

**UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW**

**Academic Standards Committee – Tuesday 16 April 2013**

**Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of Postgraduate  
Taught Programmes in the College of Medical, Veterinary & Life  
Sciences held on 22 & 23 November 2012**

**Ms H Clegg, Clerk to the Review Panel**

**Review Panel:**

Professor Neal Juster	Vice Principal (Strategy & Resources); Convener
Professor Andrew George	Imperial College London; External Subject Specialist
Mr Razvan Balaban	Student Representative
Professor Richard Berry	School of Social & Political Sciences; Cognate Member
Professor Miles Padgett	School of Physics & Astronomy; Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Vicky Gunn	Learning & Teaching Centre
Ms Helen Clegg	Senate Office, Clerk to the Review Panel

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences (hereafter, 'the College') was formed in 2010, when a major restructuring exercise reshaped the University from nine Faculties into four Colleges. This brought together the former Faculties of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical & Life Sciences with one Graduate School. This allowed the rationalisation of three Graduate Schools with historically different cultures and structures and implementation of 'best practise' across all policies and procedures. The College is made up of three Schools and seven Research Institutes.
- 1.2 This was the first time the College's postgraduate taught (PGT) provision had been reviewed under the new University structure. Certain programmes were not included because they had been reviewed recently as part of the reviews of Life Sciences or Dentistry. It was intended these areas would be included in the next review of the College. This review therefore covered PGT programmes within the Medical and Veterinary areas.
- 1.3 The previous internal review (under the DPTLA process) as the Faculty of Medicine Graduate School) took place in May 2006. It concluded that provision was of a high standard but identified a number of areas for development. It had been noted that the Faculty of Medicine Graduate School had a strong research identity, but its role in relation to PGT provision was less well established and it appeared to be poorly understood. The Review Panel believed the Graduate School would benefit from reappraising its role in relation to the provision of PGT education and to promoting the benefits of an integrated approach to taught postgraduate provision throughout

the Faculty. It had also been noted that PGT students also lacked a sense of identity within the Graduate School.

- 1.4 The Self Evaluation Report had been prepared by a team led by Professor Christine Edwards (Deputy Dean of Graduate Studies (PGT)) which included Dr Maria Jackson (Medical Genetics), Ms Gail Honeyman (Graduate School Administrator (PGT)) and Mr Phillip Stanley (Recruitment & Marketing Officer for the College). There had been input to the document from programme co-ordinators and administrators across the College and a draft had been distributed to members of the College Postgraduate Taught Committee, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Graduate School Board. Focus Groups had also been held with students from the 2011-12 cohort, as the timing of this review meant the 2012-13 cohort had only been in place for a short time and would not be in a position to offer detailed feedback. This inclusive approach was noted by the Review Panel as being good practice. However, the Review Panel noted that some information was not available – for example, the Graduate School strategy document.
- 1.5 The Review Panel met with the Dean of Graduate Studies (Professor Mandy McLean), the Deputy Dean of the Graduate School (PGT) (Professor Christine Edwards) and the College Dean of Learning & Teaching (Professor Jill Morrison). They also met with 7 Heads of School/Directors of Research Institutes, 27 members of staff, seven current students (two via Adobe Connect, from the Health Professions Education programme), and two graduates from the 2011-12 cohort. Three of the Health Professions Education students sent comments by email.

## **2. Background Information**

- 2.1 As PGT provision was supported by teaching across the College, staff were involved in various activities, including undergraduate teaching. It was not possible, therefore, to provide staff figures specific to the Graduate School.
- 2.2 In 2012-13, the College had 574 PGT students, giving 407.9 FTEs, and 682 research students (632.5 FTEs).
- 2.3 The Review Panel considered the following PGT programmes offered by the College:
  - Doctorate in Clinical Psychology
  - MSc (MedSci)/Doctorate in Health Professions Education
  - MRes Translational Medicine
  - MRes Molecular Functions in Disease
  - MRes Brain Sciences: From Molecules to Mind\*
  - MRes Molecular Medicine
  - MRes Infection & Immunobiology\*
  - MSc (MedSci) Cardiovascular Sciences
  - MSc (MedSci) Clinical Pharmacology
  - MSc (MedSci) Sport & Exercise Medicine

- MSc (MedSci) Behavioural Sleep Medicine
- MSc (MedSci) Clinical Physics/Clinical Radiation Physics
- MSc (MedSci) Forensic Toxicology
- MSc (ClinSci) Evidence Based Medicine & Education
- MSc (MedSci) Health Care
- MSc (MedSci) Human/Clinical Nutrition
- MSc (MedSci) Medical Genetics
- MSc (MedSci) Clinical/Applied Neuropsychology
- MSc (ClinSci) Paediatric Science
- MSc (ClinSci) Reproductive & Maternal Sciences
- MSc (ClinSci) Surgical Oncology
- MSc Animal Welfare Science, Ethics & Law
- MSc Quantitative Methods in Biodiversity, Conservation & Epidemiology
- MSc Sport & Exercise Science\*
- MSc Crop Biotechnology\*
- MSc Cardiovascular Practice\*
- MSc Applied Medical Science\*
- MSc Global Mental Health\*
- Master of Veterinary Public Health
- Masters in Primary Care
- Masters in Public Health
- PgC/PgD Child Health\*
- PgC Sports Nutrition
- PgC Healthcare Chaplaincy

Titles marked with an asterisk indicate that the programme was introduced in 2011-12 or 2012-13.

2.4 The College is made up of the following Schools and Research Institutes:

- School of Medicine\*
- School of Veterinary Medicine\*
- School of Life Sciences
- Institute of Cancer Sciences
- Institute of Biodiversity, Animal Health & Comparative Medicine\*
- Institute of Cardiovascular & Medical Sciences\*
- Institute of Infection, Immunity & Inflammation\*

- Institute of Molecular, Cell & Systems Biology\*
- Institute of Neuroscience & Psychology\*
- Institute of Health & Wellbeing\*

Those Schools and RIs contributing to programmes being considered in this review are marked with an asterisk.

2.5 Staff from across the College are also involved in undergraduate teaching in the College.

2.6 Teaching for PGT students takes place across a number of sites including the Gilmorehill campus, the Garscube campus, Yorkhill Hospital, Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Hampden football stadium.

### **3. Overall aims of the College's provision and how it supports the University Strategic Plan**

The Self-Evaluation Report set out the overall aims of the College's PGT provision. The Review Panel was content that these aims were in line with the University's Strategic Plan, particularly the aims to provide high quality training in response to demand from international health services, industry and research funders. The College's approach to research-led teaching, its commitment to flexible learning and its use of technology in teaching was closely aligned to the University's Learning & Teaching Strategy.

The restructuring of the University was considered by the College Graduate School to be beneficial in many ways, lowering barriers to the development of integrated provision and shared teaching at PGT level. A 'hub and spoke' approach was being developed, with programmes sharing core courses and then separating for more specialist courses. This would allow greater choice for students but also facilitate more cost-effective provision.

In response to the University's drive to increase PGT student numbers, particularly from overseas, several new programmes had been introduced and others reorganised. Demand had been difficult to predict and some programmes had not performed as well as expected. As a result, a full review of provision was being undertaken. Given the range of programmes on offer, the Review Panel questioned whether there was sufficient capacity in the Graduate School management to complete and implement this review in a timely manner.

## **4. An Evaluation of the Student Learning Experience**

### *4.1 Aims*

4.1.1 The aims of the College's PGT provision were detailed in the associated Programme Specifications. They were informed by the requirements of the relevant health professionals, scientists and professional bodies, and were broadly in line with the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Programme Specifications were publicly available through the University website.

4.1.2 The Review Panel considered from viewing the documentation that teaching appeared disjointed and some was duplicated. In order to be effective, more shared teaching was required. The Review Panel also believed there was a lack of sharing

of good practice, with no common strategy evident across the College. The Deputy Dean (PGT) explained that there had been challenges related to the formation of the new College, as the three Faculties' Graduate Schools had their own philosophies and structures. Discussions had taken place early and a Post Graduate Taught Committee had been set up in 2010 with a membership that reflected the various programmes. The Deputy Dean (PGT) stated that this was the forum to share good practice and resolve difficulties as well as programme co-ordinator awaydays and e-learning forums and workshops. The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that the main concern during the transition was to ensure student satisfaction remained high and she believed this had been achieved. For example, MVLS out-performed other Colleges in the 2012 PTES.

- 4.1.3 Based on the Programme Specifications and supporting documentation, and guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, the Review Panel was generally satisfied that the PGT programmes offered by the College remained current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the field and practice in their application. The focus on current, cutting-edge research was considered to be of particular value by the Review Panel and by the students spoken to by the Review Panel. However, many programmes were not represented at the review by students, and in some cases by staff, and this made it difficult for the Review Panel to reach a firm and informed conclusion on the quality and currency of those programmes.

#### 4.2 *Intended Learning Outcomes*

- 4.2.1 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for all programmes and courses were provided in the Programme and Course Specifications and in programme information documents given to students. In some courses, students were required to produce reflective coursework to demonstrate how each ILO had been achieved.
- 4.2.2 For professional programmes, the ILOs were informed by the requirements of accrediting bodies and matched against required competencies.
- 4.2.3 For non-professional programmes, the ILOs were based on graduate attributes for research and subject-specific knowledge and skills. They were discussed in the development stage with students, external experts and potential employers.

#### 4.3 *Assessment, Feedback and Achievement*

- 4.3.1 The Review Panel noted from the Self Evaluation Report that a wide range of assessment methods were in use, based on the requirements of students and any professional criteria. These methods included formal examinations, coursework, practical skills, work-based skills and projects. Students are provided with detailed assessment requirements and guidance.
- 4.3.2 In order to help students, sessions were held specifying what was required to pass examinations and coursework. Examples of good and excellent coursework were placed on Moodle for reference. For students who failed assessments, support was in place in the form of one to one sessions.
- 4.3.3 Given the diverse backgrounds and cultures of the PGT student body, there were differing levels of understanding about plagiarism. This issue was addressed in all programmes via the programme documentation and in taught sessions advising

students how to avoid plagiarism in their work. Many programmes also used the Turnitin software for coursework submission. Some staff members believed that the University policy of referring all plagiarism at postgraduate level to the Senate Assessors for Student Conduct was too harsh. They stated that often students made mistakes with referencing or paraphrasing and that the process appeared punitive.

- 4.3.4 It was reported in the Self Evaluation Report that, whilst staff aimed to give prompt and detailed feedback to students, this was not always possible due to heavy teaching loads and other commitments. In the PTES survey, only 58% of PGT students in the College were satisfied that feedback had been prompt, although it was noted that this was higher than the University average. Some programme co-ordinators had responded to this by employing varied feedback methods – discussion during seminars, one to one sessions, and video recordings were amongst those used. Feedback had also been formalised to ensure students realise they were receiving feedback as this was not always clear with more informal feedback mechanisms. However, the depth of the coursework meant that very detailed feedback was often expected and this took a lot of staff time to produce. The student group reported that feedback was helpful and detailed for some courses, but that only a grade was given for others.
- 4.3.5 It was noted from the documentation that the cohorts generally performed well, and that the means of assessment fairly reflected their achievements.

#### 4.4 *Curriculum Design, Development & Content*

- 4.4.1 A comprehensive review of PGT provision was currently in process across the College, with a view to identifying areas where teaching could be shared or more effectively delivered, and to developing hub and spoke teaching. Some developments had already been implemented – for example, the MRes Infection & Immunobiology programme introduced in September 2012 had replaced four named programmes. Whilst this new programme was still in its early stages, the programme leader reported that teaching was well integrated. The Deputy Dean of the Graduate School (PGT) advised that it was intended to have the review completed and rationalised provision in place within around three years. She explained that sometimes timetabling and teaching location issues, including the availability of appropriately sized rooms, prevented shared teaching. However, she estimated that, where it was possible, around one-third of the content of the programmes would form a common ‘hub’. The staff group spoke positively about the hub and spoke plans, reporting that they had participated in a recent ‘away day’, reviewing strengths and opportunities and how these could be developed. They reported that there was considerable goodwill from staff to move in this direction. Some examples of shared teaching already in operation were described by staff. The Deputy Dean (PGT) advised that a strategy for development of hub and spoke provision and the rationalisation of programmes had been devised, but that it was not included with the review documentation because it had not yet been discussed with staff. The Review Panel was extremely disappointed not to have sight of this strategy. However, the Review Panel noted that there did not appear to be any clear appraisal of the current position with regard to shared teaching, and it was therefore unclear how the College would be able to determine that it was moving in the desired direction. The Review Panel **recommends** that the College formulates a clear vision of how it wishes its

postgraduate teaching to evolve, with a comprehensive strategy and expected timescales.

- 4.4.2 The Review Panel noted that two main types of programmes were on offer – MRes programmes, designed to train students in research skills and containing two major projects, and MSc programmes containing 120 taught credits and a project. Two taught Doctorates were also offered, with the first year comprising taught courses. All programmes had been developed to suit different markets and needs.
- 4.4.3 The responsibility for reviewing and approving course and programme design and content lay with the College Postgraduate Taught Committee and the College Board of Studies. After discussions between proposers, the Deputy Dean (PGT) and the Recruitment & International Office, proposals for new courses and changes to existing ones were evaluated and approved by these Committees in the context of overall provision, resource implications, the balancing of staff workloads and coherence with other provision. Programme proposals were required to be approved by the University's Academic Standards Committee, via Programme Approval Groups.
- 4.4.4 Existing provision was reviewed regularly to ensure programmes remained fit for purpose and of the requisite high standard. As well as reviewing change proposals, the Postgraduate Teaching Committee also reviewed business plans and annual review documentation. External Examiners' reports were also considered as part of the regular review of provision.
- 4.4.5 It was noted that there was a combination of theoretical and practical elements in all programmes. Whilst practical work was more resource intensive, particularly laboratory and project work, this was considered essential in terms of employability or progression to further research. The large number of MRes programmes, each containing two major projects, presented particular challenges in terms of laboratory space and staff commitment. Some programme leaders were concerned that the planned increase in student numbers would not be manageable in terms of project provision, laboratory space or staff time.
- 4.4.6 The student/graduate group stated that they had made suggestions for alterations to their programmes via the Staff/Student Liaison Committee, but had been advised by staff that programme and course content was fixed and could not easily be changed. The students felt their feedback was often not taken on board due to the amount of bureaucracy, and that more flexibility was needed in order for courses and programmes – particularly new ones - to adapt and evolve in response to experience. A specific example related to the MRes Infection & Immunobiology programme was given. Students had noted an imbalance in how workload was scheduled, with the programme being end-loaded. Students had requested a better spread of assessment but had been advised no changes could be made. The Review Panel was surprised by these comments, given the University's comparatively flexible approval procedure for approving changes to courses and programmes. The Review Panel **recommends** that clear and consistent guidelines should be provided across the College to encourage feedback from students on all programmes and to use this to inform changes to course and programme content and structure in line with the University's course and programme approval procedure.

- 4.4.7 The student group noted that all classes were compulsory, but that in some cases the content was too basic. For example, classes in presenting using Powerpoint were mandatory, but some students were experienced in using Powerpoint, particularly as many had taken these classes as undergraduate students, and felt the time could have been used more effectively had the classes been optional.
- 4.4.8 Some students noted that the groups for Problem-based Learning were often not well balanced in terms of student ability, with some groups being entirely made up of very good students and some with poorer students. This impacted on the success of the projects submitted. It was not clear how the groups were selected. Considering this, and the preceding paragraph, the Review Panel **recommends** that the Graduate School consider introducing appropriate mechanisms for ensuring its curricula are matched to students' prior knowledge, to permit maximum engagement with programme material.

#### 4.5 *Student Recruitment*

- 4.5.1 The College developed and launched its first recruitment marketing strategy in 2011-12. The College suffered by the appointment of a full time College Recruitment & Marketing Officer (RCMO) being delayed. This appointment was made at the beginning of 2012. It aimed to achieve its objectives by increasing media coverage, using social media, working with external partners and participating in recruitment events.
- 4.5.2 Student numbers had failed to reach their target in 2012-13. This was because a number of applicants who had received unconditional offers failed to take up their place even though estimates by the Recruitment & International Office (RIO) had suggested targets would be met. More effort was therefore being put into managing conversions and the RCMO had researched the reasons why some applicants who received an offer did not take it up. He found finance was the most common reason, accounting for almost half of those who did not take up their place. The lack of conversions had been surprising to RIO. However, some of the countries being targeted (e.g. India) had historically low conversion rates and others were countries experiencing specific difficulties (e.g. Libya). The College RCMO was prioritising this and stated that marketing was now more intelligence-led than before, with much more academic involvement. Other countries would be targeted for the 2013-14 intake and China in particular would be a key focus. Work had already started, with some documents being provided in Chinese and a landing page for the College in Chinese.
- 4.5.3 The Deputy Dean (PGT) noted that it was sometimes difficult to match RIO's business with the needs of the College and that schedules for overseas visits could not always be co-ordinated. She reported that RIO was helpful in speaking to initial enquirers, but that more work needed to be done to improve communication with applicants, particularly once offers had been made. Some of the staff group agreed that there was a lack of support from RIO, despite their engagement being requested, and that data RIO supplied was not always accurate. However, it was reported that the reformed MRes Infection & Immunobiology had been prioritised by RIO and that there had been a good deal of interaction between the Research Institute and RIO with regard to this programme.

- 4.5.4 Given the high demand for the College's PGT programmes from applicants in countries where conversion was historically low, consideration had been given to the introduction of a deposit system. Staff reported they were keen to do this and the plan had the support of RIO, but there were concerns that applicants might be deterred as a result. Additionally, as any deposit scheme would be managed via MyCampus, there were concerns about the practicalities, given the difficulties that had arisen in relation to fee payments in MyCampus. The Review Panel **recommends** that the College give consideration to the implementation of a 'soft deposit' scheme to improve conversion rates, whereby those accepting an offer were required to place a deposit to secure their place, but where the College still had discretion to hold a place open without a deposit where this was considered justifiable. The process would require to be rigorously tested in MyCampus prior to introduction in order to avoid the problems already experienced by students making payments via MyCampus.
- 4.5.5 The Deputy Dean (PGT) advised that the College had a target of 50% international students by 2013-14. At present, around 31% of the PGT students were international and this figure had remained unchanged between 2011-12 and 2012-13.
- 4.5.5 The Deputy Dean (PGT) reported that 100 additional PGT students (10 per School/Research Institute) would be sought for the 2013-14 session, but it was not yet known which programmes would be able to recruit. This target has been set by the College Operational Group using information from a capacity analysis carried out. This had been based on information supplied by programme leaders. The Review Panel was concerned about the recruitment of 100 additional students given the issues that had been raised surrounding teaching space, staff time and the availability of projects, especially in MRes programmes where two projects were required. The College Dean of Learning & Teaching believed the target was achievable and realistic. However, the Heads of Schools/Directors of Research Institutes did not consider that capacity existed to meet the target, at least in some areas. The Review Panel **recommends** that the College reviews its recruitment targets to determine whether they are achievable and realistic in view of the capacity of existing estate, staffing, project provision and likely demand.
- 4.5.6 The Review Panel noted that some programmes had very small student numbers and questioned whether this was financially and academically viable. The Dean of Graduate Studies advised that, in many cases, students on these programmes shared classes with students from other programmes and that it was not typical for students to be in classes of only a few students (except in some laboratory based sessions). However, she confirmed that underperforming programmes would be withdrawn or amalgamated. She reported that there were plans at present to redevelop 17 existing programmes into four hub and spoke programmes. The Dean of Teaching and Learning noted that it was crucial to keep staff morale high when programmes were being withdrawn or merged, and that discussions were currently taking place with the staff concerned.

#### 4.6 *Student Progression, Retention & Support*

- 4.6.1 It was stated in the Self Evaluation Report that information on the requirements for progression was included in programme documentation and was an important aspect of student feedback. The teaching structures and the various assessment methods

allowed ongoing monitoring of performance and identification of students facing problems. Additional support was in place for students found to be struggling and the methods used varied between programmes. In the MSc Health Care, students received detailed feedback on work, one to one feedback sessions, and a work-based mentor. In the MSc Medical Genetics, extra tutorials were arranged. MSc Applied Neuropsychology students were given a weekly tutorial where they could review key topics and practice answering examination questions.

4.6.2 The Deputy Dean (PGT) stated that there was recognition of the issues faced by international students in particular, and that extra effort was made to try to support them. For all students, programme staff were accessible and approachable.

4.6.3 The Panel commented positively on the work done by staff and students on some MSc cohorts, supported by a variety of social events. It was clear that this helped many students have a positive experience of life at the University and in the city.

#### 4.7 *The Quality of Learning Opportunities*

4.7.1 The College was found to use a number of traditional teaching and learning methods in tandem with more innovative ones, making good use of technology, particularly for distance learning students. Some of the programmes used a work-based learning approach – for example, the MRes Molecular Medicine programme gave students a realistic experience of doctoral studies, with 42 weeks of the year being laboratory based. There were also small-group weekly tutorials which helped foster cohort identity.

4.7.2 Students had the opportunity to experience problem-based learning, debates, journal clubs and other activities to engage them with their learning. Interactive teaching methods were used, and technology featured heavily in many programmes. Students on the MSc Health Professions Education programme had the option of either on-campus attendance during the day, or online attendance using Adobe Connect from home in the evening. The programme also made use of video clips and papers placed on the Moodle site to support learning. The students the Review Panel spoke to via Adobe Connect praised the use of the face to face, online sessions which were considered much more effective than web-based discussion groups.

4.7.3 Collaboration with professional bodies ensured access to excellent opportunities. For example, some teaching in the MSc Medical Genetics programme was delivered by NHS professionals using state of the art laboratory space at the Southern General Hospital. The MSc Global Mental Health programme had links with a number of organisations carrying out mental health work around the world. Students on the MSc Sport & Exercise Medicine had access to rehabilitation facilities and clinical professionals at Hampden football stadium.

4.7.4 All programmes included project work, with the MRes programmes incorporating two major projects. It was reported in the Self Evaluation Report that students often considered the project work to be the most valuable part of their learning experience and of high value to their career development. The student group agreed with this statement.

- 4.7.5 Some programmes included a course where students were required to write a research proposal in the form of a grant application. This provided valuable experience and helped students develop essential skills in planning research projects and justifying the resources needed. Other programmes made use of reflective portfolios. According to the Self Evaluation Report, which included very positive student commentaries, students recognised the value of the skills they had acquired during their programme.
- 4.7.6 Students received teaching from active researchers, many of whom were leaders in their field. This ensured teaching reflected up to date research and offered the best possible learning experience. This was especially important with regard to the supervision of student projects.
- 4.7.7 The Deputy Dean (PGT) advised that examples of good practice were shared across the College at Learning and Teaching events, away days, conferences and meetings of the Postgraduate Teaching Committee. The staff group reported that the College Dean of Learning & Teaching had organised a session, to take place shortly, with this purpose in mind.

#### 4.8 *Resources for Learning & Teaching*

- 4.8.1 The College Dean (Learning & Teaching) reported that there were around 1000 members of staff in the College, with about 600 of these being academic staff. Staffing resources were allocated by the individual Schools and Research Institutes, depending on their strategies, business plans and projected student numbers. This presented challenges when trying to develop new programmes, as it was difficult to employ new staff until increased income had been established.
- 4.8.2 Whilst many staff were involved in both teaching and research, staff on University Teacher and Senior University Teacher reported that they were not encouraged to undertake research. They expected that they would be unable to achieve promotion in their careers as academics on these contracts. Staff reported that there were competing priorities with regard to research and teaching. They were keen to teach, but stated there were huge pressures to undertake research, particularly for members of staff in the Research Institutes where regular publications and the securing of research income were vital. Additionally, some staff resented the amount of teaching they were required to do, at the expense of research, for little recognition. The Dean of Graduate Studies recognised this conflict, but stated that it could be resolved in some cases by encouraging new teaching based on staff research interests. The Review Panel **recommends** that the College ensures support for scholarship is offered for staff on University Teacher/Senior University Teacher contracts, in order to facilitate access to promotion for those staff.
- 4.8.3 It was also noted that some areas of the College did not appear to engage in teaching at all. For example, the Review Panel saw no evidence that the Institute of Cancer Sciences offered any teaching in the College, at least at postgraduate level. There was a view that the Research Institutes were perhaps detached from the College. Staff reported that in some Research Institutes staff were discouraged from teaching.
- 4.8.4 The Head of the School of Medicine stated postgraduate teaching was a main priority for the School, in terms of strategy, projected income and links with research activity.

He reported a review of the School's provision was in progress. The Head of the School of Life Sciences agreed, adding that reputational gain from postgraduate teaching was key. He advised that graduates moved from their programmes into influential positions, given the increasing role of scientific expertise in a wide range of sectors.

- 4.8.4 It was intended that the rationalisation of programmes would benefit staff as duplication of teaching would be avoided and administration could be carried out more efficiently.
- 4.8.5 The Review Panel noted that some programmes relied very heavily on one or two key staff members, and noted that one programme was being withdrawn due to the departure of the staff member with the necessary expertise to run the programme. The Review Panel could see no effective means of dealing with this within the College and this led to concerns over the sustainability of some existing programmes.
- 4.8.6 Given the wide range of teaching and learning spaces both campus-wide and off campus, the Review Panel was presented with a 'virtual tour' of the various spaces. Whilst some excellent facilities were available, the Review Panel noted that some of the teaching space was no longer fit for purpose. Space at the Yorkhill Hospital site was unsuitable but was in use by the Medical Genetics and in part by Clinical/Human Nutrition students. Most of the Duncan Guthrie building which houses Medical Genetics was now unused, and was not well maintained. The lecture room doubled as a computer cluster and due to the small amount of laboratory space, sessions had to be run multiple times to accommodate all students. It was noted that no wi-fi access was available in the main Yorkhill Hospital but is available in the Duncan Guthrie building. The Yorkhill site was due to close completely in 2015, at which time facilities at the new Southern General campus would become available. However, the staff group reported that uncertainty about which teaching would move there meant there was reluctance to invest in existing or new provision. Additionally, staff noted that the promise of the new Southern General campus meant that the College was being overlooked in University development plans whilst seminar rooms and laboratory space were still desperately needed. The planned moves of MVLS staff to Garscube, the South Glasgow Hospital and the Glasgow Royal Infirmary were complex. Substantial planning was being undertaken with Estates & Buildings and the NHS. However, the Review Panel **recommends** that the College management better articulates the plans, in order that future plans for the movement of programmes and teaching can be more clearly communicated to staff and students.
- 4.8.7 The lack of laboratory space impacted particularly on MRes student projects, with one programme leader stating that only around one-third of students on his programme were able to undertake wet laboratory projects as a result. The Review Panel considered this unsatisfactory for a Russell Group university, and anticipated that the situation would deteriorate further with the planned recruitment of 100 additional PGT students across the College next year. This was potentially damaging to the University's reputation. Given the lack of resources to offer sufficient wet laboratory projects, and the increasing staffing and financial resources required to provide two projects for MRes students, the Review Panel **recommends** that the College reviews the balance of its MSc and MRes programmes, or considers alternatives means of providing projects for MRes students.

- 4.8.8 Students on the MSc Medical Genetics programme had access to better facilities at the Southern General Hospital, but the location was problematic for students, with poor current public transport links and a lack of parking space. In contrast, facilities at the Gartnavel Campus were excellent, with a good deal of animal accommodation and spacious, well-equipped laboratories. Forensic Toxicology students also had access to excellent teaching space, including a moot court, IT suite and library.
- 4.8.9 Teaching for Human and Clinical Nutrition students moved between the main campus, the Royal Infirmary, Yorkhill Hospital and other sites. The College tried to timetable classes to permit minimal inconvenience to students but acknowledged that travel between the various sites did consume valuable study time.
- 4.8.10 The University had introduced the MyCampus system in August 2011 to manage all aspects of student enrolment, finance and course administration. With one exception, the students spoken to by the Review Panel were not positive about their experiences of MyCampus. One student related that he had experienced severe problems that had caused delays in enrolment and fee payment. Another stated that confusion over his status (taught or research) had meant he could not access required courses on MyCampus, and this was causing him difficulty with the UK Border Agency as he required to register full-time on classes. Students reported that the system was very difficult to understand and that it was almost impossible to obtain help.
- 4.8.11 The staff group also raised a number of concerns regarding MyCampus. They reported that the situation had improved over the last year, but that this was due to the commitment and determination of staff, rather than any real improvement in the system itself. Examples were given of problems uploading results, managing payments, enrolling students and creating plans. It was also reported that there was a lack of communication with relevant staff when problems arose – for example, when around 300 students' BACS payments were delayed earlier in the year, the students were notified but staff were not, so they were unable to advise when students queried the matter. Staff concluded that MyCampus was not intuitive, was very difficult to use, and generated a significant amount of extra work, particularly in the area of error retrieval. Staff reported that it was not possible to run any required process from start to finish without spending a significant amount of time retrieving and resolving errors. This was partly due to poor training, with instructions being given but with no context or explanation, but also due to the fact that MyCampus was overcomplicated. Staff advised that the trainers' contracts were ending in December 2012, and there would then be nobody available to give training. It was estimated that the workload of administrative staff had doubled as a direct result of using MyCampus, and the Review Panel heard that some staff members were currently on sick leave due to the stress caused by this. Staff were concerned about the impact of the system on the student experience, as well as on staff morale. There was also concern that, when the applications process was implemented in MyCampus, the experience of trying to negotiate the system would deter applicants. It was also reported that Advisers of Study were unable to spend sufficient time speaking to students due to the time they were required to spend trying to resolve issues in MyCampus. The Review Panel noted that, whilst improvements had been made, MyCampus was clearly still evolving and was, at present, not seen as fit for purpose.

It **recommends** that the University's Senior Management Group recognises the ongoing inadequacies of the system and continues to invest resources in resolving these in order that MyCampus is fit for purpose and enhances, rather than frustrates, the student and staff experience.

## **5. Maintaining the Standards of Awards**

- 5.1 Benchmark statements specific to PGT programmes are not made. Each programme was developed on the basis of the academic expertise of the staff members involved and the needs of the professions, and then scrutinised via the usual University procedures. The Panel considered this was appropriate, and typical of other PGT programmes throughout the University.
- 5.2 It was reported in the Self Evaluation Report that a number of programmes were accredited by professional bodies. For instance, the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology was accredited by the UK Health Professions Council and the British Psychological Society, and the Master of Veterinary Public Health was accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. For these and other accredited programmes, Intended Learning Outcomes had been devised in line with required professional competencies.
- 5.3 External Examiners played an extremely important role in ensuring standards were maintained, through providing a means of comparison with other institutions. The Deputy Dean (PGT) confirmed that the comments made by External Examiners fed into the review process. External Examiners' reports had been generally positive about the College and its PGT provision, and had praised the high quality of students' work. The Deputy Dean (PGT) advised that External Examiners' reports were sent to the individual School or Research Institute, rather than to the Graduate School, and noted there was no mechanism for the reports to be considered centrally. The Review Panel **recommends** that the current practice of External Examiners' reports being submitted to each School and Research Institute within the College be reviewed, and that central examination of the reports by the Graduate School be considered.
- 5.4 It was highlighted in the Self Evaluation Report that the Postgraduate Taught Committee played a vital role in the maintenance of standards, both in terms of reviewing and acting upon Annual Course Monitoring Reports, and in sharing good practice across the College.

## **6. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience**

- 6.1 The Review Panel noted that there was a good deal of excellent teaching in its PGT programmes and that quality assurance procedures appeared to be in line with University policy and were applied effectively. It was clear that the staff members the Review Panel met were engaged in excellent teaching and were committed to ensuring the student experience was of the highest quality.
- 6.2 The use of technology enhanced learning was noted to be a priority, with programmes now using Moodle, YouTube and Facebook to enhance provision and engage more effectively with students. Online, interactive sessions were beginning to be used and an enhanced version of Moodle could now host video and other teaching tools. These opportunities were being explored and implemented on an

ongoing basis and student focus groups were being run to evaluate the use of technology in teaching and learning.

- 6.3 The strong research environment was considered by the Review Panel to be one of the College's main strengths. This enhanced the teaching and learning processes from the application of cutting-edge techniques to teaching, and the provision and supervision of projects. It allowed for curricula to be constantly refreshed, making sure the student experience was as current and professionally applicable as it could be. The students who met with the Review Panel noted this as a strength, stating that they had joined their programmes to learn particular skills, and that they were able to select projects based on using these skills as well as increasing their knowledge in their particular areas of interest.
- 6.4 It was noted from the Self Evaluation Report that staff/student communication was encouraged (both formally and informally) and that a good deal of feedback was provided by students. The Staff/Student Liaison Committee was described as being valued and it was reported that minutes were uploaded to Moodle as well as information on the actions taken in response to points raised. However, the student group reported that suggestions were not always taken on board, and that they were advised in some cases that changes could not be made [see paragraph 4.4.6]. The Heads of School/Directors of Research Institutes expressed surprise at this comment, stating that they acted on feedback wherever possible and appropriate.
- 6.5 The Review Panel noted that Annual Course Monitoring Reports (ACMRs), together with student feedback questionnaires, informed course and programme enhancements. The ACMRs were considered by the Deputy Dean (PGT) and the Graduate School Quality Assurance Officer, who summarised them for the Postgraduate Teaching Committee.
- 6.6 The Review Panel noted from the Self Evaluation Report that some programmes were developed specifically for the overseas market, and questioned whether these provided students with a UK university experience. The students who met with the Review Panel spoke very positively about this, reporting that the range of nationalities and cultures within their student groups offered them an extra dimension to their learning experience which would not have been available to them in their home country. The College arranged a number of social events throughout the year to assist with integration and the students valued these greatly.

## **7. Summary of Perceived Strengths and Areas for Improvement in Learning & Teaching**

### **Key Strengths**

- Strong research environment
- Commitment of staff to ensuring the student experience is high quality and engaging
- Good student support mechanisms in place, especially for international students

### **Areas for Improvement**

- The lack of coherence of provision across the College or any comprehensive strategy to address this

- The apparent lack of access to scholarship for staff on teaching contracts
- The mismatch between recruitment targets and available capacity and resources
- Variable engagement with student feedback
- Capacity of the Graduate School management to complete and implement the review of provision in a timely manner

## Conclusions

The Panel was impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and students, and with the firm focus on practical work and employability. The student group were enthusiastic and positive, and a credit to the College.

The College demonstrated a number of strengths, as well as an awareness of the areas requiring improvement. The most substantive of these are reflected in the recommendations below.

However, the Review Panel considered that the number of programmes covered by this Review was much too large to be manageable, and rendered the Review less meaningful than was satisfactory. The majority of programmes were not represented in the student group and some were also unrepresented in the staff group. This meant the Review Panel had only the documentation prepared by the College on which to base its conclusions. Although the standard documentation had been supplied, the Review Panel would have found it useful to receive more collated data and information on year on year trends and graduate destinations. Academic Standards Committee may wish to review the sufficiency of the standard documentation to be prepared for periodic subject review. Academic Standards Committee is asked to consider whether there might be a more appropriate, effective and meaningful method of reviewing the Graduate School's provision.

## Recommendations

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. They have been cross referenced to the paragraphs to which they refer in the text of the report. They are ranked in order of priority.

### *Recommendation 1*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College formulates a clear vision of how it wishes its postgraduate teaching to evolve, with a comprehensive strategy and expected timescales [*Paragraph 4.4.1*].

For the attention of: **Head of College**

### *Recommendation 2*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College reviews its recruitment targets to determine whether they are achievable and realistic in view of the capacity of existing estate, staffing, project provision and likely demand [*Paragraph 4.5.5*].

For the attention of: **Dean of Graduate Studies**

### *Recommendation 3*

The Review Panel noted that, whilst improvements had been made, MyCampus was clearly still evolving and was, at present, not seen as fit for purpose. The Review Panel **recommends** that the University's Senior Management Group recognises the ongoing inadequacies of the system and continues to invest resources in resolving these in order that MyCampus is fit for purpose and enhances, rather than frustrates, the student and staff experience [Paragraph 4.8.11].

For the attention of: **University Senior Management Group**

#### *Recommendation 4*

Given the lack of resources to offer sufficient wet laboratory projects, and the increasing staffing and financial resources required to provide two projects for MRes students, the Review Panel **recommends** that the College reviews the balance of its MSc and MRes programmes, or considers alternative means of providing projects for MRes students [Paragraph 4.8.7].

For the attention of: **Dean of Graduate Studies**

#### *Recommendation 5*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College ensures support for scholarship is offered for staff on University Teacher/Senior University Teacher contracts, in order to facilitate access to promotion for those staff [Paragraph 4.8.2].

For the attention of: **Head of College**

#### *Recommendation 6*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College management better articulates the planned moves of MVLS staff to other sites, in order that future plans for the movement of programmes and teaching can be more clearly communicated to staff and students [Paragraph 4.8.6].

For the attention of: **Head of College**

#### *Recommendation 7*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the College give consideration to the implementation of a 'soft deposit' scheme to improve conversion rates, whereby those accepting an offer were required to place a deposit to secure their place, but where the College still had discretion to hold a place open without a deposit where this was considered justifiable. The process would require to be rigorously tested in MyCampus prior to introduction in order to avoid the problems already experienced by students making payments via MyCampus [Paragraph 4.5.4].

For the attention of: **Dean of Graduate Studies**

#### *Recommendation 8*

The Review Panel **recommends** that clear and consistent guidelines should be provided across the College to encourage feedback from students on all programmes and to use this to inform changes to course and programme content and structure in line with the University's course and programme approval procedure [Paragraph 4.4.6].

For the attention of: **Dean of Graduate Studies**

*Recommendation 9*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Graduate School consider introducing appropriate mechanisms for ensuring its curricula are matched to students' prior knowledge, to permit maximum engagement with programme material [*Paragraphs 4.4.7 & 4.4.8*].

For the attention of: **Dean of Learning & Teaching**

*Recommendation 10*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the current practice of External Examiners' reports being submitted to each School and Research Institute within the College be reviewed, and that central examination of the reports by the Graduate School be considered [*Paragraph 5.3*].

For the attention of: **Head of College**