

## Periodic Subject Review (PSR)

### Review of Veterinary Medicine (Undergraduate provision) held on 4 and 5 December 2012

#### Report Summary

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The following is a brief summary of the full report of the review carried out in the School of Veterinary Medicine. *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\\_295210\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_295210_en.pdf)

Further information about the PSR process can be found at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/approvalmonitoringandreview/periodicsubjectreview>

*Italicised words* are explained in a glossary below.

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#### Conclusions

The members of the Review Panel very much enjoyed their engagement with the School of Veterinary Medicine. The students demonstrated enthusiasm for their studies and for their learning environment. This enthusiasm was the more impressive for coming at a time when School staff were juggling many demands in preparing for the new curriculum and *accreditation*, and when the campus was experiencing significant disruption from building works and student social space had recently been demolished. The Review came at an exciting time for the School as it was building for the future on its past and present success, in response to external drivers. The commitment and hard work of staff was evident to the Panel and was strongly praised by the Head of School. The Panel commends the School for its provision of a dynamic and positive learning environment where innovative methods of teaching and assessment are employed.

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## Key Strengths (Commendations)<sup>1</sup>

### Assessment and Feedback

- Its broad range of forms of assessment, particularly interactive *formative assessment* which made innovative use of technology. [paragraph 3.3.3]
- Comments from students highlighted the important role of *focus groups* within the School. It was clear to the Review Panel that the students felt that their views were listened to and taken into account. Staff confirmed that they valued the immediate nature of feedback from focus groups. The Panel commends the School's use of these groups. [paragraph 5.2]

### Curriculum Design and Content

- The successful introduction of the new programme of study, the BSc/MSci Veterinary Biosciences, and the integration of its students into the life of the School. [paragraph 3.7.1]
- In the new BVMS curriculum each new unit would last for a four-week period, with teaching delivered in weeks one to three, leaving week four clear for consolidation. The aim was to move away from such heavy reliance on lectures and to incorporate more problems; to which the students (either in small groups or on their own) would be expected, with appropriate support, to seek answers themselves, promoting deeper learning and independence. [paragraph 3.4.3]

### Learning and Teaching Resources

- The evident commitment and hard work of staff, reflected not only in their high aspirations but in the achievements of the School and in the positive reflections of the students. [paragraph 3.8.1]
- That there had been a recent redesigning of an old operating theatre complex to create a clinical skills facility, which was now supported by a full-time member of staff. This represented a very welcome enhancement of teaching facilities and was commended by the Panel. [paragraph 3.8.19]

### Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- *External Examiner* reports indicated a subject area of good standing nationally and internationally. The Review Panel commends the School on this marker of positive esteem. [paragraph 4.1]

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## Areas to be improved or enhanced

### Assessment and Feedback

- The School considers how best to ensure that feedback on assessment is available for all students – those who perform well in assessments as well as for those who do less well – and considers how to ensure that students recognise and make best use of that

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers refer to the paragraphs in the full report that contain the relevant discussion.

feedback, thus supporting them in their wish to further strengthen their performance and respond effectively to areas of weakness, and also promoting an across-the-board culture of continuing development, which is essential in the context of professional training. [Paragraph 3.3.7].

- While the nature of assessment of performance would be changing in the new curriculum, the Panel recommends that the School considers how best to feedback to students on their progress throughout the full programme of clinical rotations. [Paragraph 3.3.12].

### **Student Support**

- The School carefully considers the future operation of the mentoring system, so that, firstly, its purpose and, secondly, the respective responsibilities of both staff and students, are clearly articulated and properly implemented. This may involve training and personal development for staff acting as mentors. [Paragraph 3.6.7].

### **Curriculum Design and Content**

- Before a decision is taken to accelerate the implementation of BVMS3, the School reflects very carefully on the risks attendant on effecting too much change at one time, particularly given that BVMS3 students will not have taken the revised form of BVMS1 and 2. [Paragraph 3.4.15].
- The current Veterinary Biosciences Knowledge *Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)* were insufficiently rigorous, particularly at Level 4, and recommends that they would benefit from review in consultation with *the Learning and Teaching Centre*. [Paragraph 3.2.1].
- The School considers how best to engage students in an understanding of assessment criteria applying to the demonstration of ILOs, whether through clearer dissemination of information or through the structuring of the instruments of assessment themselves. [Paragraph 3.3.2].
- The Review Panel noted that BSc (Hons) Veterinary Biosciences students who completed a work placement year graduated with an MSci. The content of the four years of academic study at the University was the same for both BSc (Hons) and MSci students. The award of a Masters level degree could, therefore, only be justified if the placement year satisfied the requirements of SCQF Level 11 study, and the Panel concluded from the information provided that this was not currently the case. The Panel recommends that, as a matter of urgency, the School revises the content of the final taught year of the MSci to ensure that the requirements of the *Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)* and of the University Calendar in relation to the award of Masters degrees are satisfied. [Paragraph 3.2.3].
- The School ensures that the documentation prepared in connection with the forthcoming accreditation visit clearly communicates the rationale for BVMS curriculum change and reflects the careful process of consultation undertaken as well as giving detailed information on the timetable for implementation and on the process of trialling new features of the curriculum. [Paragraph 3.4.13].

### **Learning and Teaching Resources**

- Noting the strong negative impact of inadequate IT on the student experience, the Panel

recommends that the College undertakes a review of IT and IT support within the School, to identify: the range of difficulties being encountered by staff and students; possible process improvements for the use of current IT resources and the realistic level of staffing required to support these; and any possible further efficiencies to be achieved in the use of the resources shared by the School and Research Institute at Garscube. *[Paragraph 3.8.17].*

- in discussion with areas such as the Learning and Teaching Centre and Human Resources, the School considers how best to promote the hosting of training, development and networking events for staff at the Garscube campus. *[Paragraph 3.8.6].*
- consideration be given to how transport between Garscube and Gilmorehill campuses can be improved, including possible approaches to the local bus operator and the SRC.<sup>2</sup> *[Paragraph 3.8.7].*
- the College and School develops a future vision for the Small Animal Hospital that recognises its role in teaching, clinical research and income generation and that is shared and understood by all staff in the School. *[Paragraph 3.8.14].*
- action be taken to address the temperature control problems experienced in the Ilay and Jarrett Lecture Theatres which result in an environment which is not conducive to effective learning and teaching. *[Paragraph 3.8.18].*

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## **Glossary of terms/acronyms used**

### **Accreditation**

Accreditation is a 'seal of approval' given to a programme by a professional body, association or other organisation. It has potential benefits for students, such as a recognised fast-track route for graduates seeking professional status or exemption from certain professional examinations.

### **External Examiner**

External Examiners are appointed by the University Court on the recommendation of Senate based on advice from the relevant School. The role of External Examiner is a very important part of quality enhancement and assurance to maintain academic standards at the appropriate level and to ensure that student performance is properly judged.

### **Focus Groups**

A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a service, concept or idea. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

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<sup>2</sup> Subsequent to the Review visit, the Panel learned that an inter-campus travel demand analysis was being carried out under the Action Plan of the University's Strategic Travel Plan, and that this would be followed by a detailed investigation into the options for addressing the demand (e.g. introduction of a shuttle bus or subsidising existing bus services). The inclusion of the recommendation in this report reflects the issues raised during the Review visit and will ensure that there is an opportunity to consider the outcome of the study specifically in relation to the School of Veterinary Medicine.

## **Formative Assessment**

Formative assessment refers to assessed work where feedback is given to help the student improve their learning and their performance. The work may or may not contribute to the student's final grade for the course.

## **Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)**

Intended Learning Outcomes or ILOs describe what all students should be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes when they successfully complete the course or programme that the ILOs relate to.

## **Learning and Teaching Centre**

The Learning and Teaching Centre is a University Service whose role is to “help implement and develop the University’s Learning and Teaching strategy, identify, assess and disseminate new developments and good practice which serve to enhance the student learning experience, and will work with colleagues throughout the University to bring about change”.

## **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.

## **SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)**

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework promotes lifelong learning in Scotland. The Framework includes all mainstream qualifications in Scotland and provides support to learning providers and employers. It provides a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities and thereby makes the relationships between qualifications clearer. It clarifies entry and exit points, and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors and increase the opportunities for credit transfer. In these ways it assists learners to plan their progress and minimise duplication of learning.

## **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)**

The University must provide public assurance that the quality of its degree programmes is satisfactory and that it is maintaining its academic standards. This is assessed, under the terms of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005, by the Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education (SFC), a Non-departmental Public Body of the Scottish Government. To carry out the assessment, the SFC engages as its agent the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (Scotland). The QAA acts as a safeguard for quality and standards in UK universities and colleges so that students have the best possible learning experience.