

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 24 February 2006

**Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Review of the
Department of Central and East European Studies held on 18
February 2005**

Mrs Catherine Omand, Clerk to the Review Panel

The Review Panel highly commended the Department for the overall quality of its provision and for its conscientious approach to the student experience and to teaching in general, at all levels. Staff were enthusiastic, approachable and responsive to students and the Panel was impressed with the level of leadership undertaken by the Head of Department.

The Review Panel commended the Department for its wide range of innovative and research-led courses. The Department should also be commended for its staff recruitment policy and the way in which it has developed since its creation in 1999.

The Review Panel would encourage the Department to continue with its excellent work and the Faculty in its continued support of the Department.

The recommendations interspersed in the report and summarised below were made in the spirit of encouragement in order to enhance the already high standards of the Department of Central and East European Studies. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the numbered sections in the report to which they refer.

Recommendation 1:

The Panel recommends that the Department consider using a wider variety of assessment methods at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. (*Paragraph C.3.2*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

Our teaching committee regularly addresses this question and before the DPTLA recommended a change in assessment procedures. This was supported by staff, students and the external examiner. We have moved (from 2005) to a 50% course assessment based on written work and 50% on the final examination at all undergraduate levels. As a result the final examination has been reduced from three questions to two.

At the postgraduate level we have abandoned examinations entirely with assessment based on a combination of essays and projects. This was already the case with the MRes and the same system will apply to the new MSc from 2006.

Recommendation 2:

The Panel recommends that the Department consider revising the design of the Level 1 course and the examination. (*Paragraph C.3.3*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

We have revised the Level 1 course and have rewritten many of the handouts. Since the course was overhauled two years ago - only three years after its inception - we feel that the core elements are essential in order for students to progress further. One of the problems relating to this point is that the subject is not taught in schools and knowledge of our area is very poor. As a result we have extended our background and introductory lecture to articulate key themes more clearly.

Recommendation 3:

The Panel recommends that the Department introduce a workshop on essay writing at the beginning of First Year and introduce a session following the first essay to provide formal feedback. (*Paragraph C.3.6*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

We have written a workshop on essay writing into the programme, which is given by Ms Weightman of the Effective Learning Service. Our GTA will increase the level of feedback after the first essay (adopted in time for this year).

Recommendation 4:

The Panel recommends that the Department consider introducing some form of summative tutorial assessment. (*Paragraph C.3.5*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

This is still under consideration. Students seem wary of this so we shall have to engage in wider consultation, but with agreement this can be done in time for session 2006-07. As we now employ a GTA we shall have to prepare her for this. Staff no longer take first year tutorials. At Honours level we have introduced a 10% assessment for tutorial presentations in one course as an experiment. The teaching committee will monitor this with a view to the widespread introduction of this for session 2006-07.

Recommendation 5:

The Panel recommends that the Department consider introducing an assessed oral presentation of the dissertation. (*Paragraph C.3.7*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

This has been under consideration for some time. At present we are engaged in a consultative process with a view to introducing this in session 2006-07. We could not introduce it this year as there was no mention of this in junior Honours course documentation. As is the case with other provisions, above this will have to be endorsed by the external examiner --we have been in touch on this matter. The subject is on the agenda for the forthcoming Honours staff-student meeting. Staff support this proposal.

Recommendation 6:

The Panel recommends that GTAs mark coursework and that tutorials are monitored. (Paragraph C.6.8)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

Since the beginning of session 2005 we have employed a GTA for the Level 1 course. She has attended TLS training and has had several meetings with staff regarding the conduct of tutorials. She will also be marking the essays. We have had meetings with her regarding how to assess and mark essays. Since this is a team-teaching course individual members of staff have had meetings and produced handouts for her to aid the process. We shall also be meeting with her to go over the essays before they are handed back to students. She is aware of the new scale of assessment. Staff continue to take tutorials on Level 2 as these feed into their Honours options. There was no support for any change to this.

Recommendation 7:

The Panel recommends that the Department gives further consideration to the inclusion of the implications of the accession states joining the European Union into the teaching programme. (Paragraph C.4.2)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

This forms a crucial part of Level 2B and at present is incorporated into one Honours option. Further expansion in this area is contemplated, but will depend on staffing. We are hopeful of a new post in 2006.

Recommendation 8:

The Panel recommends that the Department consider developing possible links with other departments, such as the School of Law and the Departments of Politics and Economics. (Paragraph C.4.2)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

One of the strengths of the Department is that our classes draw from a wide range of departments.

Our Honours options are part of the Honours programme of Economic and Social History, Modern History, and Sociology as well as Slavonic Studies in the Faculty of Arts. Politics have one of our Honours papers as a cognate external subject.

Our PG options are part of the CDS programme in the Department of Economics and the MLitt in Slavonic Studies.

We have been in contact with Law and Urban Studies with a view to expanding links. It is fair to state that the Department is at the forefront of a more integrated PGT approach, which links these departments and includes Business and Management.

Recommendation 9:

The Panel recommends that the Faculty further develop a framework for increasing taught postgraduate provision across departments. (*Paragraph C.5.2*)

Action: The Dean of Law and Financial Studies
The Dean of Social Sciences

Response - Head of Department:

CEES has taken a leading role in the reorganisation of PGT in the Faculty. At present Mr Berry is a member of the postgraduate reform committee, which is currently working on these issues. The new CEES MSc is now complete and options will be offered in a range of degree programmes across the Faculty, eg Economics, Politics, Business and Management, Urban Studies, Sociology, Law and others.

Response - Dean of Faculty:

The Review Panel thought that taught postgraduate student numbers were low. However, at the meeting with the Dean, it was confirmed that a Faculty-wide approach was being developed for taught postgraduate provision. The Panel discussed this at the meeting with the Head of Department who indicated that he was very supportive of this approach. The Panel recommends that the Faculty further develop a framework for increasing taught postgraduate provision across departments.

The Faculty has decided that the framework to be used to develop new Master's programmes should be:

*1st Semester - 60 credits core
2nd Semester - 60 credits options
Summer - 60 credit dissertation*

The credit value of courses in this framework will be a multiple of 10 with an expectation that the value for an individual course will normally be 20. Currently Business and Management have 10 credit courses which are easily accommodated but Accounting and Finance uses 15 and the School of Law 30. The Masters programmes in these departments are well-established so the structure cannot be changed easily. The Departments are, therefore, providing 20 credit courses in appropriate subject areas using material from existing courses.

Using this framework it is possible to develop new programmes by combining existing courses or by providing some or all new core courses.

Recommendation 10:

The Panel recommends that the Department contact the Teaching and Learning Service to devise a supplementary in-house training programme for the Graduate Teaching Assistants. (*Paragraph C.6.8*)

Action: The Head of Department
Director of Teaching and Learning Service

Response - Head of Department:

TLS have greatly aided our GTA on the Level 1. The new Level 2 tutors have also undergone or, in the case of 2B tutors, about to undergo training.

Response - Director of Teaching and Learning Service

Discussions have taken place with the Department about the additional GTA provision. Provisional dates have been set for this in the new year, the exact content of the sessions is currently being finalised.

Recommendation 11:

The Panel recommends that all student representatives meet together collectively with staff and that procedures are put in place to ensure feedback is given to students following Staff/Student Liaison Committee meetings. (*Paragraph E.2*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

We have regular staff student meetings and are monitoring feedback. We found that following meetings student representative did not always feedback to students. We have stressed the importance of this to student representatives.

We are using the new virtual classroom system to disseminate the minutes of these meetings to each student. We have also established a notice board /chat facility.

Recommendation 12:

The Panel recommends that the Department revise the ILOs to reflect the Code of Assessment and amend the course documentation accordingly. (*Paragraph C.3.1*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

This was completed in time for session 2005-06.

Recommendation 13:

The Panel recommends that the Department amends the course documentation to highlight areas of good practice. (*Paragraph C.6.1*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

We take this as a compliment as we have a wide range of student-centred activities beyond the classroom such as films and conferences. We include students in these, but have now highlighted these in course documentation. We have also emphasised the variety in terms of assessment and the general learning experience. These points have been warmly welcomed by students and noted in staff student meetings.

Recommendation 14:

The Panel recommends that the Department liaise further with the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service to identify other viable student markets' in order to recruit more students. (*Paragraph C.5.1*)

Action: The Head of Department
Director of Student Recruitment and Admission Service

Response - Head of Department:

I have had meetings with Sharne Proctor. I am a member of the PGT reform committee and this subject is central to our deliberations. As a result we have developed a new approach to integrated PGT and have devised new publicity material at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Response: Recruitment and Participation Service

Awaited

Recommendation 15:

The Panel recommends that the Department reassesses the timing of the distribution of the course questionnaire and reconsiders distributing it during class to ensure a better response from students. (*Paragraph E.3*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

As a result of the introduction of Virtual Classroom we hope the new technology will allow students to increase their response rate. Questionnaires will be uploaded on this at a much earlier date.

Recommendation 16:

The Panel recommends that the Department establish more formal structures to ensure that the strengths and achievements of the Department are fully supported by processes. (*Paragraph C.6.9*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

As noted in C.6.9 the new committee structure had addressed this point. It is working well. We have regular staff meetings - 4 per term - at which consideration is given to the work of these committees.

Recommendation 17:

The Panel recommends that the Head of Department delegates some of his administrative tasks to members of the Department. (*Paragraph C.6.10*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

The Head of the Department wholeheartedly agrees. This process has been facilitated by the recent appointment of an able and effective deputy, Dr Kay, and by the reshuffle of administrative posts in the summer of 2005. The arrival of the new Chair in May 2006 will also help in this matter.

Recommendation 18:

The Panel recommends that the Department continue to encourage student participation at conferences organised within the Department. (*Paragraph F.3*)

Action: The Head of Department

Response:

This again we take as a compliment. We have invited students to several conferences and receptions where they have met leading academics and others such as Ambassadors. We have organised a new research away day for PGs and we are staging a major conference in March 2006. We have just completed the highly successful Estonian Days to which students were invited. We plan to continue in this mode and note how supportive students have been.

Recommendation 19:

The Panel recommends that Estates and Buildings and Faculty consider minor refurbishment of the Hetherington building. (*Paragraph C.6.12*)

Action: The Dean of Social Sciences
The Head of Estates and Buildings

Response - Head of Department:

Unfortunately the Minor Works budget for Estates and Buildings has been withdrawn for session 2005/06 so it will not be possible to undertake any work by this means. The Faculty intends to bid for Minor Works funding in 2006/07 for refurbishment. There is disabled access to the ground floor of the building. The installation of a lift to the first floor will require substantial investment and a request will be submitted to Estates and Buildings.

Joint Response - Dean of Faculty of Head of Estates and Buildings

The Review Panel noted from the SER that there was a need for some minor refurbishment, such as modernising the entrance, new carpeting and redecoration, to the Hetherington building in which the Department was based. In addition, there were problems of disability access to the building. The Panel recommends that Estates and Buildings and the Faculty should consider how such improvements could be made.

Unfortunately, Estates and Buildings have not held a Minor Works budget for session 2005/06 so it will not be possible to undertake any work by this means. However, it is anticipated that Minor Works funding will be re-established in 2006/07 that would allow the Faculty to bid for improvement works.

With regard to disability access to the Hetherington building, disabled parking is available opposite the main entrance that is accessible via a drop kerb and access ramp. The main entrance doors have full height tubular pull handles providing adequate grip for door operation and there is ample width for access through the security gates into the building. Egress through the security exit gates is also achievable. Access to the ground floor is therefore available however the installation of a lift providing access to the upper floors would require substantial investment.

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