University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee

Responses to the recommendations arising from the Periodic Subject Review of the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences held on 11 and 12 March 2021

	Section 3.1 Strategy for Development	Shared Enhancement Benefits	Attention in the School	For information
1	The panel noted the effective marketing and recruitment activities which included a targeted marketing campaign to support recruitment of women to the new Environmental Geoscience and Geology programmes. The panel **recommends** the School **continues** to build on the successful partnership with the College of Science and Engineering External Relations team in marketing the School to prospective students. Ref: Section 3.6	Continuing to develop this approach (which was identified by the School) will help GES promote their embedded approach to working collaboratively to demonstrate a commitment to equality	Head of School	External Relations
Response: The School intends to build on the successful partnership with the CoSE external relationship in marketing, with particular attention for UG MD20 and MD40, rest of the UK and international markets at UG and PGT levels. For PGT recruitment, scholarships directed to ethnic minorities and women have proven particularly successful, and GES would benefit by continuing to associate with such schemes				
2	Following a period of significant curriculum development, The Panel **recommends** the school **continues** to review the portfolio with a view to maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of resources to maintain the SSR. Striking the right balance between consolidation and growth will require ongoing reflection and consideration. If capacity emerges, further growth of the taught postgraduate offer might include a focus on urban regeneration and urban analytics (exploiting links with Urban Studies). The School should also take the opportunity to reflect on the experiential learning opportunities created during the pandemic	Provides the Executive with the opportunity to review resources, maximise the potential for inter-disciplinary working and cross College working. The continuation of this activity (identified by GES) helps GES to demonstrate their ongoing commitment to innovation.	Head of School	Head of College Dean of L&T

with a view to embedding good practice and while consolidating their portfolio ambitions. An example of which was the modification of active learning to accommodate online delivery in 2020 when students were given a variety of ways to interact to complete the activity with approaches which focused on individual learning, cooperative learning and collaborative learning. The students were given access to a variety of platforms such as Blackboard, Onenote, Padlet and Microsoft Teams and were supported with some the projects by Graduate Teaching Assistants to help keep track of learning objectives. This approach to learning helped the students develop time management, active listening, problem solving, communication and presentation skills.

Ref: Section 3.7

Response:

The school continues to review its portfolio of programmes and courses offered. The PGT programmes use a portfolio of complementary courses that are common to several programmes; other courses, some of which have a relatively low number of students, are required by accreditation rules. A conversation has started with colleagues teaching in the subject Urban Studies (School of Social and Political Science), the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (Dumfries Campus) and the School of Engineering to efficiently co-teach courses (e.g., Introduction to GIS and surveying with Engineering). A conversation has also started with the School of Chemistry for a new PGT programme in Environmental Chemistry.

Online resources are retained and used to efficiently deliver the programmes, while, at the same time, enhance the student experience through active learning, group working and problem solving. To this avail, the School will benefit greatly from open-ended LTS posts, which are part of its strategy, and would maintain and innovate these resources to bring GES to the forefront of research in geoscience pedagogy.

3	Outstanding programmes require outstanding scholarly communities and propinquity on campus is centrally implicated in community building, the panel noted comments regarding the physical space and estate used by GES and **recommends** that the School **continues** to work with University central estates services to help inform future estate needs. The School is encouraged to identify a pipeline of infrastructure priorities to ensure that resource requests are appropriately targeted. Ref: Section 3.8	To demonstrate and develop a shared understanding between the school and the wider University support (estates) services.	Head of School	Executive Director of Estates

4	To maximise the sharing of institutional knowledge and inform future staff development needs, the Panel **recommends** the School should look to develop transparent succession planning and to build in capacity around roles to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of resources by removing single points of failure. This should include the roles that support the academic committee and governance framework to ensure a more effective and evidential trail to capture learning and programme development and record more explicitly decisions made at key committees (for example, Learning and Teaching Committee and Student Staff Liaison Committee). Ref: Section 3.9	Protects school /institutional knowledge. Provides a local in-house staff development framework to support key decision making. Provides the school with the ability to proactively plan for contingency. Provides staff who are new to roles with support and guidance to maximise their contribution.	Head of School	Director of Organisational Development.

5	The Panel **recommends** the School executive should **continue** to develop the workload allocation model to help manage resources and look at ways of communicating the understanding and benefits of using this model for planning purposes. Ref: Section 3.10	To help build a broader understanding of the complexity and challenges of managing resources. Also provides the Executive with assurance that the school is effectively managing the resources in line with the precepts of the SCQF	Head of School	Head of PIA

Response:

Following feedback from members of academic staff, the school's current workload model has been modified to be more transparent and to contain all the teaching and administration responsibilities of each member of staff. Tasks are communicated to staff well in advance, to permit colleagues to organize and plan their work.

6	It was noted that all ECRs were mentored by senior colleagues and that performance was monitored through the annual PDR process. The Panel acknowledged this as **good practice.** The Panel **recommended** that additional time should be allocated to ECRs in the workload allocation model (recently introduced by the School) to ensure they are given appropriate time to complete the mandatory Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) and to develop independent research programmes. The panel were satisfied that processes were in place to allow ECRs to contribute and influence portfolio development. Ref: Section 3.11	Will provide the executive with assurance that staff development opportunities are maximised as a way of developing the academic profile within GES.	Head of School	Head of ADD

Response:

The teaching load of ERCs is monitored and regulated to give appropriate time for the PGCAP. We note that this review took place during the pandemic when teaching loads were unusually high (owing to the pivot to online learning) and will not be representative of post-pandemic workloads.

	Section 3.2 Learning, Teaching and Enhancement	Shared Enhancement Benefits	Attention in the School	For information
7	The panel **commended** the School for its high NSS scores including 100% and 98% student satisfaction for Geology and Human Geography, respectively, in 2020, and were top in the UK. Most of the scores for assessment and feedback were above the University target. The panel also noted the continued high league tables which consistently rank GES subjects in the UK top 10%. The Panel **recommends** the School looks at ways to share good practice identified for student satisfaction (in Geology and Human Geography), across all the subject groups to ensure consistency. Ref: Section 4.2	Sharing the good practice across the wider subject groups should help to increase NSS and league table rankings across the wider portfolio.	Head of School	
Response: Best practise is presented and disseminated at the regular SLTC meetings, and at the 'end of year' programme wash-up meetings. A teaching focused away-day is being prepared for September 2022, where best practise will be described and discussed, and will be an annual event.				
8	The Panel **commends** the School on the review and development of the portfolio and the collaborative approach taken during this development. Working in partnership with students, alumni, employers and industry bodies had resulted in an adaptable portfolio which provided opportunities for interdisciplinary working and demonstrated a knowledge and commitment to the ever changing global challenges. The Panel **recommends** the school **continues** to reflect on these changes and to embed any lessons learned during the pandemic year to further enhance the provision. Ref: Section 4.5	Having already highlighted this activity as a development priority, GES can use this recommendation to further evidence its commitment to collaborative working with multiple stakeholders to inform curriculum development.	Head of School	External Relations (for marketing and promotion)

9	All students interviewed, including international students, confirmed the University had provided good support for working remotely. Issues arising were dealt with by either GES staff or University IT services. The Panel **recommends** the School reflects on lessons learned from this year as it could inform the future development of online programmes to support the strategic ambition to grow international student numbers. Section 4.10	Will provide the school with an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned during a challenging period and to maximise and/or develop future learning technologies.	Head of School	Head of ADD

10	GES leads in the "Open Skies" programme with McGill University in Canada which is an ambitious initiative to share the best that the two institutions have to offer. This will include staff and student mobility and joint field work projects. This initiative was put on hold due to COVID. The panel noted that an online conference is planned to re-vitalise the teaching collaborations and **recommends** the School **continue** discussions post-Covid in order to maximise the potential of this relationship. Section 4.12	Will provide GES with an opportunity to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to internationalisation and collaboration.	Head of School	

| 11 | The RA confirmed work had been ongoing since the previous PSR in 2015 and that this included the constructive alignment of assessment to Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO). Discussions with staff and students confirmed multiple methods of assessment were used across GES and that they made full use of the 22 point scale. Interviews with students suggested an inconsistency regarding the timing and content of feedback. The Panel **recommends** the School **continues** to work on the development of assessment and feedback to ensure they provide more consistent, constructive and timely feedback and that the timing of feedback is made explicit to students. The panel noted the introduction of a feedback template and would encourage the School to consider using this across all subjects as part of this recommendation.

Section 4.14 | Using a template would provide an opportunity to reduce confusion and to evidence consistency of experience for the students. | Head of School | |

| 12 | The School successfully use Alumni as ambassadors and as part of their curriculum and portfolio development. The panel noted the concerns raised by some staff that the success of this approach is dependent on individual staff-alumnus relationships and would therefore **recommend** the School **continues** to collaborate with colleagues in the University Alumni Office to reduce this single point of failure by establishing a more structured approach to managing these critical relationships. GES use international alumni as ambassadors for recruitment purposes which worked | Provides further opportunities to demonstrate innovation and commitment to the enhancement of the student experience.

Provides an opportunity to inform international strategic partnerships with opportunities for student and staff mobility. | Head of School | External Relations (Alumni Office) |

	well in Nigeria and the Panel encourages GES to continue with their plans to broaden this approach globally. Section 4.16			
Response: A new LinkedIn page has been created and is maintained by GES staff, to make sure that alumni can keep in contact with the School and each other, all over the world. The page is active and used by alumni to post jobs and internships for the present students. The school intends to work more closely with the Alumni office.				
13	In the 2018 staff survey, the staff engagement score of 77%, which is 15 percentage points higher than the College of Science and Engineering average. The staff engagement score was formulated based on the survey section which encompasses four questions covering sense of belonging and levels of motivation along with pride in the University and the extent to which the University is recommended as a place to work. It demonstrates the staff commitment and emotional connection to working for the University and the School. The Panel encourages the School to continue to develop this approach to participation and inclusion. Feedback from staff suggests a gap in development opportunities for mid-career academics and therefore the Panel **recommends** GES collaborate with colleagues in ADD and HR to establish appropriate development opportunities. Ref: Section 4.19	Maximise the development of staff and career opportunities. Develop the wider academic profile of GES	Head of School	Director of Organisational Development Head of ADD
Response: A close collaboration has been established with HR, and ways to help mid-career colleagues are being actively explored, for example by encouraging them to enrol in specific training courses/leadership programmes. An example is the Management Fundamentals course.				
14	The Panel **recommends** the school to considers the suggestion raised in the staff survey that module biographies should be	Provides a forum/platform to share best practice and create evidence	Head of School	

		based information for future reporting and monitoring purposes.		
	created – capturing the incremental development of modules. Not only would this create a written record of the constant and reflective development of module content, delivery, and assessment; in the context of staff turnover, it would also create a backstory for new module leaders and would record module memory. Ref: Section 4.20	based information for future reporting and monitoring purposes. Also provides information to support induction for inexperienced staff or staff new to promoted posts.		

Response:

A new Microsoft Teams page has been created (to go live in July 2022) to collate all information to support induction of inexperienced staff, minutes of committees and records of processes. The page also offers a platform to share best practise, ask for advice and suggest changes. All of the course handbooks and related documentation will be kept on the page. Earlier versions will be retained as they are updated so that a biography for each course is created and preserved.

	Section 3.3 The Student Voice	Shared Enhancement Benefits	Attention in the School	For information
15	It was evident from the information presented and the interviews with staff and students that a number of processes were in place to obtain student feedback formally and informally. There was also evidence that the School had acted upon feedback to improve the student learning experience and that this was published on Moodle. However, the Panel noted that some inconsistencies were evident when closing feedback loops and recording these at formal committees such as the SSLC. The Panel **recommends** the School looks at its feedback mechanisms to ensure a consistent approach is taken and communicated to the student body. In addition, decisions and follow up action made at key governance committees (such as LTC and SSLC) should be recorded more explicitly. Ref Section 5.1	Provides the school with evidence based information that can demonstrate their commitment to enhancing the student experience.	Head of School	

16	The panel **recommends** the school collaborates with colleagues in staff development services/Organisational Development to introduce staff development for those supporting these committees and to ensure training is also given to anyone new to Convening or participating in committee work to ensure feedback is formally recorded at relevant committees. Ref: Section 5.2	Will provide further staff development opportunities to staff. It maximises efficiency and effectiveness of the governance structures and provides GES with an evidence based records for future reporting purposes.	Head of School	Director of Organisational Development

	Section 3.4 Supporting Student Wellbeing	**Shared Enhancement Benefits**	**Attention in the School**	**For information**
17	The panel noted the outreach work undertaken by GES to engage with high schools as a way of helping students make the transition from school to University. This included engaging applicants via webinars and social media engagement by staff and student ambassadors. The panel **recommends** the School should **continue** working with University central support services, including student learning services to facilitate further the outreach work they do and the transition from High School to University for first year students. Ref: Section 6.5	Provides the school with an opportunity to broaden the understanding of the subjects across the school sector and also create a more explicit transition and induction plan for new Student.	Head of School	External Relations

| 18 | Feedback from the student groups suggested a lack of consistency with information in student handbooks and supporting information. The Panel **recommends** the School considers using a handbook template which would provide consistent generic information around assessment, learning outcomes and feedback protocols as well as subject relevant information. (A handbook template is available online via MyGlasgow-Senate Office-Quality Enhancement and Assurance – Course Programme Design and Approval – Central Guidance on Student Handbook).

Ref: Section 6.7 | The School is encouraged to use the handbook template available online via MyGlasgow-Senate Office-Quality Enhancement and Assurance – Course Programme Design and Approval – Central Guidance on Student Handbook. | Head of School | |

| 19 | The Panel **recommends** that all course handbooks and Moodle sites consistently and explicitly signpost students to SLD services, to ensure that all students (UG&PG) are aware of the opportunity to use this service to enhance their learning, effectiveness and assessment and feedback literacies.

Section 6.9 | This will provide GES with assurance that students are fully supported at local, college and university level. | Head of School | Student Learning and Development |