

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Review of Dumfries Campus: 18 and 19 February 2010

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out at the Dumfries Campus. 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_173367_en.pdf

Further information about the DPTLA process can be found at:

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

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Review Panel commends Glasgow University, Dumfries (GUD) for its newly developing vision and strategy, dedicated Director and staff and vibrant learning environment, so clearly valued by its students. It supports their prioritisation of finalising the *Service Level Agreement* with University of the West of Scotland (UWS) and the *Memorandum of Agreement* with the Crichton Carbon Centre, and their desire to improve and standardise liaison arrangements with the Gilmorehill Campus. The Panel recognise the importance to GUD of improving their external profile and student recruitment over the next few years and improving student retention.

Key Strengths

- GUD's vision and strategy for the coming years along with its underpinning ethos;
- The range of effective and appropriate teaching methods: lectures, tutorials, seminars, field trips and guest speakers;
- The range of effective and appropriate assessment methods, such as: presentations, debates, group projects, *problem-based learning*, essays, and dissertations and the feedback viva in 'Issues in Contemporary Society' for engagement of students with the feedback they received;
- Availability and promotion of work placements as part of the MSc Carbon Management;
- Interdisciplinary teaching;
- The dedication of the staff to their students;

- The real appreciation by its students of their learning experience, and recognition of the value of their inter-disciplinary courses;
- Small class sizes and use of these to support a more student centred learning environment;
- *Research-led teaching*;
- Developing students as critical thinkers and independent learners as evidenced by staff and students;
- Engagement with the research and local community.

Areas to be improved or enhanced¹

1. Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

- a) Realistic timescales for feedback on all assignments to be agreed by programme teams, and communicated clearly to students in advance. [paragraph 3.2.8]
- b) The distribution and breakdown of their performance in individual questions in credit bearing examinations to be provided to students, with a view to informing their future learning. [paragraph 3.2.8]
- c) The amount, balance and timing of *formative* and *summative assessment* to be considered when planning new courses and programmes or making changes to existing provision to avoid over-assessment and maximise opportunities to use formative feedback. [paragraph 3.2.5 and 3.2.4]
- d) Management data relating to student entry routes, performance and progression to be routinely collated by Dumfries Campus staff and benchmarked against the College of Social Sciences profile to inform future planning and changes to existing provision. [paragraph 3.2.9]

2. Curriculum Design, Development and Content

- a) Suitable, permanent space to be identified for the use of students to meet for independent working. [paragraph 3.3.2]
- b) The use of *Moodle* to be extended across all courses. [paragraph 3.3.2]
- c) If staff are absent, their roles with students to be allocated to other staff members and arrangements communicated to students as early as possible. [paragraph 3.3.4]
- d) Consideration to be given to dividing the Creative Enquiry Project into several smaller assessed tasks to provide additional opportunities for *formative* feedback and to allow early assistance to be provided to any students struggling with the project. [paragraph 3.3.7]

3. Student Progression, Retention and Support

- a) Academic *induction* and social events suited to the needs of students who may have a range of competing commitments to be included in the planned extended induction activities with a view to assisting students to adjust to the challenges of University education and to improving student *retention*. [paragraph 3.5.4]
- b) Improved *induction* procedures for international students to be put in place for 2010-11, in consultation with international students and with staff in the Recruitment and International Office and the international student advisers based in the Careers Service at the Gilmorehill campus. [Paragraph 3.5.6]
- c) Future *retention* figures to be monitored and an annual critical analysis undertaken of the success of activities designed to improve student retention and progression. [paragraph 3.5.11]

¹ Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the full report that contain the relevant discussion.

4. Quality of the Learning Opportunities

- a) Staff to adhere to University policy in relation to use of *TURNITIN*. [paragraph 3.6.5]

5. Resources for Learning and Teaching

- a) The cause of miscommunications in relation to payment of fees should be identified and resolved through dialogue between Dumfries Campus's administration and the Registry. [paragraph 3.7.22]
- b) Electronic library resources such as e-books, key chapters of books and journals which are available electronically to be used more widely. [paragraph 3.7.16]
- c) Finalising and signing of the *Service Level Agreement* with UWS to be prioritised with a view to improving the student learning experience and allowing for more effective resources management. [paragraph 3.7.17]
- d) Efforts to ensure that the *Memorandum of Agreement* with the Crichton Carbon Centre is funded and signed as swiftly as possible to be continued to ensure that students on the MSc Carbon Management receive a high quality learning experience. [paragraph 3.7.18]
- e) A written agreement between the School of Interdisciplinary and Applied Studies at Dumfries and the College of Arts to be established. The agreement should set out the minimum expectations for what will be provided by each party. [Paragraph 3.7.20]
- f) Information and training on career pathways for *University Teachers* to be provided by the appropriate University Services to ensure that staff are clear on the roles and responsibilities of the different academic career pathways. [paragraph 3.7.6]

6. Student Recruitment

- a) The performance of students relative to their intake routes to be monitored robustly to provide information on the effectiveness of *widening participation* initiatives. [paragraph 3.4.2]
- b) The marketing of GUD courses and programmes, both nationally and internationally, to be improved under the advice of the University's International Director and Head of Student Recruitment and International Office. [paragraph 3.4.10]

7. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience

- a) A more reflective and analytical approach to *Annual Monitoring* to be adopted, as described in the Code of Practice on the Annual Monitoring Process. [paragraph 5.1]
- b) *Graduate destination data* to be gathered systematically for ongoing monitoring and critical analysis. Advice to be sought from the Careers Service on gathering and presenting such data. [paragraph 5.2]

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 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.

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.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment refers to assessed work where feedback is given to help the student improve their learning and their performance. The work may or may not contribute to the student's final grade for the course.

Graduate Destination Data

The Careers Service conducts a survey of Graduates and compiles data on what they are doing six months after graduation.

Induction

Induction is a series of events planned by the University, Faculties, Departments and the Student's Representative Council to welcome new students and provide them with information to prepare them for their studies and the forthcoming year at University. Events usually take place during the first week of the academic year.

Memorandum of Agreement

A memorandum of agreement is a co-operative partnership agreement between two parties, in this case, two institutions, setting out the responsibilities of each.

Moodle

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

Problem Based Learning (PBL)

"In problem based learning (PBL) students use "triggers" from the problem case or scenario to define their own learning objectives. Subsequently they do independent, self directed study before returning to the group to discuss and refine their acquired knowledge. Thus, PBL is not about problem solving per se, but rather it uses appropriate problems to increase knowledge and understanding. The process is clearly defined, and the several variations that exist all follow a similar series of steps." From 'ABC of learning and teaching in medicine: Problem based learning' by Diana F Wood.

Research-led Teaching

Research-led Teaching can mean different things in different disciplines. Broadly speaking, the term refers to the ways that the current research of staff can positively influence and support student learning and promote the development of research skills and attributes in students.

Retention

Retention refers to the continuation and progression of a student at the University of Glasgow.

Service Level Agreement

A service level agreement is an agreement between two parties where one is providing a 'service' and the other is a 'customer' and defines what the service will consist of.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment refers to assessed work that contributes to the final grade for the course/programme. Summative assessments may include an element of formative assessment.

Turnitin

Turnitin is a remotely hosted, web based service that compares submitted material, e.g. a student's essay, with a wide range of sources and produces an originality report. It is intended to be a tool which can support students in their understanding and avoidance of plagiarism and can be used to quickly and efficiently locate sources of material in cases of suspected plagiarism. Turnitin originality reports can be used to highlight to students, with real examples, the exact meaning of the term plagiarism.

University Teacher

University Teachers are equivalent to Lecturers but make a relatively greater contribution to teaching and service/administration than Lecturers who are required to conduct and publish research in addition to teaching.

Widening Access or Widening Participation

The objective of widening participation is to develop, implement, co-ordinate and monitor initiatives which further: the increased recruitment of students to Higher Education from those areas and groups where there is low participation; the provision of educational support for all students once they have entered the University in order to improve student retention and to facilitate the successful completion of students' programmes of study; and the flexible provision of learning opportunities. More information can be found at the Widening Participation at Glasgow website. <http://www.gla.ac.uk/wideningparticipation/>.