UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 14 November 2008

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Review of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences held on Monday 12 November 2007

Mrs Jackie McCluskey, Clerk to the Review Panel

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The Review Panel commended the Department on the overall quality of its provisions, its maintenance of standards and for its conscientious approach to the student experience and to research-led teaching. The Panel were pleased to note that the feedback from staff and students was very positive.

The Review Panel commended the Department in particular for its use of MOODLE and encouraged it to continue to develop the use of MOODLE further to support student learning.

The inadequate teaching space concerned the Review Panel and it requested that the Director of Estates and Buildings should meet with the Dean to address the provision of appropriate teaching space

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

> The Panel **recommends** that the Department review the General Paper and Dissertation in the context of the introduction of a split diet examination as a matter of urgency to identify ways in which the Department might be able to continue to offer the General Paper and Dissertation option. [Paragraph C.3.1]
>
> For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

> In light of this recommendation the Department has instigated a thorough review of the General Paper. The department felt that, with a split diet, the paper has become even more relevant. As part of this review we also looked at the number of student contact hours associated with the General Paper and their format. At the moment, the GP is based on four sessions of 2 hours each: the first one is a general presentation of the GP; the three other sessions are "student-led": they are based on discussions with the students about three major questions (What is sociology / anthropology? What's the point of sociology / anthropology? How have sociologists / anthropologists contributed to recent public debates?). The students currently sit a three-hour unseen exam.

We have decided to keep the format roughly the same but are going to increase the contact hours and slightly change the course content. These changes will be implemented in 2009-10.

We are currently modularizing the UG Honours degree programme to take account of the impact of semesterisation. We will be altering the credit weighting for this course from 30 credits to 20 credits. We will be submitting a revised PIP for approval before the end of October 08.

In taking these decisions we are aware that it is a paper that causes a great deal of concern to the students, however after sitting the exam many of the students have viewed the experience positively. There is also no evidence to suggest that students are performing badly in this paper or that it is inadvertently affecting there grades.

Recommendation 2:

*The Review Panel was encouraged to note that the Department was discussing the issue of staff workload and **strongly recommends** that the HOD should engage with the Faculty and colleagues across the University with a view to developing a transparent workload model as a matter of urgency. [Paragraph C.6.8]*

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

The Department has set up a working group to develop a workload model. This group includes representatives from all grades of academic staff. It is due to report by the end of this semester. It will base the model on the faculty workload document which it will modify where necessary to take account of local issues.

Recommendation 3:

*The Review Panel **recommends** that the Dean and HOD should review the Department's overall teaching space provision with the Director of Estates and Building as a matter of priority and investigate the possibility of providing a computer in each tutorial room for MOODLE access. It was suggested that this might be supported by the University-wide bid being submitted by the Vice Principal (Learning, Teaching and Internationalisation). In addition, the Panel **recommends** that the Department should arrange for appropriate training for staff in the use of the audio-visual equipment available within Lecture Theatres for those who feel they would benefit from it. [Paragraph C.6.4]*

For the attention of: **Dean/Head of Department/Director of Estates and Buildings**

Response: Head of Department

All staff have been offered training in audio-visual equipment through the AV services.

Clerk's Note: This will be addressed by the training now being offered by IT for all staff following the upgrade of the facilities during summer 2008.

Response: Dean

We note the concerns regarding the Department's teaching accommodation and the recommendation for a review of the teaching space provision and the availability of computers in tutorial rooms.

We are, however, pleased to report that major improvements to the teaching accommodation have taken place since the DPTLA review of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences.

Over the summer of 2008, the University has spent approximately £0.5m on an upgrade to the Adam Smith building, and in particular for a complete rebuild of the Lecture Theatre T415 (at a cost of £0.35m). The lecture theatre has been brought up to state-of-the-art specification, including completely new seating, lighting, heating, etc, as well as new audio-visual equipment. A large proportion of windows in the Adam Smith Building have been replaced, with the remaining old windows in the teaching block scheduled to be replaced next year. The refurbishment of other teaching accommodation in the university is an ongoing project. The Faculty is working closely with Central Room Bookings to try to ensure the teaching accommodation for SAASS is as good as possible. Pressures on teaching accommodation for all Departments in the Faculty persist; particularly in ensuring appropriate quality and size of rooms. In session 2008/9 the Faculty, in conjunction with Central Room Bookings, plans to look closely at the range of difficulties which have arisen and identify actions to be undertaken by the Departments, Faculty, Central Room Bookings and other parts of University Services to improve the position for future sessions.

The University' IT services have undertaken a major upgrade to the technology and audio-visual equipment in the University's centrally bookable teaching spaces over the summer. This has involved bringing all 120 rooms up to a set standard which includes screens, data projectors, control panels, improved networks with wireless connectivity, and a resident PC set up and maintained to a defined university standard. The PCs are in the process of being installed, with the work completed in most teaching rooms. The PCs will be fully connected to the internet, and it will therefore be possible to access MOODLE (as well as other software packages) from the teaching rooms. The IT Services Teaching Team are running courses to support staff in using the new AV technology.

Response: Estates and Buildings

The Director of Estates has advised the Campus Planning Manager to expect a request from the Dean/HOD in respect of the suggested review.

This matter should be referred to the Director of IT Services in order that appropriate hardware can be considered. This may be in conjunction with the aforementioned VP.

Recommendation 4:

> *The Panel **recommends** that all staff should engage with MOODLE and that the Department should develop a set of guidelines for staff and students clarifying what will be issued in hard copy and what will be posted on MOODLE. [C.6.1]*
>
> *For the attention of:*   **Head of Department/Academic Staff**

Response:

> We continue to roll out and extend our use of Moodle and are discussing with students what they can expect to receive in hard copy and what we can place on Moodle. There is however a huge cost implication here. Ideally we would like to be able to provide all students with a hard copy of all course guides, however we estimate that to do so would cost around £8000. Given the current financial environment we have to work in, we clearly cannot meet all the students' demands in this area.

Recommendation 5:

> *The Panel **recommends** that the Faculty and Department should consider earlier opening hours for the computer rooms to address the request from the PG student body for access to computer labs before 9 a.m. [Paragraph C.6.5]*
>
> *For the attention of:*   **Dean/Head of Department**

Joint response:

> Although the Adam Smith Building labs are formally open at 9.00, they often open earlier (usually from about 8.30). However, the time before 9.00 is often used for server and network development work and the maintenance of lab software and hardware, so that opening before 9.00 is not guaranteed.
>
> The main University Library, however, is near-by and is open from 7.15am to 2.00am. Over the last two years there has been a substantial increase in the number and specification of computers available there. All but the most specialist software that is available in the Adam Smith Building is also available in the University Library.
>
> Clerk's Note: The Convener welcomes the Department's efforts to open the computer labs earlier and suggests that where opening before 9.00 a.m. is operationally difficult, the Department clearly explains to students the alternative arrangements available.

Recommendation 6:

> *The Panel **recommends** that the Department engages with the Careers Service and the Learning and Teaching Centre with respect to employability and PDP and seek to make explicit their existing practices.   In addition the Head of Department should ensure that staff are given the appropriate training to understand PDP. [Paragraph C.4.4]*
>
> *For the attention of:*   **Head of Department**

Response:

We are aware that this is an area that we need to strengthen and we are looking at how best we can achieve this. In the first instance we will take our lead from Faculty in our development of employability and PDP policies.

Recommendation 7:

*The Panel **recommends that** the Department review the processes for communicating information on Faculty events, including induction, to their students to better promote the events. [Paragraph F.2]*

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

We are using Moodle for this purpose. As both the staff and students become more aware of Moodle and use it more regularly we feel that this will become the normal medium through which students are made aware of all Faculty and University events.

Recommendation 8:

*The Panel **recommends** that the Department produces a set of staff induction procedures which should include the issue of a departmental procedures guide to all new staff. [Paragraph C.6.7]*

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

These are in preparation. For the last new member of staff we appointed we put together a brief induction package. We will extend that this year and will include more on departmental and University procedures, focussing in particular on marking and exam arrangements.

Recommendation 9:

*The Panel **recommends** that the Department adopt a more general, collegiate approach towards Peer Review and extend it beyond the GTAs to all staff as a means of disseminating good practice. [Paragraph C.6.9]*

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

Peer review is available to all staff should they wish it. There is obviously a lack of communication and this has been brought to the attention of the Departmental Teaching Committee. They will take steps to ensure that the availability of Peer Review is more widely known.

Recommendation 10:

*The Panel **recommends** that information on attendance should be made more explicit in the course handbooks and highlighted to students at induction so that they are made aware of the required levels of attendance. [Paragraph F.3]*

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

This information has been included in the relevant course guides.

Recommendation 11:

*The Panel **recommends** that the Department make its diversity and equal opportunities policies and procedures explicit to communicate to the wider University community their work in this area.   [Paragraph C.5.2]*

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

The Department has checked to ensure that it complies with all the University Diversity and Equal Opportunity procedures and policies.

Clerk's Note: The Convener confirms that the Review Panel had no concerns over the Department's compliance with the University Diversity and Equality policies and procedures, rather, the Panel felt that the Department was not explicit enough about its good work in this area.

Recommendation 12:

*The Panel **recommends** that the Department no longer operates a system of permitting students to "appeal the mark" and thereby having their essays remarked to ensure consistency with the University's appeal procedures. [Paragraph C.3.3].*

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

This has been done.

Recommendation 13:

*As a routine issue the Review Panel **recommends** that the HOD should ensure all staff read and fully understand the University's IT regulations as outlined on the University's website at http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/it/regulationscommitteesandpolicies [Paragraph C.6.1]*

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Response:

This has been done.