

The University of Manchester

Teaching and Learning Group

Annual Teaching and Learning Report 2009-10

Introduction

- 1 This is the fourth year of operation of the University's procedure for the review of its teaching and learning framework. The review is designed to enable institutional oversight of:
 - The completeness and effectiveness, and where necessary the further development, of strategies, policies, procedures and structures to support teaching and learning.
 - The full and effective implementation of procedures for: programme approval and amendment, institutional approval, annual monitoring, periodic review, collaborative review, and external examining.
 - Further development of approaches to enhancing the quality of provision.
- 2 Each Faculty completed a quality assurance pro-forma and prepared an annual evaluation for 2009-10. These are included as Appendix 6 and matters arising from the reports can be discussed at the special meeting of the Teaching and Learning Group. Matters requiring an institutional response are detailed in the enclosed **draft** action plan, which TLG is asked to agree subject to any additional actions following discussion at the special meeting. The evaluations were also included in each Faculty's submission for the Operational and Performance Reviews as conducted by the President and her senior colleagues in October and November 2010.
- 3 Examples of innovations highlighted in the Faculty evaluations will be posted on the Manchester Forums at:
<http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/enhancement/>

Institutional context

- 4 The University continues to implement recommendations arising from the 2007-08 Review of Teaching and Learning (e.g. the personalised learning policy) and to undertake the subsequent development of new policies (e.g. Policy on Feedback to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students). In addition, various reviews have either been completed or are in progress as summarised below:

Review of arrangements for the provision of timetabled space for teaching purposes across the University

A Taskforce was established in the autumn of 2009 to review current arrangements for the provision of timetabled space for teaching purposes across the University. The Taskforce was chaired by the Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) and reported to the Senior Executive Team in June 2010. The Review considered current central and local

arrangements for the booking of teaching spaces, noting that the annual process of room allocation is a large exercise resulting in significant manual intervention and application of a 'best fit' process, and that there is a perception within Schools that the timetabling process is not sufficiently "customer-oriented". The Taskforce was particularly concerned to receive feedback from students of rooms not being large enough for class sizes, frequent timetable clashes for option units, and the need to travel from one end of the campus to another between lectures. The full report can be found at <http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/medialibrary/tlao/tlg/Timetabled%20space%20report.pdf>.

A Timetabling and Shared Learning Spaces Group has been established to take forward the Taskforce's recommendations for improvement and to make recommendations regarding the allocation of the annual refurbishment budget for teaching spaces. The Group is also overseeing a 'proof of concept' project to explore how the University can get the best out of Scientia's software for scheduling teaching activities and booking rooms. This will inform the development of a project plan for the University-wide roll out of Scientia software enabling the University to adopt new and best practice in the area of scheduling and room booking

Portfolio Review Working Group

This group met during 2009-10 and has provided Faculties and Schools with mechanisms to undertake portfolio review and to determine measurable indicators for the sustainability of programmes.

Degree Regulations and Assessment Policies Group

The *Assessment and Feedback Working Group* was disbanded (after it brought forward the draft Feedback to Students Policy) as there was felt to be overlap between it and the *Credit Framework Review Working Group* (which was also disbanded). These areas have been brought together under the aegis of the *Degree Regulations Review Working Group*.

A plan of work has been developed and initial principles to inform a revised set of degree regulations were considered by Senate in June 2010. An initial report from the working group, including a draft set of revised regulations, will be subject to staff and student consultation this winter. The Group will then turn its attention to other assessment and related matters.

University College Taskforce

The October 2010 meeting of Senate agreed to the establishment of a University College Taskforce. This group, to be chaired by the Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) and supported by the TLSO, will undertake a detailed evaluation of the concept of a *University College*. The Senate paper proposes a *University College* as a vehicle with which to deliver transformational change within the curriculum. The University College would champion units which contribute to the Manchester Matrix and which address the challenges facing modern society (e.g. poverty and disease, climate change). The detail (including the management framework, commissioning of units, timetabling, development of core

skills, student and employer engagement) will be considered by the Taskforce and presented to Senate in due course.

Plagiarism working group

In September 2010, the Teaching and Learning Group established a working group to review current arrangements for the detection and prevention of plagiarism and to make recommendations for improvements. The group is establishing an understanding of current arrangements and will then bring forward recommendations for improvements in the following areas: penalties for plagiarism, mechanisms for dealing with plagiarism, institutional strategy, support and guidance for staff, advice and guidance for students.

Student communications project

Communication in such a large institution is a challenge and is one of the recurring issues raised by students in feedback questionnaires. Therefore in 2010 the Registrar and Secretary agreed to the establishment of a two year project to explore how communication with students can be improved across the University. The post of Student Communications Officer has been created in the Directorate of Communications, Media and Public relations and the post holder is currently working with a range of staff and members of the UMSU Executive to bring forward recommendations. One recommendation already discussed with the Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) is the proposed development of a 'Student Charter' or similar document.

- 5 We noted last year that it will take time before some of the above developments impact directly upon the student experience and the University's standing in the National Student Survey (NSS). Although the overall satisfaction rating in the NSS has increased to 79% this year (from 77% in 2009) and although this masks excellent results in some subject areas, the University's NSS results continue to be very disappointing. Overall, the survey places the University of Manchester last in the Russell Group. This is wholly inconsistent with the world-class aspirations of the University. Performance in the NSS has therefore been scrutinised in this year's Operational Performance Reviews with each Faculty having action plans in place.
- 6 The problems with Campus Solutions, as reported last year, have been resolved via a concerted programme of upgrades, business improvement projects and specific actions to address performance issues.
- 7 This year's review of the teaching and learning framework therefore takes place against an institutional backdrop of continuing and significant activity to improve teaching, learning and the student experience. One of the challenges for the University is to therefore ensure the full implementation of the recommendations arising from the various reviews. This is ever more important given the forthcoming national changes to the higher education sector. It is also noted that the University's Institutional Audit will take place in March and April 2011.

Draft action plan

- 8 The Faculty annual evaluations are included as Appendix 6 to this report. Matters requiring University-wide action are included in the draft action plan which is included as Appendix 7. The action plan also contains matters which have arisen during the 2009-10 academic year via discussions between the TLSO and Faculty colleagues, preparations for the QAA Overseas Audit of Singapore and the QAA Institutional Audit, and consideration of common themes arising from External Examiner reports and periodic review reports.

Strategic matters for consideration by TLG

- 9 In addition to considering the Faculty reports attached to this document, TLG is asked to consider the below areas which are suggested as requiring further strategic consideration.

Encouraging, assessing and rewarding excellent teaching

- 10 At last year's meeting, we considered how we can better promote the profile of teaching and learning within the University. We undertook to consider metrics which could be used to determine the quality of teaching but the volume of other activity has meant that the TLSO has not yet taken this forward. Given national developments, it is particularly timely to review this discussion.
- 11 *TLG is asked to consider how we assess the quality of teaching in order to recognise and reward excellence and also to identify any problems requiring training and support.*

Do we wish to develop a range of metrics for measuring teaching quality and, if so, what might these look like?

To aid this discussion, members may wish to consider the 'indicators of teaching performance' (enclosed as Appendix 8) developed by Queen Mary, University of London as an outcome of a Leadership Foundation project on Managing Teaching Performance. This project involved research into practice in Australian, Swedish and UK universities with regard to the measurement of teaching performance, the relationship with HR policies and procedures, approaches to enhancing teaching quality at departmental and individual level, and the use of the measurement of teaching performance to support the achievement of larger strategic goals. The full report is available at:
<http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/publications/lffellowship/2006/mshiachrep.pdf>

- 12 This follows the agreement, at its 21 October 2010 meeting, that TLG would revisit the teaching and learning criteria of the current academic promotions to consider whether they fully reflect teaching skill and expertise and/or whether further work is required to ensure that the criteria are publicised at all levels of the University. TLG also has an outstanding action to review the University's approach to the peer review of teaching.

Prepared by the Head of the Teaching and Learning Support Office
November 2010

Appendix 1: Summary of issues raised by External Examiners

There were a number of **key positive themes** that emerged from consideration of the External Examiners reports:

- Increased positive feedback regarding our processes for feeding back on assessed work to students. This may be attributed to the work that colleagues have undertaken in this area and the initial implementation of the revised Policy on Feedback to Students.
- Increased reference to the use of Grademark for marking and giving feedback to students.
- Some evidence of innovation in eLearning.
- Perceived improvements in the quality of the administrative organisation of the Examination Board and external moderation process.

However, there was evidence of **key issues requiring consideration**:

- There were still examples of Schools not providing the appropriate programme information at the start of the academic year or at the beginning of an External Examiner's term of office.
- There were still examples of External Examiners not receiving draft exam papers or equivalent for comment as required by the Assessment Framework.
- There was significant mention of issues with the management of the assessment process for joint honours programmes. It was noted that there was not always representation at Examination Boards from the other disciplines or Schools that had been involved in the delivery of the programme. It was also noted that Examination Boards did not always have the full information if the marks had first to go through another School's Examination Board.
- With the increase in the use of Grademark come issues of access by External Examiners. External Examiners have requested that they have access for moderation purposes. Some seemed to have it, while others didn't. There needs to be consistency in this area as the use of Grademark increases and a process by which External Examiners can be granted access.

Other issues arising from External Examiners can be fed back to the Degree Regulations and Assessment Polices Group:

- External Examiners commented that they believed that our PGT degree regulations are too harsh. For example, comments were made that students have to 'jump through extensive hoops' in order to be awarded a merit or distinction.
- There were a variety of views on vivas, some External Examiners did not agree with them and believed they were resource intensive and not the best use of their time while others, predominantly in FLS, hoped that they continue.
- It was clear from the External Examiner reports that first and second marking practice in the University is inconsistent. Subsequently, the TLSO has had a number of queries from Schools and Faculties on what might be considered good practice in this area which shows a need for

further guidance. There is also reoccurring confusion within External Examiner reports on the role of a third internal marker. One External commented that he felt that awarding a 39, 49, 59, 69 by first markers, which was then agreed by a second marker, only to be referred to a third marker or the External Examiner for a further opinion was 'lazy marking' and should have been resolved earlier in the marking process.

- There were also comments regarding the role of the External Examiner as a 'decision maker'. It was indicated that some Examination Boards should be more empowered to make decisions, with advice from the External Examiner, rather than looking to them to make a final decision.

During the reading of the reports by the TLSO, opportunities were identified to improve the report format and the quality of the information gathered:

- Generally, there is a feeling that we are asking too much of our External Examiners. It is suggested that a review takes place via TLMG and that some questions are amended or removed. The review needs to consider what we are actually asking of our External Examiners, taking into account the findings of the UUK/HEFCE review of External Examiners.
- Question 16 ask for signs of improvement. Most External Examiners answer 'n/a' if the status quo is maintained and few actually answer no. The wording of this question should be reviewed to produce useful information.
- We should consider whether we need a separate report for programme and subject externals. Externals frequently use 'n/a' as a response to some questions which could be because they are a Subject External Examiner and may, for example, not have had a role in 'mitigating circumstances' procedures.
- Question 14 is concerned with meetings with students. External Examiners rarely seem to meet students and some comment in the free text boxes that they do not see the value of meeting them. However, where this does happen the External Examiners value the interaction. We should consider the benefits of this activity and decide if we actively encourage it or, if not, remove the reference from the report.
- The review should investigate reformatting the reports in order to consider the desirability of collating data that can be compared across the University. For example we could use a 5 point scale for answers: 'the administration was good...agree...strongly agree, disagree, strongly disagree etc...'. We could then consider putting the report online in a questionnaire format which would include the ability to collate 'free text' answers. The TLSO would then be able to generate comparable External Examiner data by School and Faculty for use in the monitoring and review processes, which would also be publically available for use by current and perspective students and other interested parties.

Prepared by Emma Hilton Wood
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Appendix 2: New programmes and major amendments to programmes approved during 2009-10

Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Undergraduate

None

Postgraduate Taught

MSc in Radio to sub-mm-wave Imagine and Sensing
MSc in Chemistry
MSc in Digital Imaging and Signal Processing
MSc in Environmental and Sustainable Technology
MSc in Advanced Computer Sciences (with specialism)

Faculty of Humanities

Undergraduate

History Integrated Masters (MHist)
BA (Hons) in Theological Studies in Philosophy and Ethics
BA (Hons) in Counselling (validated programme with KAPC)

Postgraduate Taught

Masters in Teaching and Learning
PGCert in Health Management and Leadership (in collaboration with the King's Fund)
MA in Theatre for Young Audiences (validated programme at Rose Bruford College)
MA in Ensemble Theatre (validated programme at Rose Bruford College)
PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Theatre and Performing Arts (validated programme at Rose Bruford College)
MA in Conference Interpreting
PGCE Teach First

Faculty of Life Sciences

None

Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences

Undergraduate

None

Postgraduate Taught

Master of Research Oncology
MSc Advanced Nursing Studies
MSc Advanced Midwifery Studies
MSc Advanced Audiology Services
MSc Advanced Professional Health Studies
MSc in Clinical Dentistry (Peridontology)
MSc in Deaf Education
MSc in Forensic Mental Health
MSc in Modelling and Simulation in Pharmacokinetics and Pharmacodynamics

Appendix 3: Internal and collaborative periodic reviews that took place during 2009-10

Internal

Chemical Engineering and Analytical Science	February 2010
Pharmacy	March 2010
Manchester Enterprise Centre	April 2010
Manchester Business School (including MBS WW)	April and June 2010
Physics and Astronomy	May 2010

Collaborative

Cliff College	December 2009
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Appendix 4: New collaborative agreements approved during 2009-10

Kings' Fund

March 2010

**Appendix 5: Collaborative institutional reviews that took place during
2009-10**

Institute of Bankers Jamaica (MBSWW)
Cliff College
Sunway University College (MBSWW)
MESPOM

October 2009
December 2009
February 2010
June 2010