Economics QAE Report 2014-15

The University of Edinburgh
College of Humanities and Social Science
School Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report
covering academic year 2014/2015

Head of School Sign-Off

School	Economics
Have all sections of the report been completed?	**yes**
If no, please explain	
Have all actions identified from the 2013/14 report been responded to?	**Yes, all actions identified from the 2013/14 School of Economics Quality Assurance Report have been identified.**
If no, please explain	
Report prepared by (name)	**Dr Richard Holt**
Date	**January 2016**
Head of School's comments (if appropriate)	
Approved by Head of School (name)	**Prof S J Clark**
Date	**January 2016**

Economics QAE Report 2014-15

Formal confirmations

Has this report been discussed at the relevant School committee (Quality Assurance/ Learning and Teaching/Postgraduate/Researcher Experience)? **N**
If N, have arrangements been made to discuss at the next meeting? **Y**

Has this report been discussed at a Student-Staff Liaison Committee or equivalent forum? **N**
If N, have arrangements been made to discuss at the next meeting/equivalent forum? **Y**

SCHOOL CONTEXT

The School of Economics consists of a single subject area, which allows a streamlined management and committee structure and facilitates effective decision-making. In 2014-15 the monitoring and enhancement of teaching and learning activities was overseen by the School's Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC), whose remit covers UG provision and the Postgraduate Studies Committee, whose remit covered PGT and PGR provision. The Teaching and Learning Committee is convened by the School's Director of Quality, thus ensuring that assurance and enhancement are at the heart of TLC activities. The Postgraduate Studies Committee is convened by the Director of the PhD programme. Strategic issues and/or those with major resource implications are also discussed at the School's Management Committee. The Convenors of the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Postgraduate Studies Committee are members of the School Management Committee, which helps to ensure that teaching and learning issues are taken into account at the management committee, and that the Teaching and Learning Committee is aware of key strategic issues and resource constraints.

Overview of the Scale and Scope of Teaching Activities

In 2014-15 the School of Economics offered undergraduate MA, Postgraduate taught MSc and Postgraduate Research PhD programmes. There are around 950 students enrolled on undergraduate degrees involving Economics, 60 MSc students and 30 PhD students.

Undergraduate Programmes

The School of Economics offers 12 four-year, single and joint Honours programmes at undergraduate level. At present, around 230 students per year graduate with a single or joint Honours degree in Economics taught by the School. All entrants to degrees involving Economics are required to offer a higher secondary qualification in Mathematics in reflection mathematical nature of the discipline The bulk of students graduating with degrees involving Economics are enrolled on one of six programmes: MA Economics (45%), MA Economics with Finance (18%), MA Economics and Politics (6%) MA Economics and Accounting (6%), MA Economics with Management Science (6%), MA Economics and Mathematics (6%). The remaining programmes involving Economics account for 13% of the average cohort. The proportion in each programme varies substantially on a cohort-by-cohort basis. The School's undergraduate provision includes 8 joint degrees owned by other Schools.

Despite the variety of programmes offered involving Economics, the normal curriculum in all but a small number of degree programmes in Economics involves a common core from 1st year to 3rd year. This core material comprises around 2/3rds of the Economics courses taken by a student in the MA Economics programme and some 80% of the Economics courses taken by a student reading for a joint degree programme involving Economics. The material to be covered in an Edinburgh Economics degree conforms to that laid down in the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subject benchmark.

In 2014-15 the core courses included:

Year 1 Economics 1 (40 credits)

Year 2 Economics 2 (40)
Issues in Global Economics (20)

Year 3 Topics in Microeconomics (20)
Essentials of Econometrics (20)
Topics in Macroeconomics (20)

The core of the programme covers key elements of economic and econometric analysis that one would expect to find in any Economics degree. Many of the core courses are geared towards providing students with the opportunity to develop a knowledge and understanding of key elements of an economist's toolkit. The material is cumulative, quantitative and can appear rather abstract, although considerable effort has been expended over many years attempting to introduce applications into the core theory courses and also in designing more applied, issues-based courses into the programme.

Economics 1 and Economics 2 form a 2-year treatment of key topics in microeconomic and macroeconomic analysis and quantitative techniques. They each use the same two standard intermediate level textbooks in microeconomics and macroeconomics. Probability and Statistics was covered within Economics 2. In 2014-15 mathematics for economics was introduced into the first semester of Economics 1 as part of a sequenced reform of the coverage of mathematics and statistics. Issues in Global Economics differs from the other non-Honours core courses in that its focus is on getting students to analyse multi-faceted big picture issues, rather than on the development of theoretical tools. At Junior Honours level Essentials of Econometrics is a standard introductory course in econometrics, Topics in Microeconomics is an advanced microeconomic theory course dealing with economics of asymmetric information and topics in game theory and bargaining theory, while Topics in Macroeconomics is an advanced course in applied macroeconomics featuring two topics time consistency in macroeconomic policy and explanations of cross-country income differences. Having completed these core courses, students are well placed to take a range of field courses that align with their interests and also to undertake supervised research in the Honours dissertation.

Partly because of the importance of the analytical core and partly because of its resulting weight within the curriculum, much of the strategic enhancement activity in the MA programmes has been devoted to these core courses. This is reflected in the content of this report. Enhancements to the programmes, courses and to the student experience in general arise in response both to student feedback and to reflection on current experience by academic and administrative staff. Dr Holt co-ordinates enhancement activity through the Teaching and Learning Committee. Dr Anwar is the Undergraduate Programme Director. Undergraduate programmes are administered by the School Undergraduate Teaching Office.

Postgraduate Programmes

The School offers two types of postgraduate programmes: a one-year taught MSc in Economics / Economics(Finance) / Economics(Econometrics) and a PhD in Economics. Together these are part of the Scottish Graduate Programme in Economics (SGPE) which is owned by the 8 Economics departments of the pre-1992 Scottish Universities. Around 60 students enrol on the MSc programmes each year; around 7 students begin doctoral training at Edinburgh each year.

A key rationale for the SGPE is to generate high quality PhD research activity rather than providing a significant revenue stream for the participating departments. One of the key purposes of the MSc is to act as the first year of PhD training; it also provides the basic training for an individual wishing to work as a professional economist. This dual focus creates a tension over the appropriate structure, content and delivery of the programme. The taught curriculum for the MSc includes a substantial common core which accounts for around ¾ of the course-based credit load and around 90% of the contact hours for a student on the MSc:

Semester 1:
Microeconomics 1 (20); Macroeconomics 1 (20); Econometrics 1 (20)

Semester 2, Teaching Block 3
Microeconomics 2 (10); Macroeconomics 2 (10); Econometrics 2(10) Econometrics Project (10)

Following the MSc year a student may progress to a PhD at one of the eight participating institutions. Progression from MSc to PhD normally requires an average grade of 60% on the MSc. In practice, a significant number of potential PhD students apply to remain in Edinburgh, so, in equilibrium, Edinburgh is able to select from amongst the most highly qualified applicants, who have average marks around 70%. Edinburgh also recruits a similar calibre of students for doctoral research from other MSc in Economics programmes from the UK, with around 40% coming from non-SGPE MScs in Economics.

In 2014-15 the MSc programme was administered by the School Postgraduate Office and overseen by Professor Thomas in conjunction with the SGPE Executive Committee - Professor Thomas, Dr Holt (Macroeconomics), Dr Anwar (Microeconomics), Professor Schafer (Heriot Watt) (Econometrics), Professor Delaney (Stirling) (Elective courses and Doctoral training courses).

The PhD programme was administered by the School Postgraduate Office and overseen by two PGR Directors, Professor Snell (PhD Admissions and MSc Research) and Professor Worrall (PhD programme). During the year, Professor Snell replaced Professor Belot in leading the PhD Reading Group. Professor Hopkins was the placement officer for PhD students on the academic job market.

1. QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 Progress

Report progress in addressing School level issues/recommendations/actions from the previous year's report, including whether and how staff and students have been advised of progress.

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For purposes of brevity I simply refer to the location within this report where these issues are discussed – the recommendations / actions from the previous plan are discussed in Section 3.1. Students are advised of progress through SSLC meetings and the Student Newsletter, ad hoc meetings and the QAE report. Staff are advised of progress through the start of year teaching meeting, minutes of the Teaching and Learning Committee, the QAE report and ad hoc meetings.

1.2 Key performance points

Comment or where relevant provide information on the following, for the current year in relation to the previous 5 academic years. Please highlight where any specific programme or student group can be identified, and where rates fall below the relevant benchmark (see guidance), what is being done to address the issue. For actions that are on-going, please comment on their impact.

See guidance section for sources of data.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught

1. **Course results: State proportion of A-D grades versus E-H grades (or grades from E and below as relevant).[UG & PGT]**

The pass rate at UG for 2014-15 was 97.2% down 0.2%. The failure rate rose by 0.2% to 2.8%. For PGT the pass rate fell from 99.1% to 95.4% (and the failure rate rose from 0.9% to 4.6%). None of the core courses identified in the School context section above had an unusually high failure rate.

When high fail rates occur they are often for low enrolment courses, such as visiting student (VV1) versions of courses, or options courses. So low pass rates may driven by a change in the number of poor outcomes for 1 or 2 students. For example, on the MSc course ECNM11032 Corporate Finance, the poor outcome this year was driven by 7 fails out of 29 students.

At PGT level the high failure rate would appear worrying were it not for the fact that the size of the taught programme is only around 60 students, so the failure rate is likely to be noisy. A failure rate of 4.6% is equivalent to having 3 very weak students this year compared with 1 moderately weak student last year (0.9% failure rate).

2. **Comment on the above including proposed actions if the proportion of grades A-D or E-H is higher than expected and briefly state actions taken or planned to address any issues of concern. [UG]**

Not applicable – the data do not present any concerns over pass rates.

3. **Comment on any significant variations or persistent issues in the last 5 year trend in student achievement and any reasons identified. [UG & PGT]**

The main feature of student achievement in Economics is not the trend, but rather the variability around the trend – there is significant variation between cohorts on a course by course basis.

The existence of such outcomes is likely to reflect the interaction of several factors. Key among these appears to be the fact that within the range of courses offered within CHSS, Economics courses are among the most quantitative. In our experience more quantitative courses generate mark distributions which exhibit higher variance. In addition, unlike many other subject areas within the College, all Economics courses (except dissertations) are assessed in part by written examination. So many Economics courses have forms of assessment that deliver a high variance of outcomes – more so than for other course in Humanities and Social Sciences. It is worth noting that the high variance of outcomes impacts on both tails of the mark distribution – we would expect that a larger fraction of students would obtain A1, A2 and high A3 standard marks in Economics than in most other Humanities and Social Science subjects.

Beyond cohort effects, another source of variation is change in the nature of assessment – a move towards greater reliance on unseen examination in a particular course tends to raise the variance of the mark distribution. For example, Issues in Global Economics incorporated an MCQ-based element to the assessment – to allow more of the syllabus to tested – and reduced the weight attached to essay-based coursework. As a result the proportion of Cs, Ds and Fails increased.

4. Comment on withdrawal rate in relation to the College average [see guidance], including any trends, and identify actions needed or being taken if the rate is of concern to the School. [UG & PGT]

College Average Withdrawal rate :
UG 4yr 6%(FT), 7%(PT). UG 5yr 0% (FT/PT).
PGT 2% (FT), 9% (PT).

School Average Withdrawal rate :
UG: The withdrawal rate for full-time entrants is 4%, slightly up on the 4 year low for 2010-11 entrants, but below the College average.
PGT: The withdrawal rate for full-time entrants is 2%. This is down on the previous year and in line with the College average. There is currently a 20% withdrawal rate (2 entrants) for the latest part-time cohort, after no withdrawals for the previous 4 years. As these figures suggest the numbers involved are small, so small absolute changes show as large percentage changes. Overall there seems little cause for concern here.

5. Proportion of entrants who have successfully achieved an award. [UG & PGT]

UG: 91% of entrants successfully achieved an award, 5% down on the previous year, however 4% of entrants are still matriculated.
PGT: 97% of full-time entrants successfully achieved an award which is up slightly on previous year but fairly constant throughout the period.

6. Any notable change in degree classifications in relation to the past 5 years, including notable divergence from Russell Group degree classification data. [UG] For College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, state any issue raised by regulatory bodies in relation to comparator

information and performance in subsequent postgraduate examinations, and state follow up action being taken or planned [UG].

Using a 10-year average the fraction of students on Economics degrees obtaining First class, Upper Second Class, Lower second class and third class degrees is 22.5%, 59.4%, 17.4% and 0.7% respectively.

This distribution of grades varies across degree programmes. The 10-year average proportion of firsts is slightly higher (around 24%) in MA Economics than for those on joint Honours degrees. Presumably this reflects the benefits of specialization and the fact that people who choose to study Single Honours degrees have a better match with Economics.

The value of flexibility within the Scottish 4-year MA Programme can be seen in performance of students who enter the University enrolled on degrees in Economics and 'discover' another subject which they enjoy so much that they elect to transfer to another degree programme 'owned' by another School.
First note that over the sample period (entrants in 2007-8 to 2011-12), 648 students entered the University on degrees owned by the School of Economics and graduated on degrees owned by the School of Economics, but a further 116 entered the University on degrees owned by Economics, but transferred to degrees owned by other Schools (mostly to degrees that do not involve Economics). That is around 15% of students found other subjects sufficiently interesting that they wanted to transfer School in order to access a different degree. Of course, this understates the extent of changes, because many students who remain on degrees owned by the School of Economics will have benefitted from the ability to take 3 subjects in year 1 so as to switch from say MA Economics and Politics to MA Economics and Accounting or from MA Economics and Mathematics to MA Economics and Economic History – but these changes do not show up in the available data.

Another aspect of the value of flexibility is the performance of people who transfer degrees. One explanation for the reluctance of other Schools to accept incoming students might be that they worry that transferring students are from the lower end of the ability distribution. The Economics data suggests that this is not the case. A higher proportion of these 'school-transfer' students obtain either an upper second class degree or a first class degree than is observed for those who enter the University on degrees in Economics and remain on those degrees. While those who enter and leave in Economics are more likely to get first class degrees (24% versus 19% for those who transfer), those who switch are more likely to obtain 1st class or upper second class degrees (85% versus 78% for those who enter and stay with Economics):

School owning exit programme	1st	2.1	2.2	3rd	Pass
Economics	24%	54%	17%	1%	4%
Other	19%	66%	13%	1%	1%

This suggests that students benefit from the flexibility of the Scottish 4 year MA – they can experiment with new subjects and make informed choices at the end of year 2, thus ensuring a good match between the student and their ultimate programme of study.

It also suggests that Subject Areas benefit – because transfers typically represent an inflow of students of above average quality. Students only take the trouble to transfer into subjects that they do particularly well at. Presumably these students do better in their destination programme than they would have done in their original Economics-owned programme – so this is a net benefit to Economics also.

However, these selection effects are only possible if School's reduce restrictions on transfers – e.g. by pairing down the number of credits required in Year 1 and by requiring a common core for both Single and Joint Honours students, as envisaged by the College's Programme Pathways project.

There is also a fair degree of variability - the fraction of firsts was as low as 10% one year and as high as 30% in another. This reflects cohort effects and compositional effects: variation in the fraction of individuals in each cohort enrolled on MA Economics as opposed to joint Honours degrees.

In the past couple of years the fraction of first class Honours degrees has been around 30%, the fraction of upper second class degrees has risen from 53% to 60% and the fraction of lower second class degrees has fallen from 16.8% to 13.3%.

See Section 1.3 below for discussion.

7. **Any notable change in successful achievement of award by taught postgraduate students.**
   This question appears to duplicate 1.2.5 above.

8. **In relation to the University's Strategic Plan target of the creation of at least 800 new opportunities for students to study abroad as part of their degree, state number of students going abroad as part of their degree, together with trend numerically [UG]. If proportion of students going abroad is increasing, briefly state what actions are being used successfully to promote study abroad.**

The number of students going abroad as part of their degree fell from 43 in 2013/14 to 35 in 2014/15. We had anticipated some decline MA Economics and Chinese has been replaced by MA Chinese and Economics (to take advantage of the experience possessed by LLC in relation to managing exchanges in China). Although this does not seem to show up in the figures – none of the School's International Experiences, this year or last, were attributed to 'Languages with a Year Abroad', which suggests that the data is not entirely accurate. There was a substantial decline in the number of non-Erasmus International and Departmental Exchanges. In the past we have not had non-Erasmus Departmental exchanges, so the effect must reflect a decline in the number of University-administered exchanges applied for by Economics students / offered to Economics students. There seems no reason to expect a decline in demand for International Exchange by Economics students (especially since the 2014-15 Junior Honours cohort was the largest that we have ever had, so it seems more likely that the University/International Office decided to restrict the number of offers made to Economics students. The number of Erasmus exchanges declined, because the agreement with Munich became unworkable – students were obliged to enrol on MSc level courses, which were too technically demanding. Meanwhile newly arranged school exchange agreements were not due to come on stream until 2015-16.

Several measures addressed the demand of international experiences:

- New Erasmus agreements with Tilburg and Mannheim and a new Departmental exchange with University of Oregon. These were released in 2014-15 for students going on exchange in 2015-16. It is hoped to expand this provision in future.
- Introduction of a week-long study trip to Dubai for 20 students, during Innovative Learning Week 2014-15 and to Singapore for 15 students during August 2015. Further Go Abroad trips are planned during 2015-16 to Ethiopia, Shanghai and Argentina.
- Introduction of reforms to the treatment of mathematics and statistics at non-Honours level (as part of a wider restructuring of non-Honours) which will allow students going on exchange to demonstrate competence in these pre-requisites more clearly.

9. State where the School has exceeded performance in the recruitment of Widening Participation students within the recruitment context of the School, as reported in the University's Outcome agreement. Comment on the specific reasons identified for success e.g. participants in summer school. [UG]

The number of Widening Participation entrants to the School of Economics rose from 33 in 2013/14 to 35 in 2014/15. This is the second successive increase, which is pleasing. It may be the result of our participation in the Sutton Trust Summer School. However, it is difficult to be sure about this. The increase and overall size of the Widening Participation cohort for Economics remains small compared with that in other Schools.

10. Report on any known issues arising from differences in student performance, for example degree outcomes in relation to gender, ethnicity and age. [UG& PGT]

UG Number of female undergraduate students at entry hovers around 36%. In the 2011-12 cohort (who graduated in 2015), the figure was 37%. In recent years a higher proportion of female students obtain 1st class degrees roughly 30% versus 20% for male students). Male students were relatively more likely to obtain upper second class degrees (55% versus 45%). Roughly equal numbers of male and female students obtain lower second class and third class Honours degrees and pass degrees.

Around 10% of students are 17 or under on entry, 85% are 18-21, 5% are 21-24 and essentially none are over 25. The data on degree outcomes by age on entry are noisy and seem uninformative.

The data on degree outcomes by ethnicity seem to be extremely variable on a year-by-year basis which makes analysis of trends very difficult. This may be because of the number of possible categories for ethnicity and the absence of clear guidelines on how to categorise oneself – presumably these data are self-reported. In any case the noisiness of the data makes it extremely difficult to say anything useful.

PGT In PGT programmes, the data present no issues in terms of overall achievement. Very few students fail overall. Over a 5-year period some 44% of students were female, but the small numbers on the PGT Programmes mean that there is a large amount of variability in the gender and ethnic balance of the programmes. Combined with the small numbers and low proportion of fails, this makes it difficult to identify any relationship between ethnicity or gender and award.

11. Report on student satisfaction with Personal Tutoring experience, against the KPI of 80% satisfaction. Report on how variations in Personal Tutor performance are being managed with a view to increasing student satisfaction. Where the KPI has not been met, outline action being taken.

Undergraduate: Satisfaction with academic support as recorded by the NSS was static at 77%. Staff were contactable (87%) but advice was not perceived as sufficient (68%) or good (76%). Student in years 1-3 as surveyed by ESES seem to perceive academic support and advice as more problematic, with satisfaction 66% (although this was a rise of 7% on the previous year). One bright spot was that students found there PTs to be approachable and willing to help.
In 2015-16 we have introduced a second compulsory meeting with Year 1 students semester 1, after the first Economics 1 assessment, in order to provide a forum to facilitate induction, build the PT-student relationship reflect on initial academic performance.

We will also survey student perception of individual PTs to identify sources of heterogeneity in student experience.

Postgraduate: The PTES survey does not provide appropriate information to assess this issue; however, the PT system conforms to the University's requirements and we have no reason to believe that MSc students are dissatisfied with the support and guidance provided by their PTs.

Postgraduate Research Key performance points

12. Comment on trends in the data provided in BI suite reports 'PGR progression and outcome' , in particular any trends relating to the numbers of students completing (i) within the prescribed period of study; (ii) within the prescribed period of study plus permitted submission period; and (iii) outwith the prescribed period of study plus permitted submission period.

See answer to 1.1.13 below, but note that the total stock of PhD students in Economics is around 35. Only 7-8 students enter the School each year. Entrant numbers are down from the previous year to 6. Virtually all students complete – the withdrawal rate for 2011/12 entrants is 0 – well below the College average. The general trend is for submissions to be made at the end of year 4 / start of year 5. The average months study to completion has, however, exhibited a decline to around 45 for the latest cohort for which we have a complete run of data (the cohort which entered in 2010-11, and who have all completed)

13. State what action is being taken where the number completing outwith the prescribed period of study plus permitted submission period continues to be a significant proportion of the relevant cohort of entrants. In relation to interruptions of study, state whether any common themes emerge from the reasons for these and if so, what action the School is taking or plans to take.

This is an issue where disciplinary needs are at variance with the practice of the University. Many of our doctoral students aspire to academic careers. The academic market for completing doctoral students in Economics has become increasingly global. To be placed well in the academic market, students need to have a good job-market paper and attend the American Economic Association job market meetings in December/January. Graduates compete with US PhDs graduates. This trend has led an increasing number of UK Economics PhD programmes to mirror the US model with two years of courses after a masters programme and three years of PhD research

Virtually no candidates complete a PhD within three years. This is fairly standard in Economics throughout the UK. Indeed, without the 4th year "writing-up" period, the PhD thesis would of necessity involve a less substantial contribution to knowledge, and the qualification would be devalued in relation to that offered by institutions in Europe and the US. We therefore welcome the review being undertaken by the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee about "What is an Edinburgh PhD?" including the review of the study period.

14. Report on any known issues arising from differences in student performance, for example degree outcomes in relation to gender, ethnicity, domicile and age.

Numbers (on average 7-8 per cohort) preclude any meaningful analysis here.

MOOCs

15. **For Schools with MOOCs, provide a brief reflection on the School's experience of providing MOOCs, and in particular any way in which its MOOC provision is informing its credit-bearing provision.**

Not applicable – no MOOCs offered.

1.3 External Examiner reports and actions taken in response

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught

1. **What proportion of External Examiner reports have been received at this point and what action is being taken to follow up outstanding reports?**
   All but 1 PGT External Examiner report received.

2. **Has the proportion of reports received improved on the final point in the previous year?**
   No

3. **What action has been taken if a 100% return rate has not been achieved?**
   Requested report from external examiner.

4. **Themes from External Examiner reports (including commendations, suggestions and issues) and actions taken in response, including any on-going remediation.**

The external examiners were mostly happy with the academic standards employed in assessment and classification, and with the administrative arrangements surrounding marking and moderation, the operation of the special circumstances committees and the Boards of Examiners' meetings.

PGT The external examiners were happy with the academic standards applied and the conduct of the Board of Examiners meetings. One external was in his final year of contract. He made raised no issues, made no suggestions and offered no commendations, but he did indicate that he felt satisfied with our PGT Programmes.

UG Hons In the undergraduate programme, the external examiner for Honours courses completed his term of employment.

He felt that the marking was broadly fair and consistent, that the procedures covering special circumstances, academic misconduct and borderline performance were considered fairly and equitably, applying University regulations and that academic standards were in the main very good. He stated that the History of Economic Thought papers were particularly praiseworthy.

He suggested that to enhance the student learning experience, within the stated aims and outcomes of the programme, course organisers should be encouraged to set riders that are less predictable and call for a greater understanding of what has been learnt.

The external examiner felt that too many Firsts had been awarded. He viewed this as (i) indicating a generic problem with the degree classification system and called for the University to provide more information on transcripts, such as the graduate's grade point average and relative performance; (ii) a consequence of the present regulations (governing the resolution of borderline cases); (iii) a result of the University's approach to the classification of degrees for Junior Year Abroad students only on final year courses; and (vi) the result of marking standards being interpreted more generously in some courses.

Item (i) is an issue that can only be resolved at University level.

In relation to item (ii), the school proposed an amendment to the College-wide rule for the resolution of borderline cases – to require a strict majority of marks in the higher class – but this was rejected by the other Schools in the College. The School is not able unilaterally adopt a revised borderline resolution rule, because then students graduating in 'Economics and Another Subject' would be classified on a different basis to students enrolled on degrees in 'Another Subject and Economics'.

For item (iii) For 2015-16 onwards, the School will require students applying for Junior Year Abroad scheme places to take some core courses (normally taken in Year 3) upon their return to Edinburgh. This will help to avoid the situation in which JYA students are unfairly advantaged when it comes to final degree classification.

In relation to (iv) we will provide course organisers, especially those who are less familiar with the UK system, with stronger guidance as to the meaning of each grade within the Edinburgh Common Marking Scale and the implications of particular marks and mark distributions for degree classification.

UG Non-Hons The external examiner was happy with the academic standards applied, the moderation arrangements and the conduct of the Board of Examiners meetings. She made some suggestions:

- that many of the questions on the online External Examiners Reporting System did not seem appropriate for an external examiner at non-Honours level.
- that the requirements for the award of prizes should be more widely and clearly understood by members of the Board of Examiners before the meetings.

We will try to comply with these for the June 2016 Board of Examiners meeting.

Postgraduate Research

5. State themes from Part III Assessment Forms submitted by External and Internal PhD/MPhil Examiners, (including both positive themes/commendations and areas for consideration) and actions taken in response, including any on-going actions.

We are now having a non-examining chair for most vivas (usually the PhD Director or the PhD Admissions Director) and this allows us to pick up common themes, if there are any, more easily than scanning the part II/III reports.

No new themes were identified this year.

1.4 Student Engagement

1. **Highlight significant issues arising from student feedback, including student-staff liaison committees, course monitoring, ESES, NSS, PTES and PRES, indicating where relevant if it relates to a specific programme.**

NSS The NSS response rate rose 2% to 69%. The 2015 Economics NSS results show small increases across several measured categories including overall satisfaction (which rose 5% to 82%), but disappointingly, there were declines for Teaching on My Course (-2% to 82%) and Assessment and Feedback (down 4% to 58%). There can be considerable year-by-year variation in NSS scores across different categories. This variation makes us wary of reading too much into the general improvement in NSS outcomes for Economics between 2014 and 2015. Even so, previous gains in the response for Academic Support were consolidated and the longer term trend for Assessment and Feedback remains upwards. Overall this suggests that the efforts that Economics has made to make feedback more timely, helpful and informative, and the reforms to the Personal Tutor system have begun to pay dividends. Still feedback and academic support remain a focus for our efforts to improve the student experience. Students' free text comments highlighted other specific issues such as the a desire for a more formal treatment of mathematical methods in the early years of the core curriculum of Economics degree; the need for greater consistency (up-levelling) in the quality of teaching provided by (PG) tutors, and in the guidance and academic support provided by Personal Tutors and dissertation supervisors; the lack of dedicated study space and an ongoing lack of sense of academic community, and the lack of opportunity to develop community between students themselves and between students and staff. There were also calls for increased contact hours and a greater choice of electives in 3rd and 4th years.

ESES The response rate for ESES rose from 18% to 22%. This may make the data relatively unrepresentative, in particular, it appears likely that the proportion of dissatisfied respondents is high. Overall satisfaction for those on programme rose from 73% to 79% and the responses rose for several categories, but declined for, Assessment and Feedback, Learning Resources and Student Services guidance. In written comments, students also highlight quality of feedback, variable quality and availability of academic support, lack of support for personal development.

PTES The School has just one PGT programme (with 3 variants), with around 60 students enrolled, so the PTES responses are particularly noisy. Large increases or decreases were posted for many sub-categories where it is difficult to believe that substantial year-on-year differences exist (e.g. Assessment and Feedback up 7 percentage points, whereas satisfaction with the Dissertation or Major Project is down 6% percentage points). At the same time the overall satisfaction with the programme rose 13% having plummeted by 29% in the previous year. This is likely to be influenced by the small number of respondents, and may in reflect a single adverse experience with one of the assessments just before the PTES survey opened.

Other discussions (at SSLC) indicated dissatisfaction with the heavy workload during the core part of the programme (which runs until just after PTES is released). The problem may have been a mismatch between student interests and the nature of the discipline at postgraduate level. Specifically, the programme is designed as the initial training for intending doctoral students, and (especially in the core) involves a rigorous, technical training in modern neoclassical economic and econometric analysis.

The Programme Director has commented before on this issue. Specifically he argues that '[Students] are warned fairly explicitly about the course being very intensive and very technical; much of this is on the website, so applicants should be aware of the nature of the MSc, with PhD training or training for a career as a professional economist as its aim. However it is clear that this message does not get across, and we are considering ways of making the purpose of the MSc crystal clear to applicants, including a letter to those who have offers.
But the broader issues are concerning, and the issue of students struggling with the sheer volume of material is something that we will address. We have had a consultation involving the teachers of all the core courses, the Scottish Graduate Programme Executive, and we have had extensive feedback from the PhD tutors on their responses to the PTES. '

PRES

The PRES was held in 2014/15. There was an improvement in the response rate from 50% to 59% over 2013 and an increase in the overall experience from 79% to 90%. Both the response rate and overall experience are above the College and University average.

There were significant improvements in a number of areas. Perhaps most striking has been the large increase in the numbers expecting to complete within the allotted timescale (up by 37 percentage points). This is probably the most important factor associated with the other positive changes.

There has been significant improvements in communication, professional development and resources.

Communication: The feeling that the School and institution values and responds to the concerns of students is also up by 37 percentage points; knowledge of whom to approach (other than the supervisor) with concerns about the programme is up by 31 percentage points.

Development: There has been a big increase in the number who have developed contacts or professional networks during their programme (up by 31 percentage points) although this shows room for improvement. The identification of training and development needs by the supervisor is up by 29 percentage points.

Resources: All resource questions show a significant increase. There is a 90% score on the provision of adequate computing and research facilities (up by 26 percentage points) and the score for provision of specialist resources is up by 26 percentage points.

There are two main areas where scores are lower than we would wish. The first area is research culture. Although up by 10 percentage points, it remains low at 65%. The second is professional development including teaching. The scores for professional development excluding teaching are considerably up but remain low. The teaching experience score was down by 20 percentage points and is the only large drop in score over the 2013 survey.

The scores on the understanding of the required standard for a PhD and final assessment procedures remain relatively low.

The comment fields did not add much extra useful information in this case. The HoS was praised for his leadership and commitment to PGR matters. The PRES results have been usefully discussed at the Student-Staff Liaison Committee. Students there felt the response rate was low.

UG Course Questionnaires and **UG SSLC** Student response focussed largely on course specific issues that are best addressed by the relevant course organiser.

In relation to the Honours dissertation, students reported unhappiness over heterogeneity in supervision. They also requested feedback on drafts, as available in other Schools. The Dissertation Co-ordinator explained that it is the School's policy not to provide feedback on drafts – because otherwise the supervisor ends up marking their own work rather than the students'.

At the Honours level, option courses are generally well-liked and perceived to be interesting. This is true even where students make suggestions for improvements. In the light of the fact that students choose their option courses, this is unsurprising – students are choosing courses on subjects that they find interesting taught by subject specialists. Students were happy with the first semester core Honours courses (Topics in Microeconomics and Essentials of Econometrics) and with the Single Honours core course (Topics in Economic Analysis). For Applications of Econometrics, students were happy with the course content – which had been re-organised to include an enhanced treatment of time series econometrics, and the level which builds on Essentials of Econometrics, but requested more office hours in the run up to the group project. With Topics in Macroeconomics, there was unhappiness with the slides provided by one lecturer – which were revised several times - the volume of material in the other part of the course and with the demands of the coursework assessment. Nevertheless students enjoyed the course. Subsequently there was disquiet over the difficulty of the final examination, although the final results for the course were better than in the previous year.

There was a discussion over the lack of study space and it was proposed that the School book out its teaching rooms during the exam period and make them available to Honours students.

At the non-Honours level, 2014-15 was the swansong for Issues in Global Economics (IGE). A number of changes were introduced: the topics were changed to International Macroeconomics and Economics of Developing Countries, to improve the coherence of the course. An MCQ-based class exam was introduced in week 4, to improve engagement and a one of the tutorials was dedicated to a timed specimen exam question, which was the basis of the formative feedback event. Student overall satisfaction with the course was significantly higher than in any previous iteration of the course.

Study Abroad Students returning from a Junior Year abroad were surveyed about their experiences. The response rate was very low (< 20%) which may cast doubt on the reliability of the responses. Overall there was very high satisfaction with the exchange experience.

LEAF Our understanding of specific issues arising in our undergraduate programmes was facilitated by a programme level analysis of assessment and feedback within the Single Honours MA Economics programme using the TESTA methodology (through the LEAF programme). Student feedback here highlighted the Junior Honours year as a particular concern for students. They highlighted the lack of feedback on core courses, the use of negatively marked multiple choice exams and the pressure of having examinations for both semester 1 and semester 2 courses at the end of the academic year. This occurred in Semester 2 of 2013-14 and as a result we have made changes to address student concerns.

MSc Course Questionnaires and SSLCs

Major issues raised in the student staff liaison committee included:

1. Students felt that the overall workload was too high.
2. Students felt that group work (for non-assessed tutorial assignments) did not work as only a few students did most of the work for each group. Staff emphasised the pedagogic value of team-based activities, including learning from problems arising in the functioning of groups. Students suggested a prize be awarded at the end of the year for the best group to act as an incentive to carry on working effectively in groups. This is a tricky issue – some students clearly benefit; others resent the amount of time and that fact that they have to help weaker students. Overall we are convinced it is a positive feature of the [programme. although we are reducing the amount of material that needs to be covered to address some of the concerns.
3. Semester 1 core Macroeconomics 1 – students were happy with the content, level, delivery and assessment of the first section of the course, but there was considerable dissatisfaction with the delivery of the second section of the course. [The Programme Director will discuss these issues with the lecturer concerned]
4. Due staffing (visa) problems the computational macroeconomic labs had to be cancelled at short notice – as it gave them more time to study and helped mitigate the workload issues (above). [Computational macroeconomics labs will not be re-introduced in 2015-16]
5. Students enjoyed the research methodology conference.
6. Semester 2 Microeconomics – students enjoyed the course and were inspired by the lecturer, but were unhappy with the fact that the exam was re-scheduled at short notice. The Programme Director will ensure that this does not happen again.
7. Semester 2 Macroeconomics, students liked the course and the lecturer but were unhappy with the perceived level of difficulty of the exam – but the overall mark distribution was not dissimilar to previous years.

PGR Engagement and SSLCs

The relatively small numbers on the programme and the collegial research environment provides students with an opportunity to engage with the programme with a view to enhancing its quality and the student experience.

The initial training course is taught by one of the PGR Directors and this allows students to develop a close working relationship with the Director and feedback any difficulties or suggestions. The PGR reading group also provides an opportunity to consult students on their views about the programme and organisation. In addition, informal discussion between students and the PhD Programme Director, the programme administrator and other academic staff provide sources of feedback from students.

Two main formal sources of feedback from students are the PGR student staff liaison committee and the PRES. Periodically, the school also undertakes its own surveys of PGR students. The PGR SSLC, chaired by a PhD Director meets once per semester with students closely involved in determining the agenda. Minutes are circulated to the rest of the student body and uploaded to the School website. The SSLC has representatives from each year of the programme, including the writing-up year. Representatives are elected in the first-year by their peers.

The SSLC met twice, in November and in June. A variety of topics were discussed, included exchange visits, catering, space, the reading group structure, research budgets and ethics procedure, the three minute thesis competition, the PhD handbook and support for students to organise their own conference.

2. **Indicate action planned by the School.**

Planned Actions for Undergraduate Programme for 2015-16

Assessment and Feedback Plans include:

- non-Honours exams to made available to students after retention period.
- Release of marks for final exams.
- Curtailed use of negative-marking of multiple choice questions in Honours core courses, in response to student perceptions of unfairness.
- Dissertation submission deadline from March to April to improve consistency with deadlines for other subject areas.

***The Economics Curriculum** :* For 2015-16 efforts to respond to these and other concerns and improve the currency of the curriculum and the quality of provision include:

- Six new Honours options: *Economics of Crime, Economics of Inequality, Health Economics, Issues in Climate Change Economics, Modelling the Financial Crisis and its Aftermath, The Chinese Economy: Past and Present.*
- We have agreed plans to streamline core-course provision at Honours level which will be implemented for students entering Honours in 2016-17.
  - For students on the *MA Economics* degree *Topics in Microeconomics*, *Essentials of Econometrics*, *Applications of Econometrics* and *Topics in Macroeconomics* will be compulsory in 3rd year, *Topics in Economic Analysis* will become an option course. The rationale is to allow students to take more elective courses in year 3 (to take advantage of the increased range of Honours options.
  - For students on the *MA Economics with Another Subject* degrees *Topics in Microeconomics*, *Essentials of Econometrics*, *Applications of Econometrics* and *Topics in Macroeconomics* will be compulsory in 3rd year. The rationale is to comply with the University definition of a 'With' degree.
  - For students on the *MA Economics AND Another Subject* degrees *Topics in Microeconomics*, *Essentials of Econometrics*, will be compulsory in 3rd year and students will choose <u>either</u> *Applications of Econometrics* <u>or</u> *Topics in Macroeconomics*. The rationale is to allow students to choose the core course appropriate to their fields of interest, and allow students on joint degrees to prepare appropriately for dissertations with significant applied content.

- We have further strengthened academic support for the large core Honours courses, with more frequent office hours *Topics in Macroeconomics* and more frequent small group tutorials for *Topics in Microeconomics*.
- Implementation of the second stage of sequenced a plan to restructure our course provision at non-Honours level so as to increase the formal coverage of mathematics and statistics in non-Honours courses. We have altered the quantitative content of *Economics 2*, with coverage of constrained optimisation (integrated with a treatment of producer theory) and an introduction to linear algebra. *Issues in Global Economics* ceased to be a core course and students take a new compulsory course *Statistical Methods in Economics* (which was previously covered in Economics 2). The international macroeconomics content of *Issues in Global Economics* has been integrated into the treatment of open economy macroeconomics issues in Economics 2.

New Degrees: We have introduced a new joint degree with Psychology: *MA Psychology and Economics* and are currently investigating the possibility of creating an *MA Politics, Philosophy and Economics.*

Academic Community: The relative lack of a sense of community has been raised in many undergraduate student surveys. There appear to be a number of aspects to this, which are not directly controlled by the School, such as availability dedicated physical space for Economics undergraduate students. At non-Honours level, due to the flexibility built into 4-year Scottish MA degrees, and the popularity of the subject, Economics classes are large. As a result, interaction with other students and with staff is limited. However, there is greater interaction with staff and other students at Honours level, where more specialisation occurs and classes are consequently smaller. At the same time there is no large physical space, which could be used as a common room for undergraduate students. In the light of these ongoing constraints, a number of changes have been introduced by the School to enhance the sense of community:

Academic Support -

- In 2015-16 we will introduce a compulsory second meeting for 1st year students in the middle of semester 1, to facilitate early identification of problems and provide opportunity to build relationship between a student and his/her personal tutor.

Support for Employability –

- In 2015-16 we introduced an Internship workshop for students interested in finding out about applying for various types of internships, with input from the Careers Service and students who had previously applied for and/or held internships.

Other Approaches to Developing Academic Community -

- Following suggestions from students and building on the successful Junior Honours and Senior Honours dinners, we have put together a more comprehensive Social Calendar of events and included a number of events early in semester 1 to foster development student-student and student-staff community.
- We will introduce a ‘Food for Thought’ lunch initiative to obtain feedback about the programme from Senior Honours students.

- Following the introduction of the Pluralist Reading Group (in heterodox schools of Economic thought), an Economics Honours News Analysis group will be introduced in Semester 1 2015-16 and an Economic Honours Reading Group will begin in semester 2.
- We have continued to make School-based teaching rooms available to Honours students during the consolidation and examination periods to address the lack of study space.

Internationalisation:

- The School expanded the number of destinations both for Erasmus and other International Exchanges with Economics-specific exchanges to Malta for students on exchange in 2016-17. The newly arranged school exchanges to Oregon, Tilburg and Mannheim are now live.
- Further Go Abroad trips are planned during 2015-16 to Ethiopia, Shanghai and Argentina.

Planned Actions for PGT Programmes for 2015-16

A new MSc Programme variant MSc Economics(Econometrics) will be introduced.

New option courses in Public Economics and Bayesian Econometrics will be introduced.

Planned Actions for PGR Programmes for 2015-16

School plans for enhancement:

We shall be talking to colleagues and students about how to improve the PhD student research culture. Two large conferences will be hosted by the School in 2016 and 2017 and we expect to fully involve our PhD students in these events as well as are other regular events and seminars. We have already agreed that the School will participate in the three minute thesis competition again this year. We have not participated in the previous two years because our PhD cohort is relatively small and there was a certain amount of fatigue from the students most of which had participated previously in the School level competition. We have booked the common room for Friday lunch time so that PGR students can have lunch together,

The fall in the score on appropriate support and guidance for your teaching (a fall of 20 percentage points) is somewhat surprising. There has been no obvious change in procedures and tutors are supported by regular weekly tutor meetings. One issue is the timing at which students start tutoring. Entry onto the PhD programme is officially 1st October (because many students may not have results from their masters programmes until late in September) and teaching starts late in September.

From this year we have from this year reduced the tutoring load for first year students commensurate with an increase in the PhD course load for first years and this may make a difference. We are adding more structure to the weekly tutor meetings this year. The first part of the meeting involves a mix of informal discussions about aspects of teaching and the second part of the meeting incorporating a greater focus on course-specific material that they are going to teach in upcoming weeks. So far the first part of the meeting has included a general discussion on approaches to teaching and preparing for tutorials, a discussion of good and bad teaching we have experienced at school and university, and another discussion on student engagement in tutorials. We are also considering reintroducing peer support/review of tutorials in which experienced and inexperienced tutors are paired. We also plan to introduce more variety to the catering for the tutor meetings, which take place on a Tuesday lunchtime.

We will consider what extra support and training we can offer for tutors. This will include making students aware of the specialists courses offered to tutors by the Economics Network and IAD tutors and demonstrators programme as well as the IAD programme on the introduction to academic practice.

In response to the low score on the knowledge of final assessment procedures (65%) and low score on understanding of the required standard for the thesis, the school has produced a separate "writing-up year" guide with details of the pre-viva, viva and post-viva requirements. This guide will be updated annually. Students will also be directed to DSpace to access past dissertations to help with an understanding of what is required for the final thesis.

In addition some further actions for 2016 include,

a) plans to hold a School level 3 minute thesis completion in 2016.

b) plans to implement the new Online Annual Review process in 2016, with the aim of brining 2nd and 3rd year reviews forward, to fall in line with College procedure.

c) offering a short training meeting in 2016 to advise students about the opportunities offered by the PURE database and the use of researchfish for ESRC funded students.

d) undertaking a marketing review include competitor comparisons

3. Evaluate effectiveness of mechanisms used for obtaining and responding to feedback from students, including feedback from on-line non-credit courses (including MOOCs).

Mechanisms used for obtaining student feedback include the surveys listed above in 1.4.1, the Student Staff Liaison Committees for each programme, the Academic Audit Committee for the Undergraduate programmes and informal contact between students and academic and administrative staff through the pastoral support system, social events etc. These channels enable students to participate as partners in shaping the design of their education. A lot of student feedback is available and the School's Teaching and Learning Committee and Postgraduate Studies Committee have devoted time to sifting this data to highlight key themes and identify responses and actions. Also individual members of staff have devoted time and effort towards addressing specific concerns. In terms of student perceptions, the relative lack of movement in survey outcomes (and issues raised) may suggest that the measures that we have undertaken have yet to fully filter through to student evaluation of their experience or may suggest that further measures need to be brought forward, or both! Responses are communicated to students through SSLCs, through the newsletter, poster campaigns such as 'You said. We did.' and through the annual QA report.

Informal Mechanisms Many members of teaching staff provide time in classes for informal discussion of concerns arising from the course. This can allow teaching staff to respond rapidly to issues of confusion arising from content or speed of delivery etc, and can prevent issues building to major problems. Office hours provide another informal vehicle for this sort of concern as do individual and group PT meetings.

SSLC The Staff Student Liaison Committees allow for a more formal discussion of issues arising in particular courses. Some concerns can be addressed directly by discussion in the meeting or by immediate action after the meeting, other issues, such as concerns over submission deadlines may require consideration and co-ordinated action and feed into discussion at the School Teaching and Learning Committee, the Postgraduate Studies Committee and the Scottish Graduate Programme Executive Committee.

All courses have student representation via the class representative scheme. Course Organisers for each non-Honours course core course request representation at the tutorial level. Tutorial group representatives elect from among themselves those students who are to act as representatives on the Staff Student Liaison Committee. Junior and Senior Honours students each select representatives to membership of the Staff Student Liaison Committee. Once members have been selected, early in the 1st semester, their names and contact details are available on through Learn. Volunteers attend the Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) class representative training. The School of Economics communicates with its class representatives via both email and meetings (usually towards the end of the semester). Details of this scheme are available from the relevant undergraduate non-honours course handbook and in the Honours Handbook.

Course Questionnaires In 2014-15 the School used the Evasys questionnaire system for undergraduate courses. Students who completed the new questionnaires were pleased with the reduction in the number of questions. From a QA perspective the introduction of “key positive” and “key negative” free text options was a useful development. There were some teething problems with the questions, in terms of the ease with which students could isolate their own tutor from a list of multiple tutors. Response rates for electronic questionnaires are often quite low, (the average (weighted by enrolment) is around 35% with lower response rates for UG non-Honours courses and higher response rates for UG Honours courses and PGT courses. This may lead to non-representative feedback (especially on courses with low enrolments). In semester 2 2014-15 we used a paper-based questionnaire administered in class time. This raised the weighted average response rate to above 50%. Since all courses now offer some formative feedback event during the system it should be possible to ensure that students have received some feedback by the time that questionnaires are completed. In 2014-15 we administered a questionnaire to elicit student views on their dissertation supervision, by supervisor.

NSS, PTES, PRES, ESES Surveys The ESES and NSS complement the course level questionnaires and provide School level information on many different aspects of the student experience. They are considered directly by the Director of Quality Assurance and inform enhancements overseen by the Teaching and Learning Committee. The ESES has a disappointingly low response rate – around 22% - which limits its usefulness. The survey might obtain higher response rates and be more reliable and informative. The NSS, PTES and PRES have significantly higher response rates. The questionnaire responses and free form comments inform the direction and detail of teaching strategy.

Academic Audit The Academic Audit is a slightly more formal meeting at undergraduate level, attended by an SSLC representative from each year group, the Director of Undergraduate Teaching and the Director of Quality and the Honours Administrator. It involves a detailed course-by-course reflection on student questionnaires on teaching activity in the previous semester, and again provides useful information that feeds into discussions of reforms to courses and enhancement of provision. From 2013-14, the Academic Audit has met as a subcommittee of the undergraduate SSLC committee.

4. **OPTIONAL: Include if wished a reflection from student representatives or other configurations of the student voice on student engagement and its effectiveness.**

1.5 Annual Monitoring
Course and Programme – All Credit-bearing Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Provision

1. Outline briefly the process for course and/or programme monitoring.

Quality assurance procedures are integrated into teaching and assessment throughout the School. The QAE procedures involve monitoring and review of all undergraduate and postgraduate courses and programmes, peer review of teaching and formal and informal meetings. Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes reviews are written by the relevant Programme Director and reviewed by the School Teaching and Learning Committee.

Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) System. The Director of Quality's review of the peer review activity highlighted the limitations in the extent to which academics are prepared to provide a critical written record of a colleagues course (a situation that can be exacerbated if a more junior member of staff is peer reviewing a course taught by a senior colleague). In fact some of the most comprehensive and critical reflective reviewing activity was undertaken by course organisers of team-taught courses, particularly at non-Honours level. So our review arrangements for second marked courses in 2014-15 involved a reflective review written by the course organiser, which the second marker then reviews and monitors. The course organiser has access to a full range of material including a broad range of course material, including assessed coursework, and guidance for and feedback on assessed coursework, SSLC comments and student questionnaire returns as well as examination scripts.

Priorities for innovation in teaching and learning are identified primarily by reflection on (i) existing teaching and learning activity by School staff, the Postgraduate Studies Committee and the Teaching and Learning Committee, including QA procedures such as course and programme monitoring (ii) student concerns highlighted by various forms of feedback (iii) enhancement themes and the College Learning and Teaching Strategy as identified by the School's Teaching and Learning Committee and Postgraduate Studies Committees (iv) strategic developments within the School as identified by the School Management Committee.

The School Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) has overall responsibility for strategy and policy relating to assurance and enhancement of the UG programme. The Director of Quality convenes the School's Teaching and Learning Committee helping to ensure that assurance and enhancement are at the heart of the TLC's activities. Other members of the Teaching and Learning Committee in 2013-14 were the Director of Undergraduate Teaching, the Senior Tutor, the International Director, as well as the PhD Programme Director. The views of support staff are represented on the TLC by the Honours Administrator who is also the secretary to the committee.

Awareness of key College strategic and enhancement themes in relation to teaching are assured by the TLC Convenor, who represents the School on of the College Quality Assurance Committee, the Director of Undergraduate Teaching, who is a member of the College Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Committee, the Senior Tutor who represents the School on the College Senior Tutor's Committee, and the Phd Programme Directors who represents the School on the College Postgraduate Studies Committee.

The convenor of the Teaching and Learning Committee is a member of the School Management Committee, as are two other members of the Teaching and Learning Committee. This structure helps to ensure that the enhancement of teaching and learning is at the heart of both committees' agendas. The Management Committee has been involved in discussions over teaching matters with significant resource implications, such as the possible changes to first year provision in Economics.

In 2014-15 the monitoring and enhancement of teaching and learning activities at postgraduate level was overseen by the School's Postgraduate Studies Committee, whose remit covers PGT and PGR provision. For PGT provision this overlaps with the SGPE Executive Committee. The Postgraduate Studies Committee is convened by the Director of the PhD programme. Strategic issues and/or those with major resource implications are also discussed at the School's Management Committee. The Convenor of the Postgraduate Studies Committee is a member of the School Management Committee, which helps to ensure that teaching and learning issues are taken into account at the management committee, and that the Postgraduate Studies Committee is aware of key strategic issues and resource constraints.

Strategic use has been made of externally imposed reforms, such as the establishment of the personal tutor system. This has been used as an opportunity to re-design the provision of academic and pastoral support so as to address concerns over the lack of sense of community amongst economics students, particularly at non-Honours level, where class sizes are large, and in the light of the absence of communal space in the School's buildings.

Quality assurance procedures are integrated into teaching and assessment throughout the School. The QAE procedures involve monitoring and review of all undergraduate and postgraduate courses and programmes, peer review of teaching and the promotion of best practice in teaching learning and pastoral and academic support within the School through regular formal and informal meetings. Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are reviewed by the relevant committee. Student opinion is incorporated in the QAE process by means of end-of-course questionnaires, student contribution at regular meetings of undergraduate and postgraduate staff-student liaison committee (SSLC) meetings, informal discussions with students, focus groups and the NSS, PTES and PRES surveys.

Many ideas for changes to core elements of the programmes come from course organisers and the teaching team either directly from their own reflection, or on the basis of reflection upon student comments. The School attempts to adhere to the University's standard procedures for approval of courses and programmes. The School has separate Board of Studies for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Courses and Programmes which meet once per semester provided there is relevant business.

These formal structures are supplemented by a number of regular meetings which target the management of particular aspects of teaching and learning from the perspective of staff, such as the weekly postgraduate tutors lunchtime training meeting, academic guidance and pastoral support training meetings, an annual core course developments meeting and a variety of end of session meetings reflecting on the academic, pastoral and administrative provision that session with a view to making changes to improve aspects of the provision in subsequent sessions.

2. Course level: Has annual monitoring been conducted for all credit-bearing courses?

Yes

3. If annual monitoring of courses has not been carried out, why is this, and what follow-up action is being taken?

Not Applicable

4. Identify the key themes from annual monitoring:

See discussion and plans in Section 1.4.

Postgraduate research

5. Outline briefly the process for monitoring student progress and for identifying any School-level issues related to student progress.

The PhD programme last three years with a final writing-up year. Students are required to submit their thesis before the end of their fourth year.

Each PhD student is required to undergo a formal review to assess whether his/her progress provides evidence that the candidate is capable of successfully completing a PhD within the regulatory time-period. This occurs at the end of the first year of study. The Review Panel consists of the supervisors and the members of the Economics PhD panel. For the review, a student is required to give a presentation on his/her research area, specifying research questions, locating the work within the appropriate academic literature, explaining the research design, methodologies, and anticipated contribution. The student also sets out a plan of research for the subsequent year. In addition the student submits a draft of a paper, as part of the annual report that summarises the research undertaken to that point. If the panel judges the progress not satisfactory, but believes that such a verdict is within reach, it may grant an extension. If a student fails to pass the review and receives no extension (s)he is recommended, in her/his own best interests to submit for an MPhil degree or to leave the programme.

In subsequent years, all Economics PGR students submit annual reports summarising achievements over the previous academic session (including a review of the training record for students, such as transferrable skills, and subject-specific advanced doctoral training courses). The supervisors comment on the student's report and a formal meeting is arranged to discuss the report and the student's progress. The PhD Director reads (with a view to providing higher level learning points for wider enhancement purposes, with the intention of reporting these to the School's Teaching Committee.) and signs off each report.

Supervisors and students are encouraged to keep notes of regular supervisory meeting. The method advised is that students write a brief e-mail report to their supervisor. This often serves to highlight any misunderstandings that may have arisen to allow them to be corrected at an early stage.

From 2014/15 The PGR Directors have fulfilled the role of personal tutor to all research students, meeting all students at least once per year and operate an open-door policy at other times.

6. **For the taught element of postgraduate research provision, reflect on key issues arising from monitoring student progress and how they are being taken forward. Do not include courses where annual monitoring is reported on via Section 1.5 (Annual Monitoring UG & PGT)**

During their first year, PhD students are required to take 6 training courses. These consist of a) 4 core courses: Mathematics/Microeconomics (Tim Worrall), Econometrics (Mark Schafer, Arnab Bhatterchajee), Macroeconomics (Ludo Vischers, Jakub Steiner). In addition they take two of the advanced SGPE MSc option courses and participate in a PhD reading and presentation group based on seminal papers in the literature.

With prior approval of the PGR Director and support of the supervisor, a student may be allowed to substitute one of the MSc advanced options by taking the Graduate Diploma exam with the Royal Statistical Society, the highest level of examination offered by RSS; assessed modules with the Scottish Mathematical Sciences Training Centre; any other advanced Economics course/summer-school of the student's choice.

In addition, the SGPE & SIRE offer a range of specialist short courses for PhD students. Each typically lasts two days and is taught by experts in the field. The courses offered vary from year to year.

No Issues arose from any of these courses, which will be incorporated into the MSc(R), which is to run from 2015 onwards.

7. **Identify the key themes from annual monitoring in 2 categories:**

- **Positives**
- **Issues identified for improvement and how these will be taken forward.**

See Section 1.4.1 for themes arising and Section 1.4.2 for planned actions.

1.6 Internal Subject Review (TPR and PPR)

1. **Attach annual report of progress with recommendations for individual reviews until all completed.**

See table below.

2. **Reflect on impact of actions taken to date.**

It is too soon to judge the effect of the curriculum reforms, and the other recommendations (in relation to staffing workloads and succession) have not yet been completed.

Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
"The review team recommends that the School develops its work allocation model to allow specialisation according to preferences and skills, and to allow for more obvious succession in roles."	September 2014 onwards	The School is developing a workload allocation model, consistent with the CHSS guidance. A shadow workload model will be developed in 2015-16 and then a full WAM will be implemented in 2016-17.	September 2016
"The review team also recommends that a terminal date is instituted for roles such as Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Director of Quality, with a named successor shadowing the incumbent during the final year of their term and with consideration given to the feasibility of introducing terminal research leave."	2014 - onwards	Succession planning has been implemented in a phased manner, initially for the roles of Director of Knowledge Exchange and Director of Research but not for roles related to undergraduate teaching.	No date agreed
"The review team also recommends rotation of roles in order to maintain and widen such knowledge and expertise, noting the importance of balancing career development, research and succession planning for administrative roles. In both respects [the first two recommendations in paragraph 2.1.5], the School should consider how to incorporate rewards for different forms of excellence	2014 - onwards	See recommendations 1 & 2 – this issue remains unaddressed.	No date agreed

within its work allocation model, for example through fixed end dates with terminal research leave for major role holders.”			
“It is recommended that such considerations [incorporation of rewards for different forms of excellence in School work allocation model] are fed into the development of the University rewards system.”	Ongoing	This builds on 1-3 and relates with University Human Resources issues. The Director of Human Resources has responded as follows: “I am pleased to confirm that we have already a significant body of work in train, led by Dr Sue Rigby and Professor Alan Murray, with input from Professor Charlie Jaffrey and Professor Graeme Laurie, which will go beyond this particular recommendation, in producing exemplars of excellence across all aspects of our academic portfolio, that is to say, these will address how to evidence excellence in learning and teaching; research impact; and interdisciplinary work, as well as how to embed these considerations into School workload models. We would be very pleased to work with Economics on further developing their current model. It must be stressed that workload allocation models have to be developed at disciplinary level. Thus, whilst the University rewards system and guidance on work allocation identify clear principles that should be incorporated in such models, these have to be tailored at local level, in order to be relevant to the particular disciplinary field. The University has already had much success in blending these principles of subsidiarity and consistency of practice and we will be building on these strong foundations in	Ongoing

		further enhancing our rewards systems."	
"It is recommended that the teaching team builds on existing practice in Year 2 to introduce mathematical concepts to students in Year 1 before these concepts are used in the context of Economics, and makes it explicit to students why these concepts will be important in subsequent parts of the course."	2013-14 with ongoing changes in the normal curriculum for degrees in Economics through to 2016-17	These recommendations relate to subject specific remit items concerning our provision at non-Honours level. These issues have been extensively discussed at the School's Teaching and Learning Committee and proposals for sequenced modifications to the existing course and programme structure were approved in 2013-14 for implementation in year 1 in 2014-2015 and in year 2 in 2015-16.	2015-16
"The review team was impressed with the School's active engagement in ensuring that the quality of the teaching and learning experience continues to be maintained under challenging circumstances such as a heterogeneous student body and large course numbers and recommends that the School continues to explore ways to maintain standards and enhance the experience of students taking Economics 1A."	2013-14 with ongoing changes for year 1 implemented in 2014-15.	As recommendation 5	2014-15
"The School has already identified that there might be benefit in altering the Degree Programme Template for Economics to provide exit routes through alternative single honours degree programmes, and the review team recommends that the School pursues this action."	2013	This relates to the possibility of including exit options as a formal requirement in the first year of the Degree Programme Template of single Honours MA Economics. In principle, forcing first year MA Economics students to take those first year courses required to transfer another Single Honours degree in a cognate discipline, e.g. Politics or Business or Economic History, might reduce the numbers of students forced to transfer to the BA(HSS). However, after further investigation the School's	June 2013

		Teaching and Learning Committee has concluded that the number of available outside options to which a students could transfer was limited (in part because of the approach to transfer requests by other schools and in part because of the requirements in the first year of other degree programmes) so that a formal constraint would be unduly restrictive on the elective courses for the majority of students (who stay with Economics) in order to make transfers easier for a relatively small number of students. At present no new action will be taken on this recommendation, instead we will continue to encourage Personal Tutors to alert first year students to the implications of their course choices. Update 2014 – it may be that the Programme Pathways project will simplify matters – by restricting the number of required credits in a particular subject area to 60.	
"The review team recommends that the School provides access to suitable space for the Student Support Officers for the purpose of conducting confidential meetings with students."	Feb 2014	The available office space has been re-allocated, and some modifications undertaken to the fabric of the building of 30 Buccleuch Place to provide suitable space for meetings with students. However, space constraints will make it difficult to increase the number of Student Support Officers in line with increasing demand from students.	Feb 2014
"The review team recommends that the Enhancing Student Support Project considers making coursework marks for all subjects available to Personal	No date agreed	This has been referred to the Enhancing Student Support project. The following response has been provided: 'The Enhancing Student Support project intends to make coursework marks for all subjects available to Personal	

Tutors to allow an overview of student performance. "		Tutors to allow an overview of student performance. However, this enhancement to the current PT system is dependent on IT systems developments being made during the implementation of other projects across the University (such as the Programme and Course Information Management project) and therefore the timing of its delivery is uncertain at this point. '	
It is recommended that the School discuss with the Timetabling Unit how it might be possible to achieve maximum clustering of Economics tutorial rooms within the University's timetabling policy.	June 2013	This relates to a desire by School of Economics to block book rooms for tutorials in the central area, since the large number of tutorials we run would allow us to fill a set of rooms throughout the day. It was hoped that teaching in a common set of rooms would act to counter, at least in part, the deleterious effect of the absence of communal space at undergraduate level and thereby enhance the sense of community felt by our undergraduate students. This has been discussed with Timetabling Unit. While the Timetabling Unit was unable to offer us dedicated teaching rooms, it has been able to concentrate our bookings within the George Square area rather than throughout the central area as before. The School has asked for dedicated tutorial and social space for undergraduate to be improved in the medium term when the School moves to the David Hume Tower.	June 2013
The need for further University guidance to ensure consistency of practice [in Special Circumstances cases] was noted, together with more specific guidance on	September 2013 onwards	Economics has noted that a Task Group of the Senatus Curriculum and Student Progression Committee has been reviewing the Special Circumstances Policy for the University. A revised policy	September 2013

Special Circumstances for students. The review team recommends that these issues are considered by the Senate Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) Special Circumstances task group.		will be implemented across the University for all assessments relating to courses which run from 16 September 2013 onwards	

1.7 Reviews by accrediting and professional bodies

1. **Report any review by an accrediting or professional body which has taken place since the last annual report and confirm the outcome (attach the outcome letter /documentation).**

Of the degrees offered by the School, only the joint Honours degree MA (Hons) Economics and Accounting offered jointly with the Business School is formally accredited. The professional accreditation processes for accounting degrees handled by the Accounting and Finance group within the Business School. Professional accounting accreditation details are available from the Business School. In addition The MA Economics and Accounting, MA Economics with Management Science, MA Economics with Finance and MA Business and Economics all contribute to the Business School's AACSB accreditation. Also the LLB Law and Economics is accredited by the Law Society of Scotland and is subject to regular review. As far as we are aware, no issues requiring action by Economics have arisen from these external reviews.

2. **Note any recommendations or actions which have an impact beyond the School.**

Not applicable.

1.8 Collaborative Arrangements (including placements and study abroad partnerships)

1. **Has the School entered into any new collaborative teaching arrangement/s in which part or all of a programme of study is provided by a partner institution either in the UK or abroad leading to an award by the University of Edinburgh either wholly or in joint names?**

No

2. **If Y, state title of award or nature of collaboration (e.g. new study abroad partnership), and whether notified to Governance and Strategic Planning.**

Not applicable.

3. **Have any issues arisen from existing collaborative arrangements?**

The only collaborative programme is the Scottish Graduate Programme in Economics, which incorporates the PGT programmes: MSc Economics, the MSc Economics(Finance) and the MSc Economics(Econometrics). The SGPE MSc programme is awarded by and wholly taught at the University of Edinburgh and is subject to Edinburgh's degree statutes and regulations, it is taught by and owned by the Economics departments of the eight participating institutions. The MSc is not "owned" and run by the School, and its governance structure reflects this. Equally, while clearly involving collaborative teaching activity, it does not appear to fulfil the University of Edinburgh's formal criteria for the characterisation of a "collaboration" because students remain on one site for the duration of the MSc and because the degree is not jointly awarded. Nevertheless, for insurance purposes, in the light of ELIR, the SGPE MSc was formally listed as a "collaboration". These are discussed extensively throughout the document. I do not repeat the discussion here for the sake of brevity.

4. **Are any changes foreseen which are likely to require changes to existing agreements? Please outline these briefly.**

No changes envisaged.

5. **Are there any issues of wider concern to the College/University arising from collaborative arrangements?**

None.

1.9 Any other issues (optional)

Reflect on any issues emerging from the School's quality assurance processes not covered by the sections above.

No comment.

2. Quality Enhancement

Reflect on good practice identified through annual monitoring, student feedback/surveys or other mechanisms, including the impact of actions which have worked well and how this impact has been evaluated. Please include name of contact for follow up.

This question is addressed in Sections 1.4 and Sections 3.1 and 3.2.
Contact: Richard.Holt@ed.ac.uk

3. Engagement with Strategy

1. **Report on key priorities as outlined in the School Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy and Postgraduate Research Strategy, or the sections of the School annual plan relevant to UG, PGT and PGR provision. Schools may wish to reference University priorities which influence School strategies.**

I use this section to report on key priorities in teaching and learning outlined in the School 2014 annual plan, which was structured around programme provision at UG, PGT and PGR levels, rather than around the strategic priorities outlined in the College Learning and Teaching Strategy. Many of the items in the plan relate to the 5 aspects of "Improvement of the Student Experience", namely, community, engagement, support and recognition. Those themes are discussed in item 3.2 below.

UG Learning and Teaching 2014-15

The 2014 NSS results broadly maintain the gains of previous years. The increase in the response for Academic Support (+7 to 77%) suggests that the work that School has undertaken have begun to pay dividends. Disappointingly, the other main measures were fairly static and overall satisfaction declined by 2% to 76%.

We implemented the first stage of sequenced a plan to restructure our course provision at non-Honours level in such a way as to maintain flexibility of degree pathways. We increased the quantitative content of Economics 1, with demand for a less quantitative treatment from students not intending to proceed to Economics Honours being met by a refreshed version of Economic Principles and Applications.

We refined the quantitative component of our progression requirements for entry to Honours in order to obtain a better signal of student ability.

We streamlined our core-course provision at Honours level. This will facilitate communication of learning outcomes for international exchanges and for students intending to continue to postgraduate study in Economics at leading institutions.

At Honours level we strengthened academic support for the large core Honours courses, with more extended office hours and more frequent small group tutorials. We have increased tutorial support for more technical Honours electives. We have introduced a new Honours option course, The Economics of the Family.

We introduced 2 new courses Alternative Approaches to Macroeconomics and Public Sector Economics as our contribution to the College Summer School.

We have extended the number of opportunities for international experiences available to undergraduate students through the introduction of School level annual exchanges with the University of Oregon, University of Mannheim and Tilburg University. A further initiative is a 1-week visit to Dubai as part of Innovative Learning Week, and to Singapore in August, which provided an international experience to around 20 students.

We have withdrawn the MA in Economics and Law and approved a new MA in Psychology and Economics.

UG assessment and Feedback

We have:

- reformed the assessment structure of several courses to provide more feedback opportunities, improve engagement and enhance learning;
- extended the Economics 1 Reading Group to Economics 2, with students receiving bonus marks for participation.
- increased the extent of individualised feedback events into core Honours courses;
- in response to student perceptions of unfairness, severely curtailed the use of negative-marking of multiple choice questions;
- made provision for individual feedback to be given on marked honours dissertations;
- introduced a reward scheme for attendance and assignment completion in non-honours courses, to replace the previous penalty scheme for tutorial non-attendance.

More specifically on feedback, we have ensured

- maximum turnaround period for assessed work of 3 weeks (including our large non-Honours courses).

- within-semester formative feedback event for all undergraduate courses.
- provision of assessment and feedback information at course level 4 weeks prior to the start of teaching.
- continued use of a Feedback log, posted on all course web-sites, which indicates the nature and availability of feedback and target and actual turnaround times

Postgraduate Taught
We bid for and won the right to host the taught component of the Scottish Graduate Programme in Economics. This secures a prime source of good PhD students.

Postgraduate Research
A number of important changes have been made to the programme in 2014/15:

a) The MSc(R) programme has been approved for implementation for 2015/16 session. The MSc(R) is an exit degree for those not proceeding to the PhD or MPhil programme. The MSc(R) coursework and dissertation is completed by all first year students.

b) Commensurately we have reduced the teaching load for those on research and teaching scholarships and principal's career development scholarships by one-third in their first year.

c) We have obtained more information about supervisory interests and capacity and included a list of potential PhD topics and readings on our website for prospective students.

d) We have reviewed and updated the prospectus entry and information on our website for prospective students.

e) We advertised the ESRC scholarships linked to large ESRC grant on Credit and Labour Market Foundations of the Macroeconomy, including adverts in the THE and Economist website.

f) We have formalised Erasmus exchange links with Mannheim and Toulouse.

g) We have arranged visits for students at Cologne, Milan, Arizona, Barcelona, Budapest and Pennsylvania for parts of 2015/16.

Student Experience

Community and Staff-Student interaction:
- Dissertation group-meetings, an opportunity for individuals with the same supervisor and similar interests to interact and work collaboratively, are now offered by all supervisors.
- The School continues to provide financial support and academic time to the Economics Society. The Society contributes to the sense of community amongst students e.g. through a development of a buddies system, which this year extends to 90 students, and through their role in Innovative Learning Week.
- The School is also closely involved in the newly created China-Economics society.
- Following suggestions from students and building on the successful Senior Honours dinner, we organised a reception in Semester 1 geared to Junior Honours students.
- An Economics Forum has been introduced to facilitate discussion of current economic issues and an opportunity for interaction between students and academic staff.

• We have made School-based teaching rooms available to Honours students during the consolidation and examination periods to address the lack of study space.

Quality Assurance

Efforts to work with students as partners in their learning have been enhanced by the introduction of student-authored minutes to bolster the student-led basis of the PhD and MSc Student-Staff Liaison Committee meetings.
Separate Student-Staff Liaison Committee meetings have been introduced for Honours and non-Honours cohorts to allow fuller discussion at each level.
Alongside the formal Student-Staff Liaison Committee, there has been an ongoing conversation with the newly formed Student Council.

Student Support

To support students' transition from secondary school to university, we have introduced a non-compulsory second individual meeting for 1st year students in Semester 1, for which take-up was around 50%.

2. **Reflect on engagement with the University's current priority theme: Improvement of the Student Experience, focussing the five key areas outlined in the Student Experience leaflet summer 2013: community, engagement, support, feedback and recognition.**

A. COMMUNITY

Students in the three broad programme areas: undergraduate MA, postgraduate taught MSc and postgraduate research students have very different experiences of academic community.

The PhD programme, while growing, remains small. PhD students typically have personal dedicated space and computing facilities within the School's main building, 30/31 Buccleuch Place. The majority of PhD students are tutors and, in this role as members of the Schools teaching staff, participate in the main teaching learning activities within the School. There are regular, whole group meetings for the weekly PhD reading group and the weekly PG tutors' lunch during which networking occurs. There is an annual residential research conference, which again fosters a sense of identity. In short there is a clear sense of shared identity and academic community.

The same is true of the PGT students. The MSc programme is fairly small – there are around 60 students in each cohort. Virtually all lectures are held in a single lecture theatre, and there is a dedicated workroom as well as computing facilities. This physical presence helps to provide a sense of community by providing spaces within which interaction can occur. The value of these facilities was explicitly recognised by students in the 2014 PTES. Students take common courses for the first semester and half of the second semester, supported by group-based assignments for tutorials and computing laboratories. The closed nature of the programme (students from other schools must seek permission before being allowed to enrol on courses) combined with its intensive nature, foster a strong sense of identity. This is bolstered by a variety of social activities and the residential methodology conference.

The situation is markedly different at undergraduate level. The physical constraints of 31 Buccleuch Place mean that, in contrast with some other Schools, we have no social space or study space for our undergraduates. Among other things, this impedes efforts to create a sense of community within the School, which is particularly problematic given the numbers of students on our courses in years 1 and 2. This is an ongoing concern in that it affects our NSS returns and may affect our ability to recruit UK and overseas students.

We had incorporated study space for undergraduate students in our plans for a move to the DHT and were dismayed to have to report to students that this move has been postponed until the end of the decade. **The School is in full agreement with its undergraduate students that study and social space is important and request that the University provide suitable space within the central area in the period before the move to the DHT can occur.**

In the absence of any dedicated social space, we have attempted to incorporate group-based activities into our courses, which may help to develop a sense of community. At an anecdotal level UG students report difficulties in booking suitable study space for group work. Clearly, if students find it difficult to co-ordinate meetings for groupwork, this may limit the extent to which the School can make use of co-operative learning approaches, which, in turn, may limit the extent to which associated graduate attributes can be developed. Regardless of the success of this approach, **the general lack of social space for undergraduate students and the inequality in the distribution of such space between Schools is an issue that needs to be addressed systematically at University level.**

Collaborative Approaches to Learning

Peer supported learning methods are used in a number of ways throughout the undergraduate programme, particularly in the core courses in the 3rd years of the programme. Experience of collaborative learning can be useful as a tool for both learning and teaching, for its value to students during in the programme, as a means of developing graduate attributes, and as a means of at least partly addressing problems of engagement and of the limited sense of community in Economics programmes. For these reasons and others we have designed group work into our programmes at various points and attempted to highlight the value of this sort of activity to students.

Examples of collaborative learning methods include group assignments as part of the assessment procedure to enhance team-working skills and stimulate peer learning. There are team projects in core courses Essentials of Econometrics and Applications of Econometrics. Group projects feature in a number of Honours electives including Capital and Growth Theory, Economics of Transition and Monetary Theory and Policy. The helpdesks offer further opportunity for peer feedback and collaborative learning.

At the graduate level there are study groups, a group-based Econometrics project and a Helpdesk staffed by PhD students (who generally have been awarded distinctions on the SGPE MSc). The use of small work groups in the SGPE MSc core courses (which occupy 75% of a student's non-dissertation credits and more than 75% of the contact hours) provides substantial opportunities to engage in groupwork and peer assisted learning. For PhD students Peer Assisted Learning is facilitated by PhD Reading Group activities. It is also encouraged in teaching activity undertaken by postgraduate tutors through mentoring and peer observation of teaching activities.

Other Initiatives for Developing Community Introduced in 2014-15 include

- Dissertation group-meetings were offered as standard by all supervisors.
- We organised a reception in Semester 1 geared to Junior Honours students, based on the assessment deadlines for the course Essentials of Econometrics.
- An Economics Forum was introduced to facilitate discussion of current economic issues and an opportunity for interaction between students and academic staff.
- We made School-based teaching rooms available to Honours students, during the consolidation and examination periods in Semesters 1 and 2 and during Innovative Learning Week, to address the lack of study space.

Further Initiatives for Developing Community to be Introduced in 2015-16 include

- Social Programme, Co-ordinated by Dr Myers, a Senior Teaching Fellow, in conjunction with the Student Experience Officer, and the Economics Society, with a focus of social events during Semester 1, to develop academic community at the start of the academic year.
- Semester 1 Senior Honours feedback lunch event – Food For Thought
- Semester 1 Senior Honours Dinner.
- Honours News Analysis Group and Honours Reading Group.

B ENGAGEMENT

Enabling students to develop as independent learners is an integral part of the design of our courses and programmes. The role of students as independent, engaged learners and students' responsibility for their own learning is highlighted in Course Handbooks for non-Honours courses, the Honours Handbook, the MSc Handbook and the PhD Handbook all of which are revised annually. Students' awareness of the opportunities for the progressive development of personal autonomy and personal effectiveness during the programme is highlighted at key points such as such the whole cohort meetings at the beginning of Junior Honours. Also support staff email second year students just before they go into junior honours, with tips and advice on how to prepare for honours.

Initial engagement

The members of the School's Teaching and Learning Committee have recognised for some time that the cultural shift in learning strategies which accompanies the transition from School to University plays a critical role in the initial recognition and subsequent development of a student's personal and intellectual autonomy and personal effectiveness. In undergraduate degrees in Economics this issue arises in Economics 1, Economics 2 and Issues in Global Economics. There was anecdotal evidence early in the review period that many students were not engaging with the learning opportunities, and were slow to accept the increased responsibility for their learning that characterises Higher education. Features of non-Honours which address this include:

- revised introductory sequence in Economics 1 illustrating the scope of economic analysis to motivate students to engage at the start of their University careers.
- refreshed weekly tutorial exercises, including more applied economics, and increased feedback on weekly online tests to encourage engagement and provide opportunities for students to develop as independent learners

• a series of mid-semester tests (related to material in online tests and summatively assessed) to encourage good study habits at an early stage in the programme.
• Named prizes for academic performance were introduced for all non-Honours courses to improve the incentives for engagement and good performance in non-Honours years.

Progression in communication of expectations of students' role as independent learners

Progression in course guidance enables students to grow as independent learners throughout the programme. For example, for essay assignments in non-Honours core course, Economics 2 , there was a detailed written discussion of the expectations in relation to student performance on that assignment, along with separate documents giving guidance on preparing and writing essays in Economics, specimen marked essays (with feedback), an online essay marking assignment to enable students to understand at a deeper level the knowledge and skills being assessed in essay assignments (which is also of use to students in later years). By contrast, when writing documentation for courses at the Honours level, particularly for options restricted to Senior Honours students, we consciously build on and attempt to develop students' personal and intellectual autonomy and their personal effectiveness. For example in Monetary Theory and Policy (an Honours option) the course outline provides explicit but succinct details of the team project. Details of the project were subsequently discussed informally in lectures when the teams were provisionally established, but sample answers are not provided.

This is emphasised by the Director of Undergraduate Teaching in the initial year group meeting for Junior Honours students, by the Honours Handbook, by Personal Tutors in individual meetings and in joint Junior and Senior Honours (Personal Tutor) group meetings. It is manifest in the lack of compulsion to attend tutorials at Honours level and the absence of tutorials on low enrolment Honours options

However, there is some concern that, the extra support provided at an early stage in the programme, rather than providing a springboard to more independent, has become instead the level of provision expected by students, who now remark adversely on the frequency and value of contact with staff at Honours level in the NSS questionnaire. At the same time however, tutorial attendance at Honours level appears lower than on non-Honours courses, many students appear unprepared for tutorials and staff office hours are unused, except around assessment deadlines and examinations.

On the MSc programme, weekly helpdesks, staffed by PhD students who tutor on the MSc programme, run for each of the 3 core courses from Block 1 until Block 3. Besides the role played by Helpdesks in the personal effectiveness and intellectual autonomy of those seeking help, they also offer outstanding opportunities for the students who staff them to develop these attributes.

Independent Learning and PG Students Personal Effectiveness and Personal and Intellectual Autonomy is generally less of a problem among PGT and PGR students. For PGR students it is developed during the gradual shift in the balance between supervisor and student, with the supervisor typically initially adopting a more proactive and interventionist role until, with the encouragement of the supervisor, the student gradually emerges as an independent research economist with his/her own research agenda. For PGR students, the ability to develop as personally and intellectually autonomous individuals has been fostered using the process of annual reporting, which acts as a means of encouraging individuals to self-reflect on how they perceive that they are developing their skills.

New Initiatives in 2014-15 that aimed to improve engagement included

- We introduced additional assessments in non-Honours courses so as to improve engagement with whole syllabus (Issues in Global Economics – mid-semester exam in week 4; Economics 1 and Economics 2 - end of semester exam in Semester 2 week 11).
- We refined the quantitative component of our progression requirements for entry to Honours in order to obtain a better signal of student ability.
- The content of *Issues in Global Economics* was changed to increase the coherence of the two sections of the course. The section on International Macroeconomics now highlights issues in emerging and developing markets and the second topic Economics of Global Climate Change has been replaced by a new section on Development Economics. This change has been well-received.
- Weekly PhD reading group meetings were further refined to focus on papers in different weeks drawn from a common theme and to dovetail with the revised structure of the School's Seminar and Workshop programmes. Greater involvement from academic staff is constrained by other demand on staff time.
- the *Economics 1* Reading Group run by Dr Brocklebank was extended to *Economics 2*, with students receiving bonus marks for participation.
- a reward scheme was introduced for attendance and assignment completion in non-honours courses, Economics 1, Economics 2 and Issues in Global Economics, to replace the previous penalty scheme for tutorial non-attendance (carrots not sticks).

New Initiatives in 2015-16 that aimed to improve engagement included

- We will streamline our progression requirements for entry to Honours to remove the unofficial progression exam (in August) for students who obtain marks between 40 and 49 to at the first attempt in the August diet, and will implement the progression conditions stated in the relevant DPT. This is to counter the in order to obtain a better signal of student ability.
- Following discussion with students participating in the non-Honours reading groups, an Honours level Reading Group and a News Analysis Group will be introduced in 2015-16.
- The reward scheme introduced for assignment completion in Economics 1, Economics 2 and Statistical Methods for Economics, will be refined to be consistent with the new requirements for monitoring attendance.

C. SUPPORT

Economics has undertaken numerous actions in this area to improve academic guidance and pastoral support, to refine the structure and content of programmes and enhance the student experience. I deal with each in turn.

Undergraduate Provision

Pastoral Support and Academic Guidance

The key contact point for undergraduate students is the School Office. SGPE MSc students have a dedicated administrative officer in a separate office who provides the initial point of contact. For PGR students the initial points of contact are the supervisors.

The School has adopted the standard structures required by the University:

- Once per semester students have an individual meeting with their personal tutor. While the content of each meeting varies by year of programme and by student, the general approach to individual meetings is that of a mini-appraisal, with the student invited to reflect on their recent academic performance and other activities and details of that reflection being recorded.
- The second key element of the PT system involves Group Meetings. Our initial approach to Group meetings has been to give each meeting a theme.

Given the heterogeneous needs of students in different years of the programme, the School has adopted targeted group meetings geared towards particular year-groups, for example, in Semester 1, the group meeting for first year students is the induction meeting described above, while a PT's third and fourth year students have a group meeting with an open discussion, facilitated by the PT, for which the theme is 'Things I wished that I had known at the start of Junior Honours'. Anecdotal evidence from tutees who attended these meetings was that they were useful and well-received, but attendance is very patchy. The size of cohort-specific personal tutor groups makes it difficult to hold mixed cohort meetings. To address this we will gradually increase the mix of cohorts for each Personal Tutor (many tutor 1 or 2 cohorts).

At the same time some issues are best covered with a whole year group at once, rather than in individual or tutor group meetings, and so we have incorporated a number of year group meetings, such as the initial meeting for Junior Honours students and the Initial Meeting surrounding Dissertations.

- These enhancements to academic guidance and pastoral support increase the workload of staff. To ensure the quality of provision and the success of the system average loads have been reduced from around 65 directees per DoS to around 35 tutees per PT (there is some initial variation in order to avoid disruption in provision in which students are reallocated to a different PT – such disruption is something upon which students comment adversely).
- SSOs remain the first point of contact for academic guidance and pastoral support, but in addition have taken on the role of identifying cases of unanswered requested for meetings.

New pastoral support and academic guidance initiatives 2014-15:

- In 2014-15 we introduced an optional second meeting for 1st year students in the middle of semester 1, to facilitate early identification of problems and provide opportunity to build relationship between a student and his/her personal tutor.
- Personal Tutors were provided with information on the relationship between performance in Semester 1 and overall outcomes for Economics 1 and Economics 2 and with evidence on the relationship between performance in Economics 2 and at Honours level in order to improve the advice given to students in relation to programme transfer and/or withdrawal.

New pastoral support and academic guidance initiatives 2015-16:

- In 2015-16 we will make the second meeting for 1st year students in the middle of semester 1 compulsory.

The Student Experience Officer takes a lead in identifying and implementing initiatives intended to enhance students' experience of Economics at Edinburgh including:

- Direct engagement with all prospective students to improve conversion (akin to the good practice commended by the Economics PPR panel in 2011).
- Development of online materials to support applicants such as a short film about studying undergraduate Economics at the University of Edinburgh, made with the support of staff and students.

• Updating the undergraduate Economics web pages, Facebook page and wiki, and the Economics newsletter in order to maintain their presence and relevance and demonstrate to students (and others) the impact of the work of the School of Economics on the wider community.
• In addition the Student Experience officer commissioned a survey of successful applicants which identified, amongst other things, the features which attracted students to Edinburgh and those which were less relevant, which will allow more targeted use of resources in converting offers.

Academic Support

The School offers a large array of measures to provide academic support to students at the level of individual courses, topics, assignments and assessments. These include the undergraduate office, office hours, the help desks, tutorials, and written guidance available through the virtual learning environment.

Academic Support: Direct Contact

Support staff often provide the first point of contact in relation to academic support. There is a separate dedicated Undergraduate Administrator for Honours level courses and another for non-Honours level courses. Administrative staff typically receive submitted work and (initial) requests for extensions to submission deadlines, and, at non-Honours level, monitor tutorial attendance and issue warning / reminder letters over non-attendance and non-submission. Responsibility for these tasks means that the undergraduate administrative team assemble the evidence that allows the School to identify and subsequently make contact with 'at risk' students who are failing to engage with their learning opportunities. This allows the School to adhere to Home Office rules. **The new systems supporting attendance and engagement monitoring are not working well and are preventing Student Support Officers from engaging directly with students.** This is a step backwards from our previous procedures, which were more streamlined and worked well: hen a student failed to engage by some measure (e.g. by missing 3 tutorials or failing to submit a key component of coursework), this triggered a warning letter, which is issued by the relevant undergraduate administrator to the student (with copies to the Personal Tutor and Student Support Officer). If the student was enrolled on a degree "owned" by the School of Economics, then the SSO followed up the warning email inviting the student to provide evidence of any special circumstances that might explain the lack of engagement. Thus the SSOs and UG administrators work in tandem.

Teaching Staff Many aspects of academic support require input from teaching staff.
• All academic staff have office hours. Office hours are advertised to students in course handbooks / outlines, on the School web-site and on individual staff office doors. Typically, most office hours, except those directly before an examination are relatively poorly attended.

Alternatives to Academic Staff
• Given the poor take up of office hours, which has been an ongoing issue, the School decided to set up the Economics Help Desk. This is staffed by those Senior Honours students who performed exceptionally well in the Economics courses taken in their Junior Honours year, and arguably users feel that the Helpdesk provides academic support in a less intimidating environment than staff office hours!

- Following the success of the Economics Help Desk and in the light of the desire for maths support we introduced the Mathematics for Economics Help Desk to provide academic assistance to students on first and second year Economics courses.
- Peer support is often designed into coursework assignments, including Essentials of Econometrics (group projects and use of student demonstrators in laboratories and tutorials); and group projects in Applications of Econometrics, Advanced Topics in Applied Econometrics, Capital and Growth, Economics of Transition and Monetary Theory and Policy.
- There is now a peer-to-peer support scheme, known as EconPALS for higher year students to support first year students through the transition to Higher Education.

Tutorial provision

Another type of academic support is provided through tutorials at non-Honours level, on Honours core courses and a couple of high-demand option courses:

- At the non-Honours level tutorial attendance is compulsory. At the Honours level students are expected to have developed sufficiently as independent learners.
- Economics 1 and Economics 2 feature weekly 1.5-hour tutorials (most courses in other Schools feature weekly 1-hour tutorials). These were introduced to allow more in depth interaction and discussion during tutorials, and to foster a sense of academic community. Given the numbers of students on these courses, the School's commitment to 1.5-hour tutorials is very resource intensive.
-
- Tutorials in the week following the mid-semester exam are devoted to feedback on examination performance.

New Initiatives for 2014-15

- We have strengthened academic support for the large core Honours courses, with more frequent office hours (*Essentials of Econometrics, Topics in Macroeconomics, Topics in Microeconomics and Topics in Economics Analysis,* more frequent small group tutorials for *Topics in Macroeconomics*.
- We have increased tutorial support for more technical Honours electives.

New Initiative for 2015-16

- Topics in Microeconomics tutorial groups will meet on a more frequent weekly basis.
- There will be econometric support for the option Health Economics

Academic Support: Indirect Contact

Written Guidance on Assignments

On any particular course, written guidance is provided on inter alia, the structure of the course, the intended learning outcomes, the syllabus, indicative readings, the form and weighting of assessments, the availability of sources of information and assistance (such as office hours). For non-Honours courses this material is covered in a Course Handbook, which is available through Learn (the virtual learning environment) and a brief (2-page) summary of key features is provided in the Course Outline. At Honours level, much of the generic information is contained in the Honours Handbook (available on Learn). Course specific features are contained in the course outline. The electronic provision of course materials (the course handbook, brief course outline, lecture slides, tutorial assignments, other coursework assignments, past exam papers, staff contact details) through the VLE, addresses issues of accessibility through a mainstreamed solution, in order to enhance the academic support offered to students.

Programme enhancements through resequencing of topics between and within courses Enhancements of this form have to be planned and undertaken in a structured manner at programme level in order to ensure adequate coverage of all materials at programme level.

New Initiatives for 2014-15

- The general (written) dissertation guidance was refreshed before its release to the current cohort submitting in March 2015.

Postgraduate Provision:

Pastoral Support and Academic Guidance

- At the postgraduate taught level, academic and pastoral support is provided by postgraduate Personal Tutors, the Programme Support Staff, the core course helpdesks and via lecturer and tutor office hours.
- Targeted interventions include meetings between PTs and students (and the Programme Director and students) following the pre-session course exams aimed at encouraging weak students to withdraw, while students are encouraged to meet with their PT after the results of the December class exams are released. PTs review student performance in tests on the pre-sessional Mathematics, Statistics and Econometrics course and use this information when discussing continued study / exit from the programme. Students' study intentions are also discussed.
- For PGR students academic and pastoral support is provided by supervisors and the PhD Director. Virtually all PGR students also act as PG tutors, which forms an integral part of their academic development.
- The MSc and PGR student handbooks are revised on an annual basis to indicate formal mechanisms and procedures, including normal milestones during the programme and complaints procedures (e.g. over supervision).

Academic Support for Taught Postgraduates

- To bolster academic support, and in part as a response to issues raised by MSc students in earlier SSLC meetings, more frequent tutorials had been introduced for core courses, supplemented by less formal, student-driven Helpdesks (which supplement pre-existing lecturer office hours). Practical support for Econometrics had been extended through the introduction of weekly laboratories in order to make it easier for students to develop a thorough practical knowledge and understanding of applied econometrics and data analysis.
- Partly as a result of the enhanced provision of tutorials and helpdesks, contact hours are high for students on the SGPE MSc are high.
- The SGPE MSc offers a very broad range of option courses to students. The breadth of the menu of electives is a direct consequence of the collaborative nature of the programme, which can draw on the expertise of specialists from Economics departments across 8 Scottish Universities.
- Enhanced measures to support students in danger of failing including:

Tightened admissions policy;
Pre-sessional courses and diagnostic tests to identify those in danger of failure early on;
Summer school in Economics to prescreen those with no formal qualification in Economics – those who do not perform sufficiently well in the Summer School are not admitted to the programme;
Statistical analysis of characteristics of failing candidates and predictive power of pre-sessional tests;
Targeted interviews with likely failing students to encourage early withdrawal where appropriate;
Increased provision of tutorials, helpdesks and laboratories to provide opportunities to reinforce and develop themes developed in lectures and enhance and deepen knowledge and understanding;
The sequencing, nature and volume of assessment.

New initiative for 2014-15:
It has been agreed to adopt the options format also for the PhD session next year at the residential conference.

Support for Graduate Attributes and Employability

Only a minority of students graduating with an undergraduate degree involving Economics proceed to further study, and only a small proportion end up working as economists or as academics. Consequently, a degree involving Economics is valued as much for the opportunities it offers to develop graduate attributes in general as for the direct subject-specific knowledge. In this section I summarise the formal mechanisms for summarising and embedding opportunities to develop graduate attributes.

Programme Specifications and the Embedding of Graduate Attributes The School has taken a number of actions to embed graduate attributes in the curriculum and support awareness of opportunities for the development and demonstration of graduate attributes amongst students and academic staff. In particular

- Course / level specific summaries of the opportunities to develop and demonstrate graduate attributes are incorporated in the Handbooks for non-Honours core courses and in the Honours Handbooks. In addition, on a number of courses, the guidance for particular assignments highlights opportunities to develop and demonstrate specific graduate attributes.
- The development of graduate attributes also forms the focus of a new second year personal tutor group meeting and forms a part of the mini-appraisal format for individual meetings, raising awareness amongst students and tutors alike.

Employability initiatives on the UG programme

- Economics has worked closely with the Careers Service to generate Career development planning sessions, for example, a core second year course includes a podcast with an associated tutorial exercise on employability and CV enhancement, which encourages students to engage in a reflective analysis of the graduate attributes which they are developing through their study of Economics.
- The Student Experience Officer includes details of internships and jobs which specifically require a background in Economics in the regular newsletter.
- Events in Innovative learning week will extend our employability initiatives, focussing on CV workshops and mock interviews.
- Changes in other aspects of the programme sometimes enhance employability as an indirect consequence. For example, we recently switched to Stata as the standard teaching software for

applied econometric work throughout the programme. A knowledge of this package can help students to compete more effectively for positions as quantitative financial analysts.

- In 2015-16 we introduced an Internship workshop for students interested in finding out about applying for various types of internships, with input from the Careers Service and students who had previously applied for and/or held internships.

Employability in the PGT programme

- One of the roles of an MSc in Economics is to act as a professional training for students intending to undertake careers in economics and related fields. This role of the programme is related to the idea of improving employability.
- Two specific initiatives have been developed for MSc students to improve employability:
  - (i) the use of commissioned dissertations (with topics, and data, provided by the research departments of private sector companies) and
  - (ii) the involvement of practitioners in teaching, in the form of economists from the Scottish Government on the Economic Policy option course.
- Broadly these initiatives focus on engagement with external organisation/employers, developing communication skills without undermining the academic rigour and focus of postgraduate study and without rendering the programme more vocational, consistent with the desires of postgraduate alumni.
- Changes in other aspects of the programme sometimes enhance employability as an indirect consequence. For example, we use Stata as the teaching software for applied econometric work throughout the programme, it turns out that facility with Stata is highly valued skill in the marketplace.

Employability in the PGR programmes

For PhD students, the School has benefited from wider Funding council initiatives directed towards employability, notably Transkills and ESRC placements/internships schemes. In particular, and unusually for non-Economics specific training courses, Transkills courses have been reasonably well-received by those students who have attended them. Several of the School's PhD students have taken advantage of internships, with destinations including the Scottish Government and the OECD.

D. FEEDBACK

A great deal of our attention over the past couple of years has been devoted to enhancing the timeliness, helpfulness and informativeness of the feedback that we offer to our students on assessed and non-assessed work.

Undergraduate programme

Effectiveness of Provision of Feedback

All courses involve opportunities for students to obtain feedback on their work.

- A broad range of forms of assessment are used in different components of the programme, including essays, the dissertation, group projects, mid-semester multiple choice examinations, presentations, problem-based exercise sets, weekly e-learning multiple choice sets. Both formative and summative assessment is used. Some forms of assessment are unseen. Different forms of assessment emphasise and test somewhat different skills. Assessments are accompanied by a variety of different forms of feedback.
- The varieties of assessment and of feedback available within a given course are communicated to students in the course outline and/or via Learn. The variety of feedback available across all honours

courses is communicated to students via an online feedback log. A copy of this is posted on the Learn page for each course. It contains details of the timescale for returning work to students. This log also indicates where and how feedback on assignments is delivered to students and the nature of the feedback provided.

- Extensive guidance on assignments is available to student. For example, in essay assignments in non-Honours core courses, Economics 2, there is a detailed written discussion of the expectations in relation to student performance on that assignment, along with separate documents giving guidance on preparing and writing essays in Economics, specimen marked essays (with feedback) and an online essay marking assignment to enable students to understand at a deeper level the knowledge and skills being assessed in essay assignments (which is also of use to students in later years).
- Further guidance is designed into student learning during courses by gradually building the complexity of tasks undertaken towards a major assignment. The same features can also be seen at programme level, as numerous coursework assignments and elements of assessed work can be seen as preparation for the final year dissertation.

One of the most readily measurable enhancements to our feedback provision has been improvements in the timeliness of feedback. This has been achieved by (i) redesigning courses, coursework and assessments to integrate feedback more readily into teaching, (ii) rescheduling deadlines and/or reallocating resources to ensure more rapid provision of feedback.

- The target and actual timescales for delivery of feedback within a given course are communicated to students in the course outline and/or via Learn.
- Attainment of these targets is incentivised through peer and student pressure, by the publishing (on each Learn course page) of the feedback log for all Honours courses.

Informativeness / helpfulness of feedback In a sense the timeliness of feedback is the easy margin to address. The School has also devoted considerable effort to the enhancing the informativeness and helpfulness of feedback, i.e. the quality of feedback provided. This can be burdensome for those assignments where feedback is student specific, particularly on our large core courses.

New Initiatives For 2014-15

- reforms to the assessment structure of core courses to provide more opportunities for individual feedback – e.g. a tutorial dedicated to completing a formatively assessed specimen exam question in *Issues in Global Economics*, formatively assessed assignments in *Topics in Microeconomics* (formerly Topics in Economics 1) and *Topics in Economic Analysis* (formerly *Topics in Economic Analysis 2*).
- reforms to introduce additional assessments in non-Honours courses so as to improve engagement with whole syllabus (Issues in Global Economics – mid-semester exam in week 4; Economics 1 and Economics 2 - end of semester exam in Semester 2 week 11).
- severely curtailed the use of negative-marking of multiple choice questions in Honours core courses, in response to student perceptions of unfairness.

Postgraduate Taught Programmes

A wide variety of assessment forms are used on the MSc. Where the taught curriculum for the MSc includes a substantial common core which accounts for around ¾ of the course-based credit load and around 90% of the contact hours for a student on the MSc. The technical nature of the subject, and especially the core material, lends itself to problem and multiple choice based assessment. Formal problem sets for core courses are formatively assessed on a weekly basis, and solution sets and feedback provided. Class exams (for core courses) test qualitative and quantitative understanding of economic issues viewed through the lens of formal models; again feedback is provided. Class examinations form part of summative assessment for these courses. Typical questions are formal quantitative exercises, related to those studied for weekly tutorials and the examinations use a mixture of multiple choice and free-form problem based questions. Understanding of the practice of econometrics is developed through Econometrics laboratories, which cover applications of the econometric theory discussed in Econometrics. These skills are assessed through the Econometrics project. There is a final examination for each core course in the April/May Diet of Examinations. In addition, those who meet the (taught-course-based) requirements for progression from the Diploma to the MSc, complete a Dissertation.

One of the benefits of the collaborative nature of the SGPE MSc is the breadth of options available to students. Option courses build on the material covered in core courses. They directly correlate with staff research interests. Most teaching staff for option courses come from outside Edinburgh (in contrast to the core courses). The option courses are taught in Block 4 of Semester 2. It is common for an individual lecturer to have as few as 2 sessions with his/her class, and the co-ordination problems are relatively large. For this reason assessment was primarily by examination only. Typically learning outcomes are assessed in the exam using essay-type questions or a mixture of essays and problems (except for advanced topics). From 2012-13 the MSc Programme Director instructed course organisers to introduce some form of assignment in each option course, so as to comply with University policies.

Postgraduate Research Programmes

PGR students have opportunities to receive feedback through:

- Supervision meetings and other interaction with their supervisors to discuss their work
- Presentation of their research at the PhD Reading Group (for which students receive feedback from their peers and academic staff on their communication skills and their research ideas)
- Presentation of their research at the Annual Postgraduate Conference (for which students have a formal discussant (a member of academic staff from another participating institution))
- Feedback from students (in course questionnaires) on their work as PG tutors.
- Feedback from course organisers / moderators on the accuracy of tutors' marking and the quality of their feedback to students.

E. RECOGNITION

The School received a total of 96 nominations for EUSA Teaching awards including Best Course (3), Best Lecturer (40), Best Personal Tutor (8), Best Postgraduate Tutor (7), Best Research / Dissertation Supervisor (8).

Dr Fiona Wainwright was Runner-up for The Ian Campbell Award for Teaching in Humanities and Social Sciences.

3. **How has the implementation of these recent developments impacted on staff and students?**

   The impact of these developments is discussed in Section 1.4

4. **Comment on potential enhancements at College or University level that could be made to support Schools' implementation of strategic developments, either in general or in relation to current projects (optional).**
See Section 4 below.

4. Opportunities identified for development and action

1. Reflect on matters requiring attention, with a suggestion for the action required. State whether the issue is for the attention of the School, College or University.

- **F.A.O University:** The incentives designed into the 4-year degree need to be restructured. Presently students face very weak incentives to engage with their studies in years 1 and 2. All that is presently required is a pass in year 1 (>= 40%) and a mark which satisfies the relevant Honours entry criteria in Year 2 (generally >= 50%). The low level of these hurdles allows some students to get by with low effort and encourages poor study habits and poor engagement. These students can then struggle during their Junior Honours year. It would be preferable to alter the University's general regulations to make first year and second year count towards final degree classification, so as to improve incentives to engage in study at non-Honours level. For example one could attach weights as follows Year 1 (10%), Year 2 (10%), Year 3 (40%), Year 4 (40%). Or if it is thought particularly important to encourage experimentation (in subject choice) in Year 1, then one could attach the weights as follows Year 1 (0%), Year 2 (10%), Year 3 (45%), Year 4 (45%). The precise numbers in these examples are not important, the main idea is to incentivise excellent performance in non-Honours. In the absence of this, we would do better to offer 3 year degrees. We do no favours to students, staff or other stakeholders by encouraging indolence.
- **F.A.O University**: Provide more information on transcripts, such as the graduate's grade point average and relative performance.
- **F.A.O. College / University:** The School had incorporated provision of study space for undergraduate students into the plans for its move to the DHT. In the light of the postponement of the DHT building works (from 2017 until 2020), it is vital that the University prioritise provision of study space and social space for undergraduate students in Economics. It is not reasonable that undergraduate students in some other schools have access to such space but that undergraduate students in Economics have to suffer an extended period without such facilities. After all, it is not as if the University charges lower fees for students on degrees owned by the School of Economics …
- **F.A.O. School of Economics** address issues raised in the School Plan and other issues as they arise. These include the intended actions identified under Section 1.4.2, 1.5.2 and 1.5.7 and the TPR recommendations identified in Section 1.6.

2. Outline plans for further enhancing students' Personal Tutoring experience.

- Additional Compulsory meeting in Semester 1 for First year tutees after first Economics 1 assessment in order to (i) foster student-Personal Tutor relationship, and (ii) provide forum for discussion of issues relating to performance on courses, transition from secondary school to higher education and early indication of desire to transfer programme.

- Personal Tutors to be provided with documentation indicating the correlation between semester 1 and overall performance for Economics 1 and Economics 2, and relationship between overall performance at non-Honours and subsequent degree outcomes, in order to be better positioned to provide academic guidance to students on relative performance and on programme transfers

5. Engagement with annual reporting process

Reflect on the structure and/or content of this report template and, where relevant, make suggestions for how it can be improved.

Please do not change the structure or content. This will make it simpler to write the report and allow more time for the management of assurance and enhancement activities.

Ric Holt
School of Economics
January 2016