

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee – Tuesday 16 April 2013****Update Report from School of Life Sciences on Proposed Revision to the MSci Structure**

Ms H Butcher, Assistant Director, Senate Office

At the February meeting of ASC, the report on recommendations arising from the review of Life Sciences which had taken place in October 2011 was received.

In relation to Recommendation 1: Redevelopment of the final year of the MSci with work placement to provide SCQF Level 11 attainment, ASC had noted that the subsequent review of the programme structure had led to the proposal to introduce a new 10 credit Level 11 course than ran through both semesters of the final year. Level 11 had also been brought into the work placement in the preceding year through the introduction of a series of Level 11 assignments in that year. However, given that the majority of the final year remained at Level 10, ASC requested further detail on the deliberations and rationale which had led to the proposed revision to the programme.

Below is a further response from Dr R Aitken, Head of School of Life Sciences

In arriving at proposals for the final year of study for students on the School's integrated Masters (MSci) programmes, the following has been taken into account:

- Students admitted to the MSci are limited in number (typically 30 – 35 per year). This is partly because of the academic rigour of the selection process, the need to take account of the competitive environment for work placement with employers, and the importance of sending out students that will be exceptional ambassadors for the School and the University.
- "Life Sciences" is not a single discipline. Students admitted to the MSci are distributed across all subject areas, each of which is very different in academic terms (eg Anatomy, Genetics, Microbiology, Zoology), the consequence being that numbers on any one programme are modest (3 or 4 at most).
- In the final year of study, there exists a large range of courses that students can choose further reducing the number of MSci students at the course level

Maintaining academic standards in any assessment process is dependent to some extent upon staff having a range of work to grade – it is only through this that expectation with respect to the attainment of ILOs and the challenge of an assignment can be reconciled with the reality of student attainment.

Setting SCQF Level 11 criteria in assessment for most courses in the final year of study becomes risky as small numbers of MSci students, distributed between courses in one and two fail to give staff a reliable cross-section of student work from which confident assessment can be made. Most students taking these courses will be from BSc programmes and hence their work will be assessed against criteria more appropriate to SCQF Level 10. If assessment from MSci students on each course is added in, and

assessment is made at SCQF Level 10, the volume of work and the range of attainment become sufficient for confident assessment to be conducted.

We recognise however that we need to be assured that students on the MSci programmes are performing at SCQF Level 11 through the work placement year **and** the final year of study as (rightly) identified in the Periodic Subject Review.

The assessment problems that concern us can be overcome by drawing all 30 – 35 MSci students together into a single generic course. Sufficient volume is reached for confident assessment and the generic nature of the course overcomes the confounding factor that students come from a diverse range of disciplines.

Academic Standards Committee is asked **to consider** the adequacy of the response.