Philosophy Response to PSR Recommendations

13 September 2022

Philosophy appreciates the supportive and helpful PSR report, received in November 2021, as well as the PSR visit itself, held over two days in May 2021, which was also encouraging and useful. We are pleased to see that the report both is very positive about our teaching operation *and* emphasises the challenge that our high student/staff ratio has long posed and continues to pose.

Below, as requested, are our responses to the PSR recommendations. In a number of cases, actions have already been taken or are to be taken imminently, at the start of the new semester. In others, we set out below our intended actions, which we will implement during 2022-23 as we throw ourselves into what we hope to be a much more typical session, following two years of pandemic. For this purpose, we have now formed a **PSR Response Group**, whose core members are: HoSub, Director of UG Teaching, PGT Director, Subhonours Programme Director, and JH and SH convenors.

NB. As requested, each response appears in a row below the relevant recommendation and is coloured blue, flagged with a yellow-filled cell to the left. Most responses are Philosophy's, with the exception of recommendations 9, 10, 15, for which responses have been provided by, respectively, Professor Michael Brady (Head of School), Nic Kipar (Director of ADD), and Dr Gareth Beale (School Disability Coordinator).

NB. The report, recommendations, and a sketch of our plans — as well as an invitation to feed back their own ideas — will be **shared with students** at the start of this semester via Moodle and/or email.

David Bain (HoSub) & Robert Cowan (Director of Teaching)
13 September 2022

PHASE 1: To be addressed within 6 months

	THEMATIC ACTIVITY: Enhancement in Learning and Teaching	Enhancement Benefits	For the attention of	For information
	Distinction between UG and PGT levels			
1.	Review the constructive alignment between teaching, ILOs, and assessment, to ensure that each cohort of students is supported in the development and demonstration of the knowledge understanding and skills required to address the ILOs.	Clarity and transparency between different levels and enable students to recognise ILOs in their assessment. Better student satisfaction rates	Head of Subject	Dr Kimberly Wilder-Davis (Academic and Digital Development)) linking ILOs with assessment and Dr Amanda Pate (Academic Digital

	For the MSc Conversion students, this may require introduction of top up teaching sessions, above those received by Honours students, plus introduction of a more systematic approach to research sessions that PGT students attend. [Para 3.4] The Subject Area should ensure that the ILOs are the appropriate SCQF level for each course. To provide greater distinction between UG and PGT student communities, streamline communications to separate student cohorts, clearly highlighting the separate assessment schemes and ILOs[Para 3.5]			Development) for course design
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • Director of Teaching and Director of PGT will meet with Dr Wilder-Davis and Dr Pate early semester 1 2022. • The PSR Response Group (above) will then meet to during semester 1 22-23 to review the alignment between teaching, ILOS and assessment at UG and PGT levels. Among other things, we will discuss the possibility of top-up sessions, separate MSc student seminars in Honours courses, and a more systematic approach to the research sessions MSc students attend. Proposals will then be presented to a staff meeting by the end of semester 1, 2022. • We will ensure that each Honours course Moodle has an MSc section, in semester 1, 2022. This will include a separate MSc discussion forum which can be used specifically by MSc students and used to send MSc-specific information to students.			
2.	Create separate Moodle sites for courses that are shared Masters' and Honours' courses and introduce separate communications between the two levels of students. In particular, conversion students who perceived themselves different. [Para 3.5]	Supporting Students: providing sense of community for PGT students	Head of Subject	
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • We think that the introduction of entirely separate MSc Moodle for each Honours course will increase staff workload and risks miscommunication. Instead, we propose as above to introduce MSc sections for each Honours course Moodle in semester 1, 2022. This will include a separate MSc discussion forum which can be used to send MSc-specific information to students. Honours course lecturers will also provide a welcome message to MSc students explaining that, while most general class communications will apply to them, they will also receive MSc-specific information via the MSc discussion forum.			

	Assessment and Feedback			
3.	Develop and introduce a clear marking criteria/marking rubric that links the Grading Schedule with ILOs. [Para 3.8]	Enhance information, ensure consistency and clarity of marking with potential of reducing student queries	Head of Subject	Dr Kimberly Wilder-Davis (Academic and Digital Development (and Dr Scott Ramsay (Good Practice Adviser)
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • Director of Teaching and Director of PGT WILL meet with Dr Wilder-Davis and Dr Ramsay for advice on creating marking criteria/rubric early IN semester 1, 2022. • PSR Response Group will then meet during semester 1 22-23 to discuss options for agreed marking criteria, with proposals presented at a staff meeting at the end of semester 1 2022.			
4.	Introduce a feedback template (this could supplement in margin annotations, providing higher level comments) to ensure consistency of feedback to students. The Subject Area should contact Academic and Digital Development for support and advice. There are several exemplars that the Subject Area could adapt to suit their own requirements. [Para 3.9]	Ensure transparency and clarity of feedback with potential of reducing student queries	Head of Subject	Dr Kimberly Wilder-Davis (Academic and Digital Development) and Dr Scott Ramsay (Good Practice Adviser)
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • Director of Teaching and Director of PGT will meet with Dr Wilder-Davis and Dr Ramsay for advice on marking templates in early semester 1, 2022. • PSR Response Group will then meet during semester 1 22-23 to discuss options for feedback templates, with proposals presented at a staff meeting at the end of semester 1 2022.			
5.	Review the timing of Joint Honours' and PGT assessment deadlines, as staggering these could enable students to manage assessment load better as well as provide an opportunity for feed forward. [Para 3.10]	Enable students to use feedback effectively. Better student satisfaction rates	Head of Subject	
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • PSR Response Group will meet during semester 1 22-23 to discuss deadline timing, with proposals to be presented to staff meeting at end of semester 1 2022.			

6.	The provision of some formative feedback for high-stake assessments and provide exemplars to students. [Para 3.12]	Enhancing student satisfaction with the provision of timely feedback	Head of Subject	
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • Philosophy offers formative feedback for UG dissertations and at MSc level. • Given our current SSR, providing formative feedback in other areas will lead to an unmanageable increase in staff workload. • Instead, from semester 1 2022 will make available exemplar essays/exam answers, as is already practised at Pre-Honours level.			
	THEMATIC ACTIVITY: **Enhancing the Student Experience**	**Enhancement Benefits**	**For the attention of**	**For information**
7.	*Enhancement in Learning and Teaching*			
	As there was a perception of a leap in level and quantity, scaffold the transition between Junior and Senior Honours including a clear communication of expectations to students [Para 2.2]	Better support for transition between Junior and Senior Honours	Head of Subject, Junior and Senior Honours' Conveners	
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • From semester 1 22-23, Honours convenors will highlight the similarities and disparities between honours and subhonours at the Honours induction meeting held at the beginning of the session.			
	Staff Support			
8.	Promote the benefits of participation in the School mentorship programme to all staff [Para 3.16]	Supporting staff development	Head of Subject and Head of School	
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • HoSub will during semester 1 22-23 ensure that up-to-date information about this programme is shared with staff at a staff meeting and in the staff handbook.			
9.	Introduce Promotions workshops for staff, highlighting the relevance of teaching excellence as well as innovation. Include the impact of Covid and teaching adaptions introduced. [Para 3.15]	Supporting staff development	Head of School	Head of Subject

	RESPONSE FROM PROFESSOR MICHAEL BRADY, HEAD OF SCHOOL · The School of Humanities already runs a dedicated promotion session for all staff, with information about the promotion process on different tracks, advice on how to write a successful application, information about timelines for submission and who to look to for help, and links to resources. · We will aim to strengthen the focus on teaching excellence and innovation. These are part of the L&T criterion for promotion, but we will emphasise the different elements of this criterion paying particular attention to how to address the impact of covid and the teaching adaptations and innovations that resulted.			
10.	Early Career staff had voiced strong criticism of the PGCAP/EDCP and the relevance and opportunity for development was questioned, particularly for staff on short term contracts The Panel will bring this to the attention of Academic and Digital Development. [Para 3.17].	Supporting staff development	Mx Nicole Kipar, Head of ADD	Head of Subject, Head of School
	RESPONSE FROM NIC KIPAR, DIRECTOR OF ADD PGCAP and ECDP should not be conflated, as it appears to be done in […] "The early career staff the Panel met with voiced strong criticism of the PGCAP/ECDP with the relevance and opportunity for development questioned." Concerns or criticisms about ECDP and PGCAP should be clearly voiced separately as they are separate, and very distinct, CPD programmes. PGCAP is incorporated into the ECDP, but its design is also externally influenced by the sector and has a wider target audience that purely ECDP members. RET and PGCAP should also not be conflated, as it appears to be done in "[…] there are routes for prior teaching that is recognised through Recognising Excellence in Teaching (RET) as an alternative route to the PGCAP". RET is an experiential opportunity that leads to appropriate levels of fellowship, it is not credit bearing. Successful completion of the PGCAP leads to RET Fellowship, but also to the award of postgraduate certificate (60 credits, level 11). RET Fellowship, however, may be recognised by ECDP (see promotions criteria "PGCAP or other appropriate routes"). This leads to the comment "No previous recognition of teaching experience was considered." Recognition of teaching experience is a complex issue. On one side, many academics enter UoG with substantial teaching experience often as a GTA. This is not comprehensive enough to represent the typical 'lecturer' role (i.e. GTA is D1 of the UKPSF, lecturer is D2 of the UKPSF with substantially increased role and responsibilities). As such, GTA experience is often insufficient to gain recognition of prior learning through the experiential route (APEL). However, where extensive experience is present, APEL is an option to gain credit on PGCAP or, indeed can be used directly to gain RET Fellowship to gain exemption from PGCAP. Prior qualification is also accepted as APCL on PGCAP if deemed relevant, and this can lead to exemption (in the case of full equivalence) or partial credit through credit transfer, in line with University policy. Regarding short/fixed term positions - job precarity is not a consideration for the PGCAP team. That is a School/College/University policy. However, ADD do support development opportunities for people whose roles are less secure. We offer DAT HE for GTAs, postdocs who			

teach and people on shorter term roles since DAT HE can be completed within roughly one semester. We offer PGCAP places, where possible, to eligible participants with >1 year on their contracts (our application guidance stipulates this) - the rationale being that we want people to complete the programme, wherever possible. This means that staff on shorter term roles (</= 1 year) are not offered this opportunity as the chance to complete is non-existent. However, DAT HE provides a stepping stone into PGCAP (APCL for the first course) and so can provide a more step-wise route into PGCAP for some colleagues.

Regarding the comment "Staff considered that it had been of no benefit, except from feedback on teaching": the PGCAP programme is reviewed regularly, through both formal and informal mechanisms alongside scholarship studies, including value and evidence for development. Recent studies (some published, some in final review) have demonstrated widespread perceptions of value and development of staff whilst studying on PGCAP particularly around assessment, curriculum design, innovations in teaching, creative pedagogies and in understanding and confidence engaging in SoTL. Whilst these studies do not show universal value for every student, they show a strong overall trend - one that is often correlated with a combination of time to engage and a commitment to engage. Ensuring that staff are encouraged to value and have time to engage in PGCAP is a vital element of its success. Additionally, recruitment numbers for the extension to PGCAP (the MEd in Academic Practice) indicate very strong perceptions of value.

Where criticism exists then we encourage students on PGCAP to use a combination of formal mechanisms (EvaSys, SSLC) and informal mechanisms (e.g. collegial conversations) to raise concerns. Occasionally, strong criticism is raised in EvaSys but in many cases the rationale for criticism is a combination of 'time poverty' (which is often attributed to the programme, as opposed to the workload of the student) or a comment that does not reflect the overall picture (an individual criticism). In the case where criticism is constructive, then the PGCAP team typically try to address such concerns (e.g. altering workload on programme, changing timing of assessments, reducing activity numbers to better manage time, etc.).

In summary, it appears that this particular report outcome relates to awareness: APCL opportunities seem not to have been explored, or perhaps have not been considered as relevant, and individual criticisms have dominated, or at least are not shared widely. That being said, proposed action includes our own PSR recommendation of a 'package for heads of school' around PGCAP that is currently in development. We also offer the opportunity for information gathering to any Heads of School and relevant staff, to support the full understanding of the programme.

	Enhancing the Student Experience: Supporting Students			
11.	Create a FAQ section in course Moodle sites to provide information and advice on typical questions raised by students. There is good practice elsewhere, where students are also encouraged to post questions in an open forum which can be answered and viewed by all students [2.7].	Effective ways of supporting students and raising awareness of support. Should reduce individual queries to staff and therefore reduce workload	Head of Subject	Head of School

	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • From semester 1 22-23, a short FAQs document which summarises the most salient points from the Philosophy Class Handbook will be posted on PreHonours course and General Honours Moodles. Students will continue to be encouraged to post questions on Moodle class discussion forums.			
12.	Clearly signpost additional support provided by the College Effective Learning Adviser and new Student Support Officers, about to be recruited for the College of Arts. [Para 2.9]	Provision of additional support. Should reduce staff and GTA workload	Head of Subject	Head of School, Mr Stuart Purcell (Effective Learning Adviser, College of Arts)
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • From semester 1 22-23, links to the relevant support to be posted on PreHonours course and General Honours Moodles.			
13.	Implement an election process for class representatives and extending their term to a full year. [Para 2.15]	More effective student voice	Head of Subject	
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • From semester 1 22-23, elections for class representatives will be introduced where there is sufficient student interest, e.g. not if it turns out there are only as many candidates as places.			
14.	Adopt the good practice in place for the PGT community, regarding student feedback, for UG students; where meetings are established to discuss what can be improved, with student ideas taken forward, whilst ensuring that responsiveness to feedback is clearly communicated to students. [Para 2.14]	More effective student voice and providing clear communication on responsiveness should improve student satisfaction	Head of Subject	

15	The School should develop a more proactive policy on how it supports students with disabilities. Guidance on this could be sought from Disability Services and Academic and Digital Development. [Para 2.10]	Enhancing the student experience for those with disabilities and providing a more inclusive environment	Head of School	Head of Subject, Mr Danny Gallacher, (Disability and Inclusion Lead), Dr Elliott Spaeth (Academic and Digital Development)

PHASE 2: In line with the recently established GTA Code of Practice

	Recommendation	Expected Impact	For the attention of	For information
16.	Better training and support for GTAs in alignment with the new GTA Code of Practice. This should include observing teaching and providing feedback. The introduction of marking and feedback templates (as recommended) and involving GTAs in team teaching meetings should greatly enhance support provided. GTAs should be aware of all support mechanisms in place to redirect student queries and reduce their time dealing with student queries. Better organization and training of GTAs would also reduce staff workload involved with supporting GTAs. [Para 3.21]	Better trained GTAs, supporting GTA development as well as providing consistent support to students. It should also reduce staff time required to support GTAs	Head of Subject, Head of School, Dean (L&T)	Head of College

PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE		
• Philosophy provides bespoke Philosophy GTA training for all of our new GTAs. This includes marking training and advice on providing feedback. We will ensure this training continues to align with the GTA Code of Practice.
• We involve GTAs in team teaching meetings. From semester 1 22-23, we will also use these as an opportunity to make them fully aware of the various students support mechanisms.
• If and when the marking templates mentioned above in response to Recommendation 4 are implemented, new GTAs will be trained in their use and existing GTAs will be provided with detailed guidance on the use of the templates.		

PHASE 3: In line with new Learning and Teaching Strategy and working with the Head of School and Dean (Learning and Teaching)

	Recommendations	Expected Impact	For the attention of	For information
17.	Develop a coherent strategic vision, in terms of future growth and range of provision, working with the Head of School and Head of College to produce a phased plan as to how to reach its vision. This should include future use of GTAs and protecting research time for staff. Staff should be involved in the development of the strategy. [Para 1.8]	Provide a more structured approach to development with School and College	Head of Subject, Head of School, Dean (L&T) and Dean (PGT)	Head of College
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE
• A core group of HoSub, Teaching Director, and PGR Director will meet during semester 1 22-23 to begin to discuss a longer term strategic vision for Philosophy given our current SSR and workload pressures.
• We will then discuss ideas from that meeting more widely, with staff on the one hand, and Head of School and College L&T and PGT Deans, on the other hand, with a view to articulating a single vision in a document produced during 2023.			
18.	In conjunction with the above, explore further ways of incorporating employability and transferable skills into the programmes, introducing career events for non-academic as well as academic careers. Consider using alumni to give presentations to students. Also consider opportunities for including work-based learning activities into the curriculum. [Para 2.17	Transparency of skill sets being developed and embedding employability and graduate attributes into the curriculum	Head of Subject, Head of School	Dean (Learning and Teaching) and Dean (PGT)

	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • We will continue to hold academic and non-academic careers events for Honours students. • From semester 1 2022, we will extend the invitation to these to Level 2 students (who may be thinking about career paths when considering Honours options), and consider extending the invitation to PGT students too. • For the non-academic careers event we will continue to invite Glasgow alumni to give presentations to our students, outlining the benefits of a Philosophy degree. • The PSR Response Group will meet during semester 1 22-23 to consider further opportunities for including work-based learning activities in the curriculum.			
19.	Increase visibility of opportunities available and develop an approach to improve student mobility. GoAbroad Team and Global Opportunities could assist the Subject Area with this development. [Para 3.13]	Enhancing the student experience: Study/work abroad part of graduate attributes skills set	Head of Subject	Mrs Sarah Armour (Head of Global Opportunities/GoAbroad)
	PHILOSOPHY RESPONSE • Teaching Director and JYA Convenor will meet with Mrs Sarah Armour in semester 1 22-23 and present proposals to a meeting of the PSR Response Group during semester 1.			