

**Internal Periodic Review of:** Politics and International Relations

**Date of review:** 3 and 4 February 2020

**Date of 14 week response:**

**Date of year on response:** August 2021

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.

Recommendation no	Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	<p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School consider the following measures to improve the working conditions and support offered to Tutors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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.</li> <li>- 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.</li> <li>- formal 'Guidance and Feedback' hours for tutors to include payment to enable tutors and students to discuss questions after tutorials and answer student emails.</li> </ul> <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"> <li>- a review of contracts to ensure they adequately reflect appropriate time for marking and to consider any additional remuneration</li> </ul>	End of <b>Sem 2, 2021/22</b>	<p>As with all of these recommendations, plans for reviewing the working conditions and support offered to tutors have been affected by COVID-19.</p> <p>The School now offers a new course for all of our postgraduate tutors: Principles and Practice of Higher Education. Richard Brodie (Social Policy) convenes this course and is now the central contact point for tutoring in the School. The School will consider in future if this course should be mandatory for all postgraduate researchers as part of their career development.</p> <p>The School is currently considering the wider issue of how we recruit, train and manage our postgraduate tutors. The PIR Co-Directors of Undergraduate Teaching are drawing together a paper on how we might learn from other institutions with similarly large cohorts.</p> <p>Recommendations with regards to dedicated office space have once again been put on hold due the pandemic.</p>	Sem 1 2021/22, with some recommendations on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic

	<p>The review team <b>recommends</b> 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 <b>recommends</b> that tutors are involved in the review process if this has not already been agreed.</p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the conclusions from the internal periodic review feed into the School review</p>			
2	<p>The review team <b>recommends</b> 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> <p>-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.</p> <p>-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.</p>	End of academic year, 2021/22	<p>A pilot of Turnitin in the School will begin in January 2022.</p> <p>Processes of moderation have now been harmonised at the UG and PG level.</p>	Ongoing
3	<p>Students suggested a number of ideas to improve community building and enhance communications. The review team <b>recommends</b> that the Subject Area and School consider these suggestions.</p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the Subject Area consider seeking opportunities such as the Course Choice Options sessions for community building.</p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School consider ways in which current study and teaching</p>	End of academic year, 2021/22	<p>Due to continuing pandemic restrictions, we will hold a virtual course options fair in 2021/22.</p> <p>Continuing restrictions also preclude consideration of further in-person community building events. We look forward to engaging further with this when guidance about in-person events is clearer.</p>	Ongoing

	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.			
4	The review team <b>recommends</b> 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		We introduced the SSOs to new students at our PIR Welcome Meeting and outlined how students could make an appointment. The greater use of online meetings has afforded students another means to have confidential meetings with our SSOs when they require them.	Ongoing
5	The review team <b>strongly recommends</b> 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		This will be considered alongside a wider review of space when the School returns gradually to campus in September 2021.	Ongoing
6	The review team <b>recommends</b> 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.  The review team also <b>recommends</b> 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.	End of academic year, 2021/22	This will be considered alongside a wider review of space when the School returns gradually to campus in September 2021.	Ongoing
7	Whilst the review team acknowledges the pedagogical rationale for this approach, it <b>recommends</b> that the School and Subject Area consider their approach to lecture recording for equality and diversity reasons.	End of academic year 2021/22	All lectures will now be recorded by default as a result of pandemic restrictions.	Sem 1, 2020/21
8	It is <b>recommended</b> that the School and Subject Area review communication channels to enable collaboration in areas that are School wide issues to	Ongoing	PIR is making a significant contribution to School teaching leadership roles – with PIR staff taking up positions of Deputy Director of Learning and Teaching (Meryl Kenny); Director of	Ongoing

	ensure that practice and enhancements are consistent.		Undergraduate Programmes (Andrea Birdsall); and Director of Postgraduate Taught Programmes (Kate Wright).  The School and subject area are also currently carrying out governance reviews that will lead to changes in 2022. The process to recruit a new Head of PIR and Head of School is ongoing.	
9	The review team <b>recommends</b> that the Subject Area continue to diversify their curriculum and build on the good work that has been done to decolonize and expand course offerings and course reading lists.	Ongoing	Our new courses (PIR 1a and PIR 1b) will run for the first time this year and have been 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.	New curriculum in place by 2023/24
10	The review team <b>recommends</b> 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. We currently have no plans to reintroduce it.	Consider again for year 2022/23
11	The review team <b>recommends</b> 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	<b>Response from Sarah McAllister, Head of Student Support Operations:</b>  Since the implementation of the ESC Service there is a misconception we are the creators of policy in relation to coursework extensions and special circumstances. We process coursework extensions based on the Taught Assessment Regulation Policy set out and agreed by Academic Policy and Regulation Committee (APRC). The committee agreed a number of mitigating policy changes to support students as a result of Covid-19 in 20/21 which includes automatic approval for coursework extensions and a reduction in evidence requirements for special circumstances. As a result, the service processed over 65,000 coursework extensions and 7,000 special circumstance applications on behalf of schools in 20/21. There was less than a 1% rejection rate for coursework extensions.  Currently, for 21/22 we will revert to the standard 19/20 Taught Assessment Regulations. Self certification for coursework extensions still exists, however, evidence requirements for special circumstances will return. The service	20/21

			<p>asked APRC in January 2020 for a review of the current regulations and the impact it was having on both schools and the service in terms of workload. This also included benchmarking where we are an outlier in terms of use of coursework extensions and levels of evidence required. The sector is more focused on special circumstances and a stronger level of evidence. We were advised to wait for a full year of service. I then approached APRC again in June 2021 in an attempt to re-introduce the conversation as Colleges were raising the same concerns as the service and an extra meeting was held with some changes made to strengthen the policy and allow schools to use mechanisms to support students with special circumstances outwith the Board of Examiners. The conversation will continue into 21/22 to ensure our policy and systems are not creating workload but supporting both students and staff but unlikely to see fundamental change before 22/23. We have asked Academic Services to ensure the changes to the Taught Assessment Regulations are very clearly communicated as we have some students who have only experienced the mitigation policies and perhaps used automatic coursework extensions as a time management tool.</p> <p>Schools still decide on the availability and length (up to seven days) for an coursework extensions for courses. The outlier are those with disability profiles that include additional time to complete course work.</p>	
12	The review team <b>recommends</b> 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	Any recommendations with regards to the provision of space have been <b>put on hold</b> 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.	Ongoing
	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	The whole subject area very much appreciated the review process. Much of the work has been put on hold due to the pandemic, but we look forward to engaging more fully with these recommendations when we fully return to in-person teaching and events.		