Department of Information Science

**Departmental Response to the Report of the Periodic Programme Review**

**Department of Information Science**

**29th April 2010**

The Department would like to thank the members of the PPR panel for their considered and constructive comments and advice. This response will address points of issues raised in the body of the report summarised under the recommendations for action listed under point 11.4.

**5.5: to continue efforts to increase international student recruitment**

International student recruitment to programmes within the Department of Information Science increased considerably for the academic year 2010-2011, particularly on the PGT programmes:

Entry 2009:

UG – 7; PGT – 11 (IKM 5, ILM 2, IMBT 4)

Entry 2010:

UG – 8; PGT – 48 (IKM 13, ILM 7, IMBT 28)

The removal of the requirement of a year’s experience in an industry related to the IMBT programme undoubtedly helped increase numbers.

For the undergraduate programmes, the department is now working through SEFS with Loughborough College to target international recruitment to the IMBS and IMC programmes. Other new and ongoing initiatives include:

* Dr Gill Ragsdell’s recruitment visit to the Middle East (w/c 24/10/2010);
* Ongoing discussions with Sun Yat Sen University in Guangzhou related to the introduction of a 2+1+1 arrangement;
* Targeting of Agents (via the International Office);
* Publishing of key departmental information in other languages (Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish);
* Google Adwords campaign aimed at the Far East market (in conjunction with the above);
* Widespread dissemination of videos of PG students talking about their experiences on the department’s programmes available via various online channels (e.g. departmental website, YouTube, departmental Facebook page etc.)

**5.5, 6.6: to continue efforts to make the PG programmes accessible for part-time students, and possibly consider the introduction of distance learning at a future date**

For the Information and Library Management Programme, the department targeted information at Learning Officers at the regional local authorities, as we have identified a potential market for part-time recruitment within these organisations. We will repeat this exercise and hope to extend it. The Programme Tutors for ILM and IKM have been investigating a mixed delivery mode with the prospect of delivering some modules in distance mode. A paper on this is due to be presented to a meeting of the PGT team after Christmas.

**6.5: to add a rubric to IMBS and IMC programme regulations to ensure that students undertook a diet of modules balanced between the two disciplines reflected in the degree title**

This point was relevant only to the final year of both programmes as in the first two years, students are required to take a balance of modules between the two disciplines. The point was considered and discussed by the Programme Tutors and Learning and Teaching Committee and it was decided that such a rubric was not appropriate. It was felt important that students should retain the opportunity to tailor the programmes in the final year to suit their own interests and abilities and that, over the cohorts as a whole, the balance is reasonably even between the disciplines involved. The planning for the new undergraduate curriculum (scheduled for introduction October 2012) will consider all aspects of the content and structure of the undergraduate programmes, including this issue, and will ensure that students are given sufficient flexibility to direct their studies in Part C while making sure that the compulsory modules in Parts A, B and C fully cover the core elements of information management and computing or business studies.

**6.7: to continue work on improving the consistency of the correlation between assessment loading and credit weighting.**

This point was of particular concern to student on PGT programmes, specifically the ILM programme. An analysis of assessment loading and credit weighting was undertaken and the following recommendations were made:

For 15 credit modules

Written assessed work (either one piece or several combined) should not exceed 4,000 words in total.

Written assessed work which forms part of the assessment combined with a presentation should not exceed 3,500 words.

For 10 credit modules

Written assessed work (either one piece or several combined) should not exceed 3,000 words in total.

Written assessed work which forms part of the assessment combined with a presentation should not exceed 2,500 words.

**6.11: to remain vigilant against academic misconduct and take steps to guard against the increasingly sophisticated methods which are being used.**

Information and advice about plagiarism is emphasised strongly during the induction of new students and reinforced through specific modules (e.g. ISA309 Studying Information Science; ISB010 Research Methods; ISC002 Project; ISP600 Dissertation). Staff are aware of the Turn-it-in service and although we are not aware of any cases of commissioning, staff have been alerted to the possibility of this occurring.

**6.12: to ensure that the review of group work covered all the areas of concern raised by students.**

This issue was of particular concern to Part B IMC students. The Programme Tutor undertook a review of the extent of groupwork and student concerns. It was found that there is a lot of groupwork in this part of the programme and that the students are primarily concerned about the logistics and practicalities of organising all the different group meetings for all the different pieces of work which can prove difficult and time consuming.  Staff were asked to review their assessment practices in the light of the findings and consider alternatives. Some staff responded that there were strong pedagogic and practical reasons to include groupwork as a learning and assessment method and it was impractical and/or undesirable to alter their assessment practices.  Staff were therefore advised to build into their module some timetabled sessions in which students could meet to organise their work. In addition, concerns had been raised by students (and External Examiners) about the allocation of marks for groupwork (see 6.13 below) and the composition of groups. Apart from in Part A when the students do not know one another and so it is more convenient and quicker to assign students to groups, staff have asked the module cohort whether they would prefer to be assigned to groups or select their own.

**6.13: to ensure that procedures for conducting peer or self-assessment were clear to students and examiners.**

Staff have been requested to ensure that all module and assessment documentation is clear and transparent with regard to how peer and self-assessment will be conducted. They have also been advised to spend time in class explaining the practicalities and rationale for the procedures. Dr Derek Stephens supervised a final year project student on the topic of group development and peer assessment completed in June 2010 which will form the basis for further discussion at Learning and Teaching Committee.

**6.14: to address the points raised by the AD(T) in respect of programme documentation**

These have been addressed and the programme documentation has been amended accordingly.

**7.2: to reconsider introducing personal academic contact into a first year module**

It was intended to introduce contact with personal tutors into the first year module ISA309 Studying Information Science for the academic year 2010-2011. This proved logistically impossible, however. The nature of the undergraduate programmes, all of which are taught in liaison with other academic departments within the University, means that the timetabling of a suitable slot when all students and staff were available proved difficult. In addition, the number of students assigned as Part A personal tutees to each member of staff is very high in some cases - not all departmental staff carry the same load for a variety of reasons (e.g. other University duties, part-time contract, maternity leave, study leave, probation etc.). This means that some staff would have a large number of personal tutees (up to 24) in a personal tutoring contact session which was not considered desirable.

**7.7: to pursue work in progress on the presentation of feedback to students on assessed coursework**

Not all External Examiners’ reports for 2009-2010 have yet been received; a review of their comments on this topic will be undertaken when they arrive. Slight changes have been incorporated into the generic cover and feedback sheet for the academic year 2010-2011 and staff have been advised to use this where practicable.

**8.4: to help the reader to trace actions on issues raised at the Staff Student committee by better cross referencing.**

This will be addressed in referencing of the minutes with effect from the first meeting in 2010-2011.