

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee – 19 May 2017

Periodic Subject Review: Review of School of Psychology held on 1 February 2017

Jane McAllister, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Moira Fischbacher-Smith	Assistant Vice Principal (Learning and Teaching) Panel Convener
Professor John Clibbens	Birmingham City University, External Subject Specialist
Dr Kathryn Lowe	Acting Senate Assessor on Court
Ms Kate Powell	SRC Vice President Education, Student member
Professor Quintin Cutts	School of Computing Science, Cognate member
Dr Michael McEwan	Learning Enhancement & Academic Development Service
Ms Jane McAllister	Senate Office and Clerk to the Panel
Dr Matthew Williamson	Director of Learning Enhancement & Academic Development Service, Observer
Dr Richard Lowdon	Senate Office, Observer

1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 The School of Psychology is one of the seven schools that form the College of Science and Engineering. The School operates with the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology (INP) under a single management structure. The focus of this review is the School of Psychology. The Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology is located in the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences (MVLS) and its provision will be reviewed with MVLS postgraduate taught provision.
- 1.1.2 Preparation of the School of Psychology Self-Evaluation Report (SER) was led by a core steering group including the Deputy Head of School, Director of Teaching, Director of Learning Enhancement, Quality Officer and the Teaching Administrator. Staff provided specific commentary according to their roles. All staff and students had an opportunity to comment on the SER via Moodle and student representatives were invited to a meeting to discuss and feedback on the document prior to its submission.
- 1.1.3 The Review Panel met with the Deputy Head of School, Professor Stephany Biello, the Director of Teaching, Dr Margaret Martin, and the Director of Learning Enhancement, Dr Niamh Stack (this group is referred to below as “the Management Team”), and the Dean (Learning and Teaching) for the College of Science and Engineering, Professor John Davies. They also met with members of academic and administrative staff, including 4 early career staff, 16 undergraduate students, 3 postgraduate taught students and 4 Graduate Teaching Assistants. The Panel did not meet with Professor Philippe Schyns, the Head of the School of Psychology and the Director of the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology.

2. Context and Strategy

2.1 Staff

The School of Psychology currently has 39 FTE teaching staff.

The staff:student ratio across the School's taught programmes is 1:17. A ratio of 1:20 must be maintained as a requirement for professional accreditation by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

2.2 Students

Student numbers for 2016-17 are summarised as follows:

Individuals enrolled on one or more courses at each level	class enrolment (headcount)	FTE
Level 1	606	182
Level 2	229	115
Level 3	16	16
Level 3 Hons	106 single/21 Joint	116.5
Level 4 Hons	114 single/25 Joint	126.5
PGT (Sch/INP)	56	56
PGT (Educ)	63	38

2.3 Range of Provision under Review

2.3.1 Accredited degrees

- M.A. Honours degree in Psychology. Single Honours
- M.A.Soc.Sci. Honours degree in Psychology. Single Honours
- B.Sc. Honours degree in Psychology. Single Honours
- M.A. Honours degree in Psychology. Joint Honours (various subjects)
- M.A.Soc.Sci. Honours degree in Psychology. Joint Honours (various subjects)
- B.Sc. Honours degree in Psychology. Joint Honours (various subjects)
- M.A. Honours degree in Psychology. Special Combination

2.3.2 Non-Accredited degrees

- B.Sc. Honours degree in Psychological Studies. Joint Honours
- B.Sc. Designated degree in Psychological Studies

2.3.3 Postgraduate degrees

- M.Sc. Research Methods of Psychological Science
- M.Sc Brain Sciences
- M.Sc. Psychological Science (conversion)

The School of Psychology also contributes a number of taught courses and project supervision to the MSc Psychological Studies (conversion) programme owned by the School of Education.

The School of Psychology is not a clinical unit. Programmes in Psychological Medicine and the Psychology of Education are provided by other academic units in the University.

2.4 Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology

2.4.1 The School of Psychology and the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology (INP) operate under a single management structure. The Head of School and Director of the Institute roles are combined by Professor Schyns, with much of the management of the School delegated to the Deputy Head of School, Professor Biello. The Review Panel explored the relationship between the School and Institute in discussions throughout the day. The Panel found the staff with whom they met to be committed to working collegiately with Institute staff, with the common aim of synthesising teaching and research [para 4.4.2]. It was explained that division between the two entities was notional and that the co-location at 58 Hillhead Street enabled staff to establish close day-to-day synergies. Institute staff were most involved with the School's provision at Level 4 where they teach optional courses on specialist research expertise and supervise maxi projects and help to prepare students to take forward research independently.

2.5 Strategic Approach to Enhancing Learning and Teaching

2.5.1 In its Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the School stated its strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching. It aims to provide "a world class student learning experience that equips students to be psychologically literate global citizens, who are able to apply their knowledge of psychology and their associated skills and attributes to problem solving and interacting with the everyday world around them". This is fully in line with the University Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Review Panel heard this vision articulated throughout the visit by the staff with whom they met. The Panel was impressed by the engagement of staff with the School's strategic aim, and particularly with the widespread focus on the application of skills in the wider world.

Research led teaching

2.5.2 The Review Panel noted the School's strong commitment to research-led teaching. The undergraduate students who met with the Panel recognised research-led teaching and confirmed that most lecturers referred to current research with increasing emphasis as the programme progressed. The postgraduate students who met with the Panel also confirmed that staff presented new research and guided the students to consider it critically. The students described this as "learning to think like a researcher".

3. Enhancing the Student Experience

3.1 Admissions, Retention and Success

Recruitment

3.1.1 The Review Panel noted that controlling the number of students admitted to Psychology was challenging and that substantial over-recruitment persisted, despite attempts every year to sharpen the qualifications required. Recent increases in student numbers had necessitated a corresponding increase in the number of staff in

order to maintain professional accreditation which required a staff:student ratio of less than 1:20. The Management Team reported that it had been challenging to organise the recruitment of staff because the funding had come from various sources and had been released in small proportions e.g. 0.2 FTE. The Panel noted that decisions about recruitment and staff resource were taken jointly between the School and the Institute by the Executive Committee.

- 3.1.2 The Review Panel noted that the School recruited undergraduate students based in three of the four Colleges in the University. The Deputy Head of School reported that none of the routes, BSc, MA, or MA (SocSci), had an advantage over the others and reported that the School welcomed the different strengths that each group brought to the programme. The students participated in the same programme, backgrounds were mixed in the allocation of groups and there was no significant variation in employment prospects across the routes.
- 3.1.3 The Review Panel discussed the experience of students from the different Colleges with the undergraduate students that they met. They confirmed that they received equal support from the School of Psychology but noted several other points of difference. The students reported that they had not been aware of the alternative pathways at application but understood that the School was working to further clarify the information it provided to applicants. The Panel noted that information to distinguish between the routes was published each year and was made available to applicants via webpages and a printed leaflet. These arrangements had been in place for some time but it seemed that many applicants did not appreciate the significance of these details before they arrived at the University. Some of the final-year students who met with the Panel reported that they were now finding that the type of qualification, i.e. BSc or MA, would affect their applications for postgraduate study, especially for institutions outwith the UK. The Panel **encourages** the School to continue to with their efforts to provide information on the alternative degree pathways to applicants, and to draw their attention to it [para 3.1.6]. This should be carried out in conjunction with MaRIO (Marketing, Recruitment and International Office).
- 3.1.4 The Review Panel recognised that cross-College management was a challenge for the School with teaching issues managed via the College of Science and Engineering, research via the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences (MVLS), and while also accommodating the College of Arts arrangements. The Panel was pleased to hear that the School, with support from senior university staff, had been working with the Colleges since October to establish a more unified approach. All parties had recognised this as a desirable way forward. The Management Team reported that progress had been made and that the recent appointment associated with the new Social Robotics Masters programme had been easier.

Progression

- 3.1.5 The Review Panel noted from the SER that limits had been set on class sizes at Level 1 (600) and Level 2 (300), and, as a function of the accreditation requirements, at Honours (approximately 140). The School was very successful in attracting and retaining high quality students to Honours, which necessitated a progression threshold to manage numbers. This was normally B2 grade point average, but this was subject to amendment to allow the School to maintain control over numbers in the event of an unusually high performing or large cohort. The threshold could also be relaxed if maximum numbers were not reached but it was unlikely to be lower than B3. The Director of Teaching confirmed that individual cases were reviewed and that other aspects of performance, such as trajectory, could be considered. While the restriction of numbers raised concern initially, it was pointed out that those not continuing would include students who had actively chosen not to progress with Psychology as well as those who had not met progression requirements. The Management Team reported

that a good balance in the numbers able and wishing to progress had been achieved prior to session 2013-14 when there had been a higher than normal intake across the University. The School expected to return to this balance when the large cohort completed the programme. The Deputy Head of School commented that a significant proportion of the psychology students were very ambitious and aspired to graduate into clinical programmes that generally require A grades, so a high progression threshold was not considered to be an issue by the School.

- 3.1.6 The undergraduate students who met with the Review Panel reported that they had not been aware of the progression requirements for Honours when they had applied to the University but that it had been communicated very clearly at an early stage in Level 1 [para 3.1.3]. The Panel asked about the advice students were given at progression points. Lectures, meetings and general advice were described and the Panel was reassured that students in Levels 1 and 2 were well briefed by the School, including strong advice on keeping their options open. Nevertheless, the Panel remained concerned by the competitive environment described by the students at the meeting and the potential for the pressure they experienced to have an adverse impact on other aspects of the degree [paras 3.1.7 - 10].

Level 2 attendance and student support

- 3.1.7 The Review Panel noted from the SER that the School had some concerns over poor lecture attendance at Level 2. The undergraduate students who met with the Panel pointed to the high workload and suggested that students who were not interested in continuing with Psychology to Honours stopped attending lectures because they chose to focus their efforts on their other subjects. In response to further questions from the Panel, the undergraduate students at the meeting unanimously agreed that this high workload affected students' ability to keep up with other subjects. They commented that, if a student was committed to studying Psychology at Honours, a total focus on Psychology was required to the exclusion of other subjects.
- 3.1.8 The Review Panel noted that the Level 2 courses, 2A/2B, amounted to 60 credits, rather than the 40 credits in most other subjects in the Colleges of Arts and Social Sciences. However, 60 credits was standard for Level 2 courses in the College of Science and Engineering. The Panel questioned whether the higher credit weighting exacerbated the pressure that students found themselves under, and reduced alternative honours routes, particularly for those based in Arts or Social Science.
- 3.1.9 Undergraduate students who met with the Panel identified a gap in the support they received at Level 2, a time when several reported that they had "felt alone". They had been accustomed to a great deal of support in Level 1 and the Honours students confirmed that they experienced good academic and career support at Levels 3 & 4. The students clarified that this referred to structured support only. They agreed that staff replied to email promptly and were readily accessible during office hours. The staff who met with the Panel noted that the small tutor groups at Level 1 did not continue into Level 2 which possibly contributed to the students' perception of being less supported.
- 3.1.10 The Review Panel was concerned that the students with whom they met had found Level 2 to be a very stressful and polarising experience, with a strong sense of competing for places in the Honours class. The Panel was aware that the School was engaged in a review of the full curriculum [paras 4.1.5 - 8] and that the next stage of process would address Level 2. The staff who met with the Panel reported that plans were already in place for adjustments to the current high value assessments at Level 2 and gave reassurances that the students were not competing with each other but with themselves. Noting that the School was aware of issues at Level 2 and was in the process of a review, the Review Panel **recommends** that, as part of the next stage of

its ongoing curriculum review, the School gives attention to student workload, support, the competitive aspects at Level 2, and the potentially different experiences of students on the various degree pathways. There should be detailed discussion with the student body at the outset to explore perceptions and ensure that effective solutions are identified.

Postgraduate Taught Provision

- 3.1.11 The Deputy Head of School explained that the direction of PGT strategy was largely determined by the available research expertise. External drivers were also monitored and existing staff were encouraged to acquire the necessary knowledge to develop new provision to address gaps. The Review Panel noted the School's plans for an MSc in Social Robotics (in collaboration with the School of Computing Science) and for the further development of the MSc Research Methods programme. The Panel was pleased to see the School's engagement with the BOLD (Blended and Online Learning Development) initiative. It was also reassured that further development of online provision would proceed with caution to ensure it would also usefully support on-campus delivery. The Panel noted that the School had previous experience of online provision but that a programme in sleep medicine had moved to another institution with the member of staff who had created it. The School was therefore concerned to ensure sustainability in future online learning provision.
- 3.1.12 The postgraduate students who met with the Review Panel confirmed that their programmes had generally met with their expectations, although it was noted that students, particularly on the conversion programme, had diverse backgrounds and thus different expectations. There was a suggestion that students who had come from other universities were less well prepared for the statistical aspects of the MSc programmes. Staff later confirmed that the PGT students were allocated an Adviser from the teaching team to help support them,
- 3.1.13 The Postgraduate taught students who met with the Review Panel reported that there were common courses across the PGT programmes. The MSc Psychological Science (conversion) programme also shared courses with the MSc Psychological Studies based in the School of Education. The Panel heard that a joint induction meeting and lunch had been held which the students had found beneficial. They were positive about the opportunity to interact with students outwith their own cohort. They expressed the view that a full day of activities would encourage useful relationship building with students on other programmes. They would also welcome an early session on Moodle and other information to assist with transition into the University.
- 3.1.14 The Review Panel noted that it was possible for students on the MSc (conversion) programme to select electives in a way that left them with a very unbalanced workload over semester 1 and 2. The Panel discussed elective choices on PGT programmes with the staff that they met. It was reported that the student's Adviser would discuss relative weighting of workload across the two semesters when choices were confirmed. The staff also reported that students were given advice on time management, which the School regarded as an important skill for the students to develop. The Panel had further discussion of the balance of electives privately and identified some possible confusion around the terminology of "core" material used by the accrediting body, the British Psychological Society (BPS). The External Subject Specialist explained that the BPS used "core" to refer to essential material that must be covered to qualify for accreditation rather than meaning that material that constituted a foundation or base for more advanced material in elective classes. The Panel suggests that there may be some benefit in clarifying this with future cohorts and in course materials to assist students in making their elective choices

3.1.15 The postgraduate taught students who met with the Review Panel expressed a view that dissertation choice had been limited and was disappointing. The Panel noted this but did not wish to draw specific conclusions given the small size of the group who attended the meeting. However, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School should extend its curriculum review to postgraduate taught provision, and that this review should include consideration of elective choices (in relation to information and balance of workload) and other support for students at key transition points. The Panel does not expect this recommendation to be addressed immediately but to follow the final stage of the undergraduate curriculum review, unless it can be reasonably accommodated in staff workload sooner. In the meantime, and in time for postgraduate students arriving in September 2017, the Panel encourages the School to pay particular attention to induction information and transition support within the current parameters of the programme structures and course offerings. This might be informed by student input on the issues faced, and on the design of induction materials and transition support.

3.2 Equality and Diversity

3.2.1 The Review Panel noted from the SER that the School had a diverse student body and that they described an engaged response to equality and diversity issues. The School offered good, co-ordinated support for disability, including a dedicated Disability Officer. The School was fully supportive of lecture recording as a means of supporting learning and provided all students, as a matter of policy, with a variety of learning resources via Moodle. In addition, the Panel noted that the Deputy Head of School, Professor Biello, was leading the development of a policy on Accessible and Inclusive Learning for the University.

3.2.2 The Review Panel was interested in the age/gender profile of academic staff. It was noted that the subject of Psychology attracted more female students than male (75/25). This reflected the picture across the sector, nationally. However, female academic staff represented a smaller proportion at 57%, and smaller proportion again at senior level, with 91% of the professorial staff being male. The Panel did not pursue this as an issue, noting that the School had been awarded the Athena Swan Bronze in October 2016.

3.3 Supporting Students in their Learning

Pastoral Support

3.3.1 The Review Panel welcomed the School's commitment to providing pastoral support to its students and noted the wide range of activities organised by the School to support students in their learning. There was a thorough focus on induction to ease undergraduate transition into the University; a Peer-Assisted Learning programme that included drop-in sessions; an initiative to support students with study-related stress (in partnership with the University Counselling and Psychological Service (CAPS)); Reading Party; student conference; and Hackathon.

3.3.2 The undergraduate and postgraduate students who met with the Panel considered the staff to be very approachable and supportive. They confirmed that all staff members were available during office hours and strongly encouraged students to use the opportunity if they needed clarification, advice or to discuss feedback on assessment.

3.3.3 A notable development was the use of group work in the new Level 1 courses, redesigned to support students in their transition into University during the first stage of the curriculum review [paras 4.1.5 - 8]. This redesign developed the theme of "Becoming a Psychologist" through lectures and coursework to draw students into the School community and to focus their attention on their goals in terms of the subject

[para 3.3.4]. The Review Panel **commends** the School's pastoral support of its students, including its efforts to integrate new undergraduate students making the transition into University study.

Graduate Attributes

3.3.4 The Review Panel noted from the SER that the School actively promotes graduate attributes from Level 1 of the undergraduate programme. Much of the language around graduate attributes is related to "psychological literacy" skills that students gain through psychology courses. These skills include problem solving, critical thinking and decision making, and aim to help students appreciate the value of an evidence-based informed approach. As well as graduate attributes and psychological literacy being embedded across the curriculum and being a particular focus of the ongoing curriculum review, the School has a number of additional activities that support students in skills development. These include a portfolio for recording skills acquired and summer vacation scholarships for work experience but of particular note is the Professional Skills course embedded in all programmes. It is specifically focused on helping students develop skills of self-reflection and an awareness of employability concerns and has drawn special commendation from the BPS.

Advisers of Studies

3.3.5 There was discussion throughout the day around arrangements for Advisers of Studies, which operated differently in each College. The Review Panel noted that the School of Psychology was responsible for advising only students based in the College of Science and Engineering. The advising system in the College of Social Sciences was similar and well-matched; however, changes in the College of Arts to a central advising team had caused some challenges for the students concerned, and for staff in the School. Those students who had previously had access to an identified adviser continued to seek advice from staff in the School. While the staff were happy to assist, this had led to some confusion over roles and responsibilities, and issues with unallocated workload.

3.3.6 The undergraduate students who met with the Review Panel were aware of the different arrangements for students based in the different Colleges. The MA students based in the College of Arts reported that they found it difficult to get advice specific to Psychology and expressed a wish to be appointed a psychology adviser. The Deputy Head of the School explained that psychology students were not automatically given any special consideration by the College of Arts as Psychology was not considered an Arts subject. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Chief Advisers of Studies for the College of Science and Engineering and the College of Arts meet with the Senior Adviser from Psychology to consider how the particular advising needs of the MA students in Psychology might be met.

3.3.7 The Review Panel discussed Advising duties with the early career staff that they met. They confirmed that they all participated in this work, had received training and were fully supported by the Senior Adviser in the School. It was an element of their work that they found to be rewarding.

Peer Assisted Learning

3.3.8 The undergraduate students who met with the Review Panel were very positive about their experiences of Peer-Assisted Learning, both as learners and mentors. The mentors explained that their role often involved an element of counselling as well as tutoring. They demonstrated to other students how to assist each other in group work and were pleased to report that they then found, when requested to act as a facilitator for a group, that they had less to do. The Review Panel considered the School's use of

Peer-Assisted Learning to be **good practice**, particularly in terms of the level of engagement demonstrated by the students that the Panel met.

Psychology Society

3.3.9 The Review Panel was pleased to note the success of the student-run Psychology Society. Among other events, the Society had recently organised a one-day conference on Student Mental Health and Wellbeing that had attracted students from other institutions as well as from Glasgow. The School also gave credit to the Psychological Society for their contribution to building the strong community feeling in the School through their social events and support of the first year cohort.

3.4 Student Engagement

3.4.1 The School has an active network of class representatives, some of whom attended the student meetings with the Review Panel. The School has in place appropriate arrangements for gathering student views via staff student liaison committees and has successfully implemented the new University course evaluation policy. Student representatives have opportunities to contribute to strategic discussions about teaching and learning developments through membership of the Teaching Management Group.

3.4.2 The undergraduate students who met with the Panel confirmed that the School sought their views and took their feedback seriously. However, some students expressed a view that the staff student liaison committees were held too early in the semester to provide comprehensive and useful feedback on the course. The School responded that its timing allowed any issues to be dealt with before the end of a particular course; however, students noted that the same issues had been raised in successive years which seemed to imply that no action had been taken at that point. The students who met with the Panel agreed, however, that staff were always willing to discuss issues outwith the formal meetings. In a similar vein, staff were rightly interested in gathering ongoing feedback in “real time” rather than waiting until the end of the course. Staff had welcomed the summary and response documents that had been introduced as part of the new course evaluation policy. Staff reported that they found completing these documents prompted reflection and identification of ideas to be discussed at the Teaching Development Group, as well as being a means of recording actions and communicating them to students. The Review Panel noted that the School was using summary and response documents systematically to record its responses to the feedback and consider this to be an example of **good practice**.

3.4.3 The Review Panel asked staff to comment more generally on their approach to gathering ideas for enhancement in learning and teaching. Responses focused on staff reflection on their practice but with some examples of improvements made as a direct result of student requests. The Panel was impressed by the responsiveness of staff to student ideas and the thorough consultation of students on new developments and had expected to also hear examples of the School engaging students in development stages of new initiatives, possibly to the extent of co-designing assessment or co-creating the curriculum. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School consider how they might involve students in development work from the very early stages, to assist with pinpointing issues and problem solving.

National Student Survey

3.4.4 With regard to the drop in overall satisfaction in the 2016 National Student Survey, the School reported that this coincided with an unusually large cohort of designated degree students (Students who are not eligible to progress to Honours in Psychology may be admitted to the BSc in Psychological Studies (Designated Degree)). While the

data could not be sufficiently unpacked to confirm this assumption, the open comments suggested that this cohort had been significant in expressing dissatisfaction with not having had access to the Honours programme and accreditation. The School had reacted to this by reviewing their communications to students with a view to managing expectations and reinforcing student responsibility for assessment performance.

- 3.4.5 The Review Panel noted that the School had established links with Glasgow Caledonian University's PGDip in Psychology programme to offer an alternative route to a BPS recognised qualification and subsequently a career in psychology for designated degree students. The School had arranged for some of its Level 3 courses to be recognised by GCU thus reducing the course load and cost of the programme for the students. In response to a question from the Panel, it was reported that the School had decided not to develop a similar programme in-house due to the additional resource needed to deliver the necessary content.

4. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

4.1 Learning and Teaching

- 4.1.1 The Review Panel was interested by the School's management structure including the roles of Director of Teaching and the Director of Learning Enhancement. The Management Team reported that they worked closely together to co-ordinate the work between them and considered that the arrangement was beneficial, allowing each to focus on their particular role. The Panel also noted the establishment of the Teaching Development Group which had been a response to the Teaching Management Group having insufficient capacity to permit useful discussion of ideas for teaching enhancement. Freedom from the need to discuss operational matters allowed the Teaching Development Group to undertake reflection and generate ideas. The Review Panel **commends** the School's commitment to reflection and enhancement and its response in establishing the twin committees of Teaching Management and Teaching Development. It is suggested that similar structures might be of interest to other academic units where the scale of provision permitted separate committees.

Study abroad

- 4.1.2 The Review Panel noted the School's commitment to further expanding the numbers of students going abroad. The School had, thus far, been successful in expanding the numbers going out to 23 students per year and also in increasing the number of approved destinations (partner institutions must be recognised by the BPS in order to maintain accreditation). The School was aware of the challenges for students in committing to study abroad, not least financially, and had given attention to alternative international experiences that required less commitment on the part of the students and were thus more accessible, e.g. summer research placements, exchange conference. Internationalisation was also being considered as part of the curriculum review [paras 4.1.5 - 8].
- 4.1.3 The School provides good support to students interested in mobility opportunities and runs various events and activities to encourage and assist students as they leave and at the point of return. The undergraduate students who met with the Panel and who had been abroad reported that coming back into Honours study had been a challenge. They had needed some time to readjust to the environment and settle back into the home curriculum and cohort. They had had some worries about their preparedness for the Honours curriculum but, on reflection, expressed confidence in the quality and standards of the selected partner institutions. Inward-bound visiting students were also well supported and welcomed with a buddy scheme and social events.

4.1.4 The undergraduate students who met with the Panel agreed that Study Abroad was an important experience and those who had been abroad to study were overwhelmingly positive about it. They reported that the application process, including those for the shorter experiences, had felt rushed and stressful and difficult to manage around their other study and life responsibilities. The students also mentioned difficulties for Joint Honours students in co-ordinating between two schools with different requirements. Limited communication between schools required even more effort on the part of the student to organise.

Curriculum Design

4.1.5 The Management Team reported that a full curriculum review had been initiated in response to external drivers. These were mainly changes to the British Psychological Society's accreditation requirements and the publication of a revised Subject Benchmark Statement. The School had also noted changes being made in other programmes and were concerned to stay ahead of the market. Student feedback had also indicated changing needs from the student perspective.

4.1.6 The Review Panel noted that the curriculum review was planned as a rolling programme of development. The review of Level 1 of the programme had now been completed, with adjustments to be made as necessary following initial evaluations. A full-scale review of Level 2 would be progressed over the next session. Monitoring and minor changes to Level 3 & 4 would continue in the meantime to maintain and enhance current student experience but only where it would not involve wasted effort come time for the full review of these levels. Likewise, proposals for new courses at Level 3 & 4 would be considered prior to the full curriculum review but only progressed where it could be shown that they were likely to fit in with the future shape of the programme as a whole.

4.1.7 With regard to student involvement, the Management Team reported that staff maintained an open dialogue with students on the curriculum review, continuously updating them on how their feedback was being used to inform developments. The Management Team considered that students had been fully consulted throughout the curriculum review.

4.1.8 The Review Panel considered the School's holistic review of the undergraduate programme to be **good practice**. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School maximises the opportunities presented by the curriculum review for staff to undertake research and scholarship based on the developments arising from the curriculum review. For example, through designing a multi-dimensional evaluation of current provision to enable improvements to be measured. This would be subject to appropriate ethical approvals [para 4.4.3].

Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes

4.1.9 The Review Panel considered that the School of Psychology had a good and systematic approach to Intended Learning Outcomes. A curriculum mapping exercise had been undertaken as part of the curriculum review to ensure the aims and outcomes of all courses fit coherently with those of the full programme.

Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching

4.1.10 The Review Panel noted from the SER that the School had a strong commitment to employing technology in support of flexible learning and the student learning environment. The School considered that further engagement with educational technologies would be beneficial and had established a Technology Committee to promote this. Current projects were an investigation into how technology might improve student attendance and engagement at the pre-Honours level [paras 3.1.7 -

10] and a new online MSc conversion programme using BOLD (Blended and Online Learning Development) funding. As noted above [para 3.1.11], the Panel was pleased to hear of the School's focus on using online developments to support and enhance on-campus delivery.

- 4.1.11 The SER also stated that staff were considering how Moodle could facilitate student coursework submission, portfolio compilation and feedback provision, and how Moodle forums could facilitate interactions between students and staff. However, the staff who met with the Panel reported that their experience had indicated that the students preferred a more anonymous format or other social media formats that were private from staff. They suggested that the value of Moodle was in the sense of support it gave students rather than its practical functions.

Innovation

- 4.1.12 The Review Panel asked the staff at the meeting to comment on aspects of the School's provision and practice that they regarded as innovative. Staff reported on the development of and focus on research skills throughout the curriculum. Research methods were taught using real data from the outset at Level 1. The staff considered that this encouraged students to build up a better understanding of the concepts. The staff also reported that they had responded to a student-led campaign for more advanced statistics by introducing a new course. They had seen high demand for this course but had capped numbers at 25. The Review Panel **commends** the School for embedding research methodologies throughout the curriculum to support students in becoming investigative, reflective learners. The Panel notes that this work has received external recognition by means of a nomination for Enhancing Student Learning in the Herald Higher Education Awards and inclusion as a good practice case study in the Supplementary Guidance on Teaching Research Methods, provided by the British Psychological Society to all accredited undergraduate and conversion programmes across the UK and internationally.

4.2 Assessment and Feedback

- 4.2.1 The Review Panel was satisfied that a wide range of assessment mechanisms were being used and that marking arrangements were secure and fair. The School acknowledged in the SER that providing timely and effective feedback to large cohorts was challenging.

Feedback on Assessment

- 4.2.2 The School has made considerable efforts to address the challenges of timely and effective feedback through the introduction of a variety of measures, e.g. assessment calendars, generic feedback sheets, use of Teleform, etc. However, the Panel concluded from its discussions with the students that there was still some frustration present. This was focussed around consistency in the clarity and the quality of the feedback the students who met with the Panel received.
- 4.2.3 The undergraduate students who met with the Panel also raised the issue of feedback on examinations. They reported that examination papers were not returned but could be accessed for 20 minutes. The students expressed the view that this was not long enough to review answers and to learn from the feedback. They had raised this with the School who had provided justification for the approach. Students, however, compared this practice with other areas where they had had opportunities to discuss their examination performance with academic staff. It was subsequently confirmed that University policy on feedback following summative examinations does not expect individual feedback to be the norm. Schools may determine the extent to which individual feedback will be available and the mechanisms by which it will be provided.

- 4.2.4 The Review Panel **recommends** that the School prioritise consideration of feedback on assessment, for both coursework and examinations, in forthcoming curriculum review and Teaching Development Group meetings; contributing to current efforts to improve assessment and feedback across the College and the University.
- 4.2.5 The Honours students advised that using office hours to consult with the marker was the best way to obtain useful feedback. This suggested that face-to-face feedback would be seen as the ideal, if unsustainable, method of delivering feedback. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School engage the students in a detailed dialogue regarding feedback on assessment to explore the students' views on feedback and to attempt to identify a mutually satisfactory solution.

Engagement with the Code of Assessment and Assessment policy

- 4.2.6 The staff who met with the Panel reported that they had invested time in communicating assessment criteria. This was evident from the awareness demonstrated by the students who met with Panel. The postgraduate students who met with the Panel were familiar with the Code of Assessment's 22-point scale and acknowledged that they had been given advice on what was required to achieve good grades. They were also aware of the method that would be used to calculate their final grade.

4.3 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)

Staff

- 4.3.1 Teaching in the School of Psychology is well-resourced. The staff student ratio is good and is protected by the requirements of BPS accreditation.
- 4.3.2 The Review Panel praised the staff engagement in the development of provision and curriculum review, and acknowledged that this required additional time and effort. The Panel asked staff whether they felt the level of effort was sustainable. The staff who met with the Panel were passionate about their work and considered it to be rewarding. They reported that although they considered that they were working to full capacity, they were happy to continue to do so provided that the outcomes of the curriculum review proved to be "worth it". The staff pointed to some constraints that caused frustration, such as the availability of equipment, IT infrastructure and technical support that did not keep up with the pace of development. The academic staff present at the meeting praised the technical support they received from the teams based in the School, including where they acted as an effective liaison with University Services.

Learning and Teaching Space

- 4.3.3 The School is located primarily in an adapted tenement building in Hillhead Street, close to the University Library. Most staff offices are in this building and it is the location of the School's research activity and a significant portion of teaching. This building provides a base for strong sense of community that the School has created amongst staff and students.
- 4.3.4 There is a dedicated suite of laboratories in the Boyd Orr Building. The laboratories have flexible layouts to accommodate many different activities and are well equipped with computer facilities, sound system, data projectors and other, psychology specific, software and systems.

4.4 Engaging and Supporting Staff

- 4.4.1 The Review Panel noted that the School had a large cohort of Teaching, Learning and Scholarship (TLS) staff. The Management Team reported that these staff had been

engaged to take forward the School's stated aim of achieving excellence in both research and teaching. Appointing staff to focus on teaching recognised the particular strengths of individuals and allowed them to focus on developing excellent teaching practice and provision. The two groups of staff worked closely together and all staff contributed to both strands. The School sought to operate an integrated model that maximised strength across all areas.

- 4.4.2 The Review Panel was impressed by the links between research and teaching staff and asked if there was a reason why this seemed to work particularly well in the School [para 2.5.2]. Dr Stack spoke about the culture in the discipline of the subject itself which focused on human interaction. It was also suggested that the strong sense of community came from the size of cohort of teaching staff and the collective commitment to excellent teaching. The School had been conscious of the potential for divisions to appear between research and teaching when University Teacher contracts were first introduced and had taken steps to ensure staff were involved in both strands, albeit with different balance. This appeared to have fostered mutual understanding and equality of status that is not always present where academic staff have teaching focussed roles. The Review Panel **commends** the integration and strong sense of community between research and teaching staff within the School. This inclusive team ethos fostered by the School extends across all grades and categories of staff, including administrative and technical staff.
- 4.4.3 The Review Panel noted the School's excellent approach to supporting staff seeking promotion which they considered to be **good practice**. The Management Team expressed the School's aim to recognise good teachers and to invest in them in order to retain their commitment to the School. The staff who met with the Panel welcomed the University's new promotion criteria and associated guidance and were very positive about the recent change of title from University Teacher to Lecturer. The Management Team commented that there had been a perception that promotion was more difficult for TLS staff, although closer inspection revealed that it appeared to be equally difficult for both tracks. It was recognised, however, that it was more difficult for TLS staff to document their achievements for the purposes of publishing and providing evidence for promotion criteria. The Review Panel **recommends** that the University's Recognising Excellence in Teaching Working Group (convened by Professor Coton) provides additional practical guidance on progressing with promotion criteria including advice on gathering evidence of impact, finding opportunities to present work, and ethics in scholarship [para 4.1.8].

Early career support

- 4.4.4 The early career staff who met with the Panel reported that they were well supported. Mentors were clearly identified, and good working relationships had been developed. They were also positive about the training they had received and regarded it as a worthwhile investment in their future careers.
- 4.4.5 There had not been an explicitly stated reduction in hours at the beginning of their employment to allow for training and teaching practice development. The early career staff who met with the Panel considered themselves to have been fully involved in teaching from the start. While they reported that their workloads had increased over the years, the increases had been agreed through P&DR and had been strategic to their own career progress. The early career staff who met with the Panel were very positive about their full integration into the work of the School and noted that involvement in projects, such as the curriculum review, presented good opportunities for development.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

- 4.4.6 The Review Panel noted that 0.18 FTE of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) was unexpectedly small. The Management Team confirmed that the figure was correct and explained that the GTA role in Psychology did not follow the usual model. GTAs worked in laboratories and tutorials as part of a team with an academic staff member leading. Because the School had a good staff-student ratio, it was not necessary to use GTA time for marking. The GTAs who met with the Panel reported that there were between 10 and 12 GTAs who regularly taught in Psychology and confirmed that laboratories were normally run by two GTAs and one University Teacher. They expressed some frustration that they did not receive the teaching materials until a few hours before their labs began, leaving them with insufficient time to prepare. The Review Panel **recommends** that GTAs are given sufficient notice of teaching materials for laboratories to allow them to organise and schedule their preparation.
- 4.4.7 The GTAs raised concerns that they were only paid for half an hour of preparation time for labs and tutorials which they did not consider to accurately reflect the full amount of time they spent on preparation. The Review Panel noted that the issue of GTA payments was frequently raised in PSRs and **recommends** that this point is flagged to Academic Standards Committee for noting. This point should also be referred, for information, to Dr Angela Jaap, who is leading a review of the GTA role and support for that role, and to the Assessment & Feedback Working Group, which is looking at the contribution of GTAs to assessment and feedback.
- 4.4.8 The Review Panel enquired about training for GTAs and heard from the GTAs that they had undertaken the statutory GTA training course with the Learning Enhancement & Academic Development Service (LEADS) and had observed a two hour teaching session with an experienced tutor/lab leader. The GTAs who met with the Panel noted that the School had encouraged and supported them in applying for the Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme (CPD framework and professional recognition scheme, administered by LEADS) as Associate Fellows. The Panel recognised the School's engagement with the Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme as **good practice**, along with its encouragement of all staff and GTAs to apply.
- 4.4.9 In response to questions from the Review Panel on evaluation of their teaching, the GTAs present at the meeting reported that they were not included in formal evaluations but had issued evaluation sheets to students under their own initiative. The feedback from students was generally very positive and helpful. The GTAs had also recently undertaken some peer-review by observing each other's classes. This was also helpful for sharing good practice.
- 4.4.10 The Review Panel noted that the GTAs did not have regular meetings, nor were they regularly included in the Teaching Management Group or the Teaching Development Group. This was because they were involved with labs and tutorials only. The GTAs who met with the Panel reported that they had provided lots of feedback on the curriculum changes but did not feel that many of their suggestions had been taken on board.
- 4.4.11 Overall, the GTAs who met with the Panel considered that staff were good at consulting with them and monitoring their teaching. They would recommend working as a GTA for the useful experience that they gained.

Administrative Support

- 4.4.12 The staff who met with the Review Panel reported that a review of administrative provision would shortly be undertaken by the College of Science and Engineering. This was causing uncertainty and concern amongst the administrative and academic staff that the successful integrated model that was currently in place would be disrupted.

Additionally, the close working relationship with the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology, which was based in another college (MVLS) and which operated under a centralised administration structure (also following a recent review of administrative support), led to further uncertainty around whether the effect of the two different structures on the School and the Institute would be taken into account by the review. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Psychology's operational relationships with the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology (based jointly in the College of Science and Engineering and the College of MVLS) be explicitly considered by the administrative review in the College of Science and Engineering.

5. Academic Standards

- 5.1.1 The Review Panel concluded, from its reading of the SER and other documentation provided and from the discussions throughout the day, that the School of Psychology has a variety of robust and effective procedures in place which ensure that the School is engaged in a continual process of self-reflection and self-evaluation with regard to academic and pedagogical practice.
- 5.1.2 The Review Panel has confidence in the School of Psychology's approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards.

Currency and Validity of Programmes

- 5.1.3 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, the programmes offered by the School of Psychology were current and valid in the light of developing knowledge and practice within the subject area.

6. Collaborative provision

- 6.1.1 The School of Psychology has no formal collaborative provision. However, there are several international links and partnerships established for the purposes of study abroad.

7. Conclusion

The Review Panel concluded that, across the School of Psychology, there is a clear culture of pedagogical development with commitment to enhancing provision. The School articulates a keen interest in, and positive strategies for, enhancing the student experience. There is a strong sense of community between the staff and students as well as involvement in the wider University; as demonstrated by the alignment of initiatives to University strategy and the valuable contribution made by individual members of staff to University projects. The Review Panel makes a small number of recommendations where it sees opportunities for the School to further enhance its provision in Learning and Teaching but these are set against the Panel's overall view of the School of Psychology as a highly successful academic unit.

7.1 Commendations, Key strengths and Good Practice

Following a meeting of Periodic Subject Review Conveners held on 16 December 2016, it was agreed that reports should present examples of good practice separately from commendations, with the latter being used to identify innovative and exemplary activities for wider dissemination.

The Review Panel commends School of Psychology on the following, which are listed **in order of appearance** in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel **commends** the School's pastoral support of its students, including its efforts to integrate new undergraduate students making the transition into University study. [Paragraph 3.3.3]

Commendation 2

The Review Panel **commends** the School's commitment to reflection and enhancement; and its response in establishing the twin committees of Teaching Management and Teaching Development. It is suggested that similar structures might be of interest to other academic units where the scale of provision permitted separate committees. [Paragraph 4.1.1]

Commendation 3

The Review Panel **commends** the School for embedding research methodologies throughout the curriculum to support students in becoming investigative, reflective learners. [Paragraph 4.1.12]

Commendation 4

The Review Panel **commends** the integration and strong sense of community between research and teaching staff within the School. This inclusive team ethos fostered by the School extends across all grades and categories of staff, including administrative and technical staff. [Paragraph 4.4.2]

The Review Panel identified the following key strengths and areas of good practice. These are listed **in order of appearance** in this report:

Good Practice 1

The strong vision of excellent teaching provision and the engagement of staff in making that vision reality. [Paragraph 2.5.1, 2.5.2 & 4.4.2]

Good Practice 2

The use of Peer-Assisted Learning, particularly in the level of engagement demonstrated by the students that the Panel met. [Paragraph 3.3.8]

Good Practice 3

The systematic use of course evaluation summary and response documents to record and communicate responses to student feedback. [Paragraph 3.4.2]

Good Practice 4

The holistic approach to review of the undergraduate programme. [Paragraph 4.1.5 – 8]

Good Practice 5

The School's engagement with the Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme, and its encouragement of all staff and GTAs to apply. [Paragraph 4.4.3 & 4.4.8]

7.2 Areas for enhancement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for further work. These and the recommendations that follow are intended to support the School of Psychology in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment:

- Points to be addressed in the next stages of the curriculum review:
 - Level 2 student experience
 - Opportunities for scholarship research
 - Extension of the review to PGT provision
 - Feedback on summative assessment
- Further development of student partnership
- Addressing areas where different College arrangements cause problems:
 - Advisers of Studies
 - Administrative Review

7.3 Recommendations

Specific recommendations addressing the areas for work are listed below, as are a number of further recommendations on particular matters.

The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are **grouped together** by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are **ranked in order of priority within each section**.

Curriculum Review

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **recommends** that, as part of the next stage of its ongoing curriculum review, the School gives attention to student workload, support, the competitive aspects at Level 2, and the potentially different experiences of students on the various degree pathways. There should be detailed discussion with the student body at the outset to explore perceptions and ensure that effective solutions are identified. The relevant Deans (Learning and Teaching) should also be consulted. [Paragraph 3.1.7 - 3.1.10]

**For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School
For information: Deans (Learning and Teaching) for Arts, Science & Engineering
and Social Sciences**

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School maximises the opportunities presented by the curriculum review for staff to undertake research and scholarship based on the developments arising from the curriculum review. For example, through designing a multi-dimensional evaluation of current provision to enable improvements to be measured. This would be subject to appropriate ethical approvals. [Paragraph 4.1.8 & 4.4.3]

For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School should extend its curriculum review to postgraduate taught provision, and that this review should include consideration of elective choices (in relation to information and balance of workload) and other support for students at key transition points. The Panel does not expect this recommendation to be addressed immediately but to follow the final stage of the undergraduate curriculum review, unless it can be reasonably accommodated in staff workload

sooner. In the meantime, and in time for postgraduate students arriving in September 2017, the Panel encourages the School to pay particular attention to induction information and transition support within the current parameters of the programme structures and course offerings. This might be informed by student input on the issues faced, and on the design of induction materials and transition support. [Paragraph 3.1.15]

For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School prioritise consideration of feedback on assessment, for both coursework and examinations, in forthcoming curriculum review and Teaching Development Group meetings; contributing to current efforts to improve assessment and feedback across the College and the University. [Paragraph 4.2.2-4.2.4]

For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School

Student partnership

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School engage the students in a detailed dialogue regarding feedback on assessment to explore the reasons behind dissatisfaction and to attempt to identify a mutually satisfactory solution. [Paragraph 4.2.5]

For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School consider how they might involve students in development work from the very early stages, to assist with pinpointing issues and problem solving. [Paragraph 3.4.3]

For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School

Advisers of Studies

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Chief Advisers of Studies for the College of Science and Engineering and the College of Arts meet with the Senior Adviser from Psychology to consider how the particular advising needs of the MA students in Psychology might be met. [Paragraph 3.3.6]

For the attention of: The Senior Adviser (School of Psychology)
For information: The Chief Adviser of Studies (Science and Engineering)
The Chief Adviser (Arts)

College Review of Administration

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School of Psychology's operational relationships with the Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology (based jointly in the College of Science and Engineering and the College of MVLS) be explicitly considered by the administrative review in the College of Science and Engineering.. [Paragraph 4.4.12]

For the attention of: The Vice Principal and Head of College of Science and Engineering

For Information: The Vice Principal and Head of College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences

Guidance on Promotion Criteria

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University's Recognising Excellence in Teaching Working Group provides additional practical guidance on progressing with promotion criteria including advice on gathering evidence of impact, finding opportunities to present work, and ethics in scholarship. [Paragraph 4.4.3]

For the attention of: The Convener of the RET WG
For information: Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service

Graduate Teaching Assistants

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that GTAs are given sufficient notice of teaching materials for laboratories to allow them to organise and schedule their preparation. [Paragraph 4.4.6]

For the attention of: The Deputy Head of School

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel noted that the issue of GTA payments was frequently raised in PSRs and **recommends** that this point is flagged to Academic Standards Committee for noting. This point should also be referred, for information, to Dr Angela Jaap, who is leading a review of the GTA role and support for that role, and to the Assessment & Feedback Working Group, which is looking at the contribution of GTAs to assessment and feedback. [Paragraph 4.4.7]

**For information: The Convener and Clerk of Academic Standards Committee
Dr Angela Jaap¹, Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service
The Convener and Clerk to the Assessment and Feedback Working Group**

¹ Please note that Dr Jaap has left the University and that her role has been taken over by Dr Nathalie Sheradin.