



Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA)

Review of Department of Urban Studies: 15 and 16 March 2010

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the Department of Urban Studies. 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_173371_en.pdf

Further information about the DPTLA process can be found at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/psr/>

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Review Panel commends the Department on its constructive engagement with the DPTLA process, its open and reflective approach to the *Self Evaluation Report* (SER) and the positive attitudes displayed by staff and students in discussions with the Panel during the review visit. A number of recommendations have been made in the body of the report, many of which concern areas that the Department itself highlighted for further development prior to the review or in the SER.

Key Strengths

- The provision of high quality engaging teaching, embedded in real world policy and practice, leading to well qualified, employable graduates;
- The recent expansion in *postgraduate taught* programmes, founded on research strength and active links with a range of professional, voluntary and governmental agencies;
- The accessibility of the Department's programmes to students from a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, and the support provided by staff to this diverse group;
- The conscious effort made by the Department to harness the breadth of these backgrounds and experiences to enhance students' collective learning experience and break down professional boundaries;
- The support provided to *Graduate Teaching Assistants* and the Department's integration of them into a broad range of the Department's activities;

- Positive staff:student relationships, both academic and administrative staff being reported to be accessible, supportive and responsive to students' individual circumstances;
- Collegiality of Department staff.

Areas to be improved or enhanced¹

1. Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

- Extending the range of non-traditional methods of assessment to be continued within the context of an assessment strategy. [paragraph 3.3.4]
- Marking practices to be reviewed with a view to implementing a robust moderation process which gives particular attention to borderlines at Levels 1 and 2, and uses double rather than blind *double marking* of honours in-course assignments. [paragraph 3.3.14]
- The lack of promptness of assessment feedback highlighted by the *National Student Survey* (NSS) should be investigated and action taken to improve the situation. [paragraph 3.3.10]
- A rationale for dealing with *plagiarism* to be developed encompassing the Department's approach to using *Turnitin*. [paragraph 3.3.15]

2. Curriculum Design, Development and Content

- All opportunities for students to undertake study overseas to be explored, including at pre-Honours and for periods of less than a year. [paragraph 3.5.7]
- A review of undergraduate provision to be pursued focussing on curriculum content and tutorial provision at Level 2 and progression from Level 1 initially. [paragraph 3.4.6]

3. Personal Development Planning

- Good practice in *Personal Development Planning* (PDP) being developed on the Masters in Public Policy and Management to be extended to other programmes. [paragraph 3.6.14]
- Greater engagement with the Careers Service at undergraduate level to be considered. [paragraph 3.6.14]

4. Student Representation

- Students to be represented at Department Teaching Committees. [paragraph 5.8]

5. Accommodation

- Use of and requirements for accommodation to be considered. Issues under the Department's control to be addressed and others presented to Faculty for consideration in the context of the University restructuring. [paragraph 3.8.18]
- The enhancement of disabled access to be prioritised by the Faculty. [paragraph 3.8.18]

6. Management

- An explicit Learning and Teaching Strategy to be developed to provide a framework and timetable for the on-going development of the Department's work. [paragraphs 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 5.10]

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

7. Staffing

- a) Induction and probation procedures to be strictly adhered to for all staff. [paragraph 3.8.5]

8. Student Recruitment

- a) Development of a marketing and recruitment strategy to be continued. [paragraph 3.5.8]

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment or DPTLA

The University has a six yearly cycle of review of the departments within it. The DPTLA is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the quality of the provision delivered by departments.

Double Marking/Second Marking

Double or Second marking describes the process of where assessments are marked a second time and the two marks compared. The purpose is to ensure the marks awarded are fair, reliable and consistent. The second marking may be done 'blind' or 'seen' and may be done on all of the class's work or on just a sample. Where the markers agree, the marks are confirmed or verified; where they disagree the marks are moderated or changed either by agreement between the two markers or by a third person.

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.

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, this can be found at:

<http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>.

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.

Postgraduate Taught or PGT

Postgraduate Taught refers to taught programmes at postgraduate level, usually Masters.

Self Evaluation Report

A Self Evaluation Report is a document prepared by the Department in advance of a DPTLA Review. Its purpose is to provide the Review Panel with an insight into the Department's view of itself, its strengths and areas it would wish to develop. It is normally prepared by the Head of Department in conjunction with other staff but students should also be offered the opportunity to comment on whether or not it reflects the Department they know.

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.