

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 30 May 2008

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:  
Report of the Review of Classics held on 25 February 2008

Mrs Lesley Fielding, Clerk to the Review Panel

**Review Panel:**

Professor Robin Leake	Pro Vice Principal, Convener
Professor Harry Hine	University of St Andrews, External Subject Specialist
Mr Mark Scott	Students' Representative Council
Dr Martin Maccauley	Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Jeremy Huggett	Department of Archaeology (Cognate Department)
Dr Mary McCulloch	Learning and Teaching Centre
Mrs Lesley Fielding	Assistant Academic Policy Manager, Senate Office (Clerk to Review Panel)

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Department of Classics is one of thirteen Departments and schools within the Faculty of Arts. The Department was formed in 1988 by the amalgamation of the Departments of Greek and Humanity (Latin). However, Humanity has been taught in the University since 1451, and Greek since 1577.
- 1.2 The Department last underwent internal review in March 2001 and was subject to external subject review by the Quality Assurance Agency in December 2001. The outcome of this review was that the Panel had 'confidence' in the academic standards achieved by the programmes in Classics: The quality of teaching and learning, the quality of student progression and the quality of learning resources were considered 'commendable'.
- 1.3 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was prepared by Professor Catherine Steel, Head of Department. Comments were sought from staff and students and the feedback received was incorporated into the document. The Review Panel **commends** the SER produced by the Department for the review, and considered it to be impressively thorough, and genuinely evaluative and self-critical.
- 1.4 The Panel met with the Dean, Professor Elizabeth Moignard, the Head of Department, Professor Catherine Steel, Dr Ronald Knox and Professor Matthew Fox who will assume the role of Head of Department with effect from August 2008. The Panel met with 7 members of staff, including the Departmental Secretary, 3 Graduate Teaching Assistants, 2 probationary members of staff, 3 postgraduate taught (PGT) students and 12 undergraduate students representing all levels of the Department's provision.

## 2 Background Information

2.1 The Department has 8 full-time academic staff, including the Head of Department, and 1 part-time academic member of staff. There is 1 Departmental secretary. 5 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) are employed by the Department.

2.2 Students numbers for 2007-08 were as follows:

Students	Headcount	FTE
Level 1	460	76.67
Level 2	124	20.66
Level 3	3	1.50
Honours	76	52.50
Undergraduate Total	663	
Postgraduate Taught	29	6.90
Postgraduate Research*	8	

\*(for information only - research is not covered by the Review)

2.3 The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Department.

- Single Honours Classics
- Single Honours Greek
- Single Honours Latin
- MA Joint Honours in Classics and another subject
- MA Joint Honours in Greek and another subject
- MA Joint Honours in Latin and another subject
- MLitt in Ancient Drama
- MLitt in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History
- MLitt in Classics Receptions of Classical Antiquity
- MLitt in Classics

The Department contributes to the following *joint* degree programmes offered with other Departments or other institutions

- MLitt in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History

The Department also contributes to the following degree programmes offered by other Departments or other institutions

- Faculty of Law, Business and Social Sciences Undergraduate Degrees
- Faculty of Physical Sciences Undergraduate Degrees

## 3 Overall aims of the Department's provision and how it supports the University Strategic Plan

3.1 The Review Panel noted the Department's overall aims which were appropriately and closely linked to the University's Strategic Plan and Learning and Teaching Strategy.

## 4 An Evaluation of the Student Learning Experience

#### **4.1 Aims**

- 4.1.1 The Review Panel noted from the SER that the Department's range of programmes was both varied and coherent. The SER demonstrated that the Department's programme aims met the criteria as set out in the Subject Benchmark Statement.
- 4.1.2 The Review Panel explored the following statement pertaining to the programme aims within the SER "We aim to embed the development of Classics as a discipline within our teaching in order to enable our students to become reflective learners within the context of an evolving discipline grounded in changing contemporary concerns". The Head of Department explained that they perceived the achievement of this aim as an evolving process with two main routes. These included the discussion of modern scholarly views and primary sources together with the encouragement of students to read and to be willing to express how their views had changed and developed.
- 4.1.3 Further to discussions with the Head of Department and the Dean on programme specifications, the Review Panel concurred that the current location on the Senate Office website was not an obvious place for programme specifications to be found. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Senate Office review the location of the Programme specifications on the University website with a view to making them more visible to students and staff.

#### **4.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)**

- 4.2.1 The Review Panel noted that, whilst oral discussion played a part in almost all of the Department's courses; it was only patchily covered in the ILOs for individual courses. The Panel **recommends** that the Department expand the sections pertaining to oral skills where appropriate within the ILOs to accurately reflect current practice.

#### **4.3 Assessment, Feedback and Achievement**

##### **Honours Assessment**

- 4.3.1 The Review Panel explored the issue of assessment and the potential for Honours students to select their courses based on the method of assessment. There was concern amongst the Panel that this could allow individuals to avoid examinations. This issue was discussed with the staff and students who met with the Panel. The Head of Department advised that this had not been identified as a problem either by staff or external examiners and there were only two courses with non-examination assessments available. However, there was awareness among the students that it was possible to select certain options that would enable them to avoid examinations. Students who met with the Panel were content with the current arrangements and felt that they were able to select courses with a mode of assessment which would allow them to perform well. The Panel **commends** the Department on the range of assessment offered which was innovative and up-to-date. However, the Panel **recommends** that the Department monitor the rationale behind students' choice of courses to ensure that students are not attempting to avoid particular assessment methods and suggests that this be done through an appropriate annual feedback questionnaire.

##### **Alternative Assessment Methods**

- 4.3.2 The Postgraduate students who met with the Panel raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of examinations at postgraduate level. The Review Panel concurred with their views that the introduction of continuous assessment as an alternative assessment method could be beneficial. The Panel **recommends** that the Department review the

usefulness of examinations for postgraduate students and explore the viability of replacing this with continuous assessment.

### **Moodle On-Line Assessment**

4.3.3 The Review Panel was impressed by staff engagement with new and varied forms of assessment. The Panel enquired further about the Moodle on-line assessment and learned that the aim of the assessment was to enable students to develop their arguments through debating with other students. Feedback on their performance was provided to students informally throughout the sessions. The students who met with the Panel reported that the on-line discussions were interesting, but expressed reservations as to whether it was an effective learning tool. The students did not appear to have any depth of awareness of the criteria for the ten percent evaluation. The Panel **recommends** that the Department clarify the aims and objectives of the on-line Moodle assessment and ensures that they are communicated effectively to students.

### **Feedback on Assessment**

4.3.4 The Review Panel explored the issue of feedback on assessment. The undergraduate students who met with the Panel were generally satisfied with the Department's practice of providing feedback on assessments within three weeks.

### **Assessment Information**

4.3.5 The Review Panel noted that the wide range of assessment methods was appreciated by the students and appeared to work well. However, the Panel observed that the criteria on new forms of assessment were less clearly outlined in the handbooks. The Panel **recommends** that the Department consider ways of expanding the essay writing guidance into other areas.

## **4.4 Curriculum Design, Development and Content**

4.4.1 The Review Panel **commends** the Department on the rigorous language training and the option to commence study of a classical language at any stage of the four-year degree programme. When asked by the Panel about their views on the language training, the students were highly appreciative of the quality of the teaching and the opportunity to develop their language abilities.

### **Honours Core Module**

4.4.2 The Review Panel was most impressed with the range of Honours options available; a view that was supported by the students. However, the Panel noted from the SER that the Department had taken the decision not to offer a core course at Honours. The Panel learned that the Department had based their decision on the implications for the Joint Honours timetabling as well as taking into account a number of other considerations including the expectation that there would be a lack of consensus among staff on the core course and a sense that the existing courses already covered the essential elements. However, thought was being given to the possibility of a new course linked to the travel requirement for Honours students becoming a core course. The new course was being introduced with the aim of ensuring that students gained the maximum benefits from the three week study tour of Greece or Italy. As the course was a new development staff wished to monitor its operation as an optional course before reviewing it to ascertain whether it could work as a core course for Honours students. It was acknowledged that the travel course would encourage students to think about the effects of travel, to reflect on their Classical education and to utilise key skills. However, there was consensus among staff that the travel course was unlikely to be

implemented as a core course within the next three years. The Panel expressed the view that the introduction of a core course at Honours could help to rationalise teaching and could provide additionally opportunities of study leave for staff (see paragraph 4.8.10). The Panel also considered that a core course, along with other activities such as the Alexandrian Society, could encourage Junior Honours students to integrate socially with a wider range of students. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department review their decision not to offer a core course and continue to explore the introduction of the travel course as a future Honours core course with a view to providing opportunities for the Honours cohort to meet as a single class as well as maximising potential benefits of reducing staff workloads.

## **Levels 1 and 2**

4.4.3 The Review Panel noted that the Department had recently redesigned its Level 1 and 2 provision and learned that this had been undertaken in response to feedback received through the Annual Monitoring Reports which highlighted chronological gaps in the material covered since an earlier restructuring exercise in 2001. The Department had undertaken a review through a working party, Departmental discussions and questionnaires. A plenary discussion had then been held within the Department and the final recommendations made and accepted. The Panel considered that this review had resulted in a more comprehensive programme.

4.4.4 Members of the Review Panel raised concerns that the teaching of Classical Civilisation at Level 1 could be repetitive for students who had studied the subject at school and queried whether this could be a contributory factor in absenteeism. The Head of Department acknowledged that this might be the case at other institutions but the majority of students in first year at Glasgow University had not studied Classics prior to attending University. The issue of attendance was further discussed in paragraph 4.6.3. The Review Panel asked the students with whom they met for their views on the repetition of material and it was confirmed that there was an element of repetition but it was not excessive and did not detract from the class overall.

## **4.5 Student Recruitment**

4.5.1 The Panel had no concerns related to student recruitment in the Department.

## **4.6 Student Progression, Retention and Support**

### **Progression**

4.6.1 The Review Panel noted that the data provided for progression was misleading as it appeared to indicate that a large number of students did not progress beyond Level 2. This was not the case as the Panel learned that most Level 2 students did progress to Honours but the data provided included students who progressed to Honours in subjects belonging to other departments.

### **Retention**

4.6.2 The Review Panel noted that retention of non-beginners Latin students was good but that there appeared to be an issue with beginners Latin whereby some students found it to be a very challenging subject. In order to address this, the Department had introduced a new textbook which the Head of Department had observed was proving to be popular with the students. With the broad subject spread in first year as noted in paragraph 4.6.1 above, retention was not regarded by the Department as a Departmental issue.

### **Attendance Monitoring**

4.6.3 The Review Panel enquired about the Department's procedures for monitoring poor attendance by students. It was advised that, whilst there were no sanctions imposed on absent students, when a student missed two consecutive seminars an e-mail was sent by the Departmental secretary. There was no official follow-up to these e-mails but staff considered that most students responded to these e-mails. Again as mentioned in paragraph 4.6.1, there was a sense that a number of those who did not respond were the students who did not intend to continue their studies in the Department. Those students who were considered as vulnerable were identified on the basis of their course work, such as non-submission of essays, lower than expected examination results and non-attendance at tutorials. At the end of semester one, a list of at risk students' names was sent to the Faculty Office and then forwarded to the students' advisers. The Department had discussed imposing a penalty system on absent students, but considered that a more appropriate way forward would be for a strong directive to be issued at University level. The Panel recognised the merits of the Department's informal approach of monitoring student attendance and the students who met with the Panel confirmed that the pastoral and overall level of care offered by the Department was excellent. However, the Panel did consider that formal procedures could be a little more robust in identifying students at risk and hence **recommends** that the Department review its absence monitoring process to ensure that the Department is aware of poor attendance or potentially vulnerable students **at the earliest opportunity**.

### **Support for Postgraduate Students**

4.6.4 At their meeting with the Postgraduate students, the Panel learned that the students were content with the support and level of feedback provided by the Department. They would prefer a wider range of subjects, but understood that subjects were linked to the staff's research interests. The Postgraduate students expressed their dissatisfaction with the accommodation available in the Department but, when asked by the Panel, were not aware that they would be eligible to use the new postgraduate study space. The Panel **recommends** that the Department publicise the new postgraduate study space in the Gilbert Scott Building when it becomes fully available to ensure that its postgraduate students are aware of the facility and their entitlement to use it.

### **Handbooks**

4.6.5 The Review Panel **commends** the Department on the guidance provided in the Classics Handbook on essay writing and considers it to be an exemplary piece of guidance work.

## ***4.7 The Quality of Learning Opportunities***

### **Honours Travel**

4.7.1 The Review Panel **commends** the Department on the Honours travel requirement which was praised by the students who met the Panel. The students considered the tour to be extremely useful and an essential element of their Classical education. When asked about the structure and organisation of the tour, the students expressed a preference for the current autonomous approach which permitted individuals to organise their own itinerary and travel but to benefit from ongoing advice and support from staff whilst abroad. The Panel noted that the Department had a commitment from the Faculty of Arts to fund students on a per capita allocation on the Study Tour.

The Panel observed that there was no formal assessment for the travel requirement. However, the Panel considered that with the introduction of the forthcoming Travel

course, it would be appropriate for the trip to be assessed. The Panel **recommends** that the Department introduce a formal assessment of the Honours travel requirement.

## **Moodle**

4.7.2 The Review Panel heard from the students who attended the review that they used Moodle approximately one or twice a week. The Department conceded that Moodle was more widely used in other Departments but the staff felt that it was important to maintain a variety of methods of communicating with students.

## **4.8 Resources for Learning and Teaching**

### **Physical Resources**

4.8.1 The Review Panel was given a conducted tour of the Department's accommodation at 65 Oakfield Avenue. The Department had been informed by Estates and Buildings that they would acquire the basement area at 65 Oakfield Avenue within a year of moving to the premises in 2004. This had been delayed by the, as yet incomplete, renovation of the Hub building which meant that the Student Counselling Service, the current occupants of the basement, could not relocate to their new premises. The Department's current accommodation included only one teaching room which could accommodate a class of 30 people. There was no dedicated accommodation for either postgraduate students or GTAs. However, the Panel learned that the GTAs were using the new Postgraduate Study Space in the Gilbert Scott Building and were highly satisfied with this new accommodation.

4.8.2 The Department's accommodation was criticised by both undergraduate and postgraduate students with facilities described as inadequate, overcrowded and contributing to a sense of displacement caused by teaching being conducted at different locations around campus. Staff also expressed dissatisfaction noting that the need to commute around campus to different teaching rooms had an adverse impact on teaching time.

4.8.3 A particular concern regarding the current accommodation was the isolation of one member of staff whose office was apart from any other staff members. In addition to concerns over isolation, concerns over security were also raised. The Review Panel appreciated these concerns and would encourage the Department to consider using the current Emeritus staff room to relocate the member of staff in question.

4.8.4 The Review Panel considered that the acquisition of the basement area would resolve a number of outstanding issues for the Department, such as:

- facilitating disabled access to the Departmental accommodation;
- addressing the lack of storage space for Departmental books;
- providing Postgraduate accommodation;
- providing additional teaching and work space;
- alleviating concerns that students could be deterred from seeking help from the Counselling Service due to its close proximity to the Department.

The Panel acknowledges the seriousness of Department's issues with its existing accommodation and **recommends** that priority be given to the relocation of the Student Counselling Service on completion of the Hub building to make the basement at 65 Oakfield Avenue available to the Department of Classics for its sole use as soon as possible. Additionally the Department should provide a clear plan of how they would use this additional space

## Library

4.8.5 When asked about the Library resources available to them, the students who met with the Review Panel expressed dissatisfaction with the information regarding the Library catalogue which they considered to be contradictory. They reported that books were not on the shelves when they should be and there were also problems regarding access to books in the short loan collection. The Head of Department informed the Panel that this had not been identified as a problem by the Library, possibly because the students were deterred by their difficulties and were not submitting book requests. The Department considered that adequate storage for books within the Department would ease the situation for Honours students and would consider this as a possible use for the additional accommodation in the basement (see paragraph 4.8.1-4). The Panel **recommends** that the Department encourage students to submit requests to the Library in order that usage figures accurately reflect difficulties in obtaining particular books and explore with the Library the possibility of purchasing further copies of recommended texts to alleviate the situation.

## Invigilation

4.8.6 The Review Panel learned from the meeting with staff that, due to an increase in the numbers of students with disabilities, the Department occasionally had to supply up to five invigilators at any one time, to meet the special needs of different students. To date, staff or GTAs had fulfilled this role, but as GTAs were paid for these additional duties, this was having an increasing impact on the GTA budget. The Department had tried to address the matter by approaching other Departments to try to pool resources but, to date, had had little success. Staff pointed out that, at other leading Universities, it was not the norm for teaching staff to undertake invigilation duties and expressed the view that it was not a productive use of staff time. The Panel concurs with the view that invigilation is not a productive use of teaching staff time and **recommends** that the Clerk of Senate review the provision of a dedicated centre and additional invigilators to cover all University students requiring special examination arrangements, thus removing this responsibility from Departments.

## Transfer of slides

4.8.7 The Review Panel learned that the Department's extensive collection of slides was not being fully utilised due to the diminishing level of technical support available for projector equipment. In order to address this problem, the Department was gradually digitising its collection but it was proving to be a slow and expensive process. The Department had secured funding from the Chancellors Fund, but it was insufficient to convert all the slides at one time. Given the extent of this task, the Panel considered that the Department should adopt a more direct approach and utilise the staff team to undertake the conversion of the slides. Therefore, the Panel **recommends** that the Department arrange for staff to receive whatever training they require to enable them to participate in the process of digitising the most commonly used examples from the Department's slide collection.

## Staffing – Workload Model

4.8.8 The Review Panel was concerned to note that there was no formal Departmental workload model and considered that it was difficult to judge workloads on the basis of the description provided as part of the supporting documentation. The Panel **strongly recommends** that the Department implement, at the earliest opportunity the Faculty of Arts guidelines on workload models prior to the next point of allocation of duties.



### **Staffing - Replacement of Staff due to Retire**

4.8.9 The Review Panel noted that key members of the teaching staff were due to retire at the end of session 2008. The Review Panel agreed with the Department that it would be essential for retiring staff to be replaced by appointees who would be research active. The Panel **recommends** that the Faculty supports the Department by ensuring the prompt replacement of retiring staff by appointees who would be research active.

### **Staffing – Study Leave**

4.8.10 The Review Panel noted that, due to the small numbers of staff within the Department, it was possible for only one member of staff to go on study leave each year. The success of the current research active staff in obtaining grants from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) meant that the impact of one person's absence was manageable and classes could be rearranged accordingly. Through the Panel's discussions with both staff and GTAs, it became apparent that there were options that the Department could explore in order to create more study leave opportunities for staff. The GTAs indicated that they would be willing to undertake lecturing duties to cover study leave absence. Lecturing was an activity they were not currently undertaking but would welcome the opportunity to gain what they considered to be valuable experience. The Panel considered that, in addition to GTAs undertaking lecturing duties, the Department could also make efficiency savings through the rationalisation of courses and the introduction of an Honours Core Course as means to improve the opportunities for study leave. The Panel **recommends** that the Department review its study leave arrangements by exploring the potential of the above for creating space for study leave in staff workloads.

### **Staffing – Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)**

4.8.11 The GTAs who met with the Panel described their experiences within the Department as very positive. In particular, the GTAs were greatly appreciative of the administrative support provided to them by the Departmental Secretary which allowed them to focus on their teaching duties. The Panel heard that the GTAs undertook assessment in the form of essay marking and that, when they started work as GTAs, all the assessments they marked were double marked by an experienced member of staff. When they had gained more experience, they were encouraged to continue to seek advice or help at any time. In particular, when they marked a piece of work that they considered to be a fail, it was compulsory to consult with another member of staff before making their decision. The Panel was also advised that, after their first year, the GTAs' teaching in tutorials had been observed by the Head of Department. The GTAs reported that the feedback received from this was most useful and a valuable experience. The Panel **commends** the Department on the support offered to GTAs.

4.8.12 The GTAs confirmed that they had all undertaken the Learning and Teaching Centre's GTA statutory training which they had found to be beneficial and positive. However, they expressed the view that a follow-up session would have been very useful after they had undertaken some teaching and could better relate the practise to the theory. The Panel **recommends** that the Learning and Teaching Centre should consider providing follow-up sessions for tutors in tutorial practice once they have gained some experience.

4.8.13 The possibility of GTAs taking part in lecturing (see paragraph 4.8.10) and peer review (see paragraph 6.2) was explored with the Head of Department and the Dean. The Review Panel was advised that the GTAs would need to be paid for their time to participate in these activities and, currently, the GTA budget was over-stretched. In order for the GTAs to be further developed in this way additional funding would have

to be provided. The Panel **recommends** that the Faculty consider providing additional funding to the Department's GTA budget to enable further development of GTAs teaching skills to take place.

### **Staffing – Probationary Staff**

4.8.14 The probationary staff expressed their satisfaction with the New Lecturer Teaching Programme. However, some reservations were expressed regarding a new timetable which required probationary staff to attend once a month. The Panel were informed that the sessions offered by the Learning and Teaching Centre were offered four times a year and that this should offer adequate flexibility for attendance.

4.8.15 The Probationary staff who met with the Panel reported that there was a lack of guidance on the new promotion system. The Panel **recommends** that the Department ensure adequate information is provided to junior staff by senior staff so that they may best structure their careers in relation to the promotions process. The Dean has indicated that she would be willing to be assist with this matter.

## **5. Maintaining the Standards of Awards**

### **Code of Assessment**

5.1 The Department reported that the revision of the Code of Assessment to a 22-point scale had been welcomed and that staff were comfortable using the 22-point scale for formally assessed work. When asked about the lack of A grades in first year, staff did not perceive any problem and expressed the view that this was part of the general variation in each cohort. During discussions with staff, the view was expressed that there had been a reduction in the number of E grades awarded. It was suggested that this could be interpreted as the new scale artificially boosting the lower grades. Staff also expressed doubt that the students understood the Code of Assessment. The Panel noted that the Clerk of Senate had recently circulated guidance for students on the Code of Assessment and would encourage the Department to draw this guide to the attention of all its students to assist them in understanding the Code.

## **6. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience**

### **Staff-Student Liaison Committees**

6.1 The undergraduate students who met with the Panel reported that they were content with their role on the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. They had a sense of being fully involved at these meetings where the student representatives were responsible for recording the minutes. The students also reported that the meetings were worthwhile and that they saw evidence of action being taken in response to their concerns, for example, the Level 1 Latin textbook was changed following comments by students. There did not appear to be any formal postgraduate student representative at such meetings. The postgraduate students who met with the Panel reported that they addressed any issues with staff directly. They were not aware of any formal procedure for concerns to be fed back to the Department. The Panel **recommends** that the Department ensures that there is a postgraduate representative at Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings to ensure that postgraduate students have a formal route for expressing any concern, should they need it. The Panel **commends** the Department on encouraging students to play a fully involved role in the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. The Panel **recommends** that the Student Representative Council, in the interests of good practice, ensure that student representatives be given brief instructions

on writing minutes, particularly with regard to ensuring a record is kept of actions being completed. It was noted that it was not always clear from the minutes when an action had been followed up.

### **Peer Review**

- 6.2 The Review Panel was most impressed with the Department's system of peer review. However, there appeared to have been some variation with regard to application of the procedures. The Panel was advised that there had, in some instances, been no meeting after the observed session and that feedback had been communicated via e-mail rather than on the official form. The Head of Department expressed surprise at this, but agreed to ensure that the correct procedures were followed in the future. Additionally, the GTAs when asked about their participation in Peer Review had indicated that they would find participation in this exercise as very useful (see paragraphs 4.8.13 and 4.8.11 above).

### **Management Committee**

- 6.3 The Panel enquired about the reporting structure and remits of the various staff committees mentioned in the SER. The Panel learned that the Departmental Management Committee generally discussed staffing issues while the Learning and Teaching Committee's remit was to address all aspects of the undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. The minutes from the Learning and Teaching Committee were reported to the Departmental meeting. The Panel noted that strategic reviews tended to be discussed at Departmental meetings and suggested that the Department could encourage more strategic development of Honours courses by holding such discussions at the Learning and Teaching Committee.

## **7. Summary of Perceived Strengths and Areas for Improvement in Learning and Teaching**

### **Key Strengths**

- The range of provision, particularly at Honours level
- Peer Review of Teaching
- Range of assessment
- Flexibility and rigour of language training
- Guidance on essay writing provided in the Classics Handbook
- Support offered by staff, both academic and administrative, was highly praised by GTAs and students

### **Areas for improvement**

- Departmental accommodation
- Learning and resources
- Opportunities for study leave for staff
- Honours Core Module
- Assessment and Feedback
- implementation of a formal workload model
- updating and accuracy of ILOs on the development of oral skills

### ***Conclusions and recommendations***

#### **Conclusions**

The Review Panel commends the Department on its awareness of its strengths and weaknesses as evidenced in its Self Evaluation Report. Although there are a number of recommendations, the Panel has no concerns regarding the quality of the Department and was most impressed with the level of commitment displayed by staff.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. It is important to note that many of these recommendations refer to issues identified by the Department for action, either in the Self Evaluation Report or through discussion at the Review.

The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs to which they refer in the text of the report. They are grouped by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are ranked in order of priority.

### **Learning and Teaching Resources**

#### *Recommendation 1:*

The Review Panel acknowledges the seriousness of Department's issues with its existing accommodation and **recommends** that priority be given to the relocation of the Student Counselling Service on completion of the Hub building to make the basement at 65 Oakfield Avenue available to the Department of Classics for its sole use as soon as possible. The Department should provide a clear plan of how they would use this additional space. [paragraph 4.8.1 – 4.8.4]

For the attention of: **The Director of Estates and Buildings**  
**The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 2:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Faculty consider providing additional funding to the Department's GTA budget to enable some additional development of GTAs teaching skills through stronger engagement with the peer observation of teaching initiative and by offering them the opportunity to provide lectures. [paragraph 4.8.13].

For the attention of: **The Dean of the Faculty of Arts**

#### *Recommendation 3:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Faculty supports the Department by ensuring the prompt replacement of retiring staff by appointees who would be research active. [paragraph 4.8.7]

For the attention of: **The Dean of the Faculty of Arts**

#### *Recommendation 4:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Clerk of Senate review the provision of additional invigilators for students requiring special examination arrangements with a view to removing this responsibility from Departments. [paragraph 4.8.6]

For the attention of: **The Clerk of Senate**

#### *Recommendation 5:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department arrange for the appropriate staff member(s) to receive training to enable them to digitise those items from the Departmental slide collection that are essential for future teaching. [paragraph 4.8.7]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

*Recommendation 6:*

The Panel **strongly recommends** that the Department implement, at the earliest opportunity the Faculty of Arts guidelines on workload models prior to the next point of allocation of duties. [paragraph 4.8.8]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

*Recommendation 7:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department encourage students to submit requests to the Library in order that usage figures accurately reflect difficulties in obtaining particular books and explore with the Library the possibility of purchasing further copies of recommended texts to alleviate the situation. [paragraph 4.8.5]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

*Recommendation 8:*

Given the urgent need to release more time for study leave and the small size of the academic staff, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Department review teaching profiles to allow larger group teaching and reduce the amount of time spent on small group teaching. [paragraph 4.8.10]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

*Recommendation 9:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department ensure adequate information is provided to junior staff regarding promotions. [paragraph 4.8.15]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**  
**The Director of Human Resources**

*Recommendation 10:*

The Panel **recommends** that the Learning and Teaching Centre should consider providing follow-up sessions for tutors in tutorial practice once they have gained adequate experience. [paragraph 4.8.12]

For the attention of: **The Head of the Learning and Teaching Centre**

**Honours Core Module**

*Recommendation 11:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department review their decision not to offer a core course and continue to explore the introduction of the travel course as a future Honours core course with a view to providing opportunities for the Honours cohort to meet as a single class as well as maximising potential benefits of reducing staff workloads. [paragraph 4.4.2]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

## **Assessment and Feedback**

### *Recommendation 12:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department should ensure that unseen examinations should be an essential element of assessment. [paragraph 4.3.1.]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### *Recommendation 13:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department review the Departmental handbooks to ensure inclusion of the aims and ILOs of courses and highlighting transferrable skills. The Department should consider using the essay writing guidance in the Student Handbook as a template for this exercise. [paragraph 4.3.5]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### *Recommendation 14:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department undertake to clarify the aims and objectives of the on-line Moodle assessment and ensures that they are communicated effectively to students. [paragraph 4.3.3]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

## **Absence Monitoring Process**

### *Recommendation 15a:*

The Review Panel recommends that the Department consider introducing tutorials in either Week 2 or Week 3 of Year 1, such that any students not appearing can immediately be contacted to ensure that there are no problems and the student intends to continue. [paragraph 4.6.3]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### *Recommendation 15b:*

The Review Panel recommends that the Department closely observe student performance during Year 1 examinations and offer suitable support to maximise student success in re-sits and increased retention from Year 1 to Year 2. [paragraph 4.6.3]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

## **Postgraduate Students**

### *Recommendation 16*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department review the usefulness of examinations for postgraduate students and explore the viability of replacing this with continuous assessment. [paragraph 4.3.2]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### *Recommendation 17:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department publicise the new postgraduate study space in the Gilbert Scott Building when it becomes fully available to ensure that

its postgraduate students are aware of the facility and their entitlement to use it.  
[*paragraph 4.6.4*]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

### **Staff-Student Liaison Committees**

#### *Recommendation 18:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department introduce separate mechanisms to seek feedback from the postgraduate research and postgraduate taught students, through or independent of the undergraduate Staff-Student Liaison Committee, such that any concerns can be identified and dealt with an early stage. [*paragraph 6.1*]

For the attention of: **The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 19:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Student Representative Council ensure that student representatives be given brief instructions on writing minutes, particularly with regard to ensuring a record is kept of actions being completed. [*paragraph 6.1.1*]

For the attention of: **The Vice-President (Learning and Development) of the SRC**

### **Programme Specifications**

#### *Recommendation 20:*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Senate Office review the location of the Programme specifications on the University website with a view to making them more visible to students and staff. [*paragraph 4.1.3*]

For the attention of: **The Director of Senate Office**

*Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office*

*Last modified on: Tuesday 22 April 2008*