

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 24 May 2012

Periodic Subject Review: Responses to the Report of the Review of School of Education held on 27 and 28 February 2012

Mrs Jackie McCluskey, Clerk to the Review Panel

Context

The School of Education warmly welcomes the Periodic Subject Review (PSR) report and takes heart from the several important commendations of the work being done in Educational Studies and Teacher Education as well as the general tenor of highly constructive critical engagement with the School, its programmes and its staff. Throughout the PSR exercise, the School Executive has sought to harness the dialogue to the School's strategic planning objectives in support of the *Good to Great* ambitions of the College of Social Sciences and the 2020 Vision of the University as a whole. In this highly dynamic context, most of the recommendations emergent from the PSR have been integrated into a comprehensive longterm prospectus of institutional development planning responsive both to the challenging internal agenda of College and University and to the most wide-ranging national reform of teacher education in Scotland in over 40 years. In an era of great turbulence across the several sectors in which the School operates, the Executive continues to take pride in the School's many markers of national and international esteem—as well as in the academic and political recognition it maintains currently at the leading edge of innovation in career-long teacher learning. Deliberating and, where appropriate, implementing the recommendations of the PSR over the past year and on into the next strategic phase of our growth are seen by the Executive as integral to the strengthening of the reputation and the capacity of the School as a centre of international excellence for all of the areas under review.

7.1 Conclusions

The Review Panel concluded that the School of Education's provision was of a high quality overall. Since the last review in 2007, the School has had to deal with a huge transformation of education teaching driven by the external environment and internal realignment of the University impacting on student and staffing numbers, and has dealt with these changes very effectively. The Panel found evidence of strong partnership with local schools and professional and statutory bodies and felt assured that the School had positioned itself well to deal with further changes.

The students who met with the Panel were articulate and their satisfaction with the quality of their educational experience and with the standard of programmes and courses offered by the School was evident. The School had emerged from the difficult times as an integrated team of staff, fully committed to the provision of high quality research-informed programmes and courses and to the expansion of international recruitment.

The Panel was particularly impressed by the innovative and creative ways with which the School used Moodle and there was clear evidence that engagement in virtual learning had enhanced the learning process for students. However the Panel was aware that a number of innovative practices were taking place in the School which they had not demonstrated in either the SER or during the Review.

7.2 Commendations

- 7.2.1 The Review Panel was confident that students are able to access and understand the ILOs and **commends** the School for the practice of linking ILOs closely to assessment, in particular the development by BEd year one staff in 2010 of 'exemplified criteria', an extended version of the 'success criteria', as described in the SER. [Paragraph 4.2.1]
- 7.2.2 The Review Panel **commends** the School for its *Modern Educational Thought* course and encourages the School to consider rolling this out across the College/University as an example of good practice. [Paragraph 4.4.13]
- 7.2.3 The Review Panel **commends** the School on the appointment of a Senior Associate Tutor and encourages the School, through the Senior Associate Tutor, to consider establishing a mentoring process similar to that in existence for Probationary staff. [Paragraph 4.8.13]
- 7.2.4 The Review Panel **commends** the School for the high level of positive feedback from its External Examiners. [Paragraph 5.3]
- 7.2.5 The Panel was of the view that one of the School's strengths was the strong relationship it had with its students and **commends** the School for this. [Paragraph 6.1]

7.3 Recommendations

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the corresponding sections of the report and are ranked in order of priority.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel welcomes the progress made by the Head of School and academic staff to date to address the concerns of the MSc Psychological Studies students but **strongly recommends** that the lack of training in quantitative research methods be addressed as a matter of urgency for the current cohort. The Panel suggests that a first step would be to meet with the student representatives to demonstrate how seriously the School views the situation. (Paragraph 4.4.6)

Action: Head of School

Status—implemented

The School Executive entirely accepts that owing to precipitate growth in the MSc Programme and some significant transitional issues in its joint management and oversight between the Schools of Education and Psychology, certain irregularities and inconsistencies impinged negatively on elements of the student experience and gaps arose in some students' learning for the cohort in question. These difficulties were already high priority concerns by the time of the PSR visitation and remedial interventions were in place under the jurisdiction of the Director of PGT and the programme leadership. In the period immediately following the PSR, the HOS and the Director of PGT held a series of lengthy meetings with student representatives and an action list of further supportive interventions was agreed—particularly in the quantitative training domains. Additional sessions on Quants were held in the School and supplementary tailored individual support was provided to those students for whom quantitative methods were central to their dissertation topics. We have every confidence that these measures restored student

trust and competence to the expected standards and enabled the high levels of successful completion we witnessed over the course of the summer of 2012.

School and College commitment to the support of the programme was further underlined by decisions made in the wake of the departure of the Programme Leader for a role elsewhere in the University. As part of a wider senior staffing investment package highlighted below, a new Programme Leader has been appointed to the MSc at Readership level. Dr Gjisbert Stoet assumed his new position in February 2013 and has since been working closely with colleagues in both Education and Psychology to enhance and upgrade the programme and to commit it to a renewed phase of international expansion. These alterations have now placed the MSc on a much stronger and more sustainable footing with intake numbers rising significantly for session 13/14.

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the School introduces a standard template for the preparation of its programme and course handbooks and refers the School to the central guidance provided on the Senate Office website (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/centralguidanceonstudenthandbooks/>). (Paragraph 4.8.1)

Action: Head of School

Status—implemented and ongoing

The School Executive welcomed the clear message from the PSR on the need for, and benefits of, standardisation of documentation. This has been an agreed and express directive of the Executive since the establishment of the School and it is of lasting advantage to have the PSR reinforce it. Indeed, we viewed with some disquiet the evidence of inconsistency revealed by the report. Since the PSR visitation, the Director of Learning and Teaching (UG & ITE) has redoubled our efforts to disseminate best practice on the basis of the BEd template and to require of Programme and Course Leaders adherence to all relevant university guidance and models. We believe all of the outstanding issues and shortcomings in undergraduate and ITE instruments have been resolved, with a small minority of remaining adjustments to be made for the 13/14 undergraduate and ITE materials.

A marginally longer-term planning phase was agreed for PGT, once again predicated upon best practice exemplars and taking full account of the reshaping and rationalisation of PGT provision initiated before the onset of the PSR. The Director of PGT, together with the PGT Administrator, has sought to embed standardisation of documentation in wider Graduate School reviews of programme viability, option choices, pathways and qualifications frameworks—including the closing of some programmes and the creation or remodelling of others. It is now the expectation of the School Executive that there will be full compliance with agreed university benchmarks for the beginning of session 13/14.

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the Convener of the Learning and Teaching Committee reviews the quality and consistency of the Annual Monitoring Reports with a view to improving the quality of the data and ensuring consistency across all programmes. The Annual Monitoring Report for BEd Honours (2010-11) is cited as an

example of good practice. To assist with consistency the School should adopt the University-wide documentation outlined in the Senate Office website¹ (*Paragraph 5.6*)

Action: Convener of the Learning and Teaching Committee and Head of School

Status—partially implemented and ongoing

In collaboration with the HOS and the Director of PGT, the Convener of Learning and Teaching engaged with the School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer to raise this key issue as part of the feedback on the 11/12 cycle of Annual Programme Monitoring. The process of programme monitoring was well underway when the PSR report was first fully addressed by the School and the Executive agreed that amended documentation integrating the additional data-collection features required for the PSR should be available for the monitoring round of session 12/13, to be conducted in the period June-September 2013 (UG)/August-November 2013 (PGT). We see this as in essence a staff development task, which will both underline to all staff the operation and obligations of the existing procedures and at the same time demonstrate to them how the added value and the milestones of the SAMS process can strengthen the wider quality enhancement culture of the School. We recognise that this may take some time to embed at its best but remain completely committed to it. The SAMS/AMR emphasis on Factual Data, Good Practice, Reflection and Development provides a very constructive framework for the QA&E tasks and also incentivises the improvement of relevant data-collection, including the key metrics elaborated in the PSR documentation itself. We note the merits of the BEd Primary Education exemplar and have highlighted this to all Programme and Course Leaders, whilst recognising the additional challenges faced by more complex and less coherent programmes (especially at PGT) where multiple pathways and cross-over option choices can complicate the monitoring and reporting responsibilities. It will be an additional priority of the School to consolidate the AMR improvement workstream in anticipation of the launch of the new MA in Primary Education in 2014.

In January 2013 the School appointed a new Quality Assurance Officer, who will lead both the process and the PSR staff development schedule for the next round of reporting.

Recommendation 4

The Panel **strongly recommends** that the School address the recommendation outlined in the 2007 DPTLA report by reviewing its postgraduate portfolio to assess the viability of those courses with less than the University guideline of fifteen students. (*Paragraph 4.5.2*)

Action: Head of School

Status—implemented

Implementation of the DPTLA 2007 recommendation remains central to the PGT growth strategy for the School. A further round of rationalisation and integration of PGT provision took place in the period immediately following the PSR exercise. This has chiefly involved redesign and simplification of programme option pathways to achieve critical mass on each of the major routes through the MEd/MSc degrees. It has also entailed significant amendments to our PGT literature and marketing materials. All of this has been done in full consultation with the

¹<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/gea/annualmonitoring/>

Graduate School. Almost all of the remaining courses occupied by 15 or fewer students are therefore legacy issues and will be taught out in the current session. We retain the option of permitting new or developing programmes to proceed below intake minima within the agreed terms of their approved business planning strategy and milestones. Strong and consistent messages are however conveyed on the need for all programmes to secure viable cohorts within the timeframes ratified by their ASC approval and documentation.

Since the PSR, the PGT portfolio of the School has been further enriched by policy decisions of Scottish Government associated with the 'Masters Profession' aspirations of *Teaching Scotland's Future* (the Donaldson Report). These decisions have been vouchsafed by significant tranche funding to the sector for additional MEd enrolments and completions. In response, the School has refreshed its MEd suite and attracted additional students for all of the newly funded places and top-up options. These developments have strengthened further the wider processes of programme rationalisation while also serving to leverage the MEd in Education portfolio as a whole.

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel considered that Education might be trying to accomplish too much within its current staff resource and **recommends** that the School give consideration as to how they might deploy Education's staff resource to maintain and enhance the quality of student support, whilst also safeguarding staff wellbeing through a balanced and achievable workload. The Review Panel further **recommends** that the School seriously considers investing in additional administrative support. (*Paragraph 4.8.3*)

Action: Head of School

Status—implemented and ongoing

This recommendation sits at the heart of the School's strategic plan for 2012-15 and the articulation of that plan with the corresponding strategic priorities of the College of Social Sciences (CoSS). It is the central preoccupation of the School Executive as it seeks to take the School to its next level of international ambition and attainment.

In relation to the programmes with which the 2012 PSR was concerned, addressing this recommendation is inseparable for the implementation of *Teaching Scotland's Future* (TSF), referenced above. In summary, the School of Education of the University of Glasgow sits now at the forefront of the major movement of national professional reform associated with TSF and is widely perceived to be leading the process of change. The HOS currently serves on the GTCS Executive, is Convener of the Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC) and—most importantly—sits on the National Implementation Board (NIB) for the implementation of the Donaldson Report. Other senior staff of the School also occupy key national roles in the continuing modernisation of teacher education, including most conspicuously those leading the 'Glasgow West' or 'Clinical Model' innovation in the understanding and practice of student teacher placements.

Deployment of the School's resources in relation to the areas under review is as a consequence now concentrated on two of the three pillars of the Donaldson settlement: the radical overhaul of the experience of initial teacher education (ITE) and the creation of structures for realisation of the goal of a Masters degree teaching profession. It is the firm belief of the School Executive that key innovations such as the launch in 2014 of a new MA in Primary Education, the openness of this new degree and the other ITE qualifications to the new Masters-level

continuum of teacher professional learning, and the roll-out of the Clinical Model of School Experience to all ITE programmes will more than overtake the principal features of the Recommendation.

Since the PSR, the School has benefited dramatically from the appointment of a total of twelve new members of academic staff—including Chairs, Readers, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers and a University Teacher. This represents a major investment package for the School, which, while targeted appropriately at the attainment of REF and research excellence, is set also to add significant capacity to learning and teaching in a professional and teaching-intensive School such as Education. In concert with new approaches to the philosophy of learning and teaching that are in turn informed by enhancements to the School's online and social media learning capabilities, the Executive believes that these additional staffing resources will soon support full realisation of the objectives embedded in the recommendation.

In a time a far-reaching conceptual and institutional change in teacher education, accompanied by a significant growth in student numbers, workload planning remains a permanent challenge. The School's pioneering efforts with College to adopt the revised College Workload Model (CWLM)—predicated upon an income, credit and resource-driven understanding of the staffing of learning and teaching—has already yielded important dividends in terms of the transparency and credibility of the workload allocation mechanisms and the role of line managers in operating them. We have every confidence that we will make steady progress in the use of the improved workload planning tools now at our disposal. To this end, the School is also in the process of appointing a Coordinator of Staffing to help manage the complex staffing requirements emergent from the revamping of teacher education locally and nationally.

The HOSA also continues to prioritise the efficient deployment of administrative staffing and has secured some additional resource to service growth areas. In common with other Schools, we acknowledge serious challenges in this area, which will be addressed by a combination of improved internal organisation and further recruitment funded from the achievements of our KPIs.

The College Secretary and the HoSA group are continuing to review administrative processes across the College looking for opportunities to streamline processes, releasing resource for other activities. A recent cross College review of purchasing has identified significant opportunities for the School by creating a purchasing hub. The HoSA is reviewing support and is benchmarking with the other Schools in the College. It should be recognised that some, but by no means all, of the pressures on support staff resulted from the implementation of new systems (notably MyCampus).

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the outstanding maintenance issues across the School be undertaken as a priority with particular emphasis on the gymnasium which currently suffers from a leaking roof and associated problems with mould. (*Paragraph 4.8.13*)

Action: Head of Estates and Buildings

For the Attention of: Head of School

Response: Estates and Buildings

Investment in the gymnasium to improve facilities and allow the room to be used as a gymnasium and lecture theatre should be undertaken this summer.

Response: School

Status—implemented

Improving and extending the capacity and flexibility of the St Andrew's Building is a permanent concern of the School Executive, especially as we anticipate increases in student numbers from both SFC and our international recruitment plans. CoSS has been entirely supportive of these concerns and we have enjoyed strong support for expenditure on fabric and facilities since the PSR took place.

A major upgrade to the Gymnasium has been agreed and work will be undertaken in the summer of 2013 to refurbish the area as a combined gymnasium and lecture theatre. Our contact HMIE has commented favourably on this and will visit the facility on May 13.

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School review its assessment processes to ensure that feedback is provided to the students in a consistent manner and within the University's policy of a four week turnaround time. (*Paragraph 4.3.6*)

Action: Head of School

Status—implemented and ongoing

The School Executive fully accepts the importance of this recommendation and has since the PSR striven hard with Programme and Course Leaders at all levels to ensure that it is honoured. The PSR was indeed instructive in revealing inconsistent practice, which we have sought to tackle immediately. Pressures existed in the system in a period of staff reduction and the increased reliance on adjunct or associate tutors on several high-profile programmes (whilst affirming that almost all such staff have given the School exemplary service). Although we have not rid ourselves entirely of the problem—and unexpected events can still occasion slippage—we have laboured to communicate to all staff the importance of deadlines and turn-around times. Mechanisms have also been created for much speedier identification and remedy of student concerns in the area, including support and challenge to staff with whom there is recurrence or persistence of missed deadlines. Extensive work – staff development days, a short life working party and new information for staff detailing best practice in assessment - associated with the development and implementation of the NSS Action Plan has further supported the focus on the timelines and quality of feedback.

Personnel of the School of Education have international reputations for work in the theory and practice of assessment. We therefore fully endorse the centrality of consistent, formative feedback guiding students in the improvement and development of their learning and attainment. We continue to work extremely hard also in the analysis of assessment schedules to reduce or ease bottlenecks and distribute assessment roles equitably.

Recommendation 8

Subject to the external influences on curriculum design, the Review Panel **recommends** that, when redesigning programmes, the School ensures that the need of the students for

more exposure to the practical requirements of teaching is taken into consideration.
(Paragraph 4.4.3)

Action: Head of School

Status—implemented

At the time of the PSR, this recommendation came as some surprise to staff of the School given two key factors: first, the clear external reputation of the School for both teaching excellence and innovation; secondly, the stress of the Donaldson Report on the central role of universities in the academic development of prospective teachers from ITE to Masters. Nevertheless—and in full compliance with eg GTCS Standards documents—the School accepts without reservation its obligation to collaborate with all of its partners in ensuring that every intending teacher is a confident classroom practitioner capable of discharging at the highest possible level of performance all of the practical duties of the profession.

The evolving philosophy of teacher education within the School is international in its scope. In consequence, we embrace the global movement towards an enquiry-led and academically accomplished teaching force focused unswervingly on the needs and outcomes of learners. In the major reform of Scottish teacher education represented at Glasgow by our forthcoming MA in Primary Education, the preparation of critical, enquiry-led professionals will be foundational. Hence whilst accessing as Donaldson has recommended a richer and more diverse undergraduate curriculum, First Year students will have restored to them a full placement in schools in order to underline the vocational direction of their studies. At the same time, the mainstreaming into our programmes of the clinical model of student placement will most certainly deepen practical professional awareness whilst also shifting the main responsibility for its support and supervision—as Donaldson proposes—to experienced practitioners in Schools. These reforms represent an entirely new concept of teacher education and the recommendation has assisted us in concentrating appropriately upon it.

Recommendation 9

With a view to ensuring consistent practice across the School and College, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School should use the University guidance on double marking to inform standard practice across all its programmes. [Paragraph 4.3.3]

Action: Head of School

For Attention of: Dean of Learning and Teaching

Status—implemented

The recommendation is accepted and implemented. It ought to have been a principle observed by all staff in relation to the high-status and terminal assessments to which it most properly applies at UG and PGT levels. Evidence to the PSR appeared to reveal inconsistency, but our investigations suggest that a proportion of apparent inconsistency was in fact part of the roll-out of the new double-marking policy across programmes in new and revised degrees. We also accept the importance of the approach in relation to the School's dependence upon adjunct and associate staffing and we have taken steps to ensure that cross-marking and double-marking are timetabled and remunerated for these staff appropriately. All Programme Leaders have been directed to the relevant guidance and advised to ensure that it is implemented appropriately across all courses.

Recommendation 10

The Panel **recommends** that the School develop an overview of its programmes for the School's webpages, outlining briefly what the programme provides and who it is aimed at.
[Paragraph 4.6.2]

Action: Head of School

Status—implementing now

This recommendation converged with other, widespread concerns about an inadequate and fragmentary web presence of the School of Education on the university pages. Since the review, CoSS has embarked with all of the Schools on a broad-ranging collaborative review of the purposes and aims of the web pages and each School has been tasked with prioritising PGR communication, personal academic webpages and throughput of student enquiries and information-gathering. In January of 2013, we secured the services of a Web Content Manager from Corporate Communications to work with own dedicated web administrators to repurpose the web pages in line with the Recommendation and in synchrony with other improvements linked to REF, dissemination and the projection of research capacity and achievements. While the exercise has been somewhat protracted, tangible gains have begun to appear in recent weeks, including the extension of moderator access to all staff. This will support restyling of the programme presentation pages implied in the Recommendation. A College workshop aimed at ongoing enhancement of the L&T webpages across the College and Schools will soon be held and an academic member of staff in Education will be invited to join that workshop given his active engagement with web and social media technologies.