Faculty of Life Sciences

Summary of the Periodic Review of degree programmes in Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences

Programmes covered by the Periodic Review

1. The programmes covered by the Periodic Review were:

   Undergraduate programmes:
   
   - BSc Psychology (C800)
   - BSc Psychology, Childhood & Aging (C805)
   - BSc Psychology, Mental & Physical Health (C806)
   - BSc Mathematics & Psychology (GC18)
   - BSc Psychology & Biology (CC18)
   - BA Art & Psychology (CW81)
   - BA Psychology & Philosophy (CV85)
   - BSc Speech & Language Therapy (SLT)

   Taught postgraduate programmes:
   
   - MSc Cognitive Neuroscience
   - MSc Development & Psychopathology
   - MSc Neuroscience of Language
   - MSc Research Methods in Psychology
   - MSc Speech & Language Therapy

Date of the Periodic Review

2. The Periodic Review took place on 9 and 10 May 2011.

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 Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences manages and assures the academic standards of the degree programmes under Review, and the quality of the learning opportunities provided;
   - Enable the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences to consider how it might enhance its portfolio of taught programmes and the learning experience of its students, and to consider the effectiveness of its approach;
   - Consider the future plans of the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences for its 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 Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences was able to reflect on the success, enhancement and future development of the taught programmes it 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 Director of Teaching and Learning for the Henley Business School, with two internal members of academic staff (from the School of Biological Sciences and the Department of Classics), and two external members of academic staff (from the London South Bank University and Royal Holloway). The 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 of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences, a copy of the Pathfinder report, relevant programme specifications, programme handbooks, and External Examiners’ reports. During the Review visit, the Panel considered further documentation, and met with a number of staff from the School and from other service providers in the University. In addition, the Panel met with a number of current students in the School, graduates of the School, and various employers. The Panel undertook a tour of facilities in the School, including teaching laboratories.

Evidence base

5. The Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including programme specifications, module descriptions, programme handbooks, External Examiners’ reports and the Schools’ responses, minutes of relevant committee meetings (including the School Staff – Student Committee and Boards of Studies meetings), Annual Programme Reports and statistical data.

   The Panel received feedback from staff and students in the School, along with feedback from employers and former students.

External peer contributors to process

6. The external members of the Review Panel were appointed by the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning in Science and Life Sciences, after the consideration of nominations from the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences. 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

7. The programmes are clearly positioned and aligned to the appropriate subject benchmark statements. There is fitting variation in teaching and learning methods. The programmes offer considerable breadth and flexibility to allow students to focus on their interests as they progress.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

8. The Panel identified a number of areas of innovation and good practice, including:
- Good, clear and comprehensive information provided to students in handbooks
- Teaching methods in Part 3 are excellent, very popular with students and commended by the External Examiners
- The range of modules in Part 3 is greatly appreciated by students
- Good examples of in-class data collection in Part 1
- Good range of research methods assessment in Parts 1 and 2
- Skills for Psychology module has wider methods of assessment
- Part 1 student conference is excellent
- Essay marking scheme is very clear for Psychology students
- Plagiarism guidance is good with examples
- Practicals in Part 1 and mini-project in Part 2 are examples of good teaching practice
- Contemporary issues course is a valuable feature of the undergraduate curriculum
- The CLS child development assignment is popular with students and well assessed with written work and presentation
- Students felt that the staff were supportive and helpful
- Masters students felt part of a community and were very complimentary about staff
- Masters students were positive about the range of assessments used

Conclusions on quality and standards

9. The Review Panel concluded:

- that the intended learning outcomes of the programmes were clear and appropriate and were being obtained by students
- that quality and standards were in general being achieved; and
- that the programme specifications were being delivered

Conclusions on currency and validity of the programmes under Review

10. The aims and outcomes of the degree programmes run by the School are appropriate, both in terms of the level and coverage of the discipline.

Recommendations

11. The Panel recommends to the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning that, subject to the School addressing the issues listed below, the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years:

Undergraduate programmes:

- BSc Psychology (C800)
- BSc Psychology, Childhood & Aging (C805)
- BSc Psychology, Mental & Physical Health (C806)
- BSc Mathematics & Psychology (GC18)
- BSc Psychology & Biology (CC18)
- BA Art & Psychology (CW81)
- BA Psychology & Philosophy (CV85)
- BSc Speech & Language Therapy (SLT)

Taught postgraduate programmes:

- MSc Cognitive Neuroscience
- MSc Development & Psychopathology
- MSc Neuroscience of Language
- MSc Research Methods in Psychology
- MSc Speech & Language Therapy
Issues to be addressed:

**Necessary**

1. The School must ensure that it adheres to the University guidance that all students receive some form of feedback on their academic performance in each module within the first term of their first year of study.

2. That for any module assessed by examination, students should always be expected to undertake, and receive feedback on, a relevant form of assessment prior to sitting a final examination.

3. That module delivery is reviewed and evaluated more systematically on an annual basis. In particular, that module convenor reports are produced each year which are considered collectively and feed into the production of the Annual Programme Reports.

**Advisable**

1. All undergraduate students should be provided with a ‘road map’ to help them more clearly navigate the modules, identify course progression, and to enable them to plan their individual skills and subject knowledge development.

2. The Panel would encourage the School to give consideration to reducing the number of examinations students are required to sit at Part 2: for example by assessing more modules through coursework only, or by restructuring modules into 20 credit units.

3. That the School implements its proposed re-introduction of a peer observation scheme, and that this used as a mechanism for sharing good practice in teaching between parts / levels of study.

4. The School should review the way in which it markets and advertises all its programmes (particularly its undergraduate degrees in Psychology), in order to more effectively highlight its unique selling points.

**Desirable**

1. The practice of arranging opportunities for first year undergraduates to meet with finalists be implemented more consistently across the School.

2. The Panel commends the School for introducing the Skills for Psychology Module, and suggests that further consideration be given to making it compulsory for Part 1 students.