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The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review
14 week response report

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Internal Periodic Review of: Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences, Post-Graduate Taught
Date of review: 20 – 22 February 2024
Date of 14 week response: 17 July 2024
Date of year on response: 2 May 2025

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	**Strategy development** [Deanery Senior Leadership] The review team recommends that the Deanery's senior leadership develop a postgraduate taught student recruitment strategy, taking account of business and financial modelling. Projected student numbers over five year rolling periods should be included and the strategy kept under annual review. The strategy should also consider financial and business modelling, for example differential fees and funding opportunities considering the diversity of the student cohort, with a view to encouraging uptake and reduce the current high withdrawal rate. The review team recommends that the Deanery senior leadership develop a resourcing strategy alongside the recruitment strategy. The aim of this should be to make staff workloads more manageable, and thereby improve staff well-being. This will, in turn, enable future development and growth. The review team identified concerns among staff over the imminent move to the BioQuarter and projection of increased student numbers in relation to staff retention. In developing a resource strategy, leadership should ensure that succession planning and staff retention is taken account of. During the review visit, the idea of a period of consolidation within postgraduate taught delivery was discussed and the review team supports this as being beneficial to the Deanery to	September 2025	A draft strategy has been articulated with a particular focus on determining our current position as a Teaching Organisation. A review of the PGT portfolio is underway concentrating on our systems, people and processes. The next steps will be to co-develop, with extensive consultation, a PGT *5-year strategy (including CPD, Short Courses (non-credit bearing) and PPD (postgraduate professional development courses).* The strategy will also focus on the implementation of the IPR recommendations. We will involve academic and research staff, professional services staff, students and alumni, industry, public sector and other relevant stakeholders in this process. The strategy will ensure alignment with the University L&T strategy and the University Curriculum Transformation project and College modernisation plans. The PGT Director is working with the Director of Professional Services on the business plans for the TO programmes with the intention for a more transparent student recruitment strategy and financial forecasting model. This will also include a staff resourcing strategy. It should be noted that at the time of writing this report CMVM have announced its financial position and recruitment restrictions have been imposed in line with the University-wide approach. The University's Senior Leadership Team has agreed that it is essential to cut spending and that this will enable the University to continue to operate with, and to provide continued opportunity for reinvestment. This will obviously have an impact on our ability to recruit new staff, but we will take this into	

	ensure appropriate strategies are in place to support future planned growth. The review team also identified a need to review contract types. The review team considered that the lack of guaranteed hours contracts was limiting tutor capacity to support marking. There was evidence of slippage in the 20% allocation of teaching time in new research contracts and a lack of formal contracts for some tutors. The Deanery should also ensure tutor appointments align with the University policy for the recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators.		consideration when developing the resourcing strategy. The College modernisation work will also create the governance structures we need to help us make smarter decisions about future recruitment. The synergy with College Modernisation plans to establish School 6 (College level) is likely to significantly affect our local teaching strategy, but we are proactively seeking guidance and ensuring alignment with any plans being implemented at this early stage of development.	
2	**Resourcing: Work Allocation Model** [Deanery Senior Leadership] The review team recommends that the Deanery senior leadership develop an appropriate and more clearly defined Work Allocation Model (WAM) across the Deanery. Currently there is a disproportionate amount of teaching activity falling on a limited number of staff. The review team particularly noted the impact of a lack of dissertation supervisors and recommends that this, along with marking activity, should be shared across all academic staff. The Deanery senior leadership should make clear the expectation that all academic staff are involved in teaching and marking. There should be a process for implementing and monitoring this, for example, an annual review of WAM at a Deanery level, and in annual reviews between individual staff and their line managers.	September 2025	A workload activity template was circulated to all staff, but the completion rate has been low at 25% and a high proportion of the respondents are from the Teaching Organisation. The Usher Executive will discuss how to improve staff engagement, with the aim of achieving an 80% response rate by the end of 2024 and agree a minimum percentage of commitment to teaching. In future, teaching contribution will be discussed more formally during staff P&DR with the expectation that academic staff on open ended contracts commit a minimum of 10% of their time to teaching-related activities. This is a staged approach and a more substantive WAM is to be developed, agreed and used in the future. This will have to align with the planned College modernisation and University WAM strategy.	
3	**Value of Teaching** [Deanery Senior Leadership] The review team recommends that the Deanery senior leadership acknowledge, and actively promote, the value of teaching and recognising the importance of teaching input to financial and business models within the Deanery. The review team noted a similar recommendation from the previous review and it appeared that little progress has been made in this respect, which was disappointing. During discussions, the review team identified a palpable tension between research and teaching within the Deanery and considered that an attitudinal culture shift needs to be progressed to bring the Institute together and to ensure the	September 2025	There are plans to develop a more formalised induction and training pathway within Usher to support and mandate all tenured fulltime staff (and all part time research staff who are interested) to be involved in teaching. Senior Management team are planning to commission a position paper to explore opportunities and barriers to research staff being involved in teaching. It will be important to quantify expectations of staff (e.g., 10% of their time) and to quantify how much time teaching activities take. Teaching contribution will be reviewed in annual reviews and training considered for line managers to ensure teaching contributions are considered. There will be a more proactive approach to ensure awareness and enactment of the University routes to rewarding teaching activities through the academic promotions process. We aim to make this more	

	sustainability of programmes, particularly in respect of plans for future expansion. There is a clear reputational risk if programmes are not able to support the student learning and teaching experience effectively. Promotion criteria should be put in place to recognise teaching and academic staff annual reviews should include conversations on teaching as a standard element and as part of a WAM.		transparent and be more proactive about encouraging colleagues who teach to apply for promotion. The message that income generated from teaching funds much of Usher activities will be articulated widely by senior management. The next Usher Forum will be dedicated to teaching and the Usher Executive will also discuss adding an Usher Recognition Awards category for teaching "Outstanding contribution to positive teaching culture" in addition to the existing 'student experience' award. This would be a clear indicator that teaching/research have equal footing at the Usher Institute and place 'value' on these crucial teaching contributions. We continue to highlight the positive contribution of our students work to the Usher and community by encouraging them to feature their final year projects in the staff newsletter Illuminate and in the first instance of the Usher Masters online Symposium in October where all students have been invited to present their projects. The first cohort of on campus MPH students will be visible to all staff from September 2024 and we hope that the student activities and events will also raise the profile of teaching and encourage more engagement from all staff in the student learning journey. Quarterly meetings are planned with the Senior Management Team to discuss milestones and progress.	
4	**Learning and Teaching** [Deanery] The review team recommends that the Deanery review overlaps between the online and campus Masters of Public Health programmes to ensure opportunities for synergy are not being missed and to ensure that the student learning experience on both programmes is optimal. Web marketing content should also be reviewed to ensure accuracy and clarity on differences between the online and campus offerings.	September 2025	We have invited teaching staff and relevant stakeholders involved in both MPH programmes to a full day workshop in August to ensure synergies, identify best practice, and review the current curriculum and work towards APHEA accreditation for the on-campus programme. MPH staff members from both programmes involved in similar courses have also begun to work together to develop and enhance content, encourage best practice and enhance the student and staff experience. We have also appointed a new Director for the MPH on campus programme from 1 August 2024. We will also review the website information and ensure it articulates the differences between both on-campus and online programmes.	
5	**Assessment and Feedback** [Deanery Programme Team] The review team recommends that programme and course teams explore where more formative assessment opportunities could be introduced.	September 2024	In line with the University's strategic focus on assessment and feedback, this will be one of our key areas of focus over the next academic year. Four main areas: 1) Fostering a culture where assessment is seen as a tool for growth, creating space for experimentation and failure, rather than simply a tool for evaluation. 2) Reducing over-assessment at the course level 3) Ambition towards mapping assessment at programme level	

			outcomes 4) Improving the quality of feedback and ensuring we feed forward in a timely manner. The critical role of Assessment and Feedback is noted within the new strategy which will have an operational plan for each of these elements. There are formative assessment opportunities in each course but students may not always recognise them as such. More explicit details of what counts as formative feedback will be communicated to students in programme handbooks, the assessment sections in Learn, welcome week and in each course introduction. Formative feedback will also be included in tutor handbooks and training and we will request an explanation of formative feedback to be included in MVM handbook templates.	
6	**Subject specific remit: co-creation** [Deanery] Co-creation activity is an area of good practice and the review team recommends that the Deanery continue the good work already begun and that this is shared across the Deanery, College and University.	On - going	We have already shared good practice with the College and Deanery including participation/presentation at the 'Good Practice Showcase' event (March 2024), an invited talk to colleagues planning an IPR on the co-creation and other aspects and a published blog on 'Teaching Matters' (June 2024). Usher Masters Alumni network continue to gather pace and is student-led with staff support, developing events for students by students and graduates. This theme will continue to be a core part of what we do. Our IPR co-created model and report has been added as an exemplar to IPR documentation about how to involve students in co-creation. The University of Edinburgh IPR team now encourage all IPRs to consider having a student coordinator.	
7	**Subject specific remit: academic citizenship** [Deanery and Careers Service] The review team recommends that the Deanery consider expanding academic citizenship to include both professional and academic citizenship. Programmes should ensure that students are consistently alerted to existing employability options and graduate attribute elements in what they are already doing and encourage programme teams to think more proactively on how core skills are embedded and highlighted within core courses. The Deanery should explore how to work more collaboratively with the University Careers Service to ensure more tailored advice and activity is available for online and on campus students. The review team suggests that this begins in	On-going	An initial meeting with Carol Macdonald, Careers and Employability Manager, took place in June and we are planning a sustainable approach to embedding 'citizenship' and 'employability' as golden threads throughout the entire programme of learning. In addition to programme specific events, this will involve mapping and developing a coherent strand of existing and new initiatives, involving the Usher Masters Alumni network and staff, open to students from all programmes. Other plans involve: - Exploring ways to accredit teaching content by industry or professional bodies as a targeted support for career changers. This could be achieved by leveraging existing industry partnership within and across the university (e.g.	

	Welcome Week and continues throughout the programmes.		School of Business, Edinburgh Innovations, DDI Hubs; EFI, Agritech, Bayes, Robotarium etc) • Creating an agreed framework to embed across programmes to articulate competencies, knowledge and skills to relevant industry or public sector demands • Establish a small external advisory group with membership from industry, public and third sector organisations to ensure alignment with sector skills and areas of priority • Naming a champion for citizenship (academic and employability), to help move the agenda forward amongst decision-makers. • Expand the option of executive sponsorship/mentoring to industry or leaders in relevant fields across all programmes, as currently implemented on the Leading Digital Transformation programme.	
8	**Dissertation Supervision** [Deanery Senior Leadership and the Deanery] The review team recommends that the Deanery explore how to support management of different dissertation routes, for example the policy brief option needs to be properly resourced in the on-campus (MPH) programme, and there may be opportunities for learning from the online programme (As part of the resourcing strategy – see recommendation 1 above). There may be opportunities to work more closely with external partners, for example, NHS Scotland, to increase dissertation supervision capacity. The Deanery should explore more formalised arrangements with external partners to facilitate this.	May 2025	The supervision element of the dissertation part of our programmes is being overhauled. A new member of staff was recruited to the MPH on-campus team and an expert in policy briefs is engaged to ensure we have the capacity to sustain this option in the future. The MPH online programme has recruited new supervisors who will be paired with an experienced policy brief supervisor this year to expand the pool of supervisors for both MPH programmes. We are currently exploring how we bring in external supervisors and support them with the academic expertise from Usher staff to provide students with the best experience from both the relevant fields which will expand their networks and employability and provide external supervisors and students with the academic expertise and support required for PGT dissertations.	
9	**Resourcing**: differential scale for marking - equal priority for room booking given to teaching activity [Deanery Senior Leadership and the Deanery] Staff noted that current practice is that all markers are paid at the same rate and this does not reflect the expertise nor mentoring required to instil consistency. The review team recommends that the Deanery senior leadership considers	March 2025	We are currently reviewing marking pay rates in the TO, for various teaching and assessment roles. The discussion about streamlining resources is part of the wider College restructuring that will address any parity across programmes. Teaching is prioritised, and room booking is not opened for other activities until Teaching has input its requirements each semester. For the 24/25 academic year we are confident that the teaching space is fit for purpose and can accommodate the anticipated number of on	

	developing a differential scale for more experienced staff as part of the resourcing strategy discussed and recommended in section 1. There was a general feeling that priority was being given to research in terms of space allocation in the new building. The review team recommends that the Deanery ensure that at least equal priority on room booking within the new building is given to teaching activity.		campus students. We have also recently secured a dedicated space for our 'Student Support Hub'. This space will allow our students to visit the Student Advisors, Student Well-being advisors and MPH on campus teaching and professional services staff in a private and safe space to discuss any personal circumstances, student support needs and overall access to our student support model.	
10	**Tutors and demonstrators** [Deanery] The review team recommends that the Deanery review its tutor training to ensure there is a co-ordinated and consistent approach to tutor training. There should also be standardised and consistent approach to recruitment of tutors in accordance with equality, diversity, and inclusivity policies.	March 2025	Plans are underway to create an 'Academy' for Learning and Teaching and we will reach out to IAD colleagues and internal TO expertise to support our inhouse induction and training. This element will be addressed within these plans and will be written into the PGT strategy All new staff will also be encouraged to complete the PG Certificate in Academic Practice course (PgCAP) and gain professional recognition for teaching as a Fellow of the Advance HE Academy. This demonstrates a commitment to professionalism and provides recognition of practice, impact and leadership in teaching and learning. Teaching hours, roles and responsibilities are being reviewed at the next Teaching Management Group (July, 24).	
11	**Technology** [Deanery] The review team commends the Deanery on its ambition to embrace the pedagogical potential of AI and recommends that the Deanery explores opportunities for internal, interdisciplinary partnerships and looks across the University for areas of expertise when thinking about adding this to their programmes.		Engaging with the new Usher Academy will enable those researchers developing cutting edge technologies and services to influence and shape new pedagogies at the Usher and beyond. As suggested, we will also seek to establish partnerships both internally and external to the university. We have a wealth of expertise on our doorstep which we should capitalise, e.g., experts at the University's Centre for Technomoral Futures, the Generative AI Laboratory (GAIL), Edinburgh Centre for Data, Culture, and Society, Edinburgh Futures Institute and Bayes Innovation hub for AI and Data Science and colleagues leading the MSc in Digital Education.	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	We plan to invite Student Reps at the next Student Reps Quality meeting, and students who participated in the Review visit and in the Focus groups in September. It is a challenge to get hold of students to comment in July and August due to the holiday period.		