

The University of Edinburgh
Internal Periodic Review 2019/20
14 week response report

Internal Periodic Review of: Social Policy

Date of review: 10-11 February 2020; SQAC approval 21 May 2020

Date of 14 week response: 27 August 2020, received 23 November 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.

Rec 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 Schools' review of Tutors and Demonstrators is in line with the University.</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 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>	Ongoing	<p>The school has established a new role of Director of Student Development whose remit covers the defining the work of tutors and demonstrators in the school (as these posts are typically occupied by the PGR students in the school). The Director of Student Development is an active member of the learning and Teaching Directorate.</p> <p>The review itself is a continuous and ongoing process (somewhat delayed by the pandemic) and tutors are involved in the process. The school always mindful of maintaining alignment with University guidance and processes.</p> <p>Space requirements will be reviewed as pandemic conditions allow.</p>	
2	<p>The review team recommends that the Subject Area review and reflect on feedback provided to students to ensure it is effective, transparent, useful and timely.</p> <p>The team also recommends that the Subject Area consider ways to make exam feedback more useful and meaningful.</p>	end 2020	<p>These items have been remitted for discussion at the School Education Committee in semester 1, 2020-2021. We are mindful of the extent to which both assessment and feedback may need to change in the light of revised arrangements for course delivery as a result of Covid-19.</p>	
3	<p>The review team recommends that the Subject Area and School consider approaches to improve community building and enhance communications</p>	September 2020 and continuing	<p>As of August 2020, we have made arrangements for online community-building through semester 1 at programme level, following School and University guidance. Further initiatives will follow, if necessarily in accordance with the changing parameters set by adaptation to Covid-19.</p>	

4	<p>It is recommended that the Subject Area consider approaches to strengthen the effectiveness of the School Education Committee.</p> <p>In addition, the review team recommends that the Subject Area consider using the Education Committee to systematically consider how to use staff research interests to reflect on possible diversity topics, especially for new members of staff who may have relevant research interests.</p> <p>The review team recommends that the Subject Area continues with planned changes and consider the topic-based suggestions</p>	end 2020 and continuing	<p>Head of Subject Area (HoSA) and Director of Undergraduate Teaching (DUGT) will conduct an initially informal review of the membership and operation of Education Committee, with a view to making recommendations to the Subject Area early in semester 1. Future membership will include at least one postgraduate tutor.</p> <p>Our Research Director will collate a list of diversity topics addressed by current research in the SA, for consideration by Education Committee.</p> <p>Our commitment to curriculum diversity will be made explicit in the remit of a configured Education Committee. The Committee will instigate a subject-wide discussion of diversity issues through academic session 2020-21.</p>	
5	<p>Therefore the review team recommends that the School and Subject Area review the award application details on what has already been agreed and use this as a starting point to further enhance diversity and/or improve community.</p>	end 2020	<p>Similarly, we will remit consideration of the Athena Swan bronze award to Education Committee, and to the wider Subject group as appropriate.</p>	
6	<p>The review team recommends that the School considers upgrading administrative support structures to 1 FTE to reflect the increase in staffing in the Subject Area.</p>		<p>The workload of the administrative team of Subject Academic Support Offices (SASO) is looked at holistically. As the Social Policy SASO is 0.6, she has not been given any additional project work or centre support to balance out the workload.</p> <p>Within student support, we have upgraded the administrative support with the addition of a dedicated line manager and student support assistant. The establishment of the new Extensions and Special Circumstances team will also take on some of the day to day tasks previously support by the Student Support Officers (SSOs). Improved team working processes also better allow staff to cover for each other, allowing resources to focus on areas of most need.</p>	January 2020
7	<p>In addition, 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.</p>	September 2020	<p>In response to Covid-19, all communication with SSOs now takes place online, with in-person pre-booked appointments available should the student require. The role of the SSO is set out in programme handbooks, with contact details and a statement about confidentiality, and highlighted in induction</p>	September 2020

			<p>meetings with Course Organisers, Programme Directors and Personal Tutors.</p> <p>As part of the reception desk, the student support office is visible to all those entering the building, with the student support assistant based at the reception desk. There has been an established in-person presence in the office since the building re-opened for welcome week.</p>	
8	<p>The review team recommends that the School consider ways in which current study and teaching 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.</p>	Ongoing	<p>In response to Covid-19, all study space and student space is considered on a University-wide basis and students are required to use the centrally managed spaces.</p>	
9	<p>The review team recommends that the Timetabling Unit consider the allocation of teaching rooms across campus to reduce transition time between classes.</p> <p>The review team also recommends that the University Estates 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>	Ongoing	<p>Recommendation 9 fits with the StEAP student travel-time project currently being worked on. The project is due to report its findings and recommendations by the end of the calendar year. However, its main focus will be on the challenges in the Central area, where travel-time constraints don't officially exist from a timetabling perspective, but do in reality for many students.</p> <p>The biggest official travel constraint burden, namely that between Central-KB, will be largely mitigated by the delivery of the KB Nucleus and hopefully contribute to ongoing reduction of travel requirements. It may be that given the necessity to deliver lectures online in 20/21, online lecture delivery becomes more of the norm, in which case many travel-time issues would be mitigated.</p> <p>The review will be noted at the University Estates' Space Management Group.</p>	
10	<p>The review team recommends that the School and Subject Area consider succession planning and are mindful of the reliance on a small number of people during the interim period.</p>	end 2020-21	<p>A new HoSA has now been in post for a month and is actively considering succession planning.</p> <p>As noted in our submission, the Subject Area has 35 members of staff: 6 at grade 10, of whom 5 have served or are serving as HoSA, and 13 at grade 9. We have no reason to think that succession will present any significant or unusual problem three years from now. In the course of session 2020-21 the Subject Area will consider whether to</p>	

			appoint a Depute (and prospective) HoSA at least one year before succession becomes due.	
11	<p>The review team recommends that the School consider ways in which additional financial assistance could be provided for the PPALS scheme.</p> <p>It is recommended that the School consider ways in which additional financial assistance could be provided to the Social Policy Student Society support events and activities.</p>	end 2020-21	<p>The Subject Area has identified budget lines to support student initiatives. In the light of Covid-19, the greater challenge is to identify what sort of initiatives might be possible.</p> <p>As of September 2020, the School's Student Support Office holds a UG student support fund, to support PPALS and other student experience initiatives.</p> <p>A fund to support student initiated activities has also been established in the Student Development Office</p>	
12	It is recommended that the Subject Area review course content with partner institutions.	March 2021	This issue has been remitted to the Junior Year Abroad coordinator to review, initially to establish the scope and nature of any problem, and to report to Education Committee. That said, it may be difficult to move quickly on this: the shape of the problem is likely to be as unclear as much else is right now, given uncertainty about the nature of provision in different countries, its mode of delivery and the possibility or otherwise of international travel.	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	A paragraph of explanation has been inserted into course and programme handbooks for all undergraduate students in the Subject Area.		
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review			