

University of Aberdeen  
Internal Teaching Review (ITR)

**SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**

Panel Visit: Tuesday 30 and Wednesday 31 October 2018

**INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** The Internal Teaching Review (ITR) of the School of Biological Sciences was undertaken under the University's revised ITR Process and Procedures - following an initial pilot in the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture (LLMVC) in March 2018 - maintained under review by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL). The Process and Procedures are available here: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/internal-teaching-review-6112.php>].
- 1.2** The ITR Panel was comprised of:
- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Professor Kath Shennan  | Convener, Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement   |
| Dr Sandie Cleland       | School of Psychology, PGT Committee                    |
| Professor Bill Harrison | School of Natural and Computing Sciences, UG Committee |
| Dr Malcolm Hole         | School of Geosciences, Quality Assurance Committee     |
| Mr Ondrej Kucerak       | Aberdeen University Students Association               |
| Professor David Coates  | External Subject Specialist, University of Dundee      |
| Dr Brian Reid           | External Subject Specialist, University of East Anglia |
| Mr Matt Fullerton       | Clerk, Academic Services                               |
- 1.3** The Panel considered the documentation provided by the School of Biological Sciences, by way of an evidence-based Critical Analysis and a Curriculum Map summarising Benchmark Statements for each of the School's courses. In addition, prior to the visits to the School, the internal members of the Panel had access to an ITR repository containing the School's annual monitoring materials (Annual Course and Annual Programme Reviews (ACR and APR)), Student Course Evaluation Forms (SCEF), minutes from meetings of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC), External Examiner reports (EER), as well as the minutes from various School Committees. Interrogation of this documentation, along with the School's submitted Critical Analysis, enabled the Panel to identify key themes for further exploration.
- 1.4** The Panel conducted a two-day site visit to the School where they met with a range of staff, academic and administrative, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research students. The report is split into two sections; Part A covers the quality assurance aspects arising from scrutiny of the material in the ITR repository and initial discussions with the Head of School (HoS) and a number of key members of senior staff; Part B covers the outcome of meetings with staff and students, focusing on a small number of themes identified during Part A, and in the Pedagogic Partnership Session, which involved more free-form discussion.

## **PART A: QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **2.1 Preparatory work:**

The aim of the preparatory work of the Panel was to gain assurance that the School's teaching provision met with the University's requirements, as well as that of the Quality Assurance Agency, and to identify both areas of good practice and areas for development in the School's provision. This process would inform the Panel meetings with the School and allow those meetings to focus more on enhancement.

**2.2** Overall, the Panel was content with the quality of provision offered within the School, was assured that the School had robust QA processes in place and that EERs were positive, indicating that the School was maintaining standards.

**2.3** *Initial observations by the Panel; Areas that the Panel decided were worth exploring during the ITR are as follows:*

- There were some concerns regarding the reduction in staffing levels since the last ITR and whether this was having any impact on the School's ability to provide teaching across the range of specialisms being offered.
- The Panel had some discussions regarding Undergraduate field courses and particularly the financial implications and related support made available to students, the health and safety of students, as well as disability provision.
- The mechanisms in place to support postgraduate students undertaking conversion courses or conducting research in remote locations was felt by the Panel to be worth further investigation.
- The Panel were interested to explore the inherent challenges of group assessment and the School's efforts in ensuring a fair balance of work and recognising individual contribution.
- The pre-ITR documentation indicated that students had unrealistic expectations regarding the turnaround of feedback and the Panel was interested to see how this is being managed in the School.
- Many Staff in the School engage fully with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). However, some EE reports viewed prior to the ITR Panel meetings suggested there was inconsistency in where staff put feedback on assignments. As such, this was felt to be a potential area of interest, and worth exploring with staff and students.
- The School's extensive deployment of postgraduate demonstrators prompted the Panel's interest in the mechanisms involved for recruitment, and the competitiveness therein, as well as the provision of appropriate training to assure the quality of the student experience.

**2.4** *Areas of good practice:*

- The level of ongoing analysis within the School, which informed the documentation submitted prior to the event, was considered impressive. The School-wide review of ACRs and the programme-wide review of course attainment using this analysis is to be commended.
- It was noted that there was clear evidence in both APRs and EERs that the School was responding to feedback from both its students and External Examiners, making changes to enhance their teaching provision as a result.
- The Panel noted evidence of a good range of assessments being utilised within the School, as well as the conscious shift from unseen written examinations as the preferred method.

- The School's ability to gauge global expectations in the balancing of its assessments was recognised, with the Panel observing External Examiners' approval of less reliance on unseen examinations in favour of continuous assessment.
- The Panel were impressed by the tailored additional support that the School were providing for their PGT students, in particular for statistics.

## **2.5** *Potential areas for development:*

- The Panel noted the suggested difficulty faced by undergraduate entrants following articulation routes entering the third year of their programme upon achieving a Higher National Diploma (HND) and consider this an area worth developing.
- Attention was drawn to the wide range of issues attributed to undergraduate honours projects, specifically their perceived impact on students' stress levels when selecting projects, despite the School offering a comparatively high volume of available projects across a range of specialisms. In addition, the Panel were interested to know whether any differences in the difficulty of certain projects (in terms of execution of the project) are sufficiently reflected on at the marking stage.
- It is clear that the School has a very good reputation for engagement in teaching and learning matters and development of innovative practice. However, the Panel perceived that there was lacklustre attendance at previous events run by the School, such as Teaching Swap Shops designed to encourage the sharing of good practice widely across the School. The Panel were interested to know whether there were other fora available to capture and disseminate the good practice that exists in the School.
- Training in grading of assessments is delivered to PhD students in the School by the Centre for Academic Development (CAD). During this process, CAD routinely promote the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Associate Fellowships scheme but there is very little uptake from PhD students. It would be useful if the School could also encourage uptake of HEA Associate Fellowships by PhD student demonstrators as this may help enhance the professionalism and consistency of PhD student demonstrator teaching and assessment.

## **2.6 Discussion points from initial QA session with Head of School (HoS) and senior members of staff:**

- 2.6.1** In regard to the recent loss of staff - which, the Panel were informed, may be partially reversed with an upcoming period of expansion over the next six months - it was noted that efforts to timetable deliverables on both teaching and research had proven difficult. The HoS stated that, while teaching would always have priority, the School endeavoured to enable staff to fully dedicate themselves, as much as possible, to either teaching or research at different times of the year.
- 2.6.2** The HoS informed the Panel that research staff who have direct cost recovery can off-set their teaching commitments meaning that staff with the least teaching commitments were driving the School's research efforts. This was deemed the fairest model for the moment, though it was noted to be a common source of confusion within the School.
- 2.6.3** On the topic of recruitment and retention in light of diminished staffing levels, the HoS expressed the need for the School to move from what they equated to a 'grow bag' - where staff, having gained experience and training, commonly move on to other employers offering better opportunities - to more beneficial soil which nurtures its talent but also better incentivises it to remain and progress professionally within the University.

- 2.6.4** It was noted that, the School, rather than increase spending on temporary services in response to recent staff losses, had rationalised its teaching provision in order to maintain standards.
- 2.6.5** The HoS estimated that the School currently maintained a staff to student ratio of approximately 15:1.
- 2.6.6** It was noted that the student population was unevenly spread across the School's various disciplines, meaning that it had proven challenging to match teaching requirements to staff expertise, though the HoS stated that the current imbalance in expertise was informing future hiring decisions.
- 2.6.7** Experienced members of staff spoke of previous concerns regarding the perceived large step between years 1 and 2 of the School's undergraduate programmes. It was felt that these concerns had been adequately addressed in recent years by some major changes to the School's programmes and this had ultimately yielded a positive impact on the student experience.
- 2.6.8** The Panel noted efforts by the School, in response to student feedback and an institutional requirement for course rationalisation, to consolidate the workload demands of its postgraduate taught programmes by converting courses worth 7.5 credit points that were clearly being overtaught to 15 credit point course more commensurate with the teaching and assessment being delivered. While this had significantly reduced the list of courses being offered from 42 to 29 - which it was recognised had significantly limited students' breadth of choice - it was hoped that the change, and corresponding reduction in workload for students, would ultimately prove beneficial to students' stress levels.
- 2.6.9** It was noted that, further to a universal change across the University, the School's field courses had been revalued from 7.5 credit points to 15 credit points. While this had resulted in significant logistical difficulties, with some courses having to be run twice this year to better accommodate student interest, it was generally agreed that it had been a positive move and one which would indicate the significance of field-based teaching to both staff and students.
- 2.6.10** When asked whether they were confident that assessments were appropriate to the intended learning outcomes (ILOs), experienced members of staff commented that, there was a widespread belief in the School that this was the case. It was, however, noted that courses did exist with a comparatively narrow distribution of high grades. The Panel expressed some concern that this may indicate that the assessments designed to show students had met the ILOs were not sufficiently demanding to produce a wider range of resultant grades or that the ILOs themselves were not sufficiently demanding.
- 2.6.11** It was noted that, despite efforts to encourage staff engagement with events to share good practice, such as lunchtime meetings and School Forum events, shared teaching had proven the most effective method for sharing good practice, especially in delivering feedback on assessments. As most staff contribute to several large courses, using a single grade centre was helping to ensure consistency across the board.
- 2.6.12** Attempts to encourage staff and postgraduate research students to pursue HEA Fellowships had met with mixed success, although a recent retreat involving the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) resulted in two applications and potentially two more soon. The Panel noted that a fund for attendance at HEA events had been stopped and as a result few staff currently attend such events, despite comments to the Panel that those who do go find them very beneficial by exposing them to experiences from around the country.

- 2.6.13** It was suggested that efforts to collaborate with other areas of the University, particularly the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences, and Nutrition (SMMSN) with which the School shares the teaching of a Level 2 course while also incorporating the Level 1 Medical Sciences course 'The Cell' in its curriculum, had been stymied by the institutional departure from a college-based structure. Senior staff commented that, regardless of their interest and that of colleagues elsewhere, there was not enough support being provided by the University to enable direct collaboration between Schools, despite the proven benefits for all parties, especially students.
- 2.6.14** It was noted that, having achieved bronze status from Athena SWAN several years previously, the School has established a group specifically dedicated to promoting equality and diversity which, while currently focused on staff, was planning to consider the gender balance in the School's student population as part of its work towards silver status. The HoS recognised that, despite the majority of both staff and students being female, senior academic positions were predominantly occupied by male staff. The HoS affirmed the School's intention that past barriers leading to the current inequality were being actively addressed.

## **PART B: QUALITY ENHANCEMENT; OUTCOMES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH STAFF, STUDENTS AND THE PEDAGOGIC PARTNERSHIP SESSION**

- 3.1** The themes agreed with the School for focused discussion prior to the visit were i) 'assessment and feedback', paying particular attention to group work and the marking of exams versus in-course components, ii) 'supporting students' at all levels of study, but particularly in relation to undergraduate field courses and honours projects and widening access, and iii) 'professional and career development', in regards to engagement by both staff and postgraduate research students, especially those performing the role of demonstrator.
- 3.2 Theme: Assessment and Feedback**
- 3.2.1** Discussions highlighted the impact of extensive staff losses in previous years, with the School's management affirming their commitment to maintaining the quality of its teaching provision. The Panel confirmed that there was no evidence that the quality of teaching provision had been impacted by staffing losses which reflects the work that has been undertaken to rationalise provision and make efficiencies in terms of teaching and assessment loads.
- 3.2.2** The School's focus on employability and building on key aspects of its learning outcomes was established as a core driving force across all of its taught delivery.
- 3.2.3** Due to field courses' notoriety for awarding higher than average marks and their credit value being increased from 7.5 credits to 15 credits, reviews of assessment practices had taken place and staff were being actively encouraged to innovate in the creation of robust means of assessment which had a "real-life" value. This had so far resulted in the use of Twitter-based tasks and a day-long lab-based session upon students' return from the field.
- 3.2.4** The popularity of field courses was evident in the Panel's discussions with student groups and praised as a very good way of further improving relations with staff.
- 3.2.5** Further to the Panel's interest in the School's implementation of group work as a means of assessment, it was stated that courses which included teamwork components were designed to bring students together and share understanding. It was also confirmed in the same discussion that many class-based courses did include an element of peer assessment.

- 3.2.6** Efforts by the School to effectively streamline examination meetings and the discussion therein by ensuring that External Examiners are better supported and provided with necessary information as far as six months in advanced were praised during the Panel's session with School management. Furthermore, it was noted that these improvements had assisted in redirecting the focus of examiners to review at course level as opposed to the more student-orientated process adopted in the past, thus enhancing their main role.
- 3.2.7** Discussions with students on the quality of their feedback repeatedly presented an apparently common perception that the School-wide move from delivering feedback via Turnitin to MyAberdeen has in some way limited the extent to which their markers can comment on submitted work. This was mirrored in concerns raised by staff in the use of Blackboard, prompting the Panel to suspect that there was a significant lack of awareness in relation to the full functionality offered by the system, in terms of feedback, or a lack of consistency in how feedback is delivered to students through MyAberdeen.
- 3.2.8** Following meetings with students suggesting that the quality of feedback was not always consistent, particularly when delivered by demonstrators, the Panel queried staff on the adequacy of the training the School was providing to PhD student demonstrators and the extent to which it appeared demonstrators were being relied on. Feedback to the Panel indicated that there was a pool of excellent demonstrators but that they could not be used for all courses that required demonstrators otherwise they would be overloaded. This resulted in sometimes having to use demonstrators who were less aware of the subject matter or less consistent in their marking, despite the training being delivered.
- 3.2.9** The Panel was informed that the School had in recent years made improvements in its oversight of demonstrators, with the introduction of a mandatory training session, non-attendance at which prohibits students from demonstrating. Whilst noting this excellent training and that the School had some highly professional demonstrators, students have noted inconsistency in the feedback provided by demonstrators. As described above, the Panel got the impression that the School did not have enough suitable candidates among its postgraduate research population to be more restrictive in their selection of demonstrators. UG students asked whether good L4 UG students who had already done that course could be utilised as "demonstrators", even if they did not do any grading, and the Panel felt that this could be worth considering.

### **3.3 Theme: Supporting Students**

- 3.3.1** The widening of access, particularly for field courses, was discussed at length across different meetings, with School management explaining that students for whom the courses are mandatory are expected to pay half of the total cost themselves, with the other half covered by the School. In addition, it was noted that a discretionary fund for students in need of monetary support in this regard did exist, from Student Support, however it was not advertised widely. The School also intimated that they would never see a student unable to attend a field course for financial reasons. When the Panel later raised the same topic with students it became clear that many were unaware of these arrangements, not even knowing that compulsory field courses were already subsidised by the School, nor that there was any special arrangements for those struggling financially beyond being directed to Student Support and the University-wide hardship fund.
- 3.3.2** Further to concerns raised following the Panel's review of the Critical Analysis submitted by the School, staff were asked to comment on the perceived toll on students' stress levels attributed to honours project selection which had been further supported by the Panel's discussions with students. While it was noted that some staff considered this a non-issue, it

was suggested that the delay this year in releasing the list of possible projects due to industrial action would certainly not have helped and it was hoped that releasing the list earlier would go some way to alleviating student stress. When asked to reflect on the level of support offered by their project supervisors, some students shared their impression that staff did not always seem to take the exercise seriously enough, resulting in varied levels of support.

- 3.3.3** While the School was noted to have already explored alternative ways of approaching the allocation of honours projects, such as through a ballot, it was believed that these would only create a greater level of dissatisfaction amongst students. The Panel learned through discussion with sub-honours students that they had been engaging with their peers in cross-year discussions independent of the School, with many suggesting to the Panel that this was proving a good way to manage their expectations for what was still to come. A suggestion that honours students be more formally involved in the support provided to those in first and second year was welcomed by the students.
- 3.3.4** Efforts to ensure that students receive additional academic support when needed included paying demonstrators to offer tailored support sessions, while the School also endeavoured to accommodate the needs of some students not necessarily identified by Student Support by approving extensions where required, with many being directed to the University's central services if appropriate. The quality of care provided by the School and its endeavours to be flexible as possible in supporting the needs of its students while maintaining fairness to all was repeatedly recognised in discussion across student groups.
- 3.3.5** The Panel noted concerns by staff regarding the lack of note takers and proof readers being provided by the centre in the School's support of disability provision. In terms of field course participation, students with disabilities are assigned a staff member (sometimes from Student Support) to ensure their needs are properly catered for and specialist accommodation is provided discretely where required. Elements of the field courses which prove impractical for students with disabilities are filmed for later viewing, assisting both those students and the rest of their cohort who can take the opportunity to review the field activities while analysing related data.
- 3.3.6** It was noted that staff had produced a video on plagiarism which was currently available on the VLE for both staff and students. It was felt that the video could prove useful to efforts elsewhere in the University to accurately define plagiarism, prompting the Convener to request that it be circulated to other Schools.
- 3.3.7** It was noted that the School had received feedback the previous year from students claiming to have not acquired enough proficiency in field-related skills but, given that students have been responsible for choosing their optional courses since the introduction of the MyCurriculum course selection system, it had been felt that students should be taking greater responsibility for achieving their own learning outcomes.
- 3.3.8** In terms of assuring the mental health of students as much as possible, the School has an appointed Mental Health Champion, to whom other staff can refer if a student requires the attention of the appropriate services at the University.
- 3.3.9** Following the Panel's earlier concerns regarding the support given to PGR students working in remote locations, it was confirmed that the School uses a variety of mechanisms to ensure that these students are able to stay in touch with the University, as well as having time allocated for them to return to Aberdeen on a semi-regular basis as part of their studies. The Panel noted that such students are expected, as per Institutional practice, to submit a six-monthly report with commentary from their supervisor(s).
- 3.3.10** Many postgraduate students expressed satisfaction with the level of support they received from staff, particularly their supervisors. However, several undergraduate students claimed

to have had very little contact with their designated personal tutors, with some even remarking that they had still to receive any kind of communication. Such feedback was met with disappointment by staff in attendance and it was suggested that the School could more closely monitor the quality of support offered to UG students by personal tutors.

- 3.3.11** Some students, including those in attendance who joined their programme as a direct entrant, recounted their initial confusion in response to the implementation of block teaching and how it is displayed in their timetable. While other students stated that they enjoyed being able to focus on fewer subjects overall, they also identified the overlapping of deadlines, symptomatic of block teaching, as having caused them a great deal of additional stress.
- 3.3.12** The administrative team was widely praised by staff and students alike. While it had been suggested by some staff that the departure of an administrator formerly dedicated to supporting postgraduate research had resulted in a noticeable impact on the level of assistance which they were receiving, students at the same level cited administrative support as something which they felt was being done well.
- 3.3.13** Both staff and students were complimentary of the work done by the technicians, with students commenting on robust safety procedures which for them further solidified the impression that the education they were receiving was of a high standard. It was later acknowledged by the Panel that the technical staff should have been represented at the event, particularly given the suggestion by some academic staff of perceived challenges arising from the merger of the School's technical staff with that of SMMSN.

#### **3.4 Theme: Professional and Career Development**

- 3.4.1** In addition to providing support for undergraduate students struggling academically, it was noted that demonstrators undergo training provided by the School which focused on marking and ensuring an understanding of the conduct and professionalism which the role expected.
- 3.4.2** The Panel heard that a Swap Shop event, designed to encourage greater engagement from staff and the sharing of good practice across the School, had been held for a number of years but was no longer active. The School are encouraged to use other fora to enable dissemination of the good practice that exists across the School.
- 3.4.3** It was clear from discussion with students that the School seems to be succeeding in its endeavour to instil in its students a high standard of employability, with several students identifying the School's reputation for producing graduates well-equipped for professional life as a key deciding factor in their applying to the University.
- 3.4.4** Although some pre-honours students displayed a lack of awareness of the real world applications of the skills they would attain over the course of their studies, the Panel noted other students' positive reflection on the opportunity to discuss with established professionals in various fields, as well as the chance to attend conferences in other parts of the country with staff helping students to source the necessary funding and rearrange their timetables accordingly.
- 3.4.5** Staff praised at length the level of specialist knowledge available to students through the University's Careers Services, however, discussion with students suggested that there was a degree of inconsistency in their interactions with the Careers Service, with many some suggesting that they were only provided very generic information. The Panel suggested that this may be the difference between meeting with the Careers Advisor assigned to the School and meeting with a "duty" Careers Adviser who may not be so familiar with the School and future careers in that area of study.



- 3.4.6** Postgraduate research students cited being encouraged to take initiative in arranging conferences themselves, with staff always on hand to provide 'light touch' support.
- 3.4.7** When questioned about acting as demonstrators by the Panel, postgraduate students largely expressed appreciation for not just the valuable experience, but also the opportunity to hone key skills. Those with demonstrating experience within the School confirmed that they were marking a wide range of assessments, including short answer questions, lab reports, essays, and presentations, for which they received an annual refresher course as well as limited feedback on the quality of their marking.

### **3.5 Overall impressions**

- 3.5.1** The School's wide range of assessments was considered a strength across many of the groups with whom the Panel spoke. There exists, however, a widely held belief throughout the student population that the feedback received from both staff and postgraduate demonstrators was inconsistent. In pursuing this matter further, it became clear from discussions with staff that the VLE was often not being used to its fullest extent where the delivery of feedback was concerned.
- 3.5.2** Many students at postgraduate level cited the School's reputation for the high rate of employability among its graduates as a major factor behind their decision to attend the University. The Panel, however, did observe a noticeable lack of awareness amongst undergraduate students as to the transferable skills being taught to them as part of their studies, despite these being stated in the learning outcomes for their courses.
- 3.5.3** Teaching across all levels of study was generally considered to be of a very high quality, with clear examples of good practice being identified by the Panel, however it was also apparent that staff felt increasingly overstretched, with some voicing concern that, despite their best efforts, it was increasingly difficult to maintain those standards. Considering the School's significant focus on research, the Panel surmised that the nature of its teaching was significantly dependent on the specialisms of staff who were being hired according to their research interests, the potential revenue from which was driving recruitment policy more than with other Schools. The Panel heard how this approach, if it continues, could have a negative impact on the breadth of teaching offered by the School, a quality which had been repeatedly pointed out as one of its defining strengths when compared with its competitors.
- 3.5.4** The School's support staff was recognised as being the focus of extensive praise throughout the ITR, with the HoS also acknowledging their contribution as integral to the School's successes.
- 3.5.5** In considering the ITR as a whole, the Panel reflected positively on the School's efforts towards maintaining high standards in ensuring provision of the best possible student experience, particularly in light of the significant loss of resources since its last ITR.

## **PART C: SCHOOL ACTION PLAN**

1. Conduct an extensive review of the consistency of feedback on student assessments, especially where issued by postgraduate demonstrators. Establish a school-wide consensus on using the full breadth of functionality available via Blackboard when delivering feedback

and increase staff awareness of this functionality through interaction with the Centre for Academic Development.

2. Reflect upon the School's reliance on, and selection of, postgraduate demonstrators and consider the possibility of deploying undergraduate honours students in a similar, but purely supportive, role.
3. Formulate better curriculum signposting and address the holistic nature of degree programmes, partly by considering a new, well-synthesised template with which to identify employability and various transferable skills across programmes.
4. Review aspects of teaching delivery, particularly the overall effectiveness of block teaching from the perspectives of both staff and students. If block teaching is to remain, consider the introduction of continuous assessments, instead of exams at the end of term, for the first blocks of teaching. Reflect on the provision of Statistics teaching in terms of effectiveness at both undergraduate and postgraduate taught level.
5. Explore the potential application of further non-traditional lab formats to facilitate less truncated delivery of lab teaching.

**PART C: SCHOOL ACTION PLAN**

Action Point	Proposed Actions	Timeline	People Responsible
1A-Conduct an extensive review of the consistency of feedback on student assessments, especially where issued by postgraduate demonstrators.	Review demonstrator activity for 2018-19 (which courses, what type of activity (e.g., practicals, computer labs, field trips, marking, what type of assessments) with a view to informing our programme for demonstrator training;	June-August 2019	DoT with K Bruce and C Trinder
	Review feedback from demonstrators on representative sample of assignments from BI1009, BI1511, BI2020 and BI2510; provide report to course teams, Teaching Committee; incorporate relevant findings into Demonstrator Training with recommendations as required and follow-up with Graduate School and SBS PGR Coordinator to pursue other actions;	Nov-Dec 2019; March 2020;	DoT with Course coordinators and SBS PGR Coordinator
	Continue to review feedback from academic staff in BI4017, BI4016 and BI1009 for consistency and provide targeted support for individuals identified requiring support;	Feb 2020;	DoT with Course coordinators
	Report to Teaching Committee and SBS Academic staff with recommendations as required;	March 2020	DoT
1B-Establish a school-wide consensus on using the full breadth of functionality available via Blackboard when delivering feedback and increase staff awareness of this functionality through interaction with the Centre for Academic Development.	Review current school expectations in relation to use of VLE	April 2019	Teaching Committee
	Reinforce existing guidance to course coordinators and provide course coordinators with feedback on their current compliance with guidance;	July-Sept 2019	DoT, A Connolly
2-Reflect upon the School's reliance on, and selection of, postgraduate demonstrators and consider the possibility of deploying undergraduate honours students in a similar, but purely supportive, role.	Discuss at SBS Teaching Committee SBS current use of demonstrators and the rationale for using UGs in this role;	Jan/April 2019	Teaching Committee
	Explore the feasibility of offering opportunities to UGs, particularly in terms of timetabling and incorporation into BI4019;	June-Sept 2019	DoT, Course Coordinators
3-Formulate better curriculum signposting and address the holistic nature of degree programmes, partly by considering a new, well-synthesised template with which to identify employability and various transferable skills across programmes.	Utilise data compiled for accreditation with SoB, CIEEM, IEMA and spreadsheet compiled for ITR mapping	March-May 2019	DoT
	Check and revise data held by courses and programmes	Sept-Dec 2019	Programme and Course Coordinators
	Develop student friendly interface for distribution via VLE and annual cohort meetings between students and DoT;	Sept-Dec 2019	DoT, A Connolly, Teaching Committee
4-Review aspects of teaching delivery, particularly the overall effectiveness of block teaching from the perspectives of both staff and students. If block teaching is to remain, consider the introduction of continuous assessments, instead of exams at the end of term, for first half session blocks of teaching.	Review effectiveness of block teaching from staff perspective	April 2019	Teaching Committee
	Incorporate discussion of this point into a set of SSLC meetings for UGs and PGTs; Ensure annual cohort orientation meetings include information about the structure of timetables at levels 3 and 4;	April/May 2019	SSLC Chairs, DoT
	Review use of exams in courses running in first block of courses;	April 2019	DoT and Course Coordinators
5-Explore the potential application of further non-traditional lab formats to facilitate less truncated delivery of lab teaching.	Incorporate suggestion into curriculum planning for new science hub project;	2019-2020	Teaching Committee, Course Coordinators, DoT

