

Periodic Review Report Template

School	Law
Discipline Name	Law
Date of Review	2nd & 3rd April 2009
Review Panel (approved by University Learning and Teaching Committee)	<p>Internal Membership</p> <p>David Bell (Chair) Associate Dean External Activities, School of Computing, Engineering & Information Sciences</p> <p>Dr Pamela Davies Programme Director (Sociology & Criminology), School of Arts & Social Sciences</p> <p>Mick Woodley Associate Dean, School of Law</p> <p>Claire Rasul Education Caseworker, Advice and Representation Centre, Northumbria Students' Union</p> <p>External Membership</p> <p>Professor Alan Bensted Assistant Vice Chancellor, University of the West of England</p> <p>Facilitators</p> <p>Ms Chris Rickelton Administrative support to panel, Academic Registry (LEAD)</p> <p>Peter Fenwick Administrative support to panel, Academic Registry</p> <p>Liz Morrow Administrative support to panel, Academic Registry</p> <p>Sally Iles Learning and Teaching Support Adviser, Academic Registry</p>
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook (2008 version).

Section 1	Discipline Aims and Context
<p>This review covered the whole of the School of Law. In line with guidance in Northumbria Review handbook only a predetermined sample of programmes was looked at in depth.</p> <p>The following programmes were sampled within the School of Law's provision</p> <p>LL.B (Hons) Full Time 21FLUW-N LDE1 (BN)</p> <p>LL.B (Hons) Exempting 21FLUG-N LEX1 (BN)</p> <p>LL.B (Hons) Part Time 21PLUG-N LAW1 (BN)</p> <p>Legal Practice Course Full Time 15FLPR-N LPR6 (BN)</p> <p>Legal Practice Course Part Time 15PLPR-N LPR6 (BN)</p> <p>LL.M Child Law 14PLPT-N LCH6 (GD)</p> <p>LL.M Information Rights Law and Practice 14PLPT-N IRL6 (BD/GD)</p> <p>LL.M International Commercial Law 14FLPT-N ICL6 (BN)</p> <p>The School of Law has 1,362 full time students and 1,439 part time students which equates to 719.5 fulltime equivalent students. The sample covered 1132 fulltime students and 328 part time students including distance learning students. Eighty academic staff are employed within the School.</p> <p>Aims of the discipline</p> <p>The Law School aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfy regional, national and international needs by providing a range of high quality undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and continuing education programmes. Equip all students with the knowledge and professional skills to enable them to operate effectively as lawyers both within the legal profession and in other professional areas. 	

- Maximise opportunities for future employment by ensuring that all undergraduate and professional programmes meet the requirements of the Bar Standards Board (BSB) and the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).
- Ensure that all undergraduate programmes not only meet but surpass the benchmark requirements for an honours degree in Law and that post-graduate degrees reflect the requirements of the framework for higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Ensure that in accordance with the University's concern for the extension of access, programmes are responsive to the needs of its students by providing a flexible range of access opportunities to legal education, including a range of part-time and distance learning programmes at both undergraduate and post-graduate level and the opportunity to train as a barrister outside London.
- Provide a unique form of integrated and practical legal education and access to the legal profession through the four year integrated academic and professional LL.B programmes. The Student Law Office Programme allows students to study law in its practical context, thus developing their understanding through the practice of legal skills. It enables them to develop the application and problem solving abilities identified in the benchmark statement and provides an additional perspective through which to examine critically legal rules.
- Encourage students to be active learners through challenging and innovative teaching. The Law School supports the University's Learning and Teaching strategy through its integration of knowledge and skills into the curriculum and the emphasis in all programmes to the development of research skills.
- Develop the full potential of its students and their preparation for employment through programmes which foster a range of intellectual and transferable personal skills. The aim is to enable students to work independently, reflect on their own learning and develop as reflective practitioners.
- Optimise its resources in order to create a harmonious and effective learning environment and to maintain and develop appropriate opportunities for staff to pursue personal development including research, scholarly activity, consultancy and legal practice in order to promote the generation and dissemination of knowledge and understanding.

Recent contextual information

During 2007 and 2008 the Law School instigated a root and branch appraisal of the undergraduate and post graduate programmes leading to the solicitor's qualification. This review was prompted by a number of factors including the Training Framework Review, introduction of QAA benchmarking, reform of student funding, changes to the legal profession's regulatory mechanisms and legislative intervention in the provision of legal services. The undergraduate course and postgraduate programme were approved internally at validation on the 12th November 2008 and approval was given at a full validation panel of the SRA on the 3rd December 2008 when both programmes were unconditionally validated. On the 5th February 2009 the SRA gave approval for a five year pilot of the M Law Solicitor full qualification degree.

Since the appointment of the new Dean of the School of Law in June of 2008, the LLM programmes have been reorganised under a new management structure and a major review is currently taking place with the aim of providing a new common postgraduate framework and a rationalisation of teaching, learning and assessment across the provision.

Section 2	Curricula and Standards
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is robust evidence that the programmes reviewed are at the appropriate level and this is confirmed by External Examiner reports and the appropriate professional bodies. 2. The introduction of the new MLaw which is a pioneering programme within the sector. 3. The student law office which has won many awards and introduces the student body to the "real world" preparing them for employment. This is confirmed by those who employ Law School graduates as well as Law School students, both current and past. 	

4. Engagement with “Aim Higher” and the provision of the open learning and part time routes, which allows students from different backgrounds the opportunity to study law.
5. The strong engagement with employers in all aspects, including new programme development and the recruitment fair.
6. The growth of a research culture within the School and working with other Schools, giving opportunities to new programmes, such as the Law plus programmes.
7. The extra support provided for International students after concerns were raised by the External Examiner.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

1. Continue to monitor the progression rates of International students on the LLM programmes with particular emphasis on the dissertation.

Section 3

Management Information

The Panel identified the following strengths:

1. Difficulties have been encountered in integrating the School's non standard pattern of delivery with the University's management information system which the School has successfully supplemented in anticipation of resolution of problems.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

1. The School needs to work more closely with the centre to ensure student information is correct to allow correct invoicing for students, especially on part time and distance learning programmes. Support Works would not appear to be an appropriate mechanism for the finance issues identified.

Section 4

Student Experience

The Panel identified the following strengths:

1. The award winning Student Law Office gives the students an excellent opportunity to apply their knowledge and improve their skills in the real world and provides excellent opportunities for reflective practice.
2. The restructuring of the LLM programmes has vastly improved the student experience and made the management of them much more efficient through common study days etc.
3. The staff have an open door policy and this is really appreciated by the student body. Provision is made for full time, part time, open learning and distance learning students through different mechanisms.
4. The student engagement in the extracurricular activities such as the mock trials and the moot society.
5. The facilities provided by the School such as the Law Courts, classrooms, recording facilities and IT are excellent and the students really appreciate them.
6. The passion shown by the Programme leaders and the knowledge they have of their student needs.
7. The student representative system is well established and concerns are quickly responded to. The student reps are encouraged to engage with the Student Union and gain credit for their work.
8. Recognising the fact that all students will not become lawyers and providing career advice for alternative employment.
9. The availability of video clips of option modules so that students can make a more informed choice.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

1. The School should ensure that assessment feedback is given within the University guidelines and is fit for purpose. Dissemination of good practice should be carried out and include all

- teaching staff as well as part time tutors.
2. Programme handbooks should follow the University guidelines and include Programme Learning Outcomes.
 3. The students should be made aware of their Programme Learning Outcomes and the link between them and the individual Module Learning Outcomes.
 4. The School should continue with their plan to embed PDPs within the curriculum as the student body does not appear to engage with the current system.

Section 5	Enhancement Strategies
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The Panel identified the following strengths:

1. Engagement with CETL, APT, RIT show a willingness to engage in enhancement within the School and to gain further funding.
2. There is a most impressive amount of enhancement activity taking place within the School and several examples were demonstrated during the review. As well as School specific activities the School engages in the wider community attending sessions provided by Academic Registry, Human Resources, MARCET, Ntale and external bodies.
3. The internal review of E-Learning platform sites, which was commended by an accrediting PSRB.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

1. The School should improve its research profile, especially across the LLM's, which will allow access to a greater market, especially nationally.
2. Continue and expand the enhancement activities to all staff within the School.

Section 6	Discipline Response to Report
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- The School will monitor the progression rates of International students through LLM programme reviews.
- The School is undertaking an ongoing review of its fees structure in conjunction with the University's Finance department.
- A report on assessment feedback has been received by the School Executive and a school-wide open meeting has taken place to consult on proposals and ensure that actions are implemented for September 2010.
- Programme handbooks are in the process of being revised. Programme and Module Learning Outcomes are being clarified for students in programme and module handbooks. Progress on this is being reported to the School Executive.
- The School is continuing with its plan to embed Personal Development Planning (PDP) in the curriculum. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs is monitoring plans to integrate PDPs with PebblePad e-portfolio software.
- The School's research profile is being reviewed and the School has attended University events in preparation for its Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment.
- Enhancement sessions have been redesigned for new staff, and activities are being monitored by the Associate Deans.