

**University of Glasgow**  
**Academic Standards Committee - Friday 29 May 2009**

**Validation Report – Postgraduate Certificate / Postgraduate Diploma  
/ Master of Science in Applied Poultry Science**

Mrs Jackie McCluskey, Senate Office

**CONFIRMED**

**Report of Validation Meeting Held at Sac, Ayr on Thursday 19 March 2009**

**Validation Panel**

Mr David McKenzie	Vice-Principal (Learning), SAC [Convener]
Dr David Parker	Industrial representative Pii Nutrition bvba Novus Europe Brussels
Dr Maureen Bain	Senior Lecturer Avian Biology Laboratory Division of Cell Sciences University of Glasgow Veterinary School
Dr Dorothy McKeegan	BVA Animal Welfare Foundation Lecturer Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Glasgow
Prof Julian Wiseman	Head of Division and Professor of Animal Production School of Biosciences, University of Nottingham
Prof Andrew Walker	Academic Services Manager, SAC [Reporter]

**1. SUMMARY**

The validation panel agreed to recommend to the Learning Division Management Team of SAC and the Academic Standards Committee of the University of Glasgow that the Postgraduate Certificate / Postgraduate Diploma / Master of Science in Applied Poultry Science should be validated as awards of the University of Glasgow for five years from session 2009-10. The Panel made a number of conditions and recommendations, which are noted in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4.

**2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1** The programme was previously validated in 2002. The university granted an extension of the validation period by one year (to include academic year 2007-08) in order that the question of whether to proceed to re-validation could be

fully considered. In the event, validation was allowed to lapse at the end of the 2007-08 academic year as a consequence of low student numbers. Following market research, particularly consultation with representatives of the poultry industry, the decision was made to re-validate the programme, offering it solely as a part-time, distance-learning opportunity. Students would typically study modules with a total SCQF credit value of 60 in a year, taking two years to complete the Postgraduate Diploma and a further year for the MSc.

- 2.2** The previous taught programme comprised nine modules (120 SCQF credits), successful completion of which led to the award of Postgraduate Diploma. The Postgraduate Certificate was awarded on successful completion of 60 SCQF credits, primarily for candidates whose personal circumstances might prevent them from completing the PG Diploma or for those interested in studying individual modules for the purpose of continuing professional development. The MSc (180 SCQF credits) was awarded on successful completion of a project and dissertation.
- 2.3** Re-validation gave the opportunity to review the previous programme in the light of developing scientific knowledge and industry practice and informed by the views of former students and of industry. The structure of the proposed awards – PG Certificate, PG Diploma, MSc – remains the same. The taught programme comprises nine modules, seven of which carry 15 SCQF credits and two (*Data analysis* and *Management skills*) 7.5 credits. The previous *Poultry egg production systems* and *Poultry meat production systems* have been combined into a new *Poultry production systems* and a new module, *Housing and environmental issues for the poultry industry*, has been introduced. The emphasis in the previous *Poultry breeding and reproduction* has been shifted towards embryogenesis, incubation and hatchery design and practice, and has been re-named *Incubation and hatchery practice*. The other modules have all been reviewed and updated.
- 2.4** There is no competing provision in the UK, the previously existing taught postgraduate poultry programme at Harper Adams University College having now ceased.
- 2.5** The validation Panel was provided with a validation document that provided full details of the proposed programme. The timetable for the meeting and details of the academic staff who met the panel are appended. Because the programme is not currently running no students were available to meet the panel.
- 2.6** The role of the validation Panel was to scrutinise the proposed programme, and to report to the Learning Division Management Team of SAC and the Academic Standards Committee of the University of Glasgow on the suitability of the programme leading to the awards of Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and Master of Science of the University of Glasgow.

### **3. ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

The re-validation Panel identified the following broad issues:

- external links: academic and industry;
- marketing/recruitment;
- approaches to learning and teaching;
- assessment issues;
- aspects of the curriculum;

- student support;
- programme management.

#### **4. MEETING WITH THE DEVELOPMENT TEAM**

The panel met the team who had been responsible for developing the revised programme in order to discuss the issues raised.

##### **4.1 *External links***

The panel recognised that the teaching team had extensive links with the poultry industry and acknowledged that it was unrealistic to try to find a single industry representative with sufficient breadth of knowledge and the time to act as a member of the programme management team. However, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to introduce a formal means of recording, for subsequent discussion and action, the outcomes of discussions between members of the teaching team and industry. This would allow useful insights and practical developments to be 'captured' for the benefit of subsequent programme development. The panel recommended that the team consider setting up a suitable mechanism for doing this.

The team confirmed that academic contacts would continue to be used for guest lectures, although the distance-learning approach meant that this would be restricted to study weekends. External project supervisors (industry and academic), working in tandem with a member of the teaching team, had been used successfully in the past and this would continue.

##### **4.2 *Marketing and recruitment***

Successful marketing and recruitment was clearly crucial to the viability of the programme. The panel was satisfied that the marketing strategy outlined in the validation document was appropriate, but wondered how the minimum number of nine FTEs had been arrived at. The team explained that this was calculated on the basis of a funding model, which gave the minimum number of students required in order to reach the financial break-even point. It was felt that this number would also give a sufficient critical mass for meaningful interaction between the students.

The panel recommended that one member of the teaching team should have responsibility for marketing and recruitment because with an advanced and specialised programmes such as this it was important that potential applicants had contact with an individual who was competent to answer any questions about the programme.

The team confirmed that most students were likely to be from the UK and the rest of the EU, not least because of the requirement to attend study weekends. The potential difficulties for recruitment of overseas (non-EU) students as a result of the points-based visa application system were noted.

### **4.3     *Approaches to learning and teaching***

#### **4.3.1   *Delivery methods***

The programme was currently offered as a full-time or part-time option on campus or part-time by distance-learning. Running the programme both full-time on campus and by distance-learning had caused practical complications, and it was now proposed to offer it solely for part-time study by distance-learning, thereby following the approach that had been used very successfully in the PGCert/PGDip/MSc Organic Farming.

The team explained that Blackboard was SAC's virtual learning environment and would be the main delivery method, largely through Powerpoint presentations, recorded 'live' presentations and comprehensive notes in the form of pdf files. Tutorials would be through Learnlink or similar real time discussion media. The main means of communication would be by email, supplemented by telephone as required. The team confirmed that much of the distance-learning material had already been produced during the period since this option was introduced in 2002. There was also considerable expertise in using this technology within SAC as a whole, not only as a result of the work done for the PGCert/PGDip/MSc Organic Farming and the HNC Countryside Management, both of which were offered by distance-learning, but also because Blackboard was used as a means of supporting learning in all of SAC's taught provision.

The panel emphasised that it was important to ensure that the material available for all the modules was of a comparable high standard, and that this needed to be monitored by one individual. It was therefore recommended that the Programme Leader, or nominee, took on this role.

External benchmarking would also be helpful and the panel suggested that the team might contact the Royal Veterinary College, which had considerable experience of producing distance-learning material.

The validation document provided examples of possible timetables for the induction (September) and study weekends (January and June). The study weekends would include tutorials, introductions to the next modules to be studied, visits and module examinations.

#### **4.3.2   *Assessment feedback***

Feedback to students on their performance in assessments was especially important in distance-learning. The team explained that individual teachers were responsible for this, providing the feedback by email. The panel pointed out that it was good practice also to give information about generic strengths and weaknesses in assessed work.

### **4.4     *Assessment issues***

#### **4.4.1   *The balance between coursework and assessment***

From the module descriptors, the panel noted that the balance between assessment through coursework and examination varied significantly between modules. This was perfectly acceptable as long as there were sound reasons

for the variation. However, there also seemed to be variation in assessment load, or at least the potential for variation, given that the length of examinations and the number of questions to be answered were not specified. Similarly, for coursework there was not a fixed relationship between the volume of work required and the weighting of that coursework in the total assessment for the module.

The Panel therefore asked the team to:

- review the balance between coursework and assessment for each module to ensure that it was appropriate;
- review the assessment load for each module to ensure that it was comparable between modules and that the total assessment load was appropriate;
- ensure that assessment tasks were consistent across modules (for example, essay length should be the same for a given weighting; examinations should be the same length, offer the same choice and require students to answer the same number of questions for a given weighting). In so doing, the duration of examinations must comply with the requirements in the University of Glasgow's Code of Assessment.

As a result of this review of assessment, a tabulated summary of the assessments planned for each module should be included in the document. This should also be included in the programme handbook issued to the students.

## **4.5 Aspects of the curriculum**

### **4.5.1 Choice of MSc project**

In a discussion about MSc projects, the panel asked for clarification of the timing of the process of choosing a project topic, emphasising the importance of early planning to ensure that students were adequately prepared to start the project by the September of Year 3. The team explained that Year 2 students would be briefed about the project and what it entailed at the January and June study weekends. Project topics would be notified to students in the summer term so that final choices could be made by June. Students would be encouraged to put forward their own ideas for projects. External supervisors would be used as appropriate, subject to adequate facilities and support being available.

The panel recommended that the validation document and the programme handbook included a clear timetable for the process of choosing project topics, with the final deadline by which choices had to be made clearly indicated.

### **4.5.2 Potential overlap between modules**

The panel recognised that overlap between modules was inevitable and in fact beneficial in that it helped to create coherence in a modular curriculum. It would be helpful to both staff and students if potential overlap were documented. In this way, staff could ensure that overlap was productive rather than merely repetitive, and students would see more clearly the links between modules. The panel therefore recommended that the team identify areas of overlap between modules in order that the teachers concerned could determine the emphasis that should be placed on these areas in each of the modules concerned, with a view to avoiding repetition and to integrating the

curriculum. Students could then be given information about how overlap was being managed constructively.

#### **4.5.3** *Environmental considerations*

The panel noted that although the document included a paragraph confirming that modules would include an appraisal of the environmental consequences of the activities covered, the emphasis in the accompanying table suggested that this was restricted to pollution in the sense of waste products specifically from the poultry industry. However, the team explained that *Housing and environmental issues for the poultry industry* dealt with the wider environmental effects and their mitigation, including carbon emissions and other global, regional and local effects. The panel recommended that this be clarified in the document

#### **4.5.4** *Individual modules*

##### **Reading lists**

The panel noted that some of the module descriptors included publications that were somewhat dated. The team was asked to review all the reading lists and update them as necessary.

##### **Data analysis**

The panel recommended that this module be re-titled *Experimental design, data analysis and interpretation* to better reflect the content.

##### **MSc project and dissertation**

The panel felt that the descriptor lacked detail, given that this component comprised one-third of the total MSc credits. The team was therefore asked to augment the descriptor to give more information about what the project and dissertation would entail and what would be expected of the students in completing a Masters level piece of work.

#### **4.6** *Student support*

##### **4.6.1** *Practical skills*

The panel was concerned about a statement in the document indicating that students “should not expect technical support” when carrying out their projects. They were reassured to learn that this did not mean that students would not receive training in the practical techniques necessary for the project – this would be provided by the supervisor. The statement was included to make students aware that they would be responsible for doing the experimental work themselves. The panel recommended that this statement be clarified in the document.

Students would not be liable for project running costs, eg consumables. A nominal allowance was built into the fee, but any additional costs would be covered.

#### **4.6.2** *IT competence*

The team confirmed that in their experience students quickly gained the necessary level of IT competence. Detailed guidance was provided about the hardware and software requirements and support was available from SAC's IT staff.

#### **4.6.3** *Learning difficulties*

Measures were in place for students with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. Students were encouraged to disclose any special needs on application so that support could be in place at an early stage.

#### **4.6.4** *Plagiarism*

The panel noted the statement on plagiarism in the validation document and asked about the guidance given to students. The team explained that more detailed guidance was given to students and included in the programme handbook. The plagiarism detection software, *Turnitin*, was about to be purchased and policies developed for its use, including about whether to allow students to submit their work to *Turnitin*. It was noted that the College would produce revised guidance for students once these policies had been approved. The panel recommended that the guidance be written in such a way that students would have no doubt about what constituted plagiarism, why it was wrong and how to avoid it. Consideration should be given to requiring students to indicate (by signature or electronically), when submitting work, that they were fully aware of the policies on plagiarism.

### **4.7** *Programme management*

#### **4.7.1** *Progression and re-assessment*

At the start of the meeting the panel was informed that since writing the document the team had reconsidered the curriculum for the Postgraduate Certificate: it was felt that specifying a particular group of modules was unnecessarily restrictive and that a free choice of modules with a total value of 60 credits should therefore be allowed. The document would be amended accordingly. The panel accepted this reasoning but asked the team, when amending the document, to ensure that any pre-requisite modules were clearly identified (for example, *Poultry nutrition and growth* as a pre-requisite for *Advanced nutrition*).

The panel also pointed out the need to clarify whether more than one re-assessment would be allowed. The team explained that the University of Glasgow's code of assessment would be followed, normally allowing one further attempt.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 5.1** The validation Panel agreed to recommend to the Learning Division Management Team of SAC and the Academic Standards Committee of the University of Glasgow that the Postgraduate Certificate / Postgraduate Diploma / Master of Science in Applied Poultry Science should be validated as awards of the University of Glasgow for five years from session 2009-10. The Panel

made a number of conditions and recommendations, which are noted in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4.

**5.2** The re-validation Panel recognised that the proposed programme had significant strengths, in particular:

- the uniqueness of the programme in the UK;
- the close contact between the staff teaching the programme and the poultry industry;
- the excellent resources for studying poultry science;
- the opportunity for those in work to study part-time at a distance.

**5.3** However, the re-validation Panel had concerns about some aspects of the programme and made the following **conditions**:

5.3.1 That the team review the assessment regime for the programme to ensure an equitable assessment load and consistency across modules, and as a result of this include in the document a tabulated summary of the assessments planned for each module. [4.4.1]

5.3.2 That the team review all the reading lists in the module descriptors and update them as necessary. [4.5.4]

5.3.3 That the team augment the *MSc project and dissertation* descriptor to give more information about what the project and dissertation would entail and what would be expected of the students in completing a Masters level piece of work. [4.5.4]

5.3.4 That the team ensure that any pre-requisite modules are clearly identified and the re-assessment regulations clarified. [4.7.1]

**5.4** In addition, the re-validation Panel made the following advisory **recommendations**:

5.4.1 That the team consider setting up a suitable mechanism for recording for subsequent discussion and action the outcomes of discussions between members of the teaching team and industry. [4.1]

5.4.2 That one member of the teaching team should have responsibility for marketing and recruitment. [4.2]

5.4.3 That the Programme Leader, or nominee, take on the role of monitoring the quality of the module material on Blackboard. [4.3.1]

5.4.4 That the validation document and the programme handbook include a clear timetable for the process of choosing project topics, with the final deadline by which choices have to be made clearly indicated. [4.5.1]

5.4.5 That the team identify areas of overlap between modules in order that the teachers concerned could determine the emphasis that should be placed on these areas in each of the modules concerned, with a view to avoiding repetition and to integrating the curriculum. Students could then be given information about how overlap was being managed constructively. [4.5.2]

5.4.6 That the team clarify in the document the range of environmental issues dealt with in the programme. [4.5.3]



- 5.4.7 That the *Data analysis* module be re-titled *Experimental design, data analysis and interpretation* to better reflect the content. [4.5.4]
- 5.4.8 That the team clarify the practical support that students would receive in conducting the MSc project. [4.6.1]
- 5.4.9 That guidance on plagiarism be written in such a way that students have no doubt about what constituted plagiarism, why it was wrong and how to avoid it. Consideration should be given to requiring students to indicate (by signature or electronically), when submitting work, that they were fully aware of the policies on plagiarism. [4.6.4]

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**Timetable**

<b>09.00</b>	<b>Arrival</b> <i>Introductions and coffee/tea</i>
<b>09.15</b>	<b>Private meeting of the validation panel</b> <i>To discuss the proposal and identify the major issues</i>
<b>10.45</b>	<b>Meeting with programme development team</b> <i>To discuss the proposals, rationale, educational aims, learning objectives, content, teaching and learning approaches, assessment issues, etc.</i>
<b>12.30</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>13.15</b>	<b>Private meeting of Panel</b>
<b>13.45</b>	<b>Meeting with programme development team</b> <i>To report back to the programme development team</i>
<b>14.30</b>	<b>Finish</b>

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**Members of SAC staff who met the panel**

Dr Tom Acamovic	Research Division, Avian Science Research Centre
Lorraine Hannah*	Learning Division, Life Sciences Teaching Group
Lesley Howie	Learning Division, Life Sciences Teaching Group
Iain Hair	Learning Division, Environment Teaching Group
Dr Jill Offer	Research Division, Avian Science Research Centre
Tom Pennycott	Research Division, Avian Science Research Centre
Dr Vasil Pirgozliev	Research Division, Avian Science Research Centre
Dr Vicky Sandilands	Research Division, Avian Science Research Centre
Dr Chris Smith	Learning Division, Life Sciences Teaching Group
Dr Nick Sparks	Research Division, Avian Science Research Centre

\* member of the development team but unavailable for the validation meeting.