

Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

Review of Postgraduate Taught Programmes in the College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences held on 22 & 23 November 2012

Report Summary

The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences for *Postgraduate Taught* Programme provision. *Periodic Subject Review* is an internal subject review focused on the quality of provision as experienced by students. The review looks at the range of programmes, course content, the teaching methods employed, assessment, facilities and much more.

The full report of the review is available publicly at:

http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_295209_en.pdf

Further information about the PSR process can be found at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/gea/approvalmonitoringandreview/periodicsubjectreview/#tabs=3>

Italicised words are explained in a glossary below.

Conclusions

The Panel was impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and students, and with the firm focus on practical work and *employability*. The student group were enthusiastic and positive, and a credit to the College.

The College demonstrated a number of strengths, as well as an awareness of the areas requiring improvement. The most substantive of these are reflected in the recommendations below.

However, the Review Panel considered that the number of programmes covered by this Review was much too large to be manageable, and rendered the Review less meaningful than was satisfactory. The majority of programmes were not represented in the student group and some were also unrepresented in the staff group. This meant the Review Panel had only the documentation prepared by the College on which to base its conclusions. Although the standard documentation had been supplied, the Review Panel would have found it useful to receive more collated data and information on year on year trends and graduate destinations.

Academic Standards Committee may wish to review the sufficiency of the standard documentation to be prepared for periodic subject review. Academic Standards Committee is asked to consider whether there might be a more appropriate, effective and meaningful method of reviewing the Graduate School's provision.

Key Strengths (Commendations)

- Commitment of staff to ensuring the student experience is high quality and engaging
 - Good student support mechanisms in place, especially for international students
 - Strong research environment
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Areas to be improved or enhanced¹

1. Feedback

- Clear and consistent guidelines should be provided across the College to encourage feedback from students on all programmes and to use this to inform changes to course and programme content and structure in line with the University's course and programme approval procedure [*Paragraph 4.4.6*].

2. Curriculum Design, Development and Content

- The College formulates a clear vision of how it wishes its postgraduate teaching to evolve, with a comprehensive strategy and expected timescales [*Paragraph 4.4.1*].
- The Graduate School consider introducing appropriate mechanisms for ensuring its curricula are matched to students' prior knowledge, to permit maximum engagement with programme material [*Paragraphs 4.4.7 & 4.4.8*].

3. University processes: Registration and Enrolment

- Whilst improvements had been made, MyCampus was clearly still evolving and was, at present, not seen as fit for purpose. The Review Panel **recommends** that the University's *Senior Management Group* recognises the ongoing inadequacies of the system and continues to invest resources in resolving these in order that MyCampus is fit for purpose and enhances, rather than frustrates, the student and staff experience [*Paragraph 4.8.11*].

¹ Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the full report that contain the relevant discussion.

4. Learning and Teaching Resources

- Given the lack of resources to offer sufficient wet laboratory projects, and the increasing staffing and financial resources required to provide two projects for MRes students, the Review Panel **recommends** that the College reviews the balance of its MSc and MRes programmes, or considers alternative means of providing projects for MRes students [Paragraph 4.8.7].
- College management better articulates the planned moves of MVLS staff to other sites, in order that future plans for the movement of programmes and teaching can be more clearly communicated to staff and students [Paragraph 4.8.6].

5. Staff Support

- The College ensures support for scholarship is offered for staff on University Teacher/Senior *University Teacher* contracts, in order to facilitate access to promotion for those staff [Paragraph 4.8.2].

6. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- Current practice of *External Examiners'* reports being submitted to each School and Research Institute within the College be reviewed, and that central examination of the reports by the Graduate School be considered [Paragraph 5.3].

7. Recruitment

- The College reviews its recruitment targets to determine whether they are achievable and realistic in view of the capacity of existing estate, staffing, project provision and likely demand [Paragraph 4.5.5].
- Give consideration to the implementation of a 'soft deposit' scheme to improve conversion rates, whereby those accepting an offer were required to place a deposit to secure their place, but where the College still had discretion to hold a place open without a deposit where this was considered justifiable. The process would require to be rigorously tested in MyCampus prior to introduction in order to avoid the problems already experienced by students making payments via MyCampus [Paragraph 4.5.4].

Glossary of terms/acronyms used

Academic Standards Committee (ASC)

The Academic Standards Committee is a sub-committee of Education Policy and Strategy Committee (EdPSC), a key functional committee of the University. The role of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) is to assist EdPSC in its implementation of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, through assurance and enhancement of the quality of educational provision and through maintenance of standards. ASC reports to EdPSC, and also approves proposals for undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree programmes on behalf of EdPSC and Senate.

Employability

Employability is about more than being able to get a job after University. It is about acknowledging and being able to demonstrate achievements, understanding and personal attributes that will contribute to success both during, and after, University.

Periodic Subject Review or PSR

The University has a six yearly cycle of review of the Subjects/Schools within it. The PSR is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the quality of the provision delivered by Subjects/Schools.

Postgraduate Taught or PGT

Postgraduate Taught refers to taught programmes at postgraduate level, usually Masters.

Senior Management Group

The Senior Management Group advises the Principal as chief executive officer of the University on matters of policy. It also advises Court and Senate on matters of strategic policy (academic and resource), and acts on a day-to-day basis to implement the policies of Court and Senate.

University Teacher

University Teachers are equivalent to Lecturers but make a relatively greater contribution to teaching and service/administration than Lecturers who are required to conduct and publish research, in addition to teaching.