

## Periodic Subject Review (PRS)

Review of School of Psychology: 25 February 2011

### Report Summary

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The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the School of Psychology. *Periodic Subject Review (PSR)* is an internal subject review focused on the quality of provision as experienced by students. The review looks at the range of programmes, course content, the teaching methods employed, assessment, facilities and much more.

The full report of the review is available publicly at:

[http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_211381\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_211381_en.pdf)

Further information about the PSR process can be found at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/psr/>

*Italicised words* are explained in a glossary below.

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### Key Strengths

The Review Panel commended the School on the following

- *National Student Survey (NSS)* results showing 97% (2009) and 93% (2010) satisfaction rates. [para 3.7]
- The emphasis given in the School's aims to: independent study, critical thinking, research skills, progression over Levels 1 – 4, *employability* and meeting the particular needs of the large numbers of students who came from a wide range of backgrounds. [para 2]
- The *Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)* for programmes and courses, which are all laid out in the relevant programme and course specifications. The Panel found these to be well written, appropriate, and well aligned to the assessment provision within each programme and course. The Panel also found clear evidence in the *Self Evaluation Report* that the School appreciates the significance of *ILOs*. [para 3.2]
- Initiatives enhancing the student learning experiences such as *peer assisted learning* and summer scholarships [paras 5.9 and 5.11]
- The low proportion of grades at less than D achieved by students in Levels 1 and 2. [para 3.3.15]
- The School's response to the recommendation in the 2005 *PSR*<sup>1</sup> (formerly known as DPTLA) concerning increasing the range of Honours level optional courses, particularly

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_104318\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_104318_en.pdf)

in the degree to which this development has supported research-teaching linkages. [para 3.4.9]

- The positive approach of *Graduate Teaching Assistants*, and the School's efforts to integrate and support this group. [para 3.8.6]
- Innovation in communication with and amongst students, evidenced on the student Portal, and excellent material on *plagiarism* for Level 1 on *Moodle* [para 3.8.11]
- The availability of exemplars of Level 4 *Critical Reviews*. [para 3.3.9]
- Informative and reflective *annual monitoring reports* at Levels 3, 4 and M. [para 5.5]
- The *SER*, which the Review Panel considered to be exemplary in its honest and reflective approach, delivering a comprehensive and engaging account of the School's activities, and describing many areas of impressive innovation and good practice. [para 1.1.5]

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## Areas to be improved or enhanced<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Student Learning Experience

The Review Panel recommends that the School reflect on its schedules for the submission of assessed work, with particular focus on Level 3 semester 2, and consider how best to support students in managing the associated workload. [para 3.3.5]

### 2. Feedback on Assessment

- The Panel recommends that the School compile a guide explaining the various forms of assessment feedback, indicating when such feedback should be provided. The Panel also recommends that, using the guide as a springboard for on-going discussion with students, the School investigate what other forms of feedback would be most helpful and laying out clearly to staff and students expectations about the nature of feedback that should be provided and in what time frame. [para 3.3.13]
- The Review Panel recommends that the School continue to monitor the proportion of A grades being awarded at Levels 1 and 2, and as part of this monitoring, reflect further on the local *grade descriptors* and assessment weightings. [para 3.3.18]

### 3. Curriculum Design, Development and Content

- The Panel recommends that the School explore the possibility of expanding the range of Joint Honours programmes, particularly in light of the developing role of the Research Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology. [para 3.4.13]
- Within the context of limitations placed on the School by British Psychological Society requirements, the Panel recommends that the School investigate options for enhancing the opportunities for *study abroad*. [para 3.4.16]

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<sup>2</sup> Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the full report that contain the relevant discussion.

- While commending the richness of the optional courses available at Level 4, the Panel recommends that the School consider carefully the balance of benefits and costs to establish the optimum number and range of options. [para 3.4.11]
- The Panel recommends that the Subject *Management Group* work with staff in the School to develop a clear vision for the future of the Psychology curriculum that recognises the core competencies and emerging themes within the discipline and capitalises on the breadth provided through the linkages between the School and the Research Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology. [para 3.4.4]

#### 4. The Quality of learning Opportunities

- While recognising that the School has a number of effective means of initiating and responding to student feedback, the Panel recommends that, for clarity, the School ensure that issues raised at *staff-student liaison committee* meetings are reported on at subsequent meetings. [para 5.4]
- The Panel recommends that staff use the excellent reports from Levels 3, 4 and M to inform the approach adopted in Level 1 and 2 *annual monitoring reports* in the future. [para 5.5]

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### Glossary of terms/acronyms used

#### Annual Monitoring (of courses)

Annual Monitoring is a process undertaken at the end of each session by Course or Programme Leaders designed to encourage reflection on the operation of course and programmes – what went right, what could be improved, what students did and didn't like etc. – with a view to enhancing the student experience next year. The work done by the course or programme leaders is followed by a full reporting process through Schools and Colleges to Senate, with responses being made, as appropriate, at each level. The reporting procedure is designed to ensure that issues arising from monitoring are properly considered and responded to, and that enhancements and the sharing of good practice are promoted. Annual monitoring reports are reviewed by Periodic Subject Review Panels as part of the documentation provided by the Subject(s)/School.

#### Critical Reviews

Critical Reviews (CRs) are essays based on scholarship i.e. on finding and reading the literature on a topic, and adding your own considered arguments and judgements about it. CRs involve both reviewing an area, and exercising critical thought and judgement.

#### Employability

Employability is about more than being able to get a job after University. It is about acknowledging and being able to demonstrate achievements, understanding and personal attributes that will contribute to success both during, and after, University.

#### Grade Descriptor

Grade descriptors are verbal descriptions against which a student's work is judged. The marker decides which descriptor matches the work most closely and awards the

corresponding grade. University-wide grade descriptors are set out in the Code of Assessment but may be customized to apply to a particular subject area or School.

### **Graduate Teaching Assistant or GTAs**

Graduate Teaching Assistants, Tutors and Laboratory Demonstrators are students, usually research students, who assist with teaching in the form of tutorials, labs and other activities that are part of undergraduate programmes in the subject/school. They are paid an hourly rate by the University.

### **Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs**

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs describe what all students should be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes when they successfully complete the course or programme that the ILOs relate to.

### **Management Group**

The Management Group consists of senior academic staff members with responsibility to formulate (at College level) or coordinate (at Subject level) policy and develop research, learning and teaching, and postgraduate strategies for the College/Subject ensuring that these are properly resourced.

### **Moodle**

Moodle is the University's supported Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

### **National Student Survey**

The NSS is a national initiative that has been conducted annually since 2005. The survey asks students in their final year of a programme to provide feedback on their student learning experience. There are 22 questions in all, this can be found at:

<http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>

### **Peer Assisted Learning or PAL**

PAL is a weekly group meeting for students on a given course, attended voluntarily but officially recommended by the subject/school, and led by a "facilitator" who is a student who has done the course previously. The content discussed may be anything that seems relevant and important to the groups, from administrative details through deeper implications of the course material to study skills and any aspect of how to be a successful student.

### **Periodic Subject Review or PSR**

The University has a six yearly cycle of review of the Subjects/Schools within it. The PSR is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the quality of the provision delivered by Subjects/Schools.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is defined as the submission or presentation of work, in any form, which is not one's own, without acknowledgement of the sources. Special cases of plagiarism can also arise from one student copying another student's work or from inappropriate collaboration.

## **Self Evaluation Report**

A Self Evaluation Report is a document prepared by the Subject(s)/School in advance of a PSR Review. Its purpose is to provide the Review Panel with an insight into the Subject(s)/School's view of itself, its strengths and areas it would wish to develop. It is normally prepared by the Head of School in conjunction with other staff but students should also be offered the opportunity to comment on whether or not it reflects the Subject(s)/School they know.

## **Staff:Student Liaison Committee or SSLCs**

Staff:Student Liaison Committees are Subject/School committees which provide a formal opportunity for Student Representatives to discuss matters with, and give feedback to their subject area.

## **Study abroad**

Study abroad is a term that is often used to refer to several programmes that offer opportunities for students to study in a European University, or one further afield, for a term, semester or year as part of their undergraduate degree programme. (The University's "Study Abroad Programme" is specifically designed for visiting students who elect to come to the University of Glasgow.)