University of Glasgow

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Review of Department of Civil Engineering: 11 and 12 March 2010

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Civil Engineering. 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_173365_en.pdf

Further information about the DPTLA process can be found at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/psr/

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Review Panel was impressed by the dedication and progressive attitude of staff and *graduate teaching assistants* within the Department and with its commitment to teaching and enhancing the student experience. The Undergraduate students who met with the Review Group were very positive when they spoke about the Department and its staff and of their learning experience within the Department. 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.

Key Strengths

- Positive feedback from students who are supportive of the Department's staff and find the courses challenging and stimulating.
- The Department's efforts in supporting students with Mathematics courses and with related *retention* issues.
- The teaching of Design from 1st to 5th year.
- The level 3 design projects (Interact).
- Assignment guidance sheets used by the Department.
- The use of a tutoring system for 1st year students.
- The range of assessment methods used by the Department.
- Engagement of Industry personnel to assist in tutorials
- The curriculum design and development of the Department's courses.

- The Probationary staff were positive and complementary of the mentoring system.
- The range of *Postgraduate Taught* (PGT) degrees offered by the Department.

Areas to be improved or enhanced[1]

1. Student Learning Experience

a) Programme *aims* should be included in the main text of the Undergraduate Student Handbooks. [paragraph 4.1]

2. Feedback on Assessment

a) The turnaround times for feedback on assessment should be reviewed and be kept to by all staff for all courses. [paragraph 4.3.2]

b) The Department's existing proforma sheets for *formative assessment* should be used by all members of staff. [paragraph 4.3.4]

c) Assignment Guidance Sheets should be issued as standard practice for all major coursework submissions. [paragraph 4.3.5]

d) Coursework submission deadlines should be included in course documentation. [paragraph 4.3.6]

e) Guidance on *plagiarism* should be given to students at the start of each year to ensure that year 2 and 3 direct entry students receive it. Information on plagiarism should also be given in all course documentation and at group advising sessions. [paragraph 4.3.7]

f) The good practice of providing feedback frequently throughout exercises in design project courses, allowing students to act on feedback and improve their work, should be promoted across the new School structure. [paragraph 4.3.3]

g) The use of technology to support both timely feedback and sustainable long term levels of staff involvement in feedback processes to be explored. [paragraph 4.3.10]

3. Curriculum Design, Development and Content

a) *Work-related learning* opportunities should be identified and supported with assistance from the Careers Service. [paragraph 4.4.1]

b) Students should be encouraged to undertake *study abroad* options. [paragraph 4.4.3]

4. Student Progression, Retention and Support

a) The high *staff: student ratio* on Civil Engineering programmes should be addressed within the new School structure. [paragraph 4.6.2]

5. The Quality of learning Opportunities

a) The provision of workspace for PGT students should be reviewed and information on the space currently available communicated to all PGT students. [paragraph 4.7.3]

b) The Department should reflect on the mentoring support provided to new lecturers and ensure that all staff are able to communicate effectively in English. [paragraph 4.7.4]

6. Student Recruitment

a) Support on the practicalities and operational issues associated with study on *collaborative degrees programmes* should be provided to PGT students. [paragraph 4.5.3]

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

b) A *Staff:Student Liaison Committee* for PGT students should be created at School level in the new School structure. [paragraph 4.5.4]

c) The Department and *Glasgow International College* should ensure that the students entering degree programmes via that route are as well prepared as possible. [paragraph 4.5.2]

d) A school-level *induction* course for PGT students should be offered in January for those who join courses then rather than in September. [paragraph 4.5.5]

7. Resources for Learning and Teaching

a) A student representative should be included on the Department's Learning and Teaching committee as recommended in university guidance (reference: Code of Practice on Student Representation). [paragraph 4.8.7]

b) A standardised system for the training and development of the GTAs should be introduced with the new School structure in accordance with Senate requirements on the training of GTAs. [paragraph 4.8.5]

c) GTAs should have access to student feedback that attains to them. [paragraph 4.8.6]

8. Maintaining Standards of Awards

a) *Annual Monitoring* Reports should be produced for all postgraduate programmes. [paragraph 5.1.5]

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 (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. 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.

Collaborative degree programmes

Collaborative degree programmes are those provided in partnership with another institution. The nature and extent of the collaboration is particular to each partner institution and to each degree programme.

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.

Glasgow International College

The College offers a foundation education with a range of Foundation Certificates, a Diploma and Pre-Masters academic preparation courses for **international** foundation education students looking to progress to the University of Glasgow. On completion, students are guaranteed progression to a higher education at university. The College is a partnership between Kaplan International Colleges and the University of Glasgow.

Graduate Teaching Assistant or GTAs

Graduate Teaching Assistants, Tutors and Laboratory Demonstrators are students, usually research students, who assist with teaching in the form of tutorials, labs and other activities that are part of undergraduate programmes in the department. They are paid an hourly rate by the University.

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.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the submission or presentation of work, in any form, which is not one's own, without acknowledgement of the sources. Special cases of plagiarism can also arise from one student copying another student's work or from inappropriate collaboration.

Postgraduate Taught or PGT

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

Retention

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

Staff:Student Liaison Committee or SSLCs

Staff:Student Liaison Committees are departmental committees which provide a formal opportunity for Student Representatives to discuss matters with, and give feedback to their Department.

Staff:Student Ratios

The Staff:Student Ratio describes the number of students to each member of staff, either in the Department, Faculty or University.

Study abroad

Study abroad is a term that is often used to refer to several programmes that offer opportunities for students to study in a European University, or one further afield, for a term, semester or year as part of their undergraduate degree programme. (The University's "Study Abroad Programme" is specifically for designed for visiting students who elect to come to the University of Glasgow.)

Work-Related Learning

"Work Related Learning encompasses the higher order attributes, skills and understandings students gain throughout the course of their degree, from a broad range of activities in, or related to, the world of work, which will enhance their learning, progress into, adaptability for, and success in, their chosen careers." - Aiming University Learning @ Work Project
http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/aulw/