

TPR of Earth Science UG programmes. School of GeoSciences:

Date of review: 11 & 12th March 2019

Date of 14 week response: 13th August 2019

Date of year on response: 15 May 2020

The School/Subject Area is responsible for reporting on progress with all recommendations, including those remitted to other areas of the University for action. If any recommendation has been fully addressed please record the action taken and date completed. Any barriers to progress should be highlighted on this report.

No.	Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	The panel recommends that the School review its processes for maintaining student welfare by instituting uniform attendance monitoring at least for practicals, record keeping and triage systems; in particular, it is recommended that the School maintain formal attendance monitoring for practicals, using University systems to support this.		<p>We currently use paper sign-in sheets for practical classes across all Earth Science programmes. These sheets are passed to the Teaching Organisation, data transferred to Excel files, and then used for various purposes (including monitoring). We will remind all staff of the importance of ensuring that this process continues. However, the School lacks resources to enact the recommendation in full, especially regarding the use of attendance monitoring for triaging. As we highlighted during the 2 day visit, this is due to a lack of investment by the University in software for monitoring student attendance and/or engagement. Current software does not readily facilitate uploading and transfer of attendance data between systems. There are various workarounds of current systems which can be used to monitor attendance (e.g. TopHat). However, there is no efficient and effective way of transferring or processing the volumes of data produced to enable the type of universal triaging process proposed. This would require a system where attendance data could be automatically synced with Euclid student records (or something equivalent). Currently, all attendance data would have to be transferred into student records manually, one student at a time. We could potentially use paper sign-in sheets and a simple database (or set of Excel sheets) to monitor attendance, although this would be time and resource intensive. The system would also again be standalone, and information would have to be continually processed and shared. We lack the resource to do this.</p> <p>As a School, we have a robust Student Support system which we believe offers a high level of support for our students, and is held up as a good model for Student Support across the College. Our SSC team provide a high level of care to students, and receive very favourable feedback from students. We would, however, be strongly supportive of any investment by the University which allows us to use data on student attendance and/or engagement to further this support.</p>	Reminders to be sent prior to start of S1 19/20

			<p>As noted during the 2-day visit, an investment by the University in this area would also be beneficial in understanding universal issues with declining student engagement.</p> <p>We further note that there is a University-level review of policy on attendance monitoring expected in 2020/2021, as part of the Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring (SEAM) project.</p>	
2	<p>The panel recommends that the School institute mechanisms to improve the collection of data in order to make informed decisions and implement change. The data should include information on student retention, transfers, progression and graduate destinations.</p>		<p>We maintain a high level of record-keeping within the School, including full data on student progression, student transfers, completion rates, and course pass rates. This data is used across the School for various purposes, and feeds into reviews of Teaching delivery.</p> <p>As highlighted in the reflective report, the issue here concerns University-level systems for record keeping, and as such, is external to the School. Data passed onto the School ahead of the TPR contained a number of significant errors. Information on student progression, in particular, was unreliable, and in some cases, 1/3 of students were missing from the data provided. This highlights a worrying deficiency in the accuracy of University student records systems. The TPR Liaison (GB) has already flagged specific data issues with the Internal Review Support team.</p> <p>We also anticipate rollout of the new power BI Quality Reports in summer 2019, which will provide us with more accurate data in these areas.</p>	N/A
3	<p>The panel recommends that the School re-purpose the Teaching and Assessment Working Group to focus on enhancing the staff and student experience, to include the following remit items: timing and modes of assessment, curriculum review including thread review, academic guidance, and optimising spaces and resourcing.</p>		<p>As recommended, the remit of the Teaching and Assessment Working Group (TAWG) has been broadened to include complete curriculum review across all taught degree programmes delivered by the School (including all Earth Science programmes reviewed in this TPR). In May, the TAWG agreed a timeline for this process, which will begin with an IAD (ELDeR) led review of the geology programme in late 2019. This will focus on the overall syllabus and student/learning progression, but with considerable focus on timing and purpose of assessments. There will be subsequent reviews of other programmes.</p> <p>Aside from the work of the TAWG, we note that the TPR report comments favourably on the culture of reflection within the School (Section B 1.2). The DoT (UG) is keen to further encourage reflection and review of UG teaching through individual annual course review (by CO/DPC), annual programme review (by DPC and TO) and the regular work of the TO. This climate of reflection feeds into descriptions of roles, and expectations of role holders (CO, DPC, ESC etc) recently agreed by the Teaching Committee and circulated to all staff.</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Full review of Geology programme by January 2020. Review of other ES programmes by Jan 2021.</p>
4	<p>The panel recommends that the School introduce more clarity and better communication on the Personal Tutor role to staff and students, more in line with the</p>		<p>We use a PT model across the School where pastoral issues are largely handled by SSCs, with PTs responsible for academic guidance. However, this system is flexible, and tutees are encouraged to engage with PTs regarding non-academic issues if both parties are comfortable doing so. We also advertise the fact that students should feel confident bringing up any issues with either their PT or</p>	<p>To be completed by Sept. 2019</p>

	University's guidance on Personal Tutors		<p>SSCs, who can then guide the student towards an additional service if appropriate. This model has been held up as good practice by both College and University.</p> <p>However, in light of the recommendation, we will clarify policy with students and provide more guidance on roles and responsibilities. We will review information given to students in Welcome Week (for 2019/2020 onwards), and ensure that a clear description of the PT and SSC roles, in addition to the School's student support policy, are available on our LEARN Student Information Hubs (which provide a one stop shop of resources and signposting for our student body).</p> <p>We also note that review of the University PT and student support systems is ongoing. Both are additionally being considered as part of the Service Excellence Review. We await recommendations.</p>	Ongoing
5	The panel recommends that the University increase provision of support services, including counselling services, on site at King's Buildings		<p>Response from Gavin Douglas, Deputy Secretary, Student Experience</p> <p>SCS (Student Counselling Service) have access to 2 counselling rooms at Murchison House, and SDS (Student Disability Service) have access to 1 room (all 5 days a week). Director of SDS has brokered a deal with Director of Student Careers Service for temporary use of another room 4 days a week until the move into the Health and Wellbeing Centre in February 2020</p> <p>Both services would welcome more space at KB- SDS has around 800 students registered with the service in Schools based at Kings. Ideally we could provide counselling (including groups), some assessor capacity, more mental health mentors and some management cover/ drop-in and problem-solving capacity. The Director of Student Wellbeing has raised this with the CSE College Office in the first instance.</p>	
6	The panel recommends that the School improve information to staff and students on feedback dates, have a uniform approach to the of quality of feedback provided within and across courses, and that it abide by the 15 working day rule set by the University.		<p>We will continue to impress upon staff the importance of adhering to the 15 working day rule for feedback. In addition, we are taking action on 4 fronts to improve return:</p> <p>-The School's TO have been collecting data on return rates for all UG and PG assessments during 2018/2019. This data is processed using a traffic light system to highlight issues, and distributed to DPCs to disseminate to staff and discuss at teaching meetings across the School. The ESC has also been flagging specific failings within the Earth Science programmes with staff line managers. In 2019/2020, as a change in policy, we will freely distribute all data of assessment return rates to staff across the School. This new policy of full transparency means that all staff will be aware of instances where work is returned late.</p>	From Sept 2019 onwards

			<p>-The School's TAWG is tasked at reviewing timing and purpose of assessments. One objective of this review is to reduce the number of assessments across Earth Sciences which, compared to other programmes within the School, remains high. A reduction in number of assessments should result in an improvement in return rates.</p>	<p>Full review of Geology programme by January 2020. Review of other ES programmes by Jan 2021.</p>
			<p>-The LEARN Foundations project, which will roll out in summer 2019, will provide a new template for LEARN course pages which gives clear, easy to find information on assessment deadlines and feedback dates.</p> <p>-The Teaching Committee has revised their role descriptors for teaching posts across the School, including the role of Course Organiser. These will be advertised to all staff, and make the responsibilities of COs clear, including ensuring that good quality feedback is given in a prompt and timely manner in accordance with University guidelines.</p>	<p>From Sept 2019 onwards</p> <p>Completed</p>
7	<p>The panel recommends that the School improve academic guidance on course choice in pre-honours years, particularly courses in or adjacent to Schools which consolidate essential skills for honours years.</p>		<p>All knowledge and skills required in Earth Science degree programmes are delivered within compulsory courses. Choice of optional courses in PHs (where applicable) is open, and students are free to take courses from across the University. Rather than prescribing certain courses, we believe that there is equal benefit to students engaging in courses closely related to their chosen programme as there is with engaging in courses which are in very different subject areas. Students meet with PTs during Welcome Week to discuss choices of optional courses, and in Welcome Week literature/presentations, are given guidance on choosing optional courses. However, in light of this recommendation we will:</p> <p>-review information given to students during Welcome Week, and in 2019/2020, trial using 3rd/4th year students to deliver short talks to incoming students on course choice. We will also review information given to PTs about advising students with option course selection.</p> <p>-Produce, as part of the ELDeR (Edinburgh Learning Design roadmap) curriculum review process, a short summary of learning outcome, knowledge and skills training for all Earth Science programmes. A version of this can be distributed to students. This will help them to reflect on any particular optional courses which might provide additional training in any area they feel less confident.</p>	<p>September 2019</p> <p>September 2019-ongoing</p>

8	<p>The panel recognises the challenge of building the identity of the Earth Sciences cohort when operating across multiple sites, and recommends that the School review and seek to improve the provision of spaces to enhance the student and staff experience, this to include social space, teaching space and quiet study space.</p>		<p>The School has been investigating options regarding reallocation of space, and this recommendation will be discussed at the School's Planning and Resources Committee (SPARC) meeting. However, there are considerable issues regarding lack of space across the School (especially within Grant and the Crew buildings), and any significant action would require a radical review of how space is used, and a major investment in capital. We will continue to investigate all possibilities and make the most of any available opportunities.</p> <p>Lack of quiet study space is a general issue across the King's Buildings Campus. Refurbishment of Murchison House, and improvement in provision, has been warmly received by students within Earth Sciences. As such, we would encourage the University to continue to invest in support on the King's Buildings Campus.</p>	On-going
9	<p>The panel recommends that the University support the long-term in-position career progression, development and promotion of the Earth Sciences professional services staff in order to allow continuity in Schools.</p>		<p>Response from Stephen Barnes Head of HR for CSE:</p> <p>The University P&DR cycle provides the opportunity for staff to discuss their development needs and future career aspirations with their line manager and for them to agree the staff member's development plan for the year. This is a plan that should be kept alive and discussed as the year progresses.</p> <p>The University provides a range of learning and development resources and opportunities open to all staff. For example, the resources in the Online Development Toolkit but also the externally facing subscription to LinkedIn Learning that is now available to all.</p> <p>On the basis that some of the most effective development comes from 'experience' and 'exposure' rather than formal learning, the local Senior HR Advisor will discuss this recommendation with the Director of Professional Service for Geosciences to establish how HR can support the team further.</p> <p>In terms of personal development time for professional services staff, that is up to the school leadership team to determine.</p>	

10	The panel recommends that the School continue to improve training for tutors and demonstrators by encouraging them to engage with CPD, including Higher Education Academy (HEA), Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP), and The Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA).		<p>The PgCAP is generally not appropriate for postgrad Tutors and Demonstrators (T&D). The Edinburgh Teaching Award (Level 1) and the <i>Introduction to Academic Practice</i> module are much more suitable than the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice for T&D seeking formal accreditation for their teaching. We currently support PG students wishing to engage with this training, although will improve how this is communicated to students:</p> <p>-We will review and improve information given to T&D during induction and training events.</p> <p>-The Student Services Projects team are trialling a regular newsletter for PGR students involved in Tutoring and Demonstrating. This will contain information on various opportunities related to training and personal development, and we will use this as a means to regularly showcase and signpost the Edinburgh Teaching Award scheme.</p>	Sept 2019
11	The panel recommends that the School institute and communicate to tutors and demonstrators a process for them to provide feedback to the School and that it address issues relating to the common marking scheme, payment for tasks undertaken and staff-student ratios raised during the review.		<p>Following this recommendation, for 2019/2020 we will trial a group feedback system for PG tutors and demonstrators. This will consist of surveys and a meeting chaired by one of the Earth Science DPCs.</p> <p>Role descriptors recently developed by the TC will remind COs of the need to fully liaise with T&D on all courses to receive feedback. We will additionally request that this feedback is also obtained and commented upon during end-of-course reviews which COs complete.</p>	Sept 2019-onwards
12	The panel recommends that academic staff members (non-tutors and demonstrators) be present and engaged with all practical sessions		Following this recommendation we are changing policy within the School. This recommendation relates to 2 specific year 1 courses. From 2019/2020 onwards, academic staff will be required to be in attendance for at least part of each and every practical session.	Sept 2019
13	The panel recommends that the School highlight the rich information which already exists on their webpages to the incoming cohorts, to provide them with sufficient knowledge and background to make well-informed course choices on arrival		<p>A complete web site review is being planned by the School, but is resource dependent. Programme web pages will be refreshed on a rolling basis by the Marketing, Recruitment and Communications team. We are also looking at setting up Facebook groups for incoming students to help them connect, share information and ask questions before they arrive to begin their programme. We also now have the LEARN Student Information Hubs, which provide resources and signposting for all students.</p> <p>We will also review information given to incoming students in Welcome Week</p>	In progress

	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	The TPR Liaison will send a copy of the TPR report to all Earth Science UG students, along with a shorter explanation of all commendations, recommendations and actions arising.
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review	