

Periodic Review Report Template

Department and Faculty	School of Law, Faculty of Business and Law
Date of Review	30 and 31 January 2017
Review Panel (approved by Programme Approvals & Review Sub-committee)	<p>Chair Dr. Pamela Davies (Associate Professor; Faculty of Arts, Design & Social Sciences)</p> <p>Non Faculty Philip Anderson (Principal Lecturer; Faculty of Engineering & Environment) (<i>absent</i>)</p> <p>Faculty Internal Dr. Andy Robson (Associate Professor; Business & Law)</p> <p>Students' Union Alice Dalglish (Vice-President Education, Northumbria Students' Union)</p> <p>Quality and Teaching Excellence Dr. Sue Mathieson (Academic Development Officer, Academic Registry)</p> <p>External membership Paul Rylance (Associate Professor, University of Exeter)</p>
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Framework available from https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/reviewframework/
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 (https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/PQI/) 	

Section 1	Department Context
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short summary of scope of review – programmes or programme areas included, total student and staff numbers Short statement of the main aims of the department Short statement of any necessary contextual information (e.g. physical and organisational location, any recent restructuring etc.) <p>Summary Scope of Review</p> <p>The remit of this Periodic Review included the whole of the School of Law. In line with current process guidance, a sampling approach was adopted and included the following programmes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LL.B (Hons) Direct Entrants - M Law Exempting - M Law Exempting BPTC - Law with Business - Legal Practice Course (general route) - LL.M Mental Health Law <p>The School of Law has an overall student population of 2023 (<i>source: Qlikview, 02 February 2017</i>). The sample selected covered 997 undergraduate students and 135 postgraduate students, including 68 on distance learning delivery. There are currently 101 staff in the School of Law.</p> <p>Main Department Aims</p> <p>The Departmental aims were gathered in discussion with the Head of Department and Faculty Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor during the event. The Self Evaluation Document and strategic discussions contextualised the department. A summary of these aims are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To remain professionally focussed and real-world engaged; - To become more cross-disciplinary and reach out beyond the discipline by exploring multi-disciplinary opportunities; - To ensure the student experience benefits from and is supported by disciplinary and practitioner staff expertise;

- To support staff development opportunities.

Contextual Information

The future of legal education is currently under review by the professional bodies with strong indication by the SRA that there will be a move away from prescribing contents of law degrees and that external assessments (solicitors qualifying examinations) will be introduced for both legal knowledge and skills. Changes to the requirements for qualifications as a barrister are also unclear as is the impact of these changes on students wishing to study in the UK but practice in a different jurisdiction.

Academics within the Law School were returned under unit 20 as part of the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) submission. An exceptional outcome was achieved with an overall GPA of 2.48, 50% of outputs assessed at the 4*/3* thresholds. A Northumbria Law lecturer recently achieved a National Teaching Fellowship, celebrating excellent practice and outstanding achievement in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

More recently, the School's distinctive approach together with the flexibility of post Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards (PFNA) and broad ranging staff expertise will allow its programmes to respond to market challenges and enhance their attractiveness and market lead. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognised the work of the Student Law Office through a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE), a new award celebrating collaborative work in teaching and learning and highlighting innovative practice which supports student learning.

Section 2	Judgement Criteria	
Focus of judgements	Judgements	Outcome
The setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets UK and NU expectations, 	√
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not meet UK and NU expectations. 	
The quality of students' learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> commended, 	√
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets UK and NU expectations, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not meet UK and NU expectations. 	
Information about higher education provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> commended, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets UK and NU expectations, 	√
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not meet UK and NU expectations. 	
The enhancement of students' learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> commended, 	√
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meets UK and NU expectations, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or, 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not meet UK and NU expectations. 	

Section 3	The setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding strength of the Student Law Office and assessment of experiential learning; • Considerable evidence of innovative and collaborative engagement in curriculum development through PFNA; • Evidenced flexibility in curriculum design to respond to PSRB requirements; • Innovative engagement with Research-Rich Learning framework, drawing on expertise in Problem-Based and Experiential Learning; • Strong links to employers and alumni, and responsiveness to markets. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To track and record how significant improvements in research benefit students and how students are involved in curriculum enhancement (2016 review cycle); • To review how protocols and processes are operationalised and completed at departmental level so as to ensure compliance with Quality Assurance mechanisms (1 March 2017). 	
<p>The Panel made the following observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The panel would like to encourage proposing teams to maintain their quality of student intakes through direct entry whilst recognising the contribution of diverse international recruitment streams. 	
Section 4	The quality of students' learning opportunities
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad range of curriculum content and approaches to learning with good balance of theory and practice; • Opportunities for students to participate in real-life legal practice through the Student Law Office; • Appropriate range of option modules creating a rich learning experience, clearly valued by students; • Enthusiasm of staff team involved in programme design and teaching with strengths in both practice and research; • Skills development targeted through specific seminar activities, core level four modules and at key stages across the programmes; • NSS scores well corroborated by internal Students' Union survey with consistent strength in teaching and overall student satisfaction and ongoing improvements around assessment and feedback. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider means by which Direct Entrants students can be better informed at an earlier stage about the content and suitability of options on offer and given sufficient time to make informed choices (in time for the next student intake); • To understand and address student dissatisfaction around Academic Support and Organisation and Management using associated action plans by communicating more effectively with the student body and monitor through improved NSS scores and other indicators (as per University timeframe). 	
<p>The Panel made the following observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue promoting new personal tutoring policy; • To ensure communication of issue resolution is fed back to the student body using representation system in place; • To consider the scheduling of assessment components from the student perspective (avoid first day back post-Christmas break or undue bunching). 	
Section 5	Information about higher education provision
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsiveness to, and evident engagement with, the developments in professional body regulations and how this may impact on student recruitment and performance; • Programmes provide highly-valued opportunities for accessing legal careers training in the region that would be prohibitively expensive elsewhere. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No recommendations. 	

<p>The Panel made the following observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific observations.
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Section 6	The enhancement of students' learning opportunities
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<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative use of technology and technology enhanced learning in both student learning and, in some areas, assessment and feedback; Wide-ranging staff development opportunities through FHEA, research bandings and sabbaticals; Effective approach to enhancement ranging from employability and careers fairs, supporting student societies, student-led conferences and the Student Law Office; Comprehensive strategy to enhance assessment and feedback, leading to NSS scores improvements; Commendable and innovative engagement with curriculum redesign via PFNA. Exemplary work around pillars; Good practice links with well-developed careers, guest speaker and mentoring schemes drawing on strong commitment of Alumni and local firms, together with engagement with practitioners and employers through the Advisory Board. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No recommendations.

<p>The Panel made the following observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To encourage a more consistent and explicit briefing of the study body as to the range of student feedback practices in operation at each level of their programme and on each module within each level; To ensure greater consistency in the quality of written feedback to students; There are only 3 Senior Fellows and 1 Principal Fellow of the HEA in Law, which does not reflect existing excellence in teaching. To consider how more staff could be encouraged to apply for Senior Fellowship.
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Section 7	Further Quality Assurance Monitoring
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This section is copied from the self-evaluation document to acknowledge actions which the Department/Faculty has already identified and is already actioning.

Affirmations¹	Please list any affirmations identified and accompanying actions (<i>add extra rows as needed</i>)	
	Issue	Action
	Student perception of disparity in levels of supervision on undergraduate dissertation projects	New guidance has been published to staff and students relating to levels of expected supervision. This is being reviewed by project co-ordinator.
	Need to continue improvements around assessment and feedback	Continuing to engage with EMA. The delivery of staff development sessions around EMA. Continuing to embed standardised assessment criteria and marking matrices across undergraduate and LL.M programmes to ensure consistency at each level and across modules. Commitment to meeting or exceeding university deadlines on turnaround of feedback (See additional observations on feedback in section 6 above)
	Issues re timetabling and communication to students re changed / cancelled sessions	Liaising with timetabling and professional support to minimise impact on students (programme leader).
Further work around employability both within the legal sector and other graduate employment sectors	Ongoing work to extend availability and promote use of placements in legal work and in other business areas overseen by Faculty Director of Placements and placement office. Ongoing work to extend availability of study abroad opportunities by increasing numbers of Erasmus partners. Continuing support and development	

¹ examples of developments, planned or in train which seek to address issues previously identified

		of the Northumbria Law and Business Careers Fair with over 120 exhibitors attending in November 2016. Introduction of a Careers Beyond Law Event.
	Academic support for international students to increase the number of good degrees	The Direct Entrant completion programme has been redesigned as part of the PFNA process to integrate a dissertation and dissertation support module which will provide additional support around research writing and critical thinking skills. The induction programme for DE students has been redesigned to incorporate writing exercises to pick up on any study skills deficits at the start of the programme. There has been closer liaison with the ESAP team particularly in relation to assessment skills. As part of the ongoing renewal of the articulation agreements there will be further dialogue around study skills and preparation for the completion year with partner institutions.
Audit Trails	No Panel Comments.	
Compliance Checks	Noted as above: <i>To review how protocols and processes are operationalised and completed at departmental level so as to ensure compliance with Quality Assurance mechanisms (1 March 2017).</i>	

Section 8	Department Response to Report
Short summary response by Department on follow up action for inclusion in published report:	