



BSc (Hons) Garden and Greenspace Design
BSc (Hons) Horticulture
BSc (Hons) Horticulture with Plantsmanship

Response to Revalidation Conditions

Update – October 2017

In May 2017, the Management Team for the Horticulture and Landscape Programmes submitted a paper outlining the response to the conditions set by the Revalidation Panel in February 2017.

The following response was duly received from the Academic Standards Committee at the University of Glasgow:

ASC/2016/51.1 Report from Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) of the Review of Programmes in the Horticulture and Landscape Subject Group - Revalidation of: BSc(Hons) Horticulture; BSc (Hons) Horticulture & Plantsmanship; BSc (Hons) Garden & Greenspace Design ASC received a report of the review of the programmes in the subject group Horticulture and Landscape at SRUC, held on 15 and 16 February 2017, in which six conditions and nine recommendations were highlighted. ASC also received a report setting out SRUC's responses to the conditions, which had all been addressed. ASC noted that the recommendations were being addressed and requested a further update in six months, including a report on what scrutiny there had been of the revision to module descriptors, as required under Condition F. On the basis of the information provided, ASC approved the revalidation of the following programmes for six years commencing 2017-18:

BSc (Hons) Horticulture

BSc (Hons) Horticulture and Plantsmanship BSc (Hons) Garden and Greenspace Design

As requested, this paper provides a further update.

Module Descriptors (response to Condition F)

All module authors were instructed to revise the module descriptors taking cognisance of the comments from the Revalidation Panel. These module descriptors were then centrally collated and reviewed by the Programme Leader to ensure parity, and standardisation of assessment in line with the SRUC Education Manual section A2 1.7 – 'Degree Module Descriptors'. Following this check, the full set of descriptors was further scrutinised by the Acting Head of the Horticulture and Landscape Department prior to final publication.

The Programme Management Team is content that within the programmes there is a varied and balanced range and methods of assessment. For units such as 'Plant Growth and Development' and 'Plant and Soils Nutrition' where class sizes have historically meant a large volume of assessments for staff marking, new online tests have been created which are marked instantly and students get immediate results. Feedback sessions can then be given to highlight general issues with the option for students to have more detailed individual feedback sessions.

The revised module descriptors more accurately reflect the different approaches to teaching and learning taken by Teachers and as mentioned above the module descriptors were reviewed in light of the comments from the Revalidation Panel. Previously the module descriptors were generic in their formatting and not given the scrutiny to accurately reflect what happens within modules in practice.

Assessment and Feedback

The Programme Management Team identified that delays in returning marked assessments were generally because of large class size. The primary source of student complaint regarding feedback was with the Year 3 Module 'Research Skills and Data Analysis' which is 'owned' by another department but taught across all programmes. The class size at the Edinburgh Campus often exceeds of 120 students. The volume of assessments takes a significant amount of time to mark and the delay is further exacerbated by the process of moderation between other campuses before feedback can be provided to students. This module has been highlighted previously as an issue, and an online assessment was introduced for 2016-17 which provided immediate feedback in advance of the students

preparing their coursework submissions. The module has also been further resourced for the 2017/2018 academic year with additional lecturers and markers being allocated to ensure a timely return of feedback to students on their coursework.

Within the Department, dates for feedback sessions have been integrated into the teaching schedule for each unit/module to ensure that students are fully aware of assessment submission dates and dates for the return of feedback. It has also been recognised that some Teachers do not effectively communicate to students when there are unavoidable delays in returning feedback. To manage expectations, all Teachers have therefore been instructed to notify students when there will be a delay in returning feedback and to indicate the revised date when feedback will be available.

Engaging students with Learning and Sharing Innovative Practice

An area on Moodle™ has been developed for Year 1 students. This on-line resource is very interactive, fun to use and easy to navigate. The content provides useful information for new students and addresses many of the questions that first year students ask. It covers much of what is discussed during the Induction Sessions on campus, but since some students cannot make the initial induction this is an excellent way for those students to not feel left out as well as a reminder for those that have attended. Following student feedback, the intention is to disseminate this novel site and content to other programmes.

Staff are engaged with the SRUC procedure for professional discussion of learning and teaching. This has three elements - developmental classroom observation, peer support of teaching and learning walks - and for 2017/2018 the department will focus on the first two of these.

Staff members are involved actively with the Education Secretary of the Landscape Institute where discussions are ongoing to help facilitate students to be accepted on the 'Pathway to Chartership' route to allow students to become chartered Landscape Architects.

Many members of staff are Fellows of the Higher Education Academy and attend Learning and Teaching events where possible. This is in addition to the yearly SRUC Learning and Teaching Conference and informal campus meetings where staff across all departments share good/innovative learning and teaching practice.

The following table highlights the responses to the recommendations provided by the Revalidation Panel:

Recommendations of the Revalidation

The panel made the following advisory recommendations:

Recommendation A

Section 4.2 Consider including *Advanced Case Studies* as an elective in Year 3 of BSc Horticulture

Action	Name	Date	Progress
The module <i>Advanced Case Studies</i> has been included in the potential elective choice for BSc Horticulture students for the 2017/18 academic year.	PL (Edin.)	Jul. 2017	Complete

Recommendation B

Section 4.2 Further examine the delivery of the module *GIS and Remote Sensing* within the suite of horticulture degrees.

Action	Name	Date	Progress
The module <i>GIS and Remote Sensing</i> was previously only available routinely to 4th year students within the degree programmes. Student feedback was that this would have been better earlier within the degree programmes to enable the use of skills gained within the module within other modules. The timetabling and availability of the module had been dictated by the Environment Department staff and their teaching loads. Following discussions with Environment Programme Leader and lecturing staff additional classes are being made available to students in 3rd year of the Horticulture degree programmes.	PL (Edin.)	Jul. 2017	Complete

Recommendation C			
Section 4.2	In addition to creating a matrix indicating the development of the business theme across all years of all programmes (see condition c) consider being more explicit in demonstrating where business is embedded in non-business units/modules within the Horticulture with Plantsmanship programme.		
Action	Name	Date	Progress
The programme leaders at each campus are to instruct staff delivering non-business units/modules to convey to students where units/modules have elements that contribute to business knowledge and skills. It is hoped that students will gain a greater appreciation of how embedded and important business skills are with the Horticulture and Landscape industry.	PLs	Sept 2017	Complete
Recommendation D			
Section 4.5	Consider extending the delivery of <i>Introduction to Rural Skills</i> to the Edinburgh Campus.		
Action	Name	Date	Progress
The SCQF level 5 course has proved to be a very popular course which allows students to articulate on to HNC level courses at Oatridge and Elmwood Campuses there is currently no staff capacity for the introduction of this course at the Edinburgh Campus. It would also be the first and only Further Education level course to the Edinburgh Campus. This potential introduction will be passed to the Divisional Management Team for consideration. This should also be reflected in the strategic plan for SRUC and should not be decided by any one individual Department	HofD/ DMT	Oct. 2017	HofD to raise at DMT
Recommendation E			
Section 4.5	Develop a basic marketing strategy for the department to help attract a more diverse student population.		
Action	Name	Date	Progress
All strategic marketing is dealt with centrally via the Marketing and Student Recruitment Manager, and so this recommendation should be taken on board at that level. It should be noted that the Horticulture programme has already one of the most diverse student populations in terms of ethnicity, age and gender balance.	HofD/ MSRM	Oct. 2017	HofD to raise at DMT

Recommendation F				
Section 4.6	For all three programmes document the range of assessments employed during years 3 and 4.			
Action		Name	Date	Progress
Revised module descriptors are more explicit in their content in terms of exam, project and coursework. In addition further information is now provided within Module Guides.		Module Leaders	Sep. 2017	Complete
Recommendation G				
Section 3.1	The panel strongly recommended that consideration be given to the needs of landscape businesses and the future development of higher level qualifications such as Graduate Apprenticeships.			
Action		Name	Date	Progress
Whilst agreed as a worthy point for consideration, the action required to fulfil this recommendation falls out with the remit of the Horticulture and Landscape Department. It is part of a wider and greater strategic decision to be taken by SRUC. The academic strategy document will outline and define where this level of qualification potentially sits within the SRUC portfolio of delivery.		Academic Director	Autumn 2017	Ongoing
Recommendation H				
Section 3.5	The panel strongly recommended that consideration is given to developing the SQA units which would assist progression from HNC Horticulture at Oatridge potentially utilising an online/distance learning format.			
Action		Name	Date	Progress
In addition to ensuring that HNC Horticulture students at the Oatridge have the opportunity to undertake the 3 additional credits required for progression to the HND Horticulture on a full-time basis, the Programme Leader (Oatridge) will also investigate (during the 2017/2018 academic year) the necessary measures required to facilitate the provision of these 3 credits on a distance learning format..		PL (Oat.)	Jun. 2018	Ongoing

Recommendation I			
Section 4.2	The panel strongly recommended that within the proposal for minor changes to the HN provision further consideration is given to the delivery and contextualization of the two SQA units <i>Preparing to Start a Business</i> and <i>Business Management: An Introduction</i> .		
Action	Name	Date	Progress
All students of the modules SQA units <i>Preparing to Start a Business</i> and <i>Business Management: An Introduction</i> will be taught by Horticultural staff with management qualifications and both modules are being tailored to make them more relevant to the students and to the industries within which they will be working.	PL (Edin.)	Sep. 2017	Complete

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