 1 October 2021

Periodic Subject Review: Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Review of Economic & Social History held on 6 March 2020

Mr Robbie Mulholland, Clerk to the Review Panel

The following recommendations have been made to support Economic & Social History in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning 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.**

Recommendation 1

Adviser of Study

The students and staff the Panel met with expressed uncertainty regarding the responsibilities attached to the role of Adviser of Study. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of the School of Social & Political Sciences considers what additional steps could be taken to establish greater clarity around the responsibilities of the role for both staff and students. **[Paragraph 3.3.3]**

[For the attention of: Head of the School of Social & Political Sciences]

Joint response:

During AY 20/21 a Professional Services "Advising" review was undertaken, under the College Learning & Teaching Framework, as a means of underpinning the Adviser of Studies role. The Review highlighted inconsistencies in the student experience of across the College and data gaps which prevented detailed analysis of the scale or trends in student demand. In response, the College, as part of broader University initiative, established a new professional services team of 10 FTE including 6 FTE Student Support Officers (4 FTE new posts) during September 2021. Communication to staff and students regarding remit of team and how to access support will be disseminated during semester 1. Advisers of Studies will receive regular updates, initially via Chief Advisers who are providing input to design of new service which is envisaged as an initial point of contact for students of all levels across the College.

Recommendation 2

Communications

The Review Panel **recommends** that Economic & Social History undertakes a review of communications within the Subject Area with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of information sharing between:

1. Individual members of staff in the Subject Area; and
2. Members of staff in the Subject Area and students.

As part of this review, the Subject Area should consult with student stakeholder groups to gain a better understanding of their experience of current communications and to identify specific opportunities for improvement. **[Paragraph 3.3.4]**

[For the attention of: Head of Subject]

Response:

Communications amongst staff in ESH were updated with the use of Microsoft Teams organised in relevant channels. There has also been an increased use of Teams for information sharing at School Level amongst staff, including use of Teams for documents relating to School Meetings, Staff Induction and Information, and Support for Line Managers.

For student-facing communications, Moodle remained the main forum for announcements and student discussion forums, as student feedback suggested that multiple platforms were not helpful. Given the pandemic situation in 2020-21, students were more immediately concerned in SSLC meetings with issues around online engagement, particularly in break-out rooms in class, and the need for more informal spaces for interaction outside class. Staff ran drop-in sessions for students to attend informally and ask questions as well as scheduling additional OnlineLive meetings within courses for students to interact with peers and ask questions. Students were also encouraged and supported to revive the Economic & Social History Student Society.

Further review of communications and consultation with students will be undertaken at the Staff-Student Liaison Committee in November 2021 as students shift back to on campus learning.

Recommendation 3

Examination Feedback

The Review Panel **recommends** that Economic and Social History reviews its practice in relation to providing feedback on examinations, in line with University policy, and encourages staff to provide generic and, where appropriate, individual feedback on exam performance. **[Paragraph 4.2.3]**

[For the attention of: Head of Subject]

Response:

At present, individual exam grades and feedback are available to students on request. The subject area anticipates that exam grades will be available to all students with the roll-out of the Grade Capture Aggregation Tool this coming academic year. As teaching begins for AY 2021-22, all staff in the subject will be asked to review the University's Policy on Feedback for Summative Examinations, and the Head of Subject will ask the L&T lead, and convenors of the pre-Honours programmes, to create procedures which build on existing good practice in marking and are in line with guidance from LEADS to ensure consistency in generic feedback. For example, we use clear and consistent rubrics for markers in the team-taught pre-Honours courses, which are also available to the external examiner. This practice can be extended across the programme and could form the basis of generic feedback to students with reflections on how the cohort of candidates achieved this.

Recommendation 4

College/School Workload Model

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Social & Political Sciences working with the College of Social Sciences, reviews the application of the College/School Workload Model with a view to delivering a meaningful and transparent mechanism for allocating and distributing academic staff workload in the Subject Area, that is understood by staff. [**Paragraph 4.3.1]**

[For the attention of: Head of School of Social & Political Sciences]
[For information: Head of Subject; Head of the College of Social Sciences; Senior Vice-Principal]

Response: Head of School/Subject

Workload planning has been improved through the use of a transparent model for allocating workload which is used across the School in one-to-one discussions with all academic staff involved in teaching with their head of subject. The School has also established a Review Group with representatives from each subject to further improve this process which will report in spring 2022.

Response: Head of College

As the Head of School's response clarifies, workload planning within the School has been improved with greater transparency in allocating workload across all subject areas within the School. Issues around workload modelling in SSPS and other Schools were raised early in my tenure as Head of College, and the Head of School has worked to ensure greater equality and transparency in workload allocation. To ensure consistency in workload allocations across the College, the five Heads of School meet regularly to compare allocations and remove or reduce inconsistencies. This activity is tracked through the CMG action log and reported at monthly CMG meetings.

Staffing

Recommendation 5

Administrative Support

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Social & Political Sciences/College of Social Sciences as appropriate, reviews the effectiveness of the current administrative support arrangements in the Subject Area in light of the recent high turn-over of administrative staff in the Subject Area and to ensure that the level and quality of support continues to be fit for purpose. **[Paragraph 4.3.2]**

[For the attention of: Head of the School of Social & Political Sciences; Head of the College of Social Sciences]
[For information: Head of Subject]

Response: Head of School/Subject

Administrative support arrangements have been strengthened by more effective team working across the MPA staff during Covid19 and improved PA support for Head of Subject. A new Head of Professional Service joined the School in May and will review the effectiveness and wellbeing of admin support across the School with a view to enhancing support.

Response: Head of College

A new HOPS was recently recruited to the School who will work with the College Director of Professional Services to review the effectiveness and wellbeing of PS staff and enhance support across the School. As the Head of School points out, the past 18 months has seen a strengthening of team working across the MPA staff within the School. Nevertheless, the pressures brought by increased student numbers in AY2021/22 on top of the 16% increase in student numbers experienced across the College in AY2020/21 means that we continue to be vigilant about PS and academic staffing levels and ensuring the School has the necessary resources to function effectively.

Recommendation 6

Early Career Staff – Reduction in Teaching Load

The Review Panel **recommends** that Economic & Social History (ESH) ensures that ESH staff who undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCap) should have protected time and a corresponding reduction in their teaching load in recognition of the time commitment involved in undertaking the programme. **[Paragraph 4.4.2]**

[For the attention of: Head of Subject]
[For information: ECDP Programme Director; Director of Performance & Reward, Human Resources]

Response:

The workload of all Early Career Staff has been reviewed in line with workload planning under 4 above and appropriate reductions are in place.

Recommendation 7

Role of Tutor

The Review Panel **recommends** that Economic & Social History, in liaison with the School of Social and Political Sciences:

1. Clarifies, and more clearly defines, the responsibilities of the role of Tutor within the Subject Area;
2. Puts in place more systematic and structured support for Tutors, this to include developmental opportunities; and
3. Ensures that both Tutors and their line managers are made aware of the above expectations. **[Paragraph 4.4.3]**

[For the attention of Head of Subject]
[For information: Head of the School of Social & Political Sciences]

Response:

The School has moved line management of tutors to appropriate Heads of Subject (away from Head of Professional Service). Tutors are included in workload planning discussions. The School is undertaking a review of Tutor contracts and workloads, including consideration of systematic and structured support including performance review and development opportunities. At subject level, the head of subject has spoken with ESH tutors about their career development in the summer of 2021 and will continue to do so through the P&DR process and beyond.

Recommendation 8

Staff Induction

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Social & Political Sciences introduces a School-level induction day for all new Economic & Social History staff to facilitate their early introduction to the School's structure, policies and practices. **[Paragraph 4.4.2]**

[For the attention of: Head of the School of Social & Political Sciences]

Response:

The School has developed an enhanced staff induction process including teams handbook and slides for new staff and this will be supported by bi-annual events for new staff.

Recommendation 9

Strategic Planning

The Panel observed that several issues had been highlighted during the PSR that were considered to be under review/development or of concern, but regarding which, no specific recommendation had been made.

In order to promote further Subject engagement with such matters, the Panel **recommends** that Economic & Social History develops an overarching plan, which as well as setting out its vision and overall plan for the future of the Subject Area, shows how it intends to address areas of concern highlighted in the report but that were not the subject of a specific recommendation. This would include, but not be limited to, issues around student mental health; the management of fluctuations in PGT student recruitment; and the alignment of assessments with Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). This plan should be agreed with the Head of School to ensure alignment with other areas of the School and should contribute to the strategic planning process within the School. **[Paragraph 3.2.2, 3.1.4, 4.1.5]**

[For the attention of: Head of Subject].
[For information: Head of the School of Social & Political Sciences]

Response:

Strategic planning takes place at the level of the School and College with input to this process from ESH via the School Executive, Research and L&T committees. Subject members on these committees actively contribute to School, College and University planning through including via highlighted areas of concern and potential solutions as part of dialogue in the planning process. For example, the Subject has raised concerns about the need to enhance student mental health support during Covid19 and helped to provide staff with updated guidance on how to support students to access these services. Similarly, the Subject has flagged concerns around recruitment and are working with School and College leads to address issues with respect to language competency and increased staffing to cater for growing numbers, as well as addressing issues around capacity. This has been taken up in College and School plans with a range of new appointments to Global Economy roles recently confirmed, working across PIR and ESH. The School's staffing strategy has also been developed in consultation with colleagues in the Subject and this has involved G7 and G8 staff in ESH moving on to open-ended contracts. The School Portfolio Review process has also recently been improved to include more active consideration of alignment with ILOs and assessment procedures, supported by School and College strategies to streamline and improve L&T governance and oversight.

The Head of Subject and Head of School also meet regularly at the School Executive and in one-to-one meetings to set and review shared strategic objectives, ensuring alignment with the School Strategic Plan and Subject leadership, including with respect to staffing, programme innovation, enhancing the student experience and developing a leading role for ESH in the School plans to play a leading role in decolonising the curriculum.