

**UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW**

**Academic Standards Committee - Friday 5 October 2007**

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment:  
Report of the Review of the Department of Educational Studies held  
on 30 April and 1 May 2007**

**Mrs Marjory Wright, Clerk to the Review Panel**

**September 2007**

**Panel**

Professor John Coggins	Vice Principal (Biosciences) [Convener]
Mrs Mary Read	External Subject Specialist, University of Hertfordshire
Professor Keith Millar	Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Robert Hamilton	Member of Cognate Department [Department of Adult and Continuing Education]
Dr Mary McCulloch	Learning and Teaching Centre
Mrs Marjory Wright	Senate Office [Clerk]

**A. Introduction**

- A.1 The Department of Educational Studies, which is located within the Faculty of Education in the recently refurbished St Andrew's Building, was formed in 1999 following the merger of St Andrew's College with the University of Glasgow' former Department of Education.
- A.2 The Department was subject to an internal review in June 2000.
- A.3 There were several changes in departmental leadership during the period between 31 July 2005 and 1 August 2006, prior to the appointment of the current Head of Department.
- A.4 The provision in the Faculty of Education is reviewed under three disciplines rather than on a departmental basis. This Review focused on Educational Studies provision, the majority of which resides in the Department of Educational Studies. Three courses provided by the Department of Curriculum Studies also fall within the "Educational Studies" discipline. Throughout this report, "the Department" refers to the Department of Educational Studies.
- A.5 The Department had provided a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documentation in accordance with the University's requirements for the Review of Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The SER had been prepared by the Head of Department, the former Head of Department, the Departmental Quality Assurance Officer, the Chair of the Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee and the Departmental Administrator and had been shared with

staff and with the students who met with the Review Panel. A short SER had also been prepared by the Department of Curriculum Studies. The Panel found both documents helpful.

- A.6 In the course of its visit, the Review Panel met with Professor Jim Conroy, Dean of the Faculty of Education, Professor Bruce Carrington, Head of Department, Dr Christine Forde, former Head of Department, 15 members of academic staff, the Departmental Administrator, the Departmental Secretary and the Faculty Administrator who had assisted with arrangements for the review.
- A.7 Concurrent meetings were held with probationary staff and with Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)/hourly-paid staff. The Senate Assessor and the External Subject Specialist met with the Department's 6 probationary staff, two of whom had also been present at the meeting with key staff. The remaining Panel members, led by the Convener, met with one GTA and 4 members of hourly-paid staff.
- A.8 A separate meeting was held with Mr Brian Templeton, Head of Department of Curriculum Studies, and 5 members of staff from that Department in relation to the two courses under review.
- A.9 The Review Panel met with 30 postgraduate students representing both departments. The students were split into three groups. Distance Education students were grouped together and the remaining two groups included a mix of part-time home students and full-time international students. A common set of discussion topics had been agreed in advance and two members of the Panel facilitated each group discussion. Distance education students who had volunteered to participate in the review, but were unable to attend in person, were invited to comment by e-mail on the same set of topics. Two students took the opportunity to do so. The Panel also met with one undergraduate student. The proximity of the undergraduate degree examinations may have been a factor in the low response rate from undergraduates to the invitation to participate.
- A.10 The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Department of Educational Studies:
- EdD Doctorate in Education
  - MEd/MSc Educational Studies
  - MEd Professional Development and Enquiry/Chartered Teacher Programme
  - MEd Inclusive Education/PG Certificate/Diploma: *Support for Learning* [Offered in collaboration with the University of Strathclyde]
  - MSc Psychological Studies
  - MSc Science and Science Education
  - Postgraduate Diploma School Leadership and Management (Scottish Qualification for Headship [SQH])
  - Postgraduate Certificate Middle Leadership and Management in Schools
  - Undergraduate courses at Level 1, 2 and 3 (Fundamentals of Educations 1A/1B; The Learning Society: Issues in Modern Education; Developing Educational Provision in Europe/Understanding Learners and Learning)
- A.11 The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Department of Curriculum Studies:
- Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching Modern Languages
  - Postgraduate Certificate in Primary Physical Education

- MEd English Language Teaching

A.12 The Review Panel was impressed with the quality of the overall provision.

## **B. Overall aims of the Department's provision**

B.1 As stated in the SER, the Department seeks to provide innovative, research-led programmes focusing on professional learning and development. It also seeks to promote the academic study of education within the broader context of the social sciences and humanities. The Department's initial and postgraduate teacher education programmes also play a significant part in the realisation of the wider institutional goal of sustaining and adding value to Scottish culture and society. The Department's programmes share a number of broad aims which were set out clearly in the SER. The Review Panel considered these to be appropriate and to be met in respect of learning and teaching.

## **C.1 Undergraduate and Taught-Postgraduate Provision**

### *C.1 Aims*

C.1.1 The Review Panel noted that each programme and course had its own aims, which were clearly stated in programme and course handbooks. There was strong evidence that that the Departments of Educational Studies and Curriculum Studies engaged actively with policy makers at national level, and with local authorities and the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). The Panel was content that the programmes and courses under review effectively realised their stated aims and prepared participants to meet the benchmarks of professional competence.

### *C.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)*

C.2.1 The Review Panel noted that all courses offered by the Departments of Educational Studies and Curriculum Studies had specific ILOs and that it was normal practice to include these in the relevant course handbooks.

C.2.2 In the course of discussions with postgraduate students, the Review Panel learned from a small number of international students that they would have benefited from some additional support in how to use ILOs as they had previously been used to a different approach to preparing essays. The Department had recognised the additional needs of international students and encouraged students to make full use of the facilities provided on Moodle to consolidate their learning.

### *C.3 Assessment*

C.3.1 The Review Panel noted from the SER that assessment practice in the Department was based on the University's Code of Assessment. The majority of programmes adhered to Schedule A. However a number of competence-based programmes (eg MEd Professional Development, Reflection and Enquiry and SQH) followed Schedule B. The Code of Assessment was also applied to year 1 of the EdD programme but a modified assessment scheme was employed in subsequent years of the programme to better reflect the criteria later used to assess the research-based dissertation at

doctoral level (ie 'satisfactory', 'minor changes required', 'major changes required' and 'unsatisfactory').

- C.3.2 The Review Panel learned that the Department had considerable in-house expertise in assessment as demonstrated by the contributions of four members of staff to the national *Assessment for Learning Initiative*. The SER indicated that collectively, these individuals had made a significant contribution to the development of assessment policy and practice, both nationally and internationally, whilst exerting a significant research-led impact on learning and teaching in the Faculty. The Department had recently completed a review of its examination and assessment procedures, which was likely to bring about discernible improvements.
- C.3.3 Staff advised the Review Panel that there was a wide range of assessment methods in use within the Department's programmes; however this had not been immediately obvious to the Panel from the content of some of the programme and course handbooks. The Head of Department was conscious of the shortcomings of some handbooks and staff were now being encouraged to use a common template (see also C.6.10).
- C.3.4 Students in the Department of Curriculum Studies advised the Review Panel that they were given clear guidance on what was required of them in relation to assessment. Students undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in Primary Physical Education advised the Review Panel that they had an opportunity to self assess and peer assess which would inform their professional practice. They had enjoyed the challenge of drawing up the criteria for assessing a presentation seminar. They had found this a very useful exercise and viewed it as a positive way forward.
- C.3.5 Students undertaking the MSc Psychological Studies, accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS), told the Review Panel that, although they enjoyed the programme, they felt overburdened by the assessment prescribed by the BPS which included 3 essays due in on the same date, a dissertation and 9 examinations. The Panel explored this with academic staff who explained that assessment was prescribed by the BPS. However, in their view, the assessment workload was not as burdensome as students perceived it to be and although the same 'final' deadline applied to three essays, students were not expected to work on all three at the same time and were advised to plan their workload to enable them to stagger their submissions. The 9 end-of-programme examinations were preceded by a formative class examination and students received feedback on their performance, followed by some additional sessions to consolidate the feedback. The Panel advised that it would be helpful to embed this information in the programme handbook to avoid misunderstanding.
- C.3.6 The undergraduate student who met with the Review Panel told them that feedback was always provided on essays and that clear guidance was given to students on how they could improve.
- C.3.7 The University's statement on plagiarism was well understood by most of the students who met with the Review Panel.

#### *C.4 Curriculum Design and Content*

- C.4.1 The Department of Educational Studies offers full-time, part-time and distance education programmes and a range of continuing professional development (CPD) courses.

- C.4.2 Postgraduate programmes are structured to meet the needs of the client group, which consists of home students who are largely in full-time employment and therefore require flexible provision, and international students who study on a full-time basis. The Review Panel learned that the MEd was designed for candidates from within the School system whilst the MSc was available to those from outwith the School system. There were slight differences in the ILOs but otherwise the two programmes were much the same.
- C.4.3 The Head of Department explained that the Departmental Review was taking place at a time of fundamental change within the Faculty and that the Department was reviewing its postgraduate taught provision with a view to identifying overlaps and to looking at how programmes could be reconciled to make best use of the Department's resources, eg rationalisation of its Research Methods courses. The Review Panel learned that the Department was also expanding into new areas of provision such as its forthcoming multidisciplinary MSc Public Service Management (Educational Leadership) which would be provided in partnership with Glasgow Business School from September 2007. The Panel had noted that some longstanding courses now appeared to attract relatively few students and **recommends** that, whilst reviewing its postgraduate taught provision, the Department also give careful consideration to the viability of such courses and their continuing relevance to the current and future climate within which the Faculty as a whole is operating.
- C.4.4 Programme leaders in the Department of Educational Studies had formed a planning group (the Masters Cluster) to discuss the Faculty's strategy to rationalise its postgraduate taught provision in line with the University's strategic objectives, and related issues.
- C.4.5 The programme structure and content of the Doctor of Education, which was delivered as web-based distance education, and the MEd/MSc Educational Studies were currently under review. In the case of the latter, two successive External Examiners had remarked on the effects of increased recruitment from overseas. The Review Panel was pleased to note that the Department was working towards making the curriculum less Scotland-specific, as this addressed an issue raised by some of the European students with whom they had met who had said that they found it difficult to transfer their learning satisfactorily to their education system at home because examples were drawn from the Scottish model with which they were largely unfamiliar.
- C.4.6 The Review Panel noted that the Department worked closely with the Faculties of Science in the provision of the MSc Science and Science and Education.
- C.4.7 The Department has two major centres: the Centre for Science Education and the Robert Clark Centre for Technological Education. Plans were in hand to merge the two centres into a single centre for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education (STEMed). The Review Panel welcomed this development, which had the potential for exciting innovations in Science and Technology education for both home and international students, building on the department's current provision.
- C.4.8 Curriculum content was sometimes driven by external agencies particularly in the case of accredited programmes, eg the MSc Psychological Studies, which is accredited by the British Psychological Society and is the only accredited conversion course in Scotland. The Review Panel had noted that the External Examiner for this programme had recommended that more time be devoted to psychobiology but the Department had been unable to proceed

with this because of physical constraints and staffing issues. The Review Panel suggested that there might be scope for interaction with the Department of Psychology.

- C.4.9 Undergraduate provision is currently confined to levels 1, 2 and 3 and the Review Panel was advised that the Department had obtained University approval for the introduction of level 4 provision but it was not yet known how or when this could be taken forward as there would be no additional funded places associated with it and the introduction of an honours programme in Educational Studies would therefore impact on other faculties. The Review Panel speculated that there might be interesting career possibilities for joint honours combinations with GTC accreditation, eg Science and Education or Politics and Education, but shared a view that joint honours would only be possible if a very detailed arrangement was agreed with other Deans. The Panel also suggested that the Department might wish to explore whether there would be a market for an honours programme such as this amongst individuals with an interest in a career in policy making rather than teaching. A slight concern had been raised about the publicising of the Level 1 courses to Advisers of Studies and the Head of Department advised that this was under discussion.
- C.4.10 The Postgraduate Certificate courses in Primary Physical Education and Learning and Teaching Modern Languages were developed by the Department of Curriculum Studies in conjunction with Glasgow City Council to respond to the specific CPD needs of primary teachers, by providing a means of enhancing their specialist knowledge of key areas of the primary curriculum. Subject to course approval, a further four Postgraduate Certificate courses will be offered from August 2007.
- C.4.11 The MEd English Language Teaching was developed through collaboration between the language section of the Department of Curriculum Studies and the English as a Foreign Language Unit and was introduced in September 2006. This MEd pathway had initially been developed as a result of the large number of overseas enquiries for a programme of this type.

### *C.5 Student Recruitment, Support and Progression*

- C.5.1 It was noted from the SER that, with the exception of the Fundamentals of Education courses, the programmes under consideration are targeted at experienced practitioners working in education and cognate fields and that the recruitment process relied on web-based and traditional marketing. Part-time provision currently relied on word-of-mouth or direct sponsorship by local authorities and schools. The Department had strong links with local authorities and with the SEED and many of its students were recruited directly through this route. The Review Panel shared the view that there could be benefits in adopting a more proactive approach to recruitment, through the inclusion of formal advertising within the Department's recruitment strategy.
- C.5.2 The Review Panel learned that the Faculty of Education was in the process of developing a Faculty marketing strategy and that the Department had been making concerted efforts to raise its international profile. The Panel noted that changes were in hand to improve the induction process for international students.
- C.5.3 Students in all programmes spoke warmly of the support provided by staff of both Departments and of the partnership between students and staff.

Postgraduate students appreciated the departments' recognition of the needs of mature students and found Moodle, the Faculty's Virtual Learning Environment, invaluable in supporting their learning. They also appreciated the swift e-mail responses that they received from tutors.

- C.5.4 The Review Panel **commends** the Department of Curriculum Studies on the excellent support provided to students undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in Primary Physical Education. Students were fulsome in their praise of the Course Leader. The Department of Educational Studies is similarly **commended** for the support provided to students undertaking the Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership and Management (SQH). The students who met with the Panel were powerful and effective advocates of the course. The Panel was pleased to learn from Senior Staff that those who had previously completed the Diploma were now sending junior members of their staff to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Middle Leadership and Management in Schools and that the Department believed that there would be local interest in topping up the Diploma with a Masters qualification.
- C.5.5 One student indicated a slight concern to the Review Panel about the number of students who appeared to be withdrawing from the new Postgraduate Certificate in Middle Leadership and Management in Schools. The Review Panel explored this with senior staff and learned that travelling from a distance had been an issue for some students and that the Department was considering introducing off campus cohorts to overcome this difficulty.
- C.5.6 Students on the MSc Psychological Studies advised the Review Panel that they were directed to the Faculty's Effective Learning Adviser at an early stage and that those who had availed themselves of this facility found the support and advice to be excellent. However students, whose courses required them to be on campus infrequently, were unaware of this support mechanism. (See C.6.10)
- C.5.7 The Dean informed the Review Panel that the Faculty was keen to promote progressive learning and to build loyalty amongst students who undertook its postgraduate CPD courses. To this end he had recently submitted a paper to the Education Policy and Strategy Committee proposing a scheme of flexible 'open registration', which might contribute to the accumulation of credit towards a qualification.

## C.6 *The Effectiveness of Provision*

### Learning and teaching

- C.6.1 Both Departments offered a portfolio of programmes and courses, which met the needs of the teaching profession. The effectiveness of the programmes and courses was demonstrated by the strong partnership with local authorities and the sponsorship that they provided to employees to undertake continuing professional development in the Department.
- C.6.2 Students found the flexible access to programmes and courses attractive and said that part-time study, distance learning and weekend courses were practical propositions for people who worked full-time and/or had personal commitments.
- C.6.3 Postgraduate taught students spoke highly of the programmes and courses offered by both Departments. They valued the face-to-face contact that supplemented other forms of learning and spoke highly of the commitment of staff. There was particular appreciation of the Postgraduate Diploma in

School Leadership and Management (SQH) and the Postgraduate Certificate in Primary Physical Education and their effectiveness in professional development.

- C.6.4 EdD students had encountered a number of staff changes since they had commenced the programme and said that the creation of the Moodle on-line forum had helped greatly with continuity. Students had found the adjustment from coursework to dissertation to be challenging and expressed some concerns about the lateness of assessment outcomes which sometimes meant that they did not know by the start of the next academic year whether or not they were eligible to progress to the next year of study. The Review Panel learned that Professor Enslin, who had been appointed at the beginning of the current academic session, had undertaken a wide-ranging review of the programme and had started to put in place various measures to enhance the learning experience of EdD students. Professor Enslin was conscious that some students might wish to exit the programme after completing the taught components and it was her intention to articulate the choices available to students more clearly at the beginning of the programme.
- C.6.5 The Review Panel was only able to meet with one undergraduate student who was highly complimentary about the two courses that she had taken. She said that c. 50% of students who took these courses hoped to pursue a career in teaching. She told the Panel that the Fundamentals of Education courses were an excellent "taster" for those with an interest in a teaching career as they provided insight into the social side of education, the philosophy behind education and the policies that informed it. She found the Department's Moodle site excellent and appreciated its links to the Scottish Executive website. She had also been able to link her educational studies learning to her principle subject.

#### Learning resources and their deployment

- C.6.6 The Faculty's Director of Learning Innovation, Dr Nicki Hedge, provided the Review Panel with a demonstration of the innovative ways in which the Department of Educational Studies used Moodle to facilitate the delivery of its courses and to enhance students' learning opportunities. Moodle provided students with a powerful tool to enable them to take charge of their learning and also provided a support mechanism. Staff were becoming increasingly aware of the potential uses of Moodle other than as a file store and a number of staff were experimenting with copyright-free visuals to enhance their site. Students also used Moodle as a facility for discussion and tutors found it helpful to see the timeline of use since it alerted them to those who were not using the facility and who might therefore have a problem. A high proportion of international students used the Moodle "Open Forum" facility and appreciated the opportunity to go back to things over and over to consolidate information. The site also provided easy access to e-books and e-texts.
- C.6.7 In addition to providing key learning resources, the various sites were used in a range of ways to suit individual programmes and courses and were a useful resource to off-campus tutors. Of particular note was the EdD programme site's virtual "Common Room", which enabled all four EdD cohorts to have discussions and seek advice from more senior peers. The contents of this site were archived annually and students were able to access the archived materials.
- C.6.8 The use of Moodle was increasing across the Faculty in general although not all programmes yet made use of it. Dr Hedge explained that the time involved in the front-loading of a good Moodle site should not be

underestimated, eg one resource had taken her 25 hours to upload. She believed that there would be opportunities for the Department of Educational Studies to be much more creative in its use of Moodle if staff had sufficient space to engage in developing it further (see also C.6.19). Many of the staff were Moodle enthusiasts and some were exploiting the media in exciting ways. The Review Panel **commends** the Department on its innovative and creative use of Moodle.

- C.6.9 The Head of Department confirmed that Moodle was the spine of both on- and off-campus provision and that the Department considered it a strength. However, the power of face-to-face contact could not be underestimated and this featured in all the Department's provision including distance education. Not all students perceived a virtual learning environment as a natural way of working but most were comfortable with it once they became used to it.
- C.6.10 The Review Panel had concerns about the variable standard of course handbooks. Some were excellent but others contained out-of-date information including reading lists and course assignment dates. Although reference was made in handbooks to the Code of Assessment, minimal guidance was given to students on how the Code would be applied to their particular programme or course. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department introduce a standard template for the preparation of its programme and course handbooks and refers the Department to the central guidance provided on the Senate Office website (<http://senate.gla.ac.uk/academic/guidelines/handbook.html>). The template should include reference to the facilities offered by the Effective Learning Adviser (see C.5.6). The Review Panel also believed that there would be merit in assigning responsibility for auditing the accuracy and consistency of handbooks to a Departmental Administrator (see C.6.20).
- C.6.11 Students spoke highly of the quality and variety of learning and teaching materials provided to them and they liked being able to control their own learning. The majority appreciated the availability of on-line course texts and journals although some international students preferred paper format.
- C.6.12 A number of those who met with the Review Panel spoke of the "outstandingly good" service provided by the Library although slight difficulties in accessing some of the recommended texts from both the Library and the University Bookshop were reported by a few students. The Head of Department confirmed that the issue of Library use continued to engage the Department but they had a very good Librarian and good links with their representative in the Library and were therefore able to discuss these matters. Distance students were encouraged to use the on-line facilities available through Moodle.
- C.6.13 Postgraduate taught students spoke of excellent e-mail feedback from tutors and of staff being "available at the end of a 'phone" and clearly appreciated this support.
- C.6.14 The Review Panel viewed a number of key facilities including the Robert Clerk Centre and the Centre for Science Education, the computer laboratory used by students on the MSc Psychological Studies, the new Staff and Research Common Room which encouraged staff networking, the room available for use by Associate Tutors, the Student Cafeteria, the Gym and the new Student Common Room which had wireless access to computing facilities. The Panel was impressed with these facilities but noted also that teaching space in the St Andrew's Building was at a premium and the flexibility of room use was an ongoing issue (see also F.4).

- C.6.15 Staff drew attention to the ongoing problem of "unintended water features" on the top floor of the St Andrew's Building. The Review Panel **recommends** that steps be taken to eliminate the water penetration on the top floor of the St Andrew's Building.
- C.6.16 A number of staff advised the Review Panel of the need for additional photocopying facilities. The Panel therefore **recommends** that the Department consider the merits of installing an additional photocopier.
- C.6.17 Following a suggestion from the course team, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Department explore with Estates and Buildings whether it might be possible to provide a dedicated notice board for the Fundamentals of Education courses on the main campus since the students who undertake these courses are largely based on the main campus.

Staff resources

- C.6.18 There are currently 30 full-time academic staff in the Department (6 professors, 6 senior lecturers, 13 lecturers, 5 university teachers) and 2 part-time members of staff (including an Honorary Professor). Three strategic appointments at professorial level have been made in the past 12 months. The work of the Department is supported by a Departmental Administrator, 4 full-time members of support staff and 2 part-time members of support staff (0.8 FTE and 0.5 FTE respectively), together with a technician who is responsible for providing support in the Technology and Psychology laboratories.
- C.6.19 Staff **commended** the leadership provided by the recently appointed Head of Department and spoke of the progress that had been made in evaluating and rationalising the Department's provision, procedures and practice in recent months. This had included refining the Department's workload model and a Workload Planning sub-group had been meeting since December with the aim of agreeing workloads for the coming year. The Panel welcomed the introduction of the refined workload model and believed that it would prove to be a useful tool for the Department.
- C.6.20 The Review Panel found academic staff to be stretched and noted that they were currently undertaking a number of administrative duties that could be managed more appropriately by a Departmental Administrator. They believed that this may have contributed to lapses in the timely provision of student feedback in some areas and to lapses in updating and checking the accuracy of information provided in programme and course handbooks. They also believed that academic staff would benefit from having more space to enable them to engage in exciting initiatives to enhance the student experience, e.g. the further development of Moodle (see C.6.8). The Review Panel **commends** the diligence of the Departmental Administrator in enhancing the Department's procedures and processes and believes that the appointment of an additional Administrator of similar calibre would remove some of the inappropriate administrative workload from academic staff and allow them the necessary space to devote more time to curriculum development and student support. For this reason, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Department and Faculty give very serious consideration to making an administrative appointment rather than an academic appointment when a staff vacancy next occurs (see also C.6.10).
- C.6.21 The Department clearly valued its University Teachers who made a major contribution to professional teaching and CPD and it supported them through professional development. The Review Panel **recommends** that the

Department's study leave scheme be as accessible to University Teachers as to other academic staff.

- C.6.22 Probationary staff had meetings with their Mentor but some were unclear how formal these were intended to be. They felt supported by the Department, particularly since the arrival of the new Head of Department. They knew what their goals were and had input to these, and were also aware of the opportunities for progression. However, they felt that they had a high administrative workload and were uncertain how much allowance was made for their probationary status. The Review Panel anticipated that the revised workload model would go some way to addressing this concern as long as there was a significant measure of transparency in the allocation of workloads.
- C.6.23 The Review Panel was concerned that the GTA with whom they met had not attended the Learning and Teaching Centre's statutory training for GTAs in the belief that this was not necessary for trained teachers. The Panel **recommends** that the Department ensure that all GTAs attend the statutory training provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre irrespective of their level of teaching experience prior to entering the Higher Education sector.
- C.6.24 The Review Panel was impressed by collective contribution and experience of the Department's hourly-paid staff, all of whom were former teachers who had held key roles in the school sector. The Panel believes that additional insight into the Learning and Teaching strategy of a Higher Education Institution could potentially enhance the contribution made by hourly-paid staff who already held a teaching qualification and therefore **recommends** that the University give consideration to introducing a short course for hourly-paid staff who fall into this category.
- C.6.25 The Review Panel learned from the SER and from discussion with staff that there were serious difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff at senior level. This was attributed to the large differential between the salaries of teaching staff in the School sector and University staff, which meant that senior staff recruited from the School sector, were expected to accept a dramatic drop in salary. The Review Panel **recommends** that the University explore the impact that salary differentials between the School and University sectors have on the recruitment of senior staff to the Faculty of Education with a view to considering whether particular initiatives are required to make key Education posts more attractive to senior staff in the School sector.

## **D The Maintenance and Enhancement of Standards of Awards**

- D.1 The Department is subject to external scrutiny in the form of External Examiners' comments and the accreditation visits of professional bodies. External Examiner reports were generally very positive, with the consensus being that high standards are maintained and that the Department is responsive to criticism.
- D.2 The following programmes are professionally accredited:
- Postgraduate Diploma School Leadership and Management [Accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)]
  - MEd Professional Development and Enquiry/Chartered Teacher Programme [Accredited by the GTCS]

- MSc Psychological Studies [Accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) and recognised as providing graduates with the Graduate Basis of Registration]
- D.3 The Department collaborates with the University of Strathclyde in the provision of the PG Certificate/Diploma: *Support for Learning* and is therefore able to benchmark its standards with those of another Scottish higher education institution.

## **E. The Maintenance and Assurance of Quality**

- E.1 It was explained in the SER that proposals for new programmes and changes to existing provision were assessed by the Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee and that new programme proposals were expected to include full details of their educational rationale, a business plan, and show that appropriate account has been taken of the opinions of a range of stakeholders. All programmes were routinely matched against the appropriate SQA benchmarks or professional standards. Where no formal benchmark or standard existed, reference was made to similar provision in comparator institutions.
- E.2 There was evidence that Annual Monitoring was taken seriously. Students had an opportunity to contribute to quality assurance and programme enhancement through Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLC), informal discussion and study weekend forums as well as by paper and electronic evaluations of courses. All Annual Monitoring reports were peer reviewed by members of the Departmental Teaching and Learning Committee.
- E.3 The SER referred to SSLCs as providing the central means of communication between tutors and students. However discussions with postgraduate taught students appeared to indicate that not all programmes and courses had an SSLC. The Review Panel recognised that part-time and distance education, together with the additional commitments of mature students, did not lend itself readily to a formal gathering of staff and students at regular intervals and therefore **recommends** that all programme teams introduce a mechanism to respond to and act on issues raised by students. The Panel further **recommends** that, where a traditional SSLC is not practicable, the Department institute a twice-yearly virtual SSLC by means of Moodle and summarise the discussion, decisions and identified action in the form of a minute or report which should be accessible on-line to present and future students.
- E.4 It was noted from the SER that the Quality Assurance Officer liaised with the department to evaluate and develop QAA Enhancement Themes. The agreed focus for session 2006-07 was Integrative Assessment and the First Year.
- E.5 The Review Panel noted the variability in the quality and consistency of the minutes of meetings and was pleased to hear that the Departmental Administrator had initiated training in minute taking for the Department's secretarial staff.
- E.6 The Head of Department told the Panel that the outcome of last year's National Student Survey had prompted the Department to look at issues of assessment and administration and its communication with students, and mechanisms has been put in place to address the identified issues. In the early years after the merger with St. Andrew's College, the main focus had been on motivating staff and managing the culture shift. Given the progress that the Department had made since 1999, the Head of Department believed that the time was now right to put in place more robust departmental administrative structures and said that he planned to introduce a Departmental/Faculty calendar and would be looking carefully at the timing of Examination Boards and the range of meetings that took place in the Department with a view to maximising the use of staff time.

## **F. Enhancing the Student Learning Experience**

- F.1 The Review Panel noted that the Department had a diverse portfolio of applied research that feeds directly into its taught programmes. There was evidence that this enhanced the quality of the student learning experience and that recent strategic staff appointments had already contributed to programme development and enhancement.
- F.2 The innovative use of Moodle clearly enhanced the students' learning experience, as did the opportunities for professional accreditation and the Department's strong working relationship with its principle stakeholders.
- F.3 In the course of discussions with postgraduate taught students, the Review Panel learned that although students were satisfied with the quality of feedback on written assignments, the timing of the receipt of feedback was variable. In some cases, students considered the delay unacceptable and detrimental to their learning. The Review Panel explored this matter at some length and understood that it related to a small number of members of staff. The Head of Department advised the Panel that he was keen to institute greater consistency in the provision of feedback and said that this had been discussed at a meeting the day before the Review. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department standardise its policy on the provision of feedback to students and that staff compliance with the policy be monitored to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to benefit from timely written feedback.
- F.4 Double-booking of teaching rooms in the St Andrew's Building was not uncommon and the Review Panel experienced this at first hand when one of the rooms booked for its meetings with students was found to be occupied. Student feedback had consistently reported dissatisfaction with accommodation arrangements and there had been occasions where staff had had to ask students to meet the lecturer at 9.00 am as they had no idea until the last minute where the class would be held. The Panel learned that the Support for Learning course, which was delivered in a one-week block, had been allocated multiple teaching venues and that the constant changing of rooms had impacted on the effective use of students' time during their week on campus. Staff also reported that there was not enough space in the St Andrew's Building to accommodate larger student groups or to bring together classes for economies of scale. The Review Panel **recommends** that the University remain alert to the changing needs of the Faculty of Education in its Estates planning and that Central Room Bookings staff be made aware of the difficulties caused by late notification of teaching venues and of the importance of minimising the number of teaching venues allocated to courses delivered in block format.
- F.5 MSc Psychological Studies students believed that they would benefit from more guidance in career trajectories/options. The Review Panel believes that a small change such as this would be helpful to students and that liaison with the Department of Psychology or with the BPS administrative officer in Scotland, who is currently located in the Division of Community-Based Sciences, Section of Psychological Medicine, may be beneficial in this respect.

## **G. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas to be Improved or Enhanced in relation to Learning and Teaching and Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Key strengths*

- The Review Panel **commends** the Department of Curriculum Studies on the excellent support provided to students undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in Primary Physical Education.

- The Department of Educational Studies is similarly **commended** for the support provided to students undertaking the Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership and Management (SQH).
- The Review Panel **commends** the Department on its innovative and creative use of Moodle which clearly enhanced the students' learning experience.
- Staff **commended** the leadership provided by the recently appointed Head of Department and spoke of the progress that had been made in evaluating and rationalising the Department's provision, procedures and practice in recent months.
- The Review Panel **commends** the diligence of the Departmental Administrator in enhancing the Department's procedures and processes.
- Staff clearly viewed the DPTLA review as being complementary to the Department's own review of its provision, procedures and processes that had been ongoing since September 2006.

#### *Areas to be improved or enhanced*

- The consistency and quality of some of the Department's programme and course handbooks
- The timing of student feedback provided by some staff
- Induction support for international students
- Provision of more guidance in career trajectories/options to MSc Psychological Studies students

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

### *Conclusions*

The Review Panel concluded that the provision of Educational Studies was of a high quality overall. The students who met with the Panel were articulate and their satisfaction with the quality of their educational experience and with the standard of programmes and courses offered by both Departments was evident. The Panel was impressed by the progress that had been made since the merger of the then Department of Education with St Andrew's College in 1999. Under the leadership of Dr Christine Forde, staff who had originally been employed by St Andrew's College had undergone a significant culture change in a relatively short period of time, and a high proportion of the Department's staff was now research active. The Department had come through some difficult times and had emerged as an integrated team of staff, fully committed to the provision of high quality research-informed programmes and courses and to the expansion of international recruitment.

The Panel found evidence of strong partnership with local authorities, the Scottish Executive Education Department and professional and statutory bodies. The Departments of Educational Studies and Curriculum Studies were alert to the changing needs of local authorities and the needs of the profession in general and were in a strong position to take advantage of emerging opportunities. There was also evidence of co-operation between the two Departments. Staff of the Department of Educational Studies valued the leadership provided by Professor Bruce Carrington and it was pleasing to note that he was working closely with Dr Forde to build on the Department's earlier achievements. Staff clearly viewed the DPTLA review as being

complementary to the Department's own review of its provision, procedures and processes that had been ongoing since September 2006.

The Panel was particularly impressed by the innovative and creative ways with which the Department used Moodle and by the students' engagement in Moodle and there was clear evidence that engagement in virtual learning had enhanced the learning process for students.

### **Recommendations to the Department/Faculty and University Officers**

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report, and summarised below, are made in the spirit of encouragement in order to enhance the already high standards in the Department of Educational Studies. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the corresponding sections of the report, and are ranked in order of priority.

#### *Recommendation 1*

- a) The Review Panel recognised that part-time and distance education, together with the additional commitments of mature students, did not lend itself readily to a formal gathering of staff and students at regular intervals and therefore **recommends** that all programme teams introduce a mechanism to respond to and act on issues raised by students. (*Paragraph E.3*)
- b) The Panel further **recommends** that, where a traditional SSLC is not practicable, the Department institute a twice-yearly virtual SSLC by means of Moodle and summarise the discussion, decisions and identified action in the form of a minute or report which should be accessible on-line to present and future students. (*Paragraph E.3*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 2*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department standardise its policy on the provision of feedback to students and that staff compliance with the policy be monitored to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to benefit from timely written feedback. (*Paragraph F.3*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 3*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department introduce a standard template for the preparation of its programme and course handbooks and refers the Department to the central guidance provided on the Senate Office website (<http://senate.gla.ac.uk/academic/guidelines/handbook.html>). The template should include reference to the facilities offered by the Effective Learning Adviser. (*Paragraph C.6.10*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

#### *Recommendation 4*

The Panel had noted that some longstanding courses now appeared to attract relatively few students and **recommends** that, whilst reviewing its postgraduate taught provision, the Department also give careful consideration to the viability of such courses and their

continuing relevance to the current and future climate within which the Faculty as a whole is operating. (*Paragraph C.4.3*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Recommendation 5*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department and Faculty give very serious consideration to making an administrative appointment rather than an academic appointment when a staff vacancy next occurs. (*Paragraph C.6.20*)

**Action: The Head of Department/the Dean of the Faculty of Education**

*Recommendation 6*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University explore the impact that salary differentials between the School and University sectors have on the recruitment of senior staff to the Faculty of Education with a view to considering whether particular initiatives are required to make key Education posts more attractive to senior staff in the School sector. (*Paragraph C.6.25*)

**Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Education /the Director of Human Resources**

*Recommendation 7*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University remain alert to the changing needs of the Faculty of Education in its Estates planning and that Central Room Bookings staff be made aware of the difficulties caused by late notification of teaching venues and of the importance of minimising the number of teaching venues allocated to courses delivered in block format. (*Paragraph F.4*)

**Action: The Director of Estates & Buildings**

*Recommendation 8*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department's study leave scheme be as accessible to University Teachers as to other academic staff. (*Paragraph C.6.21*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Recommendation 9*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department ensure that all GTAs attend the statutory training provided by the Learning and Teaching Centre, irrespective of their level of teaching experience prior to entering the Higher Education sector. (*Paragraph C.6.23*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Recommendation 10*

The Panel believes that additional insight into the Learning and Teaching strategy of a Higher Education Institution could potentially enhance the contribution made by hourly-paid staff who already held a teaching qualification and therefore **recommends**

that the University give consideration to introducing a short course for hourly-paid staff who fall into this category. (*Paragraph C.6.24*)

**Action: The Director of the Learning & Teaching Centre**

*Recommendation 11*

The Review Panel **recommends** that steps be taken to eliminate the water penetration on the top floor of the St Andrew's Building. (*Paragraph C.6.15*)

**Action: The Director of Estates & Buildings**

*Recommendation 12*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department consider the merits of installing an additional photocopier. (*Paragraph C.6.16*)

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Recommendation 13*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Department explore with Estates and Buildings whether it might be possible to provide a dedicated notice board for the Fundamentals of Education courses on the main campus since the students who undertake these courses are largely based on the main campus. (*Paragraph C.6.17*).

**Action: The Head of Department**

*Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office*

*Last modified on: Monday 10 September 2007*