

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 25 May 2007

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:
Report of the Review of the Department of Theatre, Film and
Television Studies held on 20 February 2007**

Ms Helen Clegg, Clerk to the Review Panel

October 2007

Review Panel

Professor Robin Leake (Convener)	Vice Principal, Physical Sciences and Engineering
Professor Kate Newey	External Subject Specialist University of Birmingham
Professor Yvonne Tasker	External Subject Specialist University of East Anglia
Professor Mike French	Senate Assessor on Court
Mr Bill Sweeney	Member of Cognate Department (Department of Music)
Dr Vicky Gunn	Learning and Teaching Centre Representative
Mr Anders Roberts-Aufderhorst	Student Representative
Ms Helen Clegg	Administrator, Senate Office

A. Introduction

The Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies, one of 13 Departments within the Faculty of Arts, began as a Department of Drama in 1966. Film and Television Studies was added in 1978 and the Department was renamed in 1986. Most of the Department's teaching takes place in one location, with well-equipped teaching rooms, a theatre and cinema, studio space and a resources room with viewing and IT facilities. It was noted that the arts venue G12 shared the building with the Department. A high degree of autonomy was given to the two subject groups, Theatre Studies and Film and Television Studies, but there appeared to be a very definite feeling of this being a single, cohesive department. Whilst staffing within the Film and Television subject area had been stable for some time, Theatre Studies had experienced a period of significant change, with five of the existing staff being appointed since 2003 to replace those lost through promotion to jobs elsewhere, and retirement. The Centre for Cultural Policy Research, an independent entity founded in 2002, has always had strong links with the Department and in July 2005 was placed within the Department. Whilst mainly research-focused, it had forged teaching links with the Department of Urban Studies and had contributed to Theatre, Film and Television Studies teaching.

The Department was last reviewed internally during Session 1996-97, and a Teaching Quality Assessment of Drama was undertaken by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) in March 1998, which resulted in a 'Highly Satisfactory' rating.

The Department had provided a Self Evaluation Report and supporting documentation in accordance with the University's requirements for the Review of Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The Convener thanked the Department for the fullness and clarity of the documentation and commended the Department on its inclusive approach to producing the document.

During the course of the review event, the Review Panel met with Professor Elizabeth Moignard, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Professor Christine Geraghty, Head of the Department. Professor Geraghty was accompanied by Professor Adrienne Scullion (James Arnott Chair in Drama) and Dr Karen Boyle (in her capacity as Quality Assurance Officer for the Department). The Panel also met with thirteen key members of staff, three probationary members of staff, five Graduate Teaching Assistants/Hourly Paid Staff, seven postgraduate students/graduates and nineteen undergraduate students covering all levels of provision.

The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies:

- MA (Hons) Film and Television Studies
- MA (Hons) Theatre Studies
- MLitt Film and Television Studies
- MLitt Film Journalism
- MLitt Dramaturgy
- MLitt Cultural and Media Policy

B. Overall Aims of the Department's Provision

The Review Panel noted and praised the Department's overall aims, which were communicated to all students through their handbooks, and the Panel considered them to be appropriate, and consistent with the aims of the University as a whole. The Department saw its learning and teaching provision as being marked by:

- *a variety of approaches in modes of teaching;*
- *a strong link between research and teaching;*
- *a variety of assessment methods;*
- *a thriving relationship with the theatre and media industries in Glasgow and Scotland*
- *an approach to learning which aimed to equip students for a variety of jobs and to develop their ambitions for learning*

The Panel wished to know how the Department considered itself unique and how it distinguished its offerings from those of comparable institutions. Staff believed that the integration of the two subject areas was one of its main selling points. In addition, the Department was firmly located within the cultural identity of Scotland and was the only theatre-related department in the country which was research-led. Despite not being a performance-based department, links with industry were excellent and the Department had become part of that cultural identity.

The Panel was interested to learn how the two subject areas worked together in a single department. The Head of Department firmly believed that the two areas complemented each other, particularly in terms of forming and maintaining links with the industry, as there was sometimes crossover and movement across the media. She stated that it was possible for students to undertake a joint degree encompassing both areas, and that there were hopes that more formally inter-related courses covering both Theatre and Film and Television Studies could be devised in the future. She felt the creative relationship between the two was significant. Informally, students could also be involved in both areas, which was beneficial in giving them a more rounded experience. In addition, expertise could be shared in terms of staff development. The Department was largely a young, newly-appointed team and mentoring across the subject areas helped in the sharing of knowledge. The Department was seen by all staff as being very much a single unit despite the two subject groups, and the Panel noted that this perception seemed to be shared at Faculty and University level.

C. Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Provision

C.1 Aims

The Panel found the programme and course aims to be consistent with relevant benchmark statements. These were communicated to all students through their inclusion in course handbooks.

C.2 Intended Learning Outcomes

The Panel noted that the Intended Learning Outcomes for each programme were provided in the students' documentation. The Panel heard that efforts were made to ensure all students and staff had a clear understanding of the ILOs.

Both groups of students confirmed they were familiar with the Intended Learning Outcomes and how they applied to assessment methods. However, some of the undergraduate students felt that having this framework of ILOs limited their learning, and believed the ILOs were more useful to staff than students. The GTAs/Hourly Paid staff advised that the ILOs were a useful holistic framework which acted as a constant reminder of what was required to be taught and learned. As the ILOs were presented in course handbooks in a weekly format, the requirements of each course were very clear.

C.3 Assessment

C.3.1 Assessment Methods

The assessment methods employed by the Department were wide-ranging, and included a variety of summative and formative methods for assessing academic and practical work. The Department used the University Code of Assessment with no apparent difficulty.

The Panel wished to know whether all students had equal exposure to a wide variety of assessment methods or whether some, depending on the options chosen, might not have the opportunity of being exposed to these. It was advised that all students would experience the wide variety of methods in the core courses alone, and could then choose their optional courses to cover more of any other skill. Students had a good deal of autonomy in choosing the skills with which they would graduate, and this allowed them to play to their strengths whilst still ensuring that the essential skills were covered in the core courses.

Some of the postgraduate students advised that they were encouraged to formulate their own essay questions. This was particularly appreciated, as it meant students could concentrate on areas of interest to them. They believed the flexibility allowed was one of the main strengths of the Department.

C.3.2 Feedback

The majority of students stated that they received sufficient high-quality feedback on their performance, although this varied depending on the lecturer concerned. Essay feedback was seen to be particularly helpful, with a good level of support offered. Amongst the undergraduate students, it was noted that the level of feedback improved significantly in Level 2, when students began to think about Honours selection. Students suggested that it would be helpful to see their examination scripts in order to utilise any comments on them.

Some students, particularly those in Film and Television Studies, did not feel there was enough assessed work in Level 2, and would appreciate some form of additional assessment from which they could gain feedback on their progress. The Panel **recommended** that the Department give consideration to incorporating an additional assessment into Level 2 of the MA degrees in order to provide more feedback to students.

Feedback on Honours dissertations was noted as being particularly effective. Each student had at least six meetings with their supervisor and received a significant amount of feedback, with a good deal of information on what was required to produce a successful dissertation.

C.3.3 Assessment at Postgraduate Level

Students on the MLitt Dramaturgy programme seemed to have little information on how their performance in the programme would be assessed. They had completed an essay, but had not yet received feedback on this. They stated that no information had been provided on the means of assessment, summative or formative. The Head of Department advised that there had been considerable changes in the Theatre Studies staff and it was possible certain information had been unintentionally overlooked. The Panel **recommended** that clear and detailed information on the means of assessment of the MLitt Dramaturgy programme be produced and distributed to students prior to the commencement of study, for future students. For those students already on the programme, this information should be made available immediately.

Postgraduate students on the MLitt Film and Television/Film Journalism advised that the clarity of assessment requirements varied from course to course. They stated that they often had a lot of questions for the lecturer before each piece of assessment was submitted.

C.3.4 Number of 'A' Grades

The Panel queried the relatively low number of 'A' grades, particularly at Level 2, which seemed unusual given the high degree of ability and motivation amongst students. Staff advised that courses were assessed over four assessment points with different modes of assessment, and that student ability varied across these modes, resulting in a 'levelling out' of the overall grade. Also, by Level 2, with Honours selection imminent, staff believed that students became more focused on their weaker areas, resulting in fewer 'A' grades. Students agreed that they did sometimes take this strategic approach. Staff mentioned that more 'A' grades had been awarded since the

introduction of the University Code of Assessment, as there was more freedom for markers to use the entire range of marks.

The undergraduate student groups cited the transition from school to University as a reason, stating that it was difficult to manage, and that the importance of doing the directed reading was not stressed sufficiently. By Level 2, students were only really becoming more aware of the importance of this. The Panel **recommended** that staff place more emphasis on the importance of the directed reading at the earliest possible stage in the programme and clear guidance on the types of comment/analysis that attract additional marks.

Students in Film and Television Studies believed it was difficult to achieve an 'A' grade for their essay, and that they did not undertake enough assessed work in the year on which they could receive feedback. Staff took the view that many students did not think creatively enough and did not include in their essays information they considered to be irrelevant, but which in fact could make the difference between a 'B' and an 'A' grade.

C.3.5 Honours Dissertation

The Panel noted that the assessment of the dissertation had been reviewed and now included a 'process mark' which formalised and documented students' supervision and progress. It was noted that the production of the dissertation coincided with an intense practice period, and thus competed for students' time, and that the Department had amended the degree structure slightly to restore balance.

C.3.6 Range of Provision

The Panel was keen to hear how the Department balanced the necessity of covering key areas of the discipline with the turnover of staff, particularly within Theatre Studies, where there had been significant change in recent years. Staff assured the Panel that the core courses were embedded within the Department and all new staff would be expected to be able to deliver these. No staff member was required to teach only their own specialist areas. Staff were content with this and stated it was a privilege to be able to cover such a wide variety of courses.

The Panel asked if there were any areas in which the Department felt under-represented, and would like to be able to teach. In Theatre Studies, it was stated that it would be desirable to offer a class on explicitly non-Western form, and in Applied Theatre. Film and Television Studies cited Early Cinema as a gap they would wish to fill. However, staff from both subject areas agreed these gaps were not major issues.

C.4 *Curriculum Design and Content*

C.4.1 Expansion of Postgraduate Provision

The Panel was interested to know whether any addition to the Department's current portfolio of taught postgraduate programmes was planned. The Head of Department advised that there had already been some expansion in relation to the University Shape exercise, and stated that the MLitt in Film and Television Studies was now one of the largest MLitts in the Faculty of Arts. She added that a new MSc in Media Management was being proposed, with an October 2007 start date in mind. The Dramaturgy MLitt is being revised to include playwriting and a new programme is also being developed in theatre studies.

C.4.2 Involvement with the Sector

The Panel queried the amount of professional/industry involvement in the MLitt Dramaturgy programme. It seemed from the programme documentation that this was less than was suggested in the SER. However, the Panel was reassured that there was significant input from the profession, with students working closely with industry practitioners in the second semester. At present, involvement was mainly with the Traverse Theatre, with links to an upcoming production. A successful programme of placements was in existence with the Traverse and also with Playwright Studio Scotland. Students went on, in many cases, to take up similar posts at these and other theatre companies. It was also noted that there had been success in this area for ERASMUS students from Germany, who had enjoyed having such significant exposure to professional practice.

The Panel **recommended** that the publicity material for the MLitt Dramaturgy programme be reviewed, in order to more fully stress the degree of professional involvement, as this was rather under-emphasised in the current literature.

Postgraduate students confirmed that there was a good deal of involvement in the programmes by professional practitioners, and that this had helped them to develop contacts in the profession.

C.4.3 Research-Led Teaching

Postgraduate students in particular were appreciative of the variety of research interests amongst staff, and agreed that the diversity of staff ensured that there was always a contact available for the students' areas of interest. Staff noted that one of the main benefits of research-led teaching was that students were exposed to a greater depth of information, as well as a breadth of knowledge. It was also easier for students to access up-to-date research within their area of interest.

C.4.4 Review of Provision

GTAs/Hourly Paid staff stated that they were encouraged to give feedback on how well courses ran, and to suggest improvements. However, they were unclear as to the amount of influence they might have – for instance, it was not clear whether they were in a position to influence the weightings of certain pieces of assessed work, where they felt this was disproportionate. At present, GTAs were not involved in committee discussions relating to such matters.

It was **recommended** that all staff involved in the teaching and assessment of students, including GTAs and Hourly Paid staff, be given the opportunity to become involved in any review of course content and assessment.

C.4.5 *Employability*

Postgraduate students on the MLitt Film and Television Studies saw their programme as a bridge to further research, rather than as enhancing their employability. Most planned to continue to PhD level, and confirmed that the programme had been marketed to them appropriately with a view to this.

Students on the MLitt Dramaturgy confirmed they were being well prepared for work, particularly through the placement period of their programme and the development of industry connections.

C.5 Student Recruitment, Support and Progression

C.5.1 Recruitment

The Panel noted from the SER that entrance requirements were slightly higher than those of other programmes within the Faculty. In addition, it was noted that HNC qualifications were not accepted for entry.

It was noted that the MA degrees were not vocational programmes, but that the Department did wish to recruit students wishing to make a vocation of a career in the media, and a balance had to be struck. The Head of Department suggested that some students joined the degrees expecting them to be less academic, and were then not sure of the career paths available to them. She stated that students received careers information at Honours level, but not before this. The Panel **recommended** that the Department give consideration to providing careers information prior to Honours selection, in order that students could make more informed choices.

C.5.2 Student Support

C.5.2.1 Attendance

The issue of attendance, particularly at Levels 1 and 2, was queried by the Panel, as this was a recurring issue in Annual Course Monitoring reports. The Head of Department advised that a number of methods of improving attendance were being used. Attendance lists were being kept at some classes, and any student who did not attend for two weeks was contacted. However, the Department did not wish students to be treated like school pupils, and sought to strike a balance between guiding students about their attendance and allowing them the opportunity to make their own choices about their studies. Small group teaching was also being used, with a number of small groups or pairs of students being set tasks and reporting back to the larger group. Research questions were being set in advance of seminars and students were required to bring in prepared work. This method was positively evaluated in student feedback questionnaires. Efforts were also being made to more explicitly connect the lectures and seminars in order that students could clearly see the benefit of attending both. It was also noted that, whilst the issue of over-teaching at Level 1 had been addressed by the Department and teaching had been reduced, this had not been the case in other departments in which the students took classes. However, despite attendance problems, staff firmly believed that the vast majority of students did work hard and achieved good results.

Undergraduate students commented that the timing of lectures was sometimes a problem (in particular, Friday morning lectures suffered from especially poor attendance) but advised that, as they received excellent support from the lecturer for each class, they did not always feel it was necessary to attend. They acknowledged that attendance at classes did supplement the handouts and recommended reading, but that this was not always sufficient incentive to attend. In addition, they stated that, if they had not done the recommended reading for the class, they would be more likely to miss the class than to attend without knowing the subject matter of the class. They believed that a good deal of the assessment material came from tutorials and that it was possible to get the same mark simply by attending these. The students believed that a large number of students ignored the recommended reading, as this was not mandatory, although they were more inclined to do so if they wished to progress to Honours. They suggested that students were more inclined to do the work for classes if they were split into small groups or pairs, and would be happier speaking in small groups. It would also be more obvious if some students did not participate.

The GTAs/Hourly Paid staff group stated that attendance was normally good at morning classes, but worsened later in the day. If handouts for the class were given in advance, this tended to lead to poor attendance. In addition, if students chose their assessed essay question based on one of the earlier lectures, it was likely they would not attend the remaining lectures. The undergraduate students confirmed this, stating that it was often a strategic choice. It was noted that attendance was poorer in Film and Television Studies, and that perhaps this was because students believed this subject would involve much less work than was the case. Attendance in Theatre Studies appeared to be much higher.

Staff believed it would be helpful to have a Faculty-wide policy on dealing with non-attenders. The Panel **recommended** that Faculty give consideration to the formulation of a policy for dealing with poor attendance at classes which, whilst allowing the student the freedom of choice, ensured potential problems were identified and addressed before they became retention problems. The Panel further **recommended** that, given the recurring issues regarding attendance at Level 2, formal evaluation of the year (and student motivation) be undertaken, in order to identify developments that might address the issue.

C.5.2.2 Availability of Staff

The Panel noted that an 'office hours' system operates and that many staff also have an 'open door' policy as far as is possible. This appeared to work well. However, the GTAs group stated that, whilst students were not necessarily encouraged to approach them for advice, this did happen regularly. They believed students were unclear as to the role of the GTA, and perhaps expected an excessive amount of assistance. The Panel believed it was important that the GTAs should not be over-burdened in this respect. Therefore, the Panel **recommended** that steps be taken to ensure that students were aware of the role of the GTA in terms of the amount of assistance that could be expected, and that the GTAs were not being expected to spend excessive amounts of time supporting students outside of their normal teaching responsibilities.

C.5.2.3 International Student Support

It was noted that discipline-specific support, particularly language support, was required for international students on all programmes. The Head of Department advised that, at present, Faculty was investigating the types of support needed and how best to provide these. The needs of international students varied enormously and could not be generalised. However, staff had a good deal of experience in teaching and supporting international students, and agreed that the resulting diversity was most valuable.

C.5.3 Progression

The Department had provided student numbers for each year of each programme. However, the Panel did not believe this gave a clear picture of progression of students and suggested that more specific cohort analysis information should be made available by the Planning Office. It was noted that many Departments produced this information themselves as they found it useful, but that no central provision of such reports was available. The Panel **recommended** that the Planning Office give consideration to producing more detailed cohort analysis information on progression rates, etc, for use in DPTLA review events and for general use.

From the information available, it appeared that progression rates were high, particularly within Film and Television Studies. This was confirmed by the Head of Department. She stated that students were highly motivated and well-qualified, in spite

of sometimes poor attendance at classes. The Panel wished to know, therefore, what value was being added by attendance at classes. The Head of Department, and staff, stated that attendance at classes helped by means of being able to see progression. There was variation in the abilities of students, and it was important for them to be exposed to a range of experiences in class, as well as the benefits to be gained through group working.

Undergraduate students were, in some cases, progressing to postgraduate study within the Department. It was noted that, in the past, undergraduate students wishing to take further study had been advised to apply to other universities. However, now that the Department and Faculty had developed an attractive and wide-ranging portfolio of postgraduate programmes, students were now very much encouraged to remain at the University of Glasgow for further study. Annual information sessions relating to postgraduate opportunities (both at Glasgow and elsewhere) were run within the Faculty. When asked whether they would remain at Glasgow for postgraduate study, the undergraduate students were divided in their responses. However, those who stated they would go elsewhere said they would do so only to experience another city or country. All agreed that the Department would be an excellent one in which to undertake further study.

C.6 The Effectiveness of Provision

The Department offered evidence of the effectiveness of its provision by means of External Examiners' comments and student feedback.

C.6.1 Teaching Methods

The Panel noted that the Department employed a wide variety of teaching methods, including lectures, seminars, project work, group work, practical sessions and placement periods.

Lectures given by guest speakers were widely used, and students (particularly postgraduate) cited these as excellent. They stated that they were often inspiring, and gave a good insight into what the possibilities were for their own future careers. They believed that it was crucial to interact with practitioners and experience the realities of the profession.

Theatre Studies postgraduate students undertook placement periods and found these a vital part of their programme. Placements were scheduled to run for six weeks, although this could be extended at the theatre company's discretion, depending on the type of appointment made. Students would be assigned a supervisor who would meet with them (or correspond via e-mail) to discuss progress and any difficulties that might arise.

However, some, particularly the MLitt Dramaturgy students, were not yet entirely clear about what this would entail. They understood it was assessed by means of a reflective report. A meeting had been scheduled to discuss issues surrounding the placement and students hoped to receive detailed information at that time.

C.6.2 Graduate Teaching Assistants/Hourly Paid Staff

The GTAs/Hourly Paid staff mainly had responsibility for taking tutorials. Whilst courses were already written, they were able to decide how to construct the individual classes they took. They also had some input into choosing the type of films viewed by classes.

The GTAs group advised that they shared offices within the Department and that this allowed them to be fully integrated and involved in the Department's business. They made themselves available to students whenever they were in the Department and believed this was important in building a good rapport with the students. They did concede that they perhaps took on more work than was expected of them, and mentioned that they did not receive payment for class preparation time. The Head of Department believed the GTAs rate of pay did include preparation time, but agreed to investigate this further.

The staff group confirmed that the GTAs mainly focused their attention on the core provision within the Department. However, on occasion it was possible for them to become involved in more specialist options, by perhaps taking one or two classes at the discretion of the course leader. Staff discussed with the GTAs what they felt comfortable teaching, and staff sometimes taught courses they would not normally teach in order to allow the GTAs their preference. Staff appeared entirely happy with this arrangement. The most important point was that there must be an appropriate fit between the needs of the course and its students, and the abilities of the GTA.

C.6.3 Staff Workload

The Panel noted that no Workload Model was in operation within the Department. However, it was apparent that all staff had a very clear sense of what other staff did, and that workloads were consistent throughout the Department. Staff saw no need to formalise this arrangement as it currently worked well and, in their view, offered more transparency than a formalised workload model. The Head of Department confirmed that, although she had thought the informal practice rather odd on joining the Department, it worked well within the Department. She stated that it relied heavily on democracy and staff willingness, but that these were qualities that were very strong throughout the Department.

It was noted that, in line with usual practice, Probationary Staff were given a reduced workload and it was hoped that, should they feel under pressure, they would raise the matter with the Head of Department or their mentor. Mentors were allocated to Probationary Staff from a different subject group, so mentors had no vested interest in increasing the Probationary Staff member's workload. The Head of Department reassured the Panel that workloads for Probationary Staff were reduced, although conceded that, due to the small size of the Department, they may reach a full teaching load sooner than staff in a much larger department. However, they would still receive a reduced administrative load. Probationary staff voiced some concern over the potential for workloads to increase should a member of staff take research leave.

C.6.4 Departmental Accommodation

In general, staff and students were satisfied with the teaching accommodation, and were happy with the arrangement of sharing performance space with G12. However, within Theatre Studies, problems were arising in terms of finding space to enable different teaching methodologies to be embraced. Often, break-out rooms were required, as well as space for student-initiated work outside of the normal curriculum. It was noted that it was sometimes difficult to find accommodation for classes (even outwith the Departmental building) and that this was likely to worsen with any expansion of PGT provision. Staff stated that they would like to see teaching, including any new PGT teaching, take precedence over G12 activities, but the Department would be reluctant to see G12 forced out. Ideally, staff wished for an unshared space that was available for the Department to use at any time. However, Funding Council pressure for demonstrable efficient use of space was likely to result in more, rather than less, space being managed under Central Room Bookings.

Film and Television Studies appeared not to experience the same problems with regard to space. However, there were access issues relating to the Resources Room as, at present, only one staff member had responsibility for this. Staff unanimously agreed that the facility, and the staff member, were of immense value to the Department, and that increased recognition and support of this was essential.

Staff and students found it particularly frustrating that the building could not be accessed in the evenings, other than at times when G12 were present and therefore janitorial support was available. It was unanimously agreed that evening and weekend opening would be immensely helpful, but that this had been refused in the past for Health and Safety reasons. However, it was recognised that other buildings on campus were accessible through the use of swipe-cards, with no requirement for janitorial support. The Panel **recommended** that the possibility of evening and weekend access to the Department be fully investigated, with a view to offering swipe-card controlled access to staff and Honours/Postgraduate students.

C.6.5 Staff Retention

Given the fairly rapid turnover of staff within Theatre Studies in recent times, the Panel was keen to hear how existing staff were being retained. The Head of Department advised that a number of methods were in use, including appraisals, in which objectives were set and staff suggestions considered. She stated that efforts were made to ensure such suggestions could happen. Promotions were also used, where appropriate, to encourage staff to stay within the Department.

C.6.6 Staff Development and Support

GTAs/Hourly Paid staff advised that they received training delivered by the Teaching and Learning Service, and that this was helpful in boosting their confidence. In addition, they stated that they received a large amount of informal support from staff, who were happy to be approached for feedback or help after each class. However, it was noted by the Learning and Teaching Centre representative that the Department should give a minimum of three hours formal training on assessment practices. The Panel **recommended** that the Department formalise its already excellent informal training for GTAs and Hourly Paid staff, in order to satisfy the requirement for three hours formal training on assessment.

GTAs were advised that it was possible for them to undertake the Associate Practitioner Status certificate, and several expressed an interest in this.

Probationary staff stated that they had been made to feel very welcome on joining the staff, and believed the mentoring system worked well, particularly as mentors were allocated from the opposite subject area. In addition to their allocated mentors, they felt comfortable approaching any member of staff for advice or support.

It was noted that teaching staff were well-supported administratively. However, support staff were very stretched due to not only the high volume of administrative work, but also by being the first point of contact within the Department. This tended to take up a lot of time and was a considerable distraction at busy times. It was acknowledged that any growth in teaching would necessarily require a growth in administrative support.

C.6.7 New Lecturer Programme

Probationary staff had, in general, found the New Lecturer Programme to be useful. On a positive note, the opportunity to meet other new members of staff from around the University was welcomed. However, they stated that the programme did not take into

account the fact that it was necessary to already have a good deal of experience in order to secure a lecturing post. Therefore, most of those undertaking the programme already had significant knowledge of teaching. The timing of the programme was also mentioned as being a problem, as no teaching relief was offered for attending. Probationary staff suggested that the programme should run from January until Easter, and that a two-tier system would be more helpful in separating more experienced from less experienced staff, with less experienced staff undertaking a longer programme. They firmly agreed that there was no recognition of prior learning. The Panel **recommended** that the Learning and Teaching Centre give consideration to affording appropriate recognition of prior learning, in relation to the New Lecturer Programme.

D. The Maintenance and Enhancement of Standards of Awards

The Panel was confident that the Department was operating effective measures to maintain the standards of its awards. The SER indicated that standards were maintained using a number of methods, including a transparent assessment system, Honours entry criteria, benchmarking and involvement with national bodies. External Examiners played a key role in ensuring comparability with standards and practice in other institutions. The Annual Course Monitoring process also provided an opportunity to identify relevant issues and act upon them.

E. The Maintenance and Assurance of Quality

The Department was last reviewed internally during Session 1996-97, and a Teaching Quality Assessment of Drama was undertaken by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) in March 1998, which resulted in a 'Highly Satisfactory' rating.

E.1 Quality Assurance Methods

A variety of measures were in place with regard to quality assurance – these included training for new lecturers, student feedback questionnaires, the committee structure within the Department and Faculty, and the regular review of courses and programmes with input from representatives from the sector. It was noted that the Department had been commended by the Faculty on the quality of its Annual Course Monitoring reports, and the Panel agreed these were of a very high standard.

E.2 Mechanisms for Student Input

Students were encouraged to offer feedback through the Staff Student Liaison Committee and feedback questionnaires distributed at the end of each course. They stated that, whilst they did not generally benefit personally from the improvements they suggested, they did believe changes took effect for the next year, and were confident that their suggestions were taken seriously. In addition to the formal feedback channels, students all agreed they were encouraged to make comments or suggestions informally at any time.

F. Enhancing the Student Learning Experience

F.1 Course Documentation

The course documentation was considered by students to be excellent. Many students kept these throughout the year for reference, as they contained references to directed reading, as well as very clear ILOs covering classes on a week-to-week basis.

F.2 Peer-Assisted Learning

The Panel noted from the SER that there had been a system of Peer-Assisted Learning in operation within the Department, where student facilitators were trained to work with their peers to develop their learning. This had been well-received by students and had been very positively evaluated. However, this had been discontinued due to the requirement for student facilitators to be put through Disclosure Scotland procedures. Students agreed they would be keen to see Peer-Assisted Learning reintroduced, and staff were working to solve this. It was acknowledged that the Disclosure Scotland requirements changed the dynamics of Peer-Assisted Learning and its objectives. Staff advised that the matter had been referred to Faculty and to Human Resources and it was hoped that progress could be made in reintroducing the system. The Panel **recommended** that efforts be made to find a way to re-introduce the Peer-Assisted Learning system without the requirement for Disclosure Scotland checks, which were in opposition to the spirit of Peer-Assisted Learning.

F.3 Departmental Identity

Students confirmed that the Department worked well, and that lecturers could be approached for assistance at all times, even those not directly related to the particular course. Students stated that they felt they were a cohesive group, particularly those studying both Theatre and Film and Television Studies jointly. They particularly appreciated the fact that their classes all took place in one location, and they felt at home in the Department. Some students did see the two subject areas as quite separate from one another, rather than the unified group, but were nonetheless satisfied with the experience of studying within the Department.

G. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas to be Improved or Enhanced in Relation to Learning and Teaching

G.1 Key Strengths

- The Department demonstrated a cohesive, consultative approach and all staff showed an extremely strong commitment to the success of the Department and its students
- Staff appeared to share a strong strategic vision for the Department's future
- Links with the profession had been proactively developed and carefully nurtured
- The flexibility of teaching and learning approach was particularly appreciated by the student body
- A proactive approach was taken to the review of programmes and courses, and to the introduction of new programmes and courses
- Students agreed that there was a very definite feeling of support from staff, who were helpful and approachable at all times

G.2 Areas to be Improved or Enhanced

- Certain roles, particularly those of GTAs, required clarification as students' expectations were unclear
- Assessment procedures, particularly in relation to the MLitt Dramaturgy programme, required clarification

H. Conclusions and Recommendations

H.1 Conclusion

The Panel concluded that the Department's provision was of a high quality overall, and this was particularly impressive given the proportion of relatively new staff. The Panel was pleased that, without exception, staff and students were committed to the success of the Department and were positive about its future.

H.2 Recommendations

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report, and summarised below, are made in the spirit of encouragement in order to enhance the already high standards of the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the corresponding sections of the report, and are ranked in order of priority.

Recommendation 1:

The Panel **recommended** that clear and detailed information on the means of assessment of the MLitt Dramaturgy programme be produced and distributed to students prior to the commencement of study, for future students. For those students already on the programme, this information should be made available immediately (Section C.3.3)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 2:

The Panel **recommended** that the Department formalise its already excellent informal training for GTAs and Hourly Paid staff, in order to satisfy the requirement for three hours training on assessment (Section C.6.6)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 3:

The Panel **recommended** that the Department give consideration to incorporating an additional assessment into Level 2 of the MA degrees in order to provide more feedback to students (Section C.3.2)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 4:

The Panel **recommended** that efforts be made to find a way to re-introduce the Peer-Assisted Learning system without the requirement for Disclosure Scotland checks, which were in opposition to the spirit of Peer-Assisted Learning (Section F.2)

Attention : Head of Department, Dean of Faculty, Director of Human Resources

Recommendation 5:

The Panel **recommended** that the possibility of evening and weekend access to the Department be fully investigated, with a view to offering swipe-card controlled access to staff and Honours/Postgraduate students (Section C.6.4)

Attention : Head of Department, Director of Estates and Buildings

Recommendation 6:

The Panel **recommended** that staff place more emphasis on the importance of the directed reading at the earliest possible stage in the programme and clear guidance on the types of comment/analysis that attract additional marks (Section C.3.4)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 7:

The Panel **recommended** that the Learning and Teaching Centre give consideration to affording appropriate recognition of prior learning, in relation to the New Lecturer Programme (Section C.6.7)

Attention : Director of Learning and Teaching Centre

Recommendation 8:

The Panel **recommended** that Faculty give consideration to the formulation of a policy for dealing with poor attendance at classes which, whilst allowing the student the freedom of choice, ensured potential problems were identified and addressed early, and before they became retention problems (Section C.5.2.1)

Attention : Dean, Faculty of Arts

Recommendation 9:

The Panel *recommended* that, given the recurring issues regarding attendance at Level 2, formal evaluation of the year (and student motivation) be undertaken, in order to identify developments that might address the issue (Section C.5.2.1)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 10:

The Panel **recommended** that steps be taken to ensure that students were aware of the role of the GTA in terms of the amount of assistance that could be expected, and that the GTAs were not being expected to spend excessive amounts of time supporting students outside of their normal teaching responsibilities (Section 5.2.2)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 11:

The Panel **recommended** that the Department give consideration to providing careers information prior to Honours selection, in order that students could make more informed choices (Section C.5.1)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 12:

The Panel **recommended** that the publicity material for the MLitt Dramaturgy programme be reviewed, in order to more fully stress the degree of professional involvement, as this was rather under-emphasised in the current literature (Section C.4.2)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 13:

The Panel **recommended** that all staff involved in the teaching and assessment of students, including GTAs and Hourly Paid staff, be given the opportunity to become involved in any review of course content and assessment (Section C.4.4)

Attention : Head of Department

Recommendation 14:

The Panel **recommended** that the Planning Office give consideration to producing more detailed cohort analysis information on progression rates, etc, for use in DPTLA review events and for general use (Section C.5.3)

Attention : Director of Planning Office

Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office

Last modified on: Thursday 4 October 2007