

## Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

### Review of Department of Chemistry: Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 March 2009

## Report Summary

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The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Chemistry. Reviews of *Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment* (DPTLA) are internal subject reviews 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\\_134369\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_134369_en.pdf)

Further information about the *DPTLA* process can be found at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qae/dptla/>

*Italicised words* are explained in a glossary below.

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## Conclusions

Members of the Review Panel enjoyed their visit to the Department of Chemistry where arrangements made for their comfort and the conduct of the meetings was exemplary. The Panel was impressed by the dedication and progressive attitude of staff and demonstrators within the Department, and with the focus on research-led teaching. The undergraduate students who met with the Panel were enthusiastic and very positive about their learning experience. However, the Panel noted that there were currently significant resource issues, planning developments and numerous curricula reviews underway or outstanding and felt that, given the state of change, a follow-up visit would be beneficial to allow progress to be monitored in detail. The Panel **recommends** to the Academic Standards Committee that a return visit be made to the Department in two years time by a sub-group of the current Panel to review progress and ensure that issues noted in the above report have been resolved or are being moved towards resolution.

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## Key Strengths

- Wide ranging and challenging suite of degree programmes offered; The Department's concern for, and awareness of employability of its graduates, which it promotes through the work placements, including the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE) scheme, and through its strong links with potential employers
- Encouragement and support of professional development of graduate attributes, through first year membership of the *Royal Society of Chemistry* (RSC) for Level 3 students and participation by students on the *Frontiers of Chemistry* course. which had resulted in publications of undergraduate work in research journals

- Science Fundamentals 1X and 1Y courses: providing access for non-traditional students to degree programmes in biological subjects
- The Interactive Teaching Units
- Exemplary feedback on staff support as confirmed by students who met with the Panel and 2008-09 *National Student Survey* (NSS) feedback of final year students

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## Areas to be improved or enhanced<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Aims

- a. The programme *aims* could benefit from further clarification, and that the Department revise the programme aims to further differentiate between the MSci and BSc, by means of a clearer mapping of course workload to the *Scottish and Credit Qualifications Framework* (SCQF) credits and levels. [Paragraph 4.1.1]

### 2. Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

- a. The Department should update the information on *Intended Learning Outcomes* (ILOs) in the course handbooks in accordance with the Guidelines for Writing Aims and ILOs at the Programme and Course Level, prepared by the *Learning and Teaching Centre* (LTC).[Paragraph 4.2.3]

### 3. Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

- a. Continue the plan to review assessment feedback processes and to improve the timescales for and quality of the feedback provided to students. The Department should seek the support and guidance of the *LTC* at an early stage of its review. [Paragraph 4.3.2]
- b. Survey the number of laboratory hours and the associated credit levels at a number of other Higher Education Institutions that offer Chemistry subjects and consider making adjustments to its provision where necessary to bring it into line with competitors. [Paragraph 4.3.5]
- c. The University should take account of the Department's ability to allow sufficient revision time before examinations, when the new academic year structure is reviewed at the end of this session. [Paragraph 4.3.4]
- d. Course handbooks should clearly articulate the relationship between performance and credit. [Paragraph 4.8.10]

### 4. Student Progression, Retention and Support

- a. Continue to review the Department's strategies for enhancing student progression through the levels to deliver streamlined courses in a coherent way, with guidance from the *LTC* and awareness of other Higher Education Institutions approaches. [Paragraph 4.6.1]

### 5. Curriculum Design, Development and Content

- a. Liaise with the *LTC* to identify good practice from other Departments to improve the preparation it gives students for non-traditional assignments. [Paragraph 4.4.3]
- b. Liaise with the Careers Service in respect of the coordination of career's advice to students and inclusion of preparatory support for job applications. [Paragraph 4.4.4]

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the full report that contain the relevant discussion.

## **6. Student Recruitment**

- a. Consider how to raise awareness amongst staff, in terms of foreseeable trends in the external environment for recruitment. [*Paragraph 4.5.4*]

## **7. The Quality of Learning Opportunities**

- a. Develop a plan to deliver learning opportunities for students to work on experiments individually as well as in pairs/groups. [*Paragraph 4.7.1*]
- b. Review how to more effectively promote student mobility, particularly for outward single semester opportunities, and the compatibility of course structure to facilitate this. [*Paragraph 6.3*]

## **8. Departmental Planning, Management and Organisation**

- a. Clarify the remit of the Teaching Committee to include: the development and implementation of a Teaching Development Strategy for the next 5 years; reviews of the curricula and sustainability of courses; progression issues; the development of *Postgraduate Taught* (PGT) courses; and consideration of the effectiveness and attractiveness of the full range of programmes on offer. Any curriculum review should be conducted with reference to guidance and advice from University Services, such as the *Learning and Teaching Centre* (LTC) and the *Equality and Diversity Unit* (EDU). [*Paragraph 4.7.3*]
- b. Develop a strategic plan which clearly articulates key strengths within the wider environmental context (competitors, industry/economy and perceived demand) and how this would impact on future investment/direction in the teaching, learning and assessment of Chemistry. [*Paragraph 4.8.1*]
- c. Clarify the role of the Head of Teaching to ensure an appropriate remit and enable him to plan and manage staff succession. [*Paragraph 4.8.3*]
- d. Consult with the Academic Development Unit of the *LTC* and with Human Resources to determine the appropriate course of action to address any issue of poor teaching. [*Paragraph 4.8.4*]
- e. The Dean and Head of Department should take time to explain to staff how departmental innovation can be incentivised through investment and if necessary take up the issue with the Vice Principal (Strategy & Resources). [*Paragraph 4.8.15*]

## **9. Resources for Learning and Teaching**

- a. Liaise with *LTC* and *EDU*, in its review of demonstrator training, which would include appropriate health and safety training and that the Department considers frontloading extra demonstrators to cope with the extra student demand at start of session. [*Paragraph 4.8.8*]
- b. Review support of probationary members of staff to ensure that they are allocated appropriate workloads, which take cognisance of the demands of the *New Lecturer and Teacher Programme* (NLTP). The Department should also ensure that the mentoring arrangement is in place and effective over the entire probationary period and that clearly articulated guidelines for probationary staff are developed, which would usefully include key contacts. [*Paragraph 4.8.9*]
- h. Continue to liaise with Audio Visual (AV) and Information Technology Services and Estates and Building to repair faulty AV equipment and to improve visibility in the Main

Lecture Theatre and to repair the AV equipment and the blackboard in the Physical Lecture Theatre, as appropriate. [Paragraph 4.8.12]

## **10. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience**

- a. Continue to review its *Annual Monitoring Report* (AMR) process, in compliance with University Quality Assurance process, and draw its attention to the Code of Practice in Annual Monitoring available at: <http://senate.gla.ac.uk/qa/acmr/amrcop0809.doc> [Paragraph 4.8.11]

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## **Glossary of terms/acronyms used**

### **Aims**

Programme or course aims describe what the University/Department aims to provide to students through the delivery of the programme or course overall.

### **Annual Monitoring Report (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 Departments and Faculties 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 DPTLA Panels as part of the documentation provided by the Department.

### **Audio Visual or AV**

Audio visual facilities include: data projector linked to a computer; slide projectors; CD and DVD players; infra-red hearing systems; wireless lapels and handheld microphones.

### **Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment or DPTLA**

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

### **Equality and Diversity Unit or EDU**

The Equality and Diversity Unit is responsible for promoting and embedding all aspects of equality and diversity by creating policies and action plans for the University community. The University has a statutory responsibility for complying with a range of equalities legislation, currently covering six strands of equality, including: age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

### **International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience or IAESTE scheme**

The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience, or IAESTE, is a student exchange programme with over 80 member countries worldwide. The IAESTE scheme provides students in higher education with technical experience relevant to their studies in order to offer employers well-qualified and motivated trainees.

## **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.

## **Learning and Teaching Centre**

The Learning and Teaching Centre is a University Service Department whose role is to “help implement and develop the University’s Learning and Teaching strategy, identify, assess and disseminate new developments and good practice which serve to enhance the student learning experience, and will work with colleagues throughout the University to bring about change”.

## **New Lecturer & Teacher Programme or NLTP**

Probationary staff are required to complete this programme run by the **Learning and Teaching Centre**. It comprises two Masters level modules:

- (i) Academic Practice in Higher Education (taught module),
- (ii) Developing a Portfolio of Academic Practice (assessment module).

Successful completion of the programme leads to the award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and to full practitioner status of the *Higher Education Academy* (HEA).

## **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, the Survey can be found at: <http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>

## **Postgraduate Taught or PGT**

Postgraduate Taught refers to taught programmes at postgraduate level, usually Masters.

## **The Royal Society of Chemistry or RSC**

The Royal Society of Chemistry is the UK Professional Body for chemical scientists and an International Learned Society for advancing the chemical sciences. The majority of the Chemistry Degree Programmes offered by the Department of Chemistry are accredited or recognised by the RSC.

## **The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework or SCQF**

The SCQF assists in making clear the relationships between Scottish qualifications and those in the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond. It does this by making the overall system of qualifications e.g. HNDs, Highers and Degrees equivalent to an [SCQF Levels](#)/credit point.