

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 15 November 2013

Periodic Subject Review: Update on Actions identified by ASC from previous PSR Reports (ASC/2013/2.1) – Response from School of Life Sciences: November 2013

Dr Rob Aitken, School of Life Sciences

We are happy to provide ASC with an explanation of the planned process for taking forward our actions against recommendations 3 and 11.

The School will consult with all course and programme teams towards the end of academic session 2013 – 14 and ask that they undertake a review of ILOs through the summer, aiming for revisions to be sent to the School's Board of Studies in December 2014. For those courses and programmes that are unable to comply as a result of staffing change or conflicting commitments, the School will ensure that revisions reach Board of Studies for December 2015.

We shall therefore have completed this process at the School level no later than four years from the date of the PSR.

If ASC so request, the School will provide an interim report of courses and programmes that have completed revisions in December 2014, and conformation of completion of the process for the following year.

In coming to a judgement on the slow progress that the School has made against these recommendations, we hope that ASC will take into account:

- The huge increases in workload created by introduction of central systems (MyCampus, revised arrangements for timetabling) across the University
- The pressures on all members of the academic community to take forward the University's internationalisation agenda as a matter of urgency
- The modest size of the academic and administrative complement in the School, staff to whom it falls to make these changes
- The large numbers of courses and programmes for which these staff are responsible (around 250)

Dr R. Aitken
Head of the School of Life Sciences

For reference: original responses return in January 2013

For the attention of: **The Head of School**

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School review its Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for programmes and courses, ensuring that they encompass development of knowledge, intellectual skills and transferable and/or key skills and that assessment criteria match the developed ILOs such that the attainment of the ILOs aligns constructively with the published course aims. [paragraph 4.2.2]

Response

The School has been in contact with staff in the Academic Development Unit of the Learning and Teaching Centre and enhanced guidance has been provided. This includes a glossary of terms that will assist course and programme teams as they undertake a review of ILOs. A glossary of active verbs associated with different levels of Bloom's taxonomy has been of particular assistance.

Given the range and scale of the School's existing provision and the limitations of staff time, we hope that Academic Standards Committee will appreciate that it will take some time to make significant progress against this recommendation.

As a starting point, it was the School's intention to begin systematic review and revision of UG ILOs for courses associated with the BSc programme in Pharmacology during the 2012 – 13 session but other issues intervened, specifically difficulties with room bookings and the need to train key members of staff in the use of Facilities CMIS to try and avoid the risk that problems in room bookings recur next session. Embedding all course events in FCMS will help the School with workload modelling (*Recommendation 2*) and the allocation of teaching duties for staff the College's Schools and Research Institutes (*Recommendation 5*).

That said, we hope ASC will be reassured that in bringing forward new proposals, course and programme teams are make use of the guidance received from the ADU and drawing on their advice. This has been the case for new course and programme proposals for PGT in the School (MRes Bioinformatics: new programme and course proposals; MRes Biomedical Sciences: modifications to existing programmes and new course proposals).

Our intention is thus that all upcoming programme and course proposals will be compliant with the Panel's recommendations and that review of ILOs for existing provision will take place as time and staff commitments allow.

For the attention of: **The Head of School**

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School review its Programme Specifications to ensure that each one is distinctive to the programme, and contains the relevant information for, all available degree pathways. [paragraph 4.1.1]

Response

The School will take this forward in parallel with its efforts to address *Recommendation 3*. Where new programmes are being developed (eg we are working with the School of Psychology to bring in a joint Honours degree in Psychology and Neuroscience; proposals for an Honours programme in Nutrition are also at an early stage), a natural opportunity will arise for us to create specifications that are distinctive and we will use this to review specifications for other programmes in cognate areas. Given the large number of Honours programmes that are delivered from the School, review in other areas will be taken as time and opportunity allows.