University *of* Glasgow

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Department of Theology and Religious Studies: 5 March 2008

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. 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_104283_en.pdf

Further information about the DPTLA process can be found at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qae/dptla/

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Review Panel concluded that the Department's provision was of a high quality and it was impressed by the evident enthusiasm and commitment of staff and students. The Panel commends the Department's awareness of its areas of weakness and the fact that work was underway to resolve outstanding issues. However, the Panel wishes to emphasise the importance of seeing this work through to completion, particularly in areas highlighted in previous reviews, such as the support and administration of *Graduate Teaching Assistants* and the redrafting of *Intended Learning Outcomes*.

Key Strengths

- Academic and administrative staff committed to supporting students
- Active engagement and organisational strength of the student community
- Welcoming ambience of Department, including provision of student common room
- Enthusiastic team of *Graduate Teaching Assistants*
- Established record of *widening access*
- Broad portfolio of courses covering the twin track of Theology and Religious Studies, with an established pathway from undergraduate to Masters and PhD
- Optimistic and shared vision amongst staff for the continuing development of the Department

- Continuing positive links with the Church of Scotland through Trinity College that significantly enhance Departmental and Library resources.

Areas to be improved or enhanced[1]

1. Communication

   a) The level of cancelled classes to be monitored and practice for communicating changes to timetabled classes improved. [paragraph 6.7]

2. Student Progression, Retention and Support

   a) Work on *PDP*, *employability* and *transferable skills* to be taken forward in consultation with the *Learning and Teaching Centre*. [paragraph 4.6.1]

   b) Use of *Moodle* to be developed with input and support from students. [paragraph 4.7]

3. Staff: Student Liaison Committee

   a) A Postgraduate *staff:student liaison committee* to be established and its remit developed in conjunction with a review of the undergraduate committee. [paragraph 6.3]

4. Curriculum Design, Development and Content

   a) The management and operation of all aspects of taught postgraduate provision to be overseen more closely. [paragraph 4.8.4]

   b) Further consideration to be given to how taught provision might cater more for the specific requirements of various other Churches and religious communities. [paragraph 4.4.7]

   c) Work on rationalising courses at honours and postgraduate level to be completed. [paragraph 4.4.1 and 4.4.2]

   d) Opportunities for inter-departmental and inter-faculty collaboration to be pursued. [paragraph 4.4.8–4.4.10]

   e) Each staff member should have at least one colleague whose areas of expertise overlap with her/his own to provide cover for absences. [paragraph 4.4.1 and 4.4.2]

   f) *CPD* courses for clergy, chaplains and teachers to be explored as a potential area for expansion. [paragraph 4.4.3]

5. Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

   a) Practice in relation to the provision of feedback to be reviewed; agreed timescales to be communicated to all involved in the process; and practice monitored to ensure that feedback is punctual. [paragraph 4.3.7]

   b) Work on broadening the range of assessment methods to be continued. [paragraph 4.3.3]

6. Intended Learning Outcomes

   a) *Intended Learning Outcomes* to be revised in line with University requirements and communicated to students. [paragraph 4.2]

7. Resources of Learning and Teaching

   a) A transparent appointment procedure for *Graduate Teaching Assistants* to be implemented along with a formal system of support and robust administration to ensure all students complete statutory training. [paragraph 4.8.2]

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

8. **Course Monitoring**

   a) A more rigorous practice in relation to *annual monitoring* at course and programme level to be adopted. [paragraph 6.2.1]

   b) The Department's Quality Assurance Officer to be a member of staff whose workload can accommodate the amount of work required to carry out the role effectively. [paragraph 6.2.2]

9. **Workload**

   a) Work on developing a robust and comprehensive *workload model* to be continued. [paragraph 2.9]

10. **Department vision and strategic plan**

    a) A comprehensive strategic plan, supported by a business plan and workload model, to be produced. [paragraph 2.8]

11. **Student Recruitment**

    a) Work to develop a sustainable strategy on student recruitment to be taken forward. [paragraph 4.5]

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Annual Monitoring (of courses)

Annual Monitoring is a reflection process undertaken at the end of each session by Course or Programme Leaders. They are required to reflect on the operation of courses and programmes with a view to maintaining standards and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching. The work done by the course or programme leaders is followed by a full reporting process through Departments and Faculties to Senate, with responses being made, as appropriate, at each level. The reporting procedure is designed to ensure that issues arising from monitoring are properly considered and responded to, and that enhancements and the sharing of good practice are promoted. Annual monitoring reports are reviewed by DPTLA Panels as part of the documentation provided by the Department.

Continuing Professional Development or CPD

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can be defined as learning activity that is: self-financing; developmental; and vocationally relevant. A wide range of activities are included, from conferences, seminars, very short courses (even lunchtime meetings) to credit-rated and award bearing programmes such as MBAs, MScs and other more traditional postgraduate taught (PGT) courses spread over a number of months/years for part-time students. They are normally undertaken by professionals who are already in work but are open to other interested people.

Employability

Employability is about more than being able to get a job after University. It is about acknowledging and being able to articulate achievements, understanding and personal attributes that will contribute to success both during, and after, University.

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.

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs describe what all students should be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes when they successfully complete the course or programme that the ILOs relate to.

Learning and Teaching Centre

The Learning and Teaching Centre is a University Service Department whose role is to "help implement and develop the University's Learning and Teaching strategy, identify, assess and disseminate new developments and good practice which serve to enhance the student learning experience, and will work with colleagues throughout the University to bring about change".

Moodle

Moodle is the University's supported virtual learning environment (VLE).

Personal Development Planning or PDP

Personal Development Planning or PDP is a way to promote reflection on learning, performance and achievements and to plan for personal, educational and career development. Each Faculty at the University offers different types of PDP activities.

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.

Transferable Skills

Skills which can be applied in a variety of different contexts: e.g. Communication (oral, written and the ability to summarise); Self-motivation, self-regulation and self-assurance; Team-working; etc.

Widening Access or Widening Participation

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

Workload Model (Staff)

A workload model is a means of describing the workload of all members of staff and should be used by Departments to ensure that staff workloads are manageable and allocated fairly with different types of work appropriately distributed.