The University of Reading
Faculty of Life Sciences

SUMMARY OF PERIODIC REVIEW
OF PROGRAMMES IN PSYCHOLOGY

1. Programmes covered by the Review
   BSc Psychology
   BSc Psychology Childhood & Ageing
   BSc Psychology Mental & Physical Health
   MSc Cognition & Ageing
   MSc Developmental Psychopathology
   MSc Psychology of Early Development
   MSc Research Methods in Psychology
   BA Art & Psychology
   BA Psychology & Linguistics (last intake October 2004)
   BA Psychology & Philosophy
   BA Psychology & Sociology
   BSc Mathematics & Psychology
   BSc Psychology & Biology
   BSc Psychology & Statistics (last intake October 2004)

2. Date of the Review
   The Review took place on 03 and 04 May 2005.

3. Objectives of the Review
   The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:

   - Monitor the quality and standards of the degree programmes under Review;
   - Enable the School of Psychology to evaluate its 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 Review 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 could reflect on the success, development and possible improvement of the taught programmes that it 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 Review
   The Review was conducted by a Panel chaired by the Director of Teaching and Learning of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences. The Panel was also comprised of two other internal members of academic staff from outside the School of Psychology and two external academic members from Royal Holloway, University of London and University College London.
The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, including a Self-Evaluation Document prepared by the School and relevant programme specifications. During the Review visit, the Panel considered other documentation and saw the School’s laboratory and computing facilities. The Panel met relevant staff from the School and current students studying from a selection of the degree programmes under review.

5. **Evidence base**
   In addition to meetings held with academic staff and current students the Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including examples of student work with staff feedback, copies of programme handbooks and minutes of Boards of Studies. The Panel were able to see External Examiners reports and were satisfied that these had been responded to appropriately.

6. **External peer contributors to process**
   External members of the Review Panel were appointed by the Faculty of Life Sciences Board for Teaching and Learning, after considering nominations from the School of Psychology. 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. During the Review the external members focussed on aims and learning objectives and curricula and assessment.

7. **Overview of the main characteristics of the programmes covered by the Review**
   The School of Psychology runs a large BSc Psychology programme and a series of smaller joint honours degrees with other subjects from schools across the University. These enjoy a good reputation and healthy recruitment. At postgraduate level the School’s taught MSc programmes reflect its areas of expertise and tend to draw students towards further research. All programmes are influenced by the School’s strong research base and its warm and supportive culture.

8. **Conclusions on innovation and good practice**
   The Panel identified the following examples of good practice that they wish to commend:

   - The School arranges a briefing session for students at the start of each academic year.
   - Handbooks include a list of assessment deadlines for modules within the School and advice on plagiarism tailored to the Psychology subject area.
   - Handbooks include examples of a coursework feedback sheet. When coursework is assessed, comments are written both on the feedback sheet and on the script.
   - Assessment methods are diverse and innovative, including essays, presentations, multiple-choice tests and both unseen and seen examinations, some open book. The School has clearly considered the reasons for using particular assessment methods.
   - The School has a strong system for management of undergraduate and postgraduate projects, including the documentation of information relevant to them. There is a streamlined but effective Ethics Committee for projects.
   - In addition to student questionnaires for evaluating modules, the School organises structured workshops to gain more qualitative feedback on the programmes.
   - The School has a strong system of mentoring for new staff including a staged introduction to teaching.

9. **Conclusions on quality and standards**
   The Panel concluded that:

   - Intended aims of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are appropriate, although they can be expressed more clearly and separated out to show the development of students through their studies.
• Intended learning outcomes of the programmes are appropriate and are being attained by students.
• The curriculum satisfies the requirements of the BPS.
• Quality and standards are being achieved.
• Programme specifications are being delivered.

10. Conclusions on currency and validity of the programmes under review
The Panel concluded that the programmes under review remained current and valid. They noted that the undergraduate programmes had recently been reconfirmed as meeting the British Psychological Society (BPS) requirements for Graduate Basis for Registration.

11. Recommendations
The Panel recommends to the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning for the Faculties of Science and Life Sciences that the following degree programmes should be **re-approved** to run for a further six years, subject to the School addressing the issues shown below:

- BSc Psychology
- BSc Psychology Childhood & Ageing
- BSc Psychology Mental & Physical Health
- MSc Cognition & Ageing
- MSc Developmental Psychopathology
- MSc Psychology of Early Development
- MSc Research Methods in Psychology

The Panel also recommends that the following degree programmes should be re-approved to run until the next Periodic Review of programmes in Art, Linguistics, Philosophy, Sociology, Mathematics, Animal & Microbial Sciences and Statistics respectively:

- BA Art & Psychology
- BA Psychology & Linguistics (last intake October 2004)
- BA Psychology & Philosophy
- BA Psychology & Sociology
- BSc Mathematics & Psychology
- BSc Psychology & Biology
- BSc Psychology & Statistics (last intake October 2004)

**Issues to be Addressed**

**Necessary**
The Panel found no issues under this heading.

**Advisable**
- The way in which programme aims are expressed in the Programme Handbooks for undergraduate students should be reviewed.
- It would be useful if the MSc Handbook showed more clearly how the MSc programmes build on undergraduate learning and develop students’ skills to MSc level.
- The School should review the type and location of information provided for students in order to avoid duplication and find the most effective means of communication.
- Peer review and peer observation of teaching has proved beneficial to staff in the School and its use is to be encouraged.

**Desirable**
- The provision of information on optional module choices for students and the process of module enrolment should be reviewed, especially at Part 3.
• The School should consider how best to map transferable skills onto the curriculum for the benefit of both staff and students.
• The School should review its loan collection of books and reprints of periodical articles to assess usage and flexibility of distribution.

12. Summary of actions taken in response to the Review

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