

Periodic Review Report Template

School	School of Life Sciences
Discipline Name	Psychology
Date of Review	27 / 28 March 2012
Review Panel (approved by University Review Sub Committee)	<p>Internal Members:</p> <p>Helen Manns (Chair): Associate Dean, External Engagement, Region & Partnerships; School of Built & Natural Environment</p> <p>Barbara Tully: Programme Director Visual Arts, Department of Arts; School of Arts & Social Sciences</p> <p>Dr. Fiona Caple: Programme Director Biology, Food & Nutritional Sciences; School of Life Sciences</p> <p>Students' Union Member:</p> <p>Holly Seabrook: Students' Union Vice President, Communications & Involvement</p> <p>External Member:</p> <p>David Shaw: Member of BPS Accreditation Panel (retired Senior Lecturer in Psychology)</p> <p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Sally Iles: Academic Co-ordinator (Review), Quality Support, Academic Services</p>
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook (2011 version), available from http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/review/intrev/

Section 1	Discipline Aims and Context
<p>This review considers the discipline of Psychology in the School of Life Sciences. The Psychology discipline is based wholly within the Department of Psychology, one of six departments in the School of Life Sciences. The School was formed in September 2010 from the former School of Psychology and Sports Science and parts of the former School of Applied Science.</p> <p>The Periodic Review was conducted at the same time as an accreditation event by the British Psychology Society (BPS) which considered a significant proportion of the provision in the discipline area. The first day of the review was thus run as a joint event with the BPS and required some variation from the standard Periodic Review schedule in order to accommodate the professional body's accreditation requirements. However, during the two days of the review, all the usual elements of the normal Periodic Review agenda were addressed.</p> <p>The Department of Psychology has 40 academic staff and 16 research staff supported by 18 secretarial and technical staff. It delivers taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to around 800 students (700 UG, 100 PGT). The Department's three undergraduate and eight masters programmes were all considered within the scope of this periodic review. The provision includes joint programmes delivered with the School's Department of Sport and Exercise Sciences (UG and PG) and with the Department of Social Sciences in the School of Arts and Social Sciences (UG).</p> <p>The Psychology discipline has a strong research culture focussed around two research centres – the Cognition and Communication Research Centre and the Brain Performance and Nutrition Research Centre. MRes, PhD and Professional Doctorate programmes complete the portfolio of Psychology provision.</p> <p>The Department of Psychology aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide an outstanding and vibrant environment for both study and research. 2. To deliver stimulating and challenging programmes to high calibre students. 3. To nurture highly employable, academically accomplished graduates possessed with the skills to 	

succeed in the 21st century.

The Department of Psychology is located in Northumberland Building where specialist and general teaching facilities are provided. Academic and support staff are also based here. Specialist teaching space includes dedicated undergraduate and postgraduate hub space for Psychology students, IT labs and an Experimental Psychology Lab which incorporates 18 bookable cubicles.

Section 2

Curricula and Standards

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- Strengths of the Discipline are evidenced by the positive outcomes of the BPS accreditation event, and supported by External Examiner and student feedback.
- There is a strong research culture within the Discipline and clear evidence of how this supports the curriculum. The curriculum is up to date and meets professional body requirements.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

The Discipline is encouraged to:

- Explore cross School development opportunities combining Psychology with other programmes e.g. with Forensic Science.
- Explore mechanisms to further enhance student employability skills and opportunities for work based/related experience.

Section 3

Management Information Trends

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- The Discipline has a strong record of recruiting high quality students.
- Engagement in a range of widening participation activities by the Discipline is to be commended. For example:
 - Targeting activities in schools in low participation areas;
 - The Psychology Conference aimed at mature students in local colleges; and
 - Support for disabled students.
- Discipline staff demonstrate good understanding of retention issues and use a range of mechanisms to monitor retention.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- Many students from the Discipline go on to undertake further study however, most tend to leave Northumbria. Further consideration could be given to mechanisms to increasing conversion of the Discipline's own UG students to its PG provision.

Section 4

Student Experience

The Panel identified the following strengths:

- The School's Student Support and Advice Centre provides an excellent resource to students and there is clear commitment to student support demonstrated throughout the Discipline.
- Textline is a particularly innovative mechanism for gathering student feedback.
- The Mentor/Mentee buddy scheme is an innovative system for supporting direct entry and international students.

The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- The Discipline is encouraged to continue to work on mechanisms to enhance the perception of identity amongst the BSc (Hons) Psychology and Criminology students.
- The Discipline is encouraged to ensure that students receive clear information about the primary point of contact for support and a coherent picture of the range and extent of support available.

- The Discipline should continue to explore mechanisms to enhance feedback and student use of feedback to improve NSS scores in this area.

Section 5	Enhancement Strategies
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Development Week provides an excellent mechanism to deliver enhancement opportunities to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. We would encourage the Discipline to continue to promote and develop the programme. • There is strong evidence of enhancement within the Discipline (for example the 'Participation Pool') and it is encouraging to see that such activities are fully supported by the School. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsider whether the page limit policy is placing constraints on the presentation of some students' work. • We would encourage the Discipline to find more proactive ways of sharing enhancement and good practice. 	

Section 6	Discipline Response to Report
<p>Curricula and Standards</p> <p><i>Explore cross School development opportunities combining Psychology with other programmes e.g. with Forensic Science.</i></p> <p>Potential programme developments are being explored with colleagues at Coach Lane working in mental health. Potential collaborations with Law and Business have been considered but due to differences in teaching semesters have not been considered further at this time. Once the new faculty structure is in place, further collaboration opportunities within the faculty will be explored.</p> <p><i>Explore mechanisms to further enhance student employability skills and opportunities for work based/related experience.</i></p> <p>Developments and activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of two placement modules to start September 2013 providing hands on experience with a local industry partner. The opportunity for progression from level 5 to level 6 has been built in to the modules. • A postgraduate employers' forum is being developed and a North East Networking Group will bring together MSc Occupational Psychology students, alumni and employers to identify individuals interested in the idea and willing to participate in an employers' forum. • An employability fair is to be held and employability has featured in an Academic Development Week. • Funding has been obtained from the Alumni fund to secure internships for seven undergraduate students. The students presented reports at a special Internship Conference and their research is being submitted to the British Psychological Society annual conference as individual presentations. <p>Management Information Trends</p> <p><i>Many students from the Discipline go on to undertake further study however, most tend to leave Northumbria. Further consideration could be given to mechanisms to increasing conversion of the Discipline's own UG students to its PG provision.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sessions regarding PG programmes will continue to be delivered to final year students. • Careers talks are being enhanced by inviting external speakers to discuss their experiences. • In 2012-13 the Department will be running third year option modules introducing two of the professional route MSc programmes, a third option of Health Psychology will be offered in 2013-14. • Workshops will be held in the enhancement weeks to allow UG students to engage with aspects of the PG programmes and to meet current students. 	

Student Experience

The Discipline is encouraged to continue to work on mechanisms to enhance the perception of identity amongst the BSc (Hons) Psychology and Criminology students.

There is now cross team representation on staff/student programme meetings in both areas in order to improve communication and discuss support frameworks and other relevant matters. Student representatives have reported much improvement and complimented the information exchange forums which have been set up. The Programme leader meets directly with student reps for progress reports, which the reps have found to be beneficial. An Undergraduate Psychology Facebook forum has been established and there is also a 'text-the-rep' service now in place. The Psychology department began a series of prison visits for the Joint honours students in response to their concerns. This has been very well received and it is intended to increase the number of such opportunities. A series of talks were offered during the Academic Development Week by the Psychology department, including a session which compared the two styles of essay writing and referencing across the Psychology and Criminology departments. This session was well-received by the Joint honours students.

The Discipline is encouraged to ensure that students receive clear information about the primary point of contact for support and a coherent picture of the range and extent of support available.

Information in the programme handbook will be highlighted in induction talks and will also be displayed on student notice boards.

The Discipline should continue to explore mechanisms to enhance feedback and student use of feedback to improve NSS scores in this area.

An audit of assessment load and timing will be carried out before 2012/13, aiming to align skill development and feedback. A Level 4 core laboratories and skills module has been re-worked to focus on the value of formative assessment and feedback. Student feedback has been positive and this model is being extended on a small scale to Level 5. The assessment and feedback strategy will be discussed and re-written at a Departmental away day.

Enhancement Strategies

Reconsider whether the page limit policy is placing constraints on the presentation of some students' work.

The page limit has a number of advantages such as ease of policing when considering hard copy submissions. The University is proposing a move to a universal electronic submission, marking and feedback tool. It is likely that the Department will take advantage of this opportunity to move wholesale to electronic submission and the use of word counts. In the interim the use of page limits for hard copy submissions will be retained.

We would encourage the Discipline to find more proactive ways of sharing enhancement and good practice.

The Department will actively encourage teaching focussed staff to move towards teaching fellow promotions and greater membership of and engagement with the HEA will be targeted. Part of this process will be the development of enhancement forums and showcases within and across departments.