UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 25 May 2012

Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of School of Education

Monday 27th and Tuesday 28th February 2012

Mrs Jackie McCluskey, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor Andrea Nolan (Convener)	Senior Vice Principal
Professor Olwen McNamara	University of Manchester, External Subject Specialist
Mr Dave Walker	Student Representative
Dr Ralph Jessop	School of Interdisciplinary Studies, Cognate Member
Dr Don Spaeth	Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Cathy Bovill	Learning and Teaching Centre
Mrs Jackie McCluskey	Senate Office, Clerk to the Review Panel
Dr Geraldine Perriam	Senate Office, Observer

1.   Introduction

1.1   The former Faculty of Education was established in 1999 as a result of the merger of St Andrew's College with various departments of the University of Glasgow including the Department of Education and the Department of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE). Following restructuring in 2010 which reshaped the University from nine Faculties into four Colleges, the Faculty of Education became the School of Education, forming part of the College of Social Sciences.

1.2   The School of Education is based in the St Andrew's Building. For the provision under review, the School has 26 seminar rooms, 2 Art Rooms, Computing Labs and 5 Computer Clusters, 2 Drama Rooms, 1 Gymnasium, 4 Science Labs, 1 Technical Room and 1 Lecture Theatre. The School also has full access to the lecture facilities in the Sir Charles Wilson Building. As part of the review the Panel were shown a selection of these facilities.

1.3   As part of the University's ongoing system of periodic review, the Faculty of Education was reviewed in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in 2004-2005 and in Educational Studies in 2006-2007 through the precursor to Periodic Subject Review: Departmental Review of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (DPTLA). The current review covers the portfolio of programmes previously

reviewed through these two separate reviews. The ITE programmes of the Faculty of Education were also re-accredited by the professional body, the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) in session 2004-2005.

1.4   The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was prepared by Professor Bob Davis (Head of School); Dr Beth Dickson (Depute Head of School); Moyra Boland, (PgDE Programme Director and Director of Learning and Teaching); Dr Nicki Hedge (Director of PGT) and Mr Brian Templeton (Reader in Modern Languages) in consultation with Dr Jane MacKenzie (Learning and Teaching Centre).

1.5   The Review Panel found the SER to be very informative, setting the work of the School in the current external context beyond Teacher Education.[1] Mr Templeton described the process adopted by the School in the preparation of the SER. Staff and students had been encouraged to respond to the draft document via Moodle using prepared template proformas. Sections of the SER were posted on Moodle in manageable, bite-sized portions to avoid overwhelming each group. Mr Templeton highlighted that the student response had not been as high as they had hoped. However, it was acknowledged that this had likely been due to timing - the majority of students were on placement during the consultation period (the first three weeks of January). The Panel was advised that the School intended to use this method for future consultations, such as seeking the views of staff on the replacement of the BEd programme. However, they would consider timings and the management of the responses more closely.

1.6   The Panel met with, Professor Tom Guthrie, Dean of Learning & Teaching for the College of Social Sciences, Professor Bob Davis; Dr Beth Dickson; Dr Nicki Hedge; Mr Brian Templeton; 18 other members of academic staff, including 1 probationary member of staff; 4 support staff; 5 Associate Tutors; 25 undergraduate students and 18 postgraduate taught students. At the request of the School, the PgDE students were interviewed along with the undergraduate students. Similarly, given the taught element of the programme, the EdD students were included in the group of postgraduate taught students. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students were split into two groups of similar composition and each group met with half the Panel. Half of the Panel met with the probationary member of staff whilst the remainder of the Panel met simultaneously with the Associate Tutors.

2.   Background Information

2.1   Education has a total of 464 staff (127.5 FTE), of which 411 (81 FTE) are academic staff and include 13 Professors; 1 Director; 2 Readers; 1 Senior University Teacher; 11 Senior Lecturers; 19 Lecturers and 34 University Teachers.

2.2   The Staff/Student Ratio (SSR) for taught students is: 25.4. For comparison purposes the SSRs for institutions with parallel provision were referenced in the SER[2]:

Dundee:	18.4	Edinburgh (Russell Group):	16.9
Stirling:	14.0	Strathclyde:	20.1

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[1] Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Teaching Scotland's Future (TSF)
[2] Source: Unistats 2011

The Panel was of the view that the SSR was high. The discussion on this issue is covered in paragraph 4.8.3.

2.3 Student Numbers for 2011-12 are as follows:

Students	Headcount	FTE
Level 1	278	278
Level 2	232	232
Level 3	250	250
Level 4	168	
Level 5 (if applicable)		
Undergraduate Total	1028	1028
Postgraduate Taught[3] (including PgDE: now accredited at M Level)	963	463
Postgraduate Research[4]	86	63.5

2.4 The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the School at undergraduate level:

BEd (Honours) Primary
BTechEd
MA in Religious and Philosophical Education
BA in Childhood Practice
Fundamentals in Education
BA Childhood Practice/PgDip

2.5 The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the School at postgraduate level:

Professional Graduate Diploma in Education
PgCert Expressive Arts
MSc Psychological Studies
MEd Professional Practice (with PgDE)
Certificate in Religious Education (Distance Learning[5])
MEd Professional Development and Enquiry (Chartered Teacher)
MEd/PgCert/PgDip Inclusive Education
PgCert Primary Science
MEd/MSc Educational Studies
MSc Organisational Leadership/PgCert Leadership in Drugs and Alcohol Services
Doctorate in Education
MEd English Language Teaching
MSc Organisational Leadership
PgCert Primary PE
MEd Children's Literature and Literacies
PgCert Middle Leadership and Management
PgCert Developing Leadership and Learning

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[3] The postgraduate taught student figures include the PGDE programme which is now accredited at Masters level and Doctorate in Education students.
[4] The postgraduate research student figures are provided for information only as research provision is not covered by the Review.
[5] This programme is returned to HESA as PG (Inservice Education). However it is not PGT in level.

PgDip School Leadership and Management

3. Overall aims of the School's provision and how it supports the University Strategic Plan

3.1 The SER outlines that Education's provision supports the objectives in the University's Strategic Plan – *'Glasgow 2020 – A Global Vision'* – to deliver an excellent student experience, research and to enhance its global reach and reputation. The Review Panel was satisfied, from both the SER and its findings during the Review, that this was substantiated.

3.2 The Panel was advised by the Head of School that the range of provision had evolved to satisfy the requirements of regulatory and professional bodies as well as to position the School to be able to respond to the external developments outlined in section 1.5.

4. An Evaluation of the Student Learning Experience

4.1 Aims

4.1.1 The Review Panel was provided with details of the aims of the School of Education's programmes as outlined in the SER and noted that, in most cases, they take account of the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level descriptors and the expertise of Education's staff as researchers in the field.

4.1.2 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirms that the programmes offered by the School/Subject Area remain current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application.

4.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

4.2.1 The student representative on the Panel explored the availability and clarity of the Intended Learning Outcomes. He was keen to find out how the students accessed them and whether or not they found them to be clear. Staff outlined that the ILOs were available in the majority of handbooks and on the School's website, however ILOs were missing from some of the handbooks. The ILOs are closely linked to the assessment criteria which are explained clearly to students throughout the year. The feedback from the student groups substantiated this. The Review Panel was confident that students are able to access and understand the ILOs and **commends** the School for the practice of linking ILOs closely to assessment, in particular the development by BEd year one staff in 2010 of 'exemplified criteria', an extended version of the 'success criteria', as described in the SER. The Review Panel did have a few concerns regarding the quality and consistency of the handbooks which are covered in section 4.8.1.

4.3 Assessment, Feedback and Achievement

Assessment Methods

4.3.1 The Review Panel learned from the Head of School that the School was looking at increasing its use of self assessment. As a result they were reviewing feedback and ways of educating the students to use the feedback to improve their own learning. The Deputy Head of School outlined an argument often made that, as education students have a theoretical

understanding of assessment, they could be expected to be more critical. However, she advised that the School doesn't agree with this argument but the staff recognised that more work was needed on this.

4.3.2　The Head of School outlined the School's approach to assessment. He explained that the language of assessment used by the School reflected the aspirations behind the major international movement in assessment to which the School had been integral - Assessment is for Learning (AiFL). The philosophy intended was to demonstrate student development both within and across the programmes. To this end, the Personal Development Process of AiFL was a central tool for the School in integrating assessment and feedback into ongoing student development.

4.3.3　The SER outlined the School's approach to double marking. It was clear that there was a different approach across the School's programmes.　For example, in the case of the B Ed programme, only 10% of dissertations were being double marked, while all postgraduate dissertations were double marked. Another example of a 100% double marking regime cited in the SER was the *'Introduction to Educational and Social Research'* course. The Panel highlighted the importance of consistency in marking and outlined the recent policy development completed by the Dean of Learning and Teaching for the College of Social Sciences. The staff interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they were aware of the new policy and advised that the College Learning and Teaching Committee was due to discuss it further. The Panel agreed that the reliance on Associate Tutors within the School made it particularly necessary to address this issue. With a view to ensuring consistent practice across the School and College, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School should use the University guidance on double marking to inform standard practice across all its programmes.

Feedback on Assessment

Quality of Feedback

4.3.4　Given the negative comments in the National Student Survey (NSS) on assessment practices within the School of Education, the Review Panel was keen to explore this further with both staff and students.　The Panel heard from the students about inconsistencies in the feedback provided by staff. Some undergraduate students felt they were being given generic feedback from a set of prepared sentences. However, it was acknowledged that this was a feature of the Turnitin software which was in use in the School. The MSc Psychological Studies students reported that the length and the quality of the feedback varied greatly depending on the tutor. In some cases the feedback consisted of a single sentence. Conversely, the EdD students felt that assessments were clearly articulated and that feedback was excellent. The students reported that in most cases they were aware of what was required for them to improve. However, this was mainly articulated to them verbally and not written down. This was substantiated by academic staff who confirmed that students were provided with extensive informal feedback outlining their next steps.　In the case of the school placement, the Panel learned that students are provided with interim reports halfway through outlining strengths and weaknesses, again supported by extensive formal and informal feedback.

4.3.5   To try to address inconsistencies in feedback the School holds mandatory cross marking meetings focussing on the quality of feedback. These events also include the Associate Tutors, who are involved in assessment. It was acknowledged that there were difficulties with the arrangements given that Associate Tutors only work part-time. The Review Panel encourages the School to continue to look at ways of addressing concerns and ensuring that all students are clear on plans developed by the staff.

Timing

4.3.6   When questioned about assessment turnaround time academic staff reported that it was generally four weeks, in line with University policy. However, the students interviewed by the Panel did not support this.   The MSc Psychological Studies students reported that the turnaround time was often eight to ten weeks and on average a six week turnaround time was described. Students felt they had little time to address the feedback in time for the submission of the next assignment. Students also raised concerns about communication of hand-in times, with in some cases the timing being confirmed just hours before the assessment was due. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School review its assessment processes to ensure that feedback is provided to the students in a consistent manner and within the University's policy of a four week turnaround time.

Assessment of Placements

4.3.7   The Panel heard about a major source of frustration for both staff and students, namely the practice of assessing placements as either 'satisfactory' or 'not satisfactory'. Undergraduate students were unhappy that this did not reflect the level of effort they put in to the placements. Staff advised that the move to a 'harmonised' report form had been agreed by the Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC) and it was supported by the GTCS who felt that a 'satisfactory' or 'not satisfactory' judgement was secure. However, they were attempting to compensate for this by introducing additional formative assessments. The use of formative assessments was supported by MEd students who commented that they considered grading to be less important because the feedback they received was extensive and supportive.

Student Achievement

4.3.8   The Review Panel discussed the issue of first class honours awards with the Head of School. He acknowledged that the number of first class honours awarded had historically been lower in Education in comparison to other areas across the University. However, the Panel was assured to note that the numbers had increased since adoption of the University's Code of Assessment and were now fairly stable - in the B Ed programme 14% of students were awarded a first class honours in 2009-10 with 9% in session 2010-11 as compared to an average of 4% in previous years.

4.3.9   It was noted by one panel member that the documentation showed some marked variations in pass rates by programme which were acknowledged in some cases to be due to extremely small cohort sizes. However, some programmes, for example, the PG Certificate and PG Diploma in Inclusive Education, had low pass rates on relatively large cohorts. It was also acknowledged that the low pass rates were likely to be attributable to drop-out

rates and premature termination, due to budget cuts of courses commissioned by local authorities.

4.4 Curriculum Design, Development and Content

4.4.1 Students were asked for their views on whether their programme was meeting their expectations. From the feedback received the Review Panel noted a high level of satisfaction from both undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, with both the programme and the staff of the School of Education. However, a level of concern was noted among the BEd, and to some extent the BTechEd students, that they were not well prepared for the school experience element of the programme. One BEd student reported that she had felt unprepared for controlling the classroom, while the BTechEd students felt that the University had not prepared them for dealing with the health and safety issues in the classroom. There was a need expressed for greater and earlier exposure to working in a classroom including the use of SMART Boards. The students did acknowledge however that in response to earlier feedback they were now provided with training in the use of SMART Boards. The Panel noted that experiences differed across the year groups.

4.4.2 The Panel was happy to note that the postgraduate students strongly endorsed their programmes and the student experience, listing a range of professional and personal benefits.

4.4.3 The Panel was keen to explore with staff and students whether they felt there was an appropriate balance between theory and practice in the School's programmes. With the exception of one international student, who felt that the courses focussed too much on theory, the majority of students were comfortable with the level of theory in the curriculum. However, they did feel that a better balance could be achieved with the addition of more practical examples. Academic staff were of the view that the balance between integrating professional readiness and critical thought was not quite right. However, the Panel was advised that the current BEd programme was due to be redesigned in line with the national curriculum developments resulting in a move towards a greater 'University' experience. This is likely to make any potential changes to address the balance more difficult. Subject to the external influences on curriculum design, the Review Panel **recommends** that, when redesigning programmes, the School ensures that the need of the students for more exposure to the practical requirements of teaching is taken into consideration.

4.4.4 Panel members were interested to hear from students about their input into the development of the curriculum. The students confirmed that there were mechanisms in place for them to feed into curriculum development. The BEd Year four students in particular had been involved in designing elements of the curriculum for the next cohort.

4.4.5 The Panel was keen to explore the structure of the PgDE programme, in particular the level of masters credit as outlined in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The Deputy Head of School confirmed that the programme involves 90 credits at masters level 11, consisting of three x 30 credit courses. The student placement element (School Experience) is required which consists of 30 credits at level 10, totalling 120 SCQF credits. Of the 120 credits for the PgDE qualification, 90 are at

masters level meaning that another 90 credits would be outstanding for an MEd award. The MEd qualification supersedes the PgDE and students would then possess an MEd in Professional Practice with Teaching Qualification. The Deputy Head of School assured the Panel that the issue of students entering a masters level programme with a three year degree was not of concern. Historically the teaching profession was a diploma level profession and as such dispensations were granted to students without honours level qualifications. The External Subject Specialist wanted to know how the School managed to maintain masters level standards given the mixed audience. Particularly, looking forward to the post-Donaldson era, how a more extensively school based PGDE programme would support 90 master level credits given the demands of primary training in terms of subject pedagogic and curriculum knowledge? The School of Education is satisfied that many of their students are capable of achieving masters level but highlighted that it was possible for teachers to qualify without a masters level award. They would get the masters level credits they had earned. No figures were available for the number of students who haven't achieved masters level credit but the Deputy Head of School assured the Panel that the numbers were low adding that, in reality, most students wanted to exit with a PgDE. The question was raised as to whether the 90 master credits were being double counted, specifically towards the PgDE and 50% of the masters award. Additionally were 90 credits APELed onto the masters award? The Deputy Head of School confirmed that to date no students had progressed to the masters programme. However, students who do would be advised that they should not use the PgDE qualification as it would be superseded by the MEd with Teaching Qualification.

4.4.6 Following concerns voiced by the students on the MSc Psychological Studies programme, the Review Panel explored the situation with the Head of School and College Dean of Learning and Teaching. The Panel advised the Head of School of the students' views, specifically, their concerns regarding the large number of students on the programme – students had expected a cohort of thirty but in reality there were in excess of sixty students. They felt that the large number of students was having a direct negative impact on the ability of the staff to provide them with the level of teaching and assessment they had expected. They reported little contact with, or access to, the facilities in the School of Psychology and were unclear why the programme was linked to the School of Education. Although some of their concerns had been addressed following discussion with academic staff, issues such as large numbers and lack of small group teaching were not easily resolved. The students were very concerned about what they perceived as the lack of formal training in quantitative research methods. The Panel was pleased to hear from the Head of School that he was aware of the concerns and that he was meeting with the Programme Leader on a weekly basis to monitor the situation. The difficulty had been caused by the unexpected high level of interest in the programme and the decision to cap numbers at 65, as opposed to the projected 30 students. Problems were exacerbated by the loss of two key members of programme staff including the member of staff responsible for quantitative research methods. In addition to weekly meetings with the Programme Leader, the Vice Principal, Head of College was liaising with the School of Psychology to enhance the partnership and to look at ways of increasing access to their facilities. At the same time the School is discussing a joint programme with the School of Psychology. The Panel queried why the programme was based in the School of Education. The Head of School explained that this was the preferred generic route into the Educational

Psychology profession. Educational Psychology is a staple of Schools of Education because of its close professional affiliation with school teaching, its interface with teacher education and its focus on cognitive, social and developmental themes of limited interest to modern departments of Psychology. The Review Panel welcomes the progress made by the Head of School and academic staff to date to address the concerns of the MSc Psychological Studies students but **strongly recommends** that the lack of training in quantitative research methods be addressed as a matter of urgency for the current cohort. The Panel suggests that a first step would be to meet with the student representatives to demonstrate how seriously the School views the situation. [*Clerk's note: Following the review, the Head of School met with the students and addressed a number of their concerns*].

Placement

4.4.7 The Review Panel heard from the Head of School about Education's approach to enhanced partnership with the schools – *the Glasgow West Teaching Initiative*. The initiative involves placing more students into fewer schools resulting in a more enriched and structured experience for the students as well as the University staff and staff in the schools concerned. Closer working relationships between schools and University staff have evolved which help to address issues such as inconsistent assessment. An example of this is the teacher and tutor liaising more closely to agree a student's placement report. The Panel learned that the initiative had been rolled out to Glasgow City; Glasgow South and East Ayrshire.

4.4.8 The Panel heard concerns from some undergraduate students about not being observed on placement and that overall, they felt that they had had little contact with staff while on placement. Some students were of the view that the requirement for tutors to visit three students in one day was too much for one person. The Panel was assured to learn from other students and External Examiner that this opinion was not held by all. The Panel noted however that the chance of effecting a real cultural shift in school practices would not have been helped by decreasing significantly the number of tutor visits to schools/students in 2008 and increasing the number of tutors on small fractional contacts.

4.4.9 Another issue raised by both undergraduate and postgraduate students in relation to the school placement was lack of organisation. Often last minute notice was given to the students of the location of their placements, in some cases they only found out about the location on the Friday prior to a Monday start. Similarly, students reported that they were sometimes placed in schools that required extensive travel, for example a one hour and 45 minutes trip on public transport each way. In addition, students reported little notice provided of the requirement for them to attend the School of Education for seminars and reported that this caused significant disruption to the support teachers in the schools.

4.4.10 The Review Panel was keen to explore the level of communication between the school and the University in terms of the subject and curriculum. One undergraduate student advised that support teachers had expected a greater level of knowledge on her part. The Panel learned that in the main, the school mentors did not come to the University for training. However this did seem to vary depending on the mentor. One level four student reported a positive experience and confirmed that her mentor had voluntarily attended the

University for training. The Review Panel encourages Education to consider ways to better engage with school mentors.

4.4.11 The Panel asked staff for their views of the quality assurance of the school placement. They were advised that in Scotland they had little control over it as a system existed to ensure the quality – Practicum. However they acknowledged that in reality the experience can vary and their intention was to monitor this more closely. The Review Panel strongly supports the School's position to monitor the quality of the student placement more closely.

Opportunities for increasing international profile

4.4.12 The Review Panel noted from discussions with the academic staff and Head of School and from the SER that one of the School's plans to increase their international profile was to expand the blended approach to delivery along the lines of the arrangement established with the MSc Organisational Leadership programme at Majan University College in Oman, whereby the programme is provided overseas through face-to-face teaching and distance learning. This differs from the distance learning model adopted in the CREDL and EdD programmes.

4.4.13 The SER stated that the School had made significant progress in increasing the number and variety of international students on both its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. However the School acknowledged that more work was needed on this as the numbers remained low in relation to other areas of the University.   The Review Panel was interested to learn from the SER that the School's Strategic Development Plan outlined a strategy to expand student numbers and increase international consultancy work.   While the Panel was assured to learn from the Head of School about the increase in international students (from 35 – 77 over 5 years), members were keen to explore further how the School was providing for the needs of the international student body.   The staff advised that the support of international students – particularly from the Far East – was a challenge for them. One development had been the core masters course - *Modern Educational Thought* - designed to support international students who might not be accustomed to expressing their own views. This course was welcomed by the postgraduate students who felt that the Moodle material was excellent. The Review Panel **commends** the School for its *Modern Educational Thought* course and encourages the School to consider rolling this out across the College/University as an example of good practice. The Panel considered that the School continually review their PGT programme offer as they seek to attract both part-time students from the local region such as Head Teachers etc, and full time international students.

4.5   Student Recruitment

4.5.1   The Panel learned from the SER that intake to ITE programmes was controlled by the Scottish Funding Council. Recruitment had been high in the years where the Government was pursuing its policy of reducing class sizes but it dropped substantially in 2009 as it became clear that employment for primary school teachers had not increased at the predicted rate. As a result intake numbers on the ITE programmes have fluctuated but it is predicted that the figures will increase again over the next 2/3 years.

4.5.2   The Panel sought to investigate with the Head of School and academic staff the variation in student numbers. Two issues were identified; the variation of

numbers on the B Ed programme; and the small numbers of students recruited to some postgraduate taught courses. The Head of School explained that the BEd numbers were subject to Government control. There had been significant fluctuations in recent years which had meant that resource planning had been more difficult for the School. However, Government policy over the next six to seven years predicted a steady increase in numbers. The DPTLA review in 2007 had recommended that the School review its postgraduate taught provision to assess viability and relevance. The Panel was concerned to note that this still remained an issue and sought to investigate this further with the Director of PGT. She clarified that although a number of the newer postgraduate taught programmes were running with small numbers, they remained viable as the students take core School courses, most of which are available as an option to other postgraduate taught students. She acknowledged that they may decide not to run some of the non core programmes in future. The Review Panel noted that, in terms of student numbers, the School's cut off for new postgraduate courses was six or fewer students with an ideal of more than ten. The Panel **strongly recommends** that the School address the recommendation outlined in the 2007 DPTLA report by reviewing its postgraduate portfolio to assess the viability of those courses with less than the University guideline of fifteen students.

4.6 Student Progression, Retention and Support

4.6.1 The Review Panel met with groups of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students (a total of 25 and 18 respectively). There was a high degree of contentment evident about the level of support provided by staff, particularly from the postgraduate students. Students on the SQH programme were generally working full-time and commented that they had good access to their tutors. Although a research programme, due to the taught element the EdD students were invited to form part of the postgraduate student group. They reported the level of support provided by the tutors was very good, in particular, they stressed the value of the study weekends as a support mechanism.

4.6.2 The Panel was impressed with the broad range of provision available to students and that the programmes and courses were clearly well regarded. However, the range of provision was slightly confusing to the Panel and potentially therefore also to programme applicants and it was agreed that clear and concise information was needed to distinguish between the School's programmes. The Panel **recommends** that the School develop an overview of its programmes for the School's webpages, outlining briefly what the programme provides and who it is aimed at. The Panel had concerns about the sustainability of the level of student support across both its undergraduate and postgraduate provision. The Panel felt that the high level of support evident in the case of the mainly part-time, professional, postgraduate students, would not easily translate to the undergraduate students and to the proposed international programmes.

4.7 The Quality of Learning Opportunities

4.7.1 The Review Panel was assured that the quality of the learning opportunities available to students in Education was high. The undergraduate and postgraduate students interviewed expressed satisfaction with the quality and commitment of the teaching staff. In general the communication within the

School was usually effective and expectations were made clear by staff both in lectures and on Moodle. However BEd students commented that their programme could sometimes be quite disorganised with students learning of changes to teaching rooms too late.   In some subjects, students were supposed to have four hour seminars but these often turned out to be one and a half hours or two at the most.   On occasions, classes had been cancelled after students had travelled in for them.

4.8   Resources for Learning and Teaching

Handbooks

4.8.1   The Panel reviewed the School's programme handbooks and noted that they varied greatly both in quality and quantity of information provided.   Some handbooks contained really helpful and well constructed information for students about study skills and support for assessment – here the handbook for the M Ed Inclusive Education programme was considered to be exemplary. However other handbooks were inconsistent and some of them were missing key information about learning outcomes and the University Schedule A marking scheme.   Others used fonts and italics that some students are likely to find difficult to read.   The Panel was concerned to see that the recommendation outlined in the 2007 DPTLA to develop a template for handbooks had not been addressed. The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the School introduces a standard template for the preparation of its programme and course handbooks and refers the School to the central guidance provided on the Senate Office website (http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/centralgui danceonstudenthandbooks/).

Impact of University Restructuring

4.8.2   The Review Panel wanted to explore with the School the development of the School under the new structure, and the impact of voluntary severance. The Head of School confirmed that the School had lost about a third of its administrative staff with four functions moving to College level. In addition the School, previously a Faculty, no longer had a Graduate School, which was now College based. The Head of School highlighted that the College Graduate School had to service five Schools with their own unique needs and some of the functions the School requires hadn't been picked up which had resulted, in some cases, in the School undertaking the same duties with none of the previous staff resources available. The administrative staff interviewed confirmed this. When asked about any notable gaps, the administrative staff outlined that the level of initial contact with applicants, an important influence on whether or not places are accepted, has significantly reduced. In addition, administrative staff were currently named as student advisors on the MyCampus system. The Panel learned that another consequence of the changes in support provision following restructuring was the loss of a dedicated support role for Moodle and the ethics approval process to college level (these functions had been moved to College level but had been returned during the last year). Academic staff have absorbed additional administrative tasks.

Staff Workload

4.8.3   There was a concern voiced by students that staff were being stretched too far.   Undergraduate students reported difficulties with the level of contact with their Adviser of Studies, with two advisers for 150 students.   As a result students confirmed that they tended not to use this route as other staff were more accessible.   In addition the students expressed a preference to contact staff with teaching experience; some were perceived to have had little teaching experience.   The feedback of academic and administrative staff also outlined workload concerns as outlined in section 4.8.2.   In light of the high Staff:Student Ratio [25.4] and the feedback from students and staff, the Panel was keen to explore this further with the Head of School and Dean of Learning and Teaching.   The Head of School acknowledged the difficulties and confirmed that similar concerns had been highlighted from the professional bodies.   He agreed with the Panel's view that they had problems with the level of administrative staff.   The Panel heard from administrative staff that they were performing key roles including undertaking the role of postgraduate advisors - the introduction of the MyCampus system had increased the advisory workload. The Review Panel considered that Education might be trying to accomplish too much within its current staff resource and **recommends** that, in the course of next year, the School give consideration as to how they might deploy Education's staff resource to maintain and enhance the quality of student support, whilst also safeguarding staff wellbeing through a balanced and achievable workload.   The Review Panel further **recommends** that the School seriously considers investing in additional administrative support.

Staff Development

4.8.4   The Head of School confirmed that staff development is provided through input and exposure to the five knowledge transfer networks coordinated by the School. In addition CPD opportunities, in collaboration with Strathclyde University, are available for staff throughout the year.   Wednesday afternoons are ring fenced for staff seminars with a focus on the professional development of staff, a key element of the Donaldson report 'Teaching Scotland's Future'.   In addition to the staff development opportunities provided by the School, staff reported that the centrally provided opportunities in the University 'blue book' were very useful.

4.8.5   Attendance levels of Associate Tutors at the School staff development sessions have historically been patchy.   In an attempt to engage the School's 40 Associate Tutors the School has appointed a Senior Associate Tutor who encourages the tutors to attend lectures in the School.   The Panel discussed this issue with the Associate Tutors they met and were pleased to learn that the School had factored in funds to cover payment for the Tutors to attend staff development sessions in the University.

Probationary Staff

4.8.6   Members of the Panel met with the School's one probationary staff member, a University Tutor. She was not a typical early career member of staff as she was an experienced teacher having worked in schools for 20 years, some of the time spent as a Primary Deputy Head Teacher.   She had initially been seconded to the School of Education but was now a member of staff.   The Panel learned that the member of staff ran two programmes: Childhood

Practice and Middle Leadership and Management and was also involved in the PgDE Primary programme.

4.8.7 When questioned about the level of mentoring and support she had received from the School, she confirmed that she felt very well supported by staff and was working collegiately with her mentor on a research bid and research paper. In addition, she had shadowed staff on school visits. She was strongly of the opinion that there was a collaborative effort to improve practice in the School of Education and felt that this may be an example of good practice for the rest of the University.

4.8.8 Concerned about the level of workload, the Panel was keen to explore this further with the staff member. Members learned that she teaches on three programmes (with overall responsibility for two); in part on two others and occasionally on a number of other programmes. Apart from working with other staff on these programmes, interaction with other staff tended to be on an ad hoc basis. The Panel felt that the level of workload precluded significant interaction with others. The staff member acknowledged that the weekly workload was high but stressed that she had assistance from Associate Tutors as well as help with marking from other full time staff. At the same time, she accepted that there had been an overall impact on the School from the reduction in staffing and felt that additional staff would be a positive move.

Associate Tutors

4.8.9 The School has a large pool of Associate Tutors available to it (forty) who are hourly paid staff employed on an ad hoc basis. The Review Panel met with a group of five Associate Tutors and was very impressed with the wide range of experience and expertise they brought to the School. Associate Tutors provide teaching, undertake assessment and attend moderation meetings as well as visiting students on placement. One Associate Tutor reported that she had recently undertaken her first visit to a BEd level three student on placement having shadowed experienced tutors as well as having had instant access to full time staff. When questioned further about the level of support provided to them by the School, all felt fully supported. They confirmed that they are invited to attend lectures prior to giving seminars and that lectures are available on Moodle. They all agreed that the University was very different from the teaching context they are more familiar with and they get great comfort from contact with University staff. The Panel learned from the academic staff that they were keen to ensure that the Associate Tutors felt part of the University community and as such they had been provided with a dedicated room and administrative support.

4.8.10 The Panel learned from the Associate Tutors that, although they had other responsibilities in addition to their employment with the School, they all welcomed the exposure to the University environment. Two of the tutors also worked in schools and their role as Associate Tutor was helpful in allowing them to keep up to speed with what was currently being taught at University level. Others welcomed the ability to watch students develop.

4.8.11 The students interviewed were all supportive of the Associate Tutors. Some undergraduate students did express concerns, however, that Associate Tutors did not attend lectures and, as a result, in some cases they were perceived to be less engaged than other staff. However, this view was not held by the postgraduate students, in particular the M Ed students.

4.8.12 The Head of School and Associate Tutors highlighted the appointment of a new Senior Associate Tutor. The role was currently being undertaken by a previous member of staff of the School of Education. This new role was uniformly welcomed by both staff and Associate Tutors. The Senior Associate Tutor advised the Panel that one of her first roles had been to review the patterns of employment as the School had acknowledged that, in general, the Associate Tutors were not always given sufficient notice of when they would be required by the School. This had made it difficult for them to plan their other activities. The Panel was pleased to learn that timetables for the following academic session would be available by the end of April 2012. The Senior Associate Tutor had also introduced a formal induction and recruitment process for Associate Tutors and has been key in assigning the Associate Tutors to courses depending on their experience. The Panel also heard of plans to increase the level of input of the Associate Tutors into the development of the curriculum. However, the Associate Tutors did confirm that there was no formal mentoring in place. The Review Panel **commends** the School on the appointment of a Senior Associate Tutor and encourages the School, through the Senior Associate Tutor, to consider establishing a mentoring process similar to that in existence for Probationary staff.

Physical accommodation

4.8.13 The Review Panel undertook a tour of the facilities led by Moyra Boland, Director of Learning and Teaching. They viewed the available social space - including the gymnasium - and the main lecture space within the St Andrews Building as well as a selection of the computer laboratories and computer clusters available on each floor. In addition to the lecture space available, the Panel heard that the School had first call on the lecture space in the Sir Charles Wilson building. The Panel agreed that the School was well provided for in terms of its physical accommodation but that some areas required repair in the short to medium term. The Review Panel **recommends** that the outstanding maintenance issues across the School be undertaken as a priority with particular emphasis on the gymnasium which currently suffers from a leaking roof and associated problems with mould.

4.8.14 The Director of Learning and Teaching also showed the Panel one of 19 SMART Boards the School has available to train both staff and students in their use. Such interactive boards are used extensively in schools. The Review Panel noted that the interactive boards were only available in the ICT rooms and that the School did not make use of them in their teaching rooms. The Panel was advised that the School was considering purchasing more interactive boards for teaching purposes but that the cost was proving to be prohibitive. In addition staff training in the use of SMART Boards had not progressed as well as had been hoped.   The Review Panel encourages the School to continue with its plans to address this area further.

Moodle

4.8.15 The Panel learned that Moodle is used extensively in the School including the use of discussion forums which was welcomed by the majority of students. Although some of the mature, part-time postgraduate students were not as comfortable with Moodle, they were complimentary about the support

provided by the staff. Students reported that Moodle provided them with a direct link to the Tutors.

5. Maintaining the Standards of Awards

Benchmark statement and other relevant external reference points

5.1   The SER maintains that programme proposals are benchmarked against the appropriate standards as laid down by the Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA) or relevant professional body such as the GTCS or the British Psychological Society (BPS). In other cases, similar provision in comparator institutions would be used as a basis for benchmarking. In addition, their ILOs align with the relevant QAA benchmark statement.

5.2   Whilst the School is clearly well informed and well positioned to keep up to date with changes in external schools education policies and strategies, there was less emphasis placed on external higher education policies and strategies. The SER states that the QAA themes of Assessment and the First Year Experience were taken into consideration in the recent re-design of the BEd programme. However, staff within the School made no reference to the QAA Enhancement Themes and other external higher education developments in meeting with the Panel other than discussions related to international developments.

External Examining

5.3   The SER detailed the role of the External Examiners in monitoring the standards of the programmes in the School of Education and provided a clear description of the processes in place for assessment and dissemination of the feedback from External Examiners. The Review Panel **commends** the School for the high level of positive feedback from its External Examiners.

Professional Bodies

5.4   The SER outlined that a number of the postgraduate taught programmes in the School are approved by the GCTS – the SQH and MEd Professional Development and Enquiry programmes. In addition some programmes involve professional body accreditation - the MSc Psychological Studies and MEd Professional Development and Enquiry programmes. In addition to External Examiner feedback, accreditation reports inform the ongoing process of programme enhancement.

Annual Monitoring

5.5   The Head of School and Director of Learning and Teaching advised the Panel that quality assurance within the School was managed by two Quality Assurance Officers. The Panel was assured to note from the Head of School that the School had a clear process in place which outlined key milestones for the submission of Annual Monitoring Reports. However, the Panel agreed that although the process was deemed to be sound and fit for purpose, there was a concern raised about the quality and consistency of some of the AMRs. Some were exemplary with a good level of reflection - BEd Honours (2010-11); BTechEd (2009-2010) and MA Religious and Philosophical Education with Secondary Teaching Qualification (2008-09) - while others were more cursory - PgCert in Expressive Arts (2009-10); PgCert in Primary Science

(2009-10); CREDL (2009-10). Supporting data was not as strong as it could be and in some cases staff were not using the agreed University documentation. The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the Convener of the Learning and Teaching Committee reviews the quality and consistency of the Annual Monitoring Reports with a view to improving the quality of the data and ensuring consistency across all programmes. The Annual Monitoring Report for BEd Honours (2010-11) is cited as an example of good practice. To assist with consistency the School should adopt the University-wide documentation outlined in the Senate Office website at http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/annualmonitoring/

6. Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience

Student Engagement with feedback processes

6.1   Students assured the Panel that they felt they were able to raise concerns with staff and that in general staff were receptive and dealt with issues quickly. One example of the School's response to student feedback was the investment made in SMART Boards to provide training requested by the students.   Undergraduate students were also aware of who their representatives were and the process in place for providing feedback to the School. Moodle was identified as a particularly helpful aid for feedback to staff and general communication. It was acknowledged that some students were more comfortable with the Moodle and engaging with blogs. The Panel noted from student feedback however that the level of communication depended on individual tutors and there was a need for more consistency.   The Panel was of the view that one of the School's strengths was the strong relationship it had with its students and **commends** the School for this.

6.3   The undergraduate students interviewed assured the Panel that the School's Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLC) were effective.   However, the Panel felt that the postgraduate students did not appear to have been involved in SSLCs to the same extent. Despite the School's attempts to encourage postgraduate students to attend, they had had little success. The Head of School suggested that postgraduate students tended to form their own informal groups but acknowledged that this needed further consideration. The Panel noted that difficulties have also been experienced in identifying representatives for the distance learning CREDL programme and the overseas programme in Oman.   Unlike the CREDL programme, the programme in Oman involves face to face teaching so is not completely distance learning.   A large number of the students are in full time employment therefore informal means of obtaining feedback was more feasible.

7. Summary of Perceived Strengths and Areas for Improvement in Learning and Teaching

Key Strengths

- Forward looking, in particular, preparation for the response to the national developments in teaching education.

- High level of support and feedback given to students particularly postgraduate students.

- High level of student involvement such as the input of BEd students into programme development.

- Articulate and engaged students.

- High quality, experienced and approachable staff. [**commended**]

- Leadership programmes – preparing head teachers for Scotland and leaders internationally.

- Positive feedback from External Examiners. [**commended**]

Areas to be improved or enhanced

- Improve the learning experience of those students on the MSc Psychological Studies programme.

- Consider ways to further clarify the School's range of provision on its website.

- Consider innovative ways of improving the level of engagement of postgraduate students and students on distance learning programmes [for example, CREDL and MSc Organisational Studies programme in Oman].

- Introduce a template for student handbooks with a view to improving on the quality and consistency of the information provided.

- Develop ways to improve on the quality and consistency of assessment and feedback as well as the turnaround time.

- Review staff workloads for all staff including the administrative and probationary staff to address potential overloading of staff and to address criticism of poor course organisation.

- Review postgraduate taught programmes with fewer than the University norm of fifteen students.

- Review the quality and consistency of the School's Annual Monitoring Reports.

- Maintain a balance of theory and practice in all provision.

- Provide a short overview of programmes provided by the School with a 1-2 sentence summary of what the programme provides and who it is aimed at. This should be made available on the School's web pages.

7.1   Conclusions

The Review Panel concluded that the School of Education's provision was of a high quality overall. Since the last review in 2007, the School has had to

deal with a huge transformation of education teaching driven by the external environment and internal realignment of the University impacting on student and staffing numbers, and has dealt with these changes very effectively. The Panel found evidence of strong partnership with local schools and professional and statutory bodies and felt assured that the School had positioned itself well to deal with further changes.

The students who met with the Panel were articulate and their satisfaction with the quality of their educational experience and with the standard of programmes and courses offered by the School was evident. The School had emerged from the difficult times as an integrated team of staff, fully committed to the provision of high quality research-informed programmes and courses and to the expansion of international recruitment.

The Panel was particularly impressed by the innovative and creative ways with which the School used Moodle and there was clear evidence that engagement in virtual learning had enhanced the learning process for students. However the Panel was aware that a number of innovative practices were taking place in the School which they had not demonstrated in either the SER or during the Review.

7.2   Commendations

7.2.1 The Review Panel was confident that students are able to access and understand the ILOs and **commends** the School for the practice of linking ILOs closely to assessment, in particular the development by BEd year one staff in 2010 of 'exemplified criteria', an extended version of the 'success criteria', as described in the SER. *[Paragraph 4.2.1]*

7.2.2 The Review Panel **commends** the School for its *Modern Educational Thought* course and encourages the School to consider rolling this out across the College/University as an example of good practice. *[Paragraph 4.4.13]*

7.2.3 The Review Panel **commends** the School on the appointment of a Senior Associate Tutor and encourages the School, through the Senior Associate Tutor, to consider establishing a mentoring process similar to that in existence for Probationary staff. *[Paragraph 4.8.13]*

7.2.4 The Review Panel **commends** the School for the high level of positive feedback from its External Examiners. *[Paragraph 5.3]*

7.2.5 The Panel was of the view that one of the School's strengths was the strong relationship it had with its students and **commends** the School for this. *[Paragraph 6.1]*

7.3   Recommendations

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report are summarised below. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the corresponding sections of the report and are ranked in order of priority.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel welcomes the progress made by the Head of School and academic staff to date to address the concerns of the MSc Psychological

Studies students but **strongly recommends** that the lack of training in quantitative research methods be addressed as a matter of urgency for the current cohort. The Panel suggests that a first step would be to meet with the student representatives to demonstrate how seriously the School views the situation. (*Paragraph 4.4.6*)

Action: Head of School

Recommendation 2

The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the School introduces a standard template for the preparation of its programme and course handbooks and refers the School to the central guidance provided on the Senate Office website (http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/centralguidanceonstudenthandbooks/).(*Paragraph 4.8.1*)

Action: Head of School

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **strongly recommends** that the Convener of the Learning and Teaching Committee reviews the quality and consistency of the Annual Monitoring Reports with a view to improving the quality of the data and ensuring consistency across all programmes. The Annual Monitoring Report for BEd Honours (2010-11) is cited as an example of good practice. To assist with consistency the School should adopt the University-wide documentation outlined in the Senate Office website[6] *(Paragraph 5.6)*

Action: Convener of the Learning and Teaching Committee and Head of School

Recommendation 4

The Panel **strongly recommends** that the School address the recommendation outlined in the 2007 DPTLA report by reviewing its postgraduate portfolio to assess the viability of those courses with less than the University guideline of fifteen students. (*Paragraph 4.5.2*)

Action: Head of School

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel considered that Education might be trying to accomplish too much within its current staff resource and **recommends** that the School give consideration as to how they might deploy Education's staff resource to maintain and enhance the quality of student support, whilst also safeguarding staff wellbeing through a balanced and achievable workload. The Review Panel further **recommends** that the School seriously considers investing in additional administrative support. *(Paragraph 4.8.3)*

Action: Head of School

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the outstanding maintenance issues across the School be undertaken as a priority with particular emphasis on the

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[6]http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/annualmonitoring/

gymnasium which currently suffers from a leaking roof and associated problems with mould. *(Paragraph 4.8.13)*

Action: Head of Estates and Buildings

For the Attention of: Head of School

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School review its assessment processes to ensure that feedback is provided to the students in a consistent manner and within the University's policy of a four week turnaround time. (*Paragraph 4.3.6*)

Action: Head of School

Recommendation 8

Subject to the external influences on curriculum design, the Review Panel **recommends** that, when redesigning programmes, the School ensures that the need of the students for more exposure to the practical requirements of teaching is taken into consideration. (*Paragraph 4.4.3*)

Action: Head of School

Recommendation 9

With a view to ensuring consistent practice across the School and College, the Review Panel **recommends** that the School should use the University guidance on double marking to inform standard practice across all its programmes. *[Paragraph 4.3.3]*

Action: Head of School

For Attention of: Dean of Learning and Teaching

Recommendation 10

The Panel **recommends** that the School develop an overview of its programmes for the School's webpages, outlining briefly what the programme provides and who it is aimed at. *[Paragraph 4.6.2]*

Action: Head of School