Internal Periodic Review

School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

Postgraduate provision

30 November – 3 December 2020

Contents

Executive summary

This report comprises the outcomes from the internal review of postgraduate provision in the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences.
The review team found that the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences has effective management of the quality of the student learning experience, academic standards, and enhancement and good practice.
The report provides commendations on the School's provision, recommendations for enhancement to report back on and suggestions on how to support developments.

Key Commendations
The review team commended the School in the areas of conversion rates from postgraduate taught to research, improved tutors and demonstrators process and range of tutoring opportunities, emphasis on learning technology, personal tutoring for postgraduate taught students, engaged students, student-led activity, support provided by professional services staff and the Skills Centre development.

Key recommendations
The top three recommendations that the review team identified for the School to prioritise were
Annual Progression Review [2.3.1 The review team recommends that the School ensure a robust and constructive process for student's annual reviews.
In addition, the review team recommends that the progression element of annual review needs to be appropriately addressed.]

Student Voice [The review team recommends that the School needs to have a more robust and systematic approach to engaging with students around needs, aspirations and expectations and that the School take advantage of their engaged student body to ensure the student voice is included in informing strategic decisions 2.1.4]

Strategic Governance Structure [The review team recommends that the School reflect on governance structures that promote and support learning and teaching enhancement across the School 2.1.8

The review team recommends that the School reflect on the Skills Centre governance structure

To further strengthen the strategic vision for the Skills Centre, the review team recommends that the School establishes a more coordinated structure to link with the Learning Technologists to review what courses can be delivered that are tailored to student needs 2.6.1]

Commendations, recommendations and suggestions

Key strengths and areas of positive practice for sharing more widely across the institution.

No	Commendation	Section in report
1	The review team **commends** the enthusiasm of PPLS students. The students that the review team met were engaged in their study, tutoring and community building activities. [Community]	2.1.4
2	The review team **commends** the strong, visible MSc programmes that holistically meet student expectations and enable employability for a diverse range of aspirations. [Developing employability and graduate attributes]	2.1.6
3	The review team **commends** the impressive conversion rate that the Schools has achieved in attracting students to stay on for postgraduate research study based on the positive experience with PGT programmes. [Commitment to teaching]	2.1.7
4	The review team **commends** the Personal Tutor system the School has in place for Masters students. [Student support]	2.3.1
5	The review team **commends** the postgraduate students for taking the initiative to coordinate and promote community building activities. [Community]	2.4
6	The review team **commends** the School's consideration of equality and diversity in programmes. [Accessibility and Inclusivity]	2.5
7	The review team **commends** the development of the skills centre and the positive change from focusing primarily on writing to embracing multiple activities for staff and student support. [Commitment to teaching]	2.6.1
8	The review team acknowledged that significant improvements have been made since the last review and **commends** the School for the efforts to bring about these changes and the high student satisfaction with teaching opportunities [Commitment to teaching and curriculum development.]	2.7.1
9	The review team **commends** the professional services staff on the development of new processes since the last review and for the support that is provided to and much appreciated by academic staff. [Student services/support]	2.7.2
10	The review team heard that the School have been looking at more opportunities for the Postgraduate Student Services Office and learning technologists to work together and the review team **commends** this activity to strengthen and support academic delivery [Learning technology]	2.7.2
11	The School are **commended** for the emphasis placed on learning technology and the timely appointment of additional learning technology support in response to the Covid pandemic. [Learning technology]	2.8.2
12	The responsiveness of the team during the current Covid pandemic to make remote desktops available to students to enable experiment work to continue is **commended**. [Learning technology]	2.8.2

Recommendations for enhancement/Areas for further development

Priority	Recommendation	Section in report	Responsibility of
1	**Annual progression review** The review team **recommends** that the School ensure a robust and constructive process for student's annual reviews. In addition, the review team **recommends** that the progression element of annual review needs to be appropriately addressed.	2.3.1	School
2	**Student voice** The review team **recommends** that the School needs to have a more robust and systematic approach to engaging with students around needs, aspirations and expectations and that the School take advantage of their engaged student body to ensure the student voice is included in informing strategic decisions	2.1.4	School
3	**Strategic governance structure** The review team **recommends** that the School reflect on governance structures that promote and support learning and teaching enhancement across the School.	2.1.8	School
4	**Strategic governance structure** The review team **recommends** that the School reflect on the Skills Centre governance structure To further strengthen the strategic vision for the Skills Centre, the review team **recommends** that the School establishes a more coordinated structure to link with the Learning Technologists to review what courses can be delivered that are tailored to student needs.	2.6.1	School
5	**Student experience** The review team **recommends** that the School reflect on the positive aspects of the PGT experience, for example student academic support and considers how these can be channelled to enhance the PGR student experience. To further strengthen these initiatives, the review team **recommends** that the School consider ways to provide additional assistance to drive and support opportunities for PGR	2.1.7 2.4	School

	networking and building a community of practice.		
6	**Market analysis** The review team **recommends** that the School should engage with market demand and competitor market analysis to establish and understand the needs of future students and programme/course development. To further enhance this activity and strengthen the student voice, it is **recommended** that the School reflects on its alumni activity	2.1.5 2.6.2	School
7	**Industry links** It is **recommended** that the School reflects on and defines their links to industry. The review team **recommends** that the School explore opportunities for improved links with industry through invited guest speakers and some vocational/placement activity.	2.6.2 2.6.3	School
8	**Tutors and demonstrators** The review team **recommends** that the University and the School are mindful of the impact on tutors' workload due to increased undergraduate student numbers during this period of hybrid teaching. Furthermore, consider how tutor observations can be undertaken for the period of digital teaching provision. The review team **recommends** that the School considers how marking load is distributed among tutors, how the quality of tutor teaching is linked to the undergraduate quality mechanisms and ensures equality of support for tutors.	2.7.1	School and University (HR)
9	**Feedback** The review team **recommends** that the School review and reflect on feedback provided to students to ensure it is effective, explicit, useful and timely.	2.2	School
10	**Learning technology** The review team **recommends** that the course development workshops continue and encourages the School to ensure the learning technologists are better integrated with the wider School community to enable academic staff to benefit from their knowledge and expertise, particularly their ability to support course design.	2.8.3	School

Suggestions for noting

If an issue is minor but the review team nevertheless wants to flag it as a potentially useful action, it will be couched as a suggestion rather than a formal recommendation. Suggestions are not tracked in onward reporting.

No	Suggestion	Section in report
1	The review team **suggests** the School continues to monitor student staff ratios across all programmes, particularly in specialisms.	2.1.2
2	The Reflective Report notes that a pre-enrolment questionnaire has been introduced for incoming students to improve the prediction of numbers of students on particular courses and it is **suggested** that the School consider using this as a mechanism to gather information on student's expectations and aspirations beyond study.	2.1.4
3	The review team **suggests** that an external benchmarking exercise could be carried out with the support of other departments in the University such as Communications and Marketing, Surveys Unit, Development and Alumni and Careers Service in order to establish the market/need for course and programme development.	2.1.5
4	The review team **suggests** that the School re-instate the PGT Jamboree as one mechanism to share practice	2.1.8
5	The review team **suggests** that the School also involves students in Equality and Diversity discussions as noted in section 2.1.	2.5
6	It is **suggested** that the school reflects on ways to improve timely communication to promote the Skills centre.	2.6.1
7	It is **suggested** that the School publicise Platform One which is Edinburgh's online meeting place for students to connect with fellow students and graduates.	2.6.2
8	It is **suggested** that the School reflects on current careers support and works with the Careers Service to create greater cohesion around more tailored support and advice.	2.6.3
9	It is **suggested** that the School explores how to better promote courses such as the Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA) and other training and support courses offered by IAD.	2.7.1
10	The review team **suggests** that, to support including the student voice, the School considers a formal mechanism to allow PGR tutors to feedback on courses to enhance course content and re-design.	2.7.1
11	To further strengthen and empower professional services staff, the review team **suggests** that the School reflects on the PSSO structure and considers a community-based (one per discipline) approach which will provide a dedicated key contact point for students.	2.7.2
12	The review team **suggests** that consideration is given to learning and teaching development opportunities for new and current staff. It is noted that this may be considered as part of the forthcoming University Curriculum Review.	2.7.3
13	The current status of the mentoring programme was unknown and the review team **suggests** that the School progresses with plans and confirms arrangements with staff.	2.7.3

Section A – Introduction

Scope of review

Range of provision considered by the review (see Appendix 1).

The Internal Periodic Review of School of Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences in 2020/21 consisted of:

- The University's remit for internal review (listed in Appendix 2)

- The subject specific remit for the review:
  - Postgraduate Student Skills Training:
    Raised by all subject areas and endorsed by the PGR student representatives, the School would like to investigate how to better signpost/package skills training opportunities for students including how to identify gaps in provision. This refers not only to research skills training which are focussed on within the academic provision but also to personal and career development training such as people management, budgeting etc. We would like to investigate what type of profile we would like our graduates to have when they leave our programmes and investigate whether we are preparing our students sufficiently for their next steps after study.

- The Reflective Report and additional material provided in advance of the review

- The meeting of the review team including consideration of further material (listed in Appendix 3)

- The final report produced by the review team

- Action by the School and others to whom recommendations were remitted following the review

Review Team Members

Convener	Dr Elaine Haycock-Stuart
External Member	Professor Sven Mattys
Internal Member	Dr Ruth McQuillan
Student Member	Gergana Daskalova
Review Team Administrators	Gillian Mackintosh
	Susan Hunter

The School

The School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences (PPLS) is one of 12 Schools in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS). The School offers taught and research postgraduate programmes in three Subject Areas:
- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Linguistics & English Language (LEL)

Physical location and summary of facilities

PPLS facilities are located at the University Central Campus, currently, across four locations (of which two are sites for teaching and research facilities).

Date of previous review

13 and 14 March 2014

Reflective Report:

Written by: Prof Mits Ota, School Postgraduate Director
                Katie Keltie, Head of Postgraduate Administration

Input from: Dr Alistair Isaac, Deputy Postgraduate Director
                Dr Sarah MacPherson, QA Director
                Dr Michelle Luciano, E&D Director
                Dr Alix Cohen, Philosophy PGT Director
                Dr René Mõttus, Psychology PG Director
                Dr Rob Truswell, LEL PGT Director
                Dr Steve Loughnan, International Partnership Director
                Shian Holt, Head of Student Support
                Amanda Nisbet, Human Resource Coordinator
                Cedric Macmartin, Computing Manager
                Emma Caldwell, Marketing & Communications Manager
                James Donaldson, Coordinator of PPLS Writing Centre

Consultation: PPLS Postgraduate Committee
                PPLS Postgraduate Group (all Programme Directors)
                Heads of Subject Area

Student input: PPLS PG Student Staff Liaison Committee
                MSc students 2018/19 focus group
                PGR students 2018/19 focus group
                Student representatives on committees as above

Final draft of this report distributed to
  • School Management Committee
  • PPLS Postgraduate Committee
  • Student representatives

Section B – Main report

1 Strategic overview

The School of Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences is large and diverse, with a complex organisational structure. The School offers taught and research postgraduate programmes in three subject areas; Philosophy, Psychology and Linguistics & English Language (LEL).

In addition to programmes that straddle different fields across Subject Areas in the School, PPLS hosts programmes with neighbouring disciplines/Schools including Divinity (MSc in Philosophy, Science & Religion) and Informatics (MSc in Speech & Language Processing).

In recent years, the School has taken steps to manage the student: staff ratio by capping student intake and recruiting new academic staff. A number of these new academic staff joined the School during the Covid lockdown period. Due to the challenges associated with the pivot to hybrid teaching, the School felt it was not feasible to introduce any new courses associated with the new staff members' expertise. However, the move to hybrid teaching has provided an opportunity to reflect on working practices and review what new learning opportunities could be embedded to enhance the student experience.

With hybrid teaching continuing into next semester, the School recognises that consideration needs to be given as to how the expertise and specialisms offered by the new members of staff can be exploited to provide new course offerings.

2 Enhancing the student experience

2.1 The approach to enhancing Learning and Teaching

2.1.1 New programmes and courses originate in the relevant Subject Area. Proposals are vetted and approved within the Subject Area before they are approved by the Postgraduate Board of Studies.

2.1.2 The School had originally identified different models/structures of postgraduate taught (PGT) programmes as one of their subject specific remit items (see Appendix 5). However due to the need to postpone the review, the School requested that this item was not a specific remit item to enable them to reflect on any specific changes to emerge in the pivot to digital teaching. The School provided an update on developments (see Appendix 5) and the review team covered PGT programme models and structures as part of the general review remit.

The School are currently considering all feasible possibilities in terms of models/structures of PGT programmes, whether the factors they are addressing are appropriate, and how they should go about weighing those factors in arriving at a decision. The review team **suggests** the School continues to monitor resilience, including student staff ratios across all programmes, particularly in specialisms.

2.1.3 The School is also considering a two year MSc programme as part of the review of the PGT portfolio. However this proposal received a mixed response from the students that met with the review team. Of the small number of students that the review team met, many expressed a preference for a one year programme as it provided a more consolidated period of study and offered them the opportunity to do another Masters one year degree. However others felt that a longer period of study could help manage the intense workload of a Masters programme.

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2.1.4 The review team noted that students are not routinely involved in discussions about programme and course design and delivery and other decision making processes. For example, there was a lack of student consultation in the current consideration of different models/structures of PGT programmes.

A number of students also commented that they felt there were limited opportunities to discuss career development and aspirations both within and beyond academia.

The review team **commends** the enthusiasm of PPLS students. The students that the review team met were engaged in their study, tutoring and community building activities. The review team **recommends** that the School needs to have a more robust and systematic approach to engaging with students around needs, aspirations and expectations and that the School take advantage of their engaged student body to ensure the student voice is included in informing strategic decisions.

The review team noted that it would be beneficial to ascertain students' career aspirations before the start of the programme and again at the end of each year. Existing mechanisms could be used to avoid any additional administrative burden. The Reflective Report notes that a pre-enrolment questionnaire has been introduced for incoming students to improve the prediction of numbers of students on particular courses and it is **suggested** that the School consider using this as a mechanism to gather information on students' expectations and aspirations beyond study.

2.1.5 The review team **recommends** that the School should engage with market demand and competitor market analysis to establish and understand the needs of future students and programme/course development. The review team **suggests** that an external benchmarking exercise could be carried out with the support of other departments in the University such as Communications and Marketing, Surveys Unit, Development and Alumni and Careers Service in order to establish the market/need for course and programme development.

2.1.6 Students that met with the review team were very positive about the Masters programme offering and reported that the specialisms of programmes attracted them to the School. The review team **commends** the strong, visible MSc programmes that holistically meet student expectations and enable employability for a diverse range of aspirations.

2.1.7 Many of the postgraduate research students reported that their positive experience on the Master programmes had led them to apply for a PhD programme in the School. The review team **commends** the impressive conversion rate that the Schools has achieved in attracting students to stay on for postgraduate research study based on the positive experience with PGT programmes. However, many of the students that met with the review team reported that their subsequent postgraduate research (PGR) experience had not met their positive PGT experience nor their expectations. The review team **recommends** that the School reflect on the positive aspects of the PGT experience, for example student academic support, and considers how these can be channelled to enhance the PGR student experience.

2.1.8 During discussions, the review team heard many examples of effective initiatives and innovative practices however these appear disparate and not many opportunities exist for colleagues to share practice across the School. The review team believe there was a need for more strategic oversight to drive learning and teaching enhancements across the School.

The review team **recommends** that the School reflect on governance structures that promote and support learning and teaching enhancement across the School, for

example, consideration of a School Director of Learning and Teaching role with responsibility for leading and developing the longer term strategic vision for the School.

The review team noted in the Reflective Report that the School have established a PGT Jamboree. This is a forum where all directors of postgraduate programmes gather to discuss strategic matters for postgraduate (PG) provision in the School. However the report notes that only one half-day Jamboree has taken place in October 2018. The review team **suggests** that the School re-instate the PGT Jamboree as one mechanism to share practice.

2.2   Assessment and Feedback

Assessment in taught PG courses in PPLS takes many forms, ranging from traditional essays, multiple-choice questions and data analysis exercises to poster presentations, critical reviews, and mini-research projects.

The students who met with the review team expressed mixed experiences around feedback on their academic work. Some of the students noted a lack of clarity in the feedback that made it difficult to ascertain ways in which to improve. Some students reported that although comments were assigned to coursework, it was sometimes unclear whether students recognised these comments as formal feedback.

The School reported it was not actively tracking the 15 working day submission regulation due to the ongoing challenges of the pandemic however students were kept up to date about expected response times.

The review team **recommends** that the School review and reflect on feedback provided to students to ensure it is effective, explicit, useful and timely.

2.3   Supporting students in their learning – all aspects of support relevant to students' learning including:

2.3.1   Academic and student support structures and mechanisms

Masters Students:
The recommendations following the 2019 University Review of Student Support and Personal Tutoring are currently on hold due to the impact of the global pandemic, and are awaiting University Executive approval in the coming academic year. Therefore the shape and form of the existing Student Support and Personal Tutor structures have not changed.

All Masters students are assigned a Personal Tutor (PT), who, in most cases, is the Programme Director of the degree the student is pursuing. The role of the Personal Tutor is to offer each student general academic guidance and pastoral support, including programme induction, course selection and advice on dissertation topic/ supervisor.

The Personal Tutor system for Masters students follows a holistic approach in supporting students at all stages of the student journey and appears to be working very well. The review team were particularly impressed by the dedication and attentiveness shown by the Programme Directors and their commitment to student support. The review team **commends** the Personal Tutor system the School has in place for Masters students.

Postgraduate Research Students:
Supervisors are the main source of academic support for PhD students. In addition to overseeing the student's progress on the degree, PhD supervisors also provide pastoral support and advice on professional development. Non-academic student support is given by the professional services staff in the Postgraduate Student Services Office, who assist students in key stages including pre-arrival, induction, on-programme support, annual reviews and vivas.

The review team heard evidence from students that they have inconsistent experiences of supervision. As noted in section 2.1, many of the students that met with the review team reported that their PGR experience did not meet their expectations and positive PGT experience.

In addition, students reported mixed experiences of the annual review process, around engagement and contact with supervisors and support for progression.
The review team heard evidence that some students had regular contact with their supervisor and felt well supported. However a number of students reported having very little contact and issues with communicating with their supervisor. Students also felt that there was a lack of guidance around the annual review and progression sessions and what they should do to prepare. Many students reported that the annual review felt like a tick box exercise and was not viewed by academics as a key academic activity to safeguard quality and provide benefit to students throughout the PhD lifecycle. The annual review must be linked with academic progression as a key moment in the student cycle in first and all subsequent year groups and viewed by academic staff and students as an essential component of Quality Assurance/Enhancement for the School's PhD programmes.

The review team **recommends** that the School ensure a robust and constructive process is in place for students' annual reviews. There should be appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure expectations are clear for both students and staff and for closing the loop, particularly where student progress is unsatisfactory. Students would welcome clear and consistent guidance setting out expectations on communication, contact and response times, preparing for progression reviews as well as clarity on where to find information, guidance and support.

In addition, the review team **recommends** that the progression element of annual review needs to be appropriately addressed. The review team notes that this will also support submission rates. To further strengthen the progression element of annual review, the School should consider training and support for supervisors, in particular around difficult conversations (relating to progression issues).

2.4.   Listening to and responding to the Student Voice

The review team heard of a number of student-led community building initiatives such as SolidariTea; a student led informal coffee morning for PPLS PhD students and a reading group. Students who had participated in the activities spoke very positively about them.

However, despite provision of such initiatives, there was a sense from the postgraduate research students that not many opportunities exist to integrate across the School and create a sense of community amongst this PGR cohort.

The review team **commends** the postgraduate students for taking the initiative to coordinate and promote community building activities. To further strengthen these

initiatives, the review team **recommends** that the School consider ways to provide additional assistance to drive and support opportunities for PGR networking and building a community of practice. For example, through setting up an early career group which could be student-led and funded by the School.

2.5   Accessibility, Inclusivity and Widening Participation

The recruitment of new staff has brought new expertise in areas that are particularly relevant to equality, diversity and inclusion. New programmes are being considered in Philosophy to capitalise on these research strengths in areas of race and gender which the School believes will also address student demand. The review team **commends** the School's consideration of equality and diversity in programmes. The review team **suggests** that the School also involves students in equality and diversity discussions as noted in section 2.1.

The School is engaged with widening participation and are exploring ways to extend inclusivity for underrepresented groups, for example in thinking about offering a two year Masters programme, although further market analysis will be needed to ensure this is an appropriate approach.

The School is also considering more flexible pathways for their Masters programmes which may support inclusivity. The appointment of Learning Technologists will also support accessibility through provision of digital learning and teaching.

The review team heard from the PhD tutors about some impressive student-led activities around inclusivity, including a tutorial workshop and advice on supporting neurodivergent students.

2.6   Development of Employability and Graduate Attributes

2.6.1   Skills Training

The School identified Postgraduate Student Skills Training as their subject specific remit item. The School was keen to investigate how to better signpost/package skills training opportunities for students including how to identify gaps in provision. This not only referred to research skills training but also to personal and career development training. The School wanted to investigate the type of profile they would like their graduates to have and whether students are sufficiently prepared for their next steps after study.

The Skills Centre (formerly known as the Writing Centre) offers PG (and undergraduate [UG]) students in PPLS help in writing. It also helps students find support for programming and statistical analysis. The review team **commends** the development of the skills centre and the positive change from focusing primarily on writing to embracing multiple activities for staff and student support.

To ensure that the Skills Centre can continue to contribute to the strategic vision of the School, input into the promotion of transferable skills/soft skills and how these relate to learning outcomes and graduate attributes, the review team **recommends** that the School reflect on the Skills Centre governance structure. Consideration should be given to ways in which input and support from senior management can be enhanced as well as further involvement of both PGR and PGT students.

To further strengthen the strategic vision for the Skills Centre, the review team **recommends** that the School establishes a more coordinated structure to link with

the Learning Technologists to review what courses can be delivered that are tailored to student needs. It is **suggested** that the school reflects on ways to improve timely communication to promote the centre. Finally, the School may wish to explore opportunities for collaborations with other Schools to develop and enhance skills development.

2.6.2 Links with Alumni and Industry

As noted above in section 2, the School is asked to assess and understand the needs and aspirations of current and future students. Improved connections with alumni could help inform enhancements to the programme, support students to progress on their future career and provide an opportunity for the School to engage beyond the University.

To further enhance this activity and strengthen the student voice, it is **recommended** that the School reflects on its alumni activity. This could be done through improved tracking and connections with alumni to better understand their experience of the course, and to understand what, if any, other transferable skills would have benefited them during their studies.

Linked to this, it is **recommended** that the School reflects on and defines their links to industry. The School should consider opportunities to build in non-academic, external elements into their programmes and ensure that students are engaged with addressing this, particularly PGT students. It is **suggested** that the School publicise Platform One which is Edinburgh's digital meeting place for students to connect with fellow students and graduates.

2.6.3 Preparing students for their future career

Careers advice sessions are organised by the Careers Service, with separate sessions for Masters students and PhD students. However there appears to be a disconnect between what is offered and the students' experience of these sessions.

PGT students expressed mixed views on career advice and support, in particular that advice mainly focuses on academic opportunities and some students would value more focus on non-academic opportunities and more practice-based experience and placement/internship opportunities. In addition, they would value opportunities to hear from guest speakers from different fields and areas of work beyond academia. Many students felt that there was a lack of opportunity to discuss career development and aspirations and ways in which non-academic, external elements could be integrated into the programme. This links to the recommendation in paragraph 2.6.2.

The review team **recommends** that the School explore opportunities for improved links with industry through invited guest speakers and some vocational/placement activity. It is **suggested** that the School reflects on current careers support and works with the Careers Service to create greater cohesion around more tailored support and advice.

2.7 Supporting and developing staff

2.7.1 Support and training for tutors and demonstrators

The School currently employs a significant number of PhD students as tutors and demonstrators who primarily run tutorial sessions for undergraduate courses.

The review team acknowledged that significant improvements have been made since the last review and **commends** the School for the efforts to bring about these changes and the high student satisfaction with teaching opportunities.

The students that met with the review team welcomed the opportunity to teach across a variety of fields if they wished. The review team found that there appeared to be no underlying problems with students rejecting opportunities to teach. Students felt that the balance of time spent tutoring was appropriate and they reported receiving feedback on their teaching from students through mid-course feedback and course evaluation questionnaires.

At the same time, students highlighted mixed tutorial experiences; some reported ambiguity around line management for the tutor role around reporting issues, concerns or suggestions. A number of tutors felt that the systems for logging hours and payment for teaching seemed quite bureaucratic. They also reported variable experiences in tutor teaching observations, with some tutors reporting that these are mandatory in their subject area and others reporting that observations had not taken place. It was noted that some of the observations had been cancelled as a result of the move to digital learning.

In terms of training and development, some tutors reported that they had participated in IAD (Institute for Academic Development) courses on providing feedback. However, it was felt that in general, courses were not actively promoted by the School and that more could be done to publicise and encourage participation. It is **suggested** that the School explores how to better promote courses such as the Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA) and other training and support courses offered by IAD. This relates to wider suggestions about communication and the visibility of Learning and Teaching co-ordination and information sharing discussed throughout the report

In addition, some tutors reported that due to the move to hybrid teaching, the number of undergraduate students allocated to tutorial groups has significantly increased resulting in a much heavier marking load for tutors. The review team **recommends** that the University and the School are mindful of the impact on tutors' workload due to increased undergraduate student numbers during this period of hybrid teaching. Furthermore, consider how tutor observations can be undertaken for the period of digital teaching provision. The review team **recommends** that the School considers how marking load is distributed among tutors, how the quality of tutor teaching is linked to the undergraduate quality mechanisms and ensures equality of support for tutors.

The review team **suggests** that, to support including the student voice, the School considers a formal mechanism to allow PGR tutors to feedback on courses to enhance course content and re-design.

2.7.2 Support and training for Professional Services and Support staff

Postgraduate programmes, students and supervisors in all Subject Areas are supported by the School level Postgraduate Student Services Office (PSSO). The PSSO team of four professional services staff work closely with key academic staff in order to maintain and develop the postgraduate provision within the School. The PSSO act as both the academic administration and student support office for the postgraduate community, offering a single point of contact for information and support.

The review team **commends** the professional services staff on the development of new processes since the last review and for the support that is provided to and much appreciated by academic staff, for example assisting with support around triaging vulnerable students to appropriate student services.

To further strengthen and empower professional services staff, the review team **suggests** that the School reflects on the PSSO structure and considers a community-based (one per discipline) approach which will provide a dedicated key contact point for students. The review team heard that the School have been looking at more opportunities for the Postgraduate Student Services Office and learning technologists to work together and the review team **commends** this activity to strengthen and support academic delivery.

2.7.3 Approach to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to enhance Learning and Teaching

As noted in section 1, a number of new academic staff have recently joined the School. Discussions on staff development for these new appointees and for current staff highlighted ambiguity on the number of staff engaging with the Higher Education Academy (HEA), or other CPD. The review team **suggests** that consideration is given to learning and teaching development opportunities for new and current staff. It is noted that this may be considered as part of the forthcoming University Curriculum Review.

The School are looking to launch an internal mentoring programme that will give early career academics the chance to gain a confidential review of career options and strategies from senior colleagues. However the current status of the programme was unknown and the review team **suggests** that the School progresses with plans and confirms arrangements with staff.

2.8 Learning environment (physical and virtual)

2.8.1 The School are supported by a dedicated Learning Technology team who work closely with the Postgraduate Student Service Office and course organisers to develop and maintain the VLE for PPLS PG courses. The Learning Technology team currently deals mainly with problem solving in response to staff and student queries.

2.8.2 The School are **commended** for the emphasis placed on learning technology and the timely appointment of additional learning technology support in response to the Covid pandemic. The learning technologists demonstrated strong technical support and ability and are a clear asset for the School. In addition, the responsiveness of the team during the current Covid pandemic to make remote desktops available to students to enable experiment work to continue is **commended**.

2.8.3 The ABC curriculum design method is an effective and engaging hands-on, approach to curriculum design. ABC workshops have proved themselves to be highly effective in enabling rapid re-design of courses across the University, not only do they promote good pedagogic principles in learning design, they also link to the use of supported learning technology. School based learning technologists have adapted ABC workshops such that they can support the move to hybrid education.

The move to digital teaching prompted the School to reflect on their digital delivery practices and consider where benefits from digital teaching could be embedded going forward, such as opportunities to provide more digital teaching and enable more effective use of resources.

The PPLS learning technologists provided these course development workshops for the School and the review team **recommends** that these continue and encourages the School to ensure the learning technologists are better integrated with the wider School community to enable academic staff to benefit from their knowledge and expertise, particularly their ability to support course design.

3 Assurance and enhancement of provision

3.1 Setting and maintaining academic standards

The School operates within the University's Quality Framework and the review team is confident that academic standards are high. The approach employed within the School to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards is appropriate. Standards are continually reviewed through External Examiner reports, student feedback and annual monitoring.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Range of provision considered by the review

Subject	Programme	Note
Philosophy	MSc Ancient Philosophy	Suspended pending review
	MSc Epistemology, Ethics & Mind	Online: New since last review – started 14/15
	MSc Mind, Language & Embodied Cognition	
	MSc Philosophy	
	MSc Philosophy, Science & Religion	Online: New since last review – started 16/17
	MSc by Research Philosophy	
	PhD Philosophy	
Psychology	MSc Developmental Cognitive Science	New since last review – started 18/19 Suspended in 19/20 and 20/21 due to staff leave
	MSc Human Cognitive Neuropsychology	
	MSc Psychology of Individual Differences	
	MSc Psychology of Language	
	MSc Psychological Research	
	MSc Social Psychology	New since last review – started 18/19
	MSc by Research Psychology	
	PhD Psychology	
LEL	MSc Applied Linguistics	
	MSc Developmental Linguistics	
	MSc English Language	
	MSc Evolution of Language & Cognition	
	MSc Linguistics	New since last review – started 16/17
	MSc Phonetics	New since last review – started 16/17
	MSc Speech & Language Processing	
	MSc by Research Linguistics MSc by Research English Language	
	PhD Linguistics & English Language	

Appendix 2 – University remit

The University remit provides consistent coverage of key elements across all of the University's internal reviews (undergraduate and postgraduate).

It covers all credit bearing provision within the scope of the review, including:
- Provision delivered in collaboration with others
- Transnational education
- Work-based provision and placements
- Online and distance learning
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Postgraduate Professional Development (PPD)
- Provision which provides only small volumes of credit
- Joint/Dual Degrees
- Massive Open Online Courses MOOCs (even if non-credit bearing)

1. **Strategic overview**
   The strategic approach to:

   - The management and resourcing of learning and teaching experience,
   - The forward direction and the structures in place to support this.
   - Developing business cases for new programmes and courses,
   - Managing and reviewing its portfolio,
   - Closing courses and programmes.

2. **Enhancing the Student Experience**
   The approach to and effectiveness of:

   - Supporting students in their learning
   - Listening to and responding to the Student Voice
   - Learning and Teaching
   - Assessment and Feedback
   - Accessibility, Inclusivity and Widening Participation
   - Learning environment (physical and virtual)
   - Development of Employability and Graduate Attributes
   - Supporting and developing staff

3. **Assurance and Enhancement of provision**
   The approach to and effectiveness of maintaining and enhancing academic standards and quality of provision in alignment with the University Quality Framework:

   - Admissions and Recruitment
   - Assessment, Progression and Achievement
   - Programme and Course approval
   - Annual Monitoring, Review and Reporting
   - Operation of Boards of Studies, Exam Boards, Special Circumstances
   - External Examining, themes and actions taken
   - Alignment with SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) level, relevant benchmark statements, UK Quality Code
   - Accreditation and Collaborative activity and relationship with Professional/Accrediting bodies (if applicable)

Appendix 3 Additional information considered by review team

Prior to the review visit:

- Reflective Report

- Appendices
  1 - Marketing & Communications Strategy
  2 - PhD Examination Recommendations by Subject
  3 - Tutor Policy Review & Update
  4 - Tutor Recruitment Pack
  5 - Annual Review Process Note
  6 - Tutor Induction Agenda
  7 - Training Needs Assessment Form

- School Quality Assurance Reports: (2018-2019, 2017-2018, 2016-2017)
- External Examiners summary reports: (2018-2019, 2017-2018,2016-2017)
- Full School organisational structure
- School Organisational Structure PG Specific
- Programme Handbooks
- Programme Specification Information
- Applications, progression and performance data
- Equality and Diversity Student Report
- School Background Data for first Destination Statistics (DHLE Survey) Research
- School Background Data for first Destination Statistics (DHLE Survey) Taught
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results
- Student Staff Liaison Committee meeting minutes (previous academic year)
- University of Edinburgh Standard Remit 2019/20
- Subject Specific Remit
- Edinburgh University Students' Association School Report

During the review visit
- Models/Structure of PGT provision: An update (Nov 2020)
- Skills Centre SharePoint analytics
- PhD Annual Review outcomes data
- PPLS Mentoring Programme information
- % PGR Research students have done previous degree in Edinburgh
- Details on governance of Skills Centre

Appendix 4 Number of students

Entrants by entry session and entry student type

	2015/6	2016/7	2017/8	2018/9	2019/0
Postgraduate Research	56	71	44	56	47
Postgraduate Research Visiting	22	23	20	20	10
TOTAL	**78**	**94**	**64**	**76**	**57**

	2015/6	2016/7	2017/8	2018/9	2019/0
Postgraduate Taught	222	271	296	297	260
Postgraduate Taught Visiting	2				
TOTAL	**224**	**271**	**296**	**297**	**260**

Appendix 5 Models/Structure of PGT provision: An update

1. Background

When the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences (PPLS) was formed in 2002, it inherited 5 PGT programmes from its component departments. Today, the School owns 17 taught PG programmes, more than 3 times as many as it did at its inception. The increase in the number of programmes reflects an organic growth in our PGT provision as the School acquired more staff members in new areas of specialisation, addressed gaps in provision, and diversified its types of offering to include online PG teaching. However, this growth in provision has also raised several issues surrounding the portfolio of PGT programmes the School currently holds. These issues include:

• Efficiency and sustainability: Is our provision sufficiently efficient in terms of cost and staff use, or should we streamline our portfolio to improve efficiency? Should low recruiting programmes be kept?

• Robustness and flexibility: Are we too constrained by the obligation to deliver courses on a wide range of DPTs? How can we ensure that the running of the programmes does not stretch our teaching resources, for example, in the face of staff unavailability?

• Links between staff interests and PG teaching: Does the collection of programmes reflect research interests/strength of current teaching staff?

• Market appeal: Are we more likely to succeed in student recruitment by having several named specialist programmes or fewer general programmes with a range of 'streams'?

• Training depth: How specialised should our programmes be in order to achieve a level of training necessary in a particular field of study?

Discussion within the School on these issues has so far led to two broad areas of consensus. Firstly, no changes will be made to the two online programmes in Philosophy (*MSc Epistemology, Ethics & Mind* and *MSc Philosophy, Science, & Religion*), or the on-campus programmes in *Mind, Language & Embodied Cognition* and *Speech & Language Processing*, both of which enjoy a high level of student intake and international reputation. Secondly, there is no immediate appetite to increase online PGT offering in the School. Ongoing discussion, therefore, centres around the future direction of the remaining on-campus programmes. Three models have emerged in the discussion.

2. Basic models

Model A – Specialised programmes

Maintain the current structure with several named specialised degree programmes in each subject area.

Advantages:

1) in-depth training in specialised areas potentially leading to PhDs,

2) visibility to applicants and research communities outside Edinburgh,

3) correspondence with interest-based natural groupings of students and staff.

Disadvantages:

1) pressure to deliver DPT-mandated courses,

2) imbalance in supervision and teaching duties (with some dealing with low-enrolment specialist courses while others forced to teach large general courses),

3) inflation in number of courses to run.

Two programmes were opened but subsequently closed during this process: MSc History and Theory of Psychology (closed 2014) and MSc Cognition in Science and Society (closed 2019).

Model B – **Umbrella programme with specialist 'streams' or 'exit points'**
Run a single umbrella programme for the subject area but with different 'streams'. Students graduate with a general degree but with a mention of their specialisation that reflects their coursework and dissertation topic (e.g. MSc in Philosophy (specialisation in Ancient Philosophy)).

Advantages:
1) Curriculum flexibility (non-compulsory courses need not to run every year),
2) specialisation flexibility (new specialism can be added as required),
3) efficiency in teaching and administration.
Disadvantages:
1) potential lack of depth in training,
2) less appealing to applicants interested in specialism,
3) less conducive to cohort building,
4) closure of well-established programmes means loss of historical recognition for Edinburgh,
5) loss of morale among staff involved in specialist degrees.

Model C – Large shared component
Run several specialised programmes but with a large number of shared modules.
Advantages:
1) specialisation can be maintained,
2) more efficient, robust and flexible than Model A.
Disadvantages:
1) less curriculum flexibility for students,
2) only works if subject area can agree on a set of shared modules,
3) shared modules can be very large and resource intensive.

3. Current status
COVID-19 specific temporary arrangements for 2020/21
All specialist PGT programmes have been suspended for 2020/21 except the *MSc in Speech & Language Processing* and the two online Philosophy MSc programmes. Each subject area is otherwise running an umbrella MSc programme with no specialist streams or exit points. The following discussion relates to post-COVID arrangements.

Psychology
The MSc programmes in Psychology are already tending towards a structure based on Model C, with 3 course modules (40 credits) shared by all 6 degree programmes and a 4th course module (10 credits) shared by all but one degree programmes. A proposal has been made to increase the shared component to 60 credits by changing the credit points of some of the shared modules; the remaining credits consist of programme-specific compulsory modules (40 credits) and an optional module (20 credits).

Philosophy and Linguistics & English Language (LEL)
There is ongoing discussion in Philosophy and LEL, which focuses on the choice between Model A versus Model B, and less so on the possibility of pursuing Model C. No clear conclusions have been drawn at this point.

4. Feedback sought
The School welcomes any advice on whether we are considering all feasible possibilities in terms of models/structures of PGT programmes, whether the factors we are addressing are appropriate, and how we should go about weighing those factors in arriving at a decision. Report prepared by Mits Ota, PPLS PG Director.