

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Review of Department of History: Wednesday 20 February 2008

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of History. 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_104281_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 commends the Department on its awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, which was evident both in the Self Evaluation Report and in discussions during the Review. Despite the number of recommendations, the Panel has no concerns regarding the quality of the Department, its provision or its operation. The Panel was impressed with the clear commitment of Departmental staff (both teaching and support), and found the students with whom it had met to be a credit to the Department.

Key Strengths

- Steps taken to support students at strategic points in their academic life, including the use of one-to-one essay tutorials, and the introduction of the Honours Induction programme
- The commitment and enthusiasm of staff (both teaching and support) which led to a supportive, inspiring environment for students
- Detailed and systematic reporting to students on end of course feedback
- Rigorous assessment procedures and the provision of constructive feedback
- The benefits afforded to students through the use of staff research interests to complement core teaching

Areas to be improved or enhanced¹

1. Assessment and Feedback

- a) The standards for return of work and the provision of feedback, as set out in the Department's Code of Best Practice, should be adhered to. [Paragraph 4.3.5]
- b) The timing of *formatively assessed* essays earlier in the semester or alternative, additional opportunities for *formative assessment* should be considered. [Paragraph 4.3.4]
- c) The range of assessment methods should be broadened. [Paragraph 4.2.2]
- d) Electronic submission of coursework and the use of the *plagiarism* prevention software, *Turnitin* should be considered. The Department should also reinforce to students what constitutes *plagiarism* and the acceptable use of sources. [Paragraph 5.2]

2. Transferable Skills

- a) The development of *transferable skills* in a variety of ways throughout the curriculum should be made more explicit. [Paragraph 4.4.4]

3. Provision of Seminars at Undergraduate Level

- a) Additional *seminars* at undergraduate level should be considered to enhance the student learning experience and allow for the possibility of additional assessed work. [Paragraph 4.7.1]

4. Teaching and Learning Resources

- a) Acquisition of additional copies of core texts should be discussed with the Library to reduce the reliance on *short loans*. [Paragraph 4.8.10]
- b) Students, particularly at Honours level, should be provided with training on the use of *periodicals*. [Paragraph 4.8.11]
- c) Fuller use of *Moodle* as a teaching tool and as a learning community for students should be encouraged. [Paragraph 6.4]
- d) Disabled access to the Department must be pursued as far as practicable, with access at least to certain parts of the Department being made possible. [Paragraph 4.8.8]
- e) Estates and Buildings should be alerted to the poor condition of DISH Laboratory A. [Paragraph 4.8.7]

5. Postgraduate Range of Provision

- a) Formal feedback procedures to be put in place for students on all postgraduate programmes and *GTA* representatives to be included in the membership of the *Staff-Student Liaison Committee*. [Paragraph 6.2]
- b) The sustainability of providing a large number of postgraduate taught programmes with very small student numbers should be considered. [Paragraph 4.5.2]

6. Support for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

- a) All *GTAs* carrying out marking should be appropriately trained, prior to approval as additional internal examiners by Senate. [Paragraph 4.8.4]
- b) All *GTAs* should be invited to observe at least one seminar led by their assigned mentor as part of their personal and skills development. [Paragraph 4.8.3]
- c) Rates of pay for *GTAs* to be reviewed. [Paragraph 4.8.1]

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

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Formative assessment

Formative assessment refers to assessed work where feedback is given to help the student improve their learning and their performance.

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.

Moodle

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

Periodical

A periodical is a publication that is published in regular intervals for an indefinite period of time, e.g. Magazines, journals, and newspapers.

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.

Seminar

Seminar usually refers to a small, group-based learning situation.

Short loan

The Short Loan Collection is an open-access collection that includes multiple copies of books in high demand. Loan periods range from 1 week to 24 hours and 4 hours. It is located on Level 2 of the Library.

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.

Turnitin

Turnitin is a remotely hosted, web based service that compares submitted material, e.g. a student's essay, with a wide range of sources and produces an originality report. It is intended to be a tool which can support students in their understanding and avoidance of plagiarism and can be used to quickly and efficiently locate sources of material in cases of suspected plagiarism. Turnitin originality reports can be used to highlight to students, with real examples, the exact meaning of the term plagiarism.