Draft Learning and Teaching Plan

We have an issue with the perceived quality of our learning and teaching in the School of Informatics as reflected by indicators like PTES and NSS. We have the lowest grades in the University in these surveys and some of the lowest scores nationally. These low teaching scores have an impact on general league tables such as the THES World University Rankings

This document is the draft plan to improve learning and teaching in the School. It is a draft, focussing on short- and medium-term issues. Longer-term issues will be dealt with in the coming months. After consultation it will form the basis of the Teaching and Learning plan to be incorporated into the School Plan.

This is a discussion document and so is open to change. Over the next two to three months supplementary documents will provide more detailed plans for specific actions.

1   Short Term

These are short-term measures we can work on over the next three months or so to address some of the issues identified in the NSS comments and elsewhere. The goal is to develop a stronger feeling of community in the School and provide the students with more explicit support mechanisms that identify learning needs and provide support to meet those needs.

In addition we are seeking to learn from Schools with better NSS scores in the College of Science and Engineering. In particular we have approached School of Mathematics to see if any of the measures they took are transferrable to our context. This may add to the list of short-term measures.

1. **Making the most of Appleton Tower**: The two year decant into Forrest Road has been difficult for staff and students. Appleton Tower is a great improvement and will help us rebuild the Informatics community amongst our students and staff. Actions include:
   1.1. Getting students involved in the **design of the new level 5** accommodation. We have funds to refurbish over next summer and will involve students in the redesign.
   1.2. Introducing some **"self-managed" areas in the Appleton Tower Labs**. Bookable rooms for group working.
   1.3. Freeing up ITO effort to provide better service to staff and students – the organisation of the ITO on level 6 of Appleton Tower has already improved levels of service.
   1.4. Establishing a combined **InfBase/InfPALS** space aimed at providing good support for Learning:
      1.4.1.   InfBase is open 4 hours per day 5 days per week oriented to first and second year queries. We are looking at extending to years 3-5 using online tutorials to respond to quesies for later year courses.

       1.4.2.   InfPALS has additional resource and is moving to a more student-led approach. We are also looking at ways that InfBase can reinforce InfPALS.

   1.5. We have significantly extended the scale of the **programming club** to help students gain more programming skill. This has additional staffing and is directed to year 2 in first semester and year 1 in second semester. We will evaluate and extend to all of first and second year in both semesters if this is justified.

2. **Engaging with CompSoc /Hoppers and the "Better Informatics" group:** Providing improved levels of support for the student society and ensuring they are engaged in decision taking around teaching and learning. These include:

   2.1. Involving students in the curriculum review. Currently there is a major curriculum review going on within the School. Look at how to engage students fully in the process.

   2.2. Support **CompSoc** in developing a comprehensive programme. We are in discussion over the introduction of monthly "coffee meetings" between staff and students. The new president of CompSoc is attempting to create a stronger community.

   2.3. Support Hoppers in developing their programme.

3. **Community Building:** Creating more opportunities for informal staff/student interaction.

   3.1. Introduce "year group" meetings where we get students and staff together to discuss issues informally.

   3.2. Have research "open day" sessions where the institutes present their work to the students and outline ways to become more involved in the research of the School.

   3.3. Introduce a "Teaching Lunch" where ideas can be presented and discussed. Topics might include: "Practical Work Design", "Designing for Feedback", "Technology Enhanced Learning in the University", "Learning Analytics", …

4. **Improved Support for Teaching and Learning:**

   4.1. We have recruited 2 FTE University Teachers and have begun to deploy them in key teaching roles.

   4.2. We are in the process of hiring a Student Support Coordinator. We plan to have them in place by January, evaluate their usefulness and hire additional SSCs if they improve student support.

   4.3. We have hired a Learning Technologist who will help provide support to make more effective use of learning technology on-campus and at distance.

   4.4. Improved training for tutors and demonstrators. We have a comprehensive schedule of paid training that is compulsory for our tutors and demonstrators.

   4.5. Promoting English language testing (TEAM) and follow-up courses.

   4.6. Continue with feedback monitoring and improvement plans.

   4.7. Be more active in the use of coursework assessment data and tutorial attendance data to identify struggling students earlier in order to provide additional support.

4.8. Pilot the development of diagnostic tests taken pre-course to identify learning needs.

4.9. Meet identified learning needs with support mechanisms e.g. support tutorials, study groups.

4.10.　　　Revisit the teaching of programming and the use of computer-based tools to help support students' learning.

4.11.　　　Explore mechanisms that permit students more flexibility in managing their time e.g. more flexibility on coursework deadlines. We have changed the late submission rules to align with University guidance.

2　Medium Term (Under development)

Over the next year the School will revise its approach to the structure of Teaching and Learning.   Our goal is to:

- Identify the key areas of T&L activity and develop groups of academic and admin roles that support effective delivery in these areas.
- These areas will be structured as sub-groups reporting to Teaching Committee tasked to improve the quality of delivery in these areas.
- A Quality Group will develop quality measures that are meaningful to students and staff.

The aim of this is to bring disparate academic roles together to work as a coordinated team in cooperation with admin support focussed on delivering improvement in the area. Each of the groups will include student representation and will operate in a transparent manner.

2.1　Support

This group will involve the PTs, SAMO, Student Support Coordinator, SSOs etc. The goal of the group is to improve pastoral and academic support measures in the School. The methodology of the group will be to identify the most "costly" support failures and identify how our support measures need to be adapted to avoid or mitigate such failures.   We are already looking at how to articulate the relationship between various support measures we are putting in place and how to present this to students.

2.2　Assessment

This group will involve the Chairs of Boards of Examiners and year organisers and will be tasked to ensure the oversight, quality, level, quantity, and timing of assessment is appropriate and to oversee the integrity of the examining process. The goal of the group is to develop strategy on how best to manage the balance of assessment between different modes and to avoid overload as much as possible while ensuring the quality of our assessment process.

2.3　On-Course

This group will involve the year coordinators and will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of Teaching and Learning. In particular that teaching and learning resources and facilities are available in appropriate quality and quantity and ensuring uniformity of delivery of resources. This will include reviewing our

use of the estate and ensuring we have appropriate estate resource to delivery the learning experiences we want to deliver. This group will also look at the use of analytics on coursework and attendance data to identify and support struggling students.

2.4 Curriculum

We already have an established curriculum review group. As a sub-group reporting to Teaching Committee this group will include degree programme coordinators and representatives from the School Research Institutes. The goal will be to ensure appropriate coverage against national and international benchmark curricula, ensure the curriculum is well-balanced and capable of being delivered in the School.

2.5 Recruitment and Admissions

The goal of this group is to ensure we meet agreed intake targets on our programmes in each of the main fee categories. We will also aim to reduce the number of rejected applications by providing better information to enquirers that gives a clear view of the experience we offer so potential applicants do not apply if they are unlikely to be accepted. This group will also be responsible for identifying risks in recruitment and providing mitigation for theses risks.

2.6 Quality

This group will be led by our Quality Officer and will work with the other groups to define appropriate measures and targets for the other groups. Our goal is to build quality measurement into all of our T&L activity and our key measures will be developed to ensure we can manage teaching and learning effectively.

2.7 Reducing the Compliance Burden

Compliance is a major issue (e.g. Tier 4 compliance). Our goal will be to move to more automatic systems where the onus is on the student to comply in the first instance with follow up triggered when compliance failures are identified. We believe this could significantly reduce admin effort and improve service to staff and students.

2.8 Role of University Teachers

Recently we have appointed two FTE university teaching posts. We are doing this to explore how best to deploy University Teachers. We believe that these posts could provide significant improvements in our delivery to students and in the training of tutors and demonstrators and contribute to the management of large classes with over 200 students enrolled.

3 Long Term (Some under-developed thoughts)

[The focus here will be twofold:
1. *A move to a more "blended learning" style with more student coproduction of T&L. This will involve defining the technology infrastructure necessary to achieve this using University supported tools.   The goal will be to use*

technology to manage more routine work effectively so academic and administrative staff are available to work with students. We also plan to use this as a platform to develop intermediate scale distance learning courses.

2. *A redesign of our curricular structure to offer more comprehensive Integrated Masters programmes together with a move to develop strategies for mixed distance/on campus programmes that will allow us to manage intake more effectively and manage demand for project supervisors.]*