

## Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

### Review of Department of Archaeology: Friday 30 January 2009

#### Report Summary

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The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Archaeology. 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\\_125472\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_125472_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.

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#### Conclusions

The Review Panel was impressed with the leadership of the Head of Department of Archaeology, the collegiality of the Department's staff, the quality of support to students and the opportunities that were provided to enhance the personal development of the Department's *Graduate Teaching Assistants* (GTAs). However, the Panel was disappointed to note that the Chair of Archaeology had been vacant since 2006 and hopes that it will be filled soon with a view to maintaining and enhancing the Department's standing both nationally and internationally.

The Department had adopted a frank and inclusive approach to internal review which had resulted in an exemplary document that was both reflective and forward looking and an excellent resource to support the Panel's review of the Department's learning, teaching and assessment. The students who met with the Panel were articulate and enthusiastic about their learning and spoke highly of the Department.

The Department demonstrated that it had made significant progress since the previous internal review in May 2003 and also demonstrated an impressive array of strengths and an awareness of the areas where it needed to improve. The most substantive of these are reflected in the recommendations that follow whilst development in other areas are encouraged through suggestions from the Panel.

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#### Key Strengths

- An honest and reflective approach to review as demonstrated in the inclusive approach taken to the preparation of an exemplary *Self Evaluation Report*
- Approachable and helpful staff
- The quality of staff support provided to both undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students and to *Graduate Teaching Assistants* (GTAs)

- The overall range and variety of assessment methods which allowed students the potential to excel in a variety of different ways
- The perspective and coverage of the Department's course handbooks which included, for example:
  - excellent guidance on how to avoid *plagiarism*, including examples
  - well explained referencing
- The refresher course on referencing at the start of the Junior Honours Year
- The week-long induction session at the start of the Junior Honours year
- The quality of the *Field School* experience, both academically and as a training exercise
- The active involvement of staff in assisting students to source fieldwork and funding opportunities
- The Department's Annual Teaching Review meeting
- The effectiveness of the Department's *Progress Committees*
- The introduction of a system of mitigation categories which provide valuable shorthand for indicating the nature and severity of a problem to the *Examination Board* whilst at the same time maintaining confidentiality
- Courses related to staff research interests thus ensuring a clear linkage between research and teaching
- Opportunities for Senior Honours students to compete for funded trainee supervisor positions at the *Field School*
- The high standard and commitment of *Graduate Teaching Assistants* (GTAs)
- The involvement of *GTAs* in Level 1 curriculum review
- The success of *podcasting* in enhancing student participation in lectures, as a revision and 'catch up' resource and as a resource to support the teaching preparation of *GTAs*

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## Areas to be improved or enhanced<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

- a) Use the entire range of bands prescribed in the *Code of Assessment* with a view to upholding the University's aim of promoting institution-wide equality in the student experience of assessment. (*Paragraph 3.3.1*)
- b) Investigate the capabilities of the *Moodle* assessment function to establish whether it might be modified to allow the *Code of Assessment Grade Descriptors* to be applied in marking. (*Paragraph 3.3.2*)
- c) Internal examiners should reach an agreement on *provisional grades* and feedback before returning assessments to students even if the hand back date is slightly delayed to achieve this. (*Paragraph 3.3.8*)

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the full report that contain the relevant discussion.

## 2. Student Recruitment

- a) Liaise with the *Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Service* (RAPS) to better promote the opportunities for studying Archaeology at the University of Glasgow as part of both an MA and BSc degree. (*Paragraph 3.5.1*)

## 3. Student Progression, Retention and Support

- a) Make more transparent to potential applicants and students in the early years of the undergraduate curriculum, the Department's willingness and ability to accommodate students' needs to reduce the likelihood of those with financial difficulties or other needs perceiving the fieldwork commitments as being too difficult to achieve. (*Paragraph 3.6.11*)
- b) Explore whether Archaeology alumni might be able to assist with the provision of suitable *Fieldwork Placement* opportunities for undergraduate students. (*Paragraph 3.6.12*)

## 4. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Student Learning Experience

- a) Explore ways of strengthening engagement with the more formal aspects of obtaining and responding to feedback from students with a view to:
  - enhancing the quality and effectiveness of interactions between students and staff:
  - encouraging students to participate in opportunities for the collective exchange of views on matters related to learning, teaching and assessment. (*Paragraph 5.6*)
- b) Explore ways of promoting greater individual and collective engagement in the *Annual Monitoring* process, with a view to encouraging a team approach to identifying areas that might benefit from enhancement and good practice that might usefully be shared within and beyond the Department. (*Paragraph 5.8*)
- c) The Arts Faculty should explore whether it might be possible to secure the use of an additional room in the Gregory Building for postgraduate students, with a view to increasing the opportunities for engagement between *Postgraduate Taught* (PGT) students and *Postgraduate Research* students (PGR). (*Paragraph 5.10*)
- d) Arts Faculty should review the content of the *Faculty Research Training* course with a view to improving its relevance and value to PGT students. (*Paragraph 5.11*)

## 5. Learning and Teaching Resources

- a) The University should consider whether there would be merit in exploring with the *Scottish Funding Council* (SFC) the significant disparity between the funding of Archaeology teaching in Scotland and England. (*Paragraph 3.8.2*)
- b) Be proactive in ensuring that probationary staff have well directed mentoring and are allocated an appropriately balanced workload that includes *protected research time*. (*Paragraph 3.8.6*)

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## **Glossary of terms/acronyms used**

### **Annual Monitoring**

Annual Monitoring is a process undertaken at the end of each session to reflect on the operation of courses and programmes.

### **Code of Assessment**

The University's Code of Assessment (implemented 2002-03) is designed to provide a fair and rational means of assessing students' performance.

### **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.

### **Examination Board**

A formal meeting of internal and external examiners to consider and confirm the allocation of grades awarded.

### **Faculty Research Training Course**

The Faculty Research Training Course provides training in research for arts and humanities postgraduates.

### **Field School**

The Department runs an annual Field School designed primarily for second year students about to enter Honours, which provides training across a number of areas including: topographic survey; artifact survey; standing building survey; geophysical survey; excavation techniques; planning, section drawing, etc. The Department's current field school is part of the [Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot](#) project.

### **Fieldwork Placement**

Fieldwork is an important part of archaeological training and participation on field projects or placements provide an opportunity to gain valuable work experience. and can be tailored to specific interests. Details of fieldwork requirements are available at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/currentstudents/fieldwork/>

### **Grade Descriptor**

Grade descriptors are verbal descriptions against which a student's work is judged. The marker decides which descriptor matches the work most closely and awards the corresponding grade.

### **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.

### **Moodle**

Moodle is the University's supported Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

## **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.

## **Podcasting**

A podcast is a series of digital computer files, usually either digital audio or video, that is released periodically and made available for download, so that users can subscribe (or unsubscribe) to get access to all current items in each podcast, and have newly published items automatically downloaded.

## **Postgraduate Research or PGR**

Postgraduate Research refers to research programmes at postgraduate level, usually PhD. In some Faculties and Graduate Schools students candidates undertaking PGR studies may also be registered simply as research students and not for a specific degree.

## **Postgraduate Taught or PGT**

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

## **Progress Committee**

The progress of a student is subject to annual review by the Faculty of Arts Progress Committee. Any student, who fails to satisfy the progress requirements set by the Faculty, will be invited to make representation to the Progress Committee.

## **Protected research time**

Protected research time is an agreement between a member of staff and their Head of Department, to ensure that other teaching and administrative duties do not impinge on their research.

## **Provisional grades**

Student performance and attainment are assessed and graded by the Department but the final grades awarded are finalised by the Examination Board (see above)

## **Recruitment and Participation Service (RAPS)**

The Recruitment, Admissions & Participation Service provides applicants, parents and teachers with information and advice on the range of undergraduate courses available at the University of Glasgow. RAPS also develops, implements, co-ordinates and monitors *widening participation* initiatives within the University and with other partners. Nb The International Postgraduate Service (IPS) and RAPS were brought together to create one overarching team in December 2008; the Recruitment and International Office (RIO).

## **Scottish Funding Council**

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is the body in Scotland that distributes funding from the Scottish Government to the country's colleges and universities.

## **Self Evaluation Report**

A document prepared by the Department in advance of a DPTLA Review. Its purpose is to provide the Review Panel with an insight into the Department's view of itself, its strengths and areas it would wish to develop. It is normally prepared by staff but students will also be offered the opportunity to comment on whether or not it reflects the Department they know.

## **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.