Summary of the Periodic Review of Applied Linguistics

Programmes covered by the Periodic Review

1  The programmes covered by the Periodic Review were:
   - BA English Language
   - BA English Language and Literature
   - BA English Language and Television
   - BA English Language with French
   - BA English Language with German
   - BA English Language with Italian
   - BA Applied English Language Studies
   - MA in English Language Teaching
   - MA Applied Linguistics
   - MA (Research) Applied Linguistics

Date of the Periodic Review

2  The Periodic Review took place on Tuesday 4 and Wednesday 5 May 2010.

Objectives of the Periodic Review

3  The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:
   - Review the effectiveness of the means by which Applied Linguistics manage and assure the academic standards of the degree programmes under Review and the quality of the learning opportunities provided;
   - Enable Applied Linguistics to consider how they might enhance their portfolio of taught programmes and the learning experience of their students, and to consider the effectiveness of their approach;
   - Consider the future plans of Applied Linguistics for their taught programmes
   - Enable an independent Panel to review this self-evaluation through consideration of documentation and discussions with staff and students;
   - Provide a means by which Applied Linguistics were able to reflect on the success, enhancement and future development of the taught programmes that they offered;
   - Identify examples of good and effective practice;
   - Consider whether the programmes under Review should continue to run for a further or initial period of up to six years, as appropriate;
Conduct of the Periodic Review

The Periodic Review was conducted by a Panel chaired by the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning for the Henley Business School, with two internal members of academic staff (from the School of Economics and the School of Humanities), and two external members of academic staff (from Roehampton University and the University of Birmingham). The Faculty Senior Administrative Officer and Administrative Officer acted as Secretaries to the Review Panel.

The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, made available on a BlackBoard Organisation site, including a Self-Evaluation Document prepared by the Department, a copy of the Pathfinder report, relevant programme specifications, programme handbooks, and External Examiners’ reports. During the Review visit, the Panel considered extensive further documentation, and met with the majority of staff and current students from the Department, along with recent graduates. The Panel also met with the Liaison Librarian for Applied Linguistics, Main Library, a Study Adviser, Student Services and a Careers Adviser, Careers Advisory Service.

Evidence base

The Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including programme specifications, module descriptions, programme handbooks, External Examiners’ reports and the School’s responses, minutes of relevant committee meetings (including the Staff – Student Committees and Boards of Studies meetings), Annual Programme Reports and statistical data, and examples of student work. The Panel received feedback from staff, students and recent graduates from the School.

External peer contributors to process

External members of the Review Panel were appointed by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Board for Teaching and Learning, after considering nominations from the School of Languages and European Studies. 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.

Overview of the main characteristics of the programmes covered by the Review

The Panel considers that the programmes: The Panel considers that the programmes:
(a) have strong content within the modules, noting in particular the application of theory to real life situations, drawing in practitioners;
(b) offers students both depth and breadth in the various modules available;
(c) are delivered in a supportive environment;
(d) attract a diverse student population, including international students and experienced professionals;
(e) create a link between an arts and humanities viewpoint with a scientific approach
(f) are delivered in different tracks offering students the opportunity to study in a way that best suits them individually, so developing expertise within the Department in terms of teaching a multitude of programmes.
Conclusions on innovation and good practice

The Panel commends the following as areas where the Department has particular strengths:

a) The differentiation of the teaching tracks on the Masters programmes.
b) The use of paper and e-resources at both undergraduate and postgraduate level including online communication.
c) The admissions and induction processes which form a key part of the student experience.
d) The provision and maintenance of a common room for all its students, which is constantly in use.
e) The provision of an academic writing tutor for all students within the Department.
f) The good links with the University Support Services.
g) The mentoring scheme that is run for Part 2 students to mentor Part 1 students.
h) The inclusion of a mini-conference as part of the assessment to prepare students for their BA final year dissertation, and as unaassessed preparation for the MA dissertation.
i) Student involvement, with personal contact and care of students that is maintained throughout the time students are studying within this Department, which creates a community of learning.

Conclusions on quality and standards

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

Conclusions on currency and validity of the programmes under Review

The Panel agreed that the degree programmes offered by the Department, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, met the stated aims and objectives, and were of appropriate standard and quality. The learning outcomes of the degrees were being met by students, and the degrees prepared graduates well for employment. The Department takes active steps to review and enhance its programme provision.

Recommendations

The Panel recommends to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities that all of the degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years. The Panel recommends to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Board for Teaching and Learning that the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years:

- BA English Language
- BA English Language and Literature
- BA English Language and Television
BA English Language with French
BA English Language with German
BA English Language with Italian
BA Applied English Language Studies
MA in English Language Teaching
MA Applied Linguistics
MA (Research) Applied Linguistics

The Panel does not consider that any recommendations must be addressed as a condition of re-approval.

The Panel makes the following recommendations to the Department:

**Advisable**

1. The Department is advised to look at the costing of all its activities in order to be best placed to decide on where priorities should remain in the future.

**Desirable**

1. The Department should look at the research and teaching opportunities that may become available after the merger with the Department of English and American Literature aiming to make the joint BA programme more coherent, as well as reducing existing pressures on staff.

2. The Department should look to signpost to students other modules within Part 1 that relate to the undergraduate degree which are run in other areas of the University.

3. The Department should investigate the reasons behind students moving to a single honours degree programme with the aim to retain more joint honours.

4. Following the merger with English and American Literature and the creation of the new Graduate Centre, the Department should actively seek to ensure that staff who are contracted to undertake research have sufficient space within their workload to do so.

5. The Department should seek advice to enhance marketing materials (e.g. on the web and in the print prospectus) to better convey the unique student experience at Reading.

6. The Department should consider mechanisms for developing closer employer engagement and look into further developing links with alumni.

7. The Department should try to find more time for staff development; staff need study leave as well as to attend sessions run by the Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning and Centre for Staff Training and Development.

The Panel requests that the **University** considers the following recommendations:

1. The University should ascertain the actual role of Teaching Fellows within University Departments and advise Departments accordingly.

2. The University should provide guidelines as to how long it should take students to complete degree programmes, with particular reference to Masters distance study degrees.