

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 3 October 2014

**Periodic Subject Review: Update on 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**

Mrs C Omand, Senior Academic Policy Manager

- 1. Confirmation was sought on whether the market assessment had incorporated recruitment opportunities associated with a January start, and if this has been considered by the College a reference on this would be informative.**

College of MVLS carried out preliminary market assessment for a January start.

- 1.1 Within the University of Glasgow the College of MVLS has one programme (Master of Veterinary Public Health) with a January start, whereas College of Science & Engineering has 14 programmes with a January start.

- 1.2 Market Assessment

UK Market

According to www.findamasters.com there are currently 306 PGT programmes across the UK referenced on their website that offer a January start, some are standalone and some are optional alongside September/October starts.

International Market (including feedback from the International Office)

Considering whether a January start would match better with the academic year of countries with a different cycle to University of Glasgow, we asked the International Office for a sample of countries which differ in their academic year. These countries have a varied cycle:

- Nigeria is now a September to September cycle.
- South Korea is March to March.
- Japan runs teaching from April to April (but discussions to align to the Western system to increase international mobility in the future).
- Thailand runs June to June but is in the process of aligning to the Western system.
- Americas: The most notable country for us in the Americas is Brazil which runs January to January.
- Australian undergraduate and postgraduate degrees start usually in March. They may attract applicants who want a later start.

When asked if they felt there was a market for January starts, the International Officers reported that there could be a demand from students from countries with degree systems in line with ours who struggle to make a September start.

Students in India, for example, do not get their final transcript/certificate until late July/August which makes it difficult to get a visa in order to start in September. A January start would prevent them having to wait a whole year to start.

Agents in Thailand are worried that when the universities switch to a September -to September cycle, this could have a negative impact on the UK as at the moment there is a

gap that allows them to prepare for IELTS; but moving forward this gap will close. They are predicting a dip in UK registrations the year this comes in (from next year 2015/16).

Our agents in Mexico have often fed back that they appreciate the January starts in Science & Engineering courses as it gives the students a little flexibility if they do not secure their funding in time for September. CONACYT, for example, only confirmed most of their awards for the UK in August.

1.3 Feedback from the College of Science & Engineering

College of MVLS consulted with the College of Science & Engineering about their experience.

Science & Engineering January start student registrations: 2011: 30-40; 2012: 12; 2013: 27

Science & Engineering found the introduction of January starts very easy, internally, due to their course not requiring set order of delivery and thus being able to slot them into existing September start programme structures. They feel that this is the only feasible way to manage January starts because duplication of teaching is not logical.

Historically, there have been issues with regards University services catering for students starting in January, e.g. accommodation, sport & recreation service, library. Science & Engineering have worked with the library and sport & recreation service to rectify this; however, there still appears to be issues with accommodation and cases where students may be asked to move out in June so that buildings can be 'cleaned' etc. in advance of the regular September starts.

College of MVLS will explore which programmes can allow a January start within the MVLS PGT cluster structure, but at present we have no major plans to switch to a January start. We plan to launch several online PGT courses in the next 2 years and we will assess whether flexible start dates will be attractive to either home or international students.

2. In noting the intention to stop the sharing of UG and PGT courses, confirmation is sought on whether courses will be available to senior undergraduates studying at level 11.

Within College of MVLS there have had detailed discussion with the School of Life Sciences about the possibility of sharing masters courses with the senior undergraduate students studying at level 11 (MSci students). It was concluded that the complexity of the different timetables of the programmes and the timing of assessments will not allow sharing between senior undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

3. It was noted that the review of PGT annual monitoring reports would be undertaken by the PTC, but it would be useful to know whether there will be a mechanism for coordination with the review of the UG reports, and any common themes identified.

The annual monitoring of the PGT and UG programmes are discussed at the College Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC). The chair of the PTC sits on the LTC, which will help with co-ordination and identification of common themes. In addition, the PTC has requested that they receive a copy of the summary report of the UG annual monitoring reports so that any common themes can be reviewed.

- 4. As a final point, it was not clear whether the restructuring of the PGT programmes had included any rationalising of the number of programmes, for example by offering a range of specialisations from a core set of MSc programmes. It was noted that this approach had recently been proposed within Engineering and might be something for the College of MVLS to consider.**

College of MVLS have undergone a major restructuring of our PGT programmes into 5 clusters each with a broadly common theme and more co-ordinated timetable. This promotes sharing of courses between several programmes, in most cases 60 credits of shared options per programme. This has resulted in the rationalisation of a number courses and increased numbers of students on courses shared by several programmes. Some of these courses (eg Statistics one course and the Omics course) now have such high numbers of students that we are having problems finding rooms large enough to accommodate all the students and are having to use overspill rooms. One example of rationalisation is in the area of Infection Biology. Originally the Institute of Infection, Immunity and Inflammation ran four Masters courses (in Microbiology, Parasitology, Virology and Comparative Medicine). These have now been combined into a single MSc (Infection Biology) that offers specialisms in Microbiology (bacteriology), Parasitology and Virology.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/infectionbiologywithspecialisms/>