Academic and Governance Services

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Periodic Review of Undergraduate Programmes in Henley Business School

Introduction

1   An internal review of undergraduate programmes in the Henley Business School was held on 10 and 11 March 2016. The members of the Panel were:

- Professor Matthew Almond, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science, University of Reading (*chair*)
- Dr John Burchall, Senior Lecturer in Management, Sheffield University Management School (*external member, subject specialist*)
- Professor David Campbell, Professor of Accounting and Corporate Governance, Newcastle Business School (*external member, subject specialist*)
- Professor Eleanor Highwood, Co-Dean for Diversity and Inclusion and Professor of Meteorology, University of Reading (*internal member*)
- Dr Alan Howard, School Director for Teaching and Learning in the School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science, and Associate Professor in Geography and Environmental Science, University of Reading (*internal member*)
- Ms Rachael Hopely, Part 3 BA Classics, University of Reading (*student member*)
- Mrs Georgina Randall, Senior Quality Support Officer (Partnerships), University of Reading, (*secretary*)

The Panel met the following:

- Dr Martin Bicknell, School Director of Teaching and Learning
- Dr Carol Padgett, Head of Undergraduate Programmes
- Professor Adrian Bell, Head of ICMA Centre
- Professor Kecheng Liu, Head of Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting (BISA)
- Professor James Walker, Head of International Business and Strategy
- Dr Susan Rose, Head of Henley Business School – Malaysia
- Professor Yelena Kalyuzhnova, Director of Studies in Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour
- Professor Chris Brooks, Director of Studies in the ICMA Centre
- Dr Keiichi Nakata, Director of Studies in the Business Informatics, Systems and Accounting
- Dr Ioannis Oikonomou, Programme Area Director of Undergraduate degrees in Finance
- Dr Miriam Marra, Lecturer in Finance
- Dr Simone Varotto, Senior Lecturer in Finance
- Professor Sotiris Tsolacos, Chair in Real Estate Finance
- Dr Ronita Ram, Lecturer in Accounting

- Dr Lucy Newton, Associate Professor in Business History
- Dr Peter Cook, Lecturer
- Julie Cooper, Associate Professor in Accounting and Senior Tutor for Undergraduate Accounting
- Joe Doak, Associate Professor of Urban Planning & Development Undergraduate Admissions Tutor for Real Estate & Planning
- Scarlett Palmer, Senior Tutor & Disability Representative for Real Estate & Planning
- Mrs Zoe Bourne, Teaching and Learning Officer
- Naeema Pasha, Head of Henley Careers
- Graham Philpott, Careers Consultant

2   The Panel met students who represented the following degree programmes:
- BSc Finance and Investment Banking
- BA Business and Management
- BSc Real Estate

General observations

3   The panel met with a range of staff and students during the Review process and extended their thanks to all involved for the informative and open discussions. The panel recognised the wide breadth of the School's undergraduate provision and the ongoing initiatives to seek consistency across the portfolio whilst also recognising individual needs of the various subjects. The panel also recognised the rigorous exercises the School undertakes in maintaining its triple accreditation status with AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business), EQUIS and AMBA (Association of MBAs). Working with this accreditation bodies demonstrated an ongoing process of enhancement.

4   The School is separated into six academic areas and the panel recognised that some of its recommendations may already be met in some areas but not others. As such, these recommendations seek to encourage consistency and sharing of good practice. With this in mind, it was felt that there could have been some merit in separating out academic areas into different reviews. Whilst the panel were able to satisfy themselves of the academic standards and quality of provision of all programmes, good practice and recommendation would have been more easily identifiable on an academic area basis. Therefore, the panel **recommends** that the University consider whether future periodic reviews should be separated in into three (ICMA, REP and Business/Management/Accounting) or two areas (REP and ICMA/Business/Management/Accounting).

5   Students were overwhelming positive about their experience studying within the School, especially the approachability of academic staff in responding to queries or feedback and industry specific careers provision.

Academic standards of the programmes

Educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes

6   In assessing the educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes, the Panel reviewed a range of formal documentation including Programme Specifications, Module Descriptions, Annual Programme Reports, External Examiners' Reports and

Students handbooks. It also held a number of meetings with staff and students, and read a sample of undergraduate student work.

7   The panel found that the educational aims and learning outcomes were set at the appropriate level and align with the subject benchmark statements. The panel welcomed the involvement of the School in the new University initiative to develop a curriculum framework and recognised the benefits this would bring in further refining teaching, learning and assessment strategies. It was felt this approach is particularly important with a number of modules increasingly utilising group work and need for strategic oversight of this development.

Curricula

8   The panel found that the overall portfolio of programmes are coherent and of appropriate breadth and scope. Evidence from the material provided suggested that the curricula within these programmes are clearly specified. Programmes examined are well designed, show good incorporation of key themes and demonstrate innovative responses to developments within the academics subject. There are strong interactions with the business community, notably through the PwC Flying start programme, and great efforts are made to connect teaching with employability and practice, while maintaining the integrity of commitment to 'educate' rather than just 'train'.

9   In general it appears that the curricula within the programmes connect well to the stated learning objectives, in terms of knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, practical and transferable skills. The programmes are global in scope and strongly encourage an international perspective. The strength of these programmes is further evidenced also by the School's success in achieving triple crown accreditation.

10   The programmes provide extensive opportunity for students to gain understanding of core subject areas in the early stages of study followed by a broad set of opportunities for specialisation in Part 3. The panel recognised the depth and breadth of studies offered to students as an area of **good practice** as well as the opportunities for students to specialise on particular pathways. The School should remain mindful of its ability to replicate the same specialisation as the School expands internationally and may not be able to provide the same breadth to those students not based in the UK but studying the same degree.

11   While the curriculum was strong across programmes, from an external perspective the differences between some programmes proved to be quite confusing e.g. 'Business and Management', 'Management and Business'. While closer inspection highlighted the distinctiveness within the programmes it could be challenging for potential students to develop a clear grasp of the nuanced differences between programmes.

Assessment and Feedback

12   External examiners' reports were encouraging and the reports verified that the standards achieved by learners meet the minimum expectations for awards as measured against subject benchmarks. Students are given clear guidance regarding assessment criteria and the different expectations for different grade classifications.

13   A broad variety of assessment methods are utilised including very innovative ways to introduce skills based and employability aspects. The increase in student numbers

appears to have resulted in an expansion in the utilisation of group work over individual assignments. Due to the wide range in choice of modules the overall balance of different forms of assessment was unclear. The increased utilisation of group work to manage large group sizes had the potential to restrict the variety of assessment methods used in the School and the panel **recommends** that the School should monitor the amount, use and assessment of group work. Furthermore, it should be ensured that credit is appropriately awarded to individual students who participate in group work.

14   Although moderation was evident throughout the sample work, concerns were raised about the consistent adherence to University policy. Therefore the panel **recommends** that the School ensures that University policy relating to moderation, second marking and step marking is followed on all modules.

15   The panel noted some inconsistency in the provision of feedback to students. This included variability in the types of forms, to what extent forms were filled out and the level of detail in feedback. The panel saw cases where feedback given to students whose marks were on the pass threshold varied markedly from implying that the student was likely to fail their degree to that the piece of work was quite good but with a number of minor errors. It is important that the School ensures consistency and balance of feedback forms and assessment criteria across all of its programmes. (**recommendation**) The panel were satisfied with the consistency of feedback provided to UoRM based students but had some concerns over the feedback and, to a lesser extent, the marking of Beijing based students. The School should ensure that the processes and documenting of marking and feedback for partnership students is monitored for consistency and best practice.

16   Despite large cohort numbers, staff should be congratulated in continuing to keep to the University's timescale for returning work. Students were, in the majority, satisfied with feedback but appeared keen to gain more generic feedback on exam performance across modules as well as being keen to view exam papers.

Use of student management information

17   The School clearly uses a variety of methods to accrue student feedback and is certainly aware of the content of this feedback, especially student evaluations and the National Student Survey. According to the students interviewed, the SSLCs gave them ample opportunity to express both satisfaction and dissatisfaction in modules but this was not always apparent in the audit trail. Furthermore, the minutes did not always appear to be student focused and there was inconsistent evidence that the feedback and evaluation loop. Despite this, it was apparent that students were aware of changes happening, either through discussions with other students or discussions with staff outside of formal meetings. It was also apparent from the students that comments were often made through other channels including Blackboard which is commendable. The panel **recommends** that, in order to communicate widely across the student body, the School ensure that the feedback and evaluation loop is formally closed in all cases.

18   The panel recognised the need for a number of additional committees outside normal University governance structures in order to enable the School to manage a wide and varied undertaking. The School may wish to consider how students can input into strategic level decisions made by such committees.

Quality of learning opportunities offered by the programmes

Teaching and learning

19   Staff development programmes within the School and a range of staff are engaged with the University level FLAIR Framework. However the panel felt that a more structured and formal procedure in all areas for integrating new teaching staff should be introduced. (**recommendation**). This is particularly important in the area of large group teaching and the panel further recommends that support for all staff in supporting best practice for large-group teaching should be introduced. Recognising the challenges of large group teaching is unlikely to diminish with anticipated year-on-year growth, the panel **recommends** to the University that the School be provided with more support in this area.

20   The panel found that the School uses a wide range of visiting staff and in many cases, PhD students are used to deliver teaching, especially tutorial group teaching at Part 1. Students had varying experiences of being taught by PhD student and there was also variability in the different ways PhD students were prepared for teaching in School. The panel **recommends** that the School should ensure that PhD students who are used as teachers are appropriately selected and trained to ensure their competence to take on this role.

21   It is important that the School balances the professional-training and academic nature of their programmes. The panel recognises that these aspects are generally balanced very well but asks the School to ensure that this aspect is continuously monitored moving forward, especially given the likelihood of significant growth in student numbers in the near future.

22   It was clear to the panel that staff draw upon research and scholarship to inform their teaching across the School. In many parts of the School a significant number of teaching-intensive staff are employed. It is important that the School ensures that such staff are given equal opportunities for career development as teaching-and-research staff. Thus, for example, TI staff should be given time to develop scholarship activity and be fully encouraged to take part in T&L activities both across the campus and nationally and internationally where appropriate.

Student admission and progression

23   The Panel noted a substantial rise in admissions since 2010 when 231 students joined the School to an enrolment number of 583 in 2014, representing an overall increase of 152%. Largest percentage gains occurred in accounting programmes where recruitment grew by 433% from 33 to 176 students. Business and management programmes also experienced large growth with student enrolments rising from 61 to 224 between 2010 and 2014. Changes in the ICMA Centre and REP recruitment were more modest in comparison. The Panel recognised the challenges of this growth and this is reflected in recommendations made throughout this report.

24   Recruitment, selection, and admission procedures operate in line with University policy in most cases with local variances existing for the PwC flying start programme and degrees delivered overseas. Induction and the Personal tutorial system within the School was praised by students. Students felt comfortable in approaching a range of academic and support staff and felt the tutors were always available despite large student numbers.

25   The panel welcomed the increase in outreach and widening participation activities. In particular, the "Pathways to Property" summer school targets students from groups and areas traditionally least likely to apply to Real Estate and Planning programmes.

This initiative has seen a direct impact on recruitment to the programme and was recognised by the panel as an area of **good practice**.

26   All students' English language skills are tested during Welcome Week using the language knowledge section of the TEEP test. Students with the lowest test scores are provided with in sessional support from the University's International Study and Language Institute (ISLI). The panel welcomed this initiative but recognised this provision could face challenges as the number of students grew. The panel **recommends** that the School should endeavour to maintain the availability of English language support, including academic writing skills as student numbers grow.

27   Overall retention is very good and students achieve a relatively high proportion of 2:1 and 1st class degrees. However the Panel notes that students with an overseas country of domicile achieve a noticeably lower proportion of 1sts than Home/EU students in some areas of provision. Overseas students still perform well with a high number of 2:1s but fewer of the best students in this group progress to delivering 1st class work in the final year. The School indicated that overseas students sometimes perform less well, relatively, where assessed work involves critical think and independent learning. The Panel **recommends** that the School should ensure the development of good academic practice in order to enhance critical thinking and an independent learning culture, especially for overseas students. In order to support students regardless of domicile, the panel further **recommends** the formative use of Turnitin more widely within the School.

Learning resources

28   As noted in paragraph 19 and 20, the School uses a rage of staff on its programme. The expertise of the staff as a whole is a good fit to the programmes on offer, and includes, where appropriate, staff from both academic and more vocational backgrounds (e.g. in REP and Accounting). There are some indications that new international staff may also benefit from closer mentoring and better preparation for teaching within the UK HE system.

29   Administrative support overall was praised as a highlight by students, particularly in terms of the staff in the Academic Resource Centre (ARC), and the careers staff in HBS, ICMA and REP. The dedication of careers staff in advising individuals on preparing for interviews and appraisals was recognised by the students and is excellent. It is pleasing to see the high number of placements from the School and the level of engagement from employers and students. The panel would encourage academic staff to become more engaged with the placement process, for example, by visiting students on placements in order to integrate this element of programmes even more closely.

30   Students have excellent access to learning resources, both in hard copy and online via the ARC as well as the main University library. ICMA staff and students are rightly proud of their Thomas Reuter and Bloomberg terminals and trading rooms, which can be used outside of formal classes for research and projects. The panel welcomed the availability of these recourses outside of class time but also the inclusion of use of these resources in teaching and assessment. These excellent resources, as well as the utilisation of Blackboard to provide academic support, were viewed as **good practice**.

31   The increase in group assessments and projects has increased the need for suitable group study space. Whilst space is available across the University, students were frustrated by the lack of access at time to this space. It would be beneficial for the

School to encourage utilisation of existing space for group work given the increase in this type of assessment (**recommendation**).

Employer engagement

32   Undergraduate students benefit from the School's links with local and national employers. Employers are members of the School's Strategy Board and contribute strategically to programme review and development. Employers participate in delivery of the curriculum as guest speakers on modules and by providing placement opportunities for students. A relatively high number of academic staff have worked in the financial or business sectors and transfer this industry experience to curriculum delivery. The panel recognised the **good practice** in the content of programmes preparing graduates well for entry into work which was echoed by alumni.

33   Many undergraduate programmes contain work-based learning elements, and in some programmes there is a placement year. Students provide positive feedback on their placement and internship experiences and staff note the positive impact on personal attributes such activities seem to provide their students. A dedicated team of six consultants provides a range of careers support for students including personal consultations, mock interviews and assessment centres. Regular lunchtime workshops and evening events are organised often involving contributions from employers. Employability is also embedded academic modules with some credit-bearing activities delivered by the Careers team. Students praised and the Panel recognised, as **good practice**, the dedicated support offered and the industry-relevant curriculum that prepares them for employment as well as placements.

Enhancement of quality and academic provision

34   The panel were clear that the School has suitable mechanisms for maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and there were areas of innovative practice. However, the panel was somewhat concerned that such good practice was not always fully disseminated across the whole School. The panel **recommends** that the School reviews how good practice can be better formally shared on a suitably frequent time scale.

35   The panel met with staff involved in the delivery of programmes at the University of Reading Malaysia. Furthermore the Chair of the panel had visited UoRM prior to the Periodic Review to meet staff and students and to view facilities. The Chair was very satisfied by the academic provision at UoRM and welcomed the very positive comments made by students at that campus. The panel were pleased to note that good relationships were being built between staff at both locations and that a comparable student experience was being developed in Malaysia. Furthermore, there is support provided to staff to development both their research and teaching practice.

36   Opportunities exist for staff to undertake development with regard to learning and teaching, regardless of whether they are on a teaching intensive or have teaching and research. There is good take up of the FLAIR and HEA recognition routes. However, it would be pleasing to see a clearer articulation of the pro-active ways in which staff are supported in their development in general.

Main characteristics of the programmes under review

37   The Panel considers that all the programmes under review offer students a varied and rich experience, one that the School were clearly determined to maintain across all

delivery points. All the degree programmes offered are highly regarded by students, staff and alumni.

38   School staff were acutely aware of the impact year-on-year growth has on teaching and learning and clearly seek to take a pro-active approach to maintain high academic standards and a supportive student environment.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

39   The Panel commends the following as areas where the Programme Area has particular strengths:

   a) the depth and breadth of studies offered to students as well as the opportunities for students to specialise on particular pathways.

   b) the "Pathways to Property" summer school widening participation initiative which targets students from groups and areas traditionally least likely to apply to Real Estate and Planning programmes.

   c) the excellent learning resources including the Academic Resource Centre, the Thomas Reuter and Bloomberg terminals and trading rooms, and the use of Blackboard to provide academic support.

   d) the integration of careers based skills into curricula to prepare graduates well for entry into work.

   e) the Careers Service for their dedicated and industry specific support.

Conclusions on quality and standards

40   The Panel is assured of the quality and standards of the programmes that have been reviewed, that the intended learning outcomes of the programmes are being obtained by students, and that the programme specifications are appropriate.

Recommendations

41   The Panel recommends to the School Board for Teaching and Learning for the Henley Business School that the following degree programmes taught by the Programme Area should be re-approved to run for a further six years:
   - BA Accounting (taught with Beijing Institute of Technology)
   - BA Accounting and Business
   - BSc Accounting and Finance
   - BSc Accounting and Finance with Placement Experience
   - BA Accounting and Management
   - BA Accounting and Management with Placement Year
   - BA Business and Management
   - BSc Business with Information Technology
   - BA Entrepreneurship
   - BA Entrepreneurship and Management
   - BA Entrepreneurship and Management with Placement Experience
   - BA Entrepreneurship with Placement Experience
   - BSc Finance and Business Management (UoR Malaysia)
   - BSc Finance and Investment Banking
   - BSc Finance and Management with the University of Venice

- BSc International Business and Finance
- BA International Business and Management with Placement Experience
- BA International Management & Business Administration with Spanish
- BA International Management and Business Administration with French
- BA International Management and Business Administration with German
- BA International Management and Business Administration with Italian
- BSc Investment and Finance in Property
- BA Management and Business (Also delivered at University of Reading Malaysia campus)
- BSc Management with Information Technology
- BSc Real Estate (Also delivered at University of Reading Malaysia campus)
- BSc Rural Property Management

The Panel recommends that the following degree programmes be reapproved until the final cohorts graduate as indicated below;

- BSc Finance and Psychology

42   The report will categorise any issues as follows, in order of priority:
- Those areas where the Review Team believes it is **necessary** for action to be taken urgently to safeguard the standard of provision;
- Those areas where it is **advisable** that the issues be addressed as soon as possible.
- Those areas where it is **desirable** that the issue be addressed over a longer time span.

43   The Panel does not consider that any recommendations must be addressed as a condition of re-approval.

44   The Panel makes the following recommendations to the University:
   a) Consider whether future periodic reviews should be separated in into three (ICMA, REP and Business/Management/Accounting) or two areas (REP and ICMA/Business/Management/Accounting).
   b) Provision of more support for the teaching of large group sizes.

45   The Panel makes the following recommendations to the School:

Necessary
   a) Ensure that University policy relating to moderation, second marking and step marking is followed on all modules.
   b) Introduction of a more structured and formal procedure in all areas for integrating of new teaching staff.
   c) Ensure that PhD students who are used as teachers are appropriately selected and trained to ensure their competence to take on this role.
   d) Review how good practice can be better formally shared on a suitably frequent time scale.

Advisable
   e) Monitor the amount, use and assessment of group work. Furthermore, the School should ensure that credit is appropriately awarded to individual students who participate in group work.
   f) Ensure consistency and balance of feedback to students and consistency in the use of feedback forms and assessment criteria across all programmes.
   g) In order to communicate widely across the student body, the School ensure that the feedback and evaluation loop is formally closed in all cases.

h) Ensure the development of good academic practice in order to enhance critical thinking and an independent learning culture, especially for overseas students.

i) Increase the formative use of Turnitin more widely within the School.

Desirable

j) Endeavour to maintain the availability of English language support, including academic writing skills as student numbers grow.

k) Encourage utilisation of existing space for group work given the increase in this type of assessment.

46 The Panel does not have a recommendation to the School Board for Teaching and Learning for Henley Business School as to whether any proposal(s) for new degree programmes should be approved as this is not applicable.