

# PERIODIC REVIEW OF AGRICULTURE, POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

## Reviewing programmes delivered by the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development

### INTRODUCTION

1 An internal review of programmes in Agriculture, Policy and Development was held on 18 and 19 April 2016. The members of the Panel were:

- Dr Carol Padgett, Associate Professor, ICMA Centre, HBS (*Chair*)
- Ms Caroline Drummond, Chief Executive, Leaf (*external member, industry*)
- Dr Stephen Ramsden, Associate Professor, University of Nottingham (*external member, subject specialist*)
- Dr Jakob Sehested, Associate Professor, Aarhus University (*external member, subject specialist*)
- Dr Angelique Chettiparamb, Associate Professor, Real Estate and Planning, HBS (*internal member*)
- Dr Robert Jackson, Associate Professor, School of Biological Sciences (*internal member*)
- Mr Edward White, Part 2, BSc Geography (Human), University of Reading (*Student member*)
- Mr Richard Sandford, Senior Quality Support Officer, Centre for Quality Support and Development (*Secretary*)

2 The Panel met the following:

- Prof Julian Park (*Head of School*)
- Miss Rebecca Jerrome (*School Director for Teaching and Learning*)
- Mr Nick Beard (*Senior Tutor and Programme Director, Food Marketing and Business Economics*)
- Dr Sarah Cardey (*Director of GIIDAE and Programme Director, Communication for Innovation & Development & Applied International Development*)

- Dr Andrew Ainslie (*Programme Director, Environment and Development*)
- Dr Francisco Areal (*Programme Director, Agricultural Economics*)
- Dr Alex Arnall (*Programme Director, Food Security and Development*) ???
- Dr Nick Bardsley (*Programme Director, Climate Change and Development*)
- Dr Eleanor Fisher (*Programme Director, International Development*)
- Dr Anna Macready (*Programme Director, Consumer Behaviour and Marketing*) ???
- Dr Simon Mortimer (*Programme Director, Environmental Management*)
- Dr Alistair Murdoch (*Programme Director, Agriculture and Development*)
- Dr Rachael Neal (*Programme Director, Animal Science*)
- Dr Giuseppe Nocella (*Programme Director, Food Marketing and Business Economics*)
- Dr Chittur Srinivasan (*Programme Director, Development Finance & MRes Agricultural and Food Economics*)

3 The Panel met students who represented the following degree programmes:

- BSc Agricultural Business Management
- BSc Agriculture
- BSc Animal Science
- BSc Environmental Management
- BSc Food Marketing and Business Economics
- BSc International Development
- MSc Agriculture and Development
- MSc Agriculture Economics
- MSc Applied International Development
- MSc Climate Change and Development
- MSc Communication for Innovation and Development
- MSc Development Finance
- MSc Food Security and Development
- MRes Agricultural and Food Economics

4 The Panel met recent graduates who had graduated from the following degree programmes between 2003 and 2015:

- BSc Agriculture
- BSc Food Marketing and Business Economics w/Industrial Training
- MSc Agriculture and Development

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

5 The Review Panel met with a range of staff from across the School, largely with teaching and learning responsibilities. The staff were fully engaged with the process and made the Panel feel very welcome. The review benefitted from a comprehensive and well-organised Blackboard

- organisation, and any additional information requested by the Panel was supplied in a timely fashion. The panel found the resources provided invaluable in their review of the School's activities. The panel extends its thanks to the School for its hospitality and full engagement with the process.
- 6 The Panel was pleased to meet and question current and former students from a wide range of programmes. They found the students to be passionate about their subject and enthusiastic about the opportunities afforded by the School. The panel felt that the students and alumni were a credit to the School and wish to thank them for their valuable input.
  - 7 The Panel found the School to be willing to (and adept at) engaging in critical self-reflecting, especially when evaluating its processes, and implementing change where appropriate. This is perhaps best evidenced with the School's participation on the Curriculum Framework pilot project **[good practice a]**.
  - 8 The Panel noted that the School consistently ranks highly in national and international rankings – this year achieving second in the Complete University Guide (for Agriculture & Forestry), second in the Guardian University Guide (for Agriculture, Forestry and Food) and first in the Times OnLine. It is also ranked first in the UK and 19<sup>th</sup> in the world in the 205 QS World Rankings for Agriculture and Forestry (and the only UK institution to be placed in the top 40 in this area).
  - 9 The Panel recognised that the School had undergone changes over recent years (both to personnel and organisationally), had performed a review of feedback and assessment (with the support of the Centre for Quality Support and Development), and was due to experience further changes to administrative support with the implementation of centralised support in the coming academic year.
  - 10 The Panel heard how the School was fostering a strong sense of community through the hard work of staff and students. The positive roles played by academic staff (especially the Senior Tutor) administrative staff and programme-affiliated student societies were noted as playing a key role in engendering this sense of community and comradeship **[good practice b]**.
  - 11 The Panel recognised the diversity of programmes on offer within the School and commended the School on its ability to foster a sense of belonging amongst the students of these disparate disciplines.

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS OF THE PROGRAMMES

### Educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes

- 12 The Panel felt that the programmes under review are well established and internationally highly regarded. Whilst the new BSc International Development is a recent development, it was noted that it was developed to build on the School's strong international reputation and provide a progression route for the PG programmes.
- 13 The Panel was satisfied that the School's portfolio has been designed to align with market demand and draws heavily upon the teaching and research expertise within the School.
- 14 The Panel confirmed that the aims and intended learning outcomes of the programmes are clear, and the learning outcomes are aligned to the aims.

- 15 The Panel was pleased to note that, in general, there is an effective alignment of learning outcomes, coursework and assessment **[good practice c]**.
- 16 The Panel found the learning outcomes to be properly aligned with the QAA benchmark statement for Agriculture, horticulture, forestry, food and consumer sciences.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in many instances the panel felt that the offering surpasses the subject benchmark statement **[good practice d]**.
- 17 The Panel noted that in some instances Module Descriptions were not up to date. This could lead to unfounded student expectations (with some students complaining that they didn't have sufficient information on which to base module choices), confusion and the lack of clear articulation of links between assessment mode and breakdown of marks. The Panel recommends a thorough review of all module descriptions to ensure that they are up to date **[necessary recommendation a]**.
- 18 The Panel noted that the external examiners are satisfied that aims and learning outcomes are attained.
- 19 The Panel was pleased to note that the School has demonstrated its awareness of market changes through the establishment of new PGT programmes in the natural sciences (previously an area of limited provision for the School), and the ongoing review of their PGT offering in International Development. The School has made an ongoing commitment to review its provision to ensure that it properly aligns with, and serves, the market.
- 20 The Panel noted that, by their very nature, the PGT programmes are international in their scope. Some of the UG programmes can lack an international focus, although there is a strong internationalisation element in some modules (with the BSc International Development offering the opportunity to study in Uganda). The School is committed to improving the uptake of study abroad and placement opportunities amongst its undergraduates (as part of its preparations for the Curriculum Framework). Studies are undertaken in an 'international' environment with the majority of PG students coming from overseas and 20 nationalities represented in the staff body.

## Curricula and assessment

- 21 The Panel agreed that the School offered a broad and varied range of programmes, which cover a comprehensive and appropriate range of topics. Students, staff, employers and alumni all indicated that they felt that the programmes clearly linked theory and practice **[good practice e]**.
- 22 The Panel commended the clear exposition of the possible different achievement levels in the Programme Handbooks. This meant that students felt that they knew what was expected of them from the very start of their course **[good practice f]**.
- 23 The Panel felt that elements the School's offering had benefitted from the recent reviews of provision (ie the Crops Teaching review, Marketing Teaching review, and the subsequent full Curriculum Review). The Panel anticipates that the Curriculum Framework activities will help ensure that these benefits are shared across the portfolio of undergraduate programmes. The School has made a commitment to apply the lessons learnt through the Curriculum Framework to their postgraduate programmes.
- 24 The Panel recognised that 'over-assessment' is an endemic issue within Agriculture degrees. In part this is because the subject covers science, business and 'environmental' knowledge and it is therefore difficult to drop individual assessments without losing a core part of learning.
- 25 The Curriculum Framework and associated reviews will give the School opportunities to ensure that students do not feel overburdened by assessments. The Panel recommends that the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Subject-benchmark-statement-Agriculture.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Subject-benchmark-statement-Agriculture.pdf)

- School checks that the mix, load and variety of assessment across its programmes is correct and appropriate **[advisable recommendation c]**.
- 26 The Panel heard that some students felt that there was a preponderance of group work assignments in some areas. Students felt that, especially in the final year, group work could adversely affect their grades. Whilst recognising the usefulness of group work in preparing them for the world of work, students felt that there was an over-reliance on this particular mode of assessment. The Panel urges the School to explore ways in which it could reduce this over-reliance on group work as a mode of assessment **[advisable recommendation d]**.
- 27 The Panel discussed the Schools ongoing issues around the timely provision of feedback. Whilst recognising that the School was taking measures to address the problems the Panel felt that further steps could be taken, including improving communication with students about the process. The Panel recommends that the School explores ways to better manage the turnaround of feedback and move towards better compliance with the 15 day deadline **[necessary recommendation b]**.
- 28 Additionally, the Panel recommends that the School continues to investigate ways to meet the student desire for feedback on how to improve their work. The School should seek ways to consistently deliver constructive feedback in a more considered and uniform manner **[advisable recommendation e]**.
- 29 The Panel was impressed with the School's support for international students. The Panel commends the development of a module aimed at supporting international students (IDM089), and believes it to be a model of best practice for the University. The course runs along two strands – the first provides an introduction to support available across the University (Library, IT, personal and professional development) and a group forum where students can share experiences of British culture. The English speaking and listening skills gained in this first strand are then developed in the second strand which focuses on in-session English activities to develop academic writing, speaking and listening **[good practice g]**.

## Use of student management information

- 30 All finalists are encouraged to complete the NSS and the Panel noted a year-on-year improvement in 'overall satisfaction'. These scores mean help the School's positioning in league tables. However, the School recognises the shortcomings with regards assessment and feedback highlighted by the NSS and has undertaken several activities to address these.
- 31 The Panel heard that results from the PTES survey were positive and highlighted similar issues.
- 32 The Panel noted that detailed consideration had been given to student feedback gathered via the NSS and module evaluations. The results (including qualitative responses) are have fed into their Curriculum Review.
- 33 The Panel approved of the School's use of competitor analysis in its development of a marketing strategy. The Panel was impressed with the School's ability to respond to changes in the market and its willingness to adjust its portfolio to meet market need. This strength is achieved through a thorough analysis of market data and trends by the School Marketing, Media and Communications Officer in collaboration with the University's Marketing, Communications and Engagement team. The Panel recommends that the School continues to build upon the good work in this area to ensure that Programme titles are meaningful (and align with content), promote the availability of pre-sessional and in-session offerings for international students, and further inform the Curriculum Review with market insights **[advisable recommendation f]**.

- 34 The Panel was impressed with the School's engagement with student evaluation of programmes. It noted that the School experimented with e-forms for gathering student feedback, but that this trial had been halted after a marked reduction in responses.
- 35 The Panel noted that the main mechanism for student feedback into programme evaluation was via their meeting with External Examiners. The findings of these meetings are reported back via various Boards.
- 36 The School also uses 'programme tutorials' during Enhancement Week to gather feedback on programmes. However, poor attendance during Enhancement Week has reduced the effectiveness of this feedback route. It should be noted that feedback from these sessions has usefully fed into the further development of new programmes, such as the BSc in International Development, and will provide useful insights for the new incoming Programme Directors (for BSc Animal Science and BSc Consumer Behaviour and Marketing).
- 37 The Panel heard that the School had experienced some slight difficulties in closing the feedback loop. The Panel recommends that the School explore the use of mid-module feedback, Module Provider Reports, Blackboard Module sites (or fora), and the SSLC to ensure that students were fully informed as to how their feedback and concerns were being addressed **[advisable recommendation g]**.
- 38 The Panel heard that the School's response rate for the DeLHE survey stood at 62% (below the University's average). The School is investigating ways to improve student awareness of the survey and its importance. Whilst the DeLHE results are positive, the School recognises work to be done to identify the reasons for poor results in 'percentage of graduates in professional/managerial work' for students of Agricultural Business Management and Animal Science.
- 39 The School has noted that identifying employment trends for postgraduate students is more difficult, as a number of them return overseas on graduating.

## QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THE PROGRAMMES

### Teaching and learning

- 40 The Panel noted the positive effect on teaching and learning engendered by the considerable effort made by staff (both academic and administrative) to foster a sense of community. The role played by senior members of staff was seen to be a key in delivering this sense of community.
- 41 The Panel heard how new initiatives within the school were being implemented to help deliver strategic change to teaching and learning activities. These included the launch of a Teaching and Learning fora and an in-house Teaching and Learning showcase series (including support for e-marking and e-submission). These are nascent activities and the Panel is unable to comment on their efficacy, but commends their proactive nature.
- 42 The Panel identified the Schools reliance on modules delivered by other Schools (and partners) as a particular vulnerability. The School currently relies upon the School of Biological Science, School of Psychology and Clinical Languages Sciences, Berkshire College of Agriculture, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (Jersey Zoo), and Mbarra University (Uganda) for the delivery of some modular content. The Panel was satisfied that monitoring mechanisms to ensure the quality of the provision were in place, but felt that the School would benefit from an additional layer of protection to militate against unforeseen issues. As such, the panel recommends that

procedures be put in place to monitor and maintain the co-operative activities with other Schools and partners **[advisable recommendation h]**.

- 43 The Panel noted the School's use of intensive small group teaching for the postgraduate courses. It was felt that this is key to ensuring that international students can fully participate in classroom discussions.
- 44 The Panel was impressed by the School's management of student projects, and especially the efficient management of dissertations. The provision of a dissertation library for undergraduate students, and exemplary project support of postgraduate students were seen as being particularly commendable **[good practice h]**.
- 45 The Panel heard about the School's attempts to use Enhancement Week to give students returning from placements the opportunity to feedback their experiences to their peers. Students were asked to produce a poster and give a presentation to their peers outlining what they had learnt from their experiences. The School also arranged careers planning activities for the week. All the events were poorly attended and those students who had put in time and effort to produce posters (at their own expense) felt aggrieved. Staff pointed out that students coming from a farming background may well have decided to use Enhancement Week as an opportunity to return to their home farms to help out. The Panel would urge the University to give consideration to how to make the best use of Enhancement Week and seek ways to improve attendance if it is to continue in its current format **[desirable recommendation m]**.

## Student admission and progression

- 46 The Panel felt that the entry tariffs were well-considered and reflected the School's position within the market. The Panel was especially pleased to hear that the School was continuing to experience growth in student enrolments, and was rising to the challenge of increased recruitment targets.
- 47 The Panel noted that recruitment to postgraduate programmes in the School is particularly susceptible to external factors. The high proportion of international students in this area means that government policy (including visa requirements), finances (including scholarship availability), and the global political landscape can all impact on student numbers in any particular year.
- 48 The Panel was pleased to note that the School intends to focus on extending their outreach via widening participation networks. Links with Basingstoke College of Technology are being developed and the School has participated in an Animal Science and Zoology taster day organised with the Student Recruitment and Access Officer.
- 49 The Panel recognised that the introduction of the BSc International Development provided opportunities for students to progress onto postgraduate programmes within the School. It was also noted that there was an expectation within the School that the 'Our Hungry Planet' MOOC could provide a stream of applications for postgraduate courses, although there are currently no mechanisms to monitor this.
- 50 The Panel was impressed by the Welcome Week activities provided by the School to help ensure the smooth transition of new students into life at Reading. Of particular note were the team-building activities and the off-site activities for undergraduate students.
- 51 The Panel was impressed with the work undertaken by the School's Marketing, Media and Communications Officer, especially in relation to increasing numbers on the BSc Environmental Management and BSc Animal Science. The upcoming focus on programmes in Agriculture is hoped to yield similar results.
- 52 The Panel was satisfied that there were no significant issues in terms of progression or retention. The School is addressing some progression issues around Part 1 and/or Part 2 of the BSc Animal

Science and BSc Consumer Behaviour and Marketing programmes. The issues arise when students struggle with modules provided by other Schools.

- 53 The School is aware of issues around higher failure rates and lower classification award for overseas undergraduate students. The Panel was satisfied that these issues are not specific to the School, and that the School has a strong pastoral and academic support mechanisms in place for overseas students.
- 54 The Panel noted the positive impact of a placement year on student outcomes, with a high proportion of students returning from placement going on to achieve 2:1 or firsts.

## Learning resources

- 55 The Panel recognised the important role played by support staff within the School, especially in the support they offer to international students. The Panel noted that one of the administrators is Chinese and provides an extra layer of support to help Chinese students settle in to University life.
- 56 The Panel heard about the additional support provided by the Senior Tutor. It is evident that his interventions are key in ensuring the School's high retention/completion rates, persuading students to continue with their studies and providing additional support where necessary.
- 57 The Panel was impressed with the School's use of student demonstrators to provide support with marking, class work and some tutorial activities. This is possible because the School has included such provision in the contracts of PhD funding that they provide. The number of student demonstrators has increased in recent years and this provides a significant support resource for the School **[good practice i]**.
- 58 The Panel felt that the School benefits from a good mix of staff of various experiences and backgrounds. The Panel was satisfied that although some key members of staff had recently left the University (either via retirement or moving to another institution) the School had recruited a number of talented early career professionals to help with the teaching load.
- 59 As noted elsewhere (paragraph 33), the appointment of a School Marketing, Media and Communications Officer has had a positive impact on the School and helped ensure that the portfolio of programmes is "market-ready".
- 60 The Panel was impressed by the Agriculture Building and the learning resources available to students. Indeed, the Panel recognised that the School's location away from the centre of campus helps in fostering the sense of community amongst staff and students.
- 61 The Agriculture Building benefits from two large lecture theatres (Madejski with a capacity of 244 and Nike with a capacity of 124), a small PC lab (nine PCs) and larger PC Lab (30 PCs), Teaching Office (which will be replaced when the University moves to a Hub model of student support), café/social space, and two laboratories. The laboratories are mainly for research and undergraduates are able to use them for final year projects if appropriate. The Panel was pleased to hear that there were dedicated study and group work spaces for postgraduate students **[good practice j]**.
- 62 The café/social space performs a key role in delivering a communal space for all staff and students. It is often used as an informal group work space by undergraduate students.
- 63 Students have access to the University farms, both in the course of their general studies and for their research projects. As these properties are off-campus students usually make their own way to them, with the School mini-bus being used for small classes or a coach being booked for larger groups. The Panel was pleased to note that use of the University farms had been fully integrated



into the appropriate programmes and learning activities and that students had access to them **[good practice k]**.

- 64 However, the Panel noted some shortcomings in the provision of appropriate health and safety information to students (or a lack of awareness by the students on the existence of that material). The Panel was informed that briefings were held at the start of the course and that information was included in appropriate Programme Handbooks. The Panel felt that a review documentation and processes governing health and safety on University farms and placements would be beneficial **[advisable recommendation i]**.

## Employer engagement

- 65 The Panel noted that the School is working on several initiatives to help improve the employability of their students. The Panel encourages the School to prioritise the investigation (with the Careers Centre) of ways in which better careers advice and support can be provided to international students, especially in light of the School's desire to create placement opportunities for postgraduate students **[desirable recommendation l]**.
- 66 The Panel heard how the School is looking to enhance take-up of the Year Abroad option. This should give students the chance to broaden their education and experiences and thus make them more employable.
- 67 The Panel noted that in the review of current programmes, and the design of new programmes, employers are consulted to ascertain whether there is a need for the skills and knowledge the students will be acquiring. The School manages relationships with a wide network of employers without the benefit of an 'Industrial Liaison Board' and the Panel was satisfied that this informal network and mechanisms for managing it would be sufficient and fit for purpose.
- 68 The School has engaged with University initiatives, including the delivery of career planning sessions as part of existing modules (AP1SCP and AP2SCP). However, student engagement with these initiatives has been patchy in place. In part this is because of the diversity of programmes on offer in the School, which makes it difficult to cover all possible career paths. Students expressed some dissatisfaction with the assessments for the modules, and could not appreciate why low-marked CVs had served to get them jobs with respected employers.
- 69 The Panel heard that new developments might provide a more effective model for careers learning within the School. The new 10 credit module for BSc Environmental Management students (AP2AE35) provides the opportunity for students to undertake a mini placement, building on from a Part 1 module which involved talks from external agencies, visits to potential employers in the sector, and networking opportunities with those potential employers.
- 70 The Panel was pleased to note that the School has developed links with professional bodies like the Institute of Agricultural Management and the Chartered Institute of Marketing, and that representatives from these bodies take part in student-focused events (including a Question Time style session).
- 71 The Panel noted the overall success of Careers Fair within the School, which caters for agriculture and allied sectors. Up to 25 employers attend the Careers Fair, providing current students with the opportunity to meet prospective employers and network.
- 72 Students are encouraged to participate in conferences and other co-curricular activities, which no doubt improves their employability. The BSc Animal Science has an annual conference where undergraduates present a poster, postgraduate students are encouraged to present and attend conferences in their field of study (with two students winning funding to attend the IAMCR conference in Hyderabad in 2014), and the Agri Club hold their own conference with speakers from farming and food organisations **[good practice l]**.

- 73 The Panel was impressed by the level of support offered to students prior to, and during, their placement. The School Placement Officer and Senior Tutor provide the bulk of support for this activity, with some input from the Careers Centre. Students who return from placements perform markedly better than peers who have not taken a placement opportunity. This benefit is also seen by students who do not take whole year placements, instead opting for shorter activities (usually over the summer vacation).
- 74 However, the Panel found that some students questioned the value for money offered by the placement activity. There was a perception amongst some students that they had been short-changed in paying fees for the year (even at 15% of the normal tuition fee) and only receiving one or two site visits during the course of their placement. The Panel heard that staff who visit the students on placement are informed about what issues to look out for, although it was unclear whether this checklist was officially documented. Some students indicated that there was little in the way of support in the management of their relationship with the employer. The Panel recognised the balancing act to be struck here, with some students being more independent than others and thus prefer less contact with the School whilst on their placement.
- 75 Additionally, staff indicated that some students expected the School to find them a placement, and therefore voiced some dissatisfaction when the School provided them with the means to find their own placements.
- 76 Staff and students were satisfied with the assessed element of the placement activity. Those students who have been on a placement often act as ambassadors for their course and for placements more generally. Students and alumni reported that the placement had been a transformational activity which cements the knowledge acquired during the course and prepares students fully for life after University.
- 77 The Panel felt that whilst the placement activity clearly provided a positive experience to students, it would benefit the School, students and employers if the activity underwent a review. Such a review would clarify ownership of parts of the process, explain its value (both monetarily and otherwise) to students and employers, and find ways to improve communication between all parties **[advisable recommendation j]**.

## ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY AND ACADEMIC PROVISION

- 78 The Panel noted that staff within the School are engaged with the central training programmes run by the University, and that there is a drive for all staff to achieve a 'teaching qualification'.
- 79 The Panel was pleased to hear that the School had successfully applied for funding for teaching and learning projects via the Teaching and Learning Development Fund. The School has also (in conjunction with ISLI) applied for funding via the T&L Enhancement Project (Mini) to support an online critical writing course for pre-arrival GIIDAE students. These are largely international students and would help soften their 'landing' at Reading by helping enhance achievement and thus boost their confidence.
- 80 The School has invested effort in exploring the uses of Technology Enhanced Learning in delivering and monitoring the curriculum. The Head of School ran a project on the use of iPads in fieldwork<sup>2</sup>, the School has used online forms to gather module feedback (see paragraph 34

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<sup>2</sup> Whalley, B. W., France, D., Park, J. R., Mauchline, A. L., Powell, V. and Welsch, K. (2015) iPad use in fieldwork: formal and informal use to enhance pedagogical practice in a bring your own technology world. In: Souleles, N. and Pillar, C. (eds.) iPad use in fieldwork: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the use of iPads in higher education (ihe2014). Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 110-125. ISBN 9781443876261

above), they are in the process of digitising their dissertation library, and they have embraced e-submission and e-assessment of work. In order to share best practice there are informal networks within the School, including the T&L Fora and the T&L Showcase.

- 81 The School has produced a Development Plan to guide their activities and ensure that they align with the Curriculum Framework and Review. The Plan details Objectives, Process by which it will be achieved, Timeline for achieving it and the School Lead.
- 82 The Panel noted that the School relies on a number of modules taught/owned by other Schools and explored some of the issues around managing modules owned by another School. One of the key issues was how problems could be addressed. The Panel was pleased to hear that the Programme Director for the BSc in Animal Science has recently joined the School of Biological Sciences Board of Studies; the Programmes and that the School has strong relationship with the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences (who deliver content on the BSc Consumer Marketing and Behaviour).
- 83 The Panel agreed that School has a strong and robust Teaching and Learning committee structure. The inclusion of representatives from other Schools (where appropriate) was felt to be an inclusive and positive step.
- 84 The Panel noted the issues faced by the School in recruiting Student Representatives across all programmes. This seems to be a particular problem for the undergraduate Board of Studies and the Panel would encourage the School to find ways to improve student attendance **[advisable recommendation k]**.
- 85 The Panel recognised that the upcoming Curriculum Review (as part of the Curriculum Framework) would provide opportunities for reflection on the programme. This process of reflection would necessarily include the consideration of feedback from students and other stakeholders.
- 86 The Panel praised the way in which the Staff Student Liaison Committee is run. In particular, the minutes and recording of progress against actions from those meetings was felt to be exemplary **[good practice m]**.
- 87 The Panel was similarly impressed with the Module Providers Reports. They provide a clear and open mechanism for reflection on the delivery and design of modules, and for identifying issues and any actions to be taken to address them **[good practice n]**.

## MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMMES UNDER REVIEW

- 88 The School has moved from a departmental structure to a collection of groups aligned to teaching and research expertise. The School rightly has an international standing. It delivers a broad, current and relevant curriculum to its students. The students are exposed to opportunities to deliver real world applications of their knowledge. There is a strong sense of community, not only amongst the disparate groups, but also the School as a whole.
- 89 The School is very keen to address areas of potential weakness and will take bold steps remedy issues. It is a truly international School with a global focus and students find themselves in an environment where they are challenged and given the opportunity to flourish. The staff are dedicated to their subject and to their students and provide research-informed teaching for their programmes.

## CONCLUSIONS ON INNOVATION AND GOOD PRACTICE

- 90 The Panel identified the following as representing particularly good practice:
- a) The School's willingness to critically reflect on and evaluate processes, and implement change where appropriate.
  - b) The strong sense of community and belonging that has been engendered by the hard work of staff and programme-affiliated societies.
  - c) In general there is an effective alignment of learning outcomes, coursework and assessment.
  - d) In many instances, the offering not only meets, but surpasses the subject benchmark statement.
  - e) The curriculum is perceived (by students, staff, employers and alumni) to clearly link theory and practice.
  - f) The clear explanation of the possible different achievement levels as laid out in the Programme Handbooks.
  - g) The introduction of study skills into the curriculum for international students through the IDM089 module.
  - h) The efficient management of dissertations, including the provision of a dissertation library for undergraduate students, and exemplary project support of postgraduate students.
  - i) The use of student demonstrators to provide support and cover.
  - j) The provision of study and group work spaces for postgraduate students.
  - k) The integration of University farms into the appropriate programmes and learning activities.
  - l) Support and promotion of co-curricular activities, including the Careers Fair and student participation in conferences.
  - m) The well run SSLC, including exemplary minute taking and recording of progress against actions.
  - n) The Module Providers Reports providing good reflection on the delivery and design of the module and identifying issues and actions to be taken to address them.

## CONCLUSIONS ON QUALITY AND STANDARDS

- 91 The Panel has concluded that the quality and standards of the programmes reviewed are appropriate.

## CONCLUSIONS ON NEW DEGREE PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

- 92 The Panel received no submissions with regards to new programme proposals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 93 The Panel recommends to the Joint Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning for the Sciences and Life Sciences that the following degree programmes taught by the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development re-approved to run for a further six years:

- BSc Agricultural Business Management
- BSc Agriculture
- BSc Animal Science
- BSc Consumer Behaviour and Marketing
- BSc Environmental Management
- BSc Food Marketing and Business Economics
- BSc International Development
- MSc Agriculture and Development
- MSc Applied International Development
- MSc Climate Change and Development
- MSc Communication for Development
- MSc Development Finance
- MSc Environment and Development
- MSc Food Security and Development
- MSc Agriculture Economics
- MSc Food, Economics and Marketing
- MRes Agricultural and Food Economics

- 94 The report will categorise any issues as follows, in order of priority:
- Those areas where the Review Team believes it is **necessary** for action to be taken urgently to safeguard the standard of provision;
  - Those areas where it is **advisable** that the issues be addressed as soon as possible;
  - Those areas where it is **desirable** that the issue be addressed over a longer time span.
- 95 The Panel has made the following recommendations which must be addressed as a condition of re-approval:

### **The Panel makes the following recommendations to the School:**

#### **Necessary**

- a. Ensure that module descriptions are up to date and accurate for all programmes.
- b. Continue to explore ways to better manage the 15 day turnaround of feedback to students, including improving communications to students around the process.

#### **Advisable**

- c. Use the opportunities afforded by the Curriculum Framework activity to ensure that students do not feel overburdened by assessment, but are exposed to an appropriate variety of assessment methods.
- d. Explore ways to reduce the over reliance on group work as a mode of assessment.
- e. Continue to investigate how constructive feedback can be consistently delivered to students.
- f. Build on the good work already undertaken in marketing in order to:

- i. Ensure that Programme names and content properly align (eg Agricultural Economics);
- ii. Promote pre-sessional and in-sessional offerings where appropriate; and,
- iii. Use market intelligence to inform the Curriculum Review.
- g. Find ways to close the feedback loop, including exploring the use of:
  - i. Mid-module feedback;
  - ii. Module Provider Reports
  - iii. Blackboard Module sites or fora; and,
  - iv. Using the SSLC to report back to students.
- h. Put in place procedures to monitor and maintain the co-operative activities with other Schools and partners.
- i. Review documentation and processes governing health and safety on University farms and placements.
- j. Review the Placement activity to ensure that there is
  - i. Clear ownership;
  - ii. An explanation of value to students and employers; and,
  - iii. Improved communication between the School and students and employers.
- k. Consider ways in which students' attendance at the UG Board of Studies could be improved.

**Desirable**

- l. Work with the Careers Centre to provide better careers advice and support for international students.

The Panel also makes the following recommendations to the **University**:

**Desirable**

- m. Consider how Enhancement Week can be better utilised to ensure that there is better student engagement and perceived value.

96 The Panel does not have a recommendation to the Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning for the Sciences and Life Sciences as to whether any proposal(s) for new degree programmes should be approved, as this is not applicable.