

Periodic Review Report Template

School	Applied Sciences
Discipline Name	Geography and Environmental Management
Date of Review	4th and 5th February 2010
Review Panel (approved by University Learning and Teaching Committee)	<p>Internal Panel Members: Prof. Jackie Guille, Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) School of Design (Chair) Dr. Geoffrey Bosson, Head of Biomedical Sciences, School of Applied Sciences Dr. Lindsay Findlay-King, Programme Director, School of Psychology and Sport Sciences</p> <p>Students' Union Panel Member: Becky Warburton, Students' Union Vice President Activities and Development</p> <p>External Panel Member: Dr. Rosalind Taylor, Director, Kingston University Sustainability Hub</p> <p>Facilitators: Sally Iles, Learning and Teaching Adviser, Academic Registry; Simon Moore, Administrator (Reviews), Academic Registry; Danielle Kirkup, Assistant Administrator, Academic</p>
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook (2008 version), available from http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/lts/review/intrev/

Section 1	Discipline Aims and Context
<p>Geography and Environmental Management (GEM) are two closely related Discipline areas within the School of Applied Sciences. In Sept. 2008 the School underwent a structural reorganisation that redefined what were previously five Divisions as five Subject Discipline Areas, two being Geography and Environmental Management. Within the reorganisation the School introduced discipline leads in the three core business areas of Research, Enterprise, and Teaching & Learning and a new Head of Subject Discipline role, for each of the discipline areas.</p> <p>The continued popularity of Geography at A-level and in the general media has resulted in buoyant recruitment onto single honours programmes with target numbers increased for 09/10. More recent developments have included the BSc Environmental Health programme (first graduates in July 2008), the MSc in Community Wellbeing in Disaster and Development (first intake in September 2009) and, in collaboration with the School of Arts and Social Sciences, BA Crime Science (first graduates due in July 2011). Recruitment was strong to the Crime Science programme in 09/10 and there is a target of 30 in 2010/11. The MSc Disaster Management and Sustainable Development has intakes normally reaching 25 and over. Undergraduate recruitment to the Environment programmes has not been as strong as in Geography but remains healthy with a strong contingent of mature students.</p> <p>General Discipline Aims.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide high quality, coherent, programmes of study to develop subject-specific knowledge and understanding to an appropriate level; • to foster independent critical thinking; and • to promote student employability and lifelong learning through the development of key skills and personal attributes <p>The Disciplines also have a strong commitment to and engagement with research and enterprise activities, ensuring that subject-specific, applied and pedagogic research feeds into programmes. The Disciplines aim to maintain the currency and vocational applicability of their provision through close ties with relevant professional bodies, and through collaboration with organisations particularly within the region. Significant progress has been made by GEM staff in developing regional links in the University sector and with industrial/company/voluntary sector partners.</p>	

In 2009/10 there were 479 undergraduate students, a negligible number of these being international. A total of 25 students were enrolled onto taught postgraduate programmes, a healthy proportion of which were international, reflecting a growing interest in these programmes. The applications data suggests that there is strong international demand but it is proving challenging to translate this into enrolments. For instance, for 2009/10 entry applications were received from over 100 international students, but only 6 enrolled.

GEM has 29 FTE permanent academic staff members, and two graduate tutors. Geography has seen the recruitment of three additional staff to the Physical Geography and Crime Science area since Sept. 2007 and in 2009 a new member of staff was recruited to the BA Geography team. Two graduate tutors joined GEM in 2009. New staffing in Environmental Management includes 2 staff to strengthen the environmental science area and to support employer engagement.

Most staff in GEM are located in offices in Ellison Building D-block (1st and 2nd floors). One of the School's specialist IT teaching facilities (with a range of generic and subject-specific software e.g. ArcGIS, Geomatica) is also located in D-block, in addition to IT labs on the third floor of A-block. Through the timetabling process, GEM lecture and classroom activities are dispersed through standard flat and tiered lecture rooms in Ellison Building and elsewhere on the City Campus. Some of these venues are rather remote and both students and staff have sometimes had to make complaints about IT facilities (projectors, blinds) and other aspects of the teaching environment. GEM has specialist scientific laboratory facilities on the 6th floor of Ellison A-block, and a wide range of standard and *state-of-the-art* instrumentation and equipment. Excellent support is provided by technical staff. The refurbishment of teaching and office accommodation and an increase in capital spending for equipment purchases are a major focus of the Schools' 2009-10 and 2010-11 ADP.

GEM uses local, national and overseas locations for its fieldwork which has always featured as an integral and popular component of its provision.

Section 2	Curricula and Standards
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards and quality requirements are clearly met, as demonstrated by programme learning outcomes and the student journey described in the documentation and endorsed by students • The currency of the curriculum is both evidenced and reinforced by the opportunities for debate provided through activities such as 'Wednesday at 2' staff seminars • A range of subject expertise, complemented by staff research interests supports the delivery of the curricula and ensures its relevance • The coupling of specialist knowledge with the development of transferable skills in producing adaptable and flexible graduates is clearly appreciated by employers • There is clear evidence of high profile research providing students with learning experiences which they can apply to contemporary contexts <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish without delay an Employer Advisory Forum to take forward the partnership opportunities that evidently exist in the region • Staff research activities need to be strategically prioritised, managed and appropriately reflected in staff workloads, in order to maintain a 'cutting edge curriculum', whilst developing the profiles and reputation of the Disciplines • To increase guest lectures from experts in the field, drawn from national and international organizations and institutions, most particularly in relation to the taught Postgraduate provision 	

Section 3	Management Information
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subject content of programmes engages the interests of mature students and consequently contributes to the widening participation agenda • Discipline/School demonstrate a constructive evaluation of trends identified in Management Information to strategically inform their portfolios of programmes eg ceasing recruitment to BSc 	

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

Section 4

Student Experience

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- There is a strong collegiate ethos across both disciplines that promotes and fosters initiatives, and the recent changes in structural organisation have offered the potential for the group to capitalize on strategic opportunities
- Students find staff accessible and approachable, are well supported by programme leaders and guidance tutors and have a strong sense of identity
- Students were very clear that all programmes either met or exceeded their expectations

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- The School, informed by the discipline together with the University needs to address those resource issues that currently adversely impact on the student journey including:
 - Access to dedicated computer labs that have the requisite specialist GIS software
 - Timeliness of the provision of resources and support for the maintenance of key pieces of analytical equipment
- Recommend that the School and the University give further consideration to how financial costs of student participation in module fieldwork may continue to be supported
- To explore issues around legibility of feedback and anonymity of marking, and consider the appropriateness of electronic feedback

Section 5

Enhancement Strategies

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- There is a distinctive and high level of enhancement activities with regard to learning, teaching & assessment
- The level of engagement in pedagogical enhancement initiatives, supporting the development and diversity of innovative assessment practices is to be applauded
- The imaginative way in which the disciplines facilitate learner autonomy, e.g. through the use of podcasting and participatory electronic environments

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- More attention should be given to impact evaluation of learning and teaching initiatives, and to exploiting the dissemination of innovative practice through publication in peer reviewed journals

Section 6

Discipline Response to Report

Curricula and Standards

To establish without delay an Employer Advisory Forum to take forward the partnership opportunities that evidently exist in the region.

The department has already developed employer links, through membership of the regional Chartered Institute of Environmental Health group and annual careers days. Discussions on the composition of an Environmental Management employer forum are underway with the first meeting planned in Semester 2.

Staff research activities need to be strategically prioritised, managed and appropriately reflected in staff workloads, in order to maintain a 'cutting edge curriculum', whilst developing the profiles and reputation of the Disciplines.

Structural changes have resulted in a new management structure and a new workload model is being developed for the new School. Research allowances will be considered as part of this process.

To increase guest lectures from experts in the field, drawn from national and international organizations and

institutions, most particularly in relation to the taught Postgraduate provision.

A significant number of guest lectures take place using Visiting Fellows and Visiting Professors as well as the excellent networks established by staff. We continue to draw upon external input to our programmes. Students are invited to lunch time staff seminars which include input from a number of external speakers.

Student Experience

The School, informed by the discipline together with the University needs to address those resource issues that currently adversely impact on the student journey including:

- *Access to dedicated computer labs that have the requisite specialist GIS software*
Access to IT facilities has increased with the formation of the new School and specialist software is being rolled out.
- *Timeliness of the provision of resources and support for the maintenance of key pieces of analytical equipment.*
Structural changes have resulted in a change in laboratory management structure and the development of a cross-school laboratory operational management group. New procedures for monitoring equipment have been implemented.

Recommend that the School and the University give further consideration to how financial costs of student participation in module fieldwork may continue to be supported.

Students currently pay circa 55% of residential fieldwork costs. This is fully funded by the University in some other Schools. There will be no change in the position for this academic year. This will require review in light of new fee and scholarship structures across the University.

To explore issues around legibility of feedback and anonymity of marking, and consider the appropriateness of electronic feedback.

Anonymous marking has been adopted for standard written work in line with University policy. Electronic feedback is starting to become more widely adopted across the Department and a recommendation to post generic group feedback on blackboard is being promoted within the Department.

Enhancement Strategies

More attention should be given to impact evaluation of learning and teaching initiatives, and to exploiting the dissemination of innovative practice through publication in peer reviewed journals.

Innovative assessment /student work is showcased at exhibition style events advertised across the whole School. Departmental staff have recently been involved in a number of internal and external publications.