

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 review area (School/Deanery/College) 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.

Rec. No.	Recommendation (copy text from report)	Responsibility of	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	<p>Strategy Development</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>	Deanery Senior Leadership	September 25	<p>Since the original IPR, the Deanery of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences (MGPHS) has been dissolved and many of the recommendations for the senior leadership team regarding strategic development, resource allocation, staffing and ways of working have been encompassed by the confirmation that the Teaching Organisation (TO) will become part of Edinburgh Medical School (EMS), which was announced in March 2025.</p> <p>Progress: Prior to this, a draft strategy was articulated with a particular focus on determining our current position as a TO. This included co-development, with extensive consultation, a PGT 5-year strategy (including CPD, Short Courses (non-credit bearing) and PPD (postgraduate professional development courses). The strategy focus was on the implementation of the IPR recommendations.</p> <p>Barrier: However, a wider review of the PGT portfolio is underway as part of the CMVM modernisation project, which will see the TO move to EMS along with Biomedical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, MBChB Medicine teaching from 1st August 2025. This wider review has superseded the original strategy along with the University's reimagining of the size, shape and ways of working, due to the current financial context across the Higher Education sector.</p> <p>Progress: Currently the PGT Director (DoT) is working with the Director of Professional Services (DoPS) on the business</p>	First phase of portfolio review and resourcing strategy to be completed by 1st Aug 25 and second phase by 1st Aug 26

	<p>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 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.</p>			<p>plans for the TO programmes with the intention for a more robust student recruitment strategy and financial forecasting model and an opportunity to make recommendations for major changes to current provision. This does also include a staff resourcing strategy.</p> <p>Barrier: We are currently in a University-wide mandated period of significant recruitment restraint which has and will lead to a substantial FTE reduction across both academic and professional services staff. This has had a significant impact on our ability to act on the IPR recommendations relating to staff workload, retention and wellbeing.</p>	
2	<p>Resourcing: Work Allocation Model</p> <p>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.</p>	Deanery Senior Leadership	Sept-25	<p>A workload activity template was circulated to all staff however a more substantive WAM is being developed to be used in the future aligning with the College modernisation and University WAM strategy.</p> <p>As part of the college modernisation project, research staff and students will remain in research institutes/schools, with a view that future research contracts will contribute to teaching in EMS to release tuition fee funding to their research institutes/schools.</p> <p>Barrier: on hold until formation of EMS as this will be within School remit rather than deanery</p>	On-going
3	<p>Value of Teaching</p> <p>The review team recommends that the Deanery senior leadership acknowledge, and actively promote, the value of teaching and recognising</p>	Deanery Senior Leadership	Sept-25	<p>Barrier: Prior to the college modernisation we planned 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</p>	On-going

	<p>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 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.</p>			<p>be involved in teaching. This plan has not been actioned due to college modernisation and wider financial situation.</p> <p>At a college level there are plans for teaching contribution to 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.</p> <p>Progress: The message that income generated from teaching funds much of Usher’s activities is being articulated more widely by senior management. The Usher Forum in June 2024 was dedicated to teaching and the Usher Executive also added an Usher Recognition Awards category for teaching “Outstanding contribution to positive teaching culture” in addition to the existing ‘student experience’ award, which places value on these crucial teaching contributions.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Progress: The inaugural Usher Masters online Symposium took place in October 2024 with 25 students presenting their projects. The feedback from presenters, staff and other students was incredibly positive and planning for October 2025 is already underway.</p> <p>Progress: The first cohort of on campus MPH students were welcomed to the new Usher building in September 2024; we hoped that the student activities and events would also raise the profile of teaching and encourage more engagement from all staff in the student learning journey.</p> <p>Barrier: However, as noted by MPH campus colleagues, events organised for students in the new Usher Building are poorly attended compared to those organised on central campus. Students report that reasons for poor attendance is the travel time to UB and isolation from central campus</p>	
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4	<p>Learning and Teaching</p> <p>The review team recommends that the Deanery review overlaps between the online and campus Masters of Public Health (MPH) 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.</p>	Deanery	Sept-25	<p>Progress: Teaching staff and relevant stakeholders from both online and on campus MPH programmes attended a full day workshop in August 2024 to review synergies, best practice, and the current curriculum and work towards APHEA accreditation for the on-campus programme. A new Director for the MPH on campus programme was appointed in August 2024.</p> <p>Progress: 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. To illustrate this, in the next academic year 2025/26 a systematic review course will be delivered simultaneously to the online and on campus MPH by two experienced course leads. Another example is the planned change in delivery of the core courses covering introduction to epidemiology and statistics. Initial meetings with course leads from both programmes have been held to align the Introduction to Epidemiology and Statistics courses for online and on campus MPH. This joint effort will ensure enhancement of the quality of the teaching and teaching materials across both programmes. Mapping content and creating updated teaching materials will be undertaken in 2025/26 and will be delivered in 2026/27. The online MPH Policy course was adapted for the on campus programme in 2024/25 with the addition of two on campus tutorials. Based on student feedback, there are plans to</p>	<p>First phase – Aug-25</p> <p>Second phase – Aug-26</p>

				<p>further increase the in person component of this course for 2025/26.</p> <p>As part of College modernisation work is also underway to harmonise the academic timetable between campus and online programmes which will facilitate easier sharing of courses between the two MPHs.</p> <p>We will also review the website information and ensure it articulates the differences between both on-campus and online programmes. As part of the College postgraduate portfolio review, there are strong recommendations to maximise synergy between MPH on campus and online modes, and this will be reviewed over the next 6 months as we move to EMS model.</p>	
5	<p>Assessment and Feedback</p> <p>The review team recommends that programme and course teams explore where more formative assessment opportunities could be introduced.</p>	Deanery Programme Team	Sept-24	<p>In line with the University's strategic focus on assessment and feedback, this has been one of our key areas of focus over the past 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.</p> <p>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. Under the new leadership of EMS there are also plans to review assessment across all programmes and agree standard approach.</p>	On-going
6	<p>Subject specific remit: co-creation</p> <p>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.</p>	Deanery	On-going	<p>Progress: We 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).</p> <p>An application for the student and staff co-created Usher Masters Alumni network to become a EUSA Society is being</p>	On-going

				<p>submitted in August which would make it sustainable despite staff workload and funding issues.</p> <p>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.</p>	
7	<p>Subject specific remit: academic citizenship</p> <p>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 Welcome Week and continues throughout the programmes.</p>	Deanery and Careers Service	On-going	<p>Progress: We met with Carol Macdonald, Careers and Employability Manager, in June 2024 and we were planning a sustainable approach to embedding ‘citizenship’ and ‘employability’ as golden threads throughout the entire programme of learning.</p> <p>The plan included programme specific events, mapping and developing a coherent strand of existing and new initiatives; exploring ways to accredit teaching content by industry or professional bodies as a targeted support for career changers; 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; expanding 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.</p> <p>Barrier: Unfortunately, none of these plans have materialised due to College modernisation, staff workload and University-wide constraints. However, there have been developments at University level, led by the Curriculum Transformation Future Skills working group and supported by Senate Education Committee, to replace the current university Graduate Attribute framework with a new ‘Skills for Success Framework’, with more of a focus on employability and specialist skills to ensure our graduates</p>	

				thrive in a changing world and are highly employable.	
8	<p>Dissertation Supervision</p> <p>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.</p>	Deanery Senior Leadership and the Deanery	May-25	<p>Progress: A new member of staff was recruited to the MPH on-campus team and an expert in policy briefs was 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.</p> <p>We were exploring how to expand our pool of 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.</p> <p>Barrier: Due to a strategic move, at College level, away from paying external contributors we have had to reduce rather than expand the pool of external supervisors. This relates to and has a negative impact on Point 7.</p>	
9	<p>Resourcing: differential scale for marking - equal priority for room booking given to teaching activity</p> <p>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 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.</p>	Deanery Senior Leadership and the Deanery	Mar-25	<p>We reviewed 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. For the 24/25 academic year we were confident that the teaching space was fit for purpose for the campus students. As mentioned in Point 3 – this turned out not to be the case due to a lack of suitable rooms for small group teaching/tutorials. However, this was the first year that the Usher Building was used for teaching and we have now made improvements, and this will be ongoing see comments in point 3.</p> <p>Progress: We secured a dedicated space for our ‘Student Support Hub’. This space allows 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, and student support needs.</p>	

10	<p>Tutors and demonstrators</p> <p>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.</p>	Deanery	Mar-25	<p>Plans were underway to create an ‘Academy’ for Learning and Teaching; we planned to reach out to IAD colleagues and internal TO expertise to support this. This will now be administered and led by EMS, to ensure everyone benefits from this approach.</p> <p>Barrier: Unfortunately, none of these plans have materialised due to College modernisation, staff workload and University-wide constraints.</p>	
11	<p>Technology</p> <p>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.</p>	Deanery	Sept-25	<p>We will 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.</p> <p>In October 2024, the University launched a new online AI Adoption Hub to help staff explore what artificial intelligence (AI) means for our work at the University, from teaching and learning to our day-to-day operations. The AI Adoption Task Force has created the hub as part of wider University work to navigate the opportunities and challenges emerging from rapid advances in AI. It aims to bring colleagues across the University together to explore this new technology and what it means for our work, from teaching assessments to day-to-day operations and services.</p> <p>The College organised a workshop on AI in Education in February 2025. The purpose of the workshop was to provide an opportunity to better understand AI initiatives across the University, discuss challenges such as academic integrity and training needs, and collaborate on identifying priorities and actionable next steps for the College. This is only the beginning of conversations around the implementation of AI in Education, but there is a plan to continue the workshops and create a community to enable us to advance our ambitions to embrace the pedagogical potential of AI.</p>	

				<p>Progress: In our own TO, we have created a discussion area in Teams on AI in Education and our digital education team are ensuring this thread is updated and facilitated. With the move to EMS, we think this will be a major area of focus and the university and college initiatives will drive the agenda and strategy for teaching and learning.</p> <p>Progress: A Teaching Fellow on the Master of Family Medicine (MFM) programme is leading on an AI for Teaching Innovation project - Consult-Ed (a roleplay chatbot, enabling simulated interactions with patient, family, healthcare colleagues; students interact with it in the VLE and then take a critical perspective on the experience). This was selected for development as part of EFI initiative to support the creative use of AI in learning and teaching across the University. The app will go live within MFM in September 2025.</p>	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to student on the review outcomes	We invited Student Representatives and students who participated in the Review visit and in the Focus groups to comment on the outcomes.			
Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review	<p>The IPR surfaced the differences between all programmes and has been a catalyst for improved alignment in assessment and feedback practices; course content; collaboration on future planning of the portfolio.</p> <p>For example, there has been much closer collaboration between the MPH online and on campus programmes after the IPR noted the impracticality of siloing two programmes with very similar aims and learning objectives.</p> <p>The value of teaching has been highlighted in various meetings and committees by senior management, due to the prompting by the IPR panel.</p>			