UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee – 25 May 2018

Periodic Subject Review: Review of Law held on 20 and 21 February 2018

Dr Richard Lowdon, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor James Conroy	Vice Principal Internationalisation, Panel Convener
Professor Stuart Cross	University of Dundee, External Subject Specialist
Professor Kirsteen McCue	Senate Assessor on Court
Ms Kirstin Leslie	Students Representative
Ms Elspeth Napier	Adam Smith Business School, Cognate Member
Dr Amanda Sykes	Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service
Ms Moira MacMillan[1]	Law Society of Scotland
Ms Rachel Wood	Law Society of Scotland (observing)
Dr Richard Lowdon	Senate Office, Clerk to the Review Panel

1. Introduction

1.1.1 The School of Law is one of five Schools within the College of Social Sciences. The School of Law had previously been part of the Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences prior to restructuring in 2010. The School previously underwent internal review in March 2012.

1.1.2 Preparation of the School of Law Self Evaluation Report (SER) was led by Professor Tom Guthrie with contributions from the Directors of Undergraduate Studies, Taught Postgraduate Studies and Diploma in Professional Legal Practice, and the Head of the School of Law. Contributions were also made by members of teaching staff and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). Further contributions were gathered by e-mail from all staff in the School, by minute papers from LLB students, and through student representatives for taught postgraduate students and Diploma students. The background to the SER and to Periodic Subject Review (PSR) was discussed at the School of Law Student Council, and information sheets were circulated to the Postgraduate Taught Committee and the Diploma Staff-Student Liaison Committee. An initial draft was circulated for comment in November 2017 and discussed at a School of Law meeting. A further draft was circulated for comment in December 2017. The Report was also informed by routine feedback gathered as part of the School's quality assurance procedures.

1.1.3 The Review Panel met with Professor Iain MacNeil (Head of the School of Law), Professor Anne Anderson (Vice-Principal and Head of the College of Social Sciences), Professor Moira Fischbacher-Smith (Assistant Vice-Principal and Dean of Learning

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[1] In addition to her input as a Panel member, Ms MacMillan will also produce a report making separate recommendations to the Law Society of Scotland.

and Teaching, College of Social Sciences), Professor John Finlay (Undergraduate Director), Dr Irene Marie-Esser (Postgraduate Director), Ms Kerry Trewern (Diploma Director), Professor Tom Guthrie, teaching staff, management, professional and administrative (MPA) staff, early career staff, GTAs, Diploma in Professional Legal Practice (DPLP) tutors, undergraduate students, diploma students, and postgraduate students.

2.   Context and Strategy

2.1.1 As stated in the SER, the School provides a number of taught programmes (listed at 2.4), two of which – the LLB and the DPLP – are accredited by the Law Society of Scotland and form the first two stages towards qualification as a solicitor in Scotland. The LLB is offered in three modes: a qualifying four year Honours degree, which allows graduates to progress into the legal profession, a non-qualifying four year Honours degree where these requirements have not been met, but the requirements for the award of an LLB have been, and a two year accelerated degree which permits candidates who already hold an Honours degree to complete a qualifying Ordinary LLB degree.

2.1.2 The SER makes reference to the University's aspiration to be "A world-class, world-changing university" and its mission "To bring inspiring people together and create a world-class environment for learning and research, empowering staff and students to discover and share knowledge that can change the world". To implement this vision, the School has focussed on the development of research-led teaching at Honours and Masters level, internationalisation of the student body in the LLB and LLM, and liaison with the legal profession to anticipate changes in the profession. In an effort to further develop the School's learning community, the SER also notes that the School has established a Student Law Council, produced clearer guidance on study skills, and is in the process of developing a Moodle-based Learning and Teaching Hub [Paragraph 3.3.4].

2.2   Staff

2.2.1 In 2016-17, the School of Law currently had 52.7 FTE teaching staff excluding Diploma tutors.

2.2.2 In 2016-17, the Staff Student Ratio (SSR) across the School's undergraduate programmes was 23.6:1, which is in line with University of Glasgow and Russell Group averages.

2.2.3 Excluding tutors who taught on the DPLP, the School had a headcount of 61 staff involved in teaching in 2016-17. The DPLP is taught largely in tutorial groups which do not exceed 12 students.

2.3   Students

Student numbers for 2017-18 are summarised as follows:

Individuals enrolled on one or more courses at each level	4 year degree	Accelerated degree
Level 1	224	42
Level 2	225	28
Level 3	180	N/A
Level 4	185	N/A
PGT	364	N/A

Total	1178	70

2.4   Range of Provision under Review

The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the School of Law:

Undergraduate

- Scots Law LLB
- Scots Law LLB (graduate entry)
- Scots Law with French Language
- Scots Law with French Legal Studies
- Scots Law with German Language
- Scots Law with German Legal Studies
- Scots Law with Italian Language
- Scots Law with Italian Legal Studies
- Scots Law with Portuguese Language
- Scots Law with Russian Language
- Scots Law with Spanish Language
- Scots Law with Spanish Legal Studies
- Scots Law/Business & Management
- Scots Law/Business Economics
- Scots Law/Economic & Social History
- Scots Law/Economics
- Scots Law/English Literature
- Scots Law/Gaelic Language
- Scots Law/History
- Scots Law/Philosophy
- Scots Law/Politics
- Scots Law/Social & Public Policy

Postgraduate

- Diploma in Professional Legal Practice (PgDip)
- Corporate and Finance Law (LLM)
- Intellectual Property and the Digital Economy (LLM)
- International Commercial Law (LLM)
- International Competition Law and Policy (LLM)
- International Economic Law (LLM)
- International Law (LLM)
- International Law and Security (LLM)
- Law (LLM)
- Law (MRes)
- Socio-Legal Studies (MRes)

2.5   Strategic Approach to Enhancing Learning and Teaching

2.5.1 As noted in the SER, the School has a range of shared priorities, and some priorities that are specific to particular programmes. At the School level, the following priorities have been identified:

- Student engagement
- Embedding technology enhanced learning
- Developing the curriculum
- Supporting the student experience

2.5.2 Regarding the LLB, the School approved an *Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Strateg*y in 2016, which aligns with the University *Learning and Teaching Strategy* and the College of Social Sciences *Enhancing the Undergraduate Experience Plan*. Particular priorities are:

- Improving the effectiveness of student feedback and student engagement with feedback.
- Increasing short-term student mobility and embedding the GlasGOw GLOBAL initiative[2].
- Maintaining a curriculum which reflects the expertise and research interests of the School's teaching staff and continues to be relevant to the needs of students.

2.5.3 In regard to the DPLP, the SER states that the DPLP is continuously engaged with both the Law Society of Scotland and the legal profession in Scotland in order to ensure that the programme equips those holding the DPLP for contemporary legal practice. Additional support is also provided via networking and mentoring provision and by inviting staff involved in professional recruitment to give guidance on the attributes sought by employers.

3.   Enhancing the Student Experience

3.1   Admissions, Retention and Success

Recruitment

3.1.1 In the staff survey and at the meeting with MPA staff it was reported that, since the 2017 entry, the admissions process had been administered by the Admissions Team within External Relations (ATwER) under the direction of the School's Admissions Officer. Staff also noted that there had been an unplanned increase in undergraduate admissions over the past two years due to the School receiving a higher turnover of acceptances than normal. In an effort to address this, staff informed the Review Panel that additional tutorial groups had been set up and that split site teaching had taken place to accommodate the increased student numbers. However, it was noted that this had resulted in larger class sizes and difficulties in identifying suitable teaching spaces. Prior to the introduction of ATwER, MPA staff informed the Panel that undergraduate student numbers for the following academic year were usually communicated to the School by March or April and that staff had direct access to admissions data. However, for student entry in 2017/18, staff were not informed of

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[2] GlasGOw GLOBAL is a University initiative of challenge and achievement for undergraduate students on which the College of Social Sciences has led (see: https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/undergraduate/glasgowglobal/)

student numbers until July 2017. Staff also noted that they no longer had direct access to undergraduate application data. To enable the School to better resource future increases in student numbers, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaise with External Relations to ensure that undergraduate admissions data is provided to the School further in advance of the proceeding academic year and that direct access to the admissions database is provided to relevant staff in the School.

Retention and progression

3.1.2 The SER states that retention and progression rates within the LLB are good and exceed those achieved across the College.

Student success

3.1.3 The SER notes that the School performed above the Russell Group average on the employability metric in university league tables, and that the survey of destinations shows high rates of graduate employment. The most popular destination for undergraduates is further study (32.8% of students graduating in the 2014/15 academic session), most of whom progress to complete the DPLP.

3.2 Equality and Diversity

Diversity of student body

3.2.1 The SER notes that, for the LLB and DPLP, the majority of students are white and Scottish (91.2% for the LLB and 91.7% for the DPLP). The SER also notes that this is due to the fact that the main objective for students undertaking the LLB and DPLP is qualification as a solicitor in Scotland. As a result of this, the School's main focus for diversifying recruitment on these degrees is on widening participation through the REACH and Access schemes. In particular, the SER states that adjusted entry requirements for entry onto the LLB are offered to students who participate in the REACH programme. This programme is managed by ATwER who work with 92 target 'low progression' schools in West Central Scotland to facilitate admission to professional degrees, including Law. Entry to the LLB can also be gained through completion of the Access to Law, Business and Accountancy Programme. In the meeting with teaching staff, it was noted that the School has two Advisers of Studies who specialise in providing support for Widening Access students. This was also highlighted in the meeting with the Head of School, Undergraduate Director, Postgraduate Director and Professor Tom Guthrie[3], where it was noted that progression rates to each year of study were broadly comparable to those from non-Widening Participation backgrounds. The Review Panel welcomes the School's efforts to recruit and support students from the REACH and Access programmes and has highlighted this as an area of **good practice**. However, the Panel was also informed that more detailed *performance* data relating to these students was held by External Relations so it was not known if students recruited through the Access and Widening Participation programmes achieved comparable marks and degree classifications to their peers. Therefore the Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with External Relations to compile performance data on Widening Participation and Access students which can be made available to School staff responsible for supporting these students.

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[3] Hereafter, this meeting is referred to as the meeting with the Head of School.

3.3 Supporting Students in their Learning

Supporting students with disabilities and caring responsibilities

3.3.1 At the meeting with teaching staff, the Review Panel enquired as to how the School supported 'non traditional' students such as those with disabilities or caring responsibilities. Staff noted that the Undergraduate Law Student Handbook contained helpful information for students regarding disability support and that the School had a designated Disability Officer responsible for liaising with the Disability Service and passing on relevant information to course convenors and Advisers of Studies relating to adjustments required in teaching delivery and coursework assessment. However, staff also acknowledged that more work could be done to support students with caring responsibilities. In particular, it was noted that caring responsibilities could often act as a barrier to students wishing to participate in international placements. In an effort to address this, staff noted that the School was in the process of developing shorter term international mobility opportunities. The Review Panel welcomed the School's work in this area and **recommends** that the School continues to develop short term mobility opportunities accessible to students with caring responsibilities and that, wherever possible, workshops and events are held during normal working hours. The Review Panel also **recommends** that the School considers providing information about support and opportunities for students with caring responsibilities in the Undergraduate Student Handbook and via Advisers of Studies.

Advising system

3.3.2 The SER notes that Advisers of Studies provide pastoral support and curriculum advice to all undergraduate LLB students. The Chief Adviser is supported by a team of 35 Advisers of Studies and an Advising Support Administrator, who deals with administrative matters related to advising. Students meet their Adviser before the start of each academic session and at the start of the second semester, with particular emphasis placed on seeing students who appear to be at risk based on their performance during the first semester. As noted at the meeting with teaching staff, the School has recently introduced a co-adviser system. This system pairs Advisers to ensure that, if a student's Adviser is absent, the student can still obtain assistance from their co-adviser. The Review Panel was also informed that Advisers are given the opportunity to undertake training on crisis management and that regular sessions are provided to Advisers by Counselling and Psychological Services. The Review Panel recognises the School's commitment to supporting its students through the advising system, particularly through the introduction of a co-adviser system, and **commends** this as an example of outstanding practice in the School.

Undergraduate Law Student Handbook

3.3.3 In the SER it is noted that the School re-introduced a comprehensive Student Handbook for the LLB which sets out student expectations and provides a range of useful information regarding student support, assessment and feedback, study abroad opportunities, employability and student societies. First year students are provided with an abbreviated hard copy of this document and the full electronic version is available to view on Moodle. The Review Panel noted that the Undergraduate Handbook was a helpful and well written document which, if consulted and acted upon by students, would support them in their learning and approach to legal study. However, in the meeting with undergraduate students, the Panel enquired about students' awareness of the Handbook and were informed that most students had not encountered the document. The Review Panel recognises the Undergraduate Law Student Handbook as an example of **good practice** and suggests that the Handbook is more widely publicised amongst undergraduate students.

Inclusion and community building

3.3.4 The SER notes that the School has developed an inclusive learning community in an effort to enhance the student learning experience. In particular, the School has established an Undergraduate Student Law Council comprising of the student class representatives from each year of study on the LLB and representatives from the Student Law Society. Meetings are also attended by the Director of Undergraduate Study and the Head of School Administration. The Council is student-led and provides students with an opportunity to raise any issues and ensure that the student voice is clearly heard within the School. Furthermore the School provides support for the student Law Society and organises curricula and extra-curricula activities such as networking, skills development and employability events, which students are encouraged to attend. In an effort to enhance community building on the DPLP, the SER notes that students are regularly required to work in teams and that staff have adopted an open door policy to enable students to meet with staff members at any convenient time. In addition to this, the School has its own library which includes a group area where discussion is permitted. The School has also invested in updating an existing student common room to help foster a spirit of collaboration and community among students. At the meetings with undergraduate students and diploma students the Review Panel was informed that there was a strong sense of collegiality amongst the student body and that this was strengthened through the organisation of events, programme inductions and the introduction of Peer Assisted Learning for first year students. Therefore, the Review Panel **commends** the strategies of inclusion and community building by which the School has attempted to ensure that all staff in the School are committed to supporting the student experience.

3.4 Student Engagement

Course evaluation survey response rates

3.4.1 As noted in the SER and at the meeting with the Head of School, students are asked to complete anonymous electronic course evaluation surveys for each of their courses near the end of teaching. Following completion, teaching staff are sent a statistical summary of the survey results for their course and requested to produce a Summary and Response Document which provides a summary of student responses along with any action that will be taken in response to any issues highlighted by students. This document is made available to students on Moodle within three weeks of the survey closing date. Alongside this system, the School has retained its long standing practice of 'minute papers' comprising of a short survey which students complete within one minute. This survey is distributed to students in the middle of term, enabling course conveners to identify and resolve issues immediately. While the Review Panel acknowledged that these methods of gathering student feedback were well embedded across courses, they shared the School's concerns that response rates for EvaSys surveys were typically 10%-20% and noted that this was significantly lower than the University's 49% average response rate for electronic surveys. Therefore, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with the Senate Office and consults the good practice guide on the Senate Office Website to develop a strategy for increasing student response rates for EvaSys surveys.

Placements and internships

3.4.2 The SER notes that, in response to student demand, internships are offered by the School over the Summer period for LLM students[4]. In particular, the SER highlights

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[4] These internships are organised by the School in conjunction with alumni and industrial links, and take place externally.

two internships in the Intellectual Property and Digital Economy, and Corporate and Financial Law programmes. The SER also notes that practitioner experts visit the School to talk to LLM students about their work. Furthermore, the School disseminates information about job opportunities, placements and other relevant information to all students through an employability Twitter account and a dedicated Moodle page. The issue of internships was discussed at the meeting with undergraduate students. At this meeting, some students informed the Review Panel that they had not received much guidance or support from the School and had secured internships themselves or via the University's Careers Service. Some students also noted that they had not been aware of application deadlines for Summer placements. The Panel noted that the graduate employment market for Law was competitive and that Summer placements were a prerequisite for securing traineeships at many firms. It was also noted that most universities offered students guidance and support with regards to placements and internships prior to embarking on their dissertations, and that placements typically took place between the second and third years of their degree programme. Therefore, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School provides undergraduate students with more information (and communicates existing information more effectively) about internship deadlines and greater assistance in securing placement opportunities during the first two years of their degree programme, and that efforts should be particularly focussed on providing early support for students undertaking the two-year accelerated LLB.

Employability and graduate attributes

3.4.3 The SER notes that extensive support is provided to undergraduate students in regard to employability and the development of graduate attributes. The SER also notes that the School has a strong employability programme which is open to all students and led by a designated Employability Officer. The programme consists of several events including a series of Legal Futures talks, an annual Law Fair and careers events, run either by the Careers Service or by Human Resources staff from law firms. The School has also organised a variety of credit-bearing placements at organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Govan Law Centre and Shelter. The issue of employability was raised at the meeting with undergraduate students, who informed the Review Panel that they would appreciate greater support to enhance their graduate attributes, including specific workshops or training to develop their interview and application writing skills. Students also noted that they did not possess sufficient note-taking skills to record key information in classes and develop these notes at a later point. Given that the School acknowledges in its SER that the ability to take clear notes of discussions or evidence is an essential skill for professional lawyers, the Panel noted that this was an area that required greater attention. In addition to this, several students informed the Panel that they would welcome further assistance to improve their problem solving skills, particularly in relation to structuring answers to problem-based learning questions. Therefore, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School's curriculum places greater emphasis on developing students' graduate attributes (including their application writing, interview, problem solving and note-taking skills) during the early stages of the undergraduate degree programme, particularly for accelerated LLB students who have less time to nurture these skills.

4.   Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

4.1   Learning and Teaching

Study abroad

4.1.1 At the meeting with the Head of School, it was noted that the School has the best record of study abroad of any Law School in Scotland with around 50% of its current third year cohort opting to study abroad for semester/sessional exchange and another 10% taking part in short-term mobility. It was also noted in the SER that 134 students will visit the School from partner institutions. In addition to these longer term study opportunities, the School also has shorter term mobility opportunities such as the Comparative Law Project, which involves a partnership with Johannes Gutenberg University and a Summer School at the Brandenburg Police Academy. These opportunities are facilitated by the School's International Team, consisting of several key staff, an experienced International Administrator, and a selection of students from years two to four of the LLB. The Review Panel recognises the School's efforts to promote internationalisation and **commends** the range of student mobility opportunities available within the School and encourages the School to continue developing these opportunities.

4.1.2 Study abroad opportunities were also raised in the meeting with undergraduate students. At this meeting students spoke positively about their experiences of studying abroad and learning about different international law systems. However, several students raised concerns about perceived differences in the level of difficulty between courses at different international institutions. In particular, concerns were expressed about unfamiliar assessment methods and a lack of marking consistency between institutions. Furthermore, students raised concerns about the grade translation process and a perceived lack of clarity regarding how their third year marks were calculated. Some students also noted that grade conversion tables had been altered by the time they had returned to Glasgow, due to a central decision by the University to standardise conversion tables across the institution, which further added to their confusion around the grade translation process. As a result, there was a belief among some study abroad students that they had been disadvantaged and would have achieved higher marks if they had remained in Glasgow for their third year. In addition to this, students informed the Review Panel that they would have appreciated more information about the differing academic expectations of overseas institutions before commencing their year abroad. Consequently, while the Review Panel recognises the efforts of the School to promote internationalisation, it **recommends** that students are provided with more information about academic expectations at different overseas institutions before embarking on their study abroad opportunity. The Review Panel also **recommends** that the grade conversion process is reiterated when students return from their year abroad and that the School reflects on the students' perception that there were differences in the level of difficulty experienced at different international institutions.

Law with Languages

4.1.3 As highlighted in the SER, the School acknowledges that a high proportion of students who originally embark on a Law with Languages degree opt to discontinue the language component of their degree in their first or second year and move to a single honours LLB degree. In an effort to address this, the School has introduced a Continental Legal Cultures course which includes regular meetings with other students on the same programme to practice language skills. The Review Panel welcomes the School's efforts to attend to the issue of high language drop-out rates and suggests

that the School considers the possibility of introducing a '4+1' degree model for students studying a language alongside Law, which might encourage retention by placing less pressure on the year abroad and providing students with more time to improve their language skills.

E-Learning strategy

4.1.4 In regard to the School's e-learning strategy, the SER notes that the School has an E-Learning Officer whose main role is to support the use of technology in learning and teaching in the School. This member of staff is involved in a number of projects and will be establishing a benchmark for the use of Moodle and developing a new e-learning strategy for the School. All courses in the School have a Moodle page containing course materials and reading materials. As noted in the meeting with the Head of School, Law is also piloting the use of Aropa for peer review on the Obligations 1B course. Furthermore, blended learning has been incorporated into the DPLP, where students are provided with e-modules and filmed resources. Online quizzes are also used in assessments and for self-study. In addition to this, class response systems have been used to support teaching on the DPLP and LLM programmes. The Review Panel welcomed the School's efforts to embed blended and online learning into its curriculum and its appointment of an e-learning officer. However, at the meeting with the Head of School, the view was expressed that blended learning and online assessment could be more widely utilised across the School. Therefore, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School continues to develop an academically driven and co-ordinated e-learning strategy with a view to extending the use of technology and blended online-learning (including lecture recording) in learning and teaching across the School's curriculum.

Disseminating good practice

4.1.5 The SER notes that the identification and dissemination of good practice is encouraged through the School's annual course review. This process provides a channel for discussion and wider dissemination of teaching practice through the relevant committee chairs and programme directors. Conveners of undergraduate Staff-Student Liaison Committees are requested to prepare a short report about the key learning and teaching issues highlighted in the Committees and are invited to mention any aspects of good practice raised by staff and students. This report is then disseminated to staff and students at the beginning of each semester. The School also publishes a monthly online staff newsletter which updates colleagues on new developments in learning and teaching. Furthermore, in 2017 the School established its first Learning and Teaching Day, which included presentations on the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy, blended learning, and the use of technology in legal education. This event provided staff with the opportunity to disseminate good practice and learn about new developments in learning and teaching within the School and across the University. The Review Panel welcomed the School's efforts to highlight and disseminate good practice, particularly through Learning and Teaching Day, and has identified this as an area of **good practice**.

4.2 Assessment and Feedback

Learning opportunities

4.2.1 The SER states that students on the LLB are provided with a range of learning opportunities. In their first year, students are given guidance on legal problem solving and are encouraged to use these skills, in a team context, in a Moot Court Room. Group work is also utilised on the second year Property Law course, which takes the form of a hybrid problem based learning course, where students take responsibility in

tutorials for working their way through complex legal problems with a member of staff to facilitate discussion and analysis. The Review Panel welcomed the range of learning styles (including the use on a Moot Court Room, group work and problem based learning) that students are exposed to and has identified this as an area of **good practice** in the School.

Formative assessment and feedback

4.2.2 The SER states that the School's policy is that students should have opportunities to receive formative feedback in all of their courses, and that formative assessment is mandatory in all compulsory Level 1 and Honours courses. For example, in the Obligations 1A course, students are provided with detailed feedback and the opportunity to attend a one-to-one session to discuss their performance – feedback clinics have also been introduced at Levels 1 and 2. Furthermore, at Honours level, students are allowed to submit a draft chapter of their undergraduate dissertation for feedback. The School also has a policy that all work returned to students must provide them with feedback and that, for coursework, this is usually provided on a standardised feedback sheet. As a result of these changes, implemented during the 2016-17 academic year, the School recorded the largest improvement in the University for the four NSS questions relating to assessment and feedback, with an improvement from 57% satisfaction in 2016, to 68.2% in 2017. The Review Panel noted that providing feedback on draft dissertation chapters would help to motivate students and ensure that they were proceeding in the right direction in regard to chapter structure and writing style. The Panel also noted that use of a standardised feedback sheet would help to contribute to consistency in marking and the standard of feedback. Therefore, the Review Panel **commends** the School's efforts to embed formative assessment and provide students with regular formative feedback opportunities.

Marking and feedback on the DPLP

4.2.3 Regarding assessment and feedback on the DPLP, the SER notes that tutors on the programme are required to mark assessed work within seven days of submission. The senior tutor on the course then has a further seven days in which to moderate a random sample of assessments, as well as looking at any borderline cases. The issue of feedback was raised in the meeting with Diploma students, who informed the Review Panel that they received feedback on their work in a five minute one-on-one session with their tutor and noted that this was usually a helpful experience. However, concerns were raised by several students about a perceived lack of consistency regarding the marks awarded, and feedback provided, from tutors. Concerns were also raised that, given the competitiveness of law, low marks for individual assessments could jeopardise students' employment prospects. This issue was discussed at the meeting with teaching staff who acknowledged that it was often challenging to moderate the marks and feedback provided by large numbers of Diploma tutors. At the meeting with Diploma staff, it was noted that, on some courses, particularly those with high staff turnover, there was a degree of inconsistency in regard to the constructiveness of feedback. In order to remedy this, Diploma staff were receptive to the suggestion that more training and guidance be provided in relation to marking and feedback. Furthermore, it was noted that a peer observation scheme had been introduced at the start of the 2017-18 academic year which offered tutors an opportunity to observe an experienced tutor who regularly receives positive feedback from students. In an effort to ensure greater consistency between tutorial groups, Diploma staff suggested that this scheme could be developed further by inviting experienced tutors to attend the tutorials of newer members of staff, before providing them with feedback on their teaching. Diploma staff also suggested that a seminar series could be organised, where staff from other universities could be invited to share good practice. The Review Panel welcomed these suggestions and **recommends** that

the School liaises with LEADS to provide further support and guidance for Diploma tutors (particularly in relation to assessment and feedback) and develop a system for moderating marking and feedback to ensure greater consistency. While not specific, issues were also raised in relation to completion rates for the University's Equality and Diversity training. Therefore, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School ensures that all School staff, including Diploma staff, undertake the University's mandatory Equality and Diversity training.

Student grade profiles

4.2.4 The SER notes that, within the LLB programme, relatively few students in first and second year achieve A grades. At the meeting with teaching staff, it was noted that the School had attempted to address this issue by providing detailed feedback on formative assessments and by spending time explaining techniques for answering problem questions in lectures. Combined with this, the School recently introduced a formative exam and feedback sessions, where students could receive detailed verbal feedback on their assessments. However, staff raised concerns about the lack of student attendance at these sessions. Additionally, the School has a pending application to the Learning and Teaching Development Fund to run a project seeking to develop more effective strategies to improve attainment in large first year classes. While the Review Panel recognised that efforts have been made to address the low grades of students in first and second year, Panel members noted that the grade profile variance suggested that standards are not consistent across all courses. The Panel also noted that the LLB grade descriptor was subject specific and required updating. Therefore, to improve student attainment in first and second year, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School reviews their grade descriptors, assessment criteria and Intended Learning Outcomes to ensure greater consistency across courses and enhance students' assessment literacy.

Assessment policy

4.2.5 The Undergraduate Law Student Handbook notes that feedback for summative assessment should be returned to students no later than 20 working days after the submission date of the assignment and that feedback for formative assessment should be provided within 15 working days. The Review Panel noted that this was contrary to the University's Assessment Policy which requires that all feedback on assessment should normally be returned to students within 15 working days of submission. Therefore, the Review Panel urgently **recommends** that the School revises its procedures and updates the Student Handbook to reflect the University's policy of returning feedback to students within 15 working days of submission.

4.3 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)

Diploma tutors

4.3.1 As stated in the SER, the School provides a Diploma in Professional Legal Practice (DPLP) which is accredited by the Law Society of Scotland. This programme comprises the first part of the vocational stage of legal education and is followed by a two-year traineeship. To ensure that students are adequately prepared for their traineeships, the DPLP is taught almost entirely by tutors currently engaged in the practice of Law. Responsibility for curriculum design and development is delegated to senior tutors (members of the legal profession who are experts in their respective fields) who play a role similar to that of a course convener. These members of staff are also supported by the School to ensure that courses comply with University policies and regulations. In the meeting with Diploma tutors, the Review Panel was impressed with the commitment of these staff, their collegiality, and their willingness to engage in

future training and skills development if required. Therefore, the Review Panel has identified the Diploma tutors' engagement with learning and teaching, and the support provided to them, as an area of **good practice** in the School. The Review Panel also **recommends** that the School considers the possibility of formally acknowledging the contribution of Diploma staff whose teaching is of a particularly high standard and that this might be achieved by nominating them for Teaching Excellence Awards.

Learning and Teaching Space

4.3.2 As noted in the SER, almost all teaching for the DPLP takes place in the Sir Alexander Stone Building, where the Director and Deputy Director and support staff are based. The SER also notes that concerns have been expressed about the suitability of some of the tutorial rooms, particularly the shortage of power points and limited table top space. Concerns were also raised in the meeting with Diploma staff who informed the Review Panel that teaching rooms were not conducive to teaching practical classes, which require larger and more flexible teaching spaces than those required for more traditional teaching activities. While the Review Panel acknowledges that the allocation of teaching spaces is managed centrally through Space Management and Timetabling (SMT), and that there is a shortage of teaching spaces across the University, particularly at peak times, it **recommends** that the School liaises with SMT to investigate the possibility of prioritising particular teaching spaces for the DPLP.

4.4 Engaging and Supporting Staff

Early career support

4.4.1 As noted in the SER, all new full-time staff go through an induction process which introduces them to the School and to specific aspects of its activity. Information is also provided through a Staff Handbook and a Staff Moodle page. Furthermore, new staff are mentored through the Early Career Development Programme (ECDP) and research active staff are mentored either individually or are supported through their engagement with one of the School's research groups. In order to support their integration into the academic environment, new staff on the ECDP programme receive a 50% reduction in their teaching loads in their first year, and a 25% reduction in their second year. At the meeting with early career staff, it was reported by some staff that there was a degree of inconsistency regarding mentorship and remission from teaching. However, most staff noted that they had been well supported by the School and that they had received the appropriate reductions to their teaching loads. Therefore, the Review Panel's overall impression was that the mentoring of, and support for, early career staff was an area of strength in the School.

4.4.2 In the PSR Staff Survey and at the meeting with early career staff, some staff expressed the view that research was often prioritised over teaching and that greater recognition should be given to staff who delivered exceptional teaching. Therefore, the Review Panel suggests that the School should review their practice to ensure that excellent teaching is acknowledged and has parity of esteem with excellent research.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

4.4.3 With regard to Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), the SER notes that GTAs are expected to undertake statutory training by LEADS. Following this, the responsibility falls on the course convener with whom the GTA is working to provide support to the GTAs involved in teaching. Regular meetings are held with GTAs and guidance is offered on materials that will be covered in tutorials to ensure that students on the course have a consistent experience. GTAs involved in assessment are also provided with specific training. At the meeting with GTAs, the Review Panel was informed that GTAs were well supported by the School and that course conveners provided them

with detailed notes for each tutorial that they taught. GTAs also noted that they were invited to School research group meeting and spoke positively about their experiences of teaching undergraduate students. While the Review Panel recognises the efforts of the School to train and embed GTAs into the School's teaching culture, it suggests that the School liaises with Dr Amanda Pate (LEADS) to consider how widely GTAs could be provided with the opportunity to undertake the Developing as a Teacher in Higher Education (DAT HE) course, which could enable them to further enhance their confidence with teaching and gain professional recognition as a Recognising Excellence in Teaching Associate Fellow. At this meeting and at the meeting with MPA staff, the Panel was informed that there had been delays in the payment of GTAs due to problems outwith the School in ensuring that GTAs are enrolled onto University systems. The Panel expressed concerns about these delays to payment, particularly for those students on fractional teaching contracts who were reliant upon regular payment to fund their PhDs. However, the Panel was reassured by GTAs that this issue had now been resolved.

Administrative support

4.4.4 The SER notes that front line support for students and all aspects of learning and teaching in the School is provided by administrative teams in the Undergraduate Office, PGT Office and Diploma Office. At the meeting with MPA staff, the Review Panel was informed that staff found the School a supportive and collegiate environment to work in. The Panel was also informed that the School administration team was the first point of contact for most students and that members of administrative staff played an important pastoral role, listening to students' concerns and resolving any issues. This supportive approach is typified by the open door policy adopted by the Diploma Office. The Panel also noted that MPA staff were enthusiastic about their role and committed to enhancing the student experience. Consequently, the Review Panel has identified the supportive approach of administrative support staff as an area of **good practice** in the School.

5. Academic Standards

5.1.1 The Review Panel considered that the School of Law had a variety of robust and effective procedures in place which ensure that the School is engaged in a continual process of self-reflection and self-evaluation with regard to academic and pedagogical practice.

Currency and Validity of Programmes

5.1.2 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, the programmes offered by the School of Law were current and valid in the light of developing knowledge and practice within the subject area.

6. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for enhancement

6.1 Key strengths

The Review Panel identified the following areas as key strengths:

- The School's commitment to supporting students through the co-adviser system.
- The School's leading role in promoting and sustaining internationalisation.

- The School's strategies for inclusion and community building.

- Recruitment from REACH and Access programmes and additional support provided to such students once they enter the School.

- The range of learning styles to which students are exposed.

- The engagement and commitment of staff, most especially Diploma tutors and administrative support staff.

- The Undergraduate Law Student Handbook.

6.2 Areas for enhancement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for further work.

- Curriculum development, particularly in relation to developing graduate attributes, e-learning and ensuring greater consistency of ILOs and assessment criteria.

- Consistency of marking and feedback on the DPLP.

- Support for securing internships.

- Development of short term mobility opportunities and communication of the grade conversion process.

- Standards of teaching accommodation, particularly on the DPLP.

- Access to undergraduate admissions data.

- Recognition for Diploma tutors.

Specific recommendations addressing these areas for work are listed below, as are a number of further recommendations on particular matters.

7. Conclusion

The Review Panel concluded that the School of Law is committed to enhancing the quality of teaching provision across its programmes. In particular, the Review Panel recognises the School's commitment to recruit students from the University's REACH and Access programmes and to support its students through the co-adviser system. The School has also taken effective steps to promote internationalisation and enhance the student learning experience through the use of multiple learning styles, formative assessment and the re-introduction of a detailed Undergraduate Student Handbook. Furthermore, the Panel recognises the commitment of Diploma tutors, the outstanding quality of administrative support and the strategies of inclusion and community building by which the School has attempted to ensure that all staff are committed to supporting the student experience . The Review Panel makes a number of recommendations, identifying opportunities for the School to further enhance the quality of its learning and teaching provision. However, these recommendations should not detract from the Panel's overall view of Law as a successful School within the University.

7.1 Good Practice

- Efforts to recruit and support students from the REACH and Access programmes. [Paragraph 3.2.1]

- The Undergraduate Law Student Handbook. [Paragraph 3.3.3]

- Sharing good practice through the Learning and Teaching Day. [Paragraph 4.1.5]

- The range of learning styles (including the use of a Moot Court Room, group work and problem based learning) to which students are exposed. [Paragraph 4.2.1]

- Engagement of Diploma tutors with learning and teaching. [Paragraph 4.3.1]

- The supportive approach of administrative support staff. [Paragraph 4.4.4]

7.2 Commendations

The Review Panel commends the School of Law on the following, which are listed **in order of appearance** in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel recognises the School's commitment to supporting its students through the advising system, particularly through the introduction of a co-adviser system, and **commends** this as an example of outstanding practice in the School. [Paragraph 3.3.2]

Commendation 2

The Review Panel **commends** the strategies of inclusion and community building by which the School has attempted to ensure that all staff in the School are committed to supporting the student experience. [Paragraph 3.3.4]

Commendation 3

The Review Panel recognises the School's efforts to promote internationalisation and **commends** the range of study abroad opportunities available within the School and encourages the School to continue developing these opportunities. [Paragraph 4.1.1]

Commendation 4

Review Panel **commends** the School's efforts to embed formative assessment and provide students with regular formative feedback opportunities. [Paragraph 4.2.2]

7.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the School of Law 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**.

Teaching strategy and curriculum development

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School's curriculum places greater emphasis on developing students' graduate attributes (including their application writing, interview, problem solving and note-taking skills) during the early stages of the undergraduate degree programme, particularly for accelerated LLB students who have less time to nurture these skills. [Paragraph 3.4.3]

For the attention of: The Head of School and Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School continues to develop an academically driven and co-ordinated e-learning strategy with a view to further embedding the use of technology and blended online-learning (including lecture recording) in learning and teaching across the School's curriculum. [Paragraph 4.1.4]

For the attention of: The Head of School

Recommendation 3

To improve student attainment in first and second year, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School reviews their grade descriptors, assessment criteria and Intended Learning Outcomes to ensure greater consistency across courses and enhance students' assessment literacy. [Paragraph 4.2.4]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: College of Social Sciences Dean of Learning and Teaching and Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service

Feedback on assessments and student feedback

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with LEADS to provide further support and guidance for Diploma tutors (particularly in relation to assessment and feedback) and develop a system for moderating marking and feedback to ensure greater consistency. [Paragraph 4.2.3]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel urgently **recommends** that the School revises its procedures and updates the Student Handbook to reflect the University's policy of returning feedback to students within 15 working days of submission. [Paragraph 4.2.5]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: Senate Office

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with the Senate Office and consults the good practice guide on the Senate Office Website to develop a strategy for increasing student response rates for EvaSys surveys. [Paragraph 3.4.1]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: Senate Office

Student support

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School provides undergraduate students with more information (and communicates existing information more effectively) about internship deadlines and greater assistance in securing placement opportunities during the first two years of their degree programme, and that efforts should be particularly focussed on providing early support for students undertaking the two-year accelerated LLB. [Paragraph 3.4.2]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: Careers Service

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with External Relations to compile performance data on Widening Participation and Access students which can be made available to School staff responsible for supporting these students. [Paragraph 3.2.1]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: External Relations

International mobility

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School continues to develop short term mobility opportunities accessible to students with caring responsibilities and that, wherever possible, workshops and events are held during normal working hours. The Review Panel also **recommends** that the School considers providing information about support and opportunities for students with caring responsibilities in the Undergraduate Student Handbook and via Advisers of Studies. [Paragraph 3.3.1]

For the attention of: The Head of School

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that students are provided with more information about academic expectations at different overseas institutions before embarking on their study abroad opportunity. The Review Panel also **recommends** that the grade conversion process is reiterated when students return from their year abroad and that the School reflects on the students' perception that there were differences in the level of difficulty experienced at different international institutions. [Paragraph 4.1.2]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: Translation of Grades Working Group

Teaching accommodation

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with Space Management and Timetabling to investigate the possibility of prioritising particular teaching spaces for the DPLP. [Paragraph 4.3.2]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: Space Management and Timetabling

Admissions

Recommendation 12

To enable the School to better resource future increases in student numbers, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School liaises with External Relations to ensure that undergraduate admissions data is provided to the School further in advance of the proceeding academic year and that direct access to the admissions database is provided to relevant staff in the School. [Paragraph 3.1.1]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: External Relations

Recognition for Diploma tutors

Recommendation 13

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School considers the possibility of formally acknowledging the contribution of Diploma staff whose teaching is of a particularly high standard and that this might be achieved by nominating them for Teaching Excellence Awards. [Paragraph 4.3.1]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service

Equality and Diversity training

Recommendation 14

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School ensures that all School staff, including Diploma staff, undertake the University's mandatory Equality and Diversity training. [Paragraph 4.2.3]

For the attention of: The Head of School
For information: Equality and Diversity Unit