

Periodic Review Report Template

Faculty	Health & Life Sciences
Discipline Name	Biomedical, Biological & Food Sciences
Date of Review	16 / 17 October 2012
Review Panel (approved by Review Sub-Committee)	<p>Dr. Simon Robson (Chair): Associate Dean, Programme Development; School of the Built & Natural Environment.</p> <p>Dr. Linda Prescott-Clements: Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching & Student Experience; School of Health, Community & Education Studies.</p> <p>Dr. Caroline Reynolds: Programme Director, Department of Sport & Exercise Sciences; School of Life Sciences.</p> <p>Jo Rhodes: Students' Union President.</p> <p>External</p> <p>Professor Anthony Hilton: Professor of Microbiology and Head of Biomedical & Biological Sciences; Aston University.</p> <p>Facilitator</p> <p>Sally Iles, Academic Co-ordinator, Academic Quality, Academic Services.</p>
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook (February 2012 version), available from http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/review/intrev/
Notes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review reports are expected to be short and succinct, typically 3 to 4 sides of A4 • Sections highlighted in blue below, together with the header above, make up the published summary of this review. This will be published on the University's Teaching Quality Information web pages (http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/tqinf/) 	

Section 1	Discipline Aims and Context
<p>The Discipline covers two of six approximately equally sized Departments within the School of Life Sciences. The School of Life Sciences was formed in 2010 through a merger of the Departments of Biology, Food & Nutritional Sciences, Biomedical Sciences and Chemistry & Forensic Sciences from the former School of Applied Science with the School of Psychology & Sports Science. Changes affecting the Discipline resulting from restructuring were minor and largely positive, in particular existing interdisciplinary research projects were strengthened and further collaborative activities were promoted. At the time of writing, the Discipline is set to undergo further reorganisation as the School of Life Sciences merges with the School of Health, Community and Education Studies to form the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. Like the previous merger, this will provide the opportunity to explore new collaborative activity in a range of teaching and research ventures.</p> <p>Since the last periodic review, the Discipline has developed an exciting and prestigious collaborative venture with St George's University School of Medicine (SGUSoM), Grenada. The Keith B Taylor Global Scholars Programme (KBTGSP) allows an international cohort of graduate medical students to conduct the first year of their study toward MD at Northumbria, gaining a DipHE Medical Sciences. As its title suggests, the programme is characterised by its exploration of global healthcare issues rather than a simple diet of Basic Medical Sciences. The genesis of this programme strongly drove staff recruitment and in particular broadened the subject base to include clinician and specialist lecturers in anatomy, physiology and neuroscience. This increase in subject breadth has allowed the development of Human Biosciences to include neuroscience, nutrition and dietetics aspects.</p> <p>The Discipline includes 572 students on full-time programmes (99 of whom are undertaking masters level study), 444 students on sandwich programmes and 69 students on part-time programmes (42 of whom are</p>	

undertaking masters level study).

Facilities include 7 fully refurbished teaching laboratories, 3 refurbished and 4 new research laboratories, including a food pilot plant, a new chromatography facility, two new tissue culture facilities, histology and microscopy labs and an anatomy teaching laboratory. Staff in the Discipline are located in offices in Ellison Building A and D blocks [2nd, 3rd and 5th floors] close to specialist teaching and research facilities. In addition to access to standard and tiered lecture theatres in Ellison and across the University, the Faculty has a range of general teaching and more specialist scientific laboratory facilities with a wide range of state-of-the-art instrumentation and equipment. All scientific Disciplines within the Faculty have equal access to all the teaching facilities therefore individual laboratories are not dedicated to particular Disciplines and can be used most effectively to deliver parallel sessions. The KBTGSP is housed separately in the Drill Hall which includes a lecture theatre, a series of seminar rooms, staff offices that accommodate SGUSoM academics involved in the collaborative discipline and the anatomy teaching laboratory. Additionally the Discipline is supported by 3 specialist IT suites.

The range of programmes and related staff input is captured in the table below.

Programme Management Structure and Staffing Profile

Department	Programme Director	Programme Title	Programme Leader
Biomedical Sciences Head, Dr. Lynn Dover Teaching staff: 2 Professors 2 Readers 1 Principal Lecturer 17 Senior Lecturers 2 Lecturers 4 Research Associates	Mr Derek Stobo	BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science	Dr. Kay Padget
		BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science	Mr Harry Elliott
		BSc (Hons) Human Biosciences	Dr. Suad Awad
		DipHE Medical Sciences	Dr. Nirupma Kakkar
		CertHE Medical Sciences	Dr. Seth Racey
		MSc Biomedical Science	Mr Robert Young
Biology, Food and Nutritional Sciences Head, Dr. Helen Hooper Teaching staff: 1 Professor 1 Teaching Fellow 1 Reader 2 Principal Lecturers 7 Senior Lecturers (6.5 FTE) 3 Lecturers (2.6 FTE) 3 Research Associates	Dr. Fiona Caple	BSc (Hons) Applied Biology	Dr. Mirela Cuculescu
		BSc (Hons) Biology with Forensic Biology	Dr. Mirela Cuculescu
		BSc (Hons) Biotechnology	Dr. St John Usher
		BSc (Hons) Food Science and Nutrition	Dr. Julie Young
		BSc (Hons) Human Nutrition	Dr. Julie Young
		MSc Biotechnology	Dr. Rinke Vinkenoog
		MSc Food Science	Dr. Nikos Mavroudis
		MSc Microbiology	Dr. Amanda Jones
		MSc Nutritional Science	Dr. Nikos Mavroudis

The Discipline aims to provide a high quality range of professional and applied programmes that will both equip graduates with the skills and knowledge valued by employers, and facilitate further education opportunities—ultimately to maximise student employability across a variety of career paths. To achieve this, the Discipline seeks to promote and foster an environment in which high calibre students are attracted to study alongside staff engaged with outstanding research and enterprise activities. Relevance, currency and vocational applicability of Discipline is maintained *via* close ties with, and accreditation by, relevant professional and regulatory bodies, through collaboration with local employers in the area of Work Based Learning [WBL] / placements and through year long industrial Sandwich placements on all Honours programmes.

Section 2	Curricula and Standards
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Discipline's approach to optimising Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation, including the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and Association for Nutrition (AfN), which ensures the currency of the programmes and enhances the employability of students. • The Faculty's investment in laboratory equipment which enhances the student experience. • The applied nature of the programmes which was reflected in employer endorsement that when they recruited Northumbria graduates were able to 'hit the ground running'. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That in relation to Biomedical Sciences, the Discipline needed to maintain a watching brief on the Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC) agenda with a view to tailoring its programme discipline accordingly. • Continued investment in laboratory infrastructure to increase capacity and ensure the equipment supports a contemporary student experience of laboratory practice. • The Panel established that moderation processes were in place but recommend that these should be clarified to evidence clear and transparent QA processes to external examiners and other audiences. 	

Section 3	Management Information Trends
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Discipline is aware of and responding to issues arising from management information. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p>	

Section 4	Student Experience
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Discipline's success in cultivating a strong student identity. • The motivation and engagement of students who are keen to work in partnership with the Discipline. • Positive student evaluation of pre-entry information and open days. • The Discipline's attractive facilities and investment in equipment which facilitates a positive student experience. • The supportive role provided by the Student Support and Advice Centre (SSAC) for both students and academic staff. • The overall support for student placements which is further endorsed by the employers, particularly recognising the commitment of the Student Placement Officer. • The high quality University Sports facilities which are helping to attract students to the University. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p> <p>Placements</p> <p>The Discipline and Faculty continue to support and further develop student placement activity by securing sufficient investment in resourcing this service to enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued exploration of methods to increase placement capacity. • Maximisation of employer engagement to include making full use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools. <p>The Discipline explores the funding arrangements for placement years (particularly unpaid placements) as this seems to be acting as a disincentive to students taking advantage of placement opportunities.</p>	

Timetable

The panel noted that some students' timetables are overly compressed, resulting in long days (9 a.m. - 7 p.m.) that students reported were very taxing and resulted in reduced student engagement. The panel recognises the pressures that have resulted in this, but request that this issue is investigated further and solutions explored.

Assessment and Feedback

Inconsistency was noted in the structure and content of module handbooks, assessment briefs and clarity of expression of marking criteria. The Discipline should develop clear standards and guidance for student assessment and feedback information with particular reference to what is expected in relation to module handbooks, assessment briefs and assessment criteria.

Module boxes revealed evidence of assessment feedback, but the panel also identified examples of illegible feedback, failure to explain attribution of marks and a lack of advice to students about how to improve performance. It is recommended therefore that the Discipline improve the quality and consistency of student feedback as well as to ensuring the moderation process is fully utilised to monitor the quality of assessment feedback.

The panel observed that electronic assessment submission is used in isolated cases, and recommend that increased utilisation of electronic assessment submission and feedback would help remedy some of the problems identified.

Student Support and Advice Centre (SSAC)

The Discipline should work with the Faculty to put in place mechanisms to clarify and communicate SSAC's role and the range of services available for students.

Reading lists

Staff utilise the Library's reading list template to ensure appropriate texts are available in the Library.

Careers

The panel were made aware that students would welcome more support in preparing the specialist elements of their CVs (e.g. scientific aspects). The Discipline and Careers Service should investigate this further.

Section 5

Enhancement Strategies

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- The significant range of enhancement activity happening across the Discipline and demonstrated in the showcasing session.
- The examples they found of modules where there was engagement with higher end functionality of eLP.
- Mechanisms described for capturing and disseminating enhancement activities.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- Encourage the Discipline to embed enhancement activities across the entire range of programmes.
- On module eLP sites, ensure a consistent approach to the use of navigation buttons and location of contents (which adheres to the Faculty standard) and undertake regular sampling of module sites to ensure compliance with minimum standards.
- Ensure the peer review process is fully engaged with.

Section 6

Discipline Response to Report

Curricula and standards

In relation to Biomedical Sciences, the Discipline needed to maintain a watching brief on the Modernising Scientific Careers (MSC) agenda with a view to tailoring its programme discipline accordingly.

Liaison with local NHS placement providers and Health Education North East is valuable and sufficient to remain vigilant regarding developments in NHS and will allow us to progress in an appropriate sustainable manner.

Continued investment in laboratory infrastructure to increase capacity and ensure the equipment supports a contemporary student experience of laboratory practice.

A 60 person laboratory (EBA 314) has been built and commissioned.

The Panel established that moderation processes were in place but recommend that these should be clarified to evidence clear and transparent QA processes to external examiners and other audiences.

A description of the moderation process is embedded in every Programme handbook. We describe the process at induction and refer to it when appropriate.

Student experience

We are devoting greater resources to the securing of placement opportunities including a key role for our Departmental Business and Engagement lead. We are trialling a new feedback proforma and have developed more laboratory space to provide flexibility in the delivery of our curriculum. We have a closer relationship with the Careers Service.

Enhancement strategies

Encourage the Discipline to embed enhancement activities across the entire range of programmes.

A Departmental Enhancement group has been established to share best practice across the Applied Sciences Department. External speakers are sought to absorb best practice.

On module eLP sites, ensure a consistent approach to the use of navigation buttons and location of contents (which adheres to the Faculty standard) and undertake regular sampling of module sites to ensure compliance with minimum standards.

Student complaints regarding adherence to the minimum standard are acted upon immediately by Directors of Programmes. The Head of Department randomly accesses modules periodically.

Ensure the peer review process is fully engaged with.

To monitor engagement with peer assessment of teaching, the Personal Assistant to the Head of Department compiles a list of agreed dates for peer review, and then collates records as agreed sessions are completed.