

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 25 May 2007

Review of Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Responses to the Recommendations arising from the Review of the Undergraduate School of Medicine held on 17 March 2007

Mrs Marjory Wright, Clerk to the Panel

May 2007

Conclusions

The Review Panel commended the School on the overall quality of its provision. The School had a robust and sensitive system in place for providing feedback to staff and the School worked hard at encouraging staff to respond to feedback to close the loop. Members of staff were found to be enthusiastic, committed and responsive to change and were dedicated to the ethos of problem based learning.

Students spoke warmly of the Undergraduate Medical School, of the University and of the city of Glasgow. They also spoke of the great *esprit de corps* amongst students.

The Medical School had prepared an honest evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and was committed to continually assessing the content of the curricula that it offers.

The Review Panel wished to draw to the attention of the University that it found the adaptation of the University Adviser system currently in use in the Undergraduate Medical School to be inappropriate for MBChB students and **recommends** that the University permit the introduction of an alternative support mechanism to be devised by the Faculty of Medicine to meet the particular needs of undergraduate medical students.

The Review Panel also wished to draw the University's attention to the Undergraduate Medical School's Virtual Administrative Learning Environment (VALE) and to **recommend** that the University explore the potential for linking the power of VALE to Moodle with a view to providing an opportunity for other Departments to benefit from VALE's administrative capabilities.

The Panel shared the School's concern that the gender balance of medical school entrants could have workforce implications for certain specialities in the future but this is an issue which needs to be addressed nationally.

The Panel particularly wishes to draw to the Faculty's attention the need for a Clinical Skills Tutor to enhance the effectiveness of clinical skills provision for students. The Panel also identified the enormous burden placed on the staff involved in student assessment. It **recommends** that efforts should be made to increase both academic and clinical staff involvement in the assessment of undergraduates.

The Panel also noted that the identified unfilled posts appeared to be impacting on the training of staff on hospital sites and of PBL facilitators, and on the effectiveness of the administrative support available to students.

There was a strong feeling amongst University Teachers and hourly-paid Facilitators that they were not valued and the Review Panel urges the Medical School to address this matter.

Recommendations to the Department/Faculty

Recommendation 1

Following a tour of the clinical skills facilities the Review Panel concluded that the lack of a Clinical Skills Tutor reduced the effectiveness of clinical skills provision for students and **recommends** that the Faculty give priority to identifying potential resources for the creation of such a post. (*Paragraph C.6.5*)

Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

Response:

Funding has been made available for a Clinical Skills Tutor post. Due to limited interest in the post, when first advertised in March 2007, the post will be re-advertised in May 2007.

Recommendation 2

The School believed that it was essential to have someone in-house with intimate knowledge of the demands made on medical teaching staff. The Review Panel concurred with the School's view and **recommends** that the Faculty gives serious consideration to replacing the Staff Development Officer post which is key to maintaining the standard of training of staff on hospital sites and of PBL facilitators. (*Paragraph E.7*)

Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

Response:

The West of Scotland ACT Regional Priorities Group has made funding available for a Staff Development Officer. The post is currently at advert with a closing date of 25 May 2007.

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that efforts to increase both academic and clinical staff involvement in the undergraduate medical curriculum remain a priority. (*Paragraph C.6.7*)

Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

Response:

We are making strong efforts on this by using distribution of Divisional funds as a lever with academic staff and Additional Cost of Teaching funds with NHS staff. This will be an ongoing challenge.

Recommendation 4

The Review Panel **recommends** that, in order to assure the quality of facilitating, the Faculty give consideration to providing security of employment for a core group of hourly-paid Facilitators. (*Paragraph E.8*)

Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

Response:

We value greatly the contributions of these colleagues and have issued contracts to them. However, many of these colleagues do not wish long term contracts (many are retired and wish the flexibility of their current position) and we need to ensure equity across this group of employees.

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel was concerned that University Teachers felt undervalued and believed that this group of staff could make a valuable contribution to discussions on the delivery of teaching. The Panel therefore **recommends** that University Teachers be represented on the Medical Education Committee to enable their voice to be heard. (*Paragraph E.10*)

Action: The Head of the Undergraduate Medical School

Response:

Medical School University Teachers were already represented on the Assessment Working Group and were involved in the Curriculum Review in 2006, however there was no representation on Medical Education Committee. Medical School University Teachers are now represented on Medical Education Committee by a Senior University Teacher (Dr J Burke).

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel felt that there was insufficient clarity in terms of the support that ACT funding provided for teaching and **recommends** that clarity be sought from NHS Education for Scotland as a matter of urgency. (*Paragraph C.6.10*)

Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

Response:

A great deal of work has been done to progress this issue by NHS Education for Scotland in the last year and progress has been made. However this is a highly complex issue that requires agreement across all five medical schools and all 15 health boards in Scotland.

Recommendation 7

Since provision of adequate IT facilities on all hospital sites would enhance student learning, the Review Panel agreed to **recommend** to the Faculty that potential solutions to this matter be explored with the NHS. (*Paragraph F.5*)

Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

Response:

We have raised this issue with our hospital subdeans and with NHS Education for Scotland. There has been improvement recently and NHS Education for Scotland is currently reviewing IT facilities in hospital sites and GP practices.

Recommendation 8

To improve the consistency and quality of clinical placements, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Undergraduate Medical School review the information provided to staff in clinical areas and ascertain that the quality assurance mechanisms in all clinical areas are operating effectively. (*Paragraph C.6.13*)

Action: The Head of the Undergraduate Medical School

Response:

Analysis of student feedback forms has been completed and a mechanism for “closing the loop” i.e. informing students of changes as a result of their feedback has been agreed. New training initiatives and discussions with clinical directors are currently being considered; however, the appointment of a Staff Development Officer (funded by ACT) will contribute substantially to progress in this area (shortly to be advertised). The Head of the Undergraduate Medical School is involved in ongoing Regional and National discussions with NHS Education for Scotland to agree and implement quality assurance processes across clinical placements.

Recommendation 9

The Review Panel **recommends** that a half-day training session be provided by the Medical School for clinicians from the small number of hospitals where deficiencies in the standard of placement provision had been identified. (*Paragraph C.6.13*)

Action: The Head of the Undergraduate Medical School

Response:

We are currently recruiting a staff development officer (Senior University Teacher in Medical Education with responsibility for staff development of educational supervisors in NHS sites - currently at advert). One of the roles for this postholder will be to organise workshops for educational supervisors and we will target sites where problems have been identified in the first instance"

Recommendation 10

The Review Panel **recommends** that a realistic annual budget be assigned to the Undergraduate Medical School to facilitate the effective maintenance and replacement of essential learning and teaching equipment and for the purchase of reference texts and consumables. (*Paragraph C.6.4*)

Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

Response:

The Medical School consumables budgets were maintained in 2006-07. However, from 2006-07 financial year a supplement will be made available to the Medical School to spend on learning and teaching equipment and resources (£100,000 in 2006-07).

Recommendation 11

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Undergraduate Medical School explore the possibility of providing students who are unsuccessful in the final MBChB examination with the opportunity to resit within the same year, since this could have financial and career implications for students. (*Paragraph C.3.8*)

Action: The Head of the Undergraduate Medical School

Response:

The opportunity to resit within the same academic year was withdrawn from final year MBChB students as a result of the introduction of a single entry point to the Foundation Training programme.

The Medical School is currently reviewing, amongst other things, the structure and timetabling of years 4 and 5; and one of the anticipated outcomes being the reinstatement of a resit diet of examinations. However, should a resit diet of examinations be reinstated for year 5 students, it is anticipated that the first and second diets of examinations for year 5 will fall outwith the University's standard schedule of dates for examinations. It is anticipated that such a change would be implemented in session 2008-09. Recommendations to change years 4 and 5 would be discussed with the General Medical Council (GMC) (during their review visits (Feb-July 2007) to allow them to feed into the process.

Recommendation 12

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Undergraduate Medical School engage in greater consultation with Facilitators and University Teachers in relation to curriculum review and development. (*Paragraph C.4.5*)

Action: The Head of the Undergraduate Medical School

Response:

The University Teachers had been consulted as part of the Curriculum Review; and were already represented on the Assessment Working Group; and as a result of DPTLA Recommendation 5 are now represented on Medical Education Committee by the Senior University Teacher (Dr J Burke). The Head of the Undergraduate Medical School has attended one of the monthly midWednesday facilitator meetings for a Question and Answer sessions and has agreed to make this a regular session.

Recommendation 13

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Curriculum Review be completed in sufficient time to allow the principal changes to the programme to be introduced in Session 2007-2008, with further changes introduced incrementally as appropriate. (*Paragraph C.4.3*)

Action: The Head of the Undergraduate Medical School

Response:

It was confirmed that the Curriculum Review had reached the deadline to allow principal changes to the programme to be introduced in Session 2007-08. Due to the two-year cycle for years 4 and 5 it will not be possible to introduce some changes until session 2008-09. Recommendations to change years 4 and 5 will be discussed with the GMC (during their review visits (Feb-July 2007) to allow them to feed into the process.

Recommendation 14

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Faculty review the decision to withdraw the General Office Manager post since it impacts on the effectiveness of the support available to students. (Paragraph F.6)

Action: The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine

Response:

The Medical School General Office Supervisor post was reinstated during the financial year 2006-07 and a successful appointment was made.

Recommendations to the University

Recommendation 15

The Review Panel felt strongly that the existing Adviser system did not adequately support the needs of undergraduate medical students and **recommends** that the University permit the introduction of an alternative support mechanism to be devised by the Faculty of Medicine to meet the particular needs of undergraduate medical students. (C.5.14)

Action: The Clerk of Senate

Response:

The Clerk of Senate met with the Associate Dean, Medical Student Welfare and the Deputy Chief Adviser in September 2006 to discuss the present advising system and possible changes, and later met with Medical School Advisers in November 2006, following production of the Annual Report of the Associate Dean on the advising system, for further discussion. A comprehensive web-based survey of undergraduate medical students in all years has been undertaken in the current session and responses were representative across the whole student body. Comments were constructively critical but the majority of students appear satisfied with the current system. However, the following improvements are taking place: (a) the appointment of more campus-based Advisers to facilitate easier access by students; (b) enhanced web-based information for students with regard to the advisory system; and (c) a Guide for Advisers is being written in order to clarify their roles and responsibilities. The impact of the improvements will be monitored together with student feedback during 2007-08, and there will be ongoing dialogue with the Clerk of Senate."

Recommendation 16

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University explore the potential for linking the power of VALE to Moodle with a view to providing an opportunity for other Departments to benefit from VALE's administrative capabilities. (Paragraphs C.5.8; C.5.10)

Action: The Vice Principal for Learning & Teaching

Response:

Investigation into development plans for VALE have confirmed that a review is currently being undertaken by IT Services (Sandy Macdonald) in partnership with the VALE Development team led by Barry Clarke and the Faculty of Medicine represented

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by Prof Peter MacFarlane. Over the recent past, the use of VALE has steadily increased and is in the course of changing from a niche solution used within an isolated user community, to an application which has not only a wider user group but also a greater depth and range of functionality.

The review will cover current development resource requirements, support commitments, integration requirements, solution and technical platform stability / roadmap. Following agreement on the main conclusions of the review, discussions will be able to commence on aligning / integrating VALE functionality with Moodle and other core solutions such as Student Records as part of the resulting plan.

It is hoped that initial discussions will commence in June regarding the outcome of the above review, although at this point in time no commitment is able to be given on the commencement date of the developments discussed during the assessment exercise.

Prepared by: Janet Fleming, Senate Office

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