

The University of Edinburgh
Internal Periodic Review 2019/20

14 week response report

Internal Periodic Review of: Geography

Date of review: 6 & 7 February 2020

Date of 14 week response: 30 October 2020 (due 27 August 2020)

Date of year on response: due 21 May 2021

The 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.

Recommendation no	Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	The review team felt from discussions throughout the review that the School needs to reflect on where Geography sits within the wider School strategic vision and recommends that the School prioritises this exercise to enable the vision to inform further strategic thinking about teaching and other areas of development (e.g. admissions)	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial meeting with Head of School, UGT subject leads, Director of UGT, Head of Student Services, Head or Marketing and Recruitment to discuss future undergraduate admissions in April 2020. Follow-up meetings planned with Head of School, Geography subject lead and Geography Admissions Advisors to discuss 2021-22 admissions cycle. Covid-19, its impact on recruitment and admissions in 2020-21, and the need to prioritise the move to hybrid teaching, have prevented further developing our strategic thinking about teaching and admissions 	
2	It is recommended that the School reflect on their structures to ensure that they best facilitate and encourage enhancements to learning and teaching provision and empower and support staff to make change.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since March there have significant changes in working practices and the delivery of teaching and student support across the school. The focus has necessarily on implementing and supporting change. 	
3	It is recommended that the School reflects on the capacity of the Student Support Coordinator and Student Support Office and subsequently sustainably resource the team.	Ongoing/2021-22 School Annual Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The School is included at least 1 (and possibly 2) additional FTE of student support in the annual plan for 2021-22. We had intended to implement this in alignment with the PTSSRR (Personal Tutor and Student Support Review) outcomes that are now delayed until 2022-23. We will process with the case for additional SSC support as soon as we know what the University's financial constraints will allow in terms of School devolved funded for posts. 	
	The review team recommends that the School reflect on and revise the WAM appropriately to	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The School is implementing new WAM software in 2021-22 	

4	take account of large courses, equitable distribution of workload and facilitating teaching innovation through explicit resourcing of innovation.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2019-20 the School established a Course Delivery Framework Project that has aimed to develop and implement principles that define the amount of work (academic and tutor/demonstrator time) that should be allocated to the delivery of a course. The principles focus on developing a more equitable distribution of resources across the school that reflects student numbers on programmes and courses, and aims to deliver consistent contact hours for students across courses and programmes. Recommendations from the project, including principle, proposed tariffs and an implementation plan have been presented to SPARC (School Planning and Resource Committee). The intention is to implement more granular tariffs linked to student numbers in the WAM in 2021-22. 	
5	<p>The review team recommends that the subject area consider effective communication on curricular reform. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how best to communicate changes to staff and students (matriculated and prospective) • how to engage the community of students in curriculum reform • how to work effectively with the School and College curriculum approval processes to ensure a robust consideration is given to such matters for future changes. 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the review we have communicated planned curricular changes with matriculated students via Year Group meetings and through student handbooks. As part of our strategies for keeping students informed during the pandemic we are hosting 2 town hall meetings each semester for all students. • Since 2019 recruitment cycle all materials for prospective students have included information on planner curricular changes. Materials for 2021 will emphasise any proposed reforms. • We continue to use SSLC as a key forum for engaging with our student community. We are considering how we can enhance student engagement and involvement, including appointing student representatives to working groups (for example on the Joint Honours working groups). A student representative also regularly attends the School Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Committee. • As a School we are refining our Board of Studies procedures. Enhancements to these procedures will improve the consideration given to changes at both School and College level. 	
	The review team recommends that the subject area's review of Tutor and Demonstrator provision remit is directed to ensure that Tutors and Demonstrators have good support in their work, are well trained, and have transparent processes	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of changes have been implemented for 2020-21: guidance for course organisers has been revised to provide greater clarity on what can be expected from tutor and demonstrators. This guidance has been accompanied by guidance on training and a course 	

6	<p>for appointment and allocation of work in their roles in line with the Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators.</p> <p>To this end the review team recommends that the review considers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarifying appointment processes • ensuring job descriptions are accurate and informative • monitoring Tutor and Demonstrator experience on courses • providing a structured approach to CPD • providing clear redress procedures in the case of Tutors and Demonstrators having issues with their management 	2021-22	<p>organiser checklist. Course organisers have also been required to attend a briefing, which includes recommendations for further support for tutors and demonstrators with the move to hybrid teaching.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All tutoring and demonstrating roles are advertised to all PGR students in the school. The revised guidance for course organisers emphasises the need to follow this process and information on the appointment process is available to PGR students via the School intranet: https://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/intranet/student-support/postgraduate-research-support/tutoring-and-demonstrating/tutoring-demonstrating-process • Training and CPD opportunities are advertised to tutor and demonstrators, including routes to professional accreditation via Advance HE: https://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/intranet/student-support/postgraduate-research-support/tutoring-and-demonstrating/tutoring-demonstrating-training • Current redress procedures for tutors and demonstrators are via the PGR committee. This committee includes PGR student representative and the academic-lead for tutoring and demonstrating. We have clarified existing redress procedures and will review tutor and demonstrator representation and redress procedures at a programme level in 2021-22. 	
7	<p>The review team recommends that the Subject Area investigates how to work more closely with College Admissions to ensure transparency and exchange of information to facilitate understanding recruitment patterns and how to achieve goals of greater diversity and rebalancing recruitment across the School.</p>	Ongoing 2021-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DPC and admissions advisors for Geography will meet with the Head of School, the Director of Professional Services and Head of Marketing and recruitment to discuss recruitment targets for 2021-22 and how best to influence College Admissions processes to achieve goals of diversifying and rebalancing recruitment. • DPC and admissions advisors to develop an action plan to ensure regular communication with school leadership and college admissions. • Covid-19, and in particular home-working, the challenges of recruitment and admissions in 2020-21, and the demands of moving to hybrid teaching have delayed more actions on developing a closer working relationship with College Admissions. 	
	<p>The review team recommends that the School works with students to better understand the</p>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A couple of colleagues are leading a PTAS research project in the School on Inclusive Student Cultures. The 	

8	challenges students face due to the social composition of the cohort and how to combat this.	2021-22	<p>research will provide an important evidence base for directing ongoing work on building a more inclusive programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPC, senior tutor, and honours and pre-honours coordinators will meet with Inclusive Student Cultures project team to identify complementary ways of working with student to understand and address the challenges arising from the social composition of the cohort. 	
9	The review team recommends that the review team for Joint Honours provision fully engage with Joint Honours students to identify the key issues of provision for Joint Honours students and work to better integrate them into the academic life of the subject area.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately after the Review the School established a Joint Honours working group led by the Senior Lecturer in Geographical Information Science. The remit of the working group is to define principles that define a successful joint degree, before reflecting on how our existing joint honours degrees measure up to these principles. The working group includes academic representatives, professional services staff in the teaching organisation and recruitment and marketing; and student representatives. The working group will report its recommendations to the School Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Committee and School Planning and Resource Committee. • As a programme we are interested in the opportunities that the Edinburgh Futures Institute may present for refocusing our Joint Honours provision. We will engage actively with opportunities to shape and contribute to EFI UG programmes as part of a strategic approach to reviewing our involvement in joint honours programmes. • Implementing the move to hybrid teaching has delayed on our ambitions for 2020-21. 	
10	The review team recommends that the School considers how to incorporate an element of Teaching Professional Development into the Annual Review Process.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the last year Annual Review Process forms have been revised at School level to emphasise teaching contributions. Feedback on the inclusion of Teaching Professional Development will be discussed at the Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Committee, with recommendations then made to SPARC. 	
11	The review team recommends that the subject area better communicates employability and personal development opportunities to students and incorporate more external employer engagements as well as greater support for	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the move to hybrid teaching has delayed on our ambitions for 2020-21. • In partnership with the Careers Service, Geography will pilot an alumni mentoring scheme in 2020-21. Targeting Year 3 students we will match current students with recent UoE Geography alumni, focusing on professional 	

	those interested in careers in academia earlier in the student lifecycle.	2021-	<p>development. The pilot will be implemented in January 2021 and involve 6-month mentoring arrangements. The pilot will be reviewed in July/August 2021 with the ambition to extend the scheme in 2021-22 across the programme, and other UGT programmes in the School.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with the careers service and GeogSoc we are organising a careers week in week 7 of semester 1, with a focus on internships; PGT applications and Geography careers, with presentations from current students and recent graduates. • Employability and professional development will be a key focus of our 2020-21 away day. Discussions will focus on how we implement changes for the coming year, and incorporate more employer engagement and explicit reflection on skills and professional development in all years of study. We will draw on the recently published curriculum toolkit: https://www.ed.ac.uk/employability/staff/curriculum-toolkit/elements and support from the careers service. • For 2021-22 we aim to have produced and implemented a series of expectations for each year of study that give students a clear guidance on the skills they have developed, and employability and personal development opportunities that they are expected to have engaged with. 	
12	The review team recommends that the School works with students to identify better ways to close the feedback loop with the wider student body.	Ongoing 2021-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have working with our SSLC to identify ways of closing the feedback loop, particularly with the move to hybrid teaching. • In semester 1 2020-21 we are piloting monthly town hall meetings for all geography students with a standing item reporting back key discussions raised at SSLC meetings. • We will review this approach in semester 2. We will also identify good practice within and beyond the university (e.g. via sparqs) to develop an action plan to close feedback loops with the wider student body. 	
13	The review team recommends that the School works with students to enhance peer assisted learning opportunities for Pre-Honours students (particularly second year students) to improve student engagement.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course organisers for Year 1 and Year 2 courses have been asked to work closely with the GeogPals leaders to design activities that support students' adjustment to hybrid learning and teaching. Course organisers and personal tutors have also been asked to promote GeogPals activities. 	

		2021-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has not been possible to run in person peer assisted learning activities. • A priority for the pre-honours coordinator in early 2021 will be to develop an action plan to improve student engagement with peer assisted learning opportunities for 2021-22. 	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	<p>The final report has been shared with the student representatives on the SSLC and the School EUSA undergraduate representative.</p> <p>Key commendations and recommendations have been shared with all students during online town hall and welcome meetings. These include specific meetings for Joint Honours and pathway students.</p>		
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review			