Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Review of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences: Monday 12 November 2007

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Applied Social Sciences. 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://senate.gla.ac.uk/qa/review/reports/sociology.pdf

Further information about the DPTLA process can be found at:

http://senate.gla.ac.uk/qa/review/

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Review Panel commends the Department on the overall quality of its provisions, its maintenance of standards and for its conscientious approach to the student experience and to research-led teaching. The Panel was pleased to note that the feedback from staff and students was very positive. The Review Panel particularly commends the Department for its use of *MOODLE* and encourages it to continue to develop this to support student learning.

Key Strengths

- The quality of the support and teaching provided by staff
- Wide range of student feedback mechanisms
- Developing the use of *MOODLE* to enhance Learning and Teaching
- Excellent library facilities in the Adam Smith Building
- Good use of the varying range of assessment methods
- *Research-led teaching*
- Willingness to respond to changing circumstances, including a high staff turnover, and adjust assessment methods and other practices accordingly

- System of *Peer Review* for *GTAs*

Areas to be improved or enhanced[1]

1. **Curriculum**
   a) General Paper and Dissertation option to be reviewed in the context of *split diet examination* arrangements to identify ways in which it might continue to be offered. [Paragraph C.3.1]

2. **Communication with Students**
   a) Information on attendance should be made more explicit in the course handbooks and highlighted to students at induction so that they are made aware of the required levels of attendance. [Paragraph F.3]
   b) All staff should engage with *MOODLE* and a set of guidelines should be developed for staff and students clarifying what materials will be issued in hard copy and what will be posted on *MOODLE*. [Paragraph C.6.1]
   c) Communication of information on Faculty events, including *induction*, to students should be reviewed. [Paragraph F.2]

3. **Teaching space**
   a) The Department's overall teaching space provision to be reviewed with the Dean and Director of Estates and Building. [Paragraph C.6.4]
   b) Earlier opening hours for the computer rooms should be considered. [Paragraph C.6.5]

4. **Employability and PDP**
   a) Existing practices on *employability* and *PDP* to be made explicit and staff given the appropriate training to understand *PDP*. [Paragraph C.4.4]

5. **Alignment with University Regulations and Practices**
   a) The Department's system of permitting students to "appeal the mark" and thereby having their essays remarked should no longer be operated to ensure consistency with the University's appeal procedures. [Paragraph C.3.3]
   b) The Department's *diversity and equal opportunities policies* and procedures should be disseminated to the wider University community to promote good practice. [Paragraph C.5.2]
   c) All staff to read and fully understand the University's IT regulations as outlined at http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/it/regulationscommitteesandpolicies. [Paragraph C.6.1]

6. **Staff workloads**
   a) A transparent *workload model* for staff to be developed as a matter of urgency. [Paragraph C.6.8]

7. **Induction for new staff**
   a) Staff induction procedures to be produced including a guide to departmental procedures for new staff. [Paragraph C.6.7]

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

8. Staff Development

a) A more general, collegiate approach towards *Peer Review* should be adopted to extend it beyond the GTAs to all staff as a means of disseminating good practice. [Paragraph C.6.9]

b) Training for staff in the use of the audio-visual equipment available within Lecture Theatres to be provided for those who feel they would benefit from it.

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Diversity and equal opportunities policy

The University aims to create a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone can reach their full potential and have a real choice to participate in and contribute to our activities and processes, without prejudice and discrimination. It is committed to a culture where respect and understanding is fostered and the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances will be positively valued.

http://www.gla.ac.uk/humanresources/policies/a-g/equalitypolicy/

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.

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 the forthcoming year. Events usually take place during the first week of the academic year.

Moodle

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

Peer Review

Peer Review is the process by which an academic's research is scrutinised prior to publication by other experts in the same field. Peer Review of Teaching is where an academic's colleagues, usually in the Department, will provide them with feedback on their teaching techniques with a view to enhancing their effectiveness.

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.

Research-led Teaching

Research-led Teaching can mean different things in different disciplines. Broadly speaking, the term refers to the ways that the current research of staff can positively influence and support student learning and promote the development of research skills and attributes in students.

Split Diet Examination

Split Diet Examination means that students taking honours options will sit final honours examinations in the same year as the option is taken, i.e. options taken in Junior Honours are examined at the end of the Junior Honours year, and options taken in Senior Honours are examined at the end of the Senior Honours year. In some departments, all honours examinations take place at the end of Senior Honours year

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.