Periodic Review Report: Pharmacy Degrees

Introduction

An internal review of degree programmes in Pharmacy was held on Thursday 17 and Friday 18 May 2012. The members of the Panel were:

- Dr Martha-Marie Kleinhans, Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning, Social Sciences (Chair)
- Professor Peter Hylands, Department of Pharmacy, Kings College London
- Dr Rob Jackson, School of Biological Sciences
- Dr Dai John, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Cardiff University
- Jack Legon, Vice-President Student Activities, Reading University Students’ Union
- Dr Henny Osbahr, School of Agriculture, Policy and Development
- Debbie Street, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Sally Adams, Sub-Dean, Faculties of Science and Life Sciences (Secretary)

The Panel met with staff from Pharmacy and with Programme Directors and members of the Boards of Studies for the following undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by the Department:

- MPharm Pharmacy
- Postgraduate Diploma / Certificate General Practice Pharmacy

The Panel met students who were registered for the MPharm Pharmacy. The Panel also met recent graduates who were employed within the Pharmacy sector or undertaking their pre-registration year.

General observations

The Panel is grateful for the efficient and helpful way in which staff from the School of Pharmacy (SoP) assisted with the Periodic Review process. It commended the SoP for the provision of the Blackboard Organisation which facilitated members’ access to comprehensive documentation before, during and after the Review. Particular thanks are extended to the Director of Teaching & Learning and the Administrator of the SoP for their help with the processes required of the Review.

The Panel welcomed the involvement of current and former students who gave a very positive endorsement of the programmes under Review, and wished to thank them for their input.

The Panel was particularly impressed by the SoP’s provision of pastoral care and by the feeling students conveyed of community across staff and students and across years. Students are made to feel valued whilst at the University and felt buoyed by the excitement emanating from staff.
The Panel was extremely impressed with: the range of expertise across the various areas of the SoP; the enthusiasm and dedication of the SoP’s staff and students; and, the SoP’s attempts to cater for the needs of the students. These aspects were noted throughout the meetings held by the Panel with the various stakeholders.

### Academic standards of the programmes

#### Educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes

The Panel considers the aims and learning outcomes to be clear and appropriate. The Panel was provided with evidence in the form of programme specifications, module guides, reading lists, student handbooks and External Examiners’ reports. These, along with discussions with staff and students, review of student work and the Panel’s own deliberations, confirmed that the academic standards of the programmes are being met.

The Panel recognises the recent accreditation by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and is confident in its own right that the learning outcomes are appropriate to the overall aims.

The Panel is confident that the intended learning outcomes have been informed by the published Subject Benchmarking Statement and by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and are verified by External Examiners as having been attained.

Assessment strategies are clear but there is work to be done by the SoP in drawing out a broader teaching and learning strategy that provides some headline points with actions and plans to put these in action. The Self Evaluation Document (SED) provides a sound basis for the creation of such a strategy as it identifies the key aspects in such a strategy for the Department. Further work linking this to the University’s Strategy for Learning and Teaching would also be required. **[Desirable recommendation (i)]**

#### Curricula and assessment

**Curricula**

The Panel found evidence of the developmental and reflective nature of the programmes as students progress through the Parts. The Panel was satisfied with the range of fields, which link effectively with staff research interests. Overall the Panel was convinced of the integrity and depth of all the taught provision offered by the SoP.

The Panel commends the programmes’ coherence, breadth and scope. The modules cover a range of both generic and specialist areas appropriate to the student base. The breadth of module provision is evidenced by documentation reviewed as well as students’ positive comments on the delivery of a combination of subject specific knowledge and the skills/practical training required by such profession-focussed programmes.

Students take learning from the classroom and apply this to work settings as a component of their Part 3, where they are required to spend a minimum of one week in community, hospital or industrial pharmacy.

Major pieces of coursework, such as dissertations and research projects are double-marked, and further marked if assessors’ marks are not in agreement (marks not within 10% of each other) and the marks moderated. Whilst the University recognises decisions to double-mark must be taken in light of considerations of a variety of concerns within a research-intensive institution, the SoP is subject to these stricter requirements through its professional accreditation. The Panel commends the way in which the SoP has taken on board this additional requirement.
Plans for reviewing and adapting the programmes (in light of changes proposed by the GPhC) are in the right direction, with further integration of subject knowledge explicitly into the curriculum and even greater emphasis on the preparation of students for practice.

Ample evidence was presented to the Panel that the content and design of the programmes are informed by recent developments in teaching and learning, by up-to-date scholarship in the discipline, and by relevant professional requirements.

**Assessment**

The Panel reviewed copious amounts of evidence (External Examiners’ reports, professional accreditation reports, destination data, degree classifications, progression data, etc.) of student achievement. The Panel finds that the assessment design and processes enable students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes. External Examiners’ reports verify that the standards achieved by students meet the minimum expectations for the awards, as measured against the relevant Subject Benchmarking Statement and the levels of the FHEQ. Criteria which enable examiners to distinguish between different categories of achievement are clear and present in handbooks.

The Panel was satisfied with the SoP’s assessment procedures, noting that the assessment covers an appropriate range of testing the student’s knowledge and capabilities. The Panel commended the variety of assessment methods as these were appropriate to both the content and learning outcomes of the programmes.

The Panel advises that further work be undertaken by the SoP to clarify specific marking criteria on assessments, in order to demonstrate clearly the link between assessments, in terms of module and programme outcomes, to what students do in their assessment and their overall achievement, avoiding reliance on the general statements in the module handbook to cover this. **[Advisable recommendation (i)]**

The Panel noted the SoP’s attempts to coordinate its coursework submission dates to enable students to manage their workload more easily – this practice was brought to the Panel’s attention by students and confirmed in later conversations with staff. **[Good practice (i)]**

An important element of any subsequent review by the SoP of its assessment should be an analysis of the quantity and scheduling of the assessment, bearing in mind the need for appropriate and consistent feedback to be presented in a timely manner to allow appropriate reflection. This suggestion arises from the Panel’s concern that the SoP might be over-assessing its students. **[Desirable recommendation (ii)]** Further benefits which might arise are laid out below, with regard to quality/type of feedback which is provided to students.

Students commented that there appear to be some inconsistencies in assessment for group work, with some assessments including individual marks and others not. Students expressed their desire to have all group work weighted with peer or individual marks, particularly at Part 4.

The Panel is confident, after review of much documentation, that the appropriate standards are being met for the GPhC.

**Use of student management information**

Internal arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and enhancing academic standards appear effective on the whole. The Self-Evaluation Document, Annual Programme Reports (APRs) and meeting proceedings evidence a highly reflective and responsive programme team working collaboratively to ensure the quality of provision. External Examiner reports
clearly feed into action planning, which is monitored via QME2 and documented via APRs; this process appears to be working very effectively.

The Panel recognised the School’s use of student information; including module evaluation and addressing and feeding back on issues raised in the Student-Staff Committee. Student issues feed back into academic planning through the Student-Staff Committee, School Teaching and Learning meetings and annual reviews. Students reflected a satisfaction with these existing arrangements.

Engagement with employers and professional bodies is frequent, structured and robust. The arrangements in place for reacting to the views of employers and the GPhC (and evidenced most recently in the re-accreditation exercise) were praised by the Panel. It is clear that the relationship between the SoP and its employer stakeholders and professional body is a close and productive one – this is to be commended. [Good practice (iii)]

The programme team is responsive and sensitive to student needs: student feedback is taken on board and actions are often taken quickly to resolve specific issues or problems. The feedback loop is then closed, as evidenced through meeting proceedings and students with whom the Panel met, with reports back to students on actions taken in response to their feedback. Three examples were provided in discussions with students that evidence this conclusion: the provision of more calculations practice across Parts 1-3, the revision of coursework deadlines, and changes the SoP made to timetabling structures for the OSCEs (objective structured clinical examinations) to allow more practice.

The Panel discussed the increasing importance of student surveys, such as the National Student Survey, and their use in league tables. The Panel recognised the clear benefits of explaining to students the improvements that have been made by Schools and the University in the light of concerns raised through these survey instruments and how this is reflected in scores moving forward. The SoP’s practice of doing just this was praised by the Panel. [Good practice (iii)]

Quality of learning opportunities offered by the programmes

Teaching and learning

The students, graduates and External Examiners were very satisfied and impressed with the teaching and learning of the SoP. The Panel is convinced that the skills students gain through their programmes are invaluable ‘across the board’ in terms of practice (employability, in general), group working and gaining confidence.

Following discussion with students and graduates, it was clear to the Panel that staff return marked work to students quickly. The Panel commended the SoP for having no apparent issues with the timeliness of feedback returned to students. [Good practice (iv)]

The SoP maintains and enhances the quality of teaching and learning through its staff development programme, peer review and observation processes, and the mentoring of new staff members. Staff participate in annual staff development reviews and peer reviews. Mentoring of new staff accompanies their participation in the University’s Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice.

Continuous professional development is evident in a variety of examples the Panel noted: regular division meetings to share examples of teaching and the introduction of the practice-days for non-practitioner staff. The latter example was noted as deserving particular praise by the Panel. [Good practice (v)]
The Panel commended the SoP’s Staff Handbook as an example of good practice in its provision of all guidance documentation in one place. [Good practice (vi)]

The Panel was pleased to note that staff draw extensively on their research and professional activities to inform their teaching. Students gain exposure to professionalism and practice from specialist staff, such as consultants from Oxford Radcliffe and Royal Berkshire Hospital and nurses. Staff research is discussed with students; particularly in elective modules (Part 4 modules use staff expertise directly).

The SoP ensures that its students master research skills techniques (through a variety of means, including: literature reviews, concepts and skills modules, external speakers used for certain aspects, presentation skills, interviewing techniques, and use of research databases) to prepare them for research and practice. Part 3 modules require students to demonstrate research skills in preparation for Part 4, using journal articles and critical review. Likewise exposure to the importance of evidence-based research was provided, through a ‘champions’ scheme with NICE. Students conduct their own research in Part 4 in both a project and through other research-led modules.

Notwithstanding the importance placed by the SoP on its research-led teaching, feedback from the students indicated that they felt unprepared for the sudden injection of independent experimental work. Students felt that they would appreciate more support for laboratory based projects, especially ensuring there is earlier preparation for experiments to allow more time for writing their project. There was also significant unhappiness at the timing of the project write up with little time being available to pull together the report and virtually no opportunity to receive feedback in time. This was in contrast to other students within the University who were doing final year projects in autumn term and who were able to write up in spring term. The Panel recommends that the SoP reflect upon these student concerns with a view to seeing if a revision of deadline/teaching timelines could not alleviate some of the problems. [Desirable recommendation (iii)]

The Panel welcomed steps already taken by the School to improve feedback to students. This is partly a reflection of student expectations and partly an issue of inconsistency in feedback within modules. There remains, however, some dissatisfaction with feedback in the SoP. Students expressed a desire for feedback that was more consistent in length and quality and less generic feedback where possible. Students reported that they would benefit from increased standardisation in feedback formats. The Panel noted these concerns about feedback and recommends that the SoP undertake a review of its feedback provision with a view to evaluating the quality of feedback provided to students across modules and the programmes and identifying means of enhancing that provision. [Advisable recommendation (ii)]

The linkage between intended learning outcomes and marking criteria is set out clearly when modules are designed and updated via MDFs. The Panel reviewed examples and were satisfied that the SoP assessed different learning outcomes through a variety of different assessment methods, used at different stages appropriate to the programmes. Concern was expressed by the Panel (after discussion with students and graduates) that more explicit links between learning outcomes and marking criteria could be made when assessment assignments were given to students. [Desirable recommendation (iv)]

The Panel noted, with praise, the broad range of teaching methods and student learning opportunities in the SoP. Illustrations of good practice include problem-based learning, the interactive format of tutorials and workshops, formative work completed using podcasts, pencast exercises, group work, communication and teamwork exercises, practical classes, and hospital visits. An emphasis on building professionalism and independent learning continues to be important. Students and graduates praised the SoP for having
offered/offering them extensive opportunities to be deeply engaged in their own learning. [Good practice (vii)]

Student admission and progression
The Panel was impressed with the scope and dedication of the SoP to the interview day for all applicants. The SoP clearly has excellent systems of pastoral care in place which are evident to applicants in their first face-to-face engagement with the SoP. [Good practice (viii)] The Panel heard very positive accounts of the care provided to students within the SoP from academic, administrative and technical staff and commends, again, the SoP’s work in the fostering of a strong sense of community both within and across years.

The Panel noted that arrangements for admission and induction are effective and generally understood by staff and students. The Panel reviewed clear evidence of interviews having been conducted with clear assessment criteria, and commended the guidelines provided by the SoP for interviewers as helping establish consistent application of process across the interviews. [Good practice (ix)]

The Panel noted that student progression was appropriate to the stated aims of the programmes and was consistent with the attainment of the intended learning outcomes. As mentioned above, however, making links more explicit between the aims and learning outcomes of the programmes with marking criteria is something which the Panel recommends (see Assessment, above).

The Panel noted the progression rules of the SoP’s MPharm degree: 40%, 50%, 50% and 40% for Parts 1-4. These progression rules stand out in the sector as being out of line with all other pharmacy schools. The use of a 40% pass mark is usual for a standard undergraduate degree where the final degree is classified (e.g. First to Third class), whereas 50% is the normal pass mark for a Masters degree where the degree is graded as Pass/Merit/Distinction. The Panel noted the variance in MPharm degrees across the sector (represented within the Panel, there was a clear difference: Kings uses 40:40:40:50% and Cardiff uses 40:40:40:40%). The Panel also noted that the SoP had previously asked to amend its progression requirements via its faculty but were counselled to remain with the status quo.

The Panel strongly recommends that the SoP amend the progression requirements for their degree so that they better cohere both with the eventual award obtained and with other pharmacy schools in the sector. The Panel strongly recommends that any such change consist of, at least, a change of the progression rule for Parts 1-3 to 40%. Further discussion will be required by the SoP, with their teaching and learning experts and quality assurance officers to decide whether a further change such that the Part 4 classification is changed to 50% in line with it being an M level degree is desired. [Necessary recommendation (i)]

The Panel noted how careers advice is effectively integrated into the programme: through module PM2ES3 and in personal tutor meetings. The Panel noted student recognition of this support but also their concern that the timing of CV advice be given earlier, in order to support pre-reg applications more effectively.

The Panel noted the issues with regard to student skills with numeracy that were raised in the SED as well as in discussions with staff and students. The Panel noted the variety of testing opportunities for students, from the admissions interview to the final year, to help improve numeracy skills. The Panel also noted the SoP’s use of the University’s Maths Support service to help students struggling with numeracy. [Good practice (x)]

Part 4 students interviewed indicated that they found the interview questions on numeracy easy and SoP staff indicated that students were only rarely rejected on the grounds of poor mathematical ability. Given the importance of numeracy for the degree programme, the
Panel believes that further analysis of the admissions criteria by the SoP is required. Further competitor analysis of MPharm degrees run by other pharmacy schools was done by the Panel (supported by the Pathfinder analysis). The entrance tariff for A-level chemistry as the key A-level requirement was comparable to other schools. However, the SoP was unusual in defining a second science A-level without stipulating a preference; most of the competitors stipulate that it should be either: biology, math or physics. All three inherently have a mathematical component within the curriculum, so a more precise stipulation would reinforce the admission of numerically competent students. Likewise, the Panel noted, an A grade at GCSE Maths might be preferable (or even a B-grade for greater flexibility). Given the above, the Panel strongly recommends that the SoP review its admission requirements to incorporate a more explicit requirement of a higher level of numeracy skills amongst its pool of applicants. [Advisable recommendation (iii)]

**Learning resources**

The Panel noted how the collective expertise of the academic staff provides well for effective delivery of the current curricula and for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The School includes additional specialist teaching staff to supplement student learning experience from practitioners. The Panel welcomes the good practice it viewed in the SoP in the reflective and reactive action to improve delivery.

While there is excellent technical and administrative support, timetabling has apparently put a strain on resources, especially on laboratory technicians. Timetabling is arranged centrally between 9am-6pm and the Panel noted that in the future it might be necessary to expand the timetable hours to support more classes.

The Panel commended the response by the SoP to an inconsistency identified by students between PG demonstrators. The Panel praised the quick action on the part of the SoP to ensure training, contact and job descriptions for demonstrators to overcome this issue. [Good practice (xii)]

Overall, student feedback indicated strong satisfaction with facilities. The Panel, too, was extremely impressed with facilities in the Hopkins laboratories which include interactive screens and offer excellent opportunities for engagement and learning for students. There are also 60 computers, specific practice software and AV equipment in consulting rooms for pharmacy practice training, and access to a chemical analysis facility which were noted by the Panel.

The Panel noted how technology was used to support learning. Excellent use is made of the University’s VLE for student learning. NSS feedback suggested access to resource books was below sector standard (which will become an increasing challenge with growth in student numbers). The SoP has addressed this issue in the short term by increasing availability of e-books. [Good practice (xii)]

The Panel noted the wide variety of university resources (*e.g.* library rooms for group work, computer labs and S@il as well as academic support (maths and essay writing/study advice)). Students whom the Panel interviewed were appreciative of these resources.

The Panel did note, however, a big issue of space constraint for teaching and a need for additional facilities and resources, with triple teaching common practice for student laboratory work. This challenge will continue with growing recruitment, including from the Malaysia campus starting in 2015. Concerns about capacity have been made strongly by the SoP management to the University and the Panel sees increased provision of facilities for the SoP as a *sine qua non* of increased provision (in terms of home and Transnational Education (TNE) students).
Employer engagement

The Panel was pleased with the School’s developments to practice into the curriculum and noted the increasing emphasis on integrated practice that the GPhC is pushing forward. At its next reaccreditation, the SoP will need to demonstrate an increased exposure by its students to practice and patients, etc. The Panel noted the expertise of CIPPET staff and programme alums, and suggested that the SoP explore how it might make better use of these stakeholders to address the greater focus on practice. \[Desirable recommendation (v)\]

The Panel noted a breadth of evidence that graduates from the programme are well-prepared for employment in a variety of practice settings, as is to be expected from professional programmes. There is regular and effective liaison with employers, industry and the profession but, as mentioned above, there exist further opportunities for more engagement through better use of alums and an advisory board.

The Panel noted the low current use by the SoP of the University’s own careers centre. Students and graduates admitted to not using the centre and, even, a lack of understanding of what it might provide them. In a context in which employment concerns are only increasing amongst students and graduates, the Panel recommends that the SoP review its engagement with the careers centre, including the opportunities it may provide pharmacy students as well as the timing of some of the sessions that are offered by the centre. \[Desirable recommendation (vi)\]

The use of placements is extremely effective although limited in number because of availability. The School’s plans to increase these are welcomed by the Panel. Students and graduates were highly appreciative of the placements, asking for more. \[Good practice (xiii)\]

Enhancement of quality and academic provision

The SoP uses a variety of methods to enhance the quality of its provision and identify examples of good practice. The Panel noted the use of peer review and SDRs as one such method. Reflection upon modules and the programmes, generally, by the SoP is another and is clearly evidenced in annual reports and appendices to the Self-Evaluation Document.

The SoP engaged closely with the Pathfinder process and the Panel noted this with specific reference to their reflection upon student views/feedback about provision of learning opportunities. The Panel commended the SoP’s engagement with, its response and the action plan arising out of the Pathfinder process. The strong work done with this provided the Panel with a Self-Evaluation Document (and its associated material) that was invaluable to the review process.

The Panel noted the SoP’s plans for developing the programme, including switching to a 5-year programme following recommendations coming from Health Education England’s Modernising Pharmacy Careers (MPC) Board (see note on programme changes, below). The SoP has clear plans in place to undertake this programme revision and develop and change in the ways in which the new programme will require. The changes will coincide with work on the University of Reading Malaysia (UoRM) approvals and accreditations in train and the Panel commends the SoP on over-arching approach it is taking to all of these pending programme changes/additions.

The Panel noted the many development opportunities made available to and taken-up by staff in the SoP. The Panel particularly noted and commended the SoP policy of providing all staff the opportunity to take part in pharmacy practice training. \[Good practice (xiv)\]
Main characteristics of the programmes under review

The Panel considers the aims and learning outcomes to be clear and appropriate. It commends the degree programmes’ coherence, breadth and scope. The modules cover a range of both generic and specialist areas appropriate to the student base. The Panel agreed that the programmes under review helped students to develop the academic and professional skills required to succeed both on the programme and in practice.

Students benefit from a high quality learning experience and the Panel observed many examples of innovation and good practice. In particular, the Panel commends the teaching and learning on the programme; the strong team ethos (which includes a number of stakeholders, such as employers and the GPhC); and, the exceptional pastoral and academic support offered to students. The programme operates in the complex context which exists between professional bodies and the academy, and it was clear that the programme team responded swiftly to changes in this context to ensure that programme content remained current and relevant.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

The Panel commends the following as areas where the programmes have particular strengths:

(i) The Panel noted the SoP’s attempts to coordinate its coursework submission dates to enable students to manage their workload more easily – this practice was brought to the Panel’s attention by students and confirmed in later conversations with staff.

(ii) Engagement with employers and professional bodies is frequent, structured and robust. The arrangements in place for reacting to the views of employers and the GPhC (and evidenced most recently in the re-accreditation exercise) were praised by the Panel. It is clear that the relationship between the SoP and its employer stakeholders and professional body is a close and productive one – this is to be commended.

(iii) The Panel recognised the clear benefits of explaining to students the improvements that have been made by Schools and the University in the light of concerns raised through survey instruments like the NSS and how this is reflected in scores moving forward. The SoP’s practice of doing just this was praised by the Panel.

(iv) Following discussion with students and graduates, it was clear to the Panel that staff return marked work to students quickly. The Panel commended the SoP for having no apparent issues with the timeliness of feedback returned to students.

(v) Continuous professional development is evident in a variety of examples the Panel noted: regular division meetings to share examples of teaching and the introduction of the practice-days for non-practitioner staff. The latter example was noted as deserving particular praise by the Panel.

(vi) The Panel commended the SoP’s Staff Handbook as an example of good practice in its provision of all guidance documentation in one place.

(vii) The Panel noted, with praise, the broad range of teaching methods and student learning opportunities in the SoP. Illustrations of good practice include problem-based learning, the interactive format of tutorials and workshops, formative work completed using podcasts, pencast exercises, group work, communication and teamwork exercises, practical classes, and hospital visits. An emphasis on
building professionalism and independent learning continues to be important. Students and graduates praised the SoP for having offered/offering them extensive opportunities to be deeply engaged in their own learning.

(viii) The Panel was impressed with the scope and dedication of the SoP to the interview day for all applicants. The SoP clearly has excellent systems of pastoral care in place which are evident to applicants in their first face-to-face engagement with the SoP.

(ix) The Panel reviewed clear evidence of interviews having been conducted with clear assessment criteria, and commended the guidelines provided by the SoP for interviewers as helping establish consistent application of process across the interviews.

(x) The Panel noted the variety of testing opportunities for students, from the admissions interview to the final year, to help improve numeracy skills. The Panel also noted the SoP’s use of the University’s Maths Support service to help students struggling with numeracy.

(xi) The Panel commended the response by the SoP to an inconsistency identified by students between PG demonstrators. The Panel praised the quick action on the part of the SoP to ensure training, contact and job descriptions for demonstrators to overcome this issue.

(xii) The Panel noted how technology was used to support learning. Excellent use is made of the University’s VLE for student learning. NSS feedback suggested access to resource books was below sector standard (which will become an increasing challenge with growth in student numbers). The SoP has addressed this issue in the short term by increasing availability of e-books.

(xiii) The use of placements is extremely effective although limited in number because of availability. The School's plans to increase these are welcomed by the Panel. Students and graduates were highly appreciative of the placements, asking for more.

(xiv) The Panel noted the many development opportunities made available to and taken-up by staff in the SoP. The Panel particularly noted and commended the SoP policy of providing all staff the opportunity to take part in pharmacy practice training.

Conclusions on quality and standards

The Panel is assured of the quality and standards of the programmes that have been reviewed, that the intended learning outcomes of the programmes are being achieved by students and that the programmes specifications are appropriate.

Conclusions on degree programme changes

A new 5-year MPharm

The Modernising Pharmacy Careers Board, part of Health Education England is considering moving toward all pharmacy programmes in England being five (5) years in length, with the 12-month pre-registration training being split into two 6-month placement blocks within the course to integrate the practice component more expressly into the degree programme. In the spirit of further engagement with the GPhC that the SoP will undertake, the Panel
wishes to convey some of the thoughts of students and graduates about the impending changes.

Students are generally negative about the proposals. They see no benefit accruing to them; they do, however, see burdens increasing. 12-month pre-reg training would be split into 6-month placement blocs within the course to integrate theory with practice.

Students were greatly concerned that they might not get paid for the placements, as they currently do for pre-reg year. Making placements take place earlier during the course, they believe, will also mean that they will not have covered enough material to be useful during the placement or for them to gain sufficient, relevant practice experience. There were also strong concerns that students would be less likely to be employed by pre-reg training providers than they are at present.

Graduates echoed the views of students, not seeing any benefit to the proposed changes. Having one pre-reg year (rather than 6-month split placements) is important, they said, for training graduates for professional practice. Practitioners have to be able to cope with many uncomfortable situations; the year-long pre-reg component provides these situations in a fashion which staggers the learning from these situations in a measured manner. Graduates also believed that the consolidated year-long placement enables/d them to study in greater depth throughout their academic programme and led to a smoother transition to work. The financial implications were also noted by graduates, in light of the new fee regime in higher education.

Pharmacy at the University of Reading Malaysia

The Panel noted the clear engagement by the SoP with the University's proposed establishment of a campus in southern Malaysia (the University of Reading Malaysia (UoRM)). It noted the pressures that this new programme provision will place on resources and noted this above.

Many discussions were had during Panel meetings about the additional requirements that will be placed on the SoP with regards to the new provision in Malaysia (not the least of which is an accreditation process across the various PSRBs that will be quite onerous) and the Panel was aided in much of its work by having as a member someone who works with a similar programme already accredited by the Malaysia Board of Pharmacy and the GPhC. Given the interactions it had about the UoRM provision, the Panel recommends that the SoP engage more closely with representative members of pharmacy schools like Cardiff which have such provision, to help guide its own progress in Malaysia. [Desirable recommendation (vii)]

Recommendations

The Panel recommends to the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning for Science and Life Sciences that the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years:

MPharm Pharmacy
Postgraduate Diploma / Certificate General Practice Pharmacy
The Panel considers that the following recommendations must be addressed as a condition of re-approval.

**Necessary**

(i) The Panel strongly recommends that the SoP amend the progression requirements for their degree so that they better cohere both with the eventual award obtained and with other pharmacy schools in the sector. The Panel strongly recommends that any such change consist of, at least, a change of the progression rule for Parts 1-3 to 40%.

The Panel makes the following ‘advisable’ recommendations:

**Advisable**

(i) The Panel advises that further work be undertaken by the SoP to clarify specific marking criteria on assessments, in order to demonstrate clearly the link between assessments, in terms of module and programme outcomes, to what students do in their assessment and their overall achievement, avoiding reliance on the general statements in the module handbook to cover this.

(ii) The Panel noted these concerns about feedback and recommends that the SoP undertake a review of its feedback provision with a view to evaluating the quality of feedback provided to students across modules and the programmes and identifying means of enhancing that provision.

(iii) The Panel strongly recommends that the SoP review its admission requirements to incorporate a more explicit requirement of a higher level of numeracy skills amongst its pool of applicants.

The Panel makes the following ‘desirable’ recommendations:

**Desirable**

(i) Assessment strategies are clear but there is work to be done by the SoP in drawing out a broader teaching and learning strategy that provides some headline points with actions and plans to put these in action. Further work linking this to the University’s Strategy for Learning and Teaching would also be required.

(ii) An important element of any subsequent review by the SoP of its assessment should be an analysis of the quantity and scheduling of the assessment, bearing in mind the need for appropriate and consistent feedback to be presented in a timely manner to allow appropriate reflection. This suggestion arises from the Panel’s concern that the SoP might be over-assessing its students.

(iii) Students felt that they would appreciate more support for laboratory based projects, especially ensuring there is earlier preparation for experiments to allow more time for writing their project. There was also significant unhappiness at the timing of the project write up with little time being available to pull together the report and virtually no opportunity to receive feedback in time. This was in contrast to other students within the University who were doing final year projects in autumn term and who were able to write up in spring term. The Panel recommends that the SoP reflect upon these student concerns with a view
to seeing if a revision of deadline/teaching timelines could not alleviate some of the problems.

(iv) Concern was expressed by the Panel (after discussion with students and graduates) that more explicit links between learning outcomes and marking criteria could be made when assessment assignments were given to students.

(v) The Panel noted the expertise of CIPPET staff and programme alums, and suggested that the SoP explore how it might make better use of these stakeholders to address the greater focus on practice.

(vi) In a context in which employment concerns are only increasing amongst students and graduates, the Panel recommends that the SoP review its engagement with the careers centre, including the opportunities it may provide pharmacy students as well as the timing of some of the sessions that are offered by the centre.

(vii) Given the interactions it had about the UoRM provision, the Panel recommends that the SoP engage more closely with representative members of pharmacy schools like Cardiff which have such provision, to help guide its own progress in Malaysia.

The Panel does not have a recommendation to the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning as to whether any proposal(s) for new degree programmes should be approved as this is not applicable.