

Learning and Teaching Committee Away Day

Friday 4 November 2016 in the Bridie Memorial Library, GUU

Introduction

Professor Moira Fischbacher-Smith, Assistant Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) welcomed attendees to the Learning and Teaching Away Day 2016. The agenda of the day was to discuss key areas of the University' Learning and Teaching Strategy and how, as a committee, make progress in its implementation.

Perspectives on the Student Experience

1. Student perspective on the student experience and priorities for LTC

Ms Kate Powell SRC, Vice-President Education

Ms Powell's presentation examined both the positive and the negative experiences of the student.

Positives identified

- World leading research - benefits this have for both undergraduate and post graduate students with students being encouraged to undertake research themselves such as preparing journal articles as well as "We need to talk about X" Conference for fourth year Honour students
- Commitment to providing high quality teaching
- Student involvement in all activities
- No barriers between staff and students
- Motivated staff equals motivated students
- Quality and quantity of support services
- Academic standards
- International agenda and promotion of study abroad
- Vibrancy of student life – good atmosphere
- Student support - caring environment
- Diverse student population
- Flexible course options

Negatives identified

- Could student expectations be better managed?
- Adequate advice from onset of study?
- Lack of consistency of information
- Adequate support for transition from school to Higher Education?
- Large student numbers – ability to adequately support?
- Traditional methods of assessment and how to manage
- No holistic sense of programme of study – flipside of flexible course options. Need for more 'joined up' experience
- Traditional teaching methods – more flexibility
- Greater student involvement with curriculum design
- Staff workload – reduces ability for reflection and curriculum development
- Value of teaching?

- Practical inconvenience of large and multiple campuses
- Adequate infrastructure?
- Adequate administrative and IT support?

The following was considered as ways to address the issues identified

- Better support for student transitions into Year 1
 - assumptions made on student knowledge particularly technical ability
 - access to Moodle prior to arrival – ability to work through material and become familiar with main information tool
 - better advice on what studying in a research environment involves
 - better advice on independent study
 - emphasis on importance of social opportunities
 - increase in group work to prevent social isolation
- Better communication
 - use students to assist with student communications
 - is email the best form of communication? Alternatives – Moodle forums, student mentoring, signposting
 - better use of social media – School specific more appropriate?
- Better use of class representatives – huge potential to provide feedback currently under utilized
 - over 1,000 students – use as a resource
 - all class reps trained – used for sharing good practice, use as main method for communication
 - academic collaboration
 - focus groups
- Engagement with student societies
 - work with Schools
 - participation at Open Days
 - academic collaboration
 - focus groups
 - alumni
 - graduate attributes
- Better management of complaints
 - culture of complaining about ‘the University’ by staff and students. What is actually being referred to? What is the source and how can it be resolved?
 - multiple points of contacts – standardise with better signposting as to who to complain to when there is an issue
- Better delivery of teaching – moving away from traditional delivery
 - innovative teaching with regular review as to how to improve
 - introduction of blended learning
 - lecture recording – some staff still resistant
 - size issues – lectures getting too large?
 - Better GTA support
- Capacity issues – ensuring sufficient space to cater increasing student numbers
 - small fish in big pond - lack of personal touch

- sufficient study space
- library overcrowded
- Ensure interdisciplinary options really are available
 - work with different students
 - collaborative projects and groups
 - social opportunities
- Better staff training to deal with students with psychological issues
 - should staff be trained on dealing with students with anxiety and stress related issues?
 - peer support should be encouraged
 - better self-help material
 - better signposting to appropriate services
- Transition out of University
 - access to resources
 - increased opportunities for volunteering and work shadowing
 - greater opportunities for HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report)
 - career advice
 - flexible graduate attribute opportunities provided within the curricula
 - greater opportunities provided for PGT students as well as UG
 - Use of Alumni and Networking

2. Ensuring a holistic approach to, and perspective on, the student experience

Professor Frank Coton, Vice-Principal (Academic and Educational Innovation)

Professor Coton's presentation highlighted how the student experience was integral to a number of University strategies and that there were a number of dimensions that had an impact on experience: Subject Area, degree programme, University Services, Extracurricular activity as well as the external environment. Added to this was prior experience and expectation. Across each dimension, there was a span of control, with a number of areas having responsibility for providing a positive student experience, each of which required a level of connection to ensure delivery.

There were a number of quality processes and feedback mechanisms in place to review the student experience but each were not perfect indicators and required careful interpretation. The number of dimensions and level of ownership made the holistic approach to the student experience complex. However within the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-2020, developed in parallel with the University's Strategic Plan, the ambition was to place learning at the centre, shaped by research, supporting a diverse community of learners and teachers. The vision included:

- Focus on Enhancement – review, reflect and develop teaching practice, processes and facilities
- Foster critical thought and investigative learning – fundamental relationship between teaching and cutting-edge research at the heart of transformational learning experience
- Inclusive, promoting access and opportunity – diverse student population entering the University with aptitude and potential
- Provision of a supportive environment – for both staff and students, providing a virtual and physical infrastructure to develop and support staff by recognition, promotion and

reward processes and improving administrative support aligned to effective systems. Deepening student engagement by having a stronger partnership with the student body, engaging students more actively in the co-creation and evaluation of the learning experience.

With focus on

- Curricula innovation – real flexibility, enhancing quality, breadth and depth. Agile PGT and more effective approaches to assessment and feedback
- Embedding Graduate Attributes and Employability – sector-leading employability skills
- Supporting Transitions – further improvements to retention and success and appropriate infrastructure to support a broader range of student transitions into an integrated environment
- Internationalisation of the curriculum – globally relevant, containing learning experiences culturally accessible to all, whilst giving students the benefits of the distinctive UK research-led learning environment

The above to be achieved by

- Improved teaching and information support systems
- Effective IT and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)
- Innovated and appropriate pedagogy
- Developing physical infrastructure

Current activity

Examining the National Student Survey (NSS) results, would like to compare more favourably in relation to Q22 (overall satisfaction) and Q5-9 (Assessment and Feedback). Consequently, NSS Task Group established to:

- Develop campaign for positive promotion of the student experience
- Understand and develop actions to address University-wide issues identified
- Develop longer term plan for support of the student experience

Responding to the NSS

- Action planning at local level underway
- Focus on culture across the organisation
- Assessment and Feedback Working Group established – looking at assessment standards in examinations, GTA practice, Assessment Toolkit launched, Student engagement with feedback, use of feedback calendars, staff/student interaction – getting it right

Recognition and Reward of Teaching

- New promotions criteria developed for the Teaching, Learning and Scholarship track
- Issues of coherence of career path addressed
- Change of title from University Teacher to Lecturer
- Professional Recognition - Second year of Recognising Excellence in Teaching (RET) scheme (31 members of staff have completed) Aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework

Curriculum

- Framework for curriculum conversation established – led by Director of Senate Office
- English Language support enhanced

Supporting Transitions

- Transitions Working Group established
- Developing targeted support for Widening Access, International and Glasgow International College students

On-line Learning

- Continued roll out of on-line distance Masters programmes
- Increase in blended and on-line learning courses on campus
- Continued engagement with Massive Open On-line courses (MOOCs) (8 current and more in development)

Physical Estate

- Continued upgrading of Library space (Level 1)
- 9 teaching rooms refurbished to pilot L&T hub designs
- Academic steering group supporting and evaluating new spaces
- Using space more effectively

Comments from participants included

- How to ensure University of Glasgow student experience mirrored in transnational collaborative institutions
- Influential and important role of Programme Leader
- Importance of student partnerships
- Engaging with students and student perspective on how to interpret data from surveys and feedback. Shared understanding
- Change in title from teacher to lecturer – same title removes perceived difference
- Reshaping of promotion, L&T scholarship undermined. Evidence of working at higher level. Research easier to demonstrate with award of grants
- External factors – Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) will have an impact whether directly or indirectly

3. A Student Services perspective on the student experience

Ms Jane Weir and Ms Jennifer Robertson

Participants were reminded of what services were incorporated into Student Services:

- Counselling and Psychological Services (CaPS)
- Careers & Student Enterprise
- Disability Service
- Chaplaincy
- International Student Support Team (ISST)
- Student Services Enquiry Team
- Registry
- Sport
- Student Lifecycle Support & Development
- Projects & Communications Team

Challenges faced included

- Providing services when students need them
- Increasing demand from students and different student profiles. 22% increase demand for CaPS and 75% increase demand for Careers. Students looking for internships
- Waiting times for appointments and urgency of some individual cases – need to respond quickly
- Lack of space for 1-to-1 meetings, group events and fairs

Strategy

- Manage resources differently – empower staff – work closer with College and student body - provide workshops covering key themes. Cross-service working groups and more School and group work
- Evolve – developing teams, promoting excellence and working sustainably – provide opportunities for career development, gaining better understanding of roles and priorities and explore new models of service delivery. Use of technology and increase self help
- Promote excellence – introduced recognition schemes to enhance motivation. Seek external accreditation and awards for customer services ensuring a culture of continuous quality improvement

Improvement in practice

- Preparing for L&T Hub and how service will be delivered
- Developing investment bid to develop CaPS
- Disability Services resources and operations under consideration
- Importance of partnership approach to supporting students – increasing dialogue with Colleges and Schools

Some questions

- Shared understanding of what we mean by “the student experience”?
- Collectively manage student expectations better?
- What affect the delivery of effective student support has?
- What works/doesn't?

Participants discussed communication and the ineffective use of email. Consideration should be given to social media, Twitter, texting, YouTube. Need to work with students – identify what information is needed and when. Identify key points in the year – use student focus groups as to how to be more creative.

Staff need to be better informed of services available and where to direct students and recognise when a situation appears to becoming urgent.

Role of Adviser of Studies – relationship needs to be enhanced. Was there potential for mini regular meetings?

Launching GUSTTO “Glasgow University’s Teaching Tips Online”

Dr Helen Purchase, Project Lead, Computer Science, launched GUSTTO, a software package for staff to access, share and discuss innovative teaching practices (funded by LTDF). The original concept arose from a project led by Sally Fincher (Kent) and Janet Finlay (Leeds Met) “Disciplinary Commons in Human Computer Interaction Education” in 2007-8 where “commons” was a general term for shared resources in which stakeholders had an equal interest. They had referred to good teaching practices as “bundles” where a template was provided to record information for sharing. Then at the Glasgow University Teaching and Learning Conference in 2013, keynote speakers Katarina Mårtensson and Torgny Roxå (Lund University) presented Lund’s practice of asking academic staff on their PGCAP-equivalent to document their teaching practices, identifying what could be used as a useful resource for other teachers, and this provided further inspiration for the project.

Dr Purchase put together the LTDF proposal in 2015 which had 3 aims:

- to allow staff to **share ideas** they use in their day-to-day teaching

- to create an institutional **repository** of best practice teaching activities
- To support the development of a collegial **community** based on the sharing of good teaching practice

The project team agreed on calling its bundles “teaching tips” and created the template which includes:

- Name of Teaching Tip
- Rationale
- Description
- *What I/we did...*
- *This tends to work better if...*
- *This doesn't work unless*
- *So... (the essence of the Teaching Tip)*
- Keywords

The principles of GUSTTO are

- in-house
- community of practice
- based on actual practice
- no gatekeeper
- accessible to all staff for creation and access
- intuitive, easy to use
- engaging

It was noted that the system has no gate-keeper, but that features such as the discussion forum and like/refer options will provide quality and usefulness indicators. In addition, GUSTTO is for internal use only: it is not intended to showcase teaching practices externally, but to share them as a way of discussing and developing ideas across the University community.

Focus on Assessment and Feedback

1. Alternative forms of assessment

Ms Elina Koristashevskaya, Graduate Teaching Assistant

Why do we assess?

- Demonstrate knowledge
- Demonstrate attainment
- Maintain standards
- Motivate students
- Provide guidance and feedback
- Prepare students for ‘life’

Direction for change

- Aligned with Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)
- Assessment more effective when centre of course design
- Student and teachers as partners in learning and assessment

Principles for design

- Facilitate flexibility and choice
- Support development as a learner
- Foster interaction and dialogue between students and staff
- Develop skills and attributes in addition to subject knowledge

- Promote a positive impact on student confidence and motivation
- Element of choice – some decision – expand in curriculum – foster dialogue – challenges - create own courses – include in design process
- Student voice – feedback matters
- Engagement – why assess? How to use feedback.
- More than a certificate – employability in assessment

Diversify assessment

- Seen examination questions – opportunity for research
- Self critique of practice
- Discussion groups and forums
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- Portfolio and e-portfolios
- Book review
- Multiple Choice Questions
- Blogging, research bid, posters

Assessment should be integral to learning outcomes – what do you want students to achieve? What is being assessed? Assessment *for* learning and not only *of* learning. Criteria should be explicit. Formative – opportunity to learn assessment method - give examples of assessment and how to succeed.

Avoidance of isolation – think as a ‘Programme’ not ‘course’. Redesign assessment to ensure interconnected throughout programme.

Student engagement – communication is vital. Use class representatives as a resource. Motivate staff – Programme focussed assessment – combine learning. Create opportunities to ensure assessment meaningful.

Assessment feedback – need to provide a coherent institutional system to give students the ability to store and reflect throughout their programme of study to allow for forward planning.

The recently launched Assessment and Feedback toolkit can be found at:

www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/aftoolkit/

2. Technology enhanced Learning and Teaching

Professor Jo-Anne Murray, Associate Dean of Digital Education, Deputy Dean of Graduate Studies, College of MVLS

The College of MVLS has been developing a number of short courses as well as the provision of on-line Diplomas and Masters’ programme and the School of Life Sciences has recently launched an undergraduate on-line course. Veterinary Medicine uses a blended approach using both on-line as well as face-to-face for practical elements of the course. One of the main benefits of on-line courses is that it allows for authentic and imaginative assessment practices which enhances student engagement, such as

- Discussions – main method of communication used across campus
- E-portfolios – reflective and ability to track assessment
- Peer-assessment – use of Peerwise and Aropa
- Self-assessment
- Quizzes –formative assessment
- Wikis – group work and formative assessment

- Blogs and Glogs – reflective and interactive

Students are encouraged to decide what assessment they wish to undertake and can be involved in the design as well as the marking criteria. It offers students the choice and pace at which to learn. These types of assessment activities develop skills which equip them for the workplace.

A virtual University of Glasgow is provided where students are able to interact and place posters in specified areas, can leave notes for each other, providing feedback. Instant messaging and 'live' sessions were available. Digital feedback on assignments is provided where the student can skype the lecturer to discuss - seeing the feedback on line during discussion. Feedback on this process has been positive, seeing it as more personal and inclusive. Some students on course considered this type of feedback to improve learning better than written comments alone, improving their understanding of how to progress.

The College had a digital website of case studies which staff could access and courses were available for staff to undertake on how to make on-line learning easy. Participants noted that over 2 years, the College had developed a number of on-line courses. There was a small team of learning technologists, funded by the College, to provide support. In relation to quality assurance, External Examiners had access to view all activity.

Participants agreed that the assessments were interesting and stimulating but that some staff would find it difficult to adjust to, particularly without support.

Curriculum Design

Workshop ran by Dr Jack Aitken, Director, Senate Office¹

Strong culture of curriculum development in the University, but is subject driven. The Learning and Teaching Strategy 2015-20 places importance on curriculum innovation, so should there be an institutional-wide review of curricula? If so, how is the academic community encouraged to buy-in to this process? What are the advantages of such a process? The following issues were discussed:

- Recruiting high quality students – curricula should be challenging plus from a marketing perspective, gives a competitive edge
- Enriching courses – opportunity for interdisciplinary courses
- Interdisciplinary – need to make links explicit
- Courses/Programmes appropriately structured? More flexibility? Getting beyond 'silo' effect. Some level of fluidity to allow components to enter into the programme as required
- Proportion of students wish to study a specific subject(s) – not wanting extra third subject – a more distinct route favourable? Sense of belonging more likely to start earlier?
- Provision of professional development courses and work related learning for non-professional degree programmes
- Direction – consult outside University with industry – multi-disciplinary teams, graduate attributes, range of skills desired by employers
- Importance of integrating graduate attributes within the curriculum – but explicit.
- Different approaches to graduate attributes – should not be a bolt on

¹ Participants used www.todaysmeet.com to provide commentary. TodaysMeet is a chat platform which enables participants to have a conversation during a workshop. Lecturers were using it as a tool to enhance engagement during lectures.

- Using graduate attributes to define common areas across degree programmes
- Use of Alumni – introducing students to concepts
- Student involvement in the design of curricula – create opportunities for students to have input
- Other pressures on staff - impact of REF and other external sources
- Business plan – priorities?
- College of MVLS – provides a scholarship scheme where top 10% of students are given additional opportunities – worth exploring offering a similar University scheme?
- Appropriate resourcing – impact of teaching as well as research – need clear link between teaching and quality
- Complex – need to reconcile a number of tensions – start with having conversations

Graduate Attributes

Workshop ran by Professor Alice Jenkins, Professor of Victorian Literature and Culture and Ms Mhairi Harris, SRC, Vice President Student Activities

Ms Harris highlighted that there were over 300 student club and societies associated with the University, engaged and actively involved in student life. Students were aware that university was more than a degree. Volunteering opportunities were also increasing with students actively engaged with the community. It was proposed that such activities should be recognised and recorded on HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report). HEAR is a method of recording extra-curricular activity onto student transcripts which can then be included on curriculum vitae.

Professor Jenkins had been appointed to act as Graduate Attributes lead for the University. Her goals were to:

- Improve student engagement
- Improve access to employability for all students
- Add value to the 'Glasgow brand'

Problems currently holding back the successful integration of graduate attributes into all aspects of University provision include:

- Problems with sustainability of initiatives
- Failure to embed graduate attributes within academic contexts
- Issues with the HEAR system – currently unable to record certain activities
- The graduate attribute matrix – useful repository but not used in day-to-day activity within the classroom

Any solution to these problems needs to:

- Encourage and recognise student activities
- Motivate staff to provide more opportunity for activity that enriches the curriculum
- Be responsive and easy to administer
- Be recognised and understood outside GU

One proposal – Digital badges. Digital badges potentially offer a system for recognising and accrediting graduate attribute-related activities, both within and outside the curriculum. Virtual badges can be gathered into 'backpacks' and organised into 'collections' focusing on particular themes.

Dozens of universities in the UK, USA and Europe are currently using or planning to use digital badges to recognise activity of various kinds. The SQA is currently working with Mozilla on the use

of digital badges in Scottish education, and an Open Badges in Scottish Education Group has been set up to explore the possibilities further. Digital badges can be used in Moodle. Badges can be awarded at different levels to reflect varying levels of engagement and achievement, and could be used to recognise many activities. Obvious examples include

- Running club/society
- Taking part in entrepreneurship
- Volunteering
- Sporting and fitness achievements
- Performing
- Study abroad
- Class representation

Equally, badges could be awarded for a number of academic activities such as

- Aspects of assessment activities (such as oral presentations)
- Project managing group work
- Peer learning
- Disseminating work in UG conferences or journals
- Cultural engagement
- Successful completion of training courses, such as for IT packages

Next steps include consulting with other universities already using digital badge schemes, consulting with students, services and academic units in GU, and preparing a number of pilot projects to test viability.

Conclusion and moving forward

Professor Fischbacher-Smith advised that a number of initiatives and working groups have been established to take forward a number of the issues identified:

- The Transitions Working Group was reviewing what support is provided as students enter university as well as the different transitions throughout university life. It was looking at developing a 'Glasgow Essentials' web provision aimed at providing relevant information to students both pre-arrival as well as when they commence. The Working Group was also looking at communication, where there are inconsistencies and where there is information overload and how best to communicate with students.
- The Assessment and Feedback Working Group was reviewing range of assessment and feedback, consistency and support provided to staff, including support provided to Graduate Teaching Assistants.
- The Inclusive Learning Policy Working Group was establishing a policy to define a baseline level that disabled students should expect from their academic unit in terms of inclusive learning and teaching practices. The policy would also cover academic support services offered
- Positive Student Journey Project, established by Student Services, to oversee support and access to services throughout the student journey from registry to graduation and beyond
- Mapping Student Experience – recently established and lead by Ms Jane Weir, Deputy Director of Student Services (Student Development). The Mapping Student Experience project was an initiative established by Professor Frank Coton, Vice-Principal Academic and Educational Innovation, to inform the NSS task group's actions over the coming year.

- Graduate Attributes Champion, in association with SRC, to increase engagement and use of class representatives/societies
- Curriculum review and student engagement with curricula design – Senate Office has commenced discussion in relation to an institutional-led review

Participants were thanked for their attendance, taking time out of busy schedules. It was hoped that participants had found the day useful and would reflect further on the issues discussed in their own roles as well as within their respective Colleges and Schools.