University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 3 October 2014

Report on Items approved under Summer Powers

Mrs L Fielding, Clerk to the Committee

1. Proposals Approved under Fast-Track Procedures

Academic Standards Committee is invited to **note** that the following programme proposals were recommended by the relevant Fast-Track Approval Group (see **Appendix 1**) and **approved** by the Convener of Academic Standards Committee and Clerk of Senate under Summer Powers for introduction in session 2014-15:

College of Science & Engineering

MRes Integrative Sensing and Measurement - New

College of Social Sciences

MSc Media, Communications and International Journalism – New

2. Items Carried Forward from 2013-14 Programme Approval Groups

The following new programmes were approved under Summer Powers for introduction in September 2014 following completion of actions requested by the relevant Semester 2 PAG:

College of Science & Engineering

New programme

BSc (Hons) Informatics[1]
BSc (Hons) Informatics (Faster Route)[1]
MSci Informatics[1]
MSci Informatics (Faster Route)[1]

College of Social Sciences

New programmes

MSc Tourism, Heritage & Development

Major changes

MSc Management
MSc Management with Enterprise & Business Growth
MSc Management with Human Resources
MSc Management with International Finance

3. Items Approved Under Summer Powers

3.1 Periodic Subject Review Reports

---

[1] Title changed from 'Computing Science with Specialism' to 'Informatics'

The report of the review of Community Development and Adult Education was reviewed over the Summer by ASC members Drs Morgan-Thomas and Morris. The report was approved under summer powers subject to some minor amendments. The finalised report is provided in **Appendix 2**.

3.2   Validations offered at SRUC

All programmes approved to run from session 2014-15 for six years. The report is provided in **Appendix 3**.

Master of Science in Rural Business Management
Postgraduate Diploma in Rural Business Management
Postgraduate Certificate in Rural Business Management

Fast-Track Approval Groups - Summer 2014

The membership and dates of the individual Fast-Track Approval Group meetings which considered the proposals outlined in section 1 are noted below for information:

Fast-Track Approval Group for the College of Science & Engineering - Meeting held on 29 July 2014

Membership

Professor Neil Evans (Convener), Dr Angela McDonald (*vice* Dr Allison Orr), Dr Helen Stoddart

Proposal considered:

MRes Integrative Sensing and Measurement

Fast-Track Approval Group for the College of Social Sciences - Meeting held on 30 July 2014

Membership

Professor Christine Edwards (Convener), Dr Penny Morris, Dr Marco Vezza

Proposals considered:

Advanced MRes Economics

International Masters in Adult Education and Social Change

MSc Media, Communications and International Journalism

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee

Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of Community Development and Adult Education held on 13 and 14 March 2014

Clare Barnes, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Steve Beaumont	Vice Principal (Research and Enterprise), [Convener]
Professor Howard Sercombe	University of Strathclyde, External Subject Specialist
Mr Ciaran Hoy	Student Representative
Professor Miles Padgett	Senate Assessor on Court
Professor Annette Hastings	School of Social and Political Sciences, Cognate Member
Dr Michael McEwan	Learning and Teaching Centre
Mrs Clare Barnes	Senate Office [Clerk]
Observing:	
Mrs Lesley Fielding	Senate Office

1. Introduction

1.1. The subject area of Community Development and Adult Education within the School of Education (hereafter, 'the subject area') covered by this review has its origin in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education and is now fully integrated into the School of Education. It is located within the Social Justice, Place and Lifelong Education (SJPLE) Research and Teaching Group (RTG) that concerns post-compulsory education and social justice.

1.2. Adult education has been an important area of formal study at the University of Glasgow since 1947 when the Department of Extra-Mural Education was established, later becoming the Department of Adult and Continuing Education.

1.3. The overarching theme uniting the majority of these programmes is the broad social policy area and the professional field of Community Learning and Development (CLD), which encompasses adult education, community development and youth work. The STRADA alcohol and drug programmes relate to different, but cognate policy and professional fields. The work of STRADA is directly relevant to issues and practices around developing healthy and sustainable communities, and the general welfare of communities and young people. Principles of adult education are central to the delivery of the wider STRADA programme and workforce development, although there are strong thematic links to other Schools in the University and to the Institute of Health and Wellbeing.

1.4. The Department of Adult and Continuing Education received a DPTLA review in April 2006; however, significant changes have been made to the nature and breadth of provision since 2006 and the department was subsequently integrated into the School

of Education. In 2012 the School was subject to a PSR that included all programmes except those linked to the former department of Adult and Continuing Education, which are subject to this PSR. This subject area would normally be part of the same review as the rest of the School of Education and will be part of a combined review in the future.

1.5. A School level review of the BA Community Development (BACD) programme was undertaken in 2012. This review led to major changes in the programme that are currently in their first year of implementation.

1.6. The Self Evaluation Report (SER) document was coordinated by Rod Purcell (Subject Lead), with input from Bonnie Slade (Teaching Adults and Adults and Continuing Education), Dave Beck (Community Learning and Development), Louise Sheridan (Social Justice Place and Lifelong Education), Archie Fulton (Scottish Training on Drugs and Alcohol) and Lesley Doyle (MSc Young People, Social Inclusion and Change). The content of the report was discussed with students from the above programmes, shared with and agreed by the teaching teams, Co-directors of the Social Justice Place and Lifelong Education Research and Teaching Group, Director of Learning and Teaching, Director of PGT, and Head of School.

1.7. The Review Panel met with Professor R Davies, Head of School, Mr R Purcell, Champion for this PSR, Dean of Learning and Teaching, Dr Moira Fischbacher-Smith, 12 Undergraduate students, 15 Postgraduate Students, 17 members of key staff including the RTG (Head of Subject) leader and 1 probationary staff member.

1.8. The Review Panel, having conducted the meetings, formed the impression that there was a much stronger sense of strategic direction and ambition than was evident in the SER, particularly for the Masters programmes. Potential development that had been identified was reported to be held back by shortage of specialist and of senior academic staff. It was conceded by its authors that the SER did not adequately reflect the School's ambition for the range of provision and potential for developing the Subject Area as a whole.

2. Background Information

2.1 Provision

The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the School/Subject area:

- Cert HE Drug and Alcohol Practice
- BA Community Development*
- MEd/PG Dip Community Learning and Development*
- MSc/PG Dip/PG Cert Drug and Alcohol Studies
- MSc/PG Dip in Adult and Continuing Education
- MSc/PG Dip in Teaching Adults**
- MSc Young People, Social Inclusion and Change
- 20 credit contribution to B.Ed. Liberal Arts Elective course -The impact of Drug and Alcohol misuse and Child Development

* Programmes accredited by the Community Learning and Development Standards Council for Scotland as a professional qualification

** Under review by General Teaching Council Scotland for admission to the Further Education Register.

2.2 Student numbers on these programmes are as follows:

	Cert HE Drugs and Alcohol	BA Community Development	MEd/PGD CLD	MSc/PGD Adult and Continuing Education	MSc/PGD Teaching Adults	MSc Young People, Social Inclusion and Change	MSc/PGD/PGC Drugs and Alcohol	STRAD AB.Ed Elective	FTE
Cert HE	16								11
Level 1		37						29	42
Level 2		36						29	41
Level 3		30							30
PG Cert							27		9
PG Dip							11		8.5
MSc / MEd			27	6	8	6	20		40.5
Total	16	103	27	6*	8*	6*	58	58	182

Note: Programme-specific courses are also offered as options across Education. Together they attracted a further 15 FTE students

2.3 Staffing

The staffing for these programmes is drawn from academic staff based within the School of Education's SJPLE research and teaching group. Within this arrangement programmes have core teams:

- BACD is taught mainly by 1FTE lecturer and two 0.6 FTE university teachers, with practice and support from a full time Practice Coordinator (not academic staff). In addition, other School of Education staff deliver the equivalent of 2 x 20 credit courses;

- MEd/PGD CLD is taught mainly by a 1FTE lecturer and 1FTE senior lecturer;

- MSc in Adult and Continuing Education and Teaching Adults is taught mainly by 1 FTE Lecturer with two 20 credit courses delivered by other staff within the School;

- STRADA programmes are delivered by 1FTE university teacher and two 0.5FTE university teachers (100% funded by the Scottish Government)

- Young People, Social Inclusion and Change is delivered by 2 FTE lecturers.

3. Overall aims of the Subject's provision and how it supports the University Strategic Plan

3.1 Breadth of Provision

3.1.1 The Review Panel was satisfied that the aims of the Subject's provision were appropriate and aligned with the University's Strategic Plan and supported the University's commitment to global reach, internationalisation and particularly widening access provision, for which the subject area is **commended.**

3.1.2 The Review Panel recognised that the subject area is well established, that the range of provision is good and coherent especially in the PG courses. The overall impression of the Panel was that the range of provision is being grown incrementally. There was evidence that the Subject Area was attempting to identify emerging markets but there appeared to be some challenges to achieving the breadth of provision warranted for the Subject Area.

3.1.3 The challenges were recognised by the Panel as being both organisational and in relation to capacity. There is a long and proud history to the programmes within the University of Glasgow and in their relationship with other provision in Glasgow. However the profile of this area is changing which is having consequences for the programmes in this field. For historical reasons programmes at Glasgow have tended to operate in a niche way and are fragmented and compartmentalised. With changes to this profile, notably in professional training for youth workers, there is opportunity now for some significant consolidation. See also section 4.6.

3.1.4 A number of opportunities for development were identified through the course of discussions. The Review Panel, guided by the External Subject Expert, identified that there was potential to fill out the profile by introducing an accredited Youth Work programme and to consolidate with the existing programmes in the Subject Area, as usually Youth Work would be incorporated with Adult Education and Community Development. There is a significant potential market for Youth Work here and a Masters level programme would be marketable internationally. It would be important for this to include online provision. There are a range of universities in the UK that provide online accredited youth work training but there is no capacity for this in Scotland (Dundee provides online CLD). In discussion with the Head of School it was confirmed that the School is aware of the gap in the market now in relation to Youth Work, but had resisted previously not wishing to compete with the University of Strathclyde (which will no longer provide these programmes after 2015). It was also identified that there is currently no provision in the West of Scotland for a full-time UG study in Community Work for students who are not currently working in the field. See also section 4.7.4. The Head of Subject subsequently clarified that, while the CLD qualification is accredited for Youth Work with the Standards Council for CLD in Scotland, Youth Work also has an identity outside the CLD framework. The CLD configuration is unique to Scotland. Internationally, Youth Work, like Community Development and Adult Education has an independent professional identity.

3.1.5 There is both potential and appetite for growth in the Subject Area. It was evident that there are opportunities to share course options across the college at both UG and PGT level. The Panel suggested that incrementally opening up courses to students outwith the School of Education would increase income. However, there was concern about how an increase in student numbers would be serviced when the Subject Area is at full capacity. Manifest sustainable growth is needed to achieve additional resources, but the Subject Area faces a Catch 22. There is no guarantee that increased student numbers, in the current environment, would increase staffing allocation: and recent history has indicated that the opposite may well follow. There is a general commitment in principle in that direction, but in the absence of a clear agreement, the risks involved in recruiting more students are borne by the current staff.

3.1.6 The Review Panel considered that, in order for the Subject Area to deliver on existing ambitions and to take advantage of potential areas for growth, it is essential that the Subject Area and School have the full support of the College of Social Sciences. The Review Panel strongly **recommends** that the School establish a clear vision and strategy for growth, working with the Vice Principal and Head of College in line with College plans for sustainable growth to produce a phased plan as how to reach its vision. This needs to include an unambiguous commitment to recruit additional staff to service increased student numbers.

3.2 Research led teaching

3.2.1 It was evident that teaching within the Undergraduate and Masters' courses is informed by the research interests within the Subject Area. Students were aware of research coming through in the teaching, both from the key programme staff and additional speakers. Staff reported that lots of progress has been made in linking teaching to research, much more so than in other parts of the school. Students on the MEd programme found it valuable that staff seek out research relevant to students within the class and use international examples for teaching. The programmes also draw on the staff and research experience within Cradall. The Review Panel **commends** the integration of research into the teaching on these programmes.

3.3 Internationalisation

3.3.1 It was evident that the Subject Area is building on existing international links and has a number of plans for prioritising internationalisation, including the introduction of a distance learning, online Masters in Advanced Community Development in conjunction with a consortium of Universities in the mid-west of the USA. This is currently being marketed through partners and will be available from September. Other developments include a U21 network, which is in the early stage of development, and the development of an Erasmus Mundus programme to further enhance growth in international student numbers.

4. An Evaluation of the Student Learning Experience

4.1 Validity of programmes

4.1.1 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirms that the programmes offered by the Subject Area remain current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application. See also section 4.6.

4.2 Accreditation

4.2.1 The MEd/PGD and BACD are accredited by The Community Learning and Development Standards (CLD) Council for Scotland. This accreditation is subject to a cycle of inspection and review. In addition both programmes regularly meet with placement supervisors from external agencies who are invited to comment upon the appropriateness and effectiveness of the curriculum for practice.

4.3 Benchmarking

4.3.1 No current benchmarks for this Subject Area exist. There are benchmark statements available via the (CLD) Council for Scotland for the BACD and MEd programmes; however these are for professional practice only. The Review Panel discussed with the Head of School whether the absence of academic benchmarks impact on the programmes, however it was advised that comparator courses, networking, and external examiners are used to ensure quality is maintained and at the cutting edge. The panel suggested that these might be combined into a set of benchmarks for deployment in future course developments. See also section 7.

4.4 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

4.4.1 The Review Panel noted that there is a great deal of similarity between ILOs for the MSc ACE and MSc TA programmes. There was some concern that this would cause confusion for prospective students at the point of application. In discussion with staff and students it was evident that prospective applicants are given clear advice from staff on which programme is most appropriate, usually via email or at open evenings, however this advice can only be offered to those prospective applicants who proactively contact the programme teams. While the Review Panel accepts that some similarities will exist, it is important that ILOs appropriately reflect the differences between programmes as well as the similarities. ILO sets should be distinctive for each programme of study with assessment clearly mapped to the learning outcomes. The Review Panel **recommends** the School consults with the Learning and Teaching Centre to review the ILOs to ensure they appropriately reflect the distinctive nature of different programmes, even when there are common elements. Professor Davies and Mr Purcell confirmed that they were aware of similarities and overlap and that it was planned to reconsider them in the process of synergising the programmes.

4.4.2 Students were aware of ILOs as they are available via the course handbook and on Moodle and had been discussed at the start of the course along with the assessment and marking criteria.

4.5 Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

4.5.1 On the whole, the students who met with the Review Panel were very happy with the assessment and feedback. PGT students commented that they thought the feedback and assessment were excellent.

Assessment

4.5.2 The School employs a range of assessment methods. It was evident from the SER and from discussion with students that, where there have been concerns about an assessment, the feedback has been taken on board and assessments have been reconsidered as a result. See also section 8.

Feedback

4.5.5 Feedback was often via face-to-face meetings to discuss the assessment. Students commented that feedback was constructive and prompt, usually within 1-4 weeks, which was considered to be good.

4.6 Curriculum Design, Development and Content

4.6.1 The SER indicated that the programmes within the Subject Area operate as vertical silos where there is little overlap or integration and the delivery tended to be by a very small number of staff for each course. The Review Panel were surprised by the compartmentalised nature, especially for areas that are integrated professionally outwith the University. There were concerns about the reliance on a small number of staff, usually between 1 and 3, for each of these programmes and the associated risks. The SER states that under active consideration is the integration of teaching across the programmes to create a core with specialist adult education, community development and youth work options, leading to professional qualifications. The Head of School and Subject Lead were aware of opportunities to develop a more coherent group of programmes.

4.6.2 At the meeting with the Head of School, the Panel was advised that that the courses grew up as silos due to complex demarcation boundaries. There was a sense that culturally some stakeholders have established values in respect of qualifications and that employers prized silo qualifications so it would take time to re-educate them. There was however agreement on a need to rationalise and make much clearer pathways for academic and practise routes.

4.6.3 In the meeting with members of staff, the Panel was informed that the Area is growing as a much more coherent group of subjects. There was discussion about a hub and spoke approach with a core that can be co-taught across programmes. Staff are very enthusiastic about the idea of an integrated unit with a hub and spoke approach, which would create more synergy between the programmes and allowing more flexibility for students.

4.6.4 The Panel commented that there seemed to have been a struggle to do this incrementally and that perhaps such an approach was not working effectively. Staff were asked whether they would rather start from scratch with a blank piece of paper to redesign the programmes. Staff were opposed to this idea and were of the opinion that it should be easy to build on what is already in place and transfer this to develop broader opportunities. The Panel were informed that the spokes were in place and the critical next step was to develop the hub. Although staff appreciated this was a huge challenge they were confident this could be achieved. The panel was informed that there had been early discussions with Standards Council and that opportunity for integration and more synergy between programmes was being explored. It was also recognised that there were opportunities for development into delivery complimentary to existing programmes in Further Education Teaching or CPD qualifications.

4.6.5 The Panel was advised that the School is very supportive of development plans for the Subject Area. However, the Head of School was mindful that the challenges in developing a curriculum to achieve this whilst keeping the individual strengths of the programmes should not be underestimated.

4.6.6 The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the School strategically develop a coherent body of study within the field of Adult Education and Community Development by introducing a hub and spoke approach, building in flexibility for students with pathways in and out of programmes, and the integration of Subject Area staff into a single organisational unit having collective responsibility for the range of courses under its remit, including consideration of the opportunity to develop a Youth Work option (see paragraph 3.1.4) The strategy needs to have a clear timeline, e.g. 3 years, for the development of an integrated hub and spoke course structure for presentation for approval to the Standards Council for CLD in Scotland and/or other accrediting bodies.

4.6.7 A number of programmes have work based placements at their core. Support for finding placements was very good. One student commented that their placement has transformed practice, by encouraging them to move outside their comfort zones, and had enabled them to become a better and more reflective practitioner. A number of students have also had the opportunity to undertake international study trips.

4.6.8 The Review Panel were concerned by the fact that contact hours for courses had been reduced in order to compensate for perceived understaffing. From discussion with the undergraduate students, it was evident that face to face contact with lecturers is valued highly; one student described the quality as "phenomenal". However, students across the programmes were concerned that there is not enough contact time. See also paragraph 5.2 and 6.2.2.

BACD

4.6.9 The review panel were informed that the BACD programme is frequently refreshed, and went through a substantial refresh two years ago to react to the changing environment. The Panel observed that the content was coherent although it was recognised that it has been shaped over time. A weakness that was also identified in the 2012 review is that it could be viewed as inward looking and would benefit from greater engagement with theorists and thinking outside of the specific field of community development.

4.6.10 In the meeting with the Head of School, it was conceded that emphasis seems to be on a small number of theorists. The Review Panel were informed that this is constantly under review, and is a balancing act, making choices about key theories with resource restriction that evolves over time. The External Subject Specialist suggested that a move to a broader range of theorists could be considered while still being quite contained, but that there would be benefit in borrowing from politics, social sciences etc.

4.6.11 The Panel noted that the BACD programme does not have an honours level. There was concern that this inhibits further academic progression for students on this pathway and is not commensurate with developing theorists and academics. Through discussion with UG students on the BACD course it became apparent that there was an appetite for a route to an Honours course, as there are students who have an interest in having the option to go on to pursue PG study.

4.6.12 It is evident from discussion with staff, that they are aware of this and that there are definite plans to introduce this development, that it is a top priority and the hope is to bring about honours route very quickly, the emphasis for which is to build on the content of the existing 3 years. The Panel advised that reconfiguring existing resources to deliver an Honours year, or some equivalent one-year structure such as a Masters prelim or advanced study diploma could also appeal to existing three-year graduates who wish to upgrade or want access to postgraduate study The potential for growing income via this route demonstrating sustainable growth was recognised. The Review Panel **recommended** that plans for introduction of an honours year, or equivalent, as an option for the BA Community Development programme should be prioritised and expedited and incorporate consideration of a broader range of theorists.

STRADA

4.6.13 As part of the STRADA PG programme, students undertake the School of Education research methods course. It was apparent from discussion with students that there would be greater benefit to them if the papers used as content for this course were relevant to Drug and Alcohol Studies, rather than Education. It was **recommended** by the Review Panel that the research methods course (School of Education) should seek to develop examples that are relevant to the diversity and needs of this student group.

4.6.14 STRADA staff are funded by the Scottish Funding Council and, aligned to the annual funding cycle, are on temporary annual contracts, This is problematic as it impacts on staff morale and the lack of certainty over the funding makes development planning challenging. See also section 6.2.

MEd/PGD Community Learning and Development

4.6.15 The Active Learning approach is highly regarded by students. The associated annual course review involving all students and teaching team was **commended** by the Review Panel as good practice.

New Courses

4.6.16 A distance learning online masters for the international market in partnership with a consortium of Universities in the mid-west of the USA will start in 2014-15 and the aim is to grow this as fast as possible. A proposal for an Erasmus Mundus International Masters in Teaching Adults for Social Change in partnership with the University of Toronto, University of Malta, University of Estonia, and the University of Cyprus has also been submitted.

4.7 Student Recruitment

4.7.1 The Head of School commented that there had been concerns about recruitment, in the recent economic down turn, but that the fears had not been realised as people were investing to make themselves more able to obtain promotion and new jobs.

4.7.2 The Panel noted that some of the cohort sizes are small, particularly in PGT. The SER reports that recruitment across the programmes is slowly increasing and that steps are being taken to improve marketing across the PG programmes, including an increased emphasis on attracting international students. One of the most significant reasons for choosing the University of Glasgow identified from discussion with international students on the MSc/PG Dip in Adult and Continuing Education and MSc/PG Dip in Teaching Adults is that they would be taught by International leaders in Adult Education. It was evident that there is an opportunity here to be capitalised on. The Panel advised exploring routes that would speed up growth of the international PGT cohort. Courses could be offered to the international market via Glasgow International College. The Panel **recommended** engagement with RIO to carry out assessment of market opportunities for the full range of provision and potential.

4.7.3 The factor identified as being most beneficial in supporting recruitment is the reputation of the programmes, which means that graduates are highly thought of. Often students are recruited via recommendations from employers and colleagues. There was concern from the panel that the issues around accommodation and staffing present a risk to the reputation and therefore this recruitment mechanism.

4.7.4 Although the BACD programme is in the UCAS system, generating a significant number of applications, many of the applicants are not suitable as they do not have any experience in the field. The Panel enquired whether it is an issue that there are no opportunities in the West of Scotland for students without prior experience. It was confirmed that the requirement is to have some relevant experience but that this doesn't have to be in community development per se. The Panel was advised that potential students who do not meet requirements are sign posted to FE to develop the required skills. Students who complete the HNC Working with Communities can apply to enter directly to year 2 of the BACD degree programme and there are progression arrangements in place with several F. E. colleges.

4.7.5 In the meeting with the Head of School there was agreement that entry routes needed further development and that the hub and spoke approach needs to offer more flexible entry levels than are currently available, although there are no immediate plans to accept students with qualifications but not experience.

4.7.6 The Review Panel considered that the approach was conservative and that there is some complacency with regard to the BACD programme, because it is well established and working well. It was evident that the BACD was operating on existing partnerships, but there did not seem to be evidence of seeking new ones for growth. The Panel queried to what extent the existing partnerships were based on personal relationships, and were in that sense vulnerable.

4.8 Student Progression, Retention and Support

4.8.1 There appeared to be no retention issues. Students were very positive about the support they have received in making the transition to University. Students commented that in particular, staff taking the time to explain what was expected has been very helpful and encouraging. Often students are the first in their family to go to university and they are at different life stages so do not necessary have a peer support network. It was evident from discussions with staff and students that members of staff are extremely dedicated to their students and go over and above the usual level of academic attention to support them: this is considered an important part of the job. Students found support in the transition to study very helpful, lecturers are very open

and supportive and all agreed that the programme administrators were very helpful. The Panel acknowledged the high student satisfaction and **commends** the outstanding support provided to students within this Subject Area.

4.8.2 Additional to the support provided by programme staff, the Subject Area also has a dedicated Royal Society Writing Fellow to support students in their academic writing. For a number of the students English is not their first language and many are returning to study after a long time. The expertise in University of Glasgow support services is drawn upon by students within the subject area; in particular, the International Student Service was highlighted.

4.8.3 Barriers in finding work were experienced by some on the STRADA course because there is no practical element. There would be benefit in pairing the theory with practical experience for some students via a placement opportunity.

4.8.4 Students are paired with senior students, as an additional form of support. Students were very positive and informed the Panel that the more senior students are very approachable and hugely helpful. The Panel **commended** the Subject Area for this initiative.

4.8.5 The active learning approach referred to in paragraph 4.6.15 was found to be very valuable for the integration of international students. Peer support and peer learning is also used within the Subject Area and valued by students.

4.8.6 Due to the diversity of student body integration and support are essential. It had been identified that a one week induction at the beginning was not sufficient. The Review Panel **commended** the induction support sessions that run across the whole year. Induction includes study skills, a support programme that is very well attended and mandatory for students below C3. There are strong links with SLC and University services.

5.   The Quality of Learning Opportunities

5.1   The students who met with the Review Panel expressed overall satisfaction with the quality of their learning opportunities and their experiences as students. The Review Panel was very impressed by the students they had met. There were reflective, articulate, dedicated and very supportive of the School, highlighting the School's commitment in providing a positive student experience.

5.2   The Review Panel identified from the SER that the contact hours appear to be light and investigated with the subject area whether this was sufficient. The views of the staff members were that they certainly would not want to see teaching time cut any further, as it currently was verging on inadequate. They indicated that they were pushed to think about new ways of teaching that were more cost effective, but that ideally more teaching contact would be preferable. (See also 6.2). Students inevitably value the teaching contact and both UG and PGT students said that they would like more. See also paragraphs 4.6.8 and 6.2.2.

5.3   Staff highlighted that placements are very intensive in terms of contact time, but that this supervision time is not recorded in the same way as teaching time. Supervision of placements includes 3 visits plus an observation which equates to 12 hours per student; however the Panel was advised that this is being reduced next year. Students reported that they were happy with placement supervision.

5.4   Staff Student ratios were noted by the Panel as being particularly high. The School uses the same metrics as most of College of Social Sciences. However, the Review Panel questioned whether the models for staff student ratio used by the College of Social Sciences was appropriate for this subject area. It is obvious that if workload formulae developed around high profit, mass enrolment courses such as ITE with

teaching cohorts in the hundreds are applied to a course engaged in groupwork-based pedagogies with class sizes of around thirty and a high non-traditional student base, the result is extremely high workloads. See also paragraph 6.2.3.

5.5 Students on the BEd course who had the opportunity to take part of the STRADA course as an elective could not speak highly enough of the course. They thought the course content invaluable and believe it should be compulsory for all students on the B Ed as currently there are a limited number of places and it is very popular.

5.6 Students were very positive about Moodle: staff have used it to provide lots of links, extra resources and discussion boards. The Review Panel **commends** the use of Moodle within the Subject Area. The library and library staff were highly regarded by students although they commented that there were there were not many resources with there being too few books and many were out dated. Books being recalled is particularly problematic when they are not due to be on campus and have work or placement commitments.

6. Resources for Learning and Teaching

6.1 Accommodation

6.1.1 Accommodation has been a problem for the Subject Area, particularly in the current academic year. The work based nature of the BACD, MEd CLD and the STRADA programmes means rooms are required all day for block teaching of class sizes between 35-50. These programmes have suffered particularly because the CRB system is not capable of dealing adequately with this atypical teaching mode. Rooms allocated tend not to be conducive to learning and are not good for the student experience. Teaching has been located in non-university accommodation, which does not have proper facilities. Students made it clear that this was a barrier to learning. Staff reported that delivery in non-university accommodation that is not fit for purpose has caused students to feel excluded from the University of Glasgow.

6.1.2 This was reiterated by the students that met with the Review Panel. PGT students were very unsatisfied with the accommodation and were very disappointed that they had teaching in a community centre and didn't feel they were getting the University of Glasgow experience they had expected and didn't feel part of the University community. A number of students from across the programmes have made official complaints to the University. There has been some improvement in semester 2; some students are still displaced however, such as those on the M Ed CLD.

6.1.3 The Review Panel was concerned that this was alienating widening access students and that dealing with accommodation issues was putting extra strain on staff resources. The Panel **recommends** an urgent review of policy around room allocations. Alternative factors need to be introduced to room bookings to recognise the diversity of requirements in the timetable and estate.

6.1.4 There are also general problems regarding allocation of rooms within the St Andrews building. There have been issues of unsuitable rooms within the School for example, not enough seats. Crowding means that there is sound leakage when different teaching activities are happening in closely located class rooms which has led to conflict between courses and students have been made to feel that their course was not as worthwhile as other courses in the School of Education.

6.1.5 Although the problems have increased, the School has been pro-active in supporting planning ahead of next year and has brought forward the timetabling and numbers planning by six weeks to try to mitigate the same issues next year.

6.1.6 Students commented on the challenges of disabled access to some buildings such as Adam Smith Building and Oakfield Avenue. There were also issues about disabled parking on campus.

6.2 Staffing

6.2.1 It was evident that the staff responsible for the Subject Area are dedicated and committed to providing the best possible experience for their students. Students were extremely positive about the staff and the Review Panel **highly commends** the Subject Area for the quality of provision and the dedication of the staff team in providing a rewarding and supportive student experience. However, it was noted that staff were under significant pressures. Staffing issues were identified as a key challenge for the Subject Area. Delivery of the programmes in the Subject Area is very stretched, due to increase in student and loss of staff, who have not been replaced.

6.2.2 This has already impacted on delivery with a reduction of contact hours compared with similar courses elsewhere[2]. Staff were concerned about the reduced level of contact time and students indicated they would like more. The Panel considered the contact time per credit to be insufficient, especially in a three-year degree. In the meeting with the Head of School it was reported that the current situation is based on the optimum contact time that current funding and staffing time will permit. There was discussion about the dramatic changes in pedagogy and whether it is more appropriate to think about learning time not contact time. See also paragraph 4.6.8 and 5.2.

6.2.3 The Panel also had concerns about the staff student ratio (see section 5.4). It was noted that there had been 22 appointments to the School, but only 1 of them had been in this subject area (The majority of these appointments were concerned with enhancing research especially within the ITE area). The Panel explored with the Head of School the extent to which the programmes in the Subject Area have to pay their own way. It is clear that some programmes have a higher capacity for the generation of a surplus, and for the cross-subsidisation of other areas such as research and speculative investment, than others. However, contribution rates influence staff:student ratio. The Panel considered that the staff student ratio did not seem appropriate for the Subject Area and is in excess of benchmarks.

6.2.4 The Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area's staffing resource is reviewed to identify where possible additional staff appointments could be made or existing posts secured and made permanent. As stated previously, such appointments are crucial to assisting the Subject Area to maintain the high level of teaching currently provided and realise the opportunities for development. The Review Panel suggests that, in light of the staffing issues, consideration is given to utilising GTAs to help alleviate pressure on teaching staff.

6.2.5 The Panel identified that the Subject Area has a very flat structure and that there is a shortage of senior and promoted posts. There was concern that the flat structure of staffing combined with the silo programme structure resulted in issues with leadership and direction across and between the individual courses. This affected strategic planning and direction as well as scholarship and research. This is compounded by the fact that management is organised around research groupings rather than teaching, leading to a management and leadership gap in this Subject Area as a whole. The Panel **recommended** that this structure be reviewed.

6.2.6 Due to the nature of the contract with the Scottish Government STRADA, staff are employed on annual contracts. Staff reported feeling less integrated or valued as other members of staff. As referred to in paragraph 4.6.16, the observation made by students

---

[2] Typical contact hours for the BACD in a teaching semester total 60 hours, compared with 108 at Strathclyde. And Strathclyde has an extra year, so more than twice the contact hours. The Strathclyde course has run economically, with similar teaching and learning practices to Glasgow, since 1964.

on the BEd who took the elective on drug addiction were of the opinion that this should be taught to all students not just the small number that are able to take this as an elective option. It is evident that the content is highly valued and the expertise could be capitalised on much more broadly, including opportunities for Internationalisation. The Panel considered that the STRADA course history should make a case for better integration of the course within the School to sustain the expertise held within the STRADA programme. The Panel was informed that there are restrictions on recruiting students under other models than government funding. It was suggested that it might be possible to negotiate terms of the contract to allow a phasing in of new arrangements with a view to being secure if funding is withdrawn – which has been identified as a genuine risk. It was suggested that a proposal be put to the SFC that they are flexible with restrictions while alternative funding streams are developed for these courses. It was suggested that the course could be offered, more broadly, both to more students on the BEd and also more widely within the College. The Review Panel **recommends** that the expertise of STRADA staff is capitalised on much more broadly so that funding for these posts is not reliant on Scottish Government Funding.

6.2.7 Current sustainability is reliant on the good favour of existing staff and it is not evident how the Subject Area can deliver on its ambitions given the level of resourcing. Staff are not convinced that growth in students will translate to more resource. The Head of School commented that the pressures, opportunities and constraints are the same as rest of School, and that extra resource could not be justified without a clear long term strategic plan. The Panel **recommends** that such a plan be developed.

6.2.8 Staff demonstrated a real excitement about the hub and spoke approach and indicated they want time to be reflective and radically restructure the programmes. It was not apparent to the Panel that there were clear development plans with associated timescales and it was not clear who was driving this. The Review Panel **recommends** that a senior member of staff is given a clear leadership role and authority for ensuring that the changes to programmes identified happen speedily and that the necessary provision is made for this member of staff to have the capacity to undertake this.

Probationary staff

6.2.9 At the meeting with a probationary member of staff, it was evident that her experience has been very positive. She was very positive about the support she received which had included an introduction from the Head of School and sessions with another senior member of staff. She had shadowed a member of staff for a few months to get to know the programmes and the students and had also built relationships with a number of members of staff including administrators to learn about the expectations of her own and other roles. She also reported having received a lot of peer support, which tended to be informal but was very supportive and helpful. The Panel **commended** the Subject Area on the support provided.

6.2.10 The Panel commented that her responsibilities could have been overwhelming for a probationary member of staff, but recognised that the probationer is very dedicated, committed, experienced, enthusiastic and able to cope with the demands. The probationer confirmed that she felt prepared for the role as it brought together her breadth of experience and she welcomed the challenges of the role, though the demands of the role meant that research time had suffered. The Panel queried whether the school does enough to protect research time. The probationer accepted that a lot of what she undertakes in her role as programme manager is over and above what is expected, but that she is happy to do it. It was acknowledged that she has been working on developing an Erasmus Mundus programme, but that once this is finalised it would be possible to improve the balance.

6.2.11 The Panel learned that there were very good collaborative opportunities and compared to her previous experience, the probationer found there to be much more support for

academics. The probationer was very positive of Staff Development and the PGCAP, which she had found very valuable, particularly in enabling her to learn what is important at the University of Glasgow, for example criterion based marking as well as broader university policy and expectations. She was also very positive about the delivery and people involved in organisation and delivery of the PGCAP. The PGCAP was particularly valuable for people that might not have thought about more innovative teaching practices. The course has not been particularly onerous and has been a great way to network and integrate with other new members of staff.

7. Maintaining the Standards of Awards

7.1 As discussed in section 4, although no benchmarks for the Subject Area exist, accreditation, comparator courses, networking and external examiners are used to ensure quality is maintained.

7.2 Staff teams place a high priority on understanding and responding to student feedback, and regular consultation with students occurs across the programmes. Course material is also constantly revised to reflect new research and thinking in subject areas.

8. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience

8.1 The Review Panel noted that, although it was evident that SSLCs meet regularly for some courses within the subject area, SSLCs are not happening for all courses. The MEd CD, BACD and STRADA programmes don't consider them necessary as class sizes are small and because they are able to speak to lecturers directly about any concerns they have. It was evident from the SER and supporting documentation, and from the meetings with staff and students that staff are very responsive to student feedback.

8.2 Staff recognise that responding to student feedback makes courses much better and encourage an open door policy. The nature of the courses is about developing reflective practitioners and therefore it is built into the course – there is action reflection within the teaching practices. See also paragraph 4.6.15.

8.3 From discussion with students it was evident that graduate attributes are embedded with the courses. Although not all students were specifically aware of the terminology, there was recognition that they are developing the skills identified as graduate attributes. Staff commented that graduate attributes were aligned with Scottish Social Services benchmark requirements.

9. Summary of Perceived Strengths and Areas for Improvement in Learning and Teaching

9.1 Key Strengths

The following key strengths were noted:

- Commitment and passion of the dedicated staff
- Engaged student body
- Reputation of International leaders, notably in Adult Education
- Research-led Teaching
- Responding to student feedback
- The support given probationary staff
- Feedback on assessment

9.2 Areas for improvement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for improvement:

- Vision and strategy for growth
- Staff Student ratios
- Courses to be integrated into a more cohesive structure allowing more flexibility
- Accommodation issues, most notably where courses are allocated to non-University spaces which are not fit for purpose.
- Plans for sustainable growth
- Distinctive Intended Learning Outcomes for each programme
- An enhanced sense to which students feel part of the School of Education

9.3 Conclusion and recommendations

9.3.1 The Panel was impressed by the very positive view from the students; particularly non-traditional students who demonstrated that they were very appreciative of the staff and are very proud to be at the University of Glasgow. It was evident that their experiences on the programmes, of support and academic provision, and the reflection of research practice in teaching overall are extremely positive, despite the staff being under significant pressures.

9.3.2 Staffing issues were identified as a key challenge for the Subject Area. There was concern that staff carry all the risk of any expansion. In addition, to the extent that current arrangements limit capacity for valued activities such as research and internationalisation, understaffing places the whole subject area at risk.

9.3.3 The Subject Area is currently fragmented, with small teams having responsibility for discrete programmes of study. It is recognised that a coherent structure with a single team having collective responsibility for the range of courses would be more conventional, and would also be more effective and mitigate some of the risk factors of the current structure.

9.3.4 The Panel discerned from the SER that there that there was no demonstration of overt ambition or evidence of opportunities being pursued and there was scope to do much more. There also seemed to be a sense of complacency regarding risks. The Panel recognised through discussions that there was more ambition than was evident in the SER and while there are potential opportunities to expand which are not being taken advantage of, staffing capacity limits the ability to respond to new challenges and to be more ambitious.

9.3.5 The main area for improvement was for the School to establish a clear vision and strategy for growth, working with the Vice Principal and Head of College in line with College plans for sustainable growth to produce a phased plan as how to reach its vision. The Strategy would need to be built into the College of Social Sciences plans and it was therefore important for the School to demonstrate the potential for the Subject and the benefit this would provide both the College and University.

Commendations

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

Commendation 1

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject Area on delivery of widening access ambitions of the University of Glasgow. [Paragraph 3.1.1]

Commendation 2

The Review Pane **commends** the integration of research into the teaching of the programmes [Paragraph 3.2.1]

Commendation 3

The annual course review involving all students and teaching team was **commended** by the Panel [Paragraph 4.6.15]

Commendation 4

The Review Panel **commends** the outstanding support provided to students [paragraph 4.8.1]

Commendation 5

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject Area on the pairing of students on the BACD with more senior students. [Paragraph 4.8.4]

Commendation 6

The Review Panel **commends** the induction support students receive. [Paragraph 4.8.6]

Commendation 7

The Review Panel **commends** the use of Moodle within the Subject Area. [Paragraph 5.6]

Commendation 8

The Review Panel **highly commended** the Subject Area for the quality of provision and the dedication of the staff team in providing a rewarding and supportive student experience.   [Paragraph 6.2.1]

Commendation 9

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject Area on the support provided to the probationary member of staff. [Paragraph 6.2.9]

Recommendations

A number of recommendations have been made, many of which concern areas that the School had itself highlighted for further development in the SER or during discussion. The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. They 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.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the School establish a clear vision and strategy for growth, working with the Vice Principal and Head of College in line with College plans for sustainable growth to produce a phased plan as how to reach its vision. [Paragraph 3.1.6]

For Action: Head of School/Vice Principal and Head of College

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the School strategically develop a coherent body of study within the field of Adult Education and Community Development by introducing a hub and spoke approach, building in flexibility for students with pathways in and out of programmes, and the integration of Subject Area staff into a single organisational unit having collective responsibility for the range of courses under its remit, including consideration of the opportunity to develop a Youth Work option. [Paragraph 4.6.6]

Action: Head of School/ Head of Subject

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommended** that plans for introduction of an honours year, or equivalent, as an option for the BA Community Development programme should be prioritised and expedited and incorporate consideration of a broader range of theorists. [Paragraph 4.6.12]

Action: Head of School/ Head of Subject

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that a senior member of staff is given a clear leadership role and authority for ensuring that the changes to programmes identified in recommendations 2 and 3 happen speedily and that the necessary provision is made for this member of staff to have the capacity to undertake this. [Paragraph 6.2.8]

Action: Head of School/ Head of Subject

Recommendation 5

The Panel **recommends** that the Subject Area's staffing resource is considered to identify where possible additional staff appointments could be made or existing posts secured and made permanent. Such appointments are thought to be crucial to assisting the Subject Area to maintain the high level of teaching currently provided and realise the opportunities for development. [Paragraph 6.2.4]

For Action: Head of School/ Vice Principal and Head of College

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the expertise of STRADA staff is capitalised on much more broadly so that funding for these posts in not reliant on Scottish Government Funding. [Paragraph 6.2.6]

For Action: Head of School/ Head of Subject

Recommendation 7

The Panel **recommends** engagement with RIO to carry out assessment of market opportunities for the full range of provision and potential. [Paragraph 4.7.2]

For Action: Head of School/ Head of Subject

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends** an urgent review of policy around room allocations. Alternative factors need to be introduced to room bookings to recognise the diversity of requirements in the timetable and estate. [Paragraph 6.1.3]

For Action: Central Room Bookings/ Director of Estates and Buildings

For information: Vice Principal and Head of College / Head of School

Recommendation 9

The Panel identified that the Subject Area has a very flat structure and that there is a shortage of senior and promoted posts. There was concern that the flat structure of staffing combined with the silo programme structure results in issues with leadership and direction across and between the individual courses as well as scholarship and research and **recommends** that this structure be reviewed. [Paragraph 6.2.5]

For Action: Head of School/ Vice Principal and Head of College

Recommendation 10

The Panel **recommends** that the School of Education Research Methods course should seek to develop examples that are relevant to the diversity and needs of the STRADA PG programme, students who would benefit the papers used as content for this course being relevant to Drug and Alcohol Studies, rather than Education. [Paragraph 4.6.13]

For Action: Head of School

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel **recommends** the School consults with the Learning and Teaching Centre to review the ILOs to ensure they appropriately reflect the distinctive nature of different programmes, even when there are common elements [Paragraph 4.4.1]

For Action: Head of Subject

SRUC and the University of Glasgow

Master of Science, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in Rural Business Management
Report of Validation Meeting

Held at SRUC, Aberdeen on 25th March 2014

1. Validation Panel

Dr Kyrsten Black	Assistant Principal Higher Education, SRUC [Convener]
Prof. Robert Paton	Professor of Management and Director of Graduate Studies, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow.
Dr Sabina Siebert	Senior Lecturer in Management, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow.
Dr Ian Edwards	Emeritus Senior Lecturer, School of Biological Sciences, University of Aberdeen.
Roz Caudwell	Business Adviser, Enterprise North East Trust Ltd, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire.
Dr Chris Smith	Academic Development Manager Higher Education, SRUC [Reporter]

2. Summary

The validation panel agreed to recommend to the SRUC Education Division Management Team and the Academic Standards Committee of the University of Glasgow that the Master of Science / Postgraduate Diploma / Postgraduate Certificate Rural Business Management should be validated as awards of the University of Glasgow for six years from session 2014-15. The panel made a number of conditions and advisory recommendations, which are summarised in section 5.

3. Introduction

SRUC (as SAC) offered taught postgraduate programmes in the agri-business sector for a number of years[3]. It also currently offers a full-time BA (Hons) Rural Business Management, validated by the University of Glasgow at both its Aberdeen and Edinburgh campuses. Current analysis of the needs of the rural sector strongly suggest that there is a need and demand for an MSc in Rural Business Management delivered for part-time study by distance-learning using the model developed for SRUC's other existing taught postgraduate programmes.

Students would typically study modules with a total SCQF credit value of 60 in each year, taking one year to complete the Postgraduate Certificate, two years for the Postgraduate Diploma and a further year for the MSc. The full MSc (180 SCQF credits)

---

[3] Programmes previously validated by the University of Aberdeen and the Robert Gordon University.

would require successful completion of a project and report with a credit value of 60 SCQF credits.

The validation panel (the panel) was provided with a validation document which provided details of the proposed programme. The timetable for the meeting and details of the academic staff in the programme development team (the team) who met the panel are appended as Appendices A and B.

The role of the panel was to scrutinise the proposed programme, and to report to the SRUC Education Division Management Team and the Academic Standards Committee of the University of Glasgow on the suitability of the programme leading to the awards of Master of Science, Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate of the University of Glasgow.

4. Meeting with the programme development team

The panel met the key members of the team who had been responsible for developing the programme in order to discuss a range of issues identified following consideration of the validation document.

4.1 Rationale and Learning and Teaching Approaches

4.1.1 The programme title

The team were asked to expand on their rationale for the award of an MSc (for example instead of an MBA) and use of the title Rural Business Management. The team explained that the MBA title was considered to be too restricted in scope and might not wholly match the aspirations of the type of student likely to be attracted to the programme. The programme was not aimed only at the agri-business sector but more broadly at a broader range of rural businesses.

4.1.2 Target market

The team were slightly confused over the geographical area for recruitment that the programme was aimed at. The context for the programme, the needs of industry and the employment prospects of graduates appeared to be largely focussed on the Scottish rural sector whilst it was proposed that student recruitment might include international students as well as those from Scotland and the rest of the UK. The team clarified that whilst there would be a significant Scottish context in the delivery of the programme, including the examples and case studies used, the programme would be suitable for students from throughout Europe and the target market for students was Scotland, rest of UK and EU. The team expanded on the nature of the market research with industry which had been conducted during the development of the programme – this provided reassurance to the panel that the industry demand had been suitably explored and confirmed. The team outlined the marketing plan for the programme which in part would utilise SAC Consulting contacts within the rural sector. The prime aim would be to recruit students already in employment in the rural sector with relevant industry experience. The degree was not intended as a direct progression route from the existing BA Rural Business Management, ideally students should gain some industry experience following their undergraduate degree.

4.1.3 Demand and viable numbers

The team envisaged initial recruitment coming primarily from Scotland where demand is already tangible, and later marketing being focused further afield. The team confirmed their aim to recruit around 20 students per year resulting in a full cohort of 60 students (30 FTEs) after three years.

4.1.4 Benefits to the rural sector

The validation document states that SRUC's education programmes should 'contribute to the higher education and professional training needs of the rural sector in a range of subject areas'. The panel asked the team to elaborate on how the rural sector would benefit from the proposed programme. Beyond the obvious benefit of developing a group of skilled postgraduates, the team outlined the important interaction between employers, the students and the programme, given that the majority of students were expected to be already in relevant employment whilst studying. They noted that learning and assessment would use the students' own workplace examples and experiences to contextualise the learning. This would provide direct feedback to businesses and employers; examples of this were case study assessments in modules such as *Strategic & Operational Management* and *Issues in the Rural Sector*. If students were not in relevant employment whilst studying, the programme team would for example provide case studies from SRUC's own farms, business contacts, SAC Consulting projects, etc.

4.1.5 Development of a learning community

The team were asked to explain how, for a distance learning programme using on-line study materials and methods, they intended to promote the active engagement of students with staff, and with each other in order to develop an active learning community. The team explained the key importance of study weekends (held on campus twice per year) for induction and review in developing the sense of community; these have been shown to be effective in other SRUC distance learning programmes not least in maintaining student motivation. Use would also be made of on-line discussion forums where often there would be compulsion for all students to contribute. Use will also be made of on-line conferencing using GoToMeeting. Module leaders and the Adviser of Studies would be able to track participation by students and their interaction with learning materials on the Moodle VLE, and follow-up with any students who appear not to be fully engaging with studies and group activities.

4.1.6 Contribution of research and consultancy to learning

The validation document makes the case for one strength of the programme being the contribution made to the students' learning experience by research and consultancy knowledge and expertise, from both within and outwith SRUC/SAC. The panel were interested to explore with the team how this would be achieved given the distance learning format of the programme. The team outlined, to the satisfaction of the panel, a range of mechanisms which would be used including the use of publications from for example the SRUC Rural Policy Centre, use of case studies based on recent research or consultancy projects, direct teaching by on-line conferencing using GoToMeeting by SRUC Research and Consulting staff, etc.

4.2 Programme Structure and Content

The panel considered whether the focus of the programme and for example the desired balance between 'Business' (strategy, policy, etc) and 'Management' (operational, delivery, etc) elements could be better articulated. They felt that there may be some value to prospective and enrolled students, in the programme team creating a schematic to represent the development of knowledge, skills and outcomes as students progress through the course logically leading to completion of the final MSc Project. Further, this might then allow clearer definition of the purpose and content of the individual modules and their learning outcomes. The aim should be to articulate the programme as a complete entity and in so far as is possible, minimise the risk of individual modules as learning 'silos'.

With this in mind, the panel scrutinised the content of each module and the project and dissertation, and debated with the team the balance of content and the appropriateness of the titles of each module. In general the panel felt that the titles of modules, whilst in most cases reflecting the content, did not always adequately promote the intended learning outcomes in the descriptors. The panel **recommended** that the titles and content of modules should be reviewed to better reflect a focus on their outcomes and in so doing potentially provide greater appeal to prospective students. For example the module *Financial Planning and Analysis* might be better titled *Decision Making and Risk* or *Formulating a Business Plan,* and the module Issues in the Rural Sector might be renamed *Contemporary Rural Challenges.*

Further detail is provided below for individual modules and components of the framework.

4.2.1 MSc Project and Dissertation

The panel were concerned that the descriptor implied a traditionally 'academic', research-focussed, project which could result in a missed opportunity, for example to link or include work-based learning opportunities with the project. The essential requirement for the project was that it should be an independent piece of work and as such could take a number of forms including a consultancy report, development of a business plan, new product feasibility study, etc. The panel felt there was no need for the project to be based on a formal 'hypothesis' and that the application of statistical techniques was not an essential requirement. The team agreed that this broader compass was intended and that the wording of the descriptor did not convey the opportunities which would be available to students. In common with some of the taught modules the panel considered that the title was not attractive or appropriate and that the team should consider alternatives such as *Integrative Project* or *Applied Project*.

The panel explored with the team their intentions for students making an oral presentation which was not assessed despite being a learning outcome. It was agreed that making an oral presentation should be a compulsory, assessed element of the project and that this might be best timed mid-way through the duration of the project, for example to provide a progress report. Further refinement of the assessment requirements for the project would be advisable to ensure that the learning outcomes were demonstrably assessed and weighted in the overall grade for the project, including the preparation of the project proposal.

As a result of the discussion and the consensus of understanding between the panel and the team, the panel made it a **condition** of validation that the title and descriptor of the project should be revised to better represent the applied options available to students. In so doing the team should provide examples of types of projects which might be carried out. As noted above the descriptor should provide further refinement of the weighting of assessment elements in relation to the intended learning outcomes.

4.2.2 Module: Research Methods

Given the consensus noted above on format of the project, the panel were of the view that the *Research Methods* module was not essential to the achievement of the overall aims of the MSc and certainly would not be an essential part of a Postgraduate Diploma given that the content of the module was strongly focussed on preparing students for a traditionally 'academic' project and dissertation. They explored with the team the feasibility of including some elements of research methods within other modules, including within *Marketing and e-Commerce* and *Project Management & HR.* Some elements still essential to the project, for example the development of a project proposal, could be included within the revised project descriptor (see 4.2.1) and delivered for example at the preparatory study weekend.

In conclusion, the panel made it a **condition** of validation that the module *Research Methods* should be removed from the framework; with essential elements of its content being moved to form components of other modules as noted above. This action would create space in the framework for an additional module (see 4.2.6).

4.2.3 Module: Marketing and e-Commerce

The panel **recommended** that the module should include further consideration of market research and/or 'decision making in marketing'.

4.2.4 Module: Strategic & Operations Management

The panel thought that the emphasis in this module should be on strategy and, in considering the intended learning outcomes, that the title might be changed to better reflect this: a title such as *'Managing Strategic Change'* might be more appropriate. Whilst 'operations' were essential to the implementation of strategy they might be given a lower profile in this module with elements included within other modules e.g. *Project Management*. On the other hand the development of an awareness of human resource management – essential to a change process – might be included within this module.

4.2.5 Module: Project Management and Human Resource Management

The panel suggested that the HR management content of this module should be reduced significantly and/or some elements transferred to the revised module currently titled *Strategic and Operations Management*. It is acknowledged that many rural SMEs would not have their own HR specialists but that in the main this function would be outsourced; strategic managers should have a clear awareness of HR issues but need not have operational expertise. Performance management, is however, consistent with the needs of effective project management and should be retained. In place of HR management an outcome on communication – an essential component of the effective operational implementation of strategy and change - would provide a more balanced content.

4.2.6 New Module

The panel considered, discussed with, and **recommended** to the team the inclusion of an additional module with a focus on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Such a module might consider elements such as product development, horizon scanning, etc. and take note of externalities such as socio-economics, sustainability, environmental issues, etc. It was suggested that the module might integrate earlier elements of the programme and act as a bridge looking towards the MSc Project. The team might consider ways in which this module could promote and facilitate the students transition onto the MSc Project.

4.2.7 Module Descriptors

The panel were of the view that there needed to be greater consistency in the content of, and detail contained within, module descriptors. The panel therefore made it a **condition** of validation that module descriptors should be refined. This work should include:

- Clearer definition of *Required* and *Additional* reading;

- The inclusion of named journal and journal articles in the Additional Reading for each module;

- More precise details of the nature of assessment and the weighting of assessment components;

- Review of the verbs used in learning outcomes.

It was understood that SRUC is in the process of reviewing the template for degree module descriptors and therefore the revised template should be followed.

4.2.8 New Approaches to Business Education

The panel **recommended** that the future development of the programme might be enhanced if the programme team increased their exposure to current developments and trends in curriculum design and pedagogy specific to taught postgraduate business education. This might be achieved for example by attendance at conferences and workshops, by nurturing 'critical friends' in the sector, or by inviting external review on curriculum advisory panels.

4. Conclusions, Conditions and Recommendations

5.1 The validation panel agreed to recommend to the SRUC Education Division Management Team and the Academic Standards Committee of the University of Glasgow that the Master of Science / Postgraduate Diploma / Postgraduate Certificate in Rural Business Management should be validated as awards of the University of Glasgow for six years from session 2014-15. The validation panel set a number of conditions and made a number of recommendations which are noted below in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4

5.2 The panel recognised that the proposed programme had significant strengths, in particular:

- Features of the curriculum which distinguished it from similar programmes in the UK;

- Existing staff expertise in the Education, Research and Consulting Divisions of SRUC which would contribute to the delivery of the programme;

- Provision of 'real-world' case studies and topics for MSc Projects through SRUC contacts with industry

- Providing the opportunity for those in work to study part-time at a distance.

5.3 However, the panel had concerns about some aspects of the proposal and set the following **conditions**:

a) The title and descriptor of the MSc Project should be revised to better represent the applied options available to students [4.2.1];

b) The module *Research Methods* should be removed from the framework; with essential elements of its content being moved to form components of other modules [4.2.2];

c) All module descriptors should be refined to give greater consistency in their content and detail [4.2.7].

5.4 In addition the panel made the following advisory **recommendations**:

a) The titles and content of modules should be reviewed to better reflect a focus on their outcomes [4.2].

b) The module *Marketing and e-Commerce* should include further consideration of market research and/or 'decision making in marketing' [4.2.3].

c) That an additional module should be included with a focus on Innovation and Entrepreneurship [4.2.6].

d) That the programme team should increase their exposure to current developments and trends in curriculum design and pedagogy specific to taught postgraduate business education [4.2.8].

Validation of Master of Science, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in Rural Business Management

Timetable of Validation Meeting held at SRUC, Aberdeen on 25th March 2014:

10.00   **Arrival**
Introductions and coffee/tea

10.15   **Private meeting of the validation panel**
To discuss the proposal and identify the major issues

11.45   **Meeting with programme development team**
To discuss the proposals, rationale, educational aims, learning objectives, content, teaching and learning approaches, assessment issues, etc.

12.45   **Lunch**

13.30   **Meeting with programme development team (cont.)**

14.45   **Private meeting of Panel**

15.30   **Meeting with programme development team**
To report back to the programme development team

Validation of Master of Science, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate in Rural Business Management.

Members of the Programme Development Team who met the validation panel:

Dr Morag Mitchell	Lecturer in Economics & Rural Policy, Agriculture and Business Management Department, SRUC, Aberdeen
Mr Andrew Paddison	Lecturer in Marketing, Agriculture and Business Management Department, SRUC, Aberdeen
Mrs Caroline Daniel	Programme Leader in Agriculture and Lecturer in Business Management, Agriculture and Business Management Department, SRUC, Aberdeen
Mr George Robertson	Programme Leader in Rural Business Management and Lecturer in Business Management, Agriculture and Business Management Department , SRUC, Aberdeen
Mr Chris Stockwell	Head of Agriculture and Business Management Department, SRUC, based in Aberdeen

Also in the Programme Development Team but not meeting the panel:

Ms Alison Campbell	Lecturer in Business Management, with relevant skills in social media developments, Agriculture and Business Management Department, SRUC, Aberdeen