

**UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW**

**Academic Regulations Committee - Friday 27 May 2005**

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment -  
Report of the Review of Central and East European Studies held on  
Friday 18 February 2005**

**Mrs Catherine Omand, Clerk to the Review Panel**

**February 2005**

**Review Panel**

Professor Chris Morris	Vice Principal (Arts, Social Sciences and Education [Convener])
Professor Andrea Nolan	Vice Principal (Learning and Teaching) [Observing]
Dr Rick Fawn	External Subject Specialist, St Andrew's University
Professor David Watt	Senate Assessor on the University Court
Dr Margaret Tejerizo	Lecturer, Department of Slavonic Studies
Dr Sarah Mann	Teaching and Learning Service
Mrs Catherine Omand (Clerk)	Senate Office

**A. Introduction**

- A.1 The Department of Central and East European Studies was created in 1999, following a Court review of Russian and East European Studies. Consequently, this was the Department's first departmental review. The Panel considered that as a relatively new department, it was developing well and had already established a good reputation.
- A.2 The Department was awarded a 5\* research rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and it was agreed that it had successfully incorporated its high-level research into much of its teaching. The Review Panel was pleased to note that the Department was home to *'Europe Asia Studies'*, one of the leading journals worldwide for the study of the region further enhancing the research-led profile of the Department.
- A.3 The Department had provided a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documentation in accordance with the University's requirements for the Review of Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The SER had been discussed and made available to all members of staff.
- A.4 The Review Panel met with Professor Noreen Burrows, the Dean of the Faculty of Law and Financial Studies and Acting Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, the Head of Department, Mr Richard Berry and all members of academic staff. The Panel also met with the one probationary member of staff and with four Graduate Teaching Assistants who represented hourly-paid staff. The Panel met with three postgraduate taught students and eleven undergraduate students.
- A.5 The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Department:
- MA Honours

- MPhil Russian and East European Studies
- MRes Russian and East European Studies

## **B. Overall aims of the Department's provision**

- B.1 The overall aims of the Department's provision were stated in the SER and were readily available to students. The Panel considered the Department's overall aims to be entirely appropriate and identified no areas of concern.

## **C. Undergraduate and Taught-Postgraduate Provision**

### *C.1 Aims*

The Review Panel found the Department's overall aims for the different programmes to be clear, informative and appropriate and were readily available to students through their inclusion in the course handbooks. The Panel also considered that the teaching and learning aims were met.

### *C.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)*

The Review Panel was pleased to note that ILOs were clearly stated at all levels and for all programmes in the course handbooks (though see point C.3.1 below). In addition, the SER stated that the Department used induction workshops to engage with the student body so that it was fully aware of the aims and ILOs of each course and the overall programme. It was noted that the MRes programme had Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) recognition and approval of the ILOs.

### *C.3 Assessment*

- C.3.1 The Review Panel noted from the SER that the Department complied with the University Code of Assessment and that the Department believed that the Code was working well. However, the Panel observed that wording of the ILOs on some courses would have to be revised to meet the Code of Assessment requirements. The Panel **recommends** that the Department should revise the ILOs and amend the course documentation at the earliest possibility.
- C.3.2 From the SER and from discussions with the staff and Head of Department, the Review Panel noted that conventional assessment methods, predominantly essay-style coursework and examinations, had been adopted. At the meeting with the taught postgraduate students, only one criticism had been expressed and that was that the assessment adopted by the Department was too restrictive and felt that different kinds of assessment should be encouraged. The Panel agreed that the Department should be encouraged to consider using other forms of assessment, such as oral presentations, workshops and/or a multiple question-and-answer style examination or a variation of both that and essay. The Panel **recommends** that the Department consider using a wider variety of assessment methods at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- C.3.3 At the meeting with the undergraduate students, the Review Panel had been advised that they had found the volume of information excessive in Level 1. The Panel queried whether or not this might be reflected in the examination results where no 'A' grades were awarded. The Panel **recommends** that the Department consider revising the design of the Level 1 course and the examination. The Head of Department had advised the Panel that, due to a consistently poor examination performance, the Department had recently decided to change from a 70%: 30% examination/coursework ratio for Level 1, Level 2 and for Honours options to a 50%:

50% system, commencing from Session 2005-06. This had been supported by both the External Examiners and by the students. The Panel endorsed this decision.

- C.3.4 The Review Panel confirmed that the Department **demonstrated good practice** in its innovative thinking and delivery of teaching, in particularly the adoption of team teaching at Level 1.
- C.3.5 At the meeting with the undergraduate students, opinion had been divided regarding the quality of tutorial provision. In addition, they felt that since tutorials were not assessed, some students did little or no work whilst others did the majority of the work. Consequently, there was general support for some formative tutorial assessment. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department consider some form of summative tutorial assessment to ensure that all students participate and would enhance assessment variety.
- C.3.6 At the meeting with the undergraduate students, some First Year students had requested a tutorial on essay writing as some students had perceived a difference in preferred essay style between Faculties. The Review Panel **recommends** that a workshop on essay writing be introduced at the beginning of First Year, highlighting the possible different styles between Faculties. A session should also be made available following the first essay to provide formal feedback.
- C.3.7 The Review Panel thought that, although the arrangements for the Dissertation were more than adequate, the Panel **recommends** that the Department consider introducing an assessed oral presentation, as it believed that this would enhance the arrangements as well as offer more variety to the assessment process.

#### *C.4 Curriculum Design and Content*

- C.4.1 The Review Panel thought that the collective experience of the academic staff was highly suitable for the delivery of the curricula. All the members of staff had specialized knowledge and experience as well as significant research records.
- C.4.2 The Review Panel found the range of teaching appropriate for delivering the curricula. However, while recognising the importance of continuing to teach the legacies of communism, the Panel **recommends** that further consideration be given to the inclusion of the implications of the accession states joining the European Union into the teaching programme. The Panel also **recommends** that the Department considers possible links with other departments such as the School of Law and the Departments of Politics and Economics.

#### *C.5 Student Recruitment, Support and Progression*

- C.5.1 The Review Panel recognised that, as a relatively new Department, undergraduate student numbers were satisfactory. It was believed, however, that student numbers could be enhanced by better publicity and marketing. The Panel **recommends** that the Department liaise further with the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service to identify other viable student market to recruit more students.
- C.5.2 The Review Panel thought that taught postgraduate student numbers were low. However, at the meeting with the Dean, it was confirmed that a Faculty-wide approach was being developed for taught postgraduate provision. The Panel discussed this at the meeting with the Head of Department who indicated that he was very supportive of this approach. The Panel **recommends** that the Faculty further develop a framework for increasing taught postgraduate provision across departments.

- C.5.3 The Department undertook a substantial amount of teaching at all levels and gave very careful consideration to the well-being, both pedagogic and general, to its students.
- C.5.4 The Department **demonstrated good practice** in its systematic means for consultation with students through the Department's 'open door' policy. The undergraduate students had commented that they felt that staff listened to them and acted upon concerns. At the meeting with the taught postgraduate students', the students expressed the view that the Department was receptive to new ideas.

### *C.6 The Effectiveness of Provision*

- C.6.1 The range of provision offered by the Department impressed the Review Panel. The Department **demonstrated good practice** in the range of teaching methods and learning resources used, in particular at Level 2. This included the use of workshops and role-plays to engage students actively in the learning process, and the use of resources such as video clips, memoirs and interview data. The Panel believed that highlighting areas of good practice and the positive student experience of being part of a creative and imaginative Department would enhance course documentation and might encourage more students to take the course as a first option in early years. The Panel **recommends** that course documentation be amended to highlight areas of good practice.
- C.6.2 At the meeting with the undergraduate students, students confirmed that they enjoyed the lectures and liked the method of team teaching in Level 1 as it brought variety to the course, although there was some overlap of teaching material.
- C.6.3 The Review Panel found learning materials to be substantial and detailed. The Department provided a good level of handouts and its on-line system, Universal Campus, was well utilized, particularly by students at Levels 1 and 2.
- C.6.4 The Review Panel acknowledged the excellent library and IT facilities and that the University Library was considered one of the best in the country. The Panel believed that the students were therefore well supplied and the range of books and specialist materials was regarded as a tremendous asset to teaching.
- C.6.5 The Department **demonstrated good practice** in web development, in particular, Universal Campus. However, it appeared to be used primarily by undergraduate students and the Review Panel wondered if postgraduate students could benefit more from it. In addition, at the meeting with the Postgraduate students, it was confirmed that, some of the time, the students felt isolated from the Department. It emerged that the postgraduate students had proposed an initiative to introduce seminars for them to assist in enhancing a sense of community amongst them. These would be in addition to the 'Work in Progress' seminars and workshops the Department run on the advanced research methods course. The Panel commends the students for introducing this initiative.
- C6.6 At the meeting with the taught postgraduate students, the MRes students had indicated that too much time had been spent on statistics, which they felt had not be relevant to the particular areas of study. The Review Panel noted, however, that the course was intended to be generic and was geared to general study.
- C.6.7 The Review Panel met with the current Probationary Lecturer to discuss her experiences of the University and the Department. The Panel was pleased to note that she had felt well integrated into the Department and indicated that the 'mentor' system had worked well. She felt that there was a good integration of teaching and research, and that her workload was manageable. She also expressed satisfaction with the New Lecturer Programme and felt that, although time-consuming, the process had been useful.

- C.6.8 From the Review Panel's discussions with the Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), it was evident that, although 4 formal meetings were held a year, further training was necessary to enable them to become more pro-active and to develop skills in recognising potential problems. The Panel recommended that the Department should allow GTAs to mark coursework as this would reduce lecture workload as well as allow GTAs to gain experience in marking. It was also the Panel's view that tutorials should be monitored and feedback given in a more structured manner to GTAs. The Panel **recommends** that the Department contact the Teaching and Learning Service to devise a supplementary in-house training programme to ensure that GTAs receive appropriate training, supervision and feedback on their personal performance and development, particularly in view of their role at the forefront of tutorials. The Panel also **recommends** that GTAs mark coursework and tutorials monitored.
- C.6.9 In terms of administration and management, the Review Panel noted the informal approach currently adopted, largely as a result of the Department's small size. Whilst sympathetic to this approach, the Panel **recommends** that the Department establish more formal structures given that there will be a change in headship and to ensure the strengths and achievements of the Department are fully supported by processes. It was noted at the meeting with the Head of Department that two new committees had recently been established, an Undergraduate Studies Committee and Postgraduate Teaching and Research Committee, which would report back to full staff meetings.
- C.6.10 The Review Panel considered that the administrative workload of the Head of Department, which reflected the recent history and development of the Department, was too heavy and in particular that, just as each Department has a Research Convener, so there should also be a Convener/Director of Teaching and Learning, to take this particular task away from the Head of Department. The Panel **recommends** that some of these tasks should now be delegated to other staff in the department.
- C.6.11 The Review Panel expressed some concern regarding the workload of research active staff and whether adequate opportunities were made available for staff development. However, the Panel recognised that this was a problem often associated with a small department and noted in the SER that the Department was in the process of introducing personal development plans which should address this issue. Furthermore, at the meeting with the Dean, it was confirmed that the Faculty hoped to invest further in the Department as and when it was able to do so. It was recognised that increasing the number of staff would alleviate some of the current workload pressures.
- C.6.12 The Review Panel noted from the SER that there was a need for some minor refurbishment, such as modernising the entrance, new carpeting and redecoration, to the Hetherington building in which the Department was based. In addition, there were problems of disability access to the building. The Panel **recommends** that Estates and Buildings and the Faculty should consider how such improvements could be made.

## **D. The Maintenance and Enhancement of Standards of Awards**

### *D.1 Maintenance of Standards*

The Review Panel was confident that the Department was operating effective measures to maintain the standards of awards. The SER had indicated that assessment procedures, external examiners' reports, grade profiles and student feedback were being monitored and responded to where necessary as required by the University.

## **E. The Maintenance and Assurance of Quality**

- E.1 At the meeting with the academic staff, the Review Panel was pleased to note the staffs' enthusiasm and was impressed with the level of leadership undertaken by the Head of Department. The Panel was pleased to hear that the Faculty was about to invest in a proleptic appointment to the Alex Nove Chair, vacant since 2001. It was believed that the forthcoming Chair appointment would further strengthen staff capacity.
- E.2 It appeared from the minutes of the Staff:Student Liaison Committee meetings that student representatives met with staff separately and there were no procedures in place for student feedback following these meetings. The Review Panel **recommends** that all student representatives meet together collectively with staff and that procedures are put in place to ensure feedback is given to students following Staff:Student Liaison Committee meetings, thereby closing the feedback loop.
- E.3 The Review Panel noted the disappointingly small response to the course questionnaire, where students had been invited to respond via Universal Campus. The Junior Honours' students at the undergraduate meeting confirmed that the students had been invited to complete the questionnaire at the same time as they were deliberating their dissertation topic and were therefore distracted from completing the questionnaire. The Panel **recommends** that the Department should reassess the timing of the distribution of the course questionnaire and reconsider distributing it during classes to ensure a better response from students.

## **F. Enhancing the Student Learning Experience**

- F.1 The Review Panel considered the student learning experience to be very positive and attributed that to the approachable and knowledgeable staff and the Department's 'open door' policy. It was thought that students gained significant support and guidance. The students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate meetings endorsed this.
- F.2 The Review Panel viewed that it was important to an 'area studies' degree that students should have the opportunity to study in the area. Consequently, it was interested to note the new exchange programmes being developed by the Faculty, which would assist in developing a culture where students expected to study abroad and that placements would be credited. The Panel believed that the Department was well placed to establish links with institutions in Eastern Europe and Spain.
- F.3 The Review Panel was impressed with the number of conferences held in the Department and with the level of student involvement. The Panel **recommends** that the Department continue with this practice and encourage greater student involvement, as it was agreed that this greatly enhanced the student experience.

## **G. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas to be Improved or Enhanced in relation to Learning and Teaching, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Key strengths*

- The Department is commended for offering an interesting range of research-led courses.
- The Department is commended for being pro-active in developing new and innovative methods of teaching. (Level 2)

- The Department exhibits good internal communication processes under excellent leadership, whereby all members of staff were encouraged to contribute, including new lecturers.
- The Department is commended in its systematic means for consultation with students and 'open door' policy. Students find the Department approachable and supportive
- The excellent Library and IT facilities are regarded as a tremendous asset to teaching.
- The Department is commended for its web development, in particular, Universal Campus.

*Areas to be improved or enhanced*

- The use of a greater variety of assessment, including the examination format, particularly at Level 1.
- A framework for supervision and support of GTAs, and for integrating them more into the department as a whole.
- Increasing taught postgraduate student numbers via a Faculty framework.
- Teaching collaboration with cognate departments in the Faculty.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Conclusions*

The Review Panel highly commended the Department for the overall quality of its provision and for its conscientious approach to the student experience and to teaching in general, at all levels. Staff were enthusiastic, approachable and responsive to students and the Panel was impressed with the level of leadership undertaken by the Head of Department.

The Review Panel commended the Department for its wide range of innovative and research-led courses. The Department should also be commended for its staff recruitment policy and the way in which it has developed since its creation in 1999.

The Review Panel would encourage the Department to continue with its excellent work and the Faculty in its continued support of the Department.

### *Recommendations*

#### **Recommendation 1:**

The Panel recommends that the Department consider using a wider variety of assessment methods at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. (*Paragraph C.3.2*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

#### **Recommendation 2:**

The Panel recommends that the Department consider revising the design of the Level 1 course and the examination. (*Paragraph C.3.3*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 3:**

The Panel recommends that the Department introduce a workshop on essay writing at the beginning of First Year and introduce a session following the first essay to provide formal feedback. (*Paragraph C.3.6*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 4:**

The Panel recommends that the Department consider introducing some form of summative tutorial assessment. (*Paragraph C.3.5*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 5:**

The Panel recommends that the Department consider introducing an assessed oral presentation of the dissertation. (*Paragraph C.3.7*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 6:**

The Panel recommends that GTAs mark coursework and that tutorials are monitored. (*Paragraph C.6.8*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 7:**

The Panel recommends that the Department gives further consideration to the inclusion of the implications of the accession states joining the European Union into the teaching programme. (*Paragraph C.4.2*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 8:**

The Panel recommends that the Department consider developing possible links with other departments, such as the School of Law and the Departments of Politics and Economics. (*Paragraph C.4.2*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 9:**

The Panel recommends that the Faculty further develop a framework for increasing taught postgraduate provision across departments. (*Paragraph C.5.2*)

**Action:** The Dean of Law and Financial Studies  
The Dean of Social Sciences

**Recommendation 10:**

The Panel recommends that the Department contact the Teaching and Learning Service to devise a supplementary in-house training programme for the Graduate Teaching Assistants. (*Paragraph C.6.8*)

**Action:** The Head of Department  
Director of Teaching and Learning Service

**Recommendation 11:**

The Panel recommends that all student representatives meet together collectively with staff and that procedures are put in place to ensure feedback is given to students following Staff/Student Liaison Committee meetings. (*Paragraph E.2*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 12:**

The Panel recommends that the Department revise the ILOs to reflect the Code of Assessment and amend the course documentation accordingly. (*Paragraph C.3.1*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 13:**

The Panel recommends that the Department amends the course documentation to highlight areas of good practice. (*Paragraph C.6.1*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 14:**

The Panel recommends that the Department liaise further with the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service to identify other viable student markets' in order to recruit more students. (*Paragraph C.5.1*)

**Action:** The Head of Department  
Director of Student Recruitment and Admission Service

**Recommendation 15:**

The Panel recommends that the Department reassesses the timing of the distribution of the course questionnaire and reconsiders distributing it during class to ensure a better response from students. (*Paragraph E.3*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 16:**

The Panel recommends that the Department establish more formal structures to ensure that the strengths and achievements of the Department are fully supported by processes. (*Paragraph C.6.9*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 17:**

The Panel recommends that the Head of Department delegates some of his administrative tasks to members of the Department. (*Paragraph C.6.10*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 18:**

The Panel recommends that the Department continue to encourage student participation at conferences organised within the Department. (*Paragraph F.3*)

**Action:** The Head of Department

**Recommendation 19:**

The Panel recommends that Estates and Buildings and Faculty consider minor refurbishment of the Hetherington building. (*Paragraph C.6.12*)

**Action:** The Dean of Social Sciences  
The Head of Estates and Buildings

*Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office*  
*modified on: Wednesday 23 February 2005*