

## UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

### Academic Standards Committee - Friday 24 May 2013

#### Periodic Subject Review: Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Review of School of Law held on 1 and 2 March 2012

Mrs Lesley Fielding, Clerk to the Review Panel

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

##### Conclusion

The Review Panel commends the School on the overall scope and quality of its provision. Despite the number of recommendations the Review Panel would stress that the School of Law has many commendable attributes and an impressive record particularly in the high quality of their students and results which were consistently impressive. The School's Study Abroad programme was particularly noteworthy and the School should be congratulated for this. The Quality Assurance standards initiatives were also impressive. In order to sustain and improve on the School's successes, however, the Review Panel would stress that it is imperative that the School establish a strong and innovative strategic plan to address current issues and to ensure that the aims of the strategic plan reflect those of the University's. The Review Panel would urge the College of Social Sciences to support the School in its endeavours to maintain and develop its reputation and status within the global community.

##### Commendations

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

##### *Commendation 1:*

The Review Panel **commends** the aims of the School which were innovative, interdisciplinary, research-led and internationally relevant. *[paragraph 3.1]*

##### *Commendation 2:*

The Review Panel **commends** the School's library on the excellent range of provision. *[paragraph 3.3.10]*

##### *Commendation 3:*

The Review Panel **commends** the School of Law on its development of LLM courses which had been excellent for the internationalisation strategy. Further developments such as a programme for North American students were planned. *[paragraph 3.4.1]*

##### *Commendation 4:*

The Review Panel **commends** the School of Law on its success in the high calibre of student. *[paragraph 3.5.1]*

##### *Commendation 5:*

The Review Panel **commends** the School for its positive and strong study overseas programme. The Panel was most impressed with the high uptake of students for this experience and with the large number of partner institutions and considered that there are certainly elements of the programme that could be shared with other Schools as Examples of Good Practice. *[paragraph 3.7.1]*

Commendation 6:

The Review Panel **commends** the School for many of its procedures for enhancing and maintaining quality assurance. There was good evidence of appropriately rigorous procedures for course design, course evaluation with a number of highly satisfactory examination outcomes. *[paragraph 4]*

Commendation 7:

The Review Panel **commends** the investment that the School of Law has made in a number of cases including the study abroad programme and excellent links with the profession. *[paragraph 5]*

## Recommendations

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs to which they refer in the text of the report. They are listed in order of priority.

### **Recommendation 1:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School, as a matter of priority, revise the current strategic plan, including the formulation of a Learning and Teaching Strategy, in order to identify a more clearly defined and focussed way forward for the School of Law and to further meet the aims of the University's Strategic Plan *[paragraph 2]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

### **Response:**

The School of Law has revised its strategic plan which is supplied along with this response.

### **Recommendation 2:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that, as a matter of priority, the School develops a Learning and Teaching Strategy to address the issues of training and the development of the role of GTAs within the School. *[paragraph 3.8.1]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

### **Response:**

The School has developed a Learning and Teaching Strategy. That strategy includes an objective to address the issues of training and the development of the role of GTAs within the School and enhancement of GTA training.

School training was provided for GTAs in 2012-13. From session 2012-13 onwards GTAs will be provided with a minimum of 4 hours training by the School of Law. The topics covered will include (a) the approach to small group teaching, and (b) assessment and feedback, (c) key

departmental and university procedures. The School will liaise with the University's Academic Development Unit to incorporate perspectives on GTAs that have been produced following a University-wide review of GTA training. The School will also draw on best practice identified within the Adam Smith Business School where a new GTA induction and training programme has been developed.

In addition, course conveners will be given guidance on best practice in supporting GTAs to take effect in session 2013-14.

***Recommendation 3:***

The Review Panel **recommends** that, in cooperation with the Learning and Teaching Centre, the School should develop a systematic structure to address the issue of communication and, simultaneously, to review the provision of feedback to students, including providing more detailed information on what feedback entailed. *[paragraph 3.3.5]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

***Response:***

The School has been working with Learning and Teaching Centre to identify those issues relating to communication and feedback which need to be addressed. We have met Dr McCulloch to discuss our general approach to feedback and our proposals for adjustment to existing practices and will implement the necessary changes in session 2012-13.

Changes will include (a) a revision and restatement of School policy on feedback, (b) reminding course conveners of the importance of monitoring the quality of feedback by all markers in the course team, and (c) reintroduction of monitoring of return dates for assignments by the School assessment office. These actions will complement efforts already set out in the School's NSS Action Plan.

***Recommendation 4:***

The Review Panel recommends that, in order to address the ongoing problem of staff shortages due to leave of absence and academic staff turnover, the College and School review the current level of staffing and invest accordingly. *[paragraph 3.8.4]*

For the attention of: **Head of College**

**Head of School**

***Response:***

The School has recruited additional academic staff to the School including filling the Regius Chair, appointing an additional Chair in IP Law, replacing staff in other areas of Law.

***Recommendation 5:***

The Review Panel **recommends that** the School implements appropriate procedures to ensure that communication with the School's external examiners is improved. *[paragraph 3.8.3]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

**Response:**

As the Report notes, prior to the visit the School had already given external examiners access to the relevant course information. Communication with externals has been improved with the appointment of a member of the support staff as Assessment Administrator. In addition, feedback from externals on the operation of the assessment process in 2011-12 was very complimentary.

**Recommendation 6:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of School clarifies the role of the Head of Administration to ensure that the time for the supervision of administrative processes is adequate. *[paragraph 3.8.4]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

**Response:**

The Head of School, in discussion with the College Secretary, will clarify the role of the HoSA. Discussions are continuing on ways to ensure that the HoSA has sufficient time for supervision of administrative processes both at informal meetings and through P&DR, ensuring that this is reflected in the objectives set.

It is recognized that there were particular gaps in staffing at the time of review due to several administrative members of staff being on maternity leave, and some significant systems problems which made it difficult for the HoSA to delegate responsibility. There has been considerable progress on these, and the HoSA together with the College Secretary and the HoSA group is working with University Services to identify process improvements.

**Recommendation 7:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College of Social Sciences provide resources to enable the School of Law to undertake an intensive marketing and advertising exercise for postgraduate study. *[paragraph 3.5.2]*

For the attention of: **Head of College**

For information: **Head of School**

**Response:**

The College already works closely with RIO to market PG programmes and to increase the conversion rates across the College. In response to this particular concern raised by the PSR panel, the College and RIO will dedicate further efforts towards working with the School of Law to create an action plan that focuses on increasing PG numbers in Law. The College Recruitment, Marketing and Conversion officer will also assist in implementing the agreed action plan. The Action Plan will address recruitment of existing UoG students into PG programmes, as well as the recruitment of students from the UK and abroad.

**Recommendation 8:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School should, in conjunction with the Learning and Teaching Centre and Careers Service, explore ways in which Graduate Attributes could be developed further for those students who did not intend to pursue a career in law. *[paragraph 3.4.2]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

**Response:**

The School is reviewing its approach to further developing Graduate Attributes in conjunction with Dr Dickon Copsey (College Employability Officer) and Mr Jamie Wightwick of the Careers Service, particularly for those students who do not intend to pursue a career in law. This builds on the programme already developed for 2012-13 (a copy of which is supplied with this response). Both employability and graduate attributes are a key priority within the College's Undergraduate Learning and Teaching strategy. The School will work with Dr Copsey and the Dean of L&T and to draw on appropriate approaches taken within the School of Education and the ASBS where programmes are being developed to further embed graduate attributes throughout the period of undergraduate study.

It is worth noting that both the LLB and DLP were accredited by the Law Society of Scotland in 2011/12 against the LSS's outcomes which include a considerable emphasis on graduate attributes. The LSS was happy that the courses provided to UG and DPLP students allowed them to meet these outcomes. It should be noted that even those students who do not intend to pursue a career in Law will, because of the structure of the LLB, have to take most of the professional courses in which these attributes are embedded.

**Recommendation 9:**

The Review Panel recommends that the School should devolve responsibility for some of its recruitment procedures to RIO. *[paragraph 3.5.1]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

For Information: **Director of RIO**

**Response – Head of School:**

The School does not agree with this recommendation. The School's recruitment processes are carefully tailored to our circumstances. These procedures have been very successful in recruiting a high calibre of student to the LLB programme. The School does not believe that RIO will be able to devote the same level of resources as the School has to recruitment. Recruitment through RIO is likely to become a more mechanical process and is unlikely to be as successful in identifying aptitude for the study of law.

**Recommendation 10:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that RIO should review the language entry requirements for overseas students to the School of Law and that the School and EFL should review the language support for overseas students. *[paragraph 3.3.9]*

For the attention of: **Director of RIO**

**Head of School**

***Response: School***

**Language entry requirement**

The School has discussed this matter with RIO and with the Head of College. We consider that it would not be appropriate to raise the language entry requirements for overseas students. The present requirement is appropriate and to raise it would be likely to exclude students who are capable of completing our PGT programmes.

RIO recommends that we do not increase the current PGT English Language requirements. The current requirement at PGT level is 6.5 overall (no sub test lower than 6.5). This was increased a couple of years ago from 6.0 overall (no sub test lower than 6.0) to 6.5 overall (no sub test lower than 6.5). The requirement of 6.5 overall (no sub test lower than 6.5), is essentially the same as asking for 7.0 overall (no sub test lower than 6.0), as the majority of students will need an overall score of 7.0 in order to ensure that their sub tests are 6.5 and above. This decision was taken to set the requirement at 6.5 overall (no sub test lower than 6.5), rather 7.0 overall (no sub test lower than 6.0) because a requirement of 7.0 might be off-putting to applicants. This was thought to be the case across a number of regions, particularly in the Middle East and East Asia. Increasing the requirement to 7.0 overall (no sub test lower than 6.5) would also mean that our requirement was higher than all Scottish competitors and some Northern English competitors. In view of the fact that the School of Law did not meet its recruitment target for LLMs in 2012/13, RIO believes that it would be unwise to increase the requirement and that we should maintain it at the current level.

**Language support**

There is a need to improve language support for overseas students. We have discussed support with the language Centre and our proposals are as follows.

- The Language Centre runs a 5 week Law Bridging Pre-session programme during summer. We would encourage all overseas law students to attend this.
- English and Study skills in-session evening classes will continue to be available for all international students during semesters 1 and 2.
- In semester 1 of 2012-13 the Language centre was involved with the delivery of the study skills workshops set up by the International Student Learning officer across the College of Social Sciences. These workshops will be repeated in future sessions.
- In conjunction with the International Student Learning officer, the Language Centre will run a new course: 'Writing for the Academic Community', for research students, from mid-April to mid-June.

The Language Centre does not provide in-session programmes specifically for law students. These could, in theory be provided and is now done for the Business School. However, this would be an additional call on the School of Law budget. In our view, in-session support for international is a University-wide concern and ought to be funded centrally from international student fee income.

*Recommendation 11:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School should resolve the problem pertaining to the variability of marking by staff and ensure that the marking scheme is fully implemented. [paragraph 3.3.2]

For the attention of: **Head of School**

**Response:**

It is not clear what the evidence base for the comments about implementation of the assessment scheme is. The Code of Assessment has been implemented fully by the School. Grade profiles appear in annual monitoring reports and are discussed by the relevant year committee. Our robust external examining process ensures that our standards are comparable with those of other Russell Group Institutions. The report appears to endorse an apparent student perception that it is more difficult to get a first class degree at Glasgow. The School does not accept that this perception is accurate. In terms of firsts, University wide figures for 2011/12 show that the School, with 22% firsts, was above the University average of 17%. Comparison figures are not available for other Scottish Law Schools, but it might be noted that one of our Externals (from another ancient Scottish University) has expressed the view that we award *too many* firsts.

In summary, we do not consider that there is a problem of undue variability or failure to implement the marking scheme fully.

Further assessment training has been put in place for Tutors on the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice to ensure consistent assessment across the programme.

**Recommendation 12:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School ensures that all staff are made aware of the importance of the role of adviser and that procedures are developed to ensure the advising system is robust and pro-active including the requirements that Advisers of Study should meet with their advisees at least once per academic session [paragraph 3.6.1]

For the attention of: **Head of School**

**Response:**

The School has reviewed its arrangements for advising to ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of the role of adviser, that the advising system is robust and that Advisers of Study meet their advisees at least once per academic session. An annual adviser information/training day is to be held before the beginning of the new academic session to reinforce School advising processes.

All advisees are given detailed guidance as to their role and to advising policy. Advisers meet annually to discuss advising in the coming year and support for advisers is provided by the Chief Adviser and the new position of deputy Chief Adviser. The School will complete the rolling out of the University's Advising Strategy in 2013-14. In 2013-14, all academic staff (with very limited exceptions) will be advisers. Provision for adviser support was enhanced in 2012-13 to take account of the needs of new advisers and is being further reviewed for 2013-14.

**Recommendation 13:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that consideration be given to resolving the issues of room size and technological limitations experienced by students and staff on the DLP course. *[paragraph 3.8.5]*

For the attention of: **Head of College**

**Response:**

These matters are beyond the control of the School of Law or the College. Discussions have taken place with the Director of Estates and Buildings to raise the School's concerns. In addition, the Head of School Administration is in contact with the Dean of Learning and Teaching over room requests and arrangements for 2013/14. The suitability of accommodation is under continual review and staff in the School, College and central teams within Estates and Buildings are working together as much as possible to ensure improved experiences in the future.

**Recommendation 14:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University review the P&DR policy to consider whether procedures should be implemented to ensure that all staff members, including probationers, undergo an annual PDR. *[paragraph 3.8.2]*

For the attention of: **Director of Human Resources**

**Response, Director of Human Resources:**

We are about to issue our guidelines for P&DR for 2013. These require academic staff in general to participate in P&DR. We currently have a different procedure for Probationers.

Under the proposals for Managing Academic Careers, which we are finalising in the next few weeks, there will be a requirement for probationers to participate in P&DR, although there will need to be some minor modifications to take account of their special circumstances.

**Response: School**

The School notes that the current probation procedure does include clear arrangements for objective setting and performance review.

**Recommendation 15:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School implement policy to ensure there is more consistency in the provision of information in the ILOs. *[paragraph 3.2.1]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

**Response:**

The School is puzzled by this recommendation. It considers that ILOs are in general sufficiently clear and consistent, and that they provide adequate guidance as to what is expected of students.

If the panel has concerns about particular courses, we would welcome specific guidance on which course ILOS are considered to lack clarity.



**Recommendation 16:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School should undertake to ensure students are made aware of any pre-requisites or grades which would affect their eligibility or choice of Honours options at varying points during their years of study. *[paragraph 3.3.6]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

**Response:**

The School already provides information on entry prerequisites but will draw students' attention to these requirements at varying points during their years of study. Information will be provided at the start of each session via Advising information. The pre-session Advising booklets contain information about pathways/programmes and this information will be drawn to students' attention and further reinforced at the annual advising meeting.

**Recommendation 17:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College of Social Sciences provide resources to enable the School of Law to undertake a project to develop a practical and comprehensive on-line overseas grade conversion table. *[paragraph 3.7.1]*

For the attention of: **Head of College**

**Response:**

We would welcome at least an exploratory investigation of the practicality of such a system as well as a commitment to fund development if the introduction of such a system seems feasible. In the short to medium term, Professor John Finlay (newly appointed College Study Abroad and Exchange Coordinator) will be working with the Dean of Learning and Teaching, RIO and Mobility Coordinators across the college to improve information pertaining to study abroad and to enhance the process of grade conversion. As an outcome of these activities, any potential for an online table will be explored and funds (eg, via LTDF) will be sought.

**Recommendation 18:**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College of Social Sciences should consult with the School of Law regarding the resourcing of the establishment of a law clinic. *[paragraph 3.4.4]*

For the attention of: **Head of College**

**For Information: SRC Advice Centre**

**Response:**

The School of Law considers that the provision of a law clinic is an option worth exploring although the resource implications are significant. However, the School disagrees with the premise on which the recommendation is based. Paragraph 3.4.4 appears to accept the accuracy of the perception apparently held by some students the University of Strathclyde has a more practical approach to the teaching of law. There is no evidence to indicate that these views are representative of students generally or that the suggested comparison with the University of Strathclyde is valid. Although the School of Law does not have a law clinic it does provide many opportunities for students to practical experience of law notably through a network of placements with Citizens' Advice Bureaux and law centres. Moreover, developments noted earlier around employability and graduate attributes, along with the central activities of the

University's Work Related Learning officer, are providing opportunities to raise awareness amongst Law students of a range of placements. We will work with Dr Dickon Copsey and colleagues in Careers to ensure that the full range of opportunities are drawn to the attention of our students during 2013/14 and thereafter.

***Recommendation 19:***

The Review Panel recommends that the School of Law reviews its current provision at Levels 3 and 4 to identify opportunities to incorporate additional oral assessments. *[paragraph 3.4.3]*

For the attention of: **Head of School**

**Response:**

This recommendation has been reviewed by the appropriate year committees and the Undergraduate Committee. We do not propose to incorporate additional oral assessments in level 3 and 4 courses in 2013-14. Oral assessments have both advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages include ensuring that there are robust assessment arrangements which appropriately involve external examiners and also do not create undue burdens on academic and support staff and on external examiners. It is worth noting also that the style of honours teaching in final year allows students to get feedback on their contributions during seminars even though these are not in most cases assessed. Viewing the LLB as a whole, the School of Law considers that the current balance of oral and written assessment is appropriate.