

The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review

Year-on response report

Internal Periodic Review of: Economics
Date of review: 26-10-2022
Date of 14 week response: 09-05-2023
Date of year on response: 31-07-2024

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>Recruitment: The review team recommend that the School employ ten additional academic staff members to address the current student:staff ratio which is currently below the sector-wide ratio for Economics</p>	<p>This is an ongoing issue, so no specific time frame.</p>	<p>College 14-week & Year-on response: “There are well established processes within the College that enable Schools to prepare evidence-based proposals for staffing within the standard planning rounds including provision of comparator data from within the College as well as support to provide sector comparisons on request from the Head of School or Director of Professional Services. The Head of School and Director of Professional Services share the responsibility and accountability for the preparation of the appropriate business cases and funding rationales for each staff appointment and are routinely guided and advised by the College Registrar in how best to approach planning proposals. Staffing levels within each School are carefully considered throughout the year and are based on a broad range of complex factors that extend beyond the learning and teaching provision and need to be viewed in that wider context. There are also mechanisms using the now well-established College Workload Allocation Tariffs for academic staff and the College WAM Forum to enable Schools to raise broader concerns about staff workloads and, where necessary, escalate issues via the College People Committee.”</p> <p>School response: Extensive staff time and other resources were devoted to the process of hiring of Lecturers in 2022-23 and 2023-24 in what appears to be a seller’s market. Unfortunately, in 2022-23, none of the posts were filled and so 7 further Early Career Researchers (3-year posts) were hired to address the School’s immediate teaching needs. So far, in 2023-24, we have made offers to 1 chair candidate, 4 readership candidates and 7 lecturer candidates and managed to recruit 6 lecturers, with the remaining positions filled by 3 Early Career Researchers. The School is extremely thankful for the support it received from College (HR Partner, Head of HR, Head of College and Registrar) to the School for this process. However, the issue has not been successfully resolved, despite the unwavering support from College. Looking ahead, we are concerned that any restrictions on hiring resulting from the budget settlement for the next academic year will further exacerbate the issue.</p>	

2	<p>Recruitment: The review team recommend that the timings of the economics job market are accounted for within the planning/recruitment policy, to ensure that the School can hire quality academics for long-term posts.</p>	AY 2023-24 / Ongoing	<p>College 14-week and Year-on response: “The University has returned to a five-year planning cycle and this is able to accommodate and support a range of recruitment timelines once business cases for staffing appointments have been approved. The Head of School and Director of Professional Services have discussed their recruitment plans and timelines with the Head of College and this recommendation has been addressed in those discussions.”</p> <p>School Response: The School of Economics does understand the vagaries of the Economics Job Market. See the College Response. College has been very supportive of the School’s plans and timelines for hiring.</p>	2023/24
3	<p>Assessment & Feedback: The review team recommend that the School review methods of providing feedback to ensure consistency across courses and programmes</p>	Ongoing	<p>The School has instituted a 16-calendar day deadline for the return of marks and feedback for all UG Honours coursework assignments, and have reformed our monitoring processes to ensure that this deadline is met. In Semester 1 of the 23/24 academic year, over 80% of the School’s UG coursework deadlines met this deadline for the return of marks and feedback to students – (80% averaged across the total number of assignments or 81% averaged across the total number of student submissions).</p> <p>Course organisers have been asked to review assessment and feedback practices for all assessments to ensure consistency with the College’s Minimum Standards for Assessment Guidance and Feedback (and by implication, consistency with the University’s Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities).</p> <p>Following the pilot of the Gradescope system mentioned in our 14-week reply, the School has now adopted Gradescope to facilitate the marking of all degree exams. While there were some difficulties with the implementation of Gradescope, this tool should, in principle, allow the School to expand the volume of feedback provided to students on their exam performance.</p> <p>The School has undertaken to provide information to students on their relative performance on each course by indicating each student’s rank on the basis of the final mark distribution and the course enrolment.</p> <p>The Undergraduate Teaching Committee updated the School’s policy on free-riding in group work to clarify the possible outcomes following an investigation. It also introduced guidance on which categories of assessment students would be permitted extensions and extra-time adjustments. This will allow the School to apply a systematic approach to the implementation of the University’s policies on this issue</p>	
4	<p>Tutor training: The review team recommend that the School develop their</p>	September 2024	<p>The Tutor Mentor, the Director of PGR programmes the Director of PGT programmes and the Undergraduate Teaching Committee explored training and support provision for tutors taking account of the panel’s suggestions. They devised a new induction and</p>	September 2024

	approach to tutor training in order to best support colleagues in their development		<p>training programme to address administrative and academic aspects of the tutoring role in a manner consistent with the 'Policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators'. The new programme will be introduced in September 2024.</p> <p>Presently, there are some concerns over the resourcing of the training – tutors need to be compensated for the time devoted to training but this restricts the already limited amount of teaching that they can be asked to undertake. This makes us inclined to focus on the most directly relevant subject-specific material (rather than centrally provided support).</p>	
5	<p>Undergraduate Programme Enhancement: The review team recommend that the School undertake a holistic programme review of learning outcomes and the mapping of assessment to outcomes; formative vs summative assessment; and synergy of assessment and learning outcomes across programmes and courses.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Undergraduate Course Organisers have been asked to ensure that assessments address and map to learning outcomes for AY 2024-25 as part of the College's drive for Minimum Standards for Assessment Guidance and Feedback.</p> <p>A programme level review will be undertaken by the Teaching Committee (in preparation for the programme structure changes required to meet the implementation of the Curriculum Transformation Programme) once course level learning outcomes have been clarified.</p> <p>The Teaching Committee has discussed the implications of CTP proposals for programme structure. However, until the requirements of CTP are finalised it seems inefficient to devote time to this recommendation.</p>	
6	<p>Graduate Attributes: Connected to a holistic programme enhancement review, the review team recommend that the School continue to embed graduate attributes/ employability skills in programme design and increase awareness of these attributes and skills amongst students.</p>	Ongoing (2024-25? See next item.)	<p>Programme Directors and Teaching Committees at all levels will explore ways to embed graduate attributes / employability skills and raise awareness of amongst students. However, until the requirements of CTP are finalised it seems inefficient to devote time to this recommendation.</p>	
7	<p>Graduate Attributes: The review team recommend that the phrase 'graduate attributes' is reviewed by the University with a view to creating a term that is more meaningful to students.</p>	Ongoing (2024-25?)	<p>The future use, content and presentation of the University Graduate Attributes Framework is considered by the Future Skills Workstream (https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/CurriculumTransformation/SitePages/Workstreams-Overview.aspx). This is in the context of looking at how best to support the development of these skills and attributes at a programme level, across multiple courses alongside co-curricular learning and support.</p> <p>Curriculum Transformation Project Response:</p>	

			<p>“The Future Skills workstream is part of our Curriculum Transformation Project. This group has produced a draft skills statement and framework that was discussed at October’s CTP Board meeting and is attached. This was well received.</p> <p>The next phase of the Future Skills workstream will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and testing at School level. • Connecting with parallel work being carried out on programme and course design. • Developing the framework to help support programme level learning and assessment. • Testing and refining the language of the draft skills statement. <p>During the next phase of the Future Skills workstream’s work, we are keen to involve a broader spectrum of colleagues from across the University. This includes programmes that have a strong existing emphasis on skills development, as well as programmes in which skills development has less emphasis. We recently wrote to Heads of School asking for suggestions of colleagues to join the Future Skills workstream. “</p>	
8	<p>Student Voice: The review team recommend that the School continue to develop its relationship with the Student Voice and enhances the mechanisms for communication between staff and students.</p>	2023-24 / ongoing	<p>The School’s Student Experience and Student Wellbeing and Advice teams have used the recent changes to the Student Support model as a springboard for introduction / expansion of the following provisions / developments to address this recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohort events – our cohort leads organise specific events for students to learn skills or create community. Student feedback and attendance is recorded at all of these events. We are keen to record how these events are perceived, and to find out how many of the students use such events. • (Social) Events with staff and students in attendance (Burns Night, PG welcome meal etc) allowing students to connect with teaching staff away from the classroom. • SSLC’s and mid/end course survey feedback from students shared with representatives. Representatives then have the opportunity to discuss the feedback from peers with teaching staff to address highlighted areas. • All students have a named Student Advisor (SA) and meet with them during welcome week. SAs proactively monitor students and have a greater opportunity to check in and hear what is going on with students than the previous PT model. • Students are able to book appointments to speak to their SA when they feel they need to. • Our calendar of events takes into account (historic) information from SA’s on ‘hot topics’ at specific points of the year to plan events/workshops/sessions to get ahead of issues before they arise. 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Student Experience team has developed a stronger working relationship with Econ Society to collaborate on their events and use their interaction with students to promote our offering. • Meetings are held with all peer support and society position holders before summer to better connect, plan and budget for the year ahead. • The Student Experience team have become individuals that students can recognise and go to for the planning of these events as well as receiving their communications throughout the year. • There have been improvements to alumni connections for student events such as guest speakers, careers fair attendees and alumni mixer attendees. • Social media and SharePoint have been overhauled to communicate better with students so they aren't bombarded with emails too often and from multiple sources. • A local case management system is used to record active students of concern and prevent students from needing to share their information multiple times to different staff. 	
9	<p>Resource: The review team recommend that the University invest in an online course enrolment system to alleviate pressure on staff resource and to improve the student experience</p>	<p>No time frame available.</p>	<p>University (Student Systems) 14-week on Response: “Work towards the introduction of online course enrolment is underway through the Student Lifecycle Management Group. ... We are working towards this on an incremental basis starting with understanding how we structure our data and business rules (rules for how outside courses are managed). Steps taking place in semester 2 of this academic year are to update DPT’s (Degree Programme Tables). Analysis has shown many courses which are already full with students where the course is mandatory, continue to be part of many DPT’s where students have no possibility of a place. This is raising the expectations for students leading to disappointment and increased administrative load for staff as they need to manage the student and find them an alternative which can be very time consuming as the credits need to fit in a particular space within the timetable and we provide no easy way of checking this.”</p> <p>University (Student Systems) 1-year-on Response: “ We are sharing a report with staff on Monday who are currently working to update their DPTs through to mid-April. The intention of this is to remove those courses where students will not get a place from DPTs to remove the element of ‘false choice’.</p> <p>With regard the longer term goal around an online course enrolment system. Much of the complexity in this is not in relation to the system itself, but in understanding the rules that Schools put in place, which students should get priority on courses, standardising timescales across the institution, use of quotas etc. The course enrolment group is working to set out and agree shared timescales for the 2024/5 academic year, we are also looking at introducing a bulk enrolment tool in our student</p>	

			<p>record system for staff use. As a pre-step to an enrolment system for students this will help us to identify and work through the underlying issues that need to be addressed before this can be introduced.</p> <p>As we are a small group working on incremental improvements without official resource allocation I cannot give a timescale for this work.”</p> <p>School comment on Student Systems Response: Work on this recommendation is ongoing. No time frame is available for the reasons explained above.</p>	
10	<p>Resource: The review team recommend that the University extend the scale of the student study Hub space, given the number of students, level of demand and intensive use of the current Hub provision</p>	Ongoing	<p>Awaiting College Decision on South College Street before constructing response:</p> <p>College 14-week response: “The management of estate and space allocation within the College is overseen by the Head of College and College Registrar and we understand that the Head of School has been able to achieve a successful resolution to this particular recommendation.”</p> <p>School comment on College 14-week Response: We negotiated with another School for our Student Support team to use the space adjacent to our UG student Hub (40 George Square Floor 5) and the College is allowing us to use the old EUSA shop (in 40 George Square) to house our growing numbers of PGT students (which is great, thank you) but we have around 1,000 undergraduate students and the space allocated could barely house one 10th of that number. We would need a larger UG student Hub than the one we have for successful resolution.</p> <p>College Year-on Response: “The College and School are in detailed discussion with colleagues in Estates to explore the most optimal solution for the School following the decant from 40 George Square in 2024/25. At the time of writing a new project board has been established to oversee this decant which will impact a number of Schools in CAHSS. The hope is that we will be able to deliver a solution that allows the School to build on the successful community developed through the student hub and bring together as much of the School, and its teaching, into a single location. Plans are still at an early stage of development and will be consulted on with the wider School community during semester two of 2023/24.”</p> <p>School Comment on College Year-on Response: We welcome the College’s involvement in discussions on bringing together the School’s Honours students and teaching into a single location for 2024/25. We would highlight the importance both (i) of maintaining a single subject-specific site for academic staff and PGR students and (ii) of providing dedicated study, social, support and teaching space for student on both PGT and the UG programmes. We would hope that the move of the UG student hub from 40 George</p>	

			Square to a new location results in improved facilities for the School's UG Student Hub in terms of space and equipment.	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	Once the Review Panel's report is approved and published on the University (Academic Service) website, a link to the report will be placed on the Student SharePoint Hub. The Report will be discussed formally at the next available Student Staff Liaison Committee (at each level of provision).		
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review	See responses above		