

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 28 May 2010

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:  
Responses to the Recommendation arising from the Review of  
Department of Mechanical Engineering held on 25 and 26 February  
2009

Ms Fiona Dick, Senate Office

**Conclusions**

The Review Panel commends the Department on its awareness of and willingness to address issues as they arise. A number of recommendations have been made to support staff in enhancing the quality of the student experience, and the management of teaching and learning in the Department. The Panel welcomed the Department's engagement with current University priorities, e.g. enhancing student retention, and its endeavours to meet the challenges of addressing them. The Panel felt that the Self Evaluation Report could have given a better overview and impression of the strategic direction of the Department, which would have given the Panel and departmental staff a clearer framework for discussion. However, the discussions with the Head of Department, and staff and students of the Department satisfied the Panel that the Department was generally reflecting on its practices in teaching, learning and assessment and was seeking to engage students as partners in improving the student experience.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer. They are grouped by the areas for improvement/enhancement noted above and are ranked in order of priority.

**Departmental Strategy**

*Recommendation 1:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that a Departmental Strategy be developed under the umbrella of a Faculty Strategy. [*paragraph 4.8.2*]

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

**Response:**

Further development of a Departmental Strategy has been put on hold pending the merger of the four departments in the Faculty of Engineering to a single School of Engineering.

*Recommendation 2:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department identifies strategic priorities for development and investment in teaching and learning on an annual basis for discussion with the Dean and the Faculty Management Group as part of the University's annual planning and budgeting cycle and that this is carried out as a matter of priority. This will allow for full consideration of the potential for resources to be combined with other departments within the

Faculty to facilitate new developments, e.g. around promoting student retention and enhancing the first year experience. [paragraph 4.8.6]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department and the Dean of the Faculty**

***Response – Head of Department:***

Once again this type of discussion has been overtaken by events within the University. One area identified for such a coordinated development is in the provision of labs for Materials, Mechanics and Structures where a proposal exists to form a single laboratory for the use of all of the engineering degree programmes.

***Response – Dean:***

The Department was asked, together with the other departments in the Faculty, to provide a strategic plan covering all aspects of its activity including learning and teaching. In parallel with this, the Associate Dean for Learning and Teaching led the development of a coordinated faculty wide strategy for investment in Learning and Teaching. The plans from the four departments and the faculty-wide Research and L&T plans provided the basis for the development of the faculty Strategic plan which was ultimately submitted during the current budget round after consultation and discussion through the Faculty Management Committee.

**Departmental Management and Organisation**

*Recommendation 3:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department review its management and committee structure to promote two-way communication between its leaders and staff. Consideration should be given to widening the membership of the Teaching Committee and increasing its focus on strategy. [paragraph 4.8.2]

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

***Response:***

The Department has widened membership of the Teaching Committee this academic year, however further changes to the departmental structure have not been pursued.

*Recommendation 4:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department implement a full workload model in accordance with any available Faculty guidance in order to ensure that roles and workload are balanced for all staff including the Head of Department. [paragraph 4.8.1]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department and the Dean of the Faculty**

***Response – Head of Department:***

As part of the restructuring of the University and the creation of a single School of Engineering, a full workload model will be implemented.

### **Response – Dean**

In defining the academic structure for the new unified School of Engineering, the need for a workload model to inform the allocation and balancing of duties has been clearly identified. In the absence of a University-wide workload model, the School of Engineering will need to develop one.

#### *Recommendation 5:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department formalise a means of promoting staff development in teaching, learning and assessment and suggests that consideration be given to establishing an annual Learning and Teaching Review Day where issues could be raised, discussed and good practice shared. The Department should also consider using Performance and Development Reviews (P&DR) or an Annual Review Day to recommend, and encourage staff to attend, relevant CPD opportunities such as those available through the Learning and Teaching Centre and the Higher Education Academy and its Subject Centre. [*paragraph 5.3*]

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

#### **Response:**

During P&DR a number of areas where CPD courses could beneficially be attended or needed to be provided were identified. As a result a number of members of staff have attended courses both within the University and elsewhere. Further developments are expected to be taken forward with best practice being identified from across the School of Engineering.

#### *Recommendation 6:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department consider how the experience of successful innovation in learning and teaching could be shared across the Department with a view to inspiring enthusiasm and wider uptake by staff members. [*paragraph 4.7.3*]

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

#### **Response:**

It is the Department's intention to utilise the teaching committee and the department staff meetings for presentations relating to examples of teaching innovation. It is anticipated that the teaching management structure for the new School will incorporate this approach.

### **Management Studies**

#### *Recommendation 7:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department and Faculty as a matter of priority continue to pursue a means to satisfy the requirements of the IMechE for management or professional studies in a way that is relevant and satisfying to the students throughout the programmes. The Department should also continue to monitor student satisfaction with the provision as changes are implemented. [*paragraph 4.4.5*]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department and the Associate Dean for Teaching**

## **Response – Head of Department**

Since the DPTLA review a review of management within the degree programmes has been undertaken. As a result two new courses (Professional Practice 4 and Professional Practice 5) are being run this academic year (2009/2010) for the first time in place of the Entrepreneurship 1A and 1B courses. Student satisfaction with these courses will be continue to be monitored. In addition we have recently agreed to implement a new course, Communications 1, replacing Managerial and Organisational Context E1. This approach was presented to the Engineering Accreditation Board during their visit in February 2010 and seemed to meet with approval. Although formal accreditation has not yet been given the initial report of the visiting panel is favourable.

## **Response – Associate Dean for Teaching**

The Department of Mechanical Engineering has negotiated two new courses for the later years of the programmes, Professional Practice 4 and Professional Practice 5. These were specially written for Engineering and are replacing courses that were less well suited to the department. The Department will monitor these courses and fine-tune them in the light of annual feedback from students and others.

The IMechE made an accreditation visit to the department in 2010 February and raised no issues about management courses.

The Faculty's submission to "Determining Investment Priorities: Learning and Teaching" in 2009 August contained the following item:

"The Faculty plans to appoint a University Teacher, part of whose responsibility will be to support the MSc degrees in Engineering with Management, which have proved popular with applicants but are awkward to integrate with our other MSc provision."

It was intended that the postholder would also enhance management courses for undergraduates across the faculty. Unfortunately the post was frozen due to restructuring and no progress has therefore been made. However, it remains an aim to coordinate and improve the delivery of management courses in the curriculum of all engineering degrees as the Faculty is restructured into a School.

## **Student Support**

### *Recommendation 8:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Advisers of Studies ensure that all their students have the opportunity to meet with them at least once a year in a private setting to offer support of a pastoral nature, and that first year students meet up with their advisers on two occasions. The Department should consider the optimal timing of such meetings in relation to student drop-out and providing support during the first year of study. [*paragraph 4.6.7 and 4.6.8*]

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

### **Response:**

A system has been put in place such that all students have the opportunity to meet with their adviser in private once a year. At present this is not a compulsory meeting. The students' perception of the usefulness of such meetings, and whether it should be made compulsory,

will be monitored. In addition, it is the University's intention to extend the advising system and duty to a larger number of staff. It is expected that this change will give students further opportunities for private meetings.

*Recommendation 9:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Faculty offer a second induction session for postgraduate taught students arriving in January. *[paragraph 4.6.10]*

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

**Response:**

This matter has been raised with the Faculty Teaching Committee and the Faculty Management Committee and it has been agreed that an induction will be held in January for PGT students. It is the Faculty view that this should also be supported by activities at University level.

**Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)**

*Recommendation 10:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that all of the Department's programme specifications are reviewed and updated where necessary, to ensure that they are consistent in format, and in the way ILOs are expressed. Programme Specifications should be written in a style that is readily accessible to students and other stakeholders and should clearly demonstrate how the ILOs align with the assessment of the programme. *[paragraph 4.1.2 and 4.2.2]*

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

**Response:**

Programme specifications are reviewed each year. The recent introduction of the new PIP system enables the consistency of information across the specifications

*Recommendation 11:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department ensure that the information provided to students on ILOs explains clearly how assessment activities, both formative and summative, align with the ILOs. *[paragraph 4.2.2 and 4.1.2]*

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

**Response:**

As mentioned above, the new PIP system provides the consistency across specifications allowing staff to more readily match the course assessment information passed to students at the start of teaching with the ILO's.

**Student Feedback**

*Recommendation 12:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department clarify its procedures for dealing with the results of student feedback questionnaires and communicates its policy to all staff to ensure that the results and any actions taken in response are effectively communicated back to students. The Department should also ensure that similar procedures are put in place to

communicate more widely actions taken in response to issues raised at Staff:Student Liaison Committees. [paragraph 6.4 and 6.5]

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

**Response:**

The new School of Engineering structure will obviously act to encourage the adoption of standard procedures across the School. In the meantime staff have been reminded of the current policy with respect the teaching evaluation feedback and the Senior Adviser of studies, who chairs the SSLC, has taken steps to communicate the actions taken in response to student comments. A response document is now written after each SSLC meeting and posted online so that the students can see the response to issues raised.

*Recommendation 13:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department consider extending the practice of regular, ongoing dialogue with students as widely as possible. [paragraph 6.2]

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

**Response:**

The department is committed to an ongoing dialogue with students. All staff are encouraged to elicit informal feedback on a regular basis during courses and to provide feedback to students on any resulting changes. This is followed up by the use of written student feedback forms. In addition, announcements are made in classes to ensure that all students know that a staff-student committee meeting is about to occur to encourage them to contact class representatives about any problems that they have. In addition the Head of Department makes presentations to each year-group at the beginning of the academic year highlighting the important issues that will be affecting the students during that year. A second presentation to Final year students is also made in January. At these events students are encouraged to ask questions.

**Assessment**

*Recommendation 14:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department review and amend the assessment of its postgraduate taught programmes to ensure that all provide a range of assessment methods. [paragraph 4.3.5]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department supported by L&T Centre staff**

**Response – Head of Department**

The assessment methods for the taught postgraduate courses have been reviewed and a number of changes made to increase the proportion of laboratory and coursework assessment in the overall assessment of these courses. It is expected that further changes to assessment will be made, in conjunction with input from the Learning and Teaching Centre, once the Faculty's PGT provision is considered in a single structure within the new School of Engineering.

**Response – Learning and Teaching Centre:**

Dr McCune (the Learning and Teaching Centre's contact for the Faculty of Engineering) has had discussions with the Head of Department of Mechanical Engineering. Dr Ballance has advised Dr McCune and the Director of the Learning and Teaching Centre (Lorna McEachan), that he is aware of the support available from the Learning and Teaching Centre in relation to amending assessment practices on postgraduate taught programmes, and that he will draw on it as and when appropriate.

*Recommendation 15:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department consider implementing further additional or improved mechanisms for increasing student awareness and understanding of the opportunities to receive feedback that are offered by the Department. The Panel further suggests that the Department consult students to determine the most valuable types of feedback. This should be done to ensure that students are able to obtain maximum learning benefit from the feedback they receive and to ensure that the responses the students give to assessment and feedback related questions in student satisfaction surveys are as informed, and therefore as useful, as possible. *[Paragraph 4.3.1]*

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

**Response:**

The Department has agreed to update the current format of the course descriptor documents, given to students at the start of every course, to ensure that the feedback mechanisms being used are clearly identified for the students. Once again the new School structure may require that a standard approach is adopted across the School.

**Course Development and Review**

*Recommendation 16:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department update their annual Course Review forms in line with the standard proformas provided by the University (<http://senate.gla.ac.uk/qa/acmr/index.html>) as a matter of priority to ensure that comments are gathered on the relevant, current issues *[paragraph 6.7]*

For the attention of: **The Head of Teaching/Chair of Teaching Committee**

**Response:**

The department now uses a standard form which has been agreed across the Faculty of Engineering.

*Recommendation 17:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department reconsider whether the title of the “Advanced Control Engineering” accurately reflects the course content and take forward the appropriate approval procedures to make the necessary changes. Consideration should also be given to whether there are any other courses in a similar position within the Department’s provision. *[paragraph 4.4.6]*

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

**Response:**

The content of the course now clearly matches the course title.

## **Recommendations for the Attention of the University**

### *Recommendation 18:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University take account of the ability of departments to allow time for revision before examination periods when the effectiveness/success of the new academic year structure is reviewed at the end of this session. *[paragraph 4.6.13]*

For the attention of: **Academic Structures Implementation Group**

### **Response:**

ASIG's interim review of the new academic year (during summer 2009) concluded that more time should be made available for revision before the examinations in semester 1. ASIG has been actioned by EdPSC to develop recommendations for any further changes to the academic year following its forthcoming comprehensive review (during 2010-11). Revision time will be a key issue in the forthcoming review.