

**University of Glasgow**

**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 17 April 2015**

**Report from Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) of the Review of Programmes in the Environment and Countryside Subject Group**

Kenneth Hutton, Academic Collaborations Office, Clerk to the Liaison Committee

**Report of the Review of Programmes in the Environment and Countryside Subject Group**

**Held at SRUC Oatridge Campus on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**Incorporating revalidation of:**

- **BSc (Hons) Countryside Management**
- **BSc (Hons) Environmental Protection**
- **BSc (Hons) Rural Resource Management**
- **BSc (Hons) Sustainable Environmental Management**

## **1 Review Panel**

Dr Kyrsten Black	Assistant Principal Higher Education, SRUC [Convenor]
Prof Rob Aitken	Head of School of Life Sciences, University of Glasgow
Mr Kevin Alston	Student Reviewer, BSc Rural Business Management Year 4, SRUC
Prof James Curran	Chief Executive, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
Mr Chris Stockwell	Head of Agriculture & Business Management Department, SRUC
Dr David Williams	Senior Academic Administrator, College of Science & Engineering, University of Edinburgh
Ms Lesley Howie	Learning & Teaching Enhancement Manager Higher Education, SRUC [Reporter]

## **2 Introduction**

2.1 The following programmes were under review:

- MSc Countryside Management (by distance learning)
- BSc/BSc (Hons) Environmental Protection
- BSc/BSc (Hons) Sustainable Environmental Management
- HND/BSc/BSc (Hons) Countryside Management
- HND/BSc/BSc (Hons) Rural Resource Management
- HND Environmental Management and Sustainability
- HNC Countryside and Environmental Management (both campus-based and by distance learning)

The MSc and the BSc/BSc (Hons) Countryside Management are validated by the University of Glasgow, and the BSc/BSc (Hons) Environment degrees are validated by the University of Edinburgh. The Higher National (HNC/HND) awards are validated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). All HN and undergraduate degrees were last validated in 2007-08. The MSc was validated in 2012-13.

This review and revalidation had been originally planned for academic year 2013-14 but had to be postponed. The Universities were consulted on this change which was approved by the Accreditation Committee of the College of Science and Engineering, University of Edinburgh and by the Academic Standards Committee<sup>1</sup>, University of Glasgow.

SQA's current approach is to maintain the currency of awards through incremental change rather than major revalidation after a set number of years. No minor revisions since revalidation in 2007-08 were reported in the documentation received by the panel. In reviewing the HN awards in the future, and taking into account their status as years 1 and 2 of the associated degrees, the programme team will submit proposed revisions to SQA for their consideration. SQA will ultimately judge if these changes are minor, and can therefore be progressed without the requirement for a validation event, or major where a validation event will be arranged in due course by SRUC.

The programmes under review are offered at five of SRUC's campuses – Aberdeen, Ayr, Edinburgh, Elmwood and Oatridge. During the time covered by the review Elmwood and Oatridge have delivered Countryside Management to HND level, although Elmwood now only offers the HNC (since academic session 2013-14); Aberdeen and Ayr have delivered both Countryside Management and Sustainable Environmental Management (SEM) to degree level; and Edinburgh has delivered the three Environment programmes to degree level but not Countryside Management. Not all programmes run at all times at each campus – this varies depending on recruitment and progression rates. The panel were content that decisions not to offer programmes at a specific campus in a certain year were based on sound reasons, and that existing students were clear on the progression pathways (in terms of campus of study) available to them.

The MSc Countryside Management is a part-time distance learning programme (generally studied over three years) delivered by staff based at Ayr and Aberdeen. This postgraduate programme has not yet had a cohort graduate as the first intake of students was in 2012-13.

- 2.2 The Self-Evaluation Document (SED) and the revalidation documentation were written primarily by the Edinburgh campus Environment Programme Leader, Alistair Hamilton, with contributions from other Programme Leaders as appropriate. One cross campus meeting involving all Programme Leaders had taken place in early summer. Current students had not been directly involved in the production of the SED, although an online survey of current and past students was undertaken to ascertain general views on course aims and content. Documents referred to in the SED were provided to the members of the panel electronically.

Two revalidation documents were presented to cover the following programmes:

1. BSc/BSc (Hons) Countryside Management
2. BSc/BSc (Hons) Environmental Protection  
BSc/BSc (Hons) Rural Resource Management  
BSc/BSc (Hons) Sustainable Environmental Management.

---

<sup>1</sup> ASC Meeting May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014; Item ASC/2014/116.

- 2.3 The review and revalidation process extended over two days. Essentially the first day was used to consider the review of the existing programmes and the second day to consider the proposals for revalidation of the awards, although there was inevitably overlap between the discussions. During the course of the review the panel had five meetings with staff who had been part of the review/revalidation team (the team) and one meeting with students – details are provided in Appendix 1. Inevitably, many topics were discussed at more than one meeting and the report is therefore structured by topic rather than as an account of each meeting separately.
- 2.4 The numbers of students (as FTEs) on each programme for the last six academic years (2008-09 to 2013-14) is provided in Appendix 2.

### **3 Review of Provision**

#### **3.1 Overall aims**

The programmes appear to meet industry demands in that graduates readily find relevant employment or continue onto further study. There is good feedback from employers on the content of the programmes and the attributes of graduates. The flexible entry and exit structure, with qualifications available at the end of each year, provided opportunities to students with a range of backgrounds to study at a level and pace which suited them. Whilst some students elect to leave after year 3 with a General Degree, this was often because they were taking up employment in the sector.

The team considered that the programme aims remain relevant and evidence was provided that jobs in the land-based and environmental sector are likely to increase. The panel was content that the general aims of the programmes, and those proposed for the revalidated programmes, were sound and relevant. However, the panel made it a **condition** of revalidation that there would not be named streams in the Honours year of BSc Environmental Resource Management. As a consequence of this there is a further **condition** of revalidation that the team review the programme specific aims for years 3 and 4. (Also see 4.1.2)

#### **3.2 Enrolments**

Enrolments on the individual programmes within the subject group have been variable (see Appendix 2) but in most cases viable, with the Edinburgh campus recruiting the highest number of students. The main issue was regarding Rural Resource Management where enrolments and year-on-year progression is poor and there is no evidence that demand for this award is improving. The team explained the differences in demographics of students between campuses, and the recruitment activities underway to try to counteract trends e.g. attracting more school leavers to the Aberdeen campus which tends to attract a high proportion of mature students. There was also discussion about the broad range of career destinations offered by this suite of programmes that can make it difficult to fully describe the breadth of the provision in promotional literature. This also makes it difficult for external Career Advisers to advise potential applicants.

The panel discussed measures taken by the team to promote and market the programmes and **recommended** that there was a requirement to clearly identify the Unique Selling Points (USPs) to assist the marketing of the programmes.

#### **3.3 Use of external reference points**

In reviewing and redeveloping the programmes, the team had made appropriate use of external reference points including the QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for Earth

Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies. The team noted the ongoing constructive input from External Examiners. The impact of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) on Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications had also been considered, together with various government and industry developments and publications. Members of the teaching team also engage in consultancy and research activities and actively participate in sector-specific Continuing Professional Development opportunities. The panel were satisfied that the use of external reference points contributed effectively to the review and ongoing development of the programmes.

### **3.4 Curriculum design – elective modules**

The panel noted a wide range of elective choice throughout the structure of the two programmes. In the first two years (HNC/D) this was understandable in order to provide the different named awards. However, in both years 3 and 4 of the two programmes the substantial elective choice was offered alongside a core curriculum of 5 credits for Countryside Management and 6 credits for each of the three Environmental degrees. It was explained that this was intended to allow students to follow personal interests and specialise in particular areas/topics as they progressed. Although most electives were shared (across these programmes and with programmes in other subject areas) and hence class sizes were generally viable, there are some electives that never run at certain campuses. The team reported that electives would not normally be delivered if fewer than 6 students selected them although in some cases smaller classes had had to be delivered, or students were occasionally provided with additional tuition to compensate for an elective not running. Students reported that generally they were provided with sufficient information to allow informed choice of electives in line with their own aspirations, and they appreciated that in some instances they had not been able to take their first choice of electives – however, they accepted that this could happen.

The panel felt that it would be easier to manage student expectations on the Environmental degrees if the elective choice was reduced. This would provide a clearer pathway through the programmes and the team should aim to ensure that this can be tailored to students' interests. This is covered further in section 4.

### **3.5 Distance learning provision**

The review included two programmes delivered by distance learning – MSc Countryside Management and HNC Countryside and Environmental Management. There was little mention of this provision, particularly the MSc, in the documentation and the panel were interested in the strengths and weaknesses perceived by the team of this mode of delivery. It was explained that the MSc is currently in its second year of delivery, with the first cohort expected to graduate in July 2015. There have been some challenges around engagement and support of students although there are many positive aspects in the design of the programme and the background of the students it attracts. The HNC Countryside and Environmental Management has been running in distance learning format for several years and is reasonably successful. The team indicated the importance of online tutorials using GoToMeetings to engage students and supplement the material on Moodle, and the support provided during study weekends as a means of improving student retention. The panel noted that there is good practice for the two teams to share, and it was disappointing that the strengths of the distance learning provision was not apparent in the documentation.

### 3.6 Learning and teaching

The SED, supplemented by discussions with the team, provided information on the wide range of learning and teaching methods employed, the use of staff from across all SRUC Divisions for teaching and project supervision, and the good links with industry which resulted for example in visiting lecturers and student visits. The surveys of former students conducted as part of the review indicated satisfaction with learning and teaching and this was confirmed by the students who met the panel.

The use of the VLE, Moodle, as a learning and teaching resource was positive particularly with the new SRUC Moodle site providing a greater consistency of information across all campuses. There was, however, some concern by staff about the use of video conferencing for degree teaching (particularly around reliability of equipment). This was not raised by the student group that met the panel. The panel was content that the team considered video conferencing as an alternative means of delivery and that delivery wholly or partly by this means could be a deciding factor in elective viability. Video conferencing can also facilitate greater input from specialists in the Research and Consulting Divisions, and from external speakers.

### 3.7 Assessment

Learning outcomes were clearly described in programme documentation and module descriptors, and were articulated to students through programme handbooks and at the start of each module. Students were clear where they could find information on the timing of assessments and the specific requirements. They were content that they were able to seek effective clarification from lecturers and Year Tutors/Advisers of Study where necessary.

There was some concern from both staff and students about the (almost inevitable) clustering of assessments at the end of a term/semester, and the knock-on effects that this then has on students receiving their feedback on one assessment prior to the submission date of another, possibly for the same unit/module. The panel felt that it was important for the teams to maintain an overall view of a student's workload, at least across the core modules, and hence manage the assessment load and its timing. The panel therefore **recommended** that the expected practice of providing an assessment schedule was in place for all student cohorts. It was also **recommended** that the team should review the range of assessment formats that students are exposed to, and identify innovative integrated practices that could be used to assist in managing the volume of student assessment.

In general students were happy with the quality and timing of feedback on assessments, but noted that there was some localised significant variation. The team explained about the advantages of electronic submission in spreading the load of marking across teaching teams and therefore providing more timely feedback to students (also provided electronically) e.g. in the *Research Skills and Data Analysis* module. Electronic submission could also speed up the process of cross-campus moderation, another cause of delay for students receiving feedback. However, the use of electronic submission/marketing was not universal across programmes/campuses. The panel **recommended** that further consideration should be given to creating GradeMark rubrics for assessments involving large cohorts. This would enable the marking to be shared across the team rather than relying on one subject specialist.

The team also explained about other formats for providing feedback e.g. generic feedback at the end of a timetabled session to supplement comments on individual scripts. However, it was noted that students do not always avail themselves of opportunities provided to discuss results/feedback with staff either individually or in

groups. The panel considered that in some cases there was a mismatch between staff intentions and student expectations regarding feedback and therefore **recommended** that the team should take measures to clarify and to better manage student expectations on the timing and nature of feedback. This should be clearly articulated in programme handbooks, at induction and at appropriate stages in unit/module delivery.

It was appreciated that demands on staff time for marking and moderation can often detract from the time available to provide timely feedback. The panel considered that the issues of assessment load/type and timely feedback were strongly interlinked and therefore **recommended** that further consideration could be given to the use of peer assessment. This would not only reduce the time spent by staff on marking but would assist in the development of skills and graduate attributes, and enhance the quality of the students' learning experience. Furthermore, it was **recommended** that the team should explore the use of postgraduate research students as teaching assistants, particularly in the competency based SQA Higher National Units.

### 3.8 Student achievement

The flexible entry and exit structure, with qualifications available at the end of each year, provided opportunities to students with a range of backgrounds to study at a level and pace which suited them. The strength of this system was commended very strongly by the students, and examples were provided of progression (or intention to progress) across all Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels. It is therefore not uncommon for students to progress and achieve qualifications beyond their original expectations/enrolment. This progression often required a change to the campus of study (see section 2.1 for detail on location of programme delivery). It was noted that the students considered their experience of induction at year 1 of the undergraduate programme was generally positive. However, when moving campus and entering a programme with advanced standing they felt that the induction was less supportive. The panel **recommended** that the team review induction arrangements to ensure consistency of approach. There should be particular emphasis on ensuring that students entering a degree programme in year 3 from another campus or institution are provided with adequate support.

Achievement and progression was very dependent on students receiving the appropriate academic and pastoral support beyond initial induction activities, and the panel was generally satisfied with the arrangements in place. The Advisers of Studies/Year Tutors were praised by the students who met the panel. However, discussions with the team did indicate that this support may not always be consistent across campuses with the risk that weaker students would not receive timely meetings to discuss pastoral support and academic progress – an expectation across SRUC. Therefore although staff support was identified generally as a strength, the panel **recommended** that the team ensure consistency across all programmes and that students who are perhaps less motivated or engaged with the learning process do not miss out on this support. This would assist in Personal Development Planning (or developing Individual Learning Plans at Oatridge and Elmwood campuses) for progression from each year to the next, and particularly assist with study skills when moving from the competency based HN programme to degree level study. This would also further encourage students to change campus to progress within their chosen programme of study.

The panel noted that for distance learning provision there was frequent online contact between the Adviser of Studies and the students. The study weekends provided an opportunity for face-to-face discussions. Advisers of Studies and individual lecturers

were also able to determine student engagement with online material and activities on Moodle and therefore provide additional support where needed.

### **3.9 Field trips/practical work**

Students commented most favourably on the balance between field trips and practical work in the programmes, in particular the strength of field trips to support and complement the theoretical aspects of the modules. The field trips covered both rural and urban sites and were broad in nature, covering more than one module enabling students to integrate information. They assisted in the development of core skills and graduate attributes (also see 3.11). The team also explained about the extent of field trips within the programmes, and the coordination across campuses to ensure that this important learning activity was consistent for all student groups. It is important that this is an all inclusive activity, and the team described procedures for recording material and for making specific adjustments to the planning and support available for students with particular needs. The panel commented on the positive aspects of field trips within the curriculum – this is a USP to be highlighted in recruitment activities and promotional material. It was disappointing that the documentation had not clearly articulated the extent of this learning activity.

### **3.10 Work experience**

The provision of work experience, including volunteering, was discussed with both students and staff. The students who met the panel were from different campuses and described the benefits of structured work experience in developing subject knowledge, core skills and graduate attributes. However availability of work experience was variable and there also seemed to be a lack of consistency in the length of the placement, and the expectations in terms of structure and reporting/assessment. These issues were discussed with the team. The work experience unit within the HND Countryside Management programme was core at Oatridge and Elmwood campuses (although the HND is no longer offered at Elmwood) and an elective at Aberdeen and Ayr. The students are also encouraged to seek work experience right through the programme and the more proactive students make the most of these opportunities. The team also reported ongoing discussions with external bodies e.g. Scottish Natural Heritage about paid placements for students. The panel felt that work experience was an important element within the programmes and therefore **recommended** that the team ensure a consistent approach at HN level, plus consider a more structured approach to assisting and supporting students undertaking paid work experience or volunteering activities in the latter years. Opportunities for volunteering would be a useful point to discuss with the Advisers of Studies/Year Tutors at the termly meetings.

### **3.11 Core skills and graduate attributes**

There was strong evidence of the development of students' core skills and graduate attributes through a wide range of learning, teaching and assessment activities, including field trips and work experience. Personal Development Planning, either through the formal SQA Unit (an elective on the HND programmes) or as part of the academic and pastoral support provided by Advisers of Studies/Year Tutors, would support the students in recognising the development of these attributes and help them build a strong portfolio to aid employability (also see 3.8).

### **3.12 Feedback from students**

Staff and students commented favourably on the effectiveness of both formal and informal opportunities for students to provide feedback. The termly Student Liaison Group meetings or their equivalent (i.e. meetings between student representatives and programme teams) were effective and issues raised were considered and acted on. It

was standard practice to report back to students on progress and therefore complete the feedback loop. Issues raised informally with individual lecturers, Advisers of Studies/Year Tutors or Programme Leaders were dealt with, normally in good time. The panel discussed the lack of unit/module evaluations with the team. The online system has had limited use by the students – it was felt that this is most likely due to the effectiveness of the formal and informal mechanisms for feedback already described – and some staff are moving back to handing out paper-based questionnaires in class. This is an area that is currently under review as part of the production of an SRUC Education Manual, and new procedures/guidelines will be issued in due course.

The two distance learning programmes run their Student Liaison Group meetings by GoToMeeting and therefore the whole cohort can participate. There is also an opportunity for a meeting with the students during the study weekends.

### 3.13 Staff development

The SED together with feedback from the team assured the panel that staff were provided with, and availed themselves of, opportunities to undertake individual Continuing Personal Development to advance their own specialist/subject knowledge and skills, including undertaking research and consulting activities. There was less activity reported on pedagogic research and development by teaching team members which might enhance their learning, teaching and assessment approaches. This form of research and development was generally confined to staff undertaking postgraduate teaching qualifications or Professional Development Awards. It was noted that SRUC had funding available for teaching staff to undertake small pedagogic research projects. The panel therefore **recommended** that managers should further promote the involvement of teaching staff in relevant areas of pedagogic research and staff development, including further engagement with QAA Enhancement Themes.

## 4 Revalidation proposals

The team outlined the proposed changes to the programmes which were detailed in the revalidation documents<sup>2</sup>.

- The existing BSc in Countryside Management would be retained.
- There would be a single environment degree in Environmental Resource Management but with named Honours options in:
  - Environmental Resource Management
  - Rural Resource Management
  - Environmental Protection
- Both degrees would continue to be built on a common foundation (Year 1) of HNC Environmental Studies, although the proposal that there should be two named HNC awards (separating Countryside Management and Environmental Studies yet retaining the existing content) would be explored with SQA.
- The existing HND in Countryside Management would be retained and would continue to provide a progression route to both degrees.
- A revised HND in Environmental Management and Sustainability would be proposed to SQA. This would amalgamate the two existing HND awards in Rural Resource Management and Environmental Management and Sustainability, the latter of which is available in two streams – Environmental

---

<sup>2</sup> Note that the MSc Countryside Management is not due for revalidation.



Protection and Sustainable Environmental Management. The proposed single Environment HND would have an increased proportion of electives to allow students/campuses to specialise as required.

- The revised HND in Environmental Management and Sustainability would continue to provide a progression route to both degrees.
- In the case of retained existing awards minor modifications to programme frameworks were proposed i.e. BSc Countryside Management and the HN awards (apart from the proposed change to award title at HNC level and the HND in Environmental Management and Sustainability both of which will be subject to approval by SQA in due course).

## 4.1 Structure of programme frameworks

### 4.1.1 Countryside Management

The panel considered and approved the proposed balance between core and elective modules in years 3 and 4 of the Countryside Management degree, including the increased credit value of the honours project and dissertation (now 45 credits) which is consistent with other programmes at SRUC. The wide range of electives available in the degree years had already been discussed as part of the review (see Section 3.4). This was further explored with the team, and the panel were content that the number of electives was manageable and afforded sufficient opportunity for students to specialise. The majority of electives were shared with other programmes which made them both financially and educationally viable. However, a **condition** of revalidation is that the team review the structure of years 3 and 4 to ensure that the elective choices remain viable, following reconsideration of the framework for BSc/BSc (Hons) Environmental Resource Management (see section 4.1.2). The inclusion of a free choice elective in the degree years, subject to availability and timetabling, was a welcome addition to the framework.

The team proposed six new modules for year 4:

- Climate Change and the Global Environment
- Landscape in a Socio-Political Context
- Landscape Scale Conservation
- Professional Practice and Project Management
- Wildlife and Natural Resource Management Conflicts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Upland Management

The panel considered and approved the content of these modules, subject to provision of updated module descriptors (see 4.4). For the module *Professional Practice and Project Management* it was **recommended** that further consideration should be given to developing students' knowledge and understanding of finance and budget planning.

There was discussion about the development of understanding of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) through the programme. This is an important topic for surveying/ecology and students should be encouraged to study the use of this technology within their subject area. However, some students avoid the module *GIS and Remote Sensing* as they lack confidence in the topic. The panel agreed that this should be an elective module for Countryside Management (it is, and should be, core for Environmental Resource Management). It would be helpful for both programmes if students were provided with a stronger foundation to the topic earlier in the programme. It was therefore **recommended** that the team consider the development of understanding of GIS within proposals for revised HND qualifications in due course.

Feedback from students indicated a perceived overlap in the delivery and assessment of the two core SQA Units, *Interpretation: an Introduction* (in the HNC year) and *Applied Interpretation* (at HND level). The panel **recommended** that the team consider this in the current delivery of the units and also when reviewing/revalidating the Higher National awards.

There was discussion around other topics which were embedded within the programme structure, as it was not clearly apparent how they were developed within specific modules e.g. social psychology/behavioural change, sustainable development and economics. It was noted that when preparing the revalidation documentation there is an expectation that teams review and clarify the academic purpose of the programme, including the general aims and specific objectives, which then allows definition of the characteristic competences. These should include the key knowledge, skills and graduate attributes which the students are expected to develop over the four years. It should then be possible to map all module learning outcomes to the characteristic competences. It was **recommended** that a mapping exercise to indicate the development of key topics is undertaken as part of the revision of the documentation following this revalidation event. The updating of module descriptors (see section 4.4) would likely assist this recommendation.

#### 4.1.2 Environmental Resource Management

The panel were concerned that the proposed degree in Environmental Resource Management with three named Honours options (Environmental Resource Management, Rural Resource Management and Environmental Protection) presented an over-complicated structure which would not be sustainable. This view considered, and was based on, both the financial and educational viability of the proposed named Honours options and the high number of individual modules therefore contained in the framework. The panel were of the view that a larger and more clearly defined core curriculum in both years 3 and 4 would be beneficial for students, and would provide the necessary balance between a broad range of experience and a level of elective choice that would fit with specific interests and career aspirations. The increased credit value of the honours project and dissertation (now 45 credits i.e. 3 module equivalent) was approved, and is consistent with other programmes at SRUC. The team should consider two or three other modules giving a total of 5 or 6 credits to make up the core. The panel **strongly recommended** that the team retain *Environmental Economics* as a core module.

The wide range of electives available in the degree years had already been discussed as part of the review (3.4). This was further explored with the team, and the panel were concerned about the number of electives that were unique to this programme or were *electives* on other programmes. Therefore student choice would actually be limited due to electives only running if there is sufficient interest. The team had indicated that in some cases this had led to staff providing additional tuition to compensate – and although this is appreciated by the students it puts more time pressure on staff.

The inclusion of a free choice elective in the degree years, subject to availability and timetabling, was a welcome addition to the framework.

Considering **all** of the above points the panel made it a **condition** of revalidation that there would be a single degree of BSc/BSc (Hons) Environmental Resource Management with a clearly defined core in both years 3 and 4 and a limited number of elective modules allowing pathways for specialism. Following revision of degree structure the panel made it a **condition** of revalidation that the team then review the programme specific aims for the degree.

The panel, however, recognised the different focus between the three existing degree awards and therefore considered, along with the team, how these various specialisms could best be retained within a single degree structure. All agreed that students should not be shoe-horned into a particular specialism too early in the programme and that the ideal place for a student to focus on a particular interest is in the Honours year, in particular through the honours project and dissertation. It was therefore **strongly recommended** that the focus for the Honours project be included on the degree transcript. This could provide a greater range of specialisms (as opposed to the proposed three named Honours options) and allow students to highlight their specific skills and strengths to prospective employers.

The panel also agreed with the team that following the implementation of these conditions and recommendations it would be desirable for the programmes to have additional marketing effort (see 4.3).

The team proposed seven new modules for years 3 and 4 (note that some of these are common with Countryside Management):

- Advanced Environmental Management Systems
- Landscape and Ecosystem Management
- Resource Efficiency and Security
- Landscape in a Socio-Political Context
- Professional Practice and Project Management
- Wildlife and Natural Resource Management Conflicts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Upland Management

The panel considered and approved the content of these modules, subject to provision of updated module descriptors (see 4.4) and any recommendations noted above for Countryside Management. This was also subject to the **condition** stated previously, that the team should reconsider the structure of the degree years to provide a clearly defined core with a limited number of elective modules.

The **recommendation** that the team undertake a mapping exercise to indicate the development of key topics (noted above in 4.1.1) is also relevant to this programme e.g. economic policy and analysis was discussed with the team and the mapping exercise would clearly indicate where the understanding of this topic is developed.

## 4.2 Learning, teaching and assessment

The panel were interested to explore the extent to which programmes developed and assessed higher level skills and attributes such as critical analysis and the ability to integrate and synthesise knowledge and information on a wide range of topics, perhaps outwith their subject specialism. The panel were content that *Topical Issues* provided an opportunity to challenge ideas and concepts through rigorous debate across programmes. It was **recommended** that this module should be retained as a core module in year 4 when revising the structure of Environmental Resource Management.

The panel noted the importance of being forward looking in order to deal with continuous change in the industry, and questioned the extent to which staff have opportunities to undertake horizon scanning within their subject area. The team indicated various opportunities but the panel was concerned that this was not undertaken as a formal procedure. The panel therefore **recommended** that the team consider means for formal horizon scanning within their subject area.

The importance of field trips to the learning experience within these programmes has already been noted (3.9). It is therefore essential that these are financially viable in the revalidated programme. The panel made it a **condition** of revalidation that funding should be available, allocated through an SRUC Policy, to support a core set of field trips and study tours (a key element within these programmes, and in many others across the education provision of SRUC). The SRUC Policy to support this should be in place for academic session 2015-16.

Field trips and study tours have been locally or nationally based to date. The panel **recommended** that the team consider providing an international study tour, as noted in the documentation.

The issues around assessment types and assessment load was discussed mainly during the review meetings (3.7) but was considered again by the panel during revalidation deliberations. The panel considered that, in light of their condition and recommendations concerning programme structure, it was **recommended** that the team undertake a review of assessment types in order to best develop the essential skills and graduate attributes that would assist students in their chosen specialism and prepare them for the workplace. The updating of module descriptors (4.4) should help provide the information for this exercise.

Also following discussions during review meetings, the panel were concerned about the potential workload for students in the revalidated programmes particularly if elective choice did not permit an equal split of credits between semesters 1 and 2. The panel therefore **recommended** that the team consider the assessment schedule across the semester/year to best manage the students' workload.

### 4.3 Marketing

As noted previously, the panel considered that it would be of great value to the team if there was additional effort to market these programmes following revalidation. To maximise the benefit of this it is essential that the team are clear on the USPs for the programmes, and provide information to assist recruitment and promotion of a career in the environmental industries. Clearly identified USPs and mapping of specialism development through the programmes would also assist current students. Discussion with the team also highlighted some good international links both through former students and in attracting students to SRUC. The panel therefore made it a **condition** of revalidation that there should be enhanced and strengthened marketing activities for the two degrees. This will require impetus from the Education Marketing team, although support in terms of graduate profiles will be required from the programme teams. Furthermore, it was **recommended** that the team consider the USPs and produce exemplars for career pathways through both programmes – these would be beneficial to current students as guidance information, as well as a useful aid to marketing.

### 4.4 Module descriptors

The panel noted some variability in the information provided on modules, including the level of detail included in module descriptors, and inconsistencies in module titles. The panel therefore made it a **condition** of revalidation that modules under the control of these programmes should be updated in accordance with the new degree module descriptor template. This will provide:

- information on the development, and where appropriate the assessment, of core skills and graduate attributes;
- details of appropriate reading in refereed journals and review articles;

- details on the approaches to learning and teaching which will be employed;
- more detail on the assessment methods used;
- reading lists separated more clearly into categories of 'required' and 'additional'.

## 5 Summary of review: Recommendations

The panel noted that the documentation was weak in some respects, and did not provide sufficient information. It tended to undersell the strengths of the programmes, which were clearly articulated in discussions with the team.

The panel made the following advisory **recommendations**, further details and the context for these can be found in the sections referenced:

- a) that greater consideration is given to identifying the Unique Selling Point (USP) for the programmes which can then be used in promotional and marketing material. [\[3.2\]](#)
- b) that further consideration should be given to managing the volume and scheduling of student work across an academic year. [\[3.7\]](#)
- c) that the team should review the range of assessment formats across modules, ensuring that innovative practices are shared across the teaching teams e.g. there could be more use of peer assessment. [\[3.7\]](#)
- d) that the team consider their approach to electronic submission of assessments and the benefits this provides for cross campus marking. [\[3.7\]](#)
- e) that the team should take measures to clarify and to better manage student expectations on the timing and nature of feedback - this should be clearly articulated in programme handbooks, annually at induction and at appropriate stages in unit/module delivery. [\[3.7\]](#)
- f) that the team should explore the use of postgraduate research students as teaching assistants, particularly in the competency based SQA Higher National Units. [\[3.7\]](#)
- g) that the team review the induction process for new students to ensure consistency across all campuses, and with particular emphasis on students entering at an advanced level from another campus or institution. [\[3.8\]](#)
- h) that the team take measures to ensure a consistent and structured approach to student support provided by Advisers of Studies, including the emphasis on personal development planning through the four years. [\[3.8\]](#)
- i) that the team review the disparity across campuses in relation to the support provided for work experience, including volunteering. [\[3.10\]](#)
- j) that managers should further promote the involvement of teaching staff in relevant areas of pedagogic research and staff development, including further engagement with QAA Enhancement Themes. [\[3.13\]](#)

## **6 Revalidation conclusions, conditions and recommendations** [Clerk's note: bold indicates information relevant to UoG. Non bold indicates information relevant to the University of Edinburgh.]

### **6.1 The panel agreed to recommend to the Education Division Management Team of SRUC and the Academic Standards Committee of the University of Glasgow that the BSc/BSc (Hons) Countryside Management should be revalidated as an award of the University of Glasgow for six years from session 2015-16.**

In addition, the panel agreed to recommend the revalidation of BSc/BSc (Hons) Environmental Protection, BSc/BSc (Hons) Rural Resource Management and BSc/BSc (Hons) Sustainable Environmental Management with the revised title of BSc/BSc (Hons) Environmental Resource Management as an award of the University of Edinburgh for six years from session 2015-16.

The panel made a number of conditions and recommendations which are noted in paragraphs 6.3 and 6.4 below.

### **6.2 The panel recognised that the programmes had significant strengths, in particular:**

- **Their vocational focus and relevance, with a high proportion of students finding relevant employment or progressing to further study.**
- **The value of field trips as an underpinning activity within the programme.**
- **High levels of effective and accessible academic and pastoral support which encourages progression of students throughout the programme. This is enabled by the Adviser of Studies (Year Tutor) system and an 'open-door' policy for access to staff. (However, note the recommendations in 5g and 5h above.)**
- **Robust and effective quality assurance and moderation procedures as evidenced by external examiner and external verifier (SQA) feedback.**
- **The good use of both internal (Research and Consulting Divisions) and external expertise to greatly enhance the delivery of the programmes.**

### **6.3 However, the revalidation panel had concerns about some aspects of the proposals and set the following conditions:**

- a) The degree in Environmental Resource Management should not have three named streams for the Honours year. To manage student expectations and provide a coherent and consistent student experience there should be a clearly defined core in both years 3 and 4 with a limited number of elective modules allowing pathways for specialism.
- b) Following revision of the degree structure for Environmental Resource Management the programme specific aims should be reviewed to ensure that they remain valid.
- c) **The structure of year 3 and year 4 of the degree in Countryside Management should be reviewed following reconsideration of the BSc/BSc (Hons) Environmental Resource Management to ensure that the elective choices remain viable.**
- d) **When reviewing the elective choice in years 3 and 4, both degrees should retain the option for students to select one elective module as a free choice from those on offer at their campus, subject to availability and timetabling.**

- e) Enhanced and strengthened marketing activities should be undertaken for the two degrees. This will require impetus from the Education Marketing team, although support in terms of graduate profiles will be required from the programme teams.
- f) Module descriptors for all modules under the control of these programmes should be updated in accordance with the new Degree Module Descriptor template. This will provide:
  - information on the development, and where appropriate the assessment, of core skills and graduate attributes;
  - details of appropriate reading in refereed journals and review articles;
  - details on the approaches to learning and teaching which will be employed;
  - more detail on the assessment methods used;
  - reading lists separated more clearly into categories of 'required' and 'additional'.
- g) Funding should be available to support a core set of field trips and study tours – a key element within these programmes (and in many others across the education provision of SRUC). An SRUC Policy to support this is required, and should be in place for academic session 2015-16.

The review of degree structure for Environmental Resource Management, and the updating of module descriptors for both degrees should be completed by the **end of January 2015**.

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

- a) For Environmental Resource Management it was strongly recommended that the focus for the Honours project be included on the degree transcript, hence providing a means of highlighting and promoting a student's specialism.
- b) For Environmental Resource Management it was strongly recommended that the team retain Environmental Economics as a core module.
- c) **For both programmes it was recommended that a mapping exercise is undertaken to indicate development of key topics, such as sustainable development and behavioural change, within modules.**
- d) It was recommended that Environmental Resource Management should retain *Topical Issues* as a core module in year 4.
- e) **It was recommended that further consideration should be given to developing students' knowledge and understanding of finance and budget planning within the module *Professional Practice and Project Management*.**
- f) It was recommended that the team consider the development of understanding of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) within proposals for revised HND qualifications in Environmental Management and Sustainability and in Countryside Management.
- g) For Countryside Management it was recommended that the team consider the perceived overlap between *Interpretation: an Introduction* and *Interpretive Principles* in the current delivery of these Units, and when reviewing/revalidating the HNC/D delivery.
- h) For both programmes it was recommended that the team consider means for formal horizon scanning within their subject areas.

- i) For both programmes it was recommended that the team review the range of assessment types in order to best develop essential skills and graduate attributes necessary for the workplace.**
- j) For both programmes it was recommended that the team consider the assessment schedule across the semester/year to best manage the students' workload.**
- k) For both programmes it was recommended that the team consider developing an international study tour.**
- l) It was recommended that the team consider the USPs and produce exemplars for career pathways through both programmes. These would be beneficial to students as guidance information and would also be useful to aid marketing.**



## **Appendix 1: Timetable of meetings**

### **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> November - Review**

10.00-11.00	Private meeting of review panel
11.00-12.15	Meeting with Head of Department, Programme Leaders and teams
12.15-12.35	Private meeting of review panel
13.20 -14.35	Meeting with students
14.35 -15.05	Private meeting of review panel
15.05–15.35	Meeting with Head of Department, Programme Leaders and teams
15.35-16.35	Private meeting of review panel
16.35-17.05	Feedback to Head of Department and Programme Leaders

### **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November – Revalidation of Programmes**

09.15-10.15	Private meeting of review panel
10.15-11:45	Meeting with Head of Department and programme teams
11:45-12:30	Private meeting of review panel
13.15 -13:45	Meeting with Head of Department and Programme Leaders to report back on outcomes

## Appendix 2: Student numbers

The complete FTE data for all campuses are shown in the Tables below – this includes the Countryside Management degree data, as well as data for Oatridge and Elmwood.

### HNC Countryside and Environmental Management/Year 1 Degree.

F = Full-time, P = Part-time

		08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
<i>Aberdeen</i>	HNC (F)	10	4	6	7	2	4
	HNC (P)	0.5	1	1	-	-	-
	Yr 1 SEM	2	3	5	5	-	6
	Yr 1 EMS	-	2	1	4	-	6
	Yr 1 EMS (P)					0.5	-
	Yr 1 CM	4	6	3	7	8	-
	<b>Total</b>		<b>16.5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>10.5</b>
<i>Ayr</i>	HNC (F)	12	12	7	6	5	-
	HNC (P)	0.5	2.5	-	-	-	-
	Yr 1 SEM	2	2	3	-	3	3
	Yr 1 EMS	2	2	4	-	-	5
	Yr 1 EMS (P)	-	1	-	-	0.5	-
	Yr 1 CM	5	11	8	10	6	14
	Yr 1 CM (P)	-	2	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>21.5</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Edinburgh</i>	HNC (F)	6	7	6	2	1	-
	HNC (P)	0.5	1	1	1	-	1
	Yr 1 EP	0	4	2	4	3	4
	Yr 1 EP (P)	0.5	-	-	-	0.5	-
	Yr 1 SEM	4	1	8	12	9	9
	Yr 1 SEM (P)	-	-	-	-	0.5	1
	Yr 1 EMS	8	2	12	6	6	16
	Yr 1 EMS (P)	0.5	0.5	-	-	1	1
	Yr 1 RRM	3	5	6	3	1	-
	Yr 1 RRM (P)	-	0.5	0.5	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>22.5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Elmwood</i>	HNC CM	16	14	12	16	13	13
<i>Oatridge</i>	HNC CM (F)	15	25	18	17	22	18
	HNC CM (P)	5	4	3	2.5	1	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>

### HND/BSc Year 2 Environment and Countryside Programmes.

		08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
<i>Aberdeen</i>	Yr 2 SEM	3	3	6	3	5	-
	Yr 2 SEM (P)	0.5	1	-	-	-	-
	Yr 2 EMS	-	2	1	3	2	-
	Yr 2 CM	10	2	8	5	5	6
	Yr 2 CM (P)	1.5	1	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Ayr</i>	Yr 2 SEM	9	2	4	6	-	4
	Yr 2 EMS	-	1	2	-	-	-
	Yr 2 EMS (P)	-	-	-	0.5	-	-
	Yr 2 CM	9	6	12	10	13	11
	Yr 2 CM (P)	1	-	-	-	0.5	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>Edinburgh</i>	Yr 2 EP	2	1	4	6	3	4
	Yr 2 EP (P)	-	-	-	-	0.5	-
	Yr 2 SEM	10	6	7	13	9	8
	Yr 2 SEM (P)	0.5	0.5	-	-	-	1
	Yr 2 EMS	-	9	5	11	4	4
	Yr 2 EMS (P)	-	-	-	1	1	-
	Yr 2 RRM	4	-	2	2	4	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>16.5</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Elmwood</i>	HND CM	8	8	9	10	6	4
<i>Oatridge</i>	HND CM (F)	11	11	13	13	11	8
	HND CM (P)	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>11.5</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>8</b>

### BSc Year 3 Environment and Countryside Programmes.

		08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
<i>Aberdeen</i>	Yr 3 SEM	6	3	4	6	3	6
	Yr 3 CM	7	7	4	6	4	7
	Yr 3 CM (P)	1	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Ayr</i>	Yr 3 SEM	-	6	3	5	2	-
	Yr 3 SEM (P)	-	0.5	-	-	-	-
	Yr 3 CM	10	6	5	7	8	7
	Yr 3 CM (P)	-	-	-	0.5	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Edinburgh</i>	Yr 3 EP	-	-	4	9	12	5
	Yr 3 EP (P)	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Yr 3 SEM	10	14	20	8	14	9
	Yr 3 SEM (P)	-	2	-	-	-	1
	Yr 3 RRM	6	5	-	2	-	4
	Yr 3 RRM (P)	-	0.5	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>20</b>

### BSc (Hons), Year 4 Environment and Countryside Programmes.

		08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
<i>Aberdeen</i>	Yr 4 SEM	4	5	3	4	4	2
	Yr 4 CM	5	6	3	4	3	3
	Yr 4 CM (P)	0.5	1	0.5	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>9.5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Ayr</i>	Yr 4 SEM	2	-	1	-	4	1
	Yr 4 CM	-	6	3	3	6	4
	Yr 4 CM (P)	-	-	-	0.5	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Edinburgh</i>	Yr 4 EP	4	-	-	-	7	6
	Yr 4 SEM	5	4	10	16	6	8
	Yr 4 SEM (P)	-	-	-	0.5	-	1
	Yr 4 RRM	3	2	1	1	2	-
	Yr 4 RRM (P)	-	-	-	0.5	-	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>

### FE Programmes

CM = Countryside Management      GK = Gamekeeping  
 LBS = Land-based Studies          RS = Rural Skills

		08/09	9/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
<i>Elmwood</i>	NC CM	15	12	13	14	16	14
	NC RS	x	x	x	x	10	12
	Intro LBS	x	11	11	15	10	12
	NC GK	18	21	18	23	17	16
<i>Oatridge</i>	NC CM	12	19	20	19	12	18
	Cert LBS	10	12	14	13	14	12
	NC AT	X	x	x	x	7	11