

T&L Reading

Issue 2 | Spring Term 2013

The Institutional Review of the University, conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the Autumn Term 2012, resulted in a comprehensive set of positive judgements about our provision, both on-campus and at partner institutions.

In addition, the QAA identified features of good practice in the University, made a number of recommendations to enhance processes and practice, and endorsed some initiatives which were already in progress. The QAA's Report on the Institutional Review, published in February, is available at bit.ly/16oq7np, but the key points are summarised inside.

Continued on page 2 ►



Headlines

E-learning support

Blackboard now features an updated e-Learning Support tab, which collects together some of the resources and guidance you can use for e-Learning. The tab will enable staff to access support and find answers whenever they choose. The focus of the tab is currently on Blackboard but will expand over time to include other eventually tools. If you still have queries after using the tab, you can contact elearning-support@reading.ac.uk. We would also welcome any feedback or suggestions about the tab.

Blackboard Update

There are currently plans to update Blackboard in the summer to a new Service Pack. Testing, at the time of writing, is ongoing with the help of some volunteers from within Schools and Departments. The update will have minimal impact on end users and will allow us over time to introduce some new and exciting features in the future. If you would like to see the update version and get involved in the testing, please contact elearning-support@reading.ac.uk.

Funding Opportunities

The University will be launching the **Teaching and Learning Development Fund (TLDF)** on 30 April 2013 with a deadline of 10 June 2013. For details of other funding sources please visit the **Funding Opportunities** section of the CDoTL website.

Summer Term diary

For information on the latest teaching and learning events please visit our **News and Events** webpage which has details of forthcoming internal and external events.



Key findings

Under the Institutional Review protocols, the QAA is required to make four judgements about fundamental aspects of a university's provision, using as their reference point the expectations contained in the QAA Quality Code (available at bit.ly/YhkALd). The judgements about our provision were that the University 'meets UK expectations' in all categories, namely:

- Academic standards
- The quality of student learning opportunities
- Information about learning opportunities
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities

The QAA identified the following features of good practice at the University:

- The Pathfinder process makes a significant contribution to strengthening the University's well thought-out, rigorous and comprehensive periodic review system.
- The University offers excellent web-based multimedia support for staff in relation to assessment and feedback.

The QAA review team made the following recommendations, which we are required to have implemented by the beginning of the academic year 2013–14:

- the University should introduce and address at institutional level a thematic summary of external examiners' reports
- the University should ensure that the final approval procedure for all new joint honours programmes includes external academic advice appropriate to both disciplines
- the University should, formally and in advance of their commencing teaching on University programmes, approve the curricula vitae of all relevant partner institution staff
- the University should ensure that no research degree student has a sole supervisor

The QAA affirmed the following actions already being taken to improve provision for students.

- Review of feedback provided for students
- Review of the personal tutoring system
- Implementation of the recommendations of the recently completed review of programme and module evaluation

Action plan

The University is required to publish by early April an action plan addressing the key findings. Amendments to relevant policies and procedures are in hand, and a draft action plan will be considered by UBTL at its meeting on 20 March. Two recommendations perhaps have the more significant implications:

- While the QAA praised the close attention paid to external examiners' reports and the care taken to address issues raised, the introduction of a thematic summary for consideration by UBTL and its Sub-Committee on Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching will allow clearer analysis of common issues and will helpfully complement the current, School-based arrangements.
- Currently, a small proportion of PGR students formally have a single supervisor (while having access to other supervisory support), and action is now being taken to formalise arrangements for additional supervision, in accordance with the QAA's recommendation. The QAA report indicates that the recommendation was not based on any identified deficiency in the quality of PGR supervision, but rather concerned a potential risk and anticipated the new, stronger guidance in the revised chapter of the Quality Code which is effective from next academic year.

The other two recommendations involve minor procedural amendments.

Student engagement

In addition to the core elements which form the basis of the judgements, Institutional Review also includes a thematic element designed to address matters of topical interest. The thematic element for our review was student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes. The QAA recognised the considerable work which the University and RUSU had been doing together in this area over the last 18 months (for example, the inclusion of students on periodic review panels, and further democratising course representation), but identified scope for increasing systematisation of student involvement in quality processes at School level.

The QAA review panel considered a very wide range of evidence from across the University which demonstrated the effectiveness of our processes and the shared commitment of staff and students to sustain and improve the quality of the educational experience. I am very grateful to all those who contributed directly to the review in various ways – not least those who responded so patiently to my manifold requests for ever more information. The success of the review, however, ultimately depended on the sustained work across the University over a long period to deliver stimulating, challenging programmes, to provide effective student support, and to ensure that policies and procedures are fit-for-purpose.

I should perhaps mention that the methodology used for our Institutional Review was relatively new, having only been introduced the previous year, and, given the number of HEIs attracting a negative judgement, was apparently more rigorous than its predecessor. Such is the pace of change that the QAA is currently consulting again on a new methodology, which, as ever, has the explicit ambition of reducing the bureaucratic burden. The proposal does offer an absolute commitment that, for institutions, like us, who have a good track record with the QAA, the interval between reviews will be a minimum of six years. Given that the University was subject to review in 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012, six years would be most welcome. Roll on 2018.

Keith Swanson, Director of Academic Quality Support



Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy Group (TEL SG)

The TEL SG is recently formed and met for the first time in January 2013. The rationale for creating the group is that whilst technology-enhanced learning has existed within the institution for some time, it had not previously been a top level institutional priority. With the expected growth of use of TEL in the future, it is timely to take a strategic view and approach as we move forwards.

The terms of the reference for the group are:

- To produce, and oversee the implementation of, a University-wide strategy for technology-enhanced learning;
- To audit in which ways the University, at a central level and at School/Department/Directorate level, captures current and future technological needs for Teaching and Learning;
- To determine whether current practices can be improved, and to ensure that good practice is shared;
- To consider how capacity could be built within Student and Academic Services, or elsewhere, to look at new developments in technology to enhance Teaching and Learning, and how such developments might have practical benefits to the University;
- To report to the University Board for Teaching and Learning and to the Senior Management Board as necessary.

The group is chaired by Professor Gavin Brooks (PVC, Teaching and Learning). Membership of the group reflects the many stakeholders now involved in TEL and includes representation from across the institution.

Initial activities of the group include:

- Undertaking an audit of TEL both internally and at other HEIs, to help inform our future direction
- Identifying priority areas: these come under 2 strands (i) ensuring current technologies (such as Blackboard and Turnitin) are fit for purpose and (ii) considering new technologies (such as lecture capture) and assessing their contribution to institutional teaching and learning priorities.
- Exploring cost implications of certain technologies, one example being the introduction of wi-fi across the whole campus.

Digital Silchester

by Dr Matthew Nicholls

As regular readers of this and University blogs may know, I have been using digital architectural modelling to recreate buildings and places from the ancient world, principally the city of Rome (bit.ly/XnlySB) (bit.ly/1zLnBbK). Such digital models can be used to produce visual resources which are useful in a variety of contexts in and beyond the lecture room, and students react well to this use of digital technology to illustrate an ancient subject.

As well as presenting students with the result of my own work, I've sought to get them involved in the creation of these models believing, like Ruskin, that thinking about an object or building by drawing it adds enormously to one's understanding of it. In general, active participation in the creation of new work involves arriving at a deeper understanding of a subject than looking at other people's reconstructions, and my aim has been to encourage students to think critically about the aims of reconstructing buildings from the past and the limitations of our knowledge, as well as teaching them the technical skills necessary to produce credible 3D work.

After experimenting with a the concept through a couple of UROP placements in which students helped research and create digital models (some of which were broadcast in a recent BBC documentary), I have this year started running a new

third-year module, CL3SIL Digital Silchester, in which students create digital models of buildings from our local Roman town, excavated over the last couple of decades by our own Archaeology Department. I ask students to submit their digital models along with written commentaries (in a format agreed with our external examiners to ensure consistency with more traditional forms of assessment). These commentaries set out their choices, sources, and aims, lending a structure of proper, and familiar, academic research to what could otherwise turn into a rather speculative exercise. The selection of a project and investigation of the evidence available for it makes this task a good example of 'enquiry-based learning'.

To make these models I am teaching the cohort how to use the easily downloaded, and free, 3D drawing software SketchUp (www.sketchup.com), which has a user-friendly interface and can be quickly picked up to a reasonable degree of competence. Using it to create reconstructed buildings from the past involves researching what we know about the structure in question, and then drawing it in three dimensions within the programme, starting perhaps from a scanned-in archaeological ground plan.

ITS have kindly installed this software for me in a computer lab in the Palmer Building, and I am taking fortnightly classes which combine lectures on Roman townscapes and the principles of

reconstruction with practical masterclass sessions in SketchUp. Students were warmly encouraged to pick up the software over the summer vacation before the start of their third year: a few hours spent playing around with the various tools and menus is enough to get off to a good start, but there is a learning curve which has to be climbed before you can put the software to good practical use. To prevent failure to do so from disastrously compromising the students' performance, the module is spread over two terms to allow students time to pick up and become properly conversant with the programme. There is a short assignment (20% of the module mark) at the end of the winter term, when they all make a model of a single building of my choosing to make sure they are up to speed; the rest of their mark depends on a larger model and commentary of their choosing submitted at the end of the spring term.

The students have now completed their first assessment, a model of a small (possible) church building from Silchester, and to my pleasant surprise there have been no disasters prompted by the novelty of the assignment or the difficulty of the software; all students produced decent work and some submitted very good work indeed, as you can see from some of the images here. Students are now working on their spring assignment, and their self-



Sailing the High Seas of UK HE

by Dr Orla Kennedy

devised projects include models of the walls, gates, houses, and public buildings of the town, as well as models that illustrate a single moment in time and others that show changing phases of a building's life.

The use of 3D visualisation is applicable in many academic contexts and I would be interested to hear from colleagues who are using it already, or might find it useful (a couple are sitting in on my Digital Silchester classes and others are beginning to use SketchUp to illustrate their research) – I am sure that we could learn a lot from each other about how to integrate this exciting new technique into our teaching.



When asked to write something on current teaching & learning matters, I thought where do I start. Never, I think, has higher education in the UK been in such a state of flux, and something that was akin to a slow moving cruise ship meandering down the Nile, has rapidly had to turn into an around the world super yacht with the ability to ride the various waves and storms that the UK government and other external forces are throwing at it.

However we at Reading are well positioned to rise above the swells that are ahead of us and set forth on a definite course of action. As Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) in the Faculty of Science, my position is to help influence the route by which we are travelling. One of the biggest waves hitting us in the last year was the whole free and core margin situation in terms of home student numbers.

My fellow ADs and I work closely with schools, looking at our portfolio of programmes, entry requirements, ensuring placement opportunities whilst keeping an eye out for what positions our competitors are taking, with an ever changing landscape currently at ABB, whilst at the same time looking over the horizon toward postgraduate opportunities.

What we offer students, not only in their subject specific curriculum alongside the opportunity to study languages, develop entrepreneurship skills, embedded career learning and study and work abroad,

but also co-curriculum opportunities through the RED award, UROP, Student volunteering and STEM ambassador schemes and the myriad of clubs and societies, puts us in a great position to steer Reading into exciting waters.

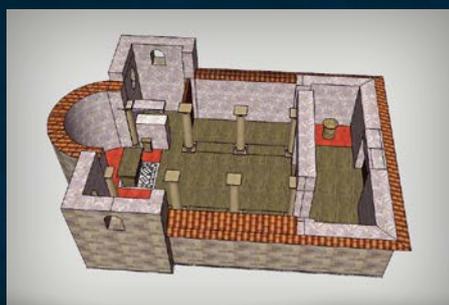
The quality of T&L support centres which support these activities CSTD, CDoTL, QSO – soon to be CQSD, Student Services, Library, ITS, Careers, Study Advice to name but a few, along with a really strong and positive relationship with RUSU are second to none.

All of us at Reading are doing much work, with more to go, and with the help and support of our newly reconfigured Admissions, Marketing and Comms and Careers, we can continue to highlight what we do well, and also begin to shout more about it. Key to this is the 1% campaign, which has given schools the impetuosity to loudly and proudly declare what we are in the top 1% for.

Promoting all of that we do and all that we intend to do, to our staff and students and externally, will allow all to maximise the opportunities that the Reading experience provides.

We have an excellent teaching and learning and research crew. I believe that the academic investment posts, in addition to the new promotion routes to recognise teaching and learning contributions, work underway on teaching qualifications, developing REDPlus and leadership skills for students, global modules, work on managing our students transitions to HE, and developing our onshore, off shore and online portfolios through our global ambitions and MOOC's development, will ensure that together with our new VC at the helm, that we are well placed to sail us and our students all the way to success.

Full steam ahead...



Teaching and learning policy updates

A number of changes were agreed to teaching and learning policies and practices during the second half of the Autumn Term 2012 and start of the Spring Term 2013 which either take effect immediately or are due for implementation in the 2013–14 academic year. These are summarised below.

Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013–18

The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2013–18 was published on the Quality Support Office website at the start of the Spring Term 2013 (Section 1b of the Guide to policies and procedures for teaching and learning: www.reading.ac.uk/qual-guidehome.aspx). The Strategy outlines four key strategic priorities:

- 1 To engage students in research and enquiry in the curriculum;
- 2 To develop highly employable graduates;
- 3 To evolve our approaches to teaching and learning; and,
- 4 To continue to recruit, develop and value well qualified, professional academic staff.

Proposals for Enhancement Priorities for the next two years will be submitted to UBTL in due course.

Students and student development

HEAR

Following the publication of the final report of the Burgess Implementation Steering Group on the Higher Education Academic Record (HEAR), UBTL has approved a proposal that the University retain its Diploma Supplement and Annex in order to record and recognize students' achievements, rather than adopting the HEAR at this stage.

Policy on Staff providing LinkedIn recommendations

UBTL recently approved a University-wide policy that staff should not provide students with LinkedIn recommendations, except in those cases where:

- a) the member of staff had employed the student, in which case a recommendation relating specifically to the employment might be provided; or,
- b) the member of staff was acting in a capacity other than tutor or lecturer.

The policy arose from concerns that LinkedIn recommendations were not time-limited, that staff could not guarantee that a student was still performing to the standards suggested by their profile at a later stage in their career, and that the potential need to provide all students with such a recommendation would be unreasonably onerous.

Technology in Learning and Teaching

The University has recently approved a number of recommendations made by the Blackboard Review Group including the following:

- a) that the University not seek an alternative to Blackboard at this time due to the prohibitive outlay costs;
- b) that the focus of Blackboard return to its original function as a Virtual Learning Environment, and be defined as a tool specifically for the use of students in their experience of teaching and learning at the University;
- c) that a 'required minimum' use of Blackboard be established to ensure at least a consistency of student experience at a basic level in respect of information about programmes, from rules and procedures to assessment briefs and marking criteria. A draft specification of minimum use will be submitted to UBTL during the Summer Term 2013. School Directors of Teaching and Learning will be responsible for monitoring adherence to the acceptable minimum use of Blackboard;
- d) that priorities for the development of Blackboard over the next three years be as follows: mobile Blackboard; integration with RISIS; and e-submission (including Turnitin);
- e) that a Blackboard Review Group meet every two years (with its first meeting being in 2014–15) to assess Blackboard, provide strategic direction of development, prevent 'drift' from Teaching and Learning aims, and to assess whether an alternative to Blackboard might be considered at that time;
- f) that a Working Group to consider links between RISIS and Blackboard be established.

Examinations and Assessment

UBTL has approved the following principles in relation to re-examination arrangements for students pursuing a programme on a part-time basis, which will take effect immediately:

- a) when a part-time student has failed a module, they should be required to choose whether to re-sit that module at the next opportunity or not to re-sit that module at all. Students should not be able to choose to re-sit a module the following year;
- b) in the case of such students, the overall result for a Part be determined on the basis of the higher mark achieved in each module whether at first attempt or re-sit;
- c) in the case of a student who has failed at the second attempt 'intermediate' modules such that they could not progress to the next Part of the programme however they performed in the remaining years for that Part:

- i) if the student could achieve a higher qualification than they had already achieved by completing the Part, then they should be allowed to complete the current Part;
 - ii) if the student could not achieve a higher qualification, then they should be required to leave the University. This should also apply to Finalists who have failed sufficient 'intermediate' modules and are unable to achieve even a Pass degree;
- d) the Examinations Office provide 'legalistic' advice to students with regard to which modules they could re-sit and what qualification could be achieved if they were not able to progress to the next Part of the degree. Students should also be strongly advised to discuss their options with their School;
 - e) for the purposes of classification, the marks for non-Final Part modules which have been re-sat should be capped, as usual;
 - f) in the event that a Finalist has failed and re-sat an 'intermediate' Final Part module, their result/classification would be based on the first attempt results for their Final Part modules. If the result were Fail, the marks for any re-sits already taken would be used to determine whether they were eligible for a Pass degree. If the result remained a Fail, the student would be eligible to re-sit any module taken in their final year in which they achieved less than 40%, and their result would be capped at Pass.

Work is underway to revise relevant policies and procedures accordingly.

Postgraduate Research matters

The University has recently approved the following changes to the Partnership Doctorate Scheme, with immediate effect:

- a) students would be expected to spend a minimum of 3 months in Reading over the course of their registration (rather than first and last terms); and
- b) students would pay the working away fee rate except in those cases when they spent periods of greater than three months in Reading (when they would pay the full fee rate).

...and some work in progress

Peer review and observation of teaching

Work is underway to investigate the various practices for peer review and observation of teaching currently in use across the University and to review and propose revisions to the University's current guidance on Peer Review and Observation of Teaching, for implementation in 2013–14.



Engage in Teaching and Learning blog

We are keen to hear from any staff wishing to submit an article to the Engage in Teaching and Learning blog so if you would like to contribute an article, video or podcast to the blog please take a look at our guidance notes (bit.ly/ZKLZnG). We would also encourage all teaching and learning staff to subscribe to the blog using the box on the right hand side of the initial home page as this will ensure that you are emailed new posts when they are posted; alternatively you can opt for a weekly email digest of the latest articles.

We also have a new contact email address for all blog submissions: to send something to us for publishing, or if you have any questions about the blog just email engageint&blog@lists.reading.ac.uk.

Check out the blog at:
blogs.reading.ac.uk/engage-in-teaching-and-learning

Recent blog posts include:

Study support for MOOCs – do the Study Advisers have the answer?
by the Study Advice team

Virtual Careers Fairs
by Amanda Duggan

Learning on Screen Awards
by Nadja Guggi

Internationalising Student Support Community of Practice (COP)
by Matthew Daley

Students like live lectures (and online ones as backup)
by Rebecca Reynolds

Presenting the brand new Placement Guide for staff
by Em Sowden

Academic Placements
by Dr Cindy Becker

NSS success: It's the little things?
by Nadja Guggi

Student representation

Following the introduction of a new policy on Student Representation at the University of Reading (Section 4a of the Guide to policies and procedures for teaching and learning: www.reading.ac.uk/qual-guidehome.aspx) in October 2012, work is continuing to enhance the representation of post-experience and pre-experience postgraduate students.

Teaching and Learning-Related Working Groups

Work has continued during the Spring Term 2013 in a number of other areas, including:

- the development of a proposal in respect of standard turnaround times for feedback and communication of assessment criteria for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes;
- consideration of the final report and recommendations of the Southern Universities Management Services (SUMS) in respect of the University's Extenuating Circumstances process;
- the implementation of the recommendations approved by UBTL during the Autumn Term 2012 in relation to programme and module evaluation. A revised policy and procedures on student evaluation are currently under development and will take effect from the 2013–14 Session;
- the Working Group on the Personal Tutorial System and the Working Group on Transition to Higher Education will both report to UBTL by the end of the Spring Term 2013.

Collaborative Provision

Following the publication by the QAA of Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others of the UK Quality Code for HE, UBTL will appoint in due course a small group, which would report by the end of the Summer Term 2013, to review the University's policies and procedures in this area.

For further information, please contact Jennie Chetcuti:
j.l.chetcuti@reading.ac.uk

Get involved

T&L Seminar: Digitally Ready: Celebrating our achievements	15 April 2013, 11.00am–2.30pm Henley Business School G15	Booking required via Employee Self Service/CSTD
T&L Scheme: Launch of the TLDF & UTFS projects scheme	30 April 2013	See TLDF scheme bit.ly/YiLlL
T&L Seminar: Digital Literacies and Skills for 21st Century learning Steve Wheeler: Plymouth University	30 April 2013 12.30–2.00pm Carrington 201	Booking required via Employee Self Service/CSTD
T&L Workshop: Blackboard Learn: The Basics	2 May 2013 2.00–4.00pm TBC	Booking required via Employee Self Service/CSTD
T&L Community of Practice: SELCS Lunch	13 May 2013 12.30–2.00pm HumSS 44	Booking required via Employee Self Service/CSTDD
T&L Community of Practice: DTLs lunch	15 May 2013 12.15–1.45pm HumSS 44	Booking required via Employee Self Service/CSTD
T&L Workshop: Blackboard Learn: extending your course with templates and tags	20 May 2013 4.00–5.00pm TBC	Booking required via Employee Self Service/CSTD
T&L Showcase: Student Engagement	23 May 2013 1.00–2.00pm Carrington 201	No booking required
T&L Showcase: PGCAP projects	June 2013 TBC	No booking required
T&L Community of Practice: UTF's lunch	20 June 2013 12.30–2.00pm HumSS 44	Booking required via Employee Self Service/CSTD

T&L Reading

i For more information,
please contact:

Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning

University of Reading
Whiteknights
Reading, RG6 6AB
cdotl@reading.ac.uk
Tel (0118) 378 4728

www.reading.ac.uk/cdotl

50% recycled
When you have finished with
this document please recycle it

