

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE
(27 November 2013)SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW ACTION PLAN

	Recommendation	Action
2.1	Evolve a vision for school aim in teaching provision and make procedures related to teaching work effectively	DoT, IBES Director and HoS developing School Strategic Plan intended to address these recommendations; (draft by end of Oct, agreed by end Dec 2013)
3.4	Take steps to reduce turnover rate of TFs and ensure greater staffing stability	Addressed by putting in place two further TF on open ended contracts; these additional posts will provide flexibility to cover teaching gaps that arise; additionally we are committed to supporting career development for TFs and will continue to provide mentoring and facilitate career progression; (on-going)
3.6	Continue to value administrative and technical support	HoS and DoT will continue to recognize and reward good practice within these teams; (on-going)
4.2	Formalise activities of TC sub-groups such that they have clear remits, regular meetings and agendas	With appointment of new DoT currently reviewing the structure and remits of TC and subgroups; DoT to take responsibility to address this by (end Dec 2013)
4.3, 13.1	Make permanent position for student rep on TC and other appropriate committees	Pending appointment of new programme reps, DoT will meet with SBS convenor and reps to implement, (end October, for approval in Nov 2013)
4.4	Encourage staff engagement and collegiality	To be addressed in Strategic Plan, actions to include scheduling more open, focused discussions around teaching, ensuring TC composition is representative of the full spectrum of academic staff within SBS and has sufficient turnover, fostering team working and reciprocity in delivering teaching, tutorials, and Personal Tutoring; (initiating action in 2013, to be pursued in 2014)
4.5, 5.3, 12.4	Develop process for reporting and disseminating good practice, report back experiences with useful courses to TC	Addressed through staff participation in CLSM T&LC, UA Teaching Fellow Forum, UA Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium, staff engagement with teaching lessons for the PG Certificate in Higher Education and Learning, participation in HEA sponsored conferences and events, and CPD courses; TC agenda to include reporting back on these activities. Also we will continue to mentor probationary staff and to pair new lecturing staff with experienced teaching fellows to facilitate dissemination of good practice; (on-going)
5.5	Review Honours curriculum to ensure opportunities for engagement with Enhanced Study	All programmes are currently compliant; DoT to continue to engage with DoTLs, VP T&L and UG Committee on how enhanced study is defined within SBS programmes and to review SBS student experience with this aspect of CREF; (engagement is on-going; review by

		June 2014)
5.6	Review course structure for changes to Academic Year, consider more integrated timetable	Addressed through wide consultation within SBS and with SMS, COPS, HoC and VP T&L
5.7, 6.4	Ensure continuation of field trip provision, review role and importance	Staff and students are enthusiastic to participate in field trips. TC to consider during budget review (Oct 2013); HoS to encourage review of funding model used by University in allocating operating costs and teaching budgets to Schools, such that appropriate financial support is provided; DoT to gather feedback from students on importance and the feasibility of increasing students' contribution to cost (by June 2014)
5.9	Universal adherence to provisioning for students with disabilities	DO to continue to provide staff with guidance of expectations (on-going)
5.10	Familiarise with AQH and review use of External Examiners	DoT reviewed in Aug/Sept 2013; DoT to ensure compliance with expectations for internal examination procedures and to incorporate structured sessions with Examiners during their visit to consider sub-Honours material (June 2014); Examiners to be provided with access to electronic copies of Honours theses and mark sheets prior to visit (March 2014); DoT and TC to continue to support use of <i>MyAberdeen</i> as depository for coursework such that Examiners have ready access to material; DoT and TC to promote use of <i>MyAberdeen</i> for marking (on-going)
6.1	Enhance diversity of assessment methods	D&A sub-group within TC to review (by April 2014); DoT and TFs to facilitate informal meetings to share experience and discuss issues related to group work and diversifying methods of assessment (initiate in October 2013, on-going)
6.2, 13.1	Address concerns over feedback to students, increase consistency of good practice	DoT to remind staff of expectations and provide guidance (October 2013); ALL to support each other to balance workloads and ensure deadlines for returns to students are met (on-going)
6.3	Review system for Honours project choice	CC for SBS Honours Projects and DoT reviewed; will continue to clarify system with staff and students (March 2014)
6.5, 15.4	Ensure sufficient administrative support and consider minimal level of provision for MyAberdeen	Support in place within SBS Secretariat; roles and responsibilities over management of <i>MyAberdeen</i> sites to be clarified for staff (November 2013 and January 2014); TC to consider setting minimum level of provision (March 2014)
7.2	Share best practice throughout School	Addressed through new procedures related to Annual Course Reviews and Programme Reviews; also see Actions under 4.5, 5.3 and 6.1
7.3	Supplement SCEF for gathering student feedback	Already in place for many courses; DoT to increase staff awareness of diversity of methods for gathering feedback (November 2013)
10.2	Highlight importance of Graduate Attributes to students and staff within School	Staff offered information session from Joy Perkins and Mary Pryor in September 2013; focus within Personal Tutor guidelines will increase awareness in staff and students; DoT to distribute examples of inclusion of Graduate Attributes in course manuals and encourage CC to adopt practice (December 2014)
12.1	Foster reflective attitude towards teaching	This is an objective within our Strategic Plan, to be approached through more regular use of open, focused discussions related to teaching (on-going)

12.3	Highlight and recognise quality teaching, strengthen strategic vision, address concerns over workload transparency	As in 2.1, 3.6, 4.4; in addition, we increasingly are using benchmarks to clarify expectations related to workloads and to enhance self-awareness and peer awareness of workloads to address staff perceptions of lack of parity in workloads related to teaching; DoT will continue to work with CLSM T&LC to ensure that teaching hours database is developed to provide relevant information for benchmarking (December 2013)
16.2	Develop plan for student recruitment	To be outlined within Strategic Plan, implemented in conjunction with CLSM and SRAS

DoT = Director of Teaching, Michelle Pinard
 IBES Director = Institute of Biological and Environmental Science Director, Stuart Piernney
 TC = School of Biological Sciences Teaching Committee
 CLSM T&LC = College of Life Sciences and Medicine Teaching and Learning Committee
 VP T&L = Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning
 DoTLs = College Directors of Teaching and Learning
 HoC = Head of College
 HoS = Head of School
 COPS = College of Physical Sciences
 SMS = School of Medical Sciences
 DO = Disabilities Officer, Martin Barker
 AQH = Academic Quality Handbook
 TF = Teaching Fellows
 D&A = Delivery and Assessment
 CC = Course Coordinators

QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE
(27 November 2013)

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN
SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

INTERNAL TEACHING REVIEW
REPORT

Panel Visit: Wednesday 20 and Thursday 21 March 2013

Panel:

Professor George M Coghill	Convener, School of Natural and Computing Sciences
Mrs Elizabeth Clark	School of Education
Dr David Pearson	School of Psychology
Ms Josefine Bjorkqvist	AUSA President for Education & Employability
Miss Emma Hay	Clerk
Professor Libby John	External Subject Specialist (University of Lincoln)
Dr Gordon Cramb	External Subject Specialist (University of St Andrews)

The Panel met the following:

Head of School	Professor Liz Baggs
College Director of Teaching and Learning	Dr Stephen Davies
School Director of Teaching and Learning (outgoing)	Dr Jim McDonald
School Director of Teaching and Learning (incoming)	Dr Michelle Pinard
School Administrative and Technical Team	Ms Sam Hall
	Ms Wendy Wilson
	Ms Emma Davidson
	Ms Hayley Murison
	Ms Maree Mccombie
	Ms Sheila Jones
	Mr Kevin Bruce
	Mr Nigel Graham
	Ms Kelly Reid
Undergraduate Course Coordinators (Levels 1 and 2)	Dr Jim McDonald
	Dr Claire Trinder
	Dr Alan Jamieson
	Dr Adam Price
	Dr Sarah Woodin
	Dr Sam Martin
	Dr Martin Barker
	Professor Ursula Witte
Undergraduate Course Coordinators (Levels 3 and 4)	Dr David Burslem
	Professor Stuart Piertney
	Professor David Hazelrigg
	Dr Andrew Cameron
	Professor David Robinson
	Dr Tara Marshall
	Professor Graeme Paton
	Professor Steve Redpath
Undergraduate Advisers of Studies	Dr David Lusseau

Newly Appointed Staff	Dr Sarah Woodin Mrs Cath Dennis Dr Andrew Yule Dr Louise Page Dr Thelma Fletcher Dr Steve Woodward Dr Helen Dooley Dr Dan MacQueen Dr Dan Mayor Mr Eddie Brede Mr Vasilis Louca Dr Alan Jamieson
Teaching Fellows	Dr John Baird Dr Andrew Yule Dr Martin Barker Dr Louise Page Dr Claire Trinder Mrs Cath Dennis Dr Lenka Maderova
Examinations Officer	Dr Andrew Yule
Disability/Teachability Officer	Dr Martin Barker
Representatives of the Employer Liaison Group	Dr John Baird Professor Graeme Paton
The panel also met:	Undergraduate Students (Levels 1 and 2) Undergraduate Students (Levels 3 and 4)

Additional Comments on the Self-evaluation Document were received from:

Dr Stephen Davies	College Director of Teaching and Learning
Dr Lucy Foley	Head of Student Support
Mrs Alison Povall	School DIT Relationship Manager

Overall Impressions

The School of Biological Sciences is one of four schools of the College of Life Sciences and Medicine and is primarily located in the Zoology Building. The School comprises several disciplines including Biology, Zoology, Marine Biology, Conservation Biology, Ecology, Environmental Science, Animal Ecology, Forestry and Plant and Soil Science.

Firstly, the panel would wish to express their sincere thanks to the School for their preparation of such a concise, yet comprehensive Self Evaluation Document (SED) detailing current teaching practices within the School. The panel agreed that the information presented in the SED together with the extensive appendices provide an excellent account of the recent changes to the curriculum and the courses and degree programmes available.

The panel commended the diverse multi-disciplinary provision offered by the School. The panel noted a high quality of teaching and learning in the School and overall, expressed confidence in the maintenance of academic standards. The panel recognised the School's commitment to teaching and learning enhancement.

The panel commended the School for embracing new technology and noted a forward-looking attitude which encompassed plans for future innovation.

The panel welcomed the positive response towards the School from the undergraduate students interviewed.

Notes: (i) This Internal Teaching Review is restricted to Undergraduate provision offered by the School of Biological Sciences. Postgraduate provision offered by the School will be reviewed as part of the Internal Teaching Review of the College of Life Sciences and Medicine, likely to be scheduled for spring 2014.

(ii) The numbering of sections below reflects the numbering of the self-evaluation document (SED). Some sections of the SED attracted no commendations or recommendations.

Section 1: Range of Provision

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

1.1 The School of Biological Sciences offers single honours and designated undergraduate degree programmes. One joint honours programme is available in Biology – Education.

- i. Bachelor of Science in Biology
- ii. Bachelor of Science in Biology - Education (Primary)
- iii. Bachelor of Science in Conservation Biology
- iv. Bachelor of Science in Ecology
- v. Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science
- vi. Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science (Physical Sciences)
- vii. Bachelor of Science in Plant Biology
- viii. Bachelor of Science in Forest Sciences
- ix. Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology
- x. Bachelor of Science in Plant and Soil Sciences
- xi. Bachelor of Science in Zoology
- xii. Bachelor of Science in Animal Ecology
- xiii. Bachelor of Science in Parasitology (to be withdrawn)
- xiv. Bachelor of Science in Forestry

- xv. Designated Bachelor of Science in Biology
- xvi. Designated Bachelor of Science in Conservation Biology
- xvii. Designated Bachelor of Science in Ecology
- xviii. Designated Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science
- xix. Designated Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science (Physical Sciences)
- xx. Designated Bachelor of Science in Plant Biology
- xxi. Designated Bachelor of Science in Forest Sciences
- xxii. Designated Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology
- xxiii. Designated Bachelor of Science in Plant and Soil Sciences
- xxiv. Designated Bachelor of Science in Zoology
- xxv. Designated Bachelor of Science in Animal Ecology
- xxvi. Designated Bachelor of Science in Parasitology (to be withdrawn)
- xxvii. Designated Bachelor of Science in Forestry

1.2 The School of Biological Sciences offers one integrated master's degree programme.

- i. Master of Science in Biological Sciences

Section 2: Aims of Provision

- 2.1 The panel **commended** the School on the commitment of staff to high quality provision. The panel **recommended** that the School work to evolve a clear and focused vision of what the school is aiming to achieve in terms of its provision of teaching and supervision. The panel noted staff engagement with teaching and an understanding of the procedures and processes in place designed to promote and sustain quality, however, **recommended** the School enthusiastically engage in the process of making the system work effectively.

Section 3: Staffing

- 3.1 At the point of publication of the Internal Teaching Review supporting documentation, the School had a total of 87.6 fte academic staff with an approximate staff-student ratio of 1:10. The panel noted a significant change in staffing since the School last underwent review and acknowledged that 56 of the 89 members of staff within the school were new appointments since 2006.
- 3.2 The panel acknowledged that the school had lost a number of members of staff through the University's voluntary severance scheme. The panel **commended** the school for their response in dealing with this. The panel noted the School were currently recruiting new permanent teaching staff to the School. The panel **commended** this step, to negate the use of individuals appointed to short term contracts.
- 3.3 The panel **commended** the school on their diverse and multi-disciplinary staff body. The panel **commended** the significant role played by a highly committed group of teaching fellows within the school and their contribution to the Schools teaching provision.
- 3.4 In commending the work of teaching fellows, the panel did note concern over the turnover rate of teaching fellows within the School, often causing issues. The panel **recommended** that steps be taken to negate this issue and to ensure greater stability for staff and students.
- 3.5 The panel **commended** the varied and stimulating teaching environment provided, made possible by staff members active in a wide range of research areas. The panel **commended** the willingness of staff to undertake various roles including many staff acting as Advisers of Studies.
- 3.6 The panel **commended** the efficiency and dedication of the School administrative and technical staff. The panel was heartened by their positive and enthusiastic attitude and noted the invaluable role they play within the School. The panel **commended** the frank discussions held with staff during the review and were heartened by their responses, which gave the panel confidence in their professionalism and commitment to quality. The panel **recommended** that the School and College continue to highly value this resource.

Section 4: School Organisation

- 4.1 The panel **commended** the organisational structure of the School and in particular the use of 'sub-groups' tackling specific areas, including staffing, curriculum and assessment, used to feed into the School Teaching and Learning Committee.

- 4.2 The panel noted the School's own admission that the sub-groups do not currently meet on a regular basis and, in addition, have significant limitations as a consequence of the fluctuation in their activities. The panel therefore **recommended** that the sub-groups meet on a more regular basis with clear remits and agendas. The panel **commended** their use and wished to encourage their continuation.
- 4.3 The panel acknowledged the varying extent to which student representatives are invited to participate in committees such as the School Teaching and Learning Committee. The panel **recommended** that this be reviewed. The panel **recommended** that the School make available a permanent position for student representatives on the School Teaching and Learning Committee and all other appropriate committees. The panel acknowledged that student representatives could be asked to step out should issues of a sensitive nature, such as staffing, arise.
- 4.4 The panel noted the lack of staff engagement in the 'staff meeting' held 3 times a year. The panel **recommended** that this issue be tackled to encourage engagement and collegiality and suggested the use of initiatives for engaging with staff, such as School Teaching Away Days, if practical.
- 4.5 The panel noted a lack of a formal process for reporting good practice within the School. The panel noted significant areas of good practice, such as the recently organised Careers Day, and **recommended** that this issue be considered in order to try to disseminate good practice amongst as many people as possible.

Section 5: Course and Programme Design, Accessibility and Approval

- 5.1 The panel **commended** the breadth of teaching methods and flexible approach to learning.
- 5.2 The panel **commended** the School for carefully reflecting on their programme structures since undergoing review in 2006 and continuing to do so, on a regular basis thereafter. The panel agreed that the School's programme structure and provision made good sense in pedagogic terms.
- 5.3 The panel were enthusiastic to **commend** the introduction of skills based courses within the School, specifically *B11006: Tutorials in Biology (BUGS)* and *BI2009: Biological Enhanced Skills Training (BEST)*. The panel noted staff and student enthusiasm for these courses and that their introduction had been borne out of student feedback. The panel would **recommend** the sharing of this good practice within the College and University as a whole.
- 5.4 The panel **commended** the School on the work undertaken to review provision as a consequence of the implementation of the University's Curriculum Reform (CRef) project. The panel **commended** the school's involvement in the organisation and delivery of sixth century courses.
- 5.5 The panel did, however, note some concern over the engagement with the spirit of curriculum reform for honours students. The panel **recommended** that the honours curriculum be reviewed carefully to ensure students had the opportunity to engage with Enhanced Study (and therefore courses out with their discipline or school).

- 5.6 The panel noted the School's course structure and in particular the 6 week courses offered. The panel **recommended** that the School carefully review their course structure in light of the pending changes to the academic year. While the issue would undoubtedly be addressed at a College and Institutional level, the panel **recommended** that the School take a proactive stance in reviewing their own provision. The panel **recommended** the School consider a more integrated timetable to allow greater flexibility for students and for future course design and development.
- 5.7 The panel **commended** the use of field trips as part of courses offered within the School. The panel acknowledged the importance of field trips and their importance in marketing Aberdeen as an institution at which to study Biological Sciences. The panel **recommended** that the School and College work closely to ensure the continuation of such provision.
- 5.8 The panel **commended** the introduction of the School's new intercalated master's programme, the Master of Science in Biological Science. The panel noted that the work contributing to the development of the degree was innovative and welcomed further information on its progression.
- 5.9 The panel **commended** the work done by the School in supporting students with disabilities, particularly that of the Disability Officer. The panel **recommended** that, in order to deal with undisclosed disabilities, and to enhance student experience, lecture material should be released prior to lectures. The panel acknowledged that some courses/programmes do already do this; however, the panel **recommended** that this practice be adhered to universally.
- 5.10 While able to demonstrate confidence in several areas of the School's Course and Programme Design, Accessibility and Approval the panel noted with some concern the School's use of External Examiners, at sub-honours level in particular. The panel **recommended** that the School familiarise themselves more thoroughly with the University's Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) and in particular the sections relating to External Examining (sections 7 and 9 apply). The panel **recommended** that the use of External Examiners within the school is reviewed and in particular that the issues outlined below, including the consideration of sub-honours materials by External Examiners, are rectified **immediately**.

The panel noted the following concerns:

- The panel were not clear that External Examiners are able to satisfy themselves that the boundaries between pass and fail and between each CAS band have been set at the appropriate standard for each individual level of study.
- The panel noted that the School does not appear to adhere to the ruling that candidate's scripts and any in-course assignments (including projects and dissertations) either should be sent to the External Examiner or should be made available to the External Examiner for the following:

Courses and summative assessments at levels 3 and 4

- those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 11, 14 and 17-20

- those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 8 (in the case of Level 4 courses, an overall CAS mark of 5)
- a small selection of those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 9-10, 12-13 and 15-16, to include a selection of single and double marked scripts
- those for which the internal markers have been unable to agree an overall mark
- any others requested by the External Examiner or the Head of School.

For all other courses (levels 1 and 2)

- those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 6-8
- a selection of those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 9-20
- those for which the internal markers have been unable to agree an overall mark.

Section 6: Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- 6.1 The panel **commended** differing forms of assessment used throughout the School. The panel **recommended**, however, further use of a range of assessment methods, such as group work and group assessment. The panel noted School concerns over the use of in-course assessment and **recommended** that these options be further investigated.
- 6.2 The panel **commended** School efforts to address student concern over feedback and **recommended** the School continue to address such concerns. Discussions with students suggested that whilst feedback was generally prompt and of good quality, perhaps some inconsistencies existed between lecturers and between subject areas. The panel **recommended** that the School ensure consistency across the School.
- 6.3 The panel noted the rationale for the School's policy on Honours entry, but **recommended** that the system (or lack thereof) for Honours project choice be reviewed to ensure consistency and fairness.
- 6.4 The panel **recommended** that the role and importance of student field activity and trips within programmes be reviewed and that resources be allocated to support these key activities.
- 6.5 The panel **commended** the School's use of the University's Virtual Learning Environment, MyAberdeen. The panel noted the potential benefits of MyAberdeen and **recommended** that there needs to be sufficient administrative support to ensure consistency of material posted on it. The panel **recommended** that the School may wish to set a minimum level of provision which should be met in all courses and introduce a programme of staff development to support staff in developing their skills in this regard.

Section 7: Course and Programme Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 The panel **commended** the School on the consistently positive comments and endorsements from external examiners.

- 7.2 The panel recognised a lack of a formal process by which the School Teaching and Learning committee can share best practice throughout the School. The panel **recommended** that this issue be investigated further to ensure best practice is communicated widely.
- 7.3 The panel **recommended** that the School consider their own procedures for gathering student feedback on courses and programmes, other than the University's Student Course Evaluation Form (SCEF) exercise.

Section 8: Academic Standards and the Academic Infrastructure

- 8.1 The panel **commended** the fact that the degree programmes offered by the School have been designed in accordance with the academic standards required by the University, as set out by the QAA.
- 8.2 The panel, referring to point 5.10 above, were unable to confirm confidence in the Academic Standards of the School without reassurance that External Examiners are being used appropriately and effectively.

Section 9: Training and Supervision of Research Students

- 9.1 This section is **not applicable** to this Internal Teaching Review (see note (ii) above).

Section 10: Personal Development and Employability

- 10.1 The panel noted that following the implementation of Curriculum Reform at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 courses had been revalidated and opportunities to achieve the University's Graduate Attributes (GAs) were now embedded in courses.
- 10.2 The panel noted concern over the lack of understanding of the Graduate Attributes amongst members of the staff and student population alike. The panel **recommended** that Graduate Attributes should be highlighted as an issue of extreme importance within the School.

Section 11: Professional Bodies/Units

- 11.1 This section is **not applicable** to this Internal Teaching Review.

Section 12: Staff Training and Educational Development

- 12.1 The panel **commended** the School for the evident commitment and intelligently reflective attitudes of teaching and support staff, at all levels. The panel commended the mentoring and support of new staff (not merely formally) by senior staff in respect of teaching standards, and procedures generally. The panel **commended** the School on a strong collegiate, and professionally supportive, ethos which was very evident in all meetings with staff. The panel **recommended** that this be further enhanced by the introduction of methods including the possibility of teaching away days (as referred to in point 4.4 above).
- 12.2 The Panel **commended** the School's supportive approach to the induction of new staff, as instanced by the collegial and supportive atmosphere in general. The panel noted the recurring thanks of members of staff toward Drs Jim McDonald, Michelle Pinard and Andrew Yule for their time and continual support.

- 12.3 Given the School's commitment to delivering quality programmes, the panel **recommended** that the School consider means to highlight and recognise quality teaching. The panel **recommended** that the school would benefit from a strengthened strategic vision and direction of in teaching and learning and agreed that this vision should begin with the Head of School. Furthermore, the panel noted concern over a lack of workload transparency for staff and **recommended** that this be urgently reviewed.
- 12.4 The panel noted a varying level of commitment to CPD activities, in part due to the perceived quality of some University courses. The panel **recommended** that staff attending useful courses report back on these to colleagues in a forum such as the School Teaching and Learning committee.

Section 13: Student Involvement in Quality Processes

- 13.1 The panel **commended** School responsiveness to student input, as confirmed by the students themselves. However, the panel **recommended** that arrangements and procedures for feedback within the School be reviewed to ensure constructive and timely feedback from the student body, and its full representation on School and programme committees (as referred to in point 4.3 above).

Section 14: Public Information/Management Information

- 14.1 The panel made no comment on this section of the SED.

Section 15: Student Support, Retention and Progression

- 15.1 The panel **commended** the School's overall commitment to student support, as demonstrated in the attitude of its knowledgeable advisers of studies, who showed a good balance between sympathy and professionalism.
- 15.2 The panel **commended** the strategy for retention and progression inherent in, for example, skills based courses within the School, specifically *B11006: Tutorials in Biology (BUGS)* and *B12009: Biological Enhanced Skills Training (BEST)*. The panel noted staff and student enthusiasm for these courses.
- 15.3 The panel noted a high level of satisfaction generally expressed by students. The panel **commended** the engaged, enthusiastic and positive student representatives with whom they met.
- 15.4 The panel **commended** excellent examples of the use of MyAberdeen, however, noted that the School's use of MyAberdeen can be inconsistent. The panel **recommended** that this be reviewed.
- 15.5 The panel **commended** a wide ranging set of School driven initiatives to engage and support students including the Careers Day.

Section 16: Recruitment Access and Widening Participation

- 16.1 The panel recognised the School's efforts in the area of undergraduate recruitment and **commended** the School for their initiatives in this regard. The panel **commended** the

School's commitment to focussing on recruitment as a key concern, particularly in regarding to RUK recruitment.

- 16.2 The panel **recommended** that the School further develop a planned and managed approach to student recruitment and cohort size that is sustainable in relation to the staff resource base, refraining from opportunistic recruitment to grow student numbers.

Section 17: SFC Quality Enhancement Engagements

- 17.1 The panel made no comment on this section of the SED.

Section 18: Recent Developments

- 18.1 The panel noted the satisfactory implementation of many changes by the School since they last undertook an Internal Teaching Review. The panel **commended** the School on the steps they had taken to act upon the majority of points raised by the previous panel. The panel recognised the proactive nature of the School in setting out action points for the coming years and **commended** them for this.

Section 19: Quality Enhancement and Good Practice

- 19.1 The panel recognised a commitment to quality enhancement and a number of examples of good practice (see above), combined with evidence of critical self-reflection as contained in the documentation submitted to the panel.

Section 20: Impediments to Quality Enhancement

- 20.1 The panel noted those issues raised by the School in this section of the SED and agreed that each issue raised had been considered or raised above.

Conclusions

The panel recommended **conditional revalidation** with the following condition:

- The School *must* demonstrate, by way of their response to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and one year follow up report, a clear change to the way in which the School uses External Examiners, as recommended in section 5 above.

The panel wished to thank all members of staff within the School of Biological Sciences for the work that had gone into producing the ITR documentation and for their commitment to the review process. The panel also wished to thank all students and staff who participated in the visit; the visit itself went very smoothly, the School was very accommodating in adapting to timetable changes, and the panel were made to feel very welcome.