

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 25 May 2012

Periodic Subject Review: Responses to Recommendations Arising from the Report of the Review of Central and East European Studies

Mrs Catherine H Omand, Clerk to the Review Panel

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

The Review Panel was most impressed by the quality of both staff and students which reflected the high quality of its provision. The group of staff appeared to be a very dedicated, collegiate group, which has maintained a strong identity even with a substantial growth of staff numbers. Central and East European Studies had adopted an exemplary approach to internal review, which provided a platform for reflection and discussion between staff, students, external examiners and partner institutions. The Review Panel commended the Subject for the excellent research-led and enquiry-based teaching and learning, its pro-active development of external linkage with partner institutions and variety of innovative assessment.

The Subject should focus on actively seeking improvements to recruitment, taking full advantage of the new School structure as well as their own enthusiastic and highly motivated students. The Review Panel was very much aware of the significant relationship the Subject had with the School of Modern Languages and Cultures and the detrimental effect closure of this unit would have on their programmes, particularly the postgraduate programmes. In addition, the Review Panel was aware of the uncertainty created by short-term externally funded posts and therefore the Review Panel would encourage the School of Social and Political Sciences to support the Subject, especially taking into consideration, its interdisciplinary and international approach and reputation.

Recommendations

The minor recommendations interspersed in the report are summarised below. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject reviews the content of CEES Level 2 Course 2B to ensure that it appropriately enhances students' learning opportunities, while maintaining its coverage of the key issues. (*Paragraph 3.4.4*)

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Response:

The recommended review of CEES Level 2 provision will be conducted during June-October 2012 as part of pending School-wide discussions on curriculum reform and the introduction of composite pre-Honours courses taught across subjects. In this regard, the current thinking is that from 2013-14, CEES will offer a composite Level 2A course in conjunction with Politics and its own stand-alone 2B course. This will entail working with colleagues in Politics to develop new curricula and to determine which elements of the existing CEES Level 2 courses are to be incorporated into the new options. As part of this process, due attention will be given to the multidisciplinary nature of CEES as a subject area and to the need to ensure that all of the key issues and academic perspectives (political, economic, social and cultural) are covered as part of an area studies syllabus.

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel recommends that CEES monitors the implication of the change to Honours entry to a 'B' pass in 40-credits at Level 1 and modify Level 1 courses to accommodate students wishing to enter Honours from Level 1, if deemed necessary. (*Paragraph 3.6.1*)

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Response:

Eligibility on the basis of second year study at Level 1 will become operational for those students seeking entry to Honours in 2012-13. Any applications on this basis will be carefully scrutinised and the performance of students monitored closely during next session. Due consideration will be given to this recommendation during June-October 2012, when CEES will discuss the development of a composite Level 1B course with colleagues in Economic and Social History and its own remodelled Level 1A option. It may be that greater standardisation of progression requirements across subjects will be introduced as part of the School-wide discussion on reform of pre-Honours.

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel recommends that the School appropriately advertises and promotes the Subject within the School and College. (*Paragraph 3.5.2*)

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

Response:

The prospective introduction of composite pre-Honours courses – based on the principles of 'parity of esteem' between subjects and the maintenance of subject identities – means that a far greater number of students will be exposed to teaching delivered by 'smaller' SSPS subjects such as CEES. It is expected that this will lead to increased entry to CEES Single and Joint Honours programmes during coming years. At the same time, a more robust system of

interchangeability of Honours options between subjects will increase the number of students taking individual CEES Honours options, which are now being offered as elements of other subject curricula (e.g. Politics). This system has already been introduced in 2011-12, and it has seen growth in the number of students enrolled on CEES Honours options.

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel recommends engaging students with recruitment processes such as open days, school visits and with induction programmes. (*Paragraph 3.5.3*)

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Response:

CEES has yet to discuss introducing a school visits programme (though individual members of staff have given talks in Scottish and English schools during the past year), mainly due to additional pressures on staff time arising from organisation of the new Erasmus Mundus International Masters consortium, submission of the successful bid for continued funding of CRCEES, the submission of a major EU FP7 funding application in January 2012 and a raft of other research, PGR training and knowledge exchange projects that have been ongoing. However, current students have been active in advertising PGT degrees through the provision of web-based testimonials, while members of the current Honours cohort have also participated in the intending Honours meeting that was held in February for current Level 2 (and year 2, level 1) students. CEES students have also contributed actively to the CEES Facebook page established a year ago, which has already attracted over 200 followers. This page is routinely brought to the attention of prospective UG and PGT applicants, many of whom have signed up. During the current session a dedicated Facebook page has also been established to advertise the new Erasmus Mundus International Masters degree.

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel recommends raising any concerns with the Student Lifecycle Project and Student Advisory System regarding clarity of advice given to the students on course selection with the Chief Adviser of Studies for the College of Social Sciences, in order for these to be addressed in the training delivered to Advisers of Studies. (*Paragraph 3.5.5*)

For the attention of: **Head of Subject and Chief Adviser of Studies for the College of Social Sciences**

Response: Head of Subject

Members of CEES academic and administrative staff have been pro-active in bringing SLP issues to the attention of the Chief Advisor and other relevant authorities, and have participated in additional training and advice sessions, as well as engaging with the 'Lessons Learned' group.

Response: Chief Adviser of Studies for the College of Social Sciences

Members of Central and East European Studies academic and administrative staff have been pro-active in bringing Student Lifecycle Project issues to my attention and other relevant authorities, and have participated in additional training and advice sessions, as well as engaging with the 'Lessons Learned' group.

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel recommends that the Subject discusses information made available for international students with the International Student Support section of RIO. (*Paragraph 3.6.9*)

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Response:

This recommendation has been extensively discussed with the RIO International Student Support section as part of CEES' preparations for the launch of the Erasmus Mundus International Masters programme in September 2012. A fully revamped induction week has now been put in place for all students entering CEES PGT programmes in 2012-13, with particular attention given to the needs of international students. New online provision such as a dedicated Facebook site has also been put in place for the information of students ahead of their arrival in Glasgow.

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel recommends distributing the assessment criteria directly to students periodically throughout the year and not just at the beginning of the year (*Paragraph 3.3.3*)

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Response:

More attention has been given to assessment criteria during this and the previous session, following the shift from year-round, 40-credit courses to one-semester, 20-credit modules. In a number of cases, this has involved greater use of in-course assessments such as individual and group presentations, literature reviews and so on. Students taking these courses have had assessment criteria carefully explained to them in class as part of the preparation for these tasks, and have also been referred periodically to the relevant course moodle sites where this information is available for consultation at any point throughout the year.

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel recommends that the mentors of the member of Probationary staff assist in setting achievable targets for PhD submission. (*Paragraph 3.8.2*)

For the attention of: **Head of Subject**

Response:

The staff member in question was able to pass probation in 2011, having met the research targets set by the Review Committee when the probationary period was extended. The post of this colleague was externally funded, and came to an end in 2011. She has since been re-engaged by CEES as a seconded employee of the Estonian Institute, and has started work on a new, social science-focused PhD under the supervision of CEES colleagues. Progress during the first year has been exemplary.