

The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review

14 week response report

Internal Periodic Review of: Deanery of Biomedical Sciences UG and PGT

Date of review: 28th/29th November 2023

Date of 14 week response: 28th August 2024

Date of year on response: 22nd 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.	<p>Remit item 2: Strategic Development of BMTO Teaching Space</p> <p>The review team recommend that the University & Deanery urgently develop and implement sustainable, innovative and flexible teaching space (HRB or equivalent space) in order to enable stronger interaction between staff and students.</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Deanery use the expertise of staff who are already working in multiple sites to inform the design of the project & refurbishment moving forward.</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Deanery consider the requirements of professional services, student support and administrative staff to ensure they have adequate space in</p>	Ongoing	<p>The Deanery have scoped the key requirements and space required for teaching staff, associated dedicated and shared teaching space as well as engagement and student support space within HRB.</p> <p>However, College & University level discussions regarding DBMS teaching space and use of HRB are still at a very early stage. Although an initial scoping meeting has taken place with College and University Estates and is in the wider College and University planning list no agreed plan, timescale or budget has been agreed. As research in HRB is scheduled to move to BioQuarter in the last quarter of 2026 we are now at a critical stage to ensure planning to accommodate staff and required teaching infrastructure at HRB is in place for AY26/27.</p> <p>The Deanery has recently relocated our Student Support team to the HRB Annex as a short term (2-3yrs) plan but uncertainty remains about provision until long-term use of HRB is defined. This will provide a dedicated Student Support Hub for all UG</p>	SS Team Relocation Completed August 2024 (however it

	<p>which to conduct their work and be accessible to students.</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Deanery consider the availability of Tutors & Demonstrators in the context of the move of all research work to the BioQuarter campus.</p>		<p>and PGT students in the Deanery for the start of the new academic year (AY24-25).</p> <p>The Deanery are urging College and Estates to accelerate specific planning and identification of budgets as soon as possible as we urgently need to find a solution for our teaching estate for AY26-27.</p>	<p>is a short-term plan for next 2-3 years)</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Remit item 1: Management Structure to Optimise Teaching & Related Activity</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Deanery progress with their plans to appoint a Director of Undergraduate Studies, which will be a critical role in the strategic nature of their plans for teaching development. This should be actioned as soon as possible.</p> <p>The review team also recommend that the Deanery consider how to best establish leadership in educational research and develop a clear plan for pedagogic innovation, to further strengthen the quality of their provision.</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Deanery establish Educational Research Hub to create space and recognition of scholarship activity and, with the support of the College, increase scholarship levels to 20% in contracts to allow for this increased activity.</p>	<p>Semester 1 24/25</p> <p>Semester 1 24/25</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>DBMS Reponses</p> <p>The Deanery have prepared a Job Description for the Director of Undergraduate Studies role and will be moving forward with recruitment to this new post in the new academic year.</p> <p>The Deanery are planning for an Educational Research appointment but this is likely to be in the longer term due to the University-wide recruitment restrictions. In the interim the BMTO will be setting up an Educational Research Teaching Hub (distinct from the BMTO Teaching Network) and a remit for this Hub is currently being developed.</p> <p>This is ongoing. It is intended that the BMTO will move to allocating 20% for Educational Research and Scholarship activity in Teaching contracts (and this will be linked in to the work/activity/expectations of the Educational Research Teaching Hub mentioned above).</p> <p>College of CMVM Response</p> <p>The College acknowledges the importance of this recommendation and emphasises that teaching and</p>	

			<p>teaching related activity is a cornerstone of the College's Strategic Plan. Our internal review identified the need to optimise governance and management structures across College, not least to stimulate and facilitate teaching development. The governance review is well underway. The recent appointment of new College leadership roles will oversee the implementation of a new school structure. It is anticipated that this will directly address recommendations made in this IPR and in the recent reviews of our other Schools/Deaneries. A detailed update will be provided for the "Year on" report, due May 2025.</p>	
3.	<p>Curriculum Mapping</p> <p>The review team recommend that the BMTO undertake a curriculum mapping review, in terms of content and skills development, to enhance the student journey through the programme.</p>	Academic Year 24/25	<p>Early discussions have taken place with UG Course Organisers and Honours Programme Organisers and work is ongoing with regard to the development of a structure that will allow curriculum mapping to start across our core BMS programmes and associated disciplines. BMTO are currently creating appropriate teams to take this work forward during the 24/25 Academic Year.</p>	
4.	<p>Tutors & Demonstrators Training</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Deanery review recruitment, administration and professional development of Tutors & Demonstrators in line with university guidance and recommend that they work with IAD to ensure the policy is correctly implemented for their benefit of T&Ds</p>	Academic Year 24/25	<p>The BMTO are mindful of the UoE work strand reviewing the governance of tutor and demonstrator contracts and training and the work we undertake will align with the work already being done in this area. A working group, consisting of course organisers, technician lead, BMS edTA lead, PG student support, Student and academic manager and PG student reps, is being formed to address key gaps in the training and support provision to our T&D. The new online course "Fundamentals of Teaching" developed by the IAD will be offered to all T&D and anyone interested to become T&D from September. Complementary sessions will be offered</p>	

			to place these “fundamentals” in the BMS context. The group will also identify ways to provide specific feedback to all our T&D to encourage reflection on their practice, to evidence their teaching accreditation claims and to support their overall career development.	
5.	<p>Student Support & Experience</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Deanery take good practice from the PGT campus programmes and ensure it applies to all provision.</p>	Ongoing	BMS Learning and Teaching Committee, regular Course and Programme Organiser discussion meetings, and the BMTO Learning and Teaching Network provide the forums for sharing best practice across UG/PGT/ZJE portfolio. The specific references by the PGT cohort in relation to assessment expectations, quality of feedback and community building reflect the fact that through the above groups a cohesive UG/PG approach to these issues is employed by the Deanery. Similar good practice already takes place in the UG domain though with a much larger UG portfolio the challenge is to ensure it extends equally in all programmes and courses. As such enhancing the management of student expectations, the provision of high quality feedback across our courses and programmes and the support of our academic communities are primary strategic objectives for the Deanery/BMTO.	
	<p>The review team recommend that the Deanery works with its cohort teams and cohort leads to ensure their remits and roles are clear, and identify how to build in aspects of academic development and knowledge of a student’s academic journey.</p>	Complete	We are just about (in the new academic year) to implement an enhancement of our academic student support structures that will address a number of issues regarding student cohort support, raised by students during the initial implementation phase of the support model, and additionally improve clarity in cohort team and cohort lead roles. Further information on this role can be found in Appendix 1.	Completed August 2024 for start of AY 24’25

	<p>The review team recommend that the Deanery evaluates the provision of support to direct entry, exchange and intercalating students.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>This also provides an enhancement to the welcome for year 1 UG students and support for making course choices. Work is ongoing to review information currently held in the Programme Handbooks which includes guidance on course choices to ensure this information is clearly presented to students in an easily accessible format. Work is ongoing to review the course choice materials made available to students and the BMTO Course Choice Fairs which are held in Spring each year.</p> <p>All students (including direct entry, exchange students and intercalating students) are allocated to a Student Advisor and all BScHons students in Years 2-4 will also be allocated to an Academic Advisor from September 2024 (as per the new Academic Advisor framework detailed above and in Appendix 1). Students are invited to attend meetings with Cohort Teams during Welcome Week to discuss elective course choices and ensure they have access to appropriate electives for their programmes. Academic support for Y2 entry and visiting students has been and remains an important development priority. Support already exists for essay writing skills and referencing, embedded in our core year 2 courses. With regards to intercalating students, Senior Honours Programme Organisers are the Cohort Leads for the final year programmes and those roles are responsible for community building activities for, and integrating, the whole final year cohort.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Resource The review team recommend that cross School/College teaching provision is formalised</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The BMTO are currently developing a Work Allocation Model and expect this to be presented to staff in Autumn 2024. In addition the College are also currently looking at how the teaching provision</p>	

	to ensure the staffing and resource is appropriately allocated and monitored		is allocated and monitored as part of it modernisation and governance review and DBMS will feed into this review.	
7.	<p>PGT Placements</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Deanery evaluate the placement opportunities available as part of the Science Communication & Public Engagement MSc programme and look to enhance the in-person experience for students</p>	Ongoing	<p>The Deanery regularly evaluates the placement opportunities available as part of the Science Communication & Public Engagement MSc programme. The programmes offers a mix of placements i.e. some within the University (for example the press office) some with external organisations. The impact of COVID affected the proportion of University to external placements and the programme team are working on building those back up and re-establishing these. The placements are 10 credit courses which are part of the programme and have been delivered every year of the programme. COVID did not impact on the opportunity for students to take placements.</p> <p>Some of the challenges however for the Programme Team relate to changes in working practices for several organisations since COVID with many organisations now mostly working from home with fewer offices. This means that meetings with placement hosts are conducted online. The students are experiencing real world work scenarios with organisations post-COVID.</p> <p>Students would not usually be involved in delivery of events on placement-they would participate in the day to day work of the placement host.</p>	
8.	<p>University actions</p> <p>The review team recommend that the University consider extra resourcing of English language skills; this was an area in which students expressed a desire for additional support. The review team suggest that the Centre for Open Learning (COL) have a role in</p>		<p>Centre for Open Learning Response 050724</p> <p>To date, COL haven't received communication from the Deanery related to the recommendation for a focus on English language skills. We would welcome any discussions to explore how COL might be able to collaborate to enhance academic language and literacies provision for all students whether through a formal programme partnership or by raising</p>	

providing this service with the appropriate resourcing and strategy from the University.

The review team recommend that the University, led by the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS), provide more support and guidance for colleagues in relation to making materials accessible and inclusive.

The review team also recommend that the University's Estates Department conducts an audit of teaching spaces to review accessibility provision in teaching space used by BMT0.

The review team recommend that the University's Student Recruitment and Fees Strategy Group (SRFSG) reviews affordability and sustainability of fees for online PGT

awareness of current provision available to all students across the university.

English Language Education has, however, recently established a collaboration with the MScR Biomedical Research programme and will be launching Academic Language and Literacies for MScR Biomedical Research in 2024-25. I looked through the programme list in the report and this programme appeared to be out of scope of the review.

DLSS

Clarity needed on specifically what additional guidance is required, and in what areas. Accessible materials guidance is available via ISG and IAD. Inclusive practice policies linked to learning and teaching are the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy (AILP) and Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities. Potentially DLSS could add to this and/or contextualise, but more specific detail is needed to understand how to respond.

Estates

To be received

SFSG

Through both Student Recruitment and Fee Strategy Group (SRFSG) and the Size and Shape working group, the issue of diversity of fee structures, and in particular the fees appropriate for online degree

students to lead to a more diverse group of students.

The review team recommend that the University review workflows to address inefficiencies in process as a result of system constraints, and consequently allow staff to best perform their roles.

students, has been discussed together with the related issue of market size. The Convenor of SRSFG (VP Students) has confirmed that the workslate for 2024/25 includes a formal assessment of our fee strategy across all modes and levels, led by the strategic planning team. The Deanery might wish to ensure clear briefing to the delegates from CMVM on SRSFG and any review (currently Professor Henderson and the Registrar), or take issues directly to the Convenor.

Student Systems and Timetabling Response (200824)

Timetabling

The following two initiatives will provide opportunities for review of inefficiencies within current timetabling processes:

- 1) Implementation of a new timetabling system – in its current phase, the new system is replacing the old one like for like (i.e. without process change) and the focus is on business continuity. However there are number of key improvements within the software which have already been identified in using the software which will support more efficient processing of timetabling changes and student group changes. This will allow requests from Schools and students to be turned around more efficiently. The new software also opens up opportunities for future process change which could potentially streamline processes for gathering and submitting timetabling requests and change request further – these would need to be properly scoped and funded to progress. The options have been reviewed at the Project Board for the implementation and endorsed.

2) Development of a business case to support the development of a “more stable and timely” timetable – a project has been initiated to build a business case to look at the root causes behind the stability and timeliness of the timetable. This aims to identify elements of the planning process (Schools/Deaneries, Estates, Timetabling) which need to be streamlined to allow staff in all areas to undertake their roles efficiently. A business case is being developed for October 2024 UIPB (University Initiatives Portfolio Board). We are currently working with academic and professional colleagues to understand the key components of this work.

Student Systems

During 2023/24, Registry Services used funding received to create Continuous Service Improvement (CSI) capability within the Student Systems Partnership (SSP) Programme. This team’s aim is to enhance the overall experience for students and staff by addressing operational challenges, streamlining processes, and improving efficiency. A Prioritisation Group with representatives from across the University was created in April 2024, with a remit to prioritise and agree the timeline for development and implementation of larger improvement initiatives. The proposal from the IPR to streamline the transfer of data between Learn and EUCLID is not currently on the roadmap of improvements. Student Systems will have capacity to engage with Biomedical Science in October ’24 to gather data around the requirements and the potential benefits and also engage with other Schools and Deaneries to understand the potential benefit of this across the University.

			Details of the Continuous Service Improvement programme of work is available on the Continuous Service Improvement Sharepoint pages , including the prioritisation and roadmap of larger initiatives	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review			
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review			