HEYTHROP COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE
Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2010-2014

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In consultation with: QARC, Director of Administration, Director of Research, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, Librarian & Chair of APT Group, Assessment Officer, Chair of Undergraduate Board of Examiners, Examinations Officer, Student Development Manager, Director of International Programmes, External Consultant, Student representatives, Comparator Institutions.

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1   Introduction

1.1   Strategic Aim

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy supports the achievement of the strategic aims of Heythrop College, in particular:

> "To provide students with excellent academic teaching, learning resources and personal support, thereby enabling them to achieve their full potential and make a valued contribution to society;"

This strategy supports the academic development of the College. All academic developments undertaken by the College should support the College Mission, reflect the aims of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and meet the requirements of the College's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook and the QAA's Academic Infrastructure, the requirements of which will be embedded in College policies and procedures. In addition, developments should be appropriate to the nature of Heythrop as a small and specialist institution, valuing a collegiate approach.

1.2   Context

Prior strategies...

2   Overarching Aims

.1   To sustain, as far as practicable, opportunities to study subjects central to the College Mission but for which demand is limited.

.2   Within the expanding activities of the College, to maintain and enhance the supportive learning environment for students in all modes of study, recognising the importance of equality of opportunity and diverse student needs, and identifying and responding to additional support needs as they arise.

.3   To foster the integration of teaching and research.

.4   To review the effective use of teaching methods (such as individual and group tutorials and small group work) such that they are aligned with learning outcomes at module and programme level.

.5   To maintain and enhance student engagement in effective learning through appropriate assessment practice and reflection on teaching methods.

.6   To enhance the clarity of progression for students between levels 5 and 6 where students at both levels are taught together.

.7   To support students at all academic levels including research students in developing qualities and skills to underpin life-long learning opportunities and future employability.

.8   To use the outcomes of quality assurance activities, including key performance indicators, as appropriate to enhance learning, teaching and assessment.

.9   To continue to develop flexible provision of learning opportunities in response to the needs of the wider community, including through the use of technology and off site learning.

3   Approaches to Curriculum Design and Learning and Teaching

3.1   General Principles

Heythrop aims to:

.1   provide programmes of study that reflect its Mission. (In particular, the College will seek to sustain opportunities to study subjects central to its Mission but for which demand is limited);

.2   follow an outcomes-based approach to learning, continually enhancing the alignment between learning, teaching and assessment practices;

.3   take an enhancement-led approach to all learning, teaching and assessment activities;

.4   develop in a collegiate manner, appropriate to its nature as a small and specialist institution, recognising the place of consultation and consensus for effectual policy and action.

.5   understand and act upon the aspirations of potential and current learners as well as employers and other stakeholders, making effective use of recently enhanced student engagement opportunities in learning and teaching enhancement processes.

3.2   Enhancement and Staff Support

Heythrop aims to continue and further develop an enhancement-led approach to all learning, teaching and assessment activities by:

.1   taking into account good practice across the sector and national initiatives, paying particular attention to developments which have direct relevance to small institutions or the teaching of disciplines in which the college specialises;

.2   making use of outcomes from quality assurance activities;

.3   sustaining excellence in supporting students' learning by active development of pedagogic approaches at institutional level which are appropriate to the needs of the whole student population on all modes of study (including for International Programmes Students, those undertaking work related learning and for research students) through a range of formal and informal initiatives (see also section 3.4.3i);[1]

.4   continuing to make effective use of student engagement in learning and teaching enhancement processes. This will be done by seeking to hear a representative student voice, and reporting back on actions taken in response to student concerns, thus 'closing the loop';

.5   enabling staff and students to reflect regularly on academic activities and developments to ensure that all meet the priorities of the Strategy and sector wide good practice

Heythrop aims to support staff in enhancement activities by:

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[1] Learning opportunities on all programmes will be appropriate (e.g. see QAA code of practice, section 9, precept 3).

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.6 further developing the means by which staff engagement in pedagogical development and innovation is recognised and rewarded, including
  i supporting staff seeking external recognition for excellence in learning and teaching in a range of ways,
  ii setting criteria for judgements of academic promotion that take pedagogical development and innovation into account,
  iii and setting criteria for the award of the Principal's Teaching Prize;
.7 facilitating the internal sharing of good practice;
.8 supporting college staff in making a visible contribution to externally and internally funded initiatives in learning and teaching;
.9 maintaining and enhancing an ongoing programme of staff development opportunities;
.10 ensuring that staff are well supported when undertaking new forms of teaching, including work related learning and the use of electronic resources.

3.3 Development of Programmes of Study

Heythrop aims to design and develop programmes that:
.1 meet the needs of all stakeholders, and in particular learners at all levels;
.2 build on the academic strengths of our departments;
.3 are informed by the needs of the graduate labour market;
.4 reflect deeply embedded values within the College, such as the importance of fostering dialogue among a range of traditions, and a tolerant approach towards alternative perspectives;
.5 articulate progression through levels 4, 5 and 6 in ways which are increasingly explicit, ensuring achievement of outcomes appropriate to level;
.6 facilitate progression from Level 3 to Level 4, and Level 6 to Level 7 or above;
.7 incorporate, where appropriate, an interdisciplinary focus;
.8 are purposefully informed by the insights gained within the developing environment of scholarship and both disciplinary and pedagogic research amongst academic staff;
.9 are regularly the subject of reflection at programme level in addition to module and institutional level;
.10 can be managed effectively within College resource constraints.

3.4 Student-Centred Learning, Learning and Teaching Practices, and Widening Participation

.1 The College aims to:
  i provide social and pastoral support to students in attendance as this is often a precondition for any effective engagement with academic life;
  ii continue to engage proactively with the appropriate use of learning technologies to support a range of objectives, including those below listed below.
.2 The College aims to promote a student-centred approach to learning by:

i   recognising the importance of close proximity between students and staff, and accessibility of staff to students appropriate to the mode of study;

ii   actively supporting students in becoming motivated, independent, self-managing, life-long learners;

iii engaging students in the design, development and delivery of the curricula and learning, teaching and assessment practices, in part by seeking to hear a representative student voice, and to report back on actions taken in response to student concerns, thus 'closing the loop';

iv   where appropriate, providing structured support and frameworks for student development, exploring with students the best way to provide a process for planning of personal development which will engage students effectively.

.3   The College aims to <u>promote effective learning and teaching practices</u> by:

i   making better strategic use of an increasing range of effective learning and teaching methods which are aligned to outcomes and level, and which include a mix of individual attention, small group and large group teaching (see also section 3.2.3);

ii   continuing to value individual attention as an important aspect of learning and teaching, making strategic use of this mode of teaching and learning in order to maximise the quality of engagement between student and teacher;

iii taking distinctive steps to support students involved in a distance-learning mode, including encouraging peer support, development of an essay-marking service, and building on the work of the recently appointed Student Support Administrator.

iv   incentivising and rewarding staff for innovation in the use of learning and teaching practices that are aligned with learning outcomes.

.4   The College aims to ensure <u>fair access and widen participation</u>:

i   whilst maintaining the highest academic standards;

ii   by maintaining and enhancing flexible learning opportunities which support widening participation, including part time study, work related learning, the appropriate use of technology, and provision within the University of London International Programmes;

iii to investigate further opportunities for provision of blended and distance learning through the University of London International Programmes, and in other ways.

3.5 **Graduate Skills, Attributes, and Employability[2]**

Heythrop College aims to provide programmes of study and learning and teaching practices which allow students to supplement the development of subject specific knowledge with the development of a broader range of attributes and skills that will enable them to become life-long learners and active global citizens.

.1   Through its curricula and other learning opportunities, the College will recognise the need for students to acquire a range of skills and attributes in addition to subject knowledge:

i   including knowledge and skills relating to employability and life-long learning within programme and module learning outcomes;

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[2] This aim is informed by QAA code of practice, section 8.

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    ii   embedding the acquisition of core skills in particular relating to literacy and information technology within curricula particularly at level 4;

    iii   exploring and implementing means to encourage students to reflect on the full range of learning experiences in which they have been engaged, whether or not these are summatively assessed, and including

- taking part in Heythrop Student Union (HSU) or University of London Union (ULU) activities,
- opportunities such as committee representation,
- placements and work experience,
- and other more informal learning opportunities beyond the academic sphere.

.2   To maintain and enhance vocational elements to provision, including foundation degree provision, work related learning and skills development to support graduate employability and life-long learning.

3.6 Fostering the Integration of Teaching, Research and Broader Scholarship[3]

The College seeks to develop the relationship between teaching and research activity through:

.1   the development of programmes, modules, and module content that reflects the research interests and utilizes the research expertise and outputs of staff;

    i   To incorporate more staff research into teaching, including supervision

.2   the provision of research degrees and supervision of research students;[4]

    i   To increase publicity for research students which emphasises staff research interests and expertise

    ii   To provide teaching skills and opportunities to research students

.3   support for and supervision of MA theses;

    i   To invite MA theses for public presentation, and where appropriate, to support their development into publishable work

    ii   To enable all research students to present their work to peer-review at least once a year

.4   pedagogical research.

    i   To support staff engaged in pedagogical research

In addition, the College will encourage learning and teaching to go on within the context of broader scholarship, and aims:

.5   To support staff to undertake appropriate consultancy and knowledge transfer to the wider community

3.7 Use of Learning Technology[5]

.1   To continue to develop and embed the use of learning technology, which is sector-leading in some areas, focusing on:

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[3] The aims listed here are shared between this strategy and the Research Strategy, which contains specific objectives for each of these aims.

[4] These aims, and the separate research strategy, are informed by the QAA code of practice, section 1 (e.g. precept 18).

[5] This section is informed by relevant precepts of the QAA code of practice, section 2, B.

      i   maintaining the very high levels of availability, reliability and security of the VLE systems (Helios and the International Programmes VLE) and associated systems (e.g. Turn-it-in);

      ii   continuing development of the management of coursework, and formative work for IP students through the VLE, ensuring that all assessed work is properly attributed to the student and supporting effective judgements with regard to academic conduct (plagiarism);

      iii   continually enhancing the usability of the VLE and associated systems for staff and students, and the relationship between such systems and College procedures and practices, in particular making effective use of good practice within the sector in the use of the MOODLE VLE;

      iv   enhancing the present training and support arrangements for all users of the VLE, including students, external examiners, academic and administrative staff;

      v   developing a consistent minimum VLE presence for all modules.

.2   To build on the work of the recently established "Appropriate Pedagogical Technology Group":

      i   developing a formal e-learning strategy to address ongoing developments (see section 5.3);

      ii   exploring the value of emerging technologies, and supporting pilot projects related to the effective use of such technologies to develop the effectiveness and efficiency of learning and teaching. (For example, social software, conferencing tools, video streaming and assessment tools may enhance learning, facilitate widening participation and improve opportunities for student feedback).

      iii   Furthering an integrated approach to the VLE provision for International Programmes students and students on other programmes.

4 Assessment[6]

4.1 Introduction

This undergraduate assessment strategy applies to all undergraduate programmes. It does not apply to postgraduate taught provision or postgraduate research programmes. The strategy covers the management, purpose, qualities, and amount and timing of assessment, as well as student conduct, feedback and staff development. This strategy makes explicit the principles which have previously been implicit in the assessment arrangements of the College. These principles are also developed and refined in the light of the QAA code of practice, and external and internal consultation. This section of the current strategy has been developed in response to the previous Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy, and the 2009 themed audit of assessment.

4.2 Management of Assessment

The College recognises the importance of rigorous and effectively implemented strategies, policies and procedures relating to both continuous assessment and end of year assessment. These are underpinned by comprehensive and effective regulations and communicated through handbooks and in other ways.

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[6] This section is informed by detailed consideration of the QAA code of practice, section 6, and is structured similarly.

.1 **Programmes & Awards:** The College aims to design, implement and enhance procedures which ensure the production and maintenance of effective assessment strategies through the design, approval, monitoring and review of programmes and awards. Such procedures are published in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.

.2 **Audits & Reviews:** The College aims to support the ongoing development of assessment strategies, policies and regulations in the light of relevant audits and reviews, in order to ensure that they are fit for purpose and aligned with the academic infrastructure.

.3 **Assessment & Learning:** The College aims to develop its ability to evaluate how academic standards are maintained through assessment practice that also encourages effective learning.

.4 **Regulations:** The College aims to maintain comprehensive and effective regulations which are fit for purpose, and which ensure that all assessment is conducted with rigour, probity and fairness, and with due regard for security. Regulations cover all aspects of assessment, including:

   i   rules for progression from one stage of a programme to another, and for qualifying for an award;
   ii the relationship between the language in which teaching is carried out and the language in which assessments must be undertaken;
   iii effective, clear and consistent policies for the membership, procedures, powers, and accountability of assessment panels and boards of examiners.
   iv an appropriate classification methodology, in line with sector hyphen wide good practice

.5 **Externality:** The College values externality in the development and enhancement of assessment, through:

   i   the systematic use of external examiners, external reference points (such as the QAA Code of Practice), and externally identified good practice;
   ii encouraging College staff to be involved as external examiners in other institutions.

.6 **Recording & Documenting:** The College will ensure that assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically and that the decisions of relevant assessment panels and examination boards are communicated as quickly as possible.

   i   The College will keep full and accurate minutes of examination boards according to an agreed format.

.7 **Responsibility:** Maintenance of strategies, policies, procedures and regulations is the responsibility of the Academic Board, advised by the Learning and Teaching Committee and QARC.

4.3   Purpose of Assessment Activities

The College aims to take an integrative view of assessment which recognises that:

.1 assessment is integral to the learning and teaching process, and that it has a major impact on the ways students learn and what they learn;

.2 assessment assists both students and staff to monitor and improve learning, provides accounts of student achievement and is the principal means by which standards are measured;

.3   assessment relates to all aspects of student achievement, including not only academic knowledge, but also subject skills and transferable skills related to employability.

.4   assessment is a generic term which covers separate, yet complementary activities, including:

       i   diagnostic assessment, which is used to show a learner's preparedness for a unit of study (typically a module or programme) and identifies any potential gaps in knowledge;

       ii   formative assessment, which is designed to help learners learn more effectively through giving them feedback on their performance indicating how it can be improved;

       iii   summative assessment is used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the intended learning outcomes specified within programme specifications and/or module outlines. The College will award credit for successfully meeting intended learning outcomes as measured by performance in summative assessment tasks;

.5   some student development cannot be summatively assessed or count for classification purposes, and therefore the College aims to develop ways of using formative assessment and structured personal tutorials to encourage forms of development in addition to those measured through summative assessment.

4.4   Qualities of Assessment Activities

The College aims to develop assessment with the following qualities:

.1   **Validity:** Assessments will be properly aligned with learning outcomes at programme and module level. Valid assessments allow learners to demonstrate the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

       i   The College will require that all items of summative assessment are compulsory in order to ensure that learning outcomes are met.

       ii   The College will ensure that assessment activities are appropriate to academic level, consistent with the College Credit and Assessment Framework, and the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and supporting progression.

.2   **Reliability:** Assessments will provide consistent, criterion-referenced results according to transparent and fair mechanisms for marking and moderating marks.

       i   The College will publish and require the use of agreed, rigorous assessment criteria appropriate to level and award.

       ii   The College will publish and implement moderation processes which are appropriate to level and award.

       iii   The College recognises that some forms of formative assessment may be designed to give feedback on more complex achievements, and may thus be less reliable than forms of summative assessment designed to measure more determinate outcomes.

.3   **Explicitness:** The College aims to provide assessment activities which are accessible to, clearly explained to, and understood by all stakeholders including staff and students. This includes clear communication of the criteria for judging performance.

.4 **Diversity:** The College aims to encourage the development of a range of assessment activities to continue to address the intended learning outcomes in ways appropriate to the discipline or subject being studied.

.5 **Comprehensiveness:** Assessment activities will address learning outcomes related to academic knowledge, subject skills, and transferable skills in order to ensure the validity of schemes of assessment. Transferable skills will be assessed and/or practised which relate to employability (e.g. IT Skills, time management, involvement in evaluation).

.6 **Effectiveness for learning:** Assessment activities will include forms of activity and feedback which will be beneficial to the learning process. In addition, students may be involved in the evaluation of assessment practices.

   i Assessment schemes will take into account the need for feedback loops, such that later assessments can take into account feedback on prior assessments;

   ii Assessment schemes and activities will, where appropriate, take into account individual learning needs through the use of a diversity of assessment types, thus supporting widening participation.

   iii The College aims to explore other aspects of assessment which are effective for learning. This includes formative peer assessment, consideration of assessment criteria, and the explicit addressing of student research activity required for an assessment.

.7 Encouragement of good academic conduct: In particular with regard to:

   i Plagiarism. For example, by setting tasks which limit the potential for success through plagiarism.

   ii Time management. For example, by introducing assessments and setting deadlines appropriately, and by monitoring progress via interim checkups and milestones where appropriate.

4.5 Amount and Timing of Assessment Activities

The College believes that that the amount and timing of assessment should enable effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of intended learning outcomes. In particular, the College aims to:

.1 develop schemes of assessment which are appropriate in terms of volume and range in relation to the learning outcomes of the module and/or programme;

.2 ensure that the volume of assessment within a module is in proper proportion to the module's credit weighting;

.3 effectively manage the timely setting of assessed work and deadlines for submission in order to assure the validity and reliability of assessments.

4.6 Student Conduct in Assessment

The College will encourage students to adopt good academic conduct in respect of assessment and seek to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities. In particular, the College is committed to:

.1 Maintaining the established procedures for monitoring and dealing with plagiarism, including:

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i   checking all assessed work electronically for potential plagiarism, and informing students of the clear institution-wide policy for dealing with academic misconduct;

ii   informing students about acceptable forms of academic referencing and citation and providing advice which promotes good academic practice, with a particular focus on plagiarism;

iii   maintaining the post of Academic Conduct Officer' to help develop policy in the light of an institution-wide view of the frequency and extent of academic misconduct.

.2   Maintaining and enforcing strict regulations with respect to published deadlines, including:

i   seeking to ensure that deadlines are set for students in such a way as to minimise 'bunching' which places additional demands on student time management. (The College recognises that some bunching of deadlines is unavoidable, given the range of programmes and student module options which are offered);

ii   supporting students with effective advice on time management at strategic times within the academic year;

iii maintenance of a culture among students and staff which recognises that work must be submitted on or before the required deadline unless there is evidence of mitigating circumstances consistent with College regulations;

iv   the publication and consistent application of substantial penalties for work which is submitted beyond the deadline without evidence of mitigating circumstances.

4.7   Feedback to students

The College aims to provide appropriate and timely feedback to students on assessed work in ways that promote learning and facilitate improvement but do not increase the burden of assessment. In particular, the College recognises that:

.1   feedback may be given in a range of ways, and that distinct methods may align better with different disciplines, assessment schemes, or activities;

.2   an indicative timeframe should be provided to students with regard to the time period between submission deadlines and provision of feedback, such that some form of feedback is provided within three weeks of the deadline for students who submit work as and when required.

4.8   Staff development and training

The College aims to use appropriate staff development opportunities to support and develop the skills of everyone involved in the assessment of students, including Visiting Lecturers and Teaching Assistants. In addition, the College aims to provide opportunities for sharing of good practice in assessment for enhancement purposes.

5   The Learning Environment

The student learning experience at Heythrop is rated by students as above average for the sector (as evidenced by all published National Student Survey results). Nevertheless, students have increasing expectations with regard to the student learning experience, and in particular with regard to high quality physical and electronic resources.   These expectations are driven by an increasingly

competitive market for higher education. Heythrop aims to remain competitive, and to enhance continually the learning environment in line with student expectation and the nature of the college as a small and specialist institution.

5.1 Learning and Teaching Spaces

Heythrop aims to invest in estate and infrastructure to provide a high-quality and modern learning environment. We aim to continually improve our formal teaching and learning spaces, ensuring that they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of all learners and teachers. The college aims to provide multiple teaching and learning spaces:

.1   that are effectively managed and maintained , facilitating ease of use for all teachers and learners, including those with particular support needs;[7]

.2   such that groups of different size can be accommodated adequately and comfortably;

.3   that support and promote different learning and teaching styles, including formal lectures, seminars, and small group teaching, as well as collaborative learning, and technology enhanced learning;

.4   which are all comfortable and stimulating, IT enabled and, where appropriate, flexible and adaptable;

In addition, the College aims to:

.5   make optimal use of existing spaces, whilst investing in new teaching and learning spaces where appropriate;

.6   consider in future planning the location of student learning spaces, learning resources, computing resources and social spaces in such a way as to promote a cohesive and integrated student body as well as interaction between students on different programmes.

5.2 ICT Infrastructure

.1   The College aims to continually enhance the provision of appropriate ICT infrastructure, including wired and wireless network access, as well as multifunction devices and printers.

5.3 E-Learning Strategy

The College aims to develop an e-learning strategy, which is related to wider developments in the use of technology for research, administration, student support and other purposes.

5.4 Virtual Learning Environment

The College aims to:

.1   develop the virtual learning environments in line with student and stakeholder expectations and feedback to provide appropriately mediated Technology Enhanced Learning;

.2   ensure that the virtual learning environment is used by all teaching staff to support the learning of their students on all programmes of study;

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[7]The College will satisfy all relevant legal obligations with regard to the rights of disabled people, and will aim to provide levels of support consistent with the precepts of the QAA code of practice, section 3, 'disabled students' (2010).

.3   explore proactively a range of possibilities for enhancement provided by existing VLE technology;

.4   explore the possibilities of using technologidevelopment of more informal social spaces and

.5   We will work with the student union to identify exemplars of virtual environments.

5.5   Student Information Systems

The College aims to work towards a better use of management information to support student learning and achievement, building on current good practice such as the use of external expertise to provide data analysis for consideration by committees. Further developments will include:

.1   enhancing the use of technology in the provision and management of student management data for the purpose of enhancing support for student learning;

.2   enhancing electronic provision of module information and other information relevant to the student learning experience;

.3   exploration of how the current use of technology may be improved to enhance the effectiveness of information collection and delivery.

5.6   Library & Learning Resources

The College aims to ensure that a full range of learning resources are available for taught courses and individual study. In particular the College will seek:-

1.   To continue to develop the library as a resource for teachers and students, both in terms of collection and of study space.

2.   Through the relationship with the ULRLS Senate House Library, to continue to have available to Heythrop staff and students the resources of a major humanities library and a wide range of electronic resources.

3   To continue to develop and promote the provision of material for modules through the Helios learning and resource portal.

4.   In collaboration with module teachers and student support staff to engage in user education, adapted to student needs, and promote academic literacy.