

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 30 May 2008

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:
Responses to the Recommendations Arising from the Review of
Theatre, Film and Television Studies held on 20 February 2007**

Ms Helen Clegg, Clerk to the Review Panel

May 2008

Conclusions and Recommendations

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.

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

Response

The lack of clarity in information given to students on this programme was picked up on and was acted on. All the students on the 2006/7 programme completed successfully in 2007. The External Examiner's report for MLitt Dramaturgy (session 2006-07) has recently been received by the Department and is extremely positive. It comments that "it is quite clear the staff have committed themselves to the course with complete dedication" and praises both the quality of the work completed by the students and the "very detailed, careful commentaries" on student work provided by the staff. The External Examiner identifies the following three areas of strength for the MLitt Dramaturgy course: "staff dedication and commitment to the highest standards of

research; an outstanding commitment to exploring the interaction of practice and research; and placements in industry which have undoubtedly given students invaluable insights and experience.” The report concludes that “standards were high” and that students were “taught and supervised to expose only their strengths.”

The MLitt Dramaturgy programme has been thoroughly reviewed and revised and is to be replaced in session 2008/09 with a new programme, MLitt Dramaturgy and Playwriting. As we prepared for this new Masters, it was useful to be reminded of the necessity for accurate, detailed and clear course documents for all students enrolling on to the new programme. The PG convenor and the MLitt convenor for this programme will work together to ensure that all future published materials are accurate and detailed and ready to be distributed to students prior to the start of the course. With proper planning in place now, there is ample time for careful proof reading and checking of facts before any materials are distributed.

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

Response

Film and Television Studies (FTV) Level 1&2 convenors will commence assessment sessions for GTAs prior to the first submission of assessed work. These sessions will consist of a marking exercise using a selected sample of essays and include assessment criteria, the University marking scheme, the assessment breakdown for the module and year. The sessions will also stress the importance of effective feedback and the completion of mark sheets.

Theatre Studies (TS) has implemented 4x1hour assessment training sessions for its GTAs and Hourly Paid staff involved in assessment. At present our GTAs contribute only to the Level 1 Theatre Studies courses. The L1 GTAs receive two assessment training sessions per semester. In each semester, the first session takes place *before* the first assessment point (a semiotic analysis in semester one, and an essay in semester two) – this session discusses the assessment criteria, looks at sample essays/reports and addresses the importance of effective feedback. The second training session takes place after the completion of the grading and is designed to encourage the GTAs to evaluate and reflect on the marking process and experience.

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

Response

The Department puts time and effort into formative and summative feedback and because of our use of coursework and practice students get more feedback than they might if traditional examinations were the norm. The DPTLA report indicates that this recommendation arose with reference to FTV Level 2 courses. The suggestion of more assessment was discussed in the staff/student meeting (date) and the student response

did not indicate that the statements made to the panel fully represented the student viewpoint. FTV staff have therefore decided instead that the current written assessment exercise should be split into two smaller parts which will achieve the objective of more feedback and give students the opportunity for improvement. This change will be kept under review and discussed again at staff-student meetings.

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**

Response: Head of Department

TFTS has been informed that it is not possible for the Peer Assisted Learning Scheme to run without Disclosure Scotland checks. Student and staff in TFTS are keen for PAL to be reinstated but for the moment the scheme is suspended throughout the Faculty.

Response from Director of Human Resources:

I confirm that recommendation 4 regarding Peer-Assisted Learning requires Disclosure Scotland checks to be undertaken. These are now a legal requirement placed upon all organisations engaged in the provision of education to anyone under the age of 18 and any person potentially coming into contact with such individuals irrespective of background, context or role, requires to be disclosure checked. I do appreciate this may well seem contrary to the spirit of Peer Assisted Learning but sadly this is a reality with which we now have to live. On a positive note, the disclosure checking process is now fairly slick and these are being turned around within a couple of weeks sometimes less.

Response: Dean

I have always supported the spirit of this recommendation; I regret that, as far as I know, no such adjustment has so far been achieved; I am aware that this Department has been obliged to suspend PAL activity, and very few others in the Faculty have managed to continue. The Faculty QA Officer has expressed willingness to try again, in which I support her.

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**

Response: Head of Department

The Department has taken advice, reviewed the question of access to the building and progress has been made. Arrangements have been made (not involving a swipe card) for postgraduates particularly those in TS to have access to the building after hours as their work requires. This allows for better use of performance spaces. In addition, it is

now clear that honours students can have access to the building provided a member of staff is present.

The Head of Department with Professor Scullion has had discussions with Laurence Edgar - Central Services (Security and Janitorial) Manager and Khosrow Hejazian - Management Information Systems (MIS) Director about the possibilities of swipe system of access. A quotation of over £4,000 for installation and over £17 a month for maintenance was received on 8th January. However, this system would be likely to cause more problems since all users of the building would require swipe cards and the system would be neither practicable nor cost-effective.

These discussions raised the question of security and complications have now arisen following the modernisation of the janitorial service which means that the building can now be closed by the janitor at 4.30pm when around 120-30 students can be in the building, in formal teaching sessions or making use of the resources room. No back shift is currently provided for the Gilmorehill Building. This is causing real difficulties to TFTS as well as G12. Discussions on this are being pursued but we do not feel we are making progress.

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

Response

In both FTV and TS, information on set texts and readings (along with full bibliographies) for individual courses is available at the start of each course and much of the required reading is now made available in electronic form through the library thus making it much more accessible to students. Course documentation does rank reading material and critical material that is especially useful for the individual units of the course is further highlighted to students at lectures/seminars. The importance of completing the directed reading is emphasised especially to Level 1 students in the course document. This is further reinforced to the L1 cohort by the Level 1 convenors at the introductory lecture, as well as by lecturers and seminar tutors throughout the duration of the courses. The importance of reading is now underlined by the participation marks being introduced in level 1 and level 2 and in some seminars students are doing presentations on what they have read. Staff office hours provide an opportunity for individual students to seek specific advice on reading and assessment criteria.

It is worth noting that in both FTV and TS the focus of the seminar will often be the play, film or television programme and that while critical reading is important in level 1 and 2 we are also working hard to ensure that students also engage effectively with the primary text.

TS Exam and essay surgeries are incorporated into the lecture programmes at TS Levels 1 and 2. During these assessment surgeries, the assessment criteria against which the students' work will be graded is explained and advice is offered on how to approach and manage exam and essay questions.

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

Response:

In response to the 2007 review of the New Lecturer and Teacher Programme (NLTP), the Learning and Teaching Centre prepared a protocol on the recognition of prior learning. As at April 2008, the protocol is still at draft stage however it will be operational in time for the 2008-09 session intakes. Once finalised, it will be published within the Learning and Teaching Centre's web site information on the NLTP, within Human Resources' web page on probationary requirements and within relevant correspondence sent by Human Resources to probationary members of staff.

Full details of all the aspects covered during the review of the NLTP are detailed at <http://committees.gla.ac.uk/senate/LTC/Papers/20070926/nltp-c.htm>

Current exemption arrangements (which were in force at the time of the DPTLA review) are detailed within the Human Resources website on Probationary requirements at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/policies/p-z/probation/newlecturer/> and also within a Frequently Asked Question section of the web page on the New Lecturer and Teacher Programme at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/learningteaching/taughtcourses/newlecturerandteacherprogramme/faq/#d.en.11428>

Although there was no specific recommendation to review the timing of the NLTP with the DPTLA report, references to problems with the timing of the programme were made within section C.6.7, specifically to the desire for the programme to run from January until Easter. The NLTP currently runs with a variety of intake dates, including January, and will continue to do so.

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

Response:

The Faculty supports its Advisers and class convenors in identifying potential problems at an early stage and attempting to address them; we have also been implementing a number of strategies to foster an early sense of commitment to the University and to the Faculty and its departments, and therefore better retention. These strategies include introducing a participation mark for seminars at Levels 1 and 2, recording attendance during lectures, and reviewing course design so that it becomes more difficult for certain students to adopt a pragmatic strategy consisting of strategic attendance rather than seeing attendance of all of the course as the best possible means of preparing for assessment.

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

Response

Both FTV and TS have reviewed the Level 2 provision in their subject groups and with students at staff/student meetings. We do believe that many of the problems commented on in the report including attendance problems and students making strategic decisions about where to put energy and commitment are problems which affect many subjects in the Faculty. We have confirmed this with English Literature and History for instance. There are also issues about students undertaking paid work which affects the time devoted to study. Both subject areas will keep this item under review.

FTV The main problems arise with the lectures at 9.30 on Friday morning. Student feedback suggests that attendance is affected by social activities the night before. In addition, the staff/student discussion confirmed that students make pragmatic calculations about what sessions they don't have to attend in person, relying on the back up of hand outs and course documentation. There is evidence to suggest that those students who are motivated and committed to the subject wish to see measures taken to curb this strategy. It is not possible for us to change the time of the lecture and we are experimenting with taking registers in lectures to see if this is feasible and has any impact. Attendance at seminars is monitored and problems raised with the students concerned if necessary via the adviser.

TS Attendance at Level 2 TS lectures is generally high. Nevertheless, the TS team does monitor the numbers attending lectures (at both L1 and L2) and, if a dip is perceived, then a sign-up sheet is circulated at the start of an individual lecture to emphasise to the students that attendance is required. In order to prevent students strategically choosing lectures based on assessment methods, the TS team decided to introduce a second question onto the exam for the first semester's course (Classical to Modern). Incorporating into the exam a second question which requires the students to make important links across and between the different historical periods and theoretical areas covered by the course will mean that the connection between teaching and assessment is strengthened further. The proposed change is in line with an examination assessment that is already in place in Level 1 Theatre Studies: Theatre and Society. Attendance at Level 1 and 2 seminars is monitored especially closely, and any student who misses two classes is contacted by the year convenor via letter. Attendance at honours is compulsory – it is a requisite of each TS honours course that 6 out of 8 seminars must be attended in order for credit to be awarded.

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

Response

It is recognised though that some GTAs do see students in their own time and the Department greatly appreciates the commitment which all our GTAs show to the students. Convenors are aware that the amount of time GTAs are available to support students has to be limited. At the first lecture of Level 1 courses, the year convenor outlines to students the role of the GTAs who deliver the L1 seminars. It is made clear that any students seeking help outwith the allotted time of the seminars/GTA office hours should contact either the year convenor or the lecturer of the individual unit about which they have a question/concern. We recognise the importance of GTA assistance during the period leading up to essay submission and GTAs can use paid seminars to provide feedback on work or advice about assessment; course work can be linked to the weekly seminar topic. GTAs are encouraged to suggest that students see academic staff in office hours. The Department will work to ensure that the restrictions on GTA time and the support available to students from other staff is made more widely known.

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

Response

In both subject areas, careers discussion is part of the 'Intending Honours' meeting which is held during the second semester for students currently in Level Two.

FTV plans to follow the TS practice of having a discussion with Level 1 students about progression to L2. FTV also runs occasional sessions with practitioners which we will open up to level 2 students. Details of particular events on the media industries run in Glasgow eg by the Royal Television Society are made know via email as appropriate.

TS Undergraduate students receive a talk at the end of their first year concerning the progression from L1 to L2 TS which includes discussion of careers. These talks/meetings for the Level 1 and 2 TS cohorts provide an opportunity for students not only to think about and seek advice on their university progression but also to raise any questions they may have about the sorts of careers that their degree programmes might lead to.

In addition to this, throughout the academic year, TS runs a seminar programme that involves practitioners visiting the department and delivering a talk on their work. These seminars provide a valuable forum in which students from Level 1 through to PG level can meet with and receive careers advice from practitioners currently active in the field.

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

Response

As noted in recommendation 1, the MLitt Dramaturgy programme has been replaced with a new MLitt Dramaturgy and Playwriting, to be offered in session 08/09. This new Masters in fact extends the level of professional involvement and engagement with the theatre industries and indeed we see it as a key feature and strength of the new programme. This opportunity to work in the creative industries will be emphasised in the publicity and literature relating to the programme.

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

Response

The Department values the input of GTA and Hourly Paid staff and has included them in discussion about course content and assessment though the contribution of the two may be slightly differently. Hourly paid staff who lead courses often have considerable control over the content and arrangement of courses, within departmental policies and University guidelines. The input of GTAs (mainly at level 1 and 2) will relate to their more limited experience though their intimate understanding of the students in their seminar groups is often highly informative.

FTV Level 1 and Level 2 lecturers liaise with GTAs each week regarding course content and - when necessary - assessment. This ongoing dialogue is key to monitoring course feedback and is passed on to and reported by the relevant course convenors at section meetings. GTAs are consulted on future changes and enhancements to course content and assessment as part of the annual course evaluation and review process and when specific courses are under review eg GTAs were involved in discussion about changes to the Level 1 Reading the Screen: Television course in June 2007.

TS All the GTAs and Hourly Paid staff involved in teaching TS students are actively involved in the review of course content and assessment. The Level 1 GTAs regularly meet with the L1 year convenor to feedback on how the course is going and to discuss any difficulties encountered by the GTAs and/or the students. GTAs are consulted on any proposed changes to course content and assessment. The Hourly Paid tutors who deliver the TS practical options are in regular contact with the relevant honours convenor to feedback on the progress of the students undertaking the courses and to discuss any difficulties that arise in relation to course content, delivery and assessment. At the beginning of the academic year, an induction session is held for the practical tutors to provide them with a full briefing on the place of the practical option in the honours degree. This is mirrored at the end of the year with a session at which the honours convenors and the practical tutors meet to reflect on and review the course. The feedback from GTAs and Hourly Paid practical tutors is reported to the TS team at staff meetings and is discussed in full at the TS planning meetings held at the end of the academic year. The reflection on and evaluation of individual courses by GTAs and Hourly Paid staff thus forms an integral part of the TS course review process.

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

Response:

"Planning Office thanks ASC for its recommendation on the provision of more detailed cohort analysis to assist with departmental reviews. At present time, the way our student datasets are constructed, it is very difficult to employ cohort analysis at a departmental level. Our data is specifically structured to reflect the Faculty a student belongs to, but not necessarily a department. This requirement has been fed into the Student Lifecycle Project as one of the necessary pieces of information that we would need as university and that any new system would have to have the capability of producing such information on a routine basis.

Planning would be happy to attend a future ASC meeting to explore this matter further."

Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office

Last modified on: Monday 12 May 2008