

The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review

Year on response report

Internal Periodic Review of: Ecological and Environmental Sciences

Date of review: 27th-28th February

Date of 14 week response:

Date of year on response: 03/06/2024

The School/Subject Area is responsible for reporting on progress with all recommendations, including those remitted to other areas of the University for action.

If any recommendation has been fully addressed please record the action taken and date completed. Any barriers to progress should be highlighted on this report.

Recommendation no	Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	<p>The review team recommends that there is more transparency between the School management and Programme teams when discussing managing admission numbers on the programme. These discussions should involve all staff involved in delivering teaching and support to the cohort. Wider conversations should consider the positive and negative impacts and consequences that a larger cohort has on School staff and resources.</p> <p>The School should consider the feasibility and risk assessments required for larger numbers of students and in particular look at the maximum threshold of the field courses and cohort embedded courses. This will futureproof the quality of the courses going forward.</p>	2023-24	<p>The School Student Recruitment Committee has an admissions advisor for EES who is part of the decision-making processes about student recruitment. Working closely with the programme team and college admissions the EES programmes recruited on target this year. For the 2024-25 recruitment round Degree Programme Conveners have been asked to provide a target (desired size of incoming cohort) and cap (maximum number of incoming students based on teaching constraints). This provides greater transparency of decision making between programme teams, School management, and College Admissions.</p> <p>In 2023-24, the School established a new School Education Committee that includes the new position of Deputy Director of Teaching: Student recruitment. This role to lead on communications with programmes about student recruitment. Transparent annual cycles of business will also better provide alignment and visibility in decision-making about student numbers.</p> <p>In 2023-24 the School commissioned a market research consultancy to undertake a portfolio review of taught programmes. The draft review has recently been shared and will inform a working group and a consultative process for renewing the School's Education Strategy, including future plans for student numbers in our portfolio of programmes.</p> <p>In 2023-24 EES has reviewed existing field teaching and identified scenarios for running the programmes with different student</p>	Completed

			numbers. Scenarios included double teaching of field courses and identifying additional staff resource that would be required to support any growth in student numbers.	
2	The review team recommends that the School review the quantity of assessments for students. A strategic review of the assessment points through all years of the programmes will look to avoid repetitive assessment or overassessment and help to manage the fixed resources available for assessments.	June 2023 2023-25	EES conducted an assessment mapping exercise during an away day in June 2023. This led to changes to 2 Year 4 courses to reduced the number of 10 credit courses and reduce the number of assessment points for final year students. In June 2024 EES will review and revise programme level learning outcomes during their annual away day. This will be the basis for an assessment mapping process in 2024-25 that aims to map all assessment to programme level learning outcomes and ensure alignment with the University's assessment principles and priorities.	Complete Ongoing. Complete by June 2025
3	The review team recommends that there needs to be a much better formal mechanism for the student voice within the School. The School should look to involve more student representation on all relevant School committees and Boards in particular, teaching committees and Board of Studies. The review team also recommends that there should be more transparent publishing of committee minutes relevant to all students. Further, the School should be highlighting the methods by which students can give feedback whilst ensuring that any actions taken are fed-back to the students to close the feedback loop e.g. "You Said, We Did." The review team recognises that this recommendation follows on from Recommendations 6 & 7 from the previous 2017 review. The review team felt these recommendations were not sufficiently met in the School responses and should be reviewed and implemented.	2023-24	In 2023-24 we launched revised learning and teaching committees. The School Education Committee, Undergraduate Education Committee, Postgraduate Education Committee, and Board of Studies have student representation from EUSA representatives. Degree programmes will be encouraged to include student representatives in their meetings. SSLCs: The School's Student Experience Team has reviewed and revised Student Staff Liaison Committees focusing on how student feedback is gathered and ways in which the feedback loop can be closed. A new action tracker available to staff and students have improved transparency of feedback and responses. The Student Experience Team have hosted town hall meetings with student representatives to work in partnership on School and University priorities. In 2023-24 priorities have been i) assessment and feedback, and ii) student community. There is an ongoing project migrating all student support information currently to SharePoint. Minutes of Education committees will be hosted on the new SharePoint and we will explore whether it is possible to provide student access to minutes.	Complete. Moving to continuous improvement.
4	Given that the EES programme applications are moving to a selection process rather than rolling offers, the review team recommends the School uses its data to track the students	2023-24	The annual Quality Report tracks and reviews student recruitment and attainment according to a range of	DoQ report due August 2024

	<p>that are being recruited and their level of attainment to allow for diversity of cohort.</p> <p>The School should look at gender, ethnicity, mature student status and widening access to ensure the course is in keeping with the University EDI vision.</p> <p>Furthermore, with the increasing student numbers, the School should look at what support can be provided for a greater diversity of student backgrounds.</p>		<p>characteristics. The DoQA will be asked to support the programme Team in reviewing this data.</p> <p>The School Student Recruitment Committee have shared practice on diversifying student recruitment. Our PGT programmes, for example, have successfully worked with the School Marketing Team and College Recruitment and Admissions to diversify our international student cohorts.</p> <p>Internationalisation and Diversification of Student Recruitment one of the key themes addressed in the School executive's away day in May 2024.</p>	Complete
5	<p>The review team recommends that the School provides guidance to incoming Year 1 students on course choices before they arrive, building upon the Academic Fairs that run for continuing students. Providing additional information, such as a course prospectus suggesting recommended education paths, pre-requisites, suitability for Year 1 or 2 students and possible career projections will enable students to choose the most appropriate courses.</p>	September 2023	<p>The School developed processes for pre-enrolment on courses and is participating in university-wide working groups on course enrolment.</p> <p>The EES programmes identified 4 pathways through the EES programme based on student interests: Ecological; Environmental (involving chemistry courses), Quantitative (data science); EES with Management. These pathways were offered as curated choices for students entering the programme in September 2023.</p> <p>Improved guidance has been provided to student experience teams to support students choosing outside courses.</p> <p>We shared practice and resources in the School as other programmes had processes for early enrolment in optional courses in place.</p>	Complete
6	<p>The review team recommends that staff should be encouraged to participate in the Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice. The review team felt that incoming staff should be enrolled into this course as part of their initial training when their teaching load is not as heavy.</p>	Ongoing	<p>Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake professional development in student education. We support our staff to follow the Edinburgh Teaching Award route to professional accreditation for Fellowship of the HEA. The School also has a number of staff who mentor on the Edinburgh Teaching Award. We support staff participation via a 50-hour tariff in the Schools WAM.</p> <p>We encourage staff to pursue PGCAP. However, the time demands of the PGCAP are high (600 hours) and teaching need in programmes, alongside other commitments to research, knowledge exchange and citizenship means we cannot provide protected time to fully support participation.</p>	Ongoing

	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review		We have and will use the existing mechanisms of SSLC to ensure students are kept up to date on the outcomes of the review and the progress of the implementation of the appropriate recommendations.	
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in recruitment communications where targets and caps are agreed beforehand to ensure greater transparency in decision making. This has been implemented for all programmes in the School. • The programme outcome/assessment mapping exercise will be implemented across the School and will also ensure alignment to the University Assessment and Feedback Priorities and Principles. 	