THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES IN THE
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

1. **Programmes covered by the Periodic Review**
   
   Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice  
   Teaching and Learning Support Programme

2. **Date of the Periodic Review**
   
   The Periodic Review took place on 16 and 17 March 2006

3. **Objectives of the Periodic Review**
   
   The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:
   
   - Monitor the quality and standards of the programmes under Review;
   - Enable the Institute of Education to evaluate their taught programme provision and in particular to evaluate student achievement of the appropriate academic standards, and the learning opportunities offered to students to support their achievements;
   - 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 Institute of Education was able to reflect on the success, development and possible improvement of the taught programmes that they offered;
   - Ask fundamental questions about the rationale, structure and resourcing of the programmes under Review;
   - Consider the educational aims and objectives of the programmes, and success in meeting these;
   - 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 of the University’s School of Arts and Communication Design and also comprising two other internal members of academic staff (neither from the Institute of Education) and two external academic members.

   The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, including a Self-Evaluation Document prepared by the Centre for Staff Training and Development, relevant programme specifications and handbooks and copies of External Examiners’ reports. During the Review visit the Panel considered other documentation and met with relevant staff from the
programme team and from University service departments. Members of the Panel also met with current students from the two programmes.

5. **Evidence Base**

In addition to the meetings held with academic staff and current students, the Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including Minutes of relevant committees, statistical data and samples of student work. The Panel was able to see External Examiners reports for the 2002/3; 2003/4; 2004/5 as well as responses written by the Programme Convenor.

The programme team provided the Panel with many examples of the ways in which feedback from students and External Examiners has been integrated back into the programmes by way of a list of examples of changes to the programme. The Panel commended the initiative of the programme team in its use of stakeholder meetings and mentor interviews as part of the evaluation process of the programmes.

6. **External peer contributors to process**

The external members of the Review Panel were present for the duration of the Periodic Review leading discussions on areas relating to the educational aims and learning outcomes of the provision, curricula and assessment, and teaching and learning, which made use of their subject expertise.

They were appointed by the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences Board for Teaching and Learning after considering nominations from the Institute of Education. The role of these External members was to provide subject expertise and to provide an expert 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 aims and learning outcomes of the programmes are designed to support the development of professional skills of individuals in their roles within the University and Higher Education. The learning outcomes are defined to meet the accreditation requirements of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and the University’s Teaching and Learning Strategy.

The programme provides a thorough professional training, and transfers knowledge across disciplinary boundaries through a mix of students. There is considerable support provided for students by the programme team which is a major feature of the successful running of the programme.

8. **Conclusions on innovation and good practice**

The Panel commended the provision of a reliable core programme combined with valuable flexibility. The evaluation of the programmes was thorough and
creative in approach, in inviting feedback from stakeholders and mentors, in addition to students. Great care was also taken to ensure that all feedback loops were closed, with clear documentation of responses and actions.

9. **Conclusions on quality and standards**

The Review Panel concluded:

- that intended learning outcomes of the programmes were being obtained by students;
- that quality and standards were being achieved in professional practice, but a broadening of the conceptual basis could be considered;
- 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 and therefore recommended to the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences Board for Teaching and Learning that the following be **re-approved** to run for a further six years, or until such time as the next Periodic Review of programmes in the Institute of Education:

- Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice
- Teaching and Learning Support Programme

The University Board for Teaching and Learning approved these recommendations on

11. **Recommendations**

There were no necessary conditions to the above re-approval, but the Review Panel made the following recommendations:

**Advisable: to be addressed as soon as possible**

(a) Ongoing monitoring of variable progression rates and the underlying reasons for these.

**Reflect upon in the longer term**

(b) Invite the team to consider how they can infuse greater analysis of the policy contexts within which teaching and learning takes place in HE e.g. Widening Participation, Internationalisation, social inclusion, equal opportunities, Bologna, gender mainstreaming. This should help to strengthen the conceptual apparatus and critical dimensions of the programmes.

(c) The Review Panel recognises that the success of these programmes relates largely to the commitment and professionalism of the team. We wish to support the efforts of the team to ensure the sustainability of
the programmes by broadening the human resource base and embedding the programmes into University structures.

The University might wish to consider:

(d) The University should ensure there is consistency across Schools in providing equitable opportunities for access to and participation in these programmes by counting them in workload models.

12. **Summary of actions taken in response to the Review**

(a) A new red, amber, green tracking system has been implemented since the review. Participants identified as behind schedule (red) have already been contacted, individual support offered and the consequences for their probationary periods explained. Those identified as in danger of falling behind (amber) have been contacted and asked to commit to a submission date and have been offered a variety of support options. In the longer-term a new post is planned and part of the rationale for that is to target resource at keeping participants engaged after the completion of the workshop programme (see below).

(b) Currently these issues are covered to varying degrees in the programme but with an emphasis on policy implications for practice rather than an analytical approach. We have discussed this with the external examiner, Dr Shân Wareing and she has some reservations about the value of this at the PG Cert level. However, we are considering introducing a debate-style session into the programme to involve participants in a closer analysis of some of these issues and making use of expertise from the Institute of Education and the Widening Participation Office. This is also linked to the recruitment of a new post as described below.

(c) A proposal has been developed to create a full-time fixed-term post to contribute to the development, delivery, assessment of the programmes and to provide individual tutorial support to participants in developing their projects and portfolios to address progression concerns highlighted above. The post will be created using Teaching Quality Enhancement Funding. The post holder would also be responsible for further development of the Blackboard site to embed it within the programme and encourage and disseminate good practice in e-learning. Assuming this is agreed and accepted by HEFCE, the post would be recruited for the start of the new academic year.