Summary of the Periodic Review of Law

Programmes covered by the Periodic Review
1 The programmes covered by the Periodic Review were:
   • LLB Law
   • LLB Law: Taylor’s University College
   • LLB Law with Legal Studies in Europe
   • LLM Advanced Legal Studies
   • LLM European Union Law
   • LLM International Law and World Order

Date of the Periodic Review
2 The Periodic Review took place on Thursday 27 and Friday 28 November 2008.

Objectives of the Periodic Review
3 The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:
   • Review the effectiveness of the means by which the School of Law manage and assure the academic standards of the degree programmes under Review and the quality of the learning opportunities provided;
   • Enable the School of Law 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 the School of Law 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 the School of Law 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
4 The Periodic Review was conducted by a Panel chaired by the Head of the School of Real Estate and Planning, Henley Business School (formerly Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning for the Faculty of Social Sciences), with two internal members of academic staff (from the School of Arts, English & Communication Design and the
Institute of Education), and two external members of academic staff (from De Montfort University Law School and the University of Sussex Law School). The Joint-Faculty Senior Administrative Officer 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 School, 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 School, along with recent graduates. The Panel also met with the Liaison Librarian for Law, Main Library, the Administrative Services Team Leader of the University Student Services Centre, the Assistant Head of the University Counselling Service and a Study Adviser from the University Counselling 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 Social Sciences Board for Teaching and Learning, after considering nominations from the School of Law. 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 concluded that the programmes under review help students to gain both the academic and professional skills required to succeed and produce strong independent learners. The development of a strong co-curricular programme to support the learning outcomes in the programmes is to be commended.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

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

a) The way in which the School supports and develops independent learners;

b) Development of innovative practice in both the delivery and assessment of individual modules such as, Criminology, Legal Skills, Pro Bono, Jurisprudence;

c) The development of the role of the Teaching Fellow and they way in which they work alongside academic staff to deliver modules and in supporting co-curricular activity;
d) Strong pastoral support for students provided by both academic and administrative staff within the school who work closely with the University’s student support services. This was highly valued by students;

e) Use of Blackboard to support individual modules, the communication with students and staff, and in facilitating other activities such as the Student Staff Liaison Committee;

f) *Legal Skills: A Guide* as a mechanism for helping students to develop the academic and professional skills required to succeed on the programme.

g) The development of wide-ranging co-curricular programme, mirrored at Taylor’s University College, which provides students with a breadth of opportunities to develop their skills and gain wider commercial awareness;

h) Investment in strong administrative support underpinning the key teaching and learning roles from admissions to careers.

Conclusions on quality and standards

8 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

9 The Panel agreed that the degree programmes offered by the School, 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 School takes active steps to review and enhance its programme provision.

Recommendations

15 The Panel recommended to the Faculty of Social Sciences that the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years:

- LLB Law
- LLB Law: Taylor’s University College
- LLB Law with Legal Studies in Europe
- LLM Advanced Legal Studies
- LLM European Union Law
- LLM International Law and World Order

There were no issues the Panel requires addressing in making these recommendations. However, as has been noted, there are a series of recommendations that the Panel advises the School to consider and take appropriate action. These recommendations are:

a) The School needs to revisit the learning outcomes and the way in which they articulate with the level of the module, particularly at Level C and I, to ensure that they are appropriately differentiated.
b) The School must ensure that the credit weighting of modules reflects the volume and not the level or difficulty of the content.

c) For LLB there is a need for a stronger strategic overview of the programme which reflects on the overall student experience and the way modules link both between Parts and within Parts of the programme so that students are able to build on their previous learning.

d) The School should ensure that the classification criteria made available to students are consistent and align with the University’s published marking criteria.

e) Drawing on the good practice in individual modules, the School should develop a clear and defensible assessment strategy, which aligns to the programmes learning outcomes.

f) Building on some interesting innovations, the School should develop a strategy for the evaluation of modules to ensure robust and high quality student input.

g) **Recommendation for the University** - Building on the work in the School of Law, the University needs to consider the career progression and reward system for Teaching Fellows within the University.

h) Building on the clarity of the classification criteria, the School should reflect on how feedback can link to those criteria in a transparent and consistent manner, ensuring students can use this systematically to improve their performance.

i) If employability/co-curricula activities are key to the School’s distinctiveness, the School should consider mechanisms for collating information on students’ destinations beyond the six-month period.

j) **Recommendation for the University** - Given the focus of the new University Learning and Teaching strategy on employability and graduate employment, consideration should be given to developing a university-wide mechanism for collecting information on destinations of higher education leavers beyond the mandatory six-month period.

k) Reflecting on the Pathfinder process, members of the School should be involved in developing a longer-term strategy for the enhancement of its programmes which will then provided a cohesive framework for prioritising specific initiatives.