

Internal Periodic Review of: Politics and International Relations

Date of review: 3 and 4 February 2020

Date of 14 week response: 3 February 2021 (due 25 November 2020)

Date of year on response: Due 19 August 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	<p>The review team recommends that the School consider the following measures to improve the working conditions and support offered to Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a more robust training programme which includes topics such as facilitating tutorials, a formal mechanism to allow tutors to feedback on courses to enhance course content, enhanced marking guidance. - a Tutor Convenor role at School level to act as the key contact for the tutors with responsibility for academic development as well as a point of contact for HR and Administrative matters. - formal 'Guidance and Feedback' hours for tutors to include payment to enable tutors and students to discuss questions after tutorials and answer student emails. <p>The review team recognise there are implications around ensuring feedback hours are used for that purpose rather than as a pastoral support for students, which tutors are not trained to provide. In addition, recognition of the challenges around allocation of office space to carry out these feedback hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a review of contracts to ensure they adequately reflect appropriate time for marking and to consider any additional remuneration 	End of Sem 2, 2020/21	<p>As with all of these recommendations, plans for reviewing the working conditions and support offered to tutors have been affected by COVID-19. A new role was created in the SPS Directorate of a Director of Student Development who assists with the training and support of tutors; advises course organisers and heads of subject on their line-management of tutors; and reviews and develops tutor training and development (amongst other duties). Key measures taken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing an updated (paid) training programme for all GH tutors to prepare for the transition to online learning (10 hours) • Revising tutor activities and pay rates to reflect the shift to online/hybrid learning, which has included (for example) extending the marking time for shorter essays, as flagged by tutors. We also adopted a model where we pay tutors by number of students as opposed to number of groups. This allows for better flexibility if numbers unexpectedly increase within a tutorial group. <p>GH tutors have been consulted in the development of the above, and their feedback has been integrated into these processes and outcomes. There is a regular Q&A with tutors, and Tutor Teams channels are also being created for tutors to share best practice, ask questions, and receive information and guidance.</p>	Sem 1 2020/21, with some recommendations on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic

	<p>The review team recommends that a dedicated space is considered to enable tutors to do marking, to meet with students and to meet as a group to facilitate opportunities to share practice.</p> <p>The review team recommends that tutors are involved in the review process if this has not already been agreed.</p> <p>The review team recommends that the conclusions from the internal periodic review feed into the School review</p>		<p>Additionally, guidance has been included in Course Organiser handbooks on their responsibilities to tutors on their courses.</p> <p>Recommendations with regards to dedicated office space have been put on hold during the pandemic – with the default position of working from home, as well as wider and continuing estate constraints flagged in the report, as the University has indefinitely paused almost all estate development. At time of writing, 27/28 George Square has been reopened to accommodate PhD students – and our Building Review Team (BRT) did include PhD students, and the office allocation process has been discussed in consultation with the PG rep.</p>	
2	<p>The review team recommends the School review their assessment and feedback procedures and consider ways to streamline these procedures to ensure timely return of materials to students and to reduce the administrative burden associated with assessment. Such changes might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -using more efficient online software so that staff can directly access and mark course assessments once these have been submitted by the students. Alternative mechanisms such as Turnitin or systems developed by other Schools such as Physics and Astronomy could be considered. -a review of the moderation processes used for course work in the School with a view of making these processes less burdensome. For Honours modules marked by a single member of staff the School could consider returning course work before moderation to ensure timely feedback. 	End of academic year, 2021/22	<p>We welcome these recommendations. However, given significant workloads and wider circumstances this year for academic and professional services staff, we are putting on hold as many School initiatives as we can this academic year to focus on digital/hybrid teaching, and will return to review the question of online software in 2021/22. We are considering a pilot of Turnitin in 21/22, which is being discussed at our next School Infrastructure and Technology Strategy Group. Proposals to streamline and harmonize moderation processes are currently being considered in the SPS PG and UG Education Committees.</p>	
3	<p>Students suggested a number of ideas to improve community building and enhance communications. The review team recommends that the Subject Area and School consider these suggestions.</p> <p>The review team recommends that the Subject Area consider seeking opportunities such as the Course Choice Options sessions for community building.</p> <p>The review team recommends that the School consider ways in which current study and teaching</p>	End of academic year, 2021/22	<p>We will hold virtual course choice options fairs for PIR students in Semester 2 2020/21 to prepare for the coming academic year. We are also reviewing our course allocation process to better communicate to students how courses are allocated, and which courses are in high demand, as we face considerable numbers pressure given a higher student intake in 2020/21 that will have knock-on effects for Honours provision. In this regard, we have initiated discussions with the School teaching office staff which aim to better match course supply and student demand and clarify the processes and rationale for course</p>	

	spaces can be improved to enhance the student experience and consider where any unused spaces could be used as social spaces for students to come together. The Student User group should be involved in these discussions if not already invited to do so.		choice, including a 'traffic light' system for indicating which courses are in high, low and medium demand. As above, we will revisit recommendations about study/teaching spaces in 2021/22 onwards, should conditions allow, given the default position of working from home, and wider and continuing estates constraints. Our current study and community spaces (e.g. the café) in our main building CMB are not open due to COVID restrictions. Students can currently book a study space on campus through the University's SeatED booking system.	
4	The review team recommends that the School and Subject Area review communications to ensure that all students are aware of the location of the SSO office and the mechanisms to book appointments and rooms confidentially		In 2020/21, meetings with SSOs are online by default due to COVID (though some SSOs were available at specific times in CMB for anyone who is unable to meet online when restrictions allowed). The role of the SSO is set out in programme handbooks, with contact details and a statement about confidentiality, and is highlighted in induction meetings with Students, Course Organisers, Programme Directors and Personal Tutors. The school has also introduced systematic use of a functional email address for the SSO team, students can contact this address or their SSOs directly to request a meeting.	Completed
5	The review team strongly recommends that the School considers additional resources for Student Support in terms of office space and placement and additional Student Support Officer staffing resources as well as additional staffing resource to support the PIR SASO	On-going	Within student support, we have upgraded the staffing of the SSO team with the addition of a dedicated Head of Student Support and Enhancement to lead and line manage the team and have added a student support assistant to support routine day to day enquiries. Improved team working processes also better allow staff to cover for each other, allowing resources to focus on areas of most need. The School has included the hiring of an additional SSO as a business critical need in its plans for 21/22. Situated behind the reception desk, the student support office is visible to all those entering the building (in times when the building is staffed and open), with the student support assistant based at the reception desk. The workload of the administrative team of Subject Academic Support Officers (SASO) is looked at holistically with the team assisting and covering for each other as needed.	

6	<p>The review team recommends that the Timetabling Unit consider the allocation of teaching rooms across campus to reduce transition time between classes. This could have a positive impact on community building between students and staff by enabling and encouraging after-class conversations.</p> <p>The review team also recommends that the University Estates' Space Management Group are mindful of the factors noted above and the impact that the pressures on the School estate is having on the student and staff experience.</p>	End of academic year, 2021/22	<p>Recommendation 6 fits with the StEAP student travel-time project which was shaped by Scott Rosie and initiated earlier in the year. The project was due to report its findings and recommendations by the end of the calendar year. It will be delayed due to COVID challenges. Critically for the issue raised, the main focus will be in the challenges in the Central area, where travel-time constraints don't officially exist from a timetabling perspective (compared, say, to the issues experienced in moving between King's Building and the Central area). As this review notes, correctly, these issues have impact for many students. Key in this includes consideration of EDI issues (mobility factors across Central campus etc). The report, when available, will be supported and managed through the Central Area Programme Board and Space Strategy Group.</p> <p>It may also be worth reflecting that, given the necessity to deliver lectures online in 20/21, this mode of lecture delivery may become somewhat more common, in which case many travel-time issues would be mitigated. It is worth noting that some Schools (e.g. Mathematics) are considering this formally in their planning around AY2122 - a School who service large cohorts of students who have travel time issues.</p>	
7	<p>Whilst the review team acknowledges the pedagogical rationale for this approach, it recommends that the School and Subject Area consider their approach to lecture recording for equality and diversity reasons.</p>	End of academic year 2021/22	<p>All lectures have moved online in 2020/21 and are recorded for students. Some continued aspects of hybrid delivery will likely remain on the agenda for some courses in 2021/2 as well. The wider pedagogical issues are ones we will need to return to once the pandemic has been resolved.</p>	Sem 1, 2020/21
8	<p>It is recommended that the School and Subject Area review communication channels to enable collaboration in areas that are School wide issues to ensure that practice and enhancements are consistent.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Communication channels have been moved digitally in 2020/21, and have been improved by, for example, the creation of Teams groups to respond to issues quickly. In teaching, the subject area is represented through regular meetings of School leadership and HoSAs; as well as the School Undergraduate Teaching Committee and Board of Studies, with representatives from each subject area, as well as the Learning & Teaching Directorate. From Jan 2021 for three years, PIR will make a significant contribution to School teaching leadership roles – with PIR staff taking up positions of Deputy Director of Learning and Teaching ; Director of Undergraduate Programmes and Director of Postgraduate Taught Programmes.</p>	

9	The review team recommends that the Subject Area continue to diversify their curriculum and build on the good work that has been done to decolonise and expand course offerings and course reading lists.	Ongoing	This work is ongoing and is a core principle of our pre-honours curriculum reform (first course delivery in 2021/2), which aims to embed intersectionality and inclusion at the heart of our teaching practice. Our new courses are being designed over the academic year 2020/21 – led by our Senior Teaching Fellows in consultation with the PIR Teaching Committee - with the aim to mainstream considerations of power and (in)equality throughout the substantive material; and to diversify reading lists.	
10	The review team recommends the Subject Area reviews the format and content of the fundamentals course.	End of academic year 2021/22	The Fundamentals course was put on hold in 2020/21 due to COVID-19. It will be reviewed from 2021/22 as part of our wider Politics and International Relations curriculum reforms, which will focus on further embedding skills training and career development within our pre-honours courses.	
11	The review team recommends that the coursework extension policy is reviewed to consider and reflect on the negative impact the process is having on feedback timelines and staff workload/ time management across the board.	1 year	<p>The coursework extension policy was reviewed in 2019/20 to incorporate the incoming Extensions and Special Circumstances Services (ESC), which launched in September 2020. This service reviews and approve/reject course work extension requests made by students through an online system. A holistic review of the policy has been agreed from January 2021, as intuitional statistics will become available through the service to support a policy review. This will be undertaken by Academic Services and the ESC Service.</p> <p>The new service standardises extensions, as students are only be able to apply for a maximum number of days. It is the school and Course Organiser who decide if an extension is available and, if so, the timeframe (up to seven days). No late applications will be accepted but special circumstances can be applied for if the criteria is met.</p>	20/21
12	The review team recommends that the School consider ways in which additional financial assistance and support could be provided, e.g. provision of space. In addition, access to relevant Learn pages to be granted to the leaders.	5-10 years	<p>Any recommendations with regards to the provision of space have been put on hold during the pandemic – with the default position of working from home, as well as wider and continuing estate constraints flagged in the report, as the University has indefinitely paused almost all estate development.</p> <p>In PIR, we have set up access for course organisers across relevant Learn pages, to ensure that we can share best practice, especially as we make the transition to online/hybrid</p>	

			learning. This has been particularly effective and helpful at pre-Honours level, where we have significant numbers pressure.	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	The outcomes of the review and the recommendations were shared and discussed with student representatives through our Staff-Student Liaison committee held in November 2020.		
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review			