The University of Reading

Faculty of Life Sciences

Summary of the Periodic Review of Degrees in Food Biosciences

1. **Programmes Covered by the Periodic Review**

   BSc Biotechnology
   BSc Food Science
   BSc Food Science with Business
   BSc Nutrition and Food Science
   
   BSc Biotechnology with Industrial Training
   BSc Food Science with Industrial Training
   BSc Food Science with Business with Industrial Training
   BSc Nutrition and Food Science with Professional Training
   
   MSc Food Science
   MSc Food Technology – Quality Assurance
   MSc Nutrition and Food Science

2. The Periodic Review took place on 28 February and 1 March 2007.

3. **Objectives of the Periodic Review**

   The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:
   
   - Monitor the quality and standards of the degree programmes under Review;
   - Enable the Department of Food Biosciences to evaluate its taught programme provision, particularly student achievement of the appropriate academic standards, and the learning opportunities offered to students;
   - To enable an independent Panel to review this self-evaluation through consideration of documentation and discussions with staff and students;
   - Provide a means by which the Department was able to reflect on the success, development and possible improvement of its taught programmes;
   - Ask fundamental questions about the rationale, structure and resourcing of the programmes under Review;
   - Consider the educational aims and objectives of the programmes;
   - Review teaching, learning and methods of assessment in their contexts;
   - Consider whether the programmes under Review should continue to run for a further period of up to six years.

4. **Conduct of the Periodic Review**

   The Periodic Review was conducted by a Panel chaired by the Director of Teaching and Learning for the School of Arts and Communication Design. In addition to the Chair, the Panel comprised two internal members of academic staff (one from the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development, the other from the School of Biological Sciences) and two external members. One of the external members was
a representative of the food industry (Sainsbury’s Plc), and the other was a member of academic staff specialising in Food Biosciences from Nottingham Trent University. The Sub-Dean acted as Secretary to the Review Panel.

The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, including a Self-Evaluation Document prepared by the Department, relevant programme specifications and External Examiners’ Reports. During the Review Visit, the Panel considered other documentation and met with relevant staff from the Department and from the University Library. In addition, the Panel met with students registered for the degree programmes under Review, and was also provided with a tour of Departmental facilities, including the Pilot Plant and laboratory facilities.

5. Evidence Base

In addition to the meetings held with academic staff and current students, the Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including examples of student work, copies of programme handbooks, minutes of relevant Committee meetings and statistical data. The Panel also considered the Report of the Periodic Review of Food Biosciences conducted in 2001, and the relevant section of the 2004 QAA Institutional Audit Report relating to Food Biosciences. The Panel was able to see External Examiners’ Reports for the three previous years, as well as the Department’s responses to these Reports.

In addition, the Panel was able to see the evaluation questionnaires produced by students and the minutes of recent Departmental Staff / Student Committee meetings. Feedback from peer observation of teaching was also provided.

6. External Peer Contributors to Process

The external members of the Review Panel were present for the duration of the Periodic Review. They were appointed by the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning in Science and Life Sciences, after considering nominations from the Department of Food Biosciences. The role of these External members was to provide subject expertise and judgement of the validity and appropriateness of the programmes under Review.

7. Overview of the Main Characteristics of the Programmes Covered by the Review

The programmes reviewed are all taught by a well-established team of staff with extensive experience resulting in graduates who meet the demands of industry, and related professions. Teaching is informed by research with projects benefiting from the research interests of staff. The Department has put significant effort into compensating for the national decline in applicants by diversifying their suite of programmes and developing agreements with other institutions overseas.

8. Conclusions on Innovation and Good Practice

Examples of good practice identified included:

- Actively seeking to identify and move into new student recruitment markets;
- Actively working to address issues in relation to the integration of students recruited through links with Henan University, China;
- Excellent support provided for industrial placements;
- Excellent support provided for the development of career management skills;
- Well-established role of Departmental Senior Tutor;
- Actively seeking to maintain and develop links with the food industry;
- Very strong links between teaching, research and industry;
- Provision of an on-line food legislation resource.

9. **Conclusions on Quality and Standards**

The Review Panel concluded:

- That the intended learning outcomes of the undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes were clear and appropriate and were being obtained by students, although the Panel felt that the learning outcomes for the taught postgraduate programmes might be developed further;
- That quality and standards were in general being achieved; and
- That the programme specifications were being delivered.

10. **Conclusions on Currency and Validity of the Programmes under Review**

The Review Panel concluded that the programmes under review remained current and valid. The Panel therefore recommended that, subject to the programme teams addressing the issues shown below, the following degree programmes be **re-approved** to run for a further six years:

- BSc Biotechnology
- BSc Food Science
- BSc Food Technology
- BSc Nutrition and Food Science
- BSc Biotechnology with Industrial Training
- BSc Food Science with Industrial Training
- BSc Food Technology with Industrial Training
- BSc Nutrition and Food Science with Professional Training
- MSc Food Science
- MSc Food Technology – Quality Assurance
- MSc Nutrition and Food Science

The Panel also recommended that, subject to the programme teams addressing the issues shown below, the following degree programmes be **re-approved** to run until such time as the next Periodic Review of Programmes in Agricultural and Food Economics:

- BSc Food Science with Business
- BSc Food Science with Business with Industrial Training

11. **Summary of Recommendations**

The Department of Food Biosciences was asked to address the following:

**Necessary:**

- (a) Ensure handbooks and related documentation are correct and up-to-date.

**Advisable:**

- (a) Continue to monitor and respond to ongoing issues and challenges in relation to Henan students and students recruited through similar arrangements in the future;
(b) Work to ensure the consistency and quality across the Department of the specification of assessment criteria given to students;

(c) Consider differentiating the programme aims between 3 and 4-year undergraduate programmes, to reflect specifically additional learning outcomes from the industrial placement year;

(d) Re-visit the learning outcomes of MSc module descriptions, to reflect deeper learning objectives as appropriate to taught Masters-level provision;

(e) Review assessment weighting between coursework and examination, and overall assessment load for all programmes within the Department;

(f) Formalise the Department’s policy for moderation of coursework, within available human and time resources;

(g) Provide discipline-specific guidance concerning plagiarism in student handbooks.

Desirable:

(a) Encourage other Schools / Departments which regularly provide modules for the Department’s degree programmes to provide feedback to students in a timely manner;

(b) Disseminate across the Department current good practice of high quality feedback on student work;

(c) Develop further and more innovative use of Blackboard;

(d) Consider introducing greater content in teaching of corporate social responsibility in all degree programmes.

In addition, the Panel recommended that lessons learned in relation to the integration of students from Henan University be disseminated to other Schools at Reading.