Periodic Review of Undergraduate and Pre-experience Postgraduate programmes in Management

Introduction

1 An internal Periodic Review of Undergraduate and Pre-experience Postgraduate programmes in Management was held on 21 and 22 November 2011. The members of the Panel were:

- Professor Rosemary Auchmuty, Director of Teaching and Learning, School of Law (Chair)
- Dr Pru Marriott, Winchester Business School
- Professor Trevor Wood-Harper, Manchester Business School
- Dr Angelique Chettiparambil Rajan, Real Estate and Planning
- Eur Ing Simon Sherratt, School of Systems Engineering
- Mr David Stannard, Faculty Director of Administration (Secretary)

2 The Panel met the following members of staff:

- Dr Kleio Akrivou, Director of Studies, Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour
- Mrs Charmaine Birchmore, School Administrator, Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting
- Ms Verna Care, Programme Area Director, Pre-experience Postgraduate Accounting programmes
- Dr Peter Cook, Programme Area Director, Undergraduate Management programmes
- Dr Julie Cooper, Programme Area Director, Undergraduate Accounting programmes
- Dr Evelyn Fenton, former Director of Teaching and Learning, School of Management
- Dr Maria Gee, Senior Lecturer, Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting
- Professor Andrew Godley, Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship
- Dr Stephen Gulliver, Lecturer, Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting
- Dr Alison Hennell, Senior Lecturer, Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting
- Miss Emily Hilbourne, Parts 2 and 3 Undergraduate Administrator
- Dr John Latsis, Lecturer, Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour
- Professor Kecheng Liu, Head of School, Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting
- Dr Stuart Morris, Lecturer, Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour
- Dr Keiichi Nakata, Programme Area Director, Informatics programmes, and Director of Studies, Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting
- Dr Lucy Newton, former Undergraduate Director of Studies, School of Management
- Dr Dan Nunan, Teaching Fellow, Marketing and Reputation
- Mrs Julie Rees, Placement Officer
- Mrs Jean Teall, Part 1 Undergraduate Administrator
Mr Kevin Thompson, University Student Employment, Experience and Careers Centre
Dr Bernd Vogel, Associate Professor, Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour
Dr James Walker, former Acting Head of the School of Management
Mrs Imogen Watson, Administration Manager

3 The Panel met students who represented the following degree programmes:

- BSc in Accounting and Economics
- BA in Accounting and Management
- BA in Business and Management
- BA in Management and Business Administration
- MSc in Business Informatics
- MSc in Business Information Management
- MSc in International Business
- MSc in International Management and Accounting
- MSc in Marketing and International Management

The Panel also met a Visiting Student on an Erasmus programme.

4. The Panel also met the following former students and employers:

- Phil Clarke, Capgemini UK
- Adeyinka Adewale, MSc graduate
- Amal Ahmadi, MSc graduate
- Soi Luong, MSc graduate
- Nitin Srivastava, Citigroup and MSc graduate

General observations

5. The Panel met with a range of staff during the Review process and wished to express its gratitude to all those who had participated, in particular to the administrative staff for their hard work in relation to the practical arrangements for the Review. The staff involved in delivering the Undergraduate and Pre-experience Postgraduate programmes in Management were very enthusiastic about the teaching and learning process, and worked hard to ensure a high quality student experience. It was clear to the Panel that the staff had thought carefully about the academic portfolio that they delivered and that this had led to a suite of programmes which paid appropriate regard to the needs of both students and employers, and which were in many cases highly innovative.

6. During the course of the Review, the Panel was made aware of changes to the academic structure of the Henley Business School and to the former School of Management which took effect from 1 August 2011. The former School of Management had been divided into four new Schools as follows:

- Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting (BISA);
- International Business and Strategy (IBS);
- Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour (LOB);
- Marketing and Reputation (M&R).

In addition, the Henley Business School had created a number of Faculty-level ‘Programme groups’ – including Undergraduate Programmes and Pre-experience Postgraduate Programmes – each of which was led by a Head of Programmes, in order to provide strategic oversight of distinct ‘product’ areas across the School. Some of the outcomes of this re-structuring were revisions to the governance structure for degree
programmes, the creation of new teaching and learning-related roles and a shift in formal responsibility for programmes and students from constituent Schools to the Faculty-level ‘Programme groups’. Constituent Schools did, however, retain responsibility for and ownership of Modules.

7. Whilst the Panel recognised that implementation of the new academic structures in the Henley Business School was at a very early stage and, from the meetings it held with staff during the Review Visit, was clear that there continues to be strong academic leadership of the Undergraduate and Pre-experience Postgraduate programmes in Management, it also heard from some staff that there was not yet complete clarity about how arrangements and structures for teaching and learning should operate. As a result, the Panel recommends as desirable that as its new academic structure beds down, the Henley Business School should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to fully provide strategic oversight and leadership of the Undergraduate and Pre-experience Programmes in Management in relation to teaching and learning, the dissemination of Good Practice, e-Learning, and assessment and feedback [Recommendation b].

Academic standards of the programmes

Educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes

8. The Panel was provided with evidence in the form of programme specifications, module descriptions, student handbooks, external examiners’ reports and student work. It also held a number of meetings with staff and students, and read a small number of examples of student work.

9. The Panel reviewed the educational aims and learning outcomes of the provision. In relation to both the Undergraduate and the Pre-experience Postgraduate programmes, the Panel confirmed that these were clearly stated, comprehensive and at the appropriate Level. The learning outcomes were appropriate to the overall aims and had been informed by the relevant Subject Benchmarking Statement and by the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. These issues had also been verified by the External Examiners.

Curricula and assessment

Curricula

10. The Panel welcomed the breadth and relevance of the curricula across all programmes within the remit of the Review. It felt that the programmes were coherent, of appropriate breadth and scope, and provided students with the opportunity to achieve, and to demonstrate achievement of, the intended learning outcomes. The Panel saw evidence that programme content and design were informed by recent developments in teaching and learning and by up-to-date scholarship in the discipline, as well as having a strong international focus which was mirrored by the nature of the student body. There was particular praise from students for the modules delivered by the Centre for Entrepreneurship. The Panel also recognised that the programme portfolio included a number of highly innovative programmes, including the MSc in Informatics with Beijing Institute of Technology, and the MSc in Business Technology Consulting delivered in association with Capgemini, as well as a new BA in Accounting and Business which had been developed in partnership with Pricewaterhouse Coopers and included a significant placement element. The Panel heard that this latter programme would be delivered from the start of the 2012-13 academic year. It
11. The Panel also formed the clear view that the programme portfolio was highly appropriate to the future employment needs of the students and fully addressed the University’s employability agenda. It heard that many of the Undergraduate programmes formally included significant periods of either work or study placement, whether in the UK or internationally, and that where they were not advertised as including a placement (in the case of the Accounting programmes), a proactive decision had been made to include such placement opportunities for interested students on a case-by-case basis. The Panel met with specialist staff who were dedicated to supporting and managing placements, and heard from several members of staff of the positive influence that undertaking a placement had on students’ academic and personal development. It was informed that whilst placements were not currently available on the Pre-experience Postgraduate programmes, summer placement provision was currently being developed. The Panel also recognised that the Informatics MSc programmes included significant industrial links which students could exploit in a number of ways. As a result, the Panel formed the view that the inclusion of placements within the curricula and the support provided for students on those placements was a clear example of good practice [Good Practice a].

12. In discussing the Informatics MSc programmes, the Panel recognised the highly innovative nature of the MSc in Business Technology Consulting, as highlighted above, which included close collaboration with Capgemini, the global technology consulting firm. It agreed that this was a very significant and positive relationship and warmly congratulated the Henley Business School on this link. The Panel did, however, have some concerns about the final Consulting Project, in particular whether the work that students undertook was essentially consulting in nature or whether it included an appropriate element of research. After discussions with relevant staff, the Panel was somewhat reassured but felt that it was possible for students to undertake projects which were not significantly informed by their own research. As a consequence, the Panel recommends as desirable that, at an appropriate time in the future, consideration be given to putting in place effective mechanisms for ensuring that the project report on the MSc in Business Technology Consulting appropriately incorporates research-informed learning [Recommendation c].

Assessment

13. The Panel was provided with examples of student coursework and examinations, and also with External Examiners’ Reports for the last three years. As highlighted above, the External Examiners had verified that the standards achieved by students met the expectations for relevant awards as set out in the QAA Subject Benchmarking Statements and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

14. The Panel also agreed that assessment design and processes enabled students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes and also promote effective learning. It saw evidence of a wide range of assessment methods and students confirmed that assessment criteria were generally effectively communicated to them.

15. However, the Panel also heard from students of some variation in the timeliness of feedback and also in the nature and quality of that feedback. In looking at examples of student coursework, the Panel also saw some variation in this regard. In particular, the students that the Panel met highlighted some occasions, often relating to examinations, where feedback did not enable them to identify how they might
improve their marks. The Panel recognised that work was being undertaken by academic staff to enhance the opportunities for providing feedback to students, and that this was a particular action arising out of the Pathfinder process. It agreed that there were a number of examples of good practice within the programmes but that these were, perhaps, not being widely disseminated or shared. However, it was noted that staff could engage with the work being undertaken by the Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning in relation to feedback, such as ways to provide generic feedback on examinations or the provision of video feedback. The Panel also noted the growth in student numbers throughout the provision and felt that implementation of effective and efficient feedback mechanisms was becoming a matter of some importance. As a result, the Panel recommends as advisable that mechanisms be put in place for the sharing of best practice, in addition to consulting with CDoTL, in order to ensure the efficient, consistent, timely and appropriate provision of feedback to students on both coursework and examinations [Recommendation a].

Use of student management information
16. The Panel noted that there were mechanisms in place for the collection and analysis of statistical data, External Examiners’ Reports, student surveys and evaluations, and for student representation. These processes inform the production of the Annual Programme Reports. Effective responses were made to all of these and the Panel heard from students of timely and appropriate addressing of issues they raised through student evaluations and Student-Staff Committees.

Quality of learning opportunities offered by the programmes
Teaching and learning
17. The students that the Panel met were generally very complimentary about their teaching and learning experience. They praised the high quality teaching, delivered by enthusiastic and committed members of staff. The Panel noted the wide variety of teaching methods used within the programmes, including significant use of real-world case studies and applications, and also recognised as features of good practice both the use of external speakers throughout the programme portfolio [Good Practice c] and the effective use of innovative teaching methods such as Wikis and Blogs [Good Practice d].

18. There was, however, one area where the students identified variability in teaching quality and this related to the teaching of small-group seminars and classes by PhD students. The Panel was informed of a number of less positive experiences. In discussing this issue with staff, the Panel heard of a number of ways in which individual academic staff supported the PhD students and other tutors who taught on their modules, including the provision of module guides for these people, and were also informed that PhD students and tutors were expected to undergo training, including attendance on modules which were part of the CSTD Teaching and Learning Support Programme, before delivering teaching. The Panel therefore agree that there was good practice within the provision relating to the support and training provided for tutors and for PhD students who teach [Good Practice e]. Nevertheless, the Panel recognised that these arrangements were not systemic across the whole of the provision. It therefore recommends as desirable that the training and support for
tutors and for PhD students who teach be standardised, including the provision of module guides for team teaching [Recommendation d].

19. With both staff and students, the Panel discussed how teaching and learning were informed by research and scholarship, particularly that undertaken by the academic staff of the Business School. Whilst it heard of a number of examples of good practice and was also pleased to hear of discipline areas which were recruiting research-active academic staff in order to enhance the student learning experience, the Panel formed the view that more could be done in this area, particularly as this was a clear focus of the University’s Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Panel therefore recommends as desirable that consideration be given to both enhancing the ways in which staff research could inform their teaching and to ensuring that programmes are research-informed [Recommendation e].

20. The Panel were informed that modules within the Informatics MSc programmes were delivered in intensive one-week blocks followed by a further week of supported learning activities. The Panel was generally very supportive of this innovative teaching arrangement but had some concerns that this did not provide an appropriate opportunity for students to fully assimilate their learning to the required extent and suggested that this might be alleviated by the introduction of some pre-module work to enable students to commence the intensive teaching period with an appropriate background of knowledge. The Panel therefore recommends as desirable that on the Informatics MSc programmes, the introduction of pre-module student work be considered in order to enhance the student learning experience and student preparation for study [Recommendation f].

Student admission and progression

21. The students that the Panel met confirmed that there were appropriate and effective arrangements for admission and induction. Students explained that they chose to study at Reading for a number of reasons, including the reputation of the Henley Business School and the high position in various league tables of the Management programmes. Undergraduate students particularly commented on the high quality and welcoming Open Days, contrasting these with experiences at other institutions, and the Panel therefore commended these as an example of good practice [Good Practice f]. The Panel also met a Visiting Student on an Erasmus programme who also positively contrasted her experience at Reading with that of her ‘home’ institution and stated that she was investigating ways in which she could complete her degree programme in the Henley Business School. The Panel therefore felt that the welcome and support provided to Erasmus students was another example of good practice [Good Practice g].

22. The Panel noted the significant increase in student numbers, particularly on the Pre-experience Postgraduate Programmes, in the last few years. Whilst it did not hear of any particular negative effects arising from such growth, the Panel highlighted the need to manage appropriately such growth in the future to avoid any damage to what was a high quality student experience. The Panel therefore recommends as desirable that consideration be given to implementing appropriate strategies to manage the implications for programmes of growth in student numbers and ensure the continuation of a high quality student experience [Recommendation g].

23. The Panel noted that student progression through programmes was generally very high. It did note that in the past, a significant number of BA Management and Business Administration students had failed their Part 1 examinations at the First Attempt, although the great majority then passed at Re-sit. The Panel heard that this
had previously been identified as an issue to be addressed and was one of the reasons for the re-structuring of the programme to create the new (from 2010 entry) BA in Business and Management. Data for the Part 1 examinations in 2011 was not available to the Panel but it was assured that this issue had been resolved. The Panel confirmed, therefore, that student progression and classification was appropriate to the stated aims and consistent with the attainment of intended learning outcomes.

24. The Panel heard from students that they received high quality support during their studies. In particular, the great majority of students praised the support given by their Personal Tutors and, whilst it heard of a small number of negative experiences, the Panel agreed that the operation of the Personal Tutor System was an example of good practice [Good Practice h].

Learning resources

25. The Panel was informed that the Henley Business School building at Whiteknights had opened in May 2009. Whilst it heard of some minor problems with wi-fi access within the building and also with the capacity of the Academic Resources Centre at certain times, it also heard that student concerns about learning resources were generally small-scale and were usually addressed quickly and appropriately. As a result, the Panel agreed that the high quality facilities in the Henley Business School building, in particular the specialist Academic Resources Centre, represented a feature of good practice [Good Practice i].

Employer engagement

26. Throughout its meetings with staff, current students, graduates and employers, the Panel heard of a wide range of mechanisms used to enhance student employability, ranging from the inclusion of placements and formal parts of programmes, to the use of real-world case studies, talks given by external speakers and careers/placement fairs. The Panel recognised the significant work that the Placement staff did to support students and also heard of the close relationship that existed with the University’s Student Employment, Experience and Careers Centre (SEECC). As a result, the Panel agreed that the industry and professional focus within the curriculum, through real-world case studies, placements and links with SEECC in relation to careers skills, which ensured that students were ‘employer-ready’, was exemplary and represented a feature of good practice [Good Practice j].

27. The Panel felt, however, that the one area which could be enhanced to further benefit student employability was making greater use of links with alumni. After talking to former students, the Panel formed the view that such links were not yet particularly formalised and suggested that there were examples of good practice elsewhere in the Henley Business School, for example in Real Estate and Planning, in developing links with alumni for such purposes as student mentoring. As a result, the Panel recommends as desirable that greater use be made of alumni links, particularly for reasons of employability, mentoring and marketing [Recommendation h].

Enhancement of quality and academic provision

28. The Panel is clear that the importance of enhancing the academic provision is recognised, with programmes needing to remain up-to-date to ensure that students are well-prepared for future careers. As highlighted elsewhere in this Report, it is not only the expertise of its staff which is drawn on in this regard, but the widespread and appropriate use of a range of external inputs to programmes to ensure that they
remain at the cutting edge. Nevertheless, as previously indicated, the Panel cautions that the Henley Business School needs to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to fully provide strategic oversight and leadership of the Undergraduate and Pre-experience Programmes in Management. In particular, it highlights that whilst there are many examples of good practice within the provision, these are perhaps not being as systematically exploited as might be wished and it also suggests that in one or two areas there is a potential over-reliance on a small number of individual academic staff to deliver programmes.

29. The Panel was clear that there had been active engagement with the Pathfinder process. It endorses the Action Plan drawn up at the Away Day in response to Pathfinder and asks that an update on progress in relation to the identified actions is provided in the ‘One Year Follow-on Report’.

Main characteristics of the programmes under review

30. The Panel considers that the programmes under review:

(a) are up-to-date, are often innovative and are relevant for students and their future careers;
(b) are greatly valued by graduates;
(c) are of high quality and make use of a wide variety of teaching, learning and assessment methods;
(d) are delivered by enthusiastic and committed academic staff;
(e) have a strong international focus;
(f) enable appropriate student progression.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

31. The Panel identifies the following as representing particularly good practice:

(a) The delivery of a number of highly innovative programmes including the new BA in Accounting and Business with PWC, the MSc in Informatics with Beijing Institute of Technology, and the MSc in Business Technology Consulting delivered in association with Capgemini;
(b) Inclusion of placements within curricula and the support provided for students on placement;
(c) The use of external speakers;
(d) The effective use of innovative teaching methods such as Wikis and Blogs;
(e) The support and training provided for tutors and for PhD students who teach, where there are examples of Good Practice;
(f) The high quality and welcoming Open Days;
(g) The welcome and support provided to Erasmus students;
(h) The operation of the Personal Tutor System, where there are examples of Good Practice;
(i) The high quality facilities in the Henley Business School building, in particular the specialist Academic Resources Centre;
The industry/professional focus within the curriculum, through real-world case studies, placements and links with SEECC in relation to careers skills, which ensure that students are ‘employer-ready’.

Conclusions on quality and standards
32. The Review Panel has concluded that the academic standards of both the Undergraduate and the Pre-experience Postgraduate programmes in Management are appropriate and that these programmes are delivered at the appropriate Level.

Recommendations
33. The Panel recommends to the Henley Business School Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning that the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years:

- BA in Accounting and Economics
- BSc in Accounting and Economics
- BA in Accounting and Management
- BA in Business and Management
- BA in International Management and Business Administration with French
- BA in International Management and Business Administration with German
- BA in International Management and Business Administration with Italian
- BA in Management and Business
- BA in Management and Business Administration
- MSc in Accounting and Financial Management
- MSc in Business Information Management
- MSc in Business Technology Consulting
- MRes in Informatics
- MSc in Informatics (in collaboration with Beijing Institute of Technology)
- MSc in Information Management and Systems
- MSc in International Business
- MSc in International Management
- MSc in International Management and Accounting
- MSc in Marketing and International Management
34. The Panel has identified the following actions which it **recommends** be addressed:

**Advisable actions:**

(a) Put in place mechanisms for the sharing of best practice, in addition to consulting with CDoTL, in order to ensure the efficient, consistent, timely and appropriate provision of feedback to students on both coursework and examinations;

**Desirable actions:**

(b) As its new academic structure beds down, the Henley Business School should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to fully provide strategic oversight and leadership of the Undergraduate and Pre-experience Programmes in Management in relation to teaching and learning, the dissemination of Good Practice, e-Learning, and assessment and feedback;

(c) At an appropriate time in the future, consideration be given to putting in place effective mechanisms for ensuring that the project report on the MSc in Business Technology Consulting appropriately incorporates research-informed learning;

(d) Standardise the training and support for tutors and for PhD students who teach, including the provision of module guides for team teaching;

(e) In line with the University’s Teaching and Learning Strategy, enhance the ways in which staff research can inform their teaching and ensure that programmes are research-informed;

(f) On the Informatics MSc programmes, consider the introduction of pre-study student work in order to enhance the student learning experience and student preparation for study;

(g) Consider appropriate strategies to manage the implications for programmes of growth in student numbers and ensure the continuation of a high quality student experience;

(h) Make greater use of alumni links, particularly for reasons of employability, mentoring and marketing.