University of Glasgow

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Review of Department of Computing Science: 7 March 2008

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Computing Science. 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_104277_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 the quality of the overall student experience and on its outstanding performance in the 2007 National Student Survey in relation to overall student satisfaction and intellectual challenge. The Panel was pleased to note the strong collegiate support within the Department and the staff's satisfaction with the leadership skills of the Head of Department. The Panel also commends the Department's proactive links with industry which have significant benefits for students in terms of the overall student experience and expectations for employment.

Key Strengths

- The quality of the overall student experience, demonstrated by the Department being rated first in its subject group for overall student satisfaction and intellectual challenge in the 2007 *National Student Survey*
- Friendly and approachable staff and well qualified teachers
- The student-driven "accelerator course" where students from the year above deliver extra classes to support the year below them

- strong involvement in outreach activity with schools and the distinctive *transferable skills* that involvement in the project affords to Level 4 students
- The Department's strong links with employers and the opportunities available to students for exposure to industry through employers' visits to the Department and industrial placements at Level 3
- The system of weekly tutorials and the support that they provide for students
- The wide range of assessment methods employed
- The detailed *grade descriptors* and comprehensive *assessment criteria* provided to students, supervisors and readers in relation to Level 3 team projects
- The articulation of programme *aims* and *intended learning outcomes*
- *Peer support*
- The cycle of root and branch programme review which is undertaken on a year-by-year basis starting from Level 1
- The range of opportunities for *personal development planning* (PDP) offered within the curriculum
- The articulation of existing PDP opportunities
- Recruitment
- The quality of the taught postgraduate admissions experience which had included the support of a "mentor" from the point of being made a conditional offer
- The mapping of assessment methods and feedback on assessment
- Students' approach to time management
- The leadership of the Head of Department and the strong collegiate support amongst staff

---

Areas to be improved or enhanced[1]

1. Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

a) The taught postgraduate assessment requirements in Semester 1 should be modified. [Paragraph 4.3.4]

2. Student Progression, Retention and Support

a) Serious consideration should be given to introducing group work into the first year curriculum. [Paragraph 4.6.2]

b) Advice should be sought on mapping existing *PDP* opportunities across the entire curriculum. [Paragraph 4.6.4]

3. Resources for Learning and Teaching

a) Social space for students of all levels should be provided if possible. [Paragraph 4.8.14]

b) Staff *workload models* should adopt current Faculty practice. [Paragraph 4.8.1]

c) An in-depth review should be conducted to assess the impact of the University's computer replacement policies on the practical experience of students and the external perception of the Department. [Paragraph 4.8.11]

d) Potential safety implications of permitting students to utilise personal laptops in laboratories and classrooms should be investigated and the annual cost of portable appliance testing (PAT) established. [Paragraph 4.8.8]

---

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

e) The University's current review of teaching spaces should give due consideration to the specialist technical needs of certain departments. [Paragraph 4.8.10]

4. **Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)**

a) Advice is to be sought on effective ways of re-mapping *ILOs*. [Paragraph 4.2.2]

b) Assessment methods should be mapped more explicitly to programme and course *ILOs*, and programme and course documentation updated accordingly. [Paragraph 4.3.2]

5. **Maintaining the Standards of Awards**

a) The advice given to students on what constitutes *plagiarism* in relation to programming and software should be reviewed. [Paragraph 5.3]

b) The Academic Regulations Sub Committee should explore the concerns regarding the *criteria for the award of Distinction*. [Paragraph 5.6]

6. **Student Recruitment**

a) Marketing and recruitment strategies should be reviewed to ensure that the highly competitive strengths of the Department are given prominence. [Paragraph 4.5.1]

b) Existing recruitment materials should be reviewed to ensure that they contain a clear explanation of the *Faculty entry* system. [Paragraph 4.5.4]

c) The use of the Faculty Recruitment Officer within the Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Service (RAPS) should be maximised. [Paragraph 4.5.6]

d) Recruitment materials should be reviewed to ensure that the merits of the Scottish Higher Education system are highlighted. [Paragraph 4.5.7]

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Aims

Programme or course aims describe what the University/Department aims to provide to students through the delivery of the programme or course overall.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment criteria are statements that explain how a student's achievement will be evaluated against a learning outcome.

Criteria for award of Distinction

The criteria for the award of distinction are set out in the regulations for the programme and describe the standards or grades that must be achieved to be eligible to receive an award "with distinction". The regulations will also set out the grades required to be eligible for the award of the degree and, usually, the award of the degree "with merit".

Faculty Entry

In some areas of the University, students are admitted to the Faculty rather than to a specific department or subject area.

Grade Descriptor

Grade descriptors are verbal descriptions against which a student's work is judged. The marker decides which descriptor matches the work most closely and awards the corresponding grade. University-wide grade descriptors are set out in the Code of Assessment but may be customized to apply to a particular subject area or Department.

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs describe what all students should be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes when they successfully complete the course or programme that the ILOs relate to.

National Student Survey

The NSS is a national initiative that has been conducted annually since 2005. The survey asks students in their final year of a programme to provide feedback on their student learning experience. There are 22 questions in all.

Peer Support

Peer Support can be used to refer to different types of activity whereby senior students provide support, in learning or more personal matters, to junior students. There is usually training involved for the senior students.

Personal Development Planning or PDP

Personal Development Planning or PDP is a way to promote reflection on learning, performance and achievements and to plan for personal, educational and career development. Each Faculty at the University offers different types of PDP activities.

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.

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.

Workload Model (Staff)

A workload model is a means of describing the workload of all members of staff and should be used by Departments to ensure that staff workloads are manageable and allocated fairly with different types of work appropriately distributed.