

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Tuesday 15 April 2014

**Periodic Subject Review: Responses to the Recommendations
arising from the Review of Postgraduate Taught Programmes in the
College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences held on
22 and 23 November 2012**

Ms H Clegg, Clerk to the Review Panel

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.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **recommends** that 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].

For the attention of: **Head of College**

Response

The Graduate School has undertaken a major review of its PGT provision and developed a comprehensive strategy for implementation over the next 3 years. This is attached in Appendix 1.

A PGT strategy group (senior members of Graduate School management) was formed to facilitate and progress the review and required actions. In addition, a short life PGT task force (with representatives from all Schools and Institutes) was commissioned to consider horizon scanning, industrial input and work based learning opportunities, course sharing and market intelligence gathering. The Graduate School Executive and Graduate School Board now oversee the implementation of the new strategy.

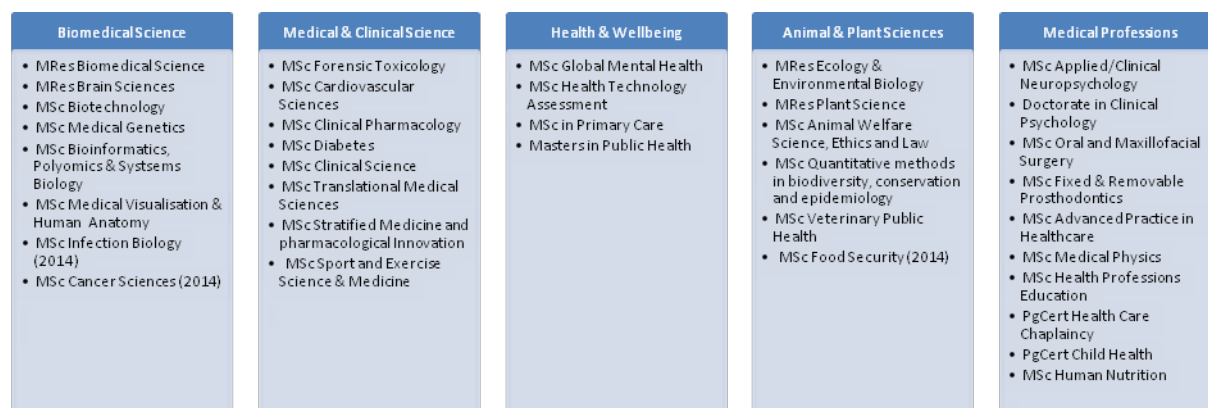
A major part of the strategy was to consolidate the provision of PGT programmes into five clusters (Table1, Fig. 1) each with an overarching structure and timetable format to facilitate course sharing and a greater and more flexible choice of options between programmes. The clusters were designed after a full review of individual programme provision and have rearranged the College portfolio to break down barriers between Schools and Institutes with each cluster having input from more than one School or Institute.

Table 1: Timeline and Lead for Each PGT Cluster

Cluster	Lead	Formation completed by
Biomedical Sciences	J. Mottram	2014/15
Animal and Plant Sciences	B. Mable	2015/16
Health and Wellbeing	TBD	2016/17
Medical and Clinical Sciences	C. Edwards	2015/16
Medical Professions	A. O'Neill	2015/16

We aim to maintain the total number of PGT programmes between 36 and 40. For September 2014 MVLS will have 35 Masters programmes, with the number expected to increase to 38 programmes for 2015 entry. There is an expectation that most programmes will recruit between 25-50 students; new programmes will have three years to reach their target and underperforming programmes will be evaluated and closed if student recruitment remains below target.

Figure 1: Programme content of each PGT Cluster



Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **recommends** that 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].

For the attention of: **Dean of Graduate Studies**

Response:

The College has undertaken a full review of capacity in terms of estate, staffing, project availability and likely demand. The new targets have been discussed with Schools and Institutes as well as programme leaders. The new recruitment targets (Table 2) have also

been informed by the new cluster structure, which promotes more course sharing and rationalisation of the workload and projects between programmes.

Table 2: PGT Recruitment Targets for the Next 3 Years

MVLS Postgraduate Taught Registrations and Targets. Data extracted 25.11.13.	Home						International					
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	TARGETS 2014/15	TARGETS 2015/16	TARGETS 2016/17	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	TARGETS 2014/15	TARGETS 2015/16	TARGETS 2016/17
Grand Total Headcount	422	449	505	546	611	653	132	147	197	246	313	408
% Change	-7%	6%	12%	8%	12%	7%	-30%	11%	34%	25%	27%	30%
Use a 0.65 conversion rate to convert Home figures to FTE												
Current targets				566	645	660	Current targets			274	359	425
				12%	13%	2%				39%	31%	18%

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel noted that, 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].

For the attention of: **University Senior Management Group**

We welcome improvements to MyCampus, however, problems are still occurring and integration with further central processes, including admissions, has not reduced the number of issues for staff and students, workload for College administrative staff and academics and has introduced new problems which need to be urgently addressed.

Response:

SMG has taken, and continues to take, a close interest in the development of MyCampus, and the Project Board, which includes 5 members of SMG, continues to meet monthly. At the time the PSR Report was written, the University had just been through the experience of Registration and Enrolment for 2012/13. That exercise saw difficulties experienced in three main areas: 1) the IT infrastructure, where a tool intended to distribute load among servers malfunctioned, leading to students and staff being ejected from the system; 2) financial processes where, while the MyCampus software worked as designed, students experienced problems because there was not sufficient clarity about which staff were responsible for which tasks; and 3) the look and feel of the system, which students and staff found to be unintuitive. In Session 2012/13, improvements were made in each of these areas, as follows: 1) the IT infrastructure deficiency was addressed through the installation of hardware load balancers in early 2013, and the infrastructure has worked robustly since this was done; 2) the Finance SUG (Specialist User Group) agreed on a series of improvements to processes, to messaging, and to the way in which information was presented on the MyCampus screens. These were implemented in early 2013 and led to a more successful process of financial registration in 2013/14, with 96% of undergraduates fully registered before the start of the session; and 3) following discussions with MyCampus users, in particular with SRC representatives, development work was undertaken in 2013 to reconfigure aspects of the user interface and make the system more intuitive.

The PSR captured concerns in 2012 regarding the future implementation of MyCampus Direct Admissions. This crucial implementation took place in October 2013, and simultaneously the University revised its process for PgR admissions. Direct Admissions is a business-critical activity for the University and SMG has therefore been monitoring the

implementation and is satisfied with progress. Direct Admissions is the final major element of MyCampus implementation.

There had been an ongoing commitment since the time of the PSR to ensure effective communications on MyCampus issues (through, in particular, College Liaison Groups), to make suitable training available to staff, and to improve practices in Colleges and Services so that they are more effective in using the MyCampus system. Greater emphasis is now being placed on this final point through the work of the Process Improvement Director, appointed in July 2013, who is leading work to spread and facilitate the adoption of good practice throughout the University.

Recommendation 4

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].

For the attention of: **Dean of Graduate Studies**

Response:

As part of our new 3-year strategy we will have reduced the number of MRes programmes from six to two (by 2015), withdrawing programmes or converting them to taught MScs.

- MRes Molecular Medicine closed in 2013.
- MRes Exercise Science withdrawn in 2014.
- The MRes in Infection and Immunobiology will close in 2014 and be replaced by an MSc in Infection Biology (2014) and an MSc in Immunology and Inflammation (2015).
- The MRes in Brain Science is under review, with a view to replacing the course with an MSc in Brain Science (joint with Psychology in CoSE) and an MSc in Neuroscience. A provisional launch for the new programmes in 2015.
- The MRes in Plant Sciences, which has only 2-4 students/year is under review with a view to providing students with the opportunity to undertake a Masters by Research in Plant Science.
- Two MRes programmes will remain; MRes in Biomedical Sciences, which is a successful course with 40-50 students/year and MRes in Ecology and Environmental Biology, which has increasing student numbers.

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel **recommends** that 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].

For the attention of: **Head of College**

Response:

The College of MVLS Learning and Teaching Committee has agreed that support for staff on University Teacher/Senior University Teacher contracts including support for their scholarly activities is a priority this year. A College-wide all day symposium hosted by the School of Medicine, but open to all College members, was held on the 4th of December 2013: "Recognising, Measuring and Rewarding Scholarship and Teaching Excellence". There were keynote presentations from Dr Thomas Olsson, Senior Lecturer in the Academic Development LTH in Lund University, Sweden and Dr Vicky Gunn, Director, Learning and Teaching Centre, University of Glasgow. The majority of the meeting, however, involved groupwork and sharing examples of successful promotion applications. This meeting itself

was useful for staff in these categories but, in addition, it is planned that this meeting will be the start of a process of regenerating the Community for Educational Scholarship, which was established in the College (previously Faculty of Medicine) in 2008 to support scholarship in College staff focused on teaching. The future development of the Community for Educational Scholarship will be taken forward by the College Learning and Teaching Committee.

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the 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].

For the attention of: **Head of College**

Response:

The College has promptly taken this recommendation on board and is ensuring that there are effective communication mechanisms in place for both staff and students where there are planned moves or disruptions. As an example of this, we have a staff and student user group as part of the Garscube Learning & Social Space (GLaSS) project. The communication plans that have been put in place for this project, including communication/briefing sessions, posters, staff/student liaison committee, and a weekly newsletter, was commended as best practice in the recent formal Gatekeeper Review of Gateway 3 of the project (February 2014).

More recently, with the transfer of staff from Yorkhill Hospital to Glasgow Royal Infirmary, in addition to there being a dedicated key contact member of staff for each staff and student groups, there were regular communications with staff and students involved in the move.

Construction of the new Teaching & Learning Facility and Stratified Medicine Innovation Centre at South Glasgow Hospital is due for completion in May 2015, with entry in August 2015. Working Groups of key functional leads have been established and communications with appropriate staff are underway.

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College 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].

For the attention of: **Dean of Graduate Studies**

Response:

Soft deposits have been implemented for applications in 2014/15. RIO have tested the robustness of the system for collecting deposits on My Campus.

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends** that 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].

For the attention of: **Dean of Graduate Studies**

Response:

The importance of student feedback has been emphasised to all programme co-ordinators and PGT clusters and is a clear part of our strategy document (Appendix 1). We have developed guidelines (Appendix 2) to outline the different strategies to be used for garnering and enhancing student feedback including staff student liaison committees, meetings with student representatives, questionnaires, Moodle questionnaires and post-it notes. Programme Moodle sites and Student Voice are being used to inform students of changes made in light of their comments. The Graduate School has been in discussion with the President of the SRC to ensure that PGT students are adequately represented. The current MVLS SRC Postgraduate College Convenor is a PGT student.

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that 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*].

For the attention of: **Dean of Learning & Teaching**

Response:

It is particularly difficult, given the make-up of PGT programmes, with many students from a range of backgrounds, cultures and previous degrees to have every piece of teaching reflect each student's individual needs. However, this was discussed in depth at the Programme Co-ordinators away day (Sept 2013). We have also consulted with staff at the LTC who attend our PGT Committee meetings. We will allow students with more relevant experience to opt out of training and support essential training for other students. However, some students who feel they do not need some of the refresher or basic teaching may not fully appreciate their own needs and we have learnt in the past to encourage them to attend sessions they feel they do not need. More on-line provision and self tests to support individual learning developed during (2013/2014) will also be provided via Moodle. The impact of these initiatives to the student experience will be considered through student feedback and annual course monitoring from 2014.

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that the 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*].

For the attention of: **Head of College**

Response:

We welcome this recommendation, which will allow better quality control of our programmes. All external examiners reports are now sent to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies (PGT) and key issues discussed at the PGT committee as well as informing the annual course monitoring exercise.