University of Aberdeen
Internal Teaching Review (ITR)

SCHOOL OF GEOSCIENCES
Virtual Panel Visit: 9-11 February 2022

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Internal Teaching Review (ITR) of the School of Geosciences took place under the University's published process and procedures, which are available on the University webpages: https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/internal-teaching-review-6112.php. In light of recent updates to the process, this review had two student-focused elements reintroduced. These included:

(i) One student-focused session, online (via Microsoft Teams)

(ii) One student-focused session, on-campus (blended, dual delivery session with some panellists on Microsoft Teams)

1.2 Additionally, as a response to increased workload pressures resulting from the move to blended learning, the Critical Analysis document was streamlined to address the following key areas:

(i) School context: to include student numbers, demographics and outcomes; highlight any areas of teaching and learning practices that are specific to the School and a summary of the School's response to the previous ITR

(ii) Positive aspects of the School's teaching and learning: to include examples of positive practice and particular strengths of the School as well as how this good practice is shared both within the School and beyond

(iii) Challenges that have been encountered in the School's teaching and learning provision: to include potential areas identified for improvement and an action plan for how they might be addressed – or whether these were issues for discussion at the ITR. It was advised that this section was not only focused on response to the COVID-19 pandemic

(iv) Future plans: to include areas for development in the next few years, e.g. new course/programme developments, partnerships proposed

1.3 The ITR Panel was comprised of:

Dr Jason Bohan	Chair of the Review School of Psychology Quality Assurance Committee
Dr Martin Barker	School of Biological Sciences Student Support Committee
Dr Isa Ehrenschwendtner	School of Divinity, History, Philosophy & Art History Quality Assurance Committee
Mr David Mercieca	Vice-Chair of Undergraduate Education Committee, Aberdeen University Students' Association
Dr Michelle Alexander	External Subject Specialist, University of York

Prof Deborah Dixon	External Subject Specialist, University of Glasgow
Dr Carl Stevenson	External Subject Specialist, University of Birmingham
Mr Liam Dyker	Clerk, Academic Services

1.4   The Panel considered the documentation provided by the School, by way of an evidence-based Critical Analysis (CA) as detailed in 1.2 above. In addition, prior to the virtual visit to the School, internal members of the Panel were provided with access to the School's Quality Assurance (QA) repository, containing the School's annual monitoring materials (Annual Course and Annual Programme Reviews (ACR and APR)), Course Feedback Forms, minutes from meetings of Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLC), and External Examiner Reports (EERs), as well as the minutes from various School Committees. External panel members were provided with a sample of the documentation. Consideration of this documentation, along with the School's submitted CA, enabled the Panel to identify key themes for further exploration.

1.4   The Panel conducted a virtual visit to the School via Microsoft Teams, with the exception of the on-campus enhancement discussion with students. Across the review, the panel met with a range of management, academic and support staff and undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. This provided valuable insight into the School's pedagogic provision as well as how the School interacts with the wider University.

1.5   The themes for focused discussion agreed with the School prior to and during the visit were:

     (i)   **School Vision and Strategy,** particularly in relation to the growing number of Postgraduate Taught (PGT) programmes and increased focus on interdisciplinarity

     (ii)   **Assessment and Feedback,** particularly concerning the diverse range of assessments across the School

     (iii)   **Student Experience,** with particular focus on student feedback, employability in the curriculum and collegiality in the student body

     (iv)   **Staff Experience,** which aimed to acknowledge the workload pressures on staff, as well as how they had coped with the Covid-19 situation

     (v)   **School Identity, Structure and Communication,** particularly in relation to interdisciplinarity and communication across the disciplines

     (vi)   **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**, concerning the EDI and Decolonising the Curriculum agenda, as well as pastoral support

1.6   This report is split into three sections:

     (i)   Part A gives the overall impressions of the teaching provision within the School, formed from the whole ITR process;

     (ii)   Part B covers the outcome of various meetings held throughout the review, focusing on a small number of themes as outlined above. It also details the Pedagogic Partnership Session, which involved more free-form discussion; and

     (iii)   Part C details the School action plan which will form the basis of the annual follow-up reports on actions highlighted here.

PART A: OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

2.1   Overall, the panel were very impressed by how quickly the School had adapted to the Covid-19 pandemic and had put in place a range of measures, including alternative assessment, to support students, which the students themselves greatly appreciated. It is noted that students generally feel very supported by the School. The panel were particularly impressed by the innovation in teaching and assessment, with praise from both staff and students on the authenticity of those assessments. However, the panel noted that it would be useful to undertake a review of these assessments to ensure they continue to remain appropriate.

2.2   The panel found interdisciplinarity to be an area of strength in the School, with the commitment to interdisciplinary working evident across the three disciplines, which encouraged staff to think out-with their 'silos'. This was also commended in light of the Aberdeen 2040 strategy, whereby interdisciplinary is a key focus. The interdisciplinary working was also noted in relation to challenges surrounding communication (see 2.3 below).

2.3   One of the key focus areas for enhancement that the panel had identified was communication. Generally, it was acknowledged that communication was good within disciplines and programme areas, however, wider School communication could be further enhanced. This includes the representation of students on the various School committees to ensure their voice is represented. This is particularly important considering the growing interdisciplinarity of the School. However, the panel also acknowledged that there is a need not to undermine the individuality of each discipline. In relation to this, the panel acknowledged the work that had been done to ensure staff and students were regularly informed, such as the use of weekly updates, however, they felt that the closing of the feedback loop could be stronger and more explicit.

2.4   The panel felt there was a good sense of community generally within the School, however, they also noted that as students and staff transition back to an on-campus style of delivery of education, additional support may be required for those students and staff who may not have felt the same sense of belonging or community in the online environment. In relation to new staff, the panel felt that greater face-to-face interaction would aid their induction and training.

2.5   In relation to staff workloads and responsibilities, the panel acknowledged the Covid-19 situation had had an impact on staff and the volume of work. However, it was also noted that the division of responsibilities, particularly in relation to administrative duties, was not clear to academic and administrative staff and students alike. The panel advised it would be useful to undertake a review of administrative duties across the School to ensure that all respective parties are aware of the division of responsibilities.

PART B: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT; OUTCOMES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH STAFF AND THE PEDAGOGIC PARTNERSHIP SESSION

3.1   Theme: School Vision and Strategy

3.1.1   The School highlighted the main focus for their vision as disciplinary expertise within interdisciplinary education and research, and that this had been discussed at a recent *Away Day* with the School Executive. The School highlighted the ambition to be a community of geoscientists that enter in one discipline and leave with a broader understanding of geoscience. It was advised that interdisciplinarity would be a good way of encouraging students to realise the wider significance and importance of geosciences. The School also

reported that students identify with the cross-disciplinarity and actively sought it out. It was also advised that interdisciplinarity could be incorporated into the curriculum and collaboration built across disciplines. The School recognised that this will be a transition and a culture change for many programmes and academic staff.

3.1.2   It was reported that the Masters' programmes selected by the School have been chosen in order to maximise graduate success and to remain relevant in the modern world. In highlighting the future strategy, the School advised of the change of focus to Energy Transition and Sustainability, moving away from solely oil and gas-based programmes. It was advised that programmes use External Advisory Boards to ensure a strong connection to industry and employability. The School further noted that some programmes also utilise internships, which further highlight the engagement with industry. In highlighting potential areas for development, the School acknowledged the social science elements within geoscience and noted that this will form part of the future planning of programmes.

3.1.3   The School highlighted the hub-and-spoke model which had been adopted for the Archaeology programmes, which includes a series of core courses for each programme as well as an array of optional courses drawn from a wider pool. This has allowed the School to create more new programmes, while keeping staffing levels to a minimum. This allows for growth, while ensuring an efficient way of building Masters' level programmes. The risks this model poses were also highlighted, noting that there could be a single point of failure if a particular member of staff were to be unavailable at any given time.

3.1.4   The Geography programme had been revisited to ensure more explicit pathways were available for students to lead into Postgraduate study. The School reported that colleagues pushed for a review of the level one courses because it was felt that they had lost their identity and that they did not resonate with students. In terms of postgraduate study in Geographical Information Systems (GIS), the School highlighted that physical space was an issue with regard to the equipment required. The technological role of GIS was also highlighted by the School and the potential to weave this through the programmes.

3.1.5   The School highlighted the short- and longer-term solutions to realise the School's strategy, which included reducing workloads and building new staff recruitment into the School. In discussing recruitment, the School advised that they seek academic staff who could work in multiple disciplines and additional posts which have been allocated were as a result of strategic investment from the University. It was further advised that, in building programmes across disciplines, the majority of teaching would be carried out by core lecturing staff, who would have been recruited for the purpose of developing that specific programme. The School pointed out that, once the programme had been running for a few years, discussions were had to review staffing and the future of the programme. It was also advised that the School could sustain further growth of student numbers without having to modify any structures. The School reported of a significant opportunity for growth in planetary sciences, which includes the development of attractive, multi-disciplinary courses for first year students. It was advised that the School had an opportunity to promote these courses which were not commonly used across the UK.

3.1.6   The School noted the role of the 1845 Committee in Geology, which included academics aged between 18 and 45 and had a pertinent role in discussing what the future of geoscience might look like. The School advised it is useful to reflect on the challenges of embedding interdisciplinary courses. In particular, the removal of pre-requisites had been positive in

ensuring a broader range of students could partake in a given course. This was particularly important in ensuring the accessibility of courses.

3.2 Theme: Assessment and Feedback

3.2.1 The School were commended for their approach to setting assessments, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The School advised of the ability to diversify their assessments and the positive changes that had been instilled as a result. The professional development trajectory in the innovative assessments was highlighted, whereby some assessments have been aimed at the challenges students may face in a professional career. Students reported a positive experience of the diverse and innovative assessments, and it was further suggested that student feedback is always considered when reviewing assessment. Staff advised that it appeared that students appeared to prefer the types of assessments that built upon one another. Staff also acknowledged that it is important to ensure that each assessment is clear on which Intended Learning Outcome (ILO) it is assessing and that guidance for the assessment is clear. It was acknowledged that students could get confused in some instances where multiple ILOs are being assessed at once.

3.2.2 In relation to interdisciplinary teaching and assessment, the School reported that some assessments on particular programmes, such as the MSc in Planetary Sciences, are tailored to the individual given the small cohort sizes and accounting for the diverse range of backgrounds of the students on the programme. In some areas, a system of adopting at least one or two major assessments as the project, which could involve different disciplines, had been offered as a mechanism to ensure adequate student support.

3.2.3 While the smaller pieces of assessment were commended, the challenges associated with workloads were also noted. Staff advised that to try and overcome this, smaller assessments were more formulaic and could be marked easily. It was noted that PhD students and demonstrators have been able to assist with some of the teaching workload where class sizes have grown. The need to avoid clustering of assessment deadlines would also help student and staff workloads.

3.2.4 Students advised of instances where graded participation was part of the assessment. It was noted that these assessments tended to be between 10 and 20%. Students reported that it was frustrating to have participation included in the final grade, especially given the accessibility and ethical issues it raises.

3.2.5 In relation to feedback, it was noted that, generally, the School does well to ensure feedback is returned to students within the 15 working days deadline. It was noted there were a small number of instances where this was not followed.

3.3 Theme: Student Experience

3.3.1 In relation to employability skills that are embedded into the curriculum, the representative from the Careers Service advised of the lifetime commitment to students, by various means, including one-to-one sessions, co-curricular programmes and a series of awards. In terms of specific courses, it was noted that PD1002 is a skills development course for all new students. At School-level, while employability is embedded into many level 3 courses, including engagement with industry and assessments focused on demonstrating professional skills, it is recognised that the School could explore further embedding employability skills in the

curriculum and the advantages that these offer. The role of the School's Employability and Entrepreneurship Committees was highlighted.

3.3.2   Students reported of the positive experiences of the blended learning environment, and the positivity of having the option of online where necessary. They felt that this should be continued going forward. Students felt that the blended learning environment set a really good precedent for accessibility. In particular, students praised the use of virtual microscopes, which were innovative. Some students were pleased to have the face-to-face interaction and build the rapport with lecturers and fellow classmates. Students also noted the positive difference made between live online lectures and recorded online lectures, though stressed the value of the recorded lectures for those who may require them, e.g. for additional support. Some students praised the quality of materials that had been made available as a result of Covid-19, including the digital interactions. Students advised that they felt very supported, particularly in relation to the measures which were put in place and the ongoing communications with the disciplines. Some students reported of difficulties in the online environment, particularly in relation to social isolation.

3.3.3   Some students advised that it was difficult for the department to adjust to the Covid-19 situation in terms of fieldwork skills. It was advised that some trips had already been planned prior to the pandemic beginning. Some students noted that it was more difficult to adjust to online fieldwork excursions and activities, particularly for conducting research. Students were appreciative of the support given by staff in an attempt to mitigate the effect of a lack of fieldwork. Some students advised that the School was thinking outside the box for solutions to impart knowledge and skills.

3.3.4   In terms of community within the student experience, students reported that for those on campus, the feeling of community was stronger than for those online. It was noted that the ice-breaker sessions did help in engaging students and meeting new people. Students highlighted that, due to their optional nature, these events were often not well attended. The students suggested there need be greater integration across undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students across the School.

3.3.4   Students advised that they felt heard and valued within the School, and that any issues that are raised could be escalated to class representatives and brought to the attention of the School. The value of the Student-Staff Liaison Committees was also noted by the student representatives and the importance of engagement with them.

3.4   Theme: Staff Experience

3.4.1   Staff reported a generally positive experience of their employment within the School and noted the light touch approach to workload modelling. Staff noted that they will always have limitations to their capabilities, however, the management within the School have been receptive to that and have managed workloads accordingly. Some staff reported the need to ensure resilience in the workforce, given the extended pressure on staff. Some technical staff advised of the single points of failure within the technical team, which creates a strain on individual members of the team.

3.4.2   The division of administrative responsibilities between academic staff and administrative staff was highlighted by both groups as an area for development, as the definition of roles and the related responsibilities areas are believed to be unclear. Some staff advised that communication in this respect could be improved. Some staff highlighted the varying

pressures from different parts of the University professional services on school administrative and technical functions, which proved challenging at times.

3.4.3   In relation to the handling of Covid-19, staff coped with the emergency situation well and transitioned to homeworking and online delivery quickly. The admin team noted the difficulty of trying to finalise the teaching timetable with the timetabling team, given the uncertainties with regards to student numbers. Difficulties were also advised regarding room capacities and changes therein. The technical team stressed the pressures that were put upon them to support research activities in the earlier part of the pandemic, which saw them as the only staff from the School on campus. The wellbeing of the team was paramount throughout the emergency situation. Throughout, the technical team advised of feeling valued by the School for the work that they had undertaken under difficult circumstances.

3.4.4   In terms of community within the School, some staff reported it to be difficult to foster a sense of community as a result of academic, administrative, and technical staff being spread across three buildings. It was important that events involving the whole School were reintroduced to ensure a building of connections across disciplines, departments, and roles.

3.4.5   In relation to systems, some administrative staff expressed frustration with the resources which were allocated to University systems and the associated user experience. Staff reported that it is unfortunate that the University systems do not interact with one another. An example given was that of Blackboard Ultra, whereby the administrative team reported that the upgrade had not appeared to make their duties easier so far. It appeared that the updates were focused on benefitting students, in particular. Some administrative staff reported that the absence and monitoring systems were often inefficient and the use of the QR code for attendance monitoring meant that students were able to check in from anywhere in the world, if the code were sent to them.

3.5   Theme: School Identity, Structure and Communication

3.5.1   The School advised of the positive focus from the University on sustainability, particularly in light of the changing political climate and energy transition. It was noted the focus on sustainable development was viewed as a useful way to frame the teaching, based on the UN Sustainability Goals. The conflict between sustainability and energy futures was noted by the School, noting that Sustainable Energy Geoscience will run alongside the Integrated Petroleum Geoscience, giving students the opportunity to diversify into other careers. Staff noted that there would be a future in petroleum energy for some years to come with demand from the industry for energy graduates. Similarly, the role of the new Undergraduate degree in Geology, as opposed to Petroleum Geology, was a shift away from finite resources, whereby geologists are relevant to any discipline. In realising the interdisciplinary vision for the School, the new Undergraduate degree in Geoscience was noted, which brings together physical geography and geology.

3.5.2   In terms of outward perceptions, the School reported that the challenge is not what they *actually* do, but what those looking in *think* they do, and that education on what geoscience means is important in the wider identity of the School. Some staff advised that there was a clear outward focus on sustainability for the School. Further, staff advised that they had been engaged on the vision for the School identity, particularly at a departmental level.

3.5.3   In relation to outreach and prospective students, staff advised this was practically difficult due to the ongoing pandemic. However, there had been some instances of outreach activities such

as public engagement talks and connections with the Scottish Geology trust. It was noted that there used to be visits to Schools, however, these have been abandoned due to Covid-19. It was recognised as an ambition of the School to include more outreach activities in the community and to use the new Science Teaching Hub to facilitate some aspects of this. The role of the School Marketing Committee and liaison with the University Marketing department were also highlighted as integral to these outreach activities.

3.6 Theme: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

3.6.1 Staff reported on the work being done in Archaeology in relation to Decolonising the Curriculum, particularly with regard to engagement with indigenous groups. It was advised that there are courses in the School which relate more broadly to the theme of Decolonising the Curriculum. Students noted their involvement in the co-creation of the curriculum to a certain extent, particularly in relation to Decolonising the Curriculum. It is suggested that this model could be adopted more widely.

3.6.2 Staff advised that there had been a sharp increase in the number of students who require support, particularly with mental health issues. The School commended the Disabilities Coordinator for his role in ensuring that students are well-supported. The administrative staff reported that there had been a greater number of students requiring extensions, and also greater numbers requiring resit examinations. Staff highlighted that, due to the pandemic, students were dispersed across the world which made supporting them more challenging. However, students advised that the support they had been provided with by the School was excellent and the 'open door policy' by staff was welcomed.

3.6.3 In relation to disabilities, some staff noted that when a student progresses to further study at the institution (e.g. from Masters' to PhD), unless they explicitly state on their application, their disability provision will not be carried over. Staff advised of the reporting structure whereby the Schools are able to ascertain those students who might require additional support or provisions. This involves the database which is populated by the University support services. However, some staff highlighted that students who gain additional provisions across a year will not have been captured.

3.6.4 With regards to personal tutoring, overall, student experience varied and was often dependent on the personal tutor assigned. Some students felt that there could be more engagement on a personal level as opposed to a group level, suggesting a yearly 'check-in' meeting just to see how they were doing. Some students advised that the personal tutor waited for the students to get in touch, which meant some had not had any contact. Other students reported that they had had a positive experience with their personal tutor and that all issues raised had been dealt with appropriately or attempted to be resolved. Most students noted their personal tutor was from the discipline in which they are studying.

3.7 Pedagogic Partnership Discussion

3.7.1 The pedagogic partnership discussion backed up many of the points mentioned during the focused meetings. A summary of the points raised can be found in **Appendix A**. The School are invited to consider this appendix to help inform future practice. Student comments are noted underneath the staff posts and vice versa.

3.7.2 Across the student and staff groups, there were a range of experiences raised with regard to the teaching and learning experience. Both staff and students raised communication as an

area for enhancement, especially for closing the feedback loop. The good communication links at course and programme level were highlighted as excellent, however, at School-level, this was lacking. Some students advised that they were not aware of the administrative team in the School, which links to the division of responsibilities between academics and administrative staff (see 4.4.2 above).

3.7.3   The staff group reported that some discussion had been focused on the training and induction of staff, to ensure that they had all relevant information pertinent to their role when they joined the institution. This was reinforced by the students noting that they had a lack of understanding of the key policies within the School.

3.7.4   Students highlighted it may be useful to be included in the curriculum design aspects of programmes offered by the School, and in discussions surrounding the role of students in the formal school structures. Staff agreed that it would be useful to include students in the design of the curriculum. Staff noted that they do not consult adequately with students and there is no current vehicle for capturing information in such circumstances. Staff suggested it may be appropriate to build this into courses, in order to react to student feedback on desired content. It was reported that this mechanism was already in place in some areas at PGT-level.

3.7.5   In relation to employability embedded in the curricula, staff and students alike reported that this was important, especially in ensuring that assessments are authentic and linked to employability skills. It was recognised that assessments should develop skills, while also assessing content knowledge. It was acknowledged that often, personal contacts played a role in attracting employers or industry leaders to engage with students.

PART C: SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

4.1   Continue to increase and enhance communication across the School by:

(i)   emphasising the importance of interdisciplinarity within the School and working with staff and students to realise the School's vision, especially in the transition to a sustainable future

(ii)   ensuring there are spaces for staff and students alike to engage informally, particularly in relation to the transition back to on campus teaching

(iii)   promoting open and active discussion at a discipline- and school-level

(iv)   providing meaningful updates on feedback, i.e. *You Said, We Did*, to ensure the closure of the feedback loop

(v)   developing a School-level handbook which outlines the key important policies and a "who's who" in the School

(vi)   reviewing student representation on School-level committees and consider whether committees without students should have the student voice represented

4.2   Aim to enhance the student academic experience by:

(i)   undertaking a review of assessments to ensure that all assessments remain appropriate, especially as the University transitions back to on-campus delivery

(ii)   reviewing methods for providing feedback on assessment to students, ensuring that all students receive fulsome feedback within the 15 working day deadline

(iii) reviewing the ways in which students are engaged in curricula and course development

(iv) emphasising the existing links to the Careers Service, and investigating opportunities for further integration of careers and employability skills in the curriculum

(v) continuing to increase the co-creation of curriculum in terms of decolonisation and EDI issues

4.3 Enhance the support offered to students by:

(i) working to ensure the personal tutoring system is applied consistently across the School

(ii) investigating ways to integrate the various student cohorts (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) to enhance the feeling of community

4.4 Enhance the overall staff experience by:

(i) providing increased induction and training materials to new staff to enhance communication and ensure a smooth induction to the School

(ii) continuing to keep staff workloads under review to ensure an appropriate balance and division of workload across the disciplines and School

(iii) reviewing the inclusion of administrative and technical staff in school matters, ensuring they are represented at all levels

(iv) working with the University senior management to invest in the School administrative team, and raising the profile of the team to ensure students and staff alike are aware of the team's role and responsibilities

(v) reviewing the division of administrative responsibilities between academic and administrative staff to ensure the correct balance

STAFF - Geosciences - PPS

LIAM DYKER   JAN 19, 2022 01:48PM

STAFF: What is the School doing well?

Embrace online teaching technology

Communicate with students

> *on a module level - yes very good. But at a school and institutional level no so good* — ANONYMOUS

Developing new more flexible and engaging pedagogies in response to the pandemic and then continuing to innovate when in person teaching has returned.

Restarting fieldwork (and putting on additional fieldwork to help student catch up)

STAFF: What could the School improve on?

Student feedback form return rates

> *Module evaluations? number of students filling in the evaluations to help improve courses.* — ANONYMOUS

> *Easier to get feedback in person 1-2-1 verbally* — ANONYMOUS

> *make time in the course (allocate a session at end to gather feedback)* — ANONYMOUS

> *consider reasons for low response - it may be that students are generally satisfied. May also be students don't feel they have a stake anymore once the course has finished* — ANONYMOUS

> *communication of action on feedback* — ANONYMOUS

> *unclear how the feedback loop is closed* — ANONYMOUS

> *mid-module review* — ANONYMOUS

> *Perhaps have class reps give info on what was discussed in relation to these evaluations at a different level* — ANONYMOUS

Sharing how teaching innovations have gone across the school on regular basis

Improve communication and flow of information between timetabling and course coordinators e.g. when having to shift classrooms etc.

Find ways for allocating workload for interdisciplinary supervision of student work such as dissertations

Provide clear information to new staff members on processes within the school

Negotiaitng with uni around tuition fees - these need ot be lowered

More technical and administrative support

course co-ordinatiors deal with timetabling /room booking problems that come up with support from admin staff

> *Is there scope for some sharing of the timetabling in that students are a big stakeholder in the resultant timetable* — ANONYMOUS

We need more admin and marketing staff to deal with the increase in demands on course admin, student monitoring and recuritment efforts put on academic staff

More teaching team meetings, incl cross-disciplinary ones

We have just started a series of teaching meetings in archaeology (3 h meetings) to streamline our courses and negotiate team teaching more closely. Something at school level would be great. Workshop format

Better and more even workload allocation

We have started new programmes with new courses requiring rooms and slots. It is very difficult to accommodate and we have often gotten classrooms at the other side of campus.

Have a physical meeting space such as a coffee room for Geosciences to meet with people

Clearly defining roles and expectations for all teaching roles

Teaching meetings that specifically address pedagogicl issues/best practice

Embracing more innovative teaching methods and sharing good practice

Monitoring reduced workload for new staff - how has this been implemented in practice, and are there inequities in practice?

STAFF: What should the School stop doing?

Starting new programmes without proper consideration of workload etc.

Do not introduce new programmes without in-depth assessment of resources needed and potential knock-on impacts

Charging so much for PGT courses (damaging to recruitment and student experience)

Pushing admin onto academics

possibly links to the clarity on division of labour between academic issues and admin responsibilities – ANONYMOUS

links to school level communication and policy – ANONYMOUS

Some students were not aware there was an admin team... – ANONYMOUS

seems to be an instinct to go to the course coordinator as a first contact – ANONYMOUS

links to admin staff comments about noticing studetns tend not to go to them – ANONYMOUS

Stop the current student personal tutor system, and bring back positives of old system, and augment with specialist support staff able to deal with signaling counselling services etc - confirm for staff the current remit of the Disaniliy Support Officer.

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STUDENTS - Geosciences - PPS

LIAM DYKER JAN 19, 2022 01:45PM

STUDENTS: What is the School doing well?

responsiveness

good overall
quick and efficient responses when needed

However - some programmes have had problems getting responses from staff

so mixed on a school level

Support from staff

overall very good. Staff accessible

Mixed assessment

mix of exams, public engagement, group work, podcasts, hypothetical archaeological site report

different ways of learning — ANONYMOUS

Back on campus

Live lectures again and enthusiasm appreciated

nice to know this. It is sometimes hard for teaching staff to judge from giving a class (if you're not course coordinator for instance)
— ANONYMOUS

yes, please make sure this is communicated via SCEF forms, etc., as we really appreciate it — ANONYMOUS

STUDENTS: What could the School improve on?

Students want more say in the curriculum

Involvement in course content and design to be able to ask for things like more on decolonising and environmental justice. This is relevant to the focus on interdisciplinarity and sustainability and key to ensuring nimble responsiveness to needs and priorities of UGs and prospective UGs

Communication

Although there are great connections at module level there is a sense of a lack of school level communication or policy - this combined with the return from isolated ways of working during covid seems to exacerbate issues with the 'hidden curriculum'

Feedback

Delayed feedback (none from semester 1 until december)
unclear expectations
or no feedback at all

that is horrible. Where would you go with this concern?
— ANONYMOUS

This is not acceptable — ANONYMOUS

When was the relevant assignment date? Just to understand the context. — ANONYMOUS

1st assignment set 18th October, due 5th November and no grade/feedback until 1st December. — ANONYMOUS

my timetable

It would if it worked

Word! — ANONYMOUS

Inconsistent use of myaberdeen

some courses use it and some don't

this should not be the case. Everybody should e using MyAberdeen from teaching staff. — ANONYMOUS

sorry for confusion, everyone is using it, but inconsistently, some courses have migrated to new format but not all — ANONYMOUS

decolonising the curriculum

some discussions have yielded positive additions to the curriculum - can do more though

History of our subject and colonial links are important. Colonialism and racism is not just a thing of the past in our subjects.

'didn't know there was an admin team...'

Information about degree

Lots of info on modules but lacking in the overall degree info
Weighting of grades across years

So module level communication from individual staff is great but there's a lack of consistent communication at a more plenary degree level school or institutional level

We have been discussing creating a detailed UG handbook with all programme years and options, grading procedures etc in it. Not just the general school one or the individual course ones. This could perhaps be helpful. (lecturer) — **ANONYMOUS**

This sounds like a v good idea! — **ANONYMOUS**

Agreed :) — **ANONYMOUS**

Personal tutoring

inconsistent contact with personal tutors
sense of mixed experience

I agree (as staff) and I would prefer for the personal tutor system to be abandoned in favour of professionalised and consistent student support (with considerable increase in support staff associated with that) — **ANONYMOUS**

Me too — **ANONYMOUS**

I agree with this (as lecturer) System does not work. — **ANONYMOUS**

responsiveness and support

'Communication has been variable - some things have been fine, but for example some big things we haven't been aware of - notably the need for ethical review, bad for me as I had very nearly sampled human bones for DNA and if I had done this without (and I had no idea it existed), would have been a big problem'

'Not really clear who to go to especially in admin - but when you email the wrong person they generally direct you to the right person'

This could definitely be improved with a clear signposting of who to go to (for staff and students) — **ANONYMOUS**

STUDENTS: What should the School stop doing?

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