

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Academic Standards Committee - Friday 17 November 2006

**Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment -
Report of the Review of the Department of Adult and Continuing
Education held on 20 and 21 April 2006**

Mrs E K Shearer, Clerk to the Review Panel

Panel:

Professor Andrew Nash (Convener)	Clerk of Senate
Professor Mike Osborne	External Subject Specialist, University of Stirling
Professor Stella Parker	External Subject Specialist
Mr Stephen McKinney	Department of Religious Education
Dr Jacqueline Atkinson	Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Jane MacKenzie	Learning and Teaching Centre
Mrs Elaine Shearer (Clerk)	Senior Administrative Officer, Senate Office

A. Introduction

The Department of Extra-Mural Education, the forerunner of the Department of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE), was created in 1951. It was originally a self-standing unit out with the Faculty structure linked academically to the Faculty of Arts.

On the establishment of the Faculty of Education in 1999, DACE became a department of the Faculty. DACE is the largest department of its kind in Scotland. A recent development was the establishment of the Centre for Research and Development in Adult & Lifelong Learning (CRADALL).

DACE employs a large number of hourly paid staff to support the Open Programme (186 = 11.7 FTE). The high ratio of support staff to academics is required to support the administration of enrolment, fee collection, record keeping and examinations (duties carried out centrally for other departments) in respect of its Open and other programmes.

DACE underwent Departmental Review in 2000 but no report was available. It was the subject of a Court Review in 2002. The recommendations from the latter included a number of changes to its teaching portfolio that are now being implemented and which reflect a move towards ensuring that all activities are cost effective.

The Panel commended the collegiate nature of the compilation of the Department's Self-Evaluation Report (SER), whereby responsibility for the reflective evaluation of each of the Department's core programmes rested with the Course Leader, and its efforts to involve students. While valuing the full and comprehensive nature of the document members, nevertheless, found the SER somewhat lacking in critical self-evaluation.

The Review Panel met with the Dean, Professor James Conroy, the former Head of Department, Dr Martin Cloonan and, at a subsequent meeting, two of the Panel met with the incoming Head of Department, Dr Brian Findsen. The Panel also met with nine key staff, three probationary members of staff, nine part-time tutors, three taught postgraduate students and representative groups of students on the Open and Language Programmes, Certificate of Higher Education Programmes, Access Programme and the Bachelor of Community Learning and Development. The Panel was disappointed that two of the most senior members of staff of the Department were not available, due to other commitments, to attend meetings of key staff. The Panel was, thereby, unable to ascertain what their role in the leadership of strategy and teaching might be.

The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Department:

- A University Introduction to Study for Mature Students (Access Programme);
- The Open Continuing Education Programme;
- Certificate of Higher Education;
- Certificate in Community Learning and Development/Bachelor of Community Learning and Development;
- Taught Postgraduate Programmes comprising:
 - Certificate in Adult Literacy & Numeracy (CALN);
 - Diploma/MSc in Adult and Continuing Education;
 - Diploma/MSc in Adult and Continuing Education (Teaching Adults);
 - Diploma/MSc in Adult and Continuing Education (Community Development);
 - Postgraduate Certificate in Addictions;
 - MLitt in English, Educational and Cultural Studies.

B. Overall aims of the Department's provision

The Review Panel noted the Department's overall mission was to 'promote educational opportunities for people at all levels before, during, and after their working life and, in particular, work towards widening access to those sections of the population who are currently under-represented in higher education.'

The Panel commended DACE for its wide and comprehensive range of provision and explored with the former Head of Department and key staff how DACE saw its provision fitting into University-wide strategies and how it might influence these. Members heard that DACE played a key role in communities and in fulfilling the Scottish Executive policies of lifelong learning and social inclusion and that the Department was contributing to the University's "Future Shape"¹ agenda through its postgraduate developments, eg the MSc in Adult and Continuing Education and the MLitt in English, Educational and Cultural Studies which contributes to the internationalisation policy. The Panel was pleased to hear that the Department was seeking to appoint an additional Senior Lecturer who would lead on international developments. The Panel noted that the Department was consulted on policies on inclusion, widening participation, etc., and that the Head of Department was a member of the Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Committee. The Panel noted that the

¹ The 'Future Shape' agenda or exercise was undertaken by the University with the aim "to build a financially-sustainable and academically-excellent future for the University".

Department's provision covered a diverse range of activities but concluded that the Certificates in Addictions and Adult Literacy and Numeracy, the Children's Hearings Training Unit, the Certificate in Counselling Skills, and the Certificate/Diploma in Community Learning and Development all had a common theme of community involvement.

The Panel noted that there was no Departmental Strategic Plan in the documentation submitted and was informed that the one prepared a few years ago had not been updated. DACE had input to the Faculty Strategic Plan and the Head of Administration's wider role in the Faculty helped to ensure that developments in DACE fitted with this Plan eg the MLitt in English, Educational and Cultural Studies. The Panel heard that there was now potential for cross-Faculty developments. The Panel **recommended** that there should be a DACE Strategic Plan which harmonised with those of the Faculty and the University.

The Panel noted that the SER had highlighted the issue of part-time undergraduate degree development with responsibility for part-time provision currently being split between DACE and the Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Service (RAPS). The former Head of Department indicated that having part-time provision located in two places had not been helpful and that DACE would be willing to commit resources, including staff, to develop a part-time degree. It acknowledged that such provision might be at non-honours degree level only but felt that this would not be a deterrent to potential students. The Panel heard from the Guidance Officer that students found it difficult to slot into the timetables of mainstream undergraduate programmes and that a growing number could only attend in the evening.

The Certificate of Higher Education students seen by the Panel confirmed that it would be helpful to be able to continue to degree level through evening provision provided by DACE. The Programme Leader expressed frustration at the lack of progress in this area. The Dean informed the Panel that the strength of feeling in the Faculty regarding the refusal to allow DACE to develop part-time degrees was such that he had been charged by the Faculty to take the matter back to the Senior Management Group. The Panel shared DACE's concern that the development of a wider and more structured pathway to a part-time degree had not been achieved and **recommended** that this should be expedited as soon as possible. The Panel encouraged the incoming Head of Department, in consultation with other departments, to consider developing DACE Level 2 courses in two or three subjects from which students could progress to degree-level study in those departments.

C. Undergraduate and Taught-Postgraduate Provision

C.1 Aims

The Panel was satisfied with the aims of the individual programmes within DACE and did not explore these at the review. There were no benchmark statements for this area.

C.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

The Review Panel expressed concern that, where there were Intended Learning Outcomes for DACE's programmes, they were variable in terms of clarity. Given that the Department had indicated that it was using the Code of Assessment, members were uncertain how the Code could satisfactorily be employed in programmes where ILOs were absent. The Panel was informed that ILOs were provided for all courses that led to a University award and that the Open Programme had a generic set of ILOs. The Programme Leader for the Access Programme informed the Panel that, as the

programme was not accredited, there was no requirement to have ILOs for the Programme as a whole; ILOs did, however, exist at individual subject option level. The Panel **recommended** that consideration be given to developing ILOs for all programmes and courses to promote uniformity and clarity across the Department's portfolio.

C.3 Assessment

The Review Panel noted that a relatively high proportion of students on the Open Programme opted not to take assessments. The former Head of Department informed the Panel that around 50% of students were aged 60 years or over and that many attended with the aim of learning for its own sake. The Panel was informed that funding was dependent on courses being accredited and assessed, and that it was therefore necessary to offer the opportunity for assessment. The Open Programme Co-ordinator informed the Panel that courses of eight meetings or more were eligible for assessment and that students were encouraged to undertake it. The External Examiner had also encouraged the Department to be flexible in its approaches to assessment in order to encourage student participation. Of the 11 Open and Language Programme students seen by the Panel, three had opted to seek credit. Reasons given included increased engagement in the subject, the desire to measure their progress and the challenge of undertaking the assessment. Other students complained that the assessment in some language classes appeared to be compulsory and indicated that they believed assessment had to be passed before they could progress to the next stage. The Panel heard from staff that, although the written assessments were optional, the Programme Co-ordinator for the Language Programmes had taken the approach of developing and assessing skills as an integral and continuous part of the course. One student referred to the wide range of assessments, apart from the traditional essay, that were offered including writing an article and designing a website and expressed the view that such variation might encourage more students to attempt assessment. The general view, however, was that a significant number of students would not take the courses if assessment was mandatory. The Panel **recommended** that assessment in the Open Courses should be reviewed and, where necessary, rationalised. The Panel further **recommended** that innovative methods of assessment, which might encourage students to undertake the assessment exercises, should be explored.

The Review Panel heard from the Certificate of Higher Education students with whom they met that a variety of assessment methods were used including essays, laboratory reports, examinations, oral presentations and assessment on a gallery visit. Some of the students were aware of the criteria for assessment while others were not. Three of the six students present indicated that their assignments had been double-marked. The Programme Co-ordinator pointed out that some students lacked the confidence to take the full assessment and that there was a fine line between encouraging students to complete the assessments and frightening them off.

The Panel was informed that, for the BCLD programme, self-assessment and peer assessment were used formatively while the range of assessment methods included a mini research exercise; a management organisational study and assessed presentations. The assessment process was being reviewed in light of the introduction of the new degree—the BA in Community Development—from session 2006-07. The BCLD students met by the Panel confirmed that they had placement visits from University staff and that their assignments were based on the placements.

C.4 Curriculum Design and Content

C.4.1 The Open & Language Programmes

The Review Panel explored with staff how courses were planned and were informed that the subject specialists were invited, on an annual basis, to submit their plans for the year drawing on their expertise, knowledge, awareness of the external environment and course evaluations. The proposals were then analysed and discussions held to ensure that the courses were relevant and of high quality. All tutors were eligible for staff development opportunities. The Panel was pleased to note the collegiate nature of the process and the potential for interdisciplinary courses. The students met by the Panel were very positive about the programme with one stating that he looked forward to the new catalogue and had never failed to find a course of interest. The Panel was pleased to hear that tutors were receptive to suggestions from students and often asked what topics students would like to study in future years.

In light of the pressure on accommodation, the Panel explored with staff the possibility of developing short, fat courses which could be offered when the Initial Teacher Training (ITE) students were out on teaching practice. Staff were receptive to this suggestion and expressed the view that courses could be devised to fit this pattern. The Panel accordingly **recommended** that, as a matter of urgency, the Department examine the timing and duration of its programmes, especially the Open Programme, with a view to changing the timings and duration of the Open Courses so that they coincide with periods when ITE Students would be on school placements and considerably more accommodation would be available in the St Andrew's Building.

C.4.2 Certificate of Higher Education

The Review Panel heard from staff that a review of the Certificate of Higher Education had been instituted and that it was anticipated that there would be major areas for development. The Panel was pleased to hear that the preparation of Programme Specifications for the Certificates had helped the Department focus on how they wished to develop the programmes.

Students met by the Panel expressed satisfaction with the programme with one student commenting that the learning experience was good and varied and had involved audio-visual presentations and object handling in the Hunterian Museum. Students appreciated the relatively small class sizes.

C.4.3 BCLD/CCLD

The Review Panel noted that the Certificate in Community Learning and Development and the Bachelor in Community Learning and Development would be replaced by a new BA in Community Development from session 2006-07. The Panel heard that some of the existing courses were no longer considered appropriate for the new degree which was more sociologically driven and that the academic input to the degree, which also provided a professional qualification, had been strengthened.

C.4.4 Postgraduate Taught Programmes

The Review Panel queried whether the MSc in Adult and Continuing Education was making the best use of the expertise of staff and commented that the programme appeared traditional. The Panel was informed that, outside the core structure, there was scope for more international work. It was noted that the incoming Head of Department had international interests and might develop the programme in this direction. It was pointed out, however, that a financial balance had to be struck given the small numbers

on the current options. The Panel **recommended** that the Department review its Postgraduate Taught provision to explore the possibilities of attracting students from overseas; eg South America and the Middle East.

The Panel heard that there was an issue of whether there should be a separation of the Masters and the teaching qualification associated with the "Teaching Adults" route. The Panel was assured that the programme would be kept under continual review and noted that the Teaching Adults route had been developed partly in response to external factors. The Panel suggested that the Department might investigate whether there was scope for greater collaboration with other departments with, perhaps, reciprocal arrangements for students on other programmes to take DACE courses.

The students met by the Panel informed members that staff were receptive to student comments as evidenced in the introduction of the separate 'Teaching Adults' stream of the MSc in Adult and Continuing Education and the change from two placements to one extended placement.

C.4.5 Other DACE Activities

The Review Panel noted that a common thread in many of the activities of DACE was that of community involvement, inclusion, and social justice and suggested that these activities could be better promoted as part of a rounded, cohesive portfolio if they were all credit rated. The Panel **recommended** that the Department move towards credit rating all courses including the Certificate in Counselling Skills, if this is appropriate.

C.4.6 Use of IT

The Review Panel explored the extent to which courses made use of IT and the expectations that students would have access to computing facilities. Members heard that the Open and Language Programme students were not expected to have computers although tutors often provided web references. Despite Access students having been granted access to the Library and Computing facilities, work and family commitments often meant that they did not have the time to use the University facilities and students commented that they might have experienced problems had they not had computers at home. The Panel noted the aspirations of the Department to introduce MOODLE, although it did not seem to be widely used at present, and noted that there were issues of equality for student access to it and resource implications for its introduction. Members were informed that there had been little take-up on the part of students for the modified version of the Basic Computing course. The Panel **recommended** that Course Leaders/Programme Co-ordinators be encouraged to review the mode of delivery and assessment in all courses with a view to a possible move to more blended learning and use of IT, while recognising constraints on some students with limited access to IT facilities.

C.5 Student Recruitment, Support and Progression

C.5.1 Student Recruitment

The Review Panel noted that, despite it being an aim of the Department to widen access to sections of the population currently under-represented, there were still few black and minority ethnic students (BME) on DACE's programmes. The majority appeared to be from more traditional student backgrounds and many were graduates, although it was recognised that the larger numbers in the Open Programmes had a disproportionate effect on the statistics. The Panel was informed that efforts had been made to raise DACE's profile in community organizations and to become involved with relevant

networks, eg drop-in sessions would be held in libraries during Adult Learners Week and the Department was working with local organisations in Royston. Discussions had also been held with the Equal Opportunities Co-ordinator as a result of which efforts were being made to diversify the programmes to appeal to BME groups. The Panel suggested that the Department might consider developing a programme which would be of specific interest/relevance to a particular under-represented group.

The Panel was pleased to note that one-to-one interviews were held with all applicants to the Access programme for which an 'open access' policy was in place. The Panel heard from the Guidance Officer that funding was a major issue for potential students, particularly for those wishing to progress to full-time study. Members were pleased to note that the Department operated the SFC fee waiver scheme for the Certificate of Higher Education and 12-credit language courses, and offered concession fees for other courses. The Panel noted with interest the view of one Certificate of Higher Education student that potential applicants who were on benefit thought they would have to pay to attend courses and that the concept of 'fee waiver' for those on benefit was not understood. This student also commented that the prospect of studying at 'the University of Glasgow' would be too daunting for many potential applicants whilst studying at 'DACE' was seen as more achievable.

Several of the students and tutors met by the Panel raised the issue of the cost of the courses and one student complained that, although they were eligible for an Individual Learning Account (ILA), they were unable to use it in DACE for the course they wished to study. The Panel was informed that currently ILAs could only be used on Access courses on account of the bureaucracy involved. The Panel noted that ILAs were currently worth £200 and available to all whose income was below a fixed level. Given the high proportion of retired and other persons currently undertaking the Open Programme courses who were likely to have access to ILAs, the Panel **recommended** that DACE review its position with regard to registering courses as eligible for ILAs.

The Panel discussed with staff the Department's relationship with the Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Service and queried whether there was unnecessary duplication. Members were informed that the Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Service tended to target school-leaving groups whereas DACE targeted mature students. It had, however, been recommended by the Recruitment, Admissions and Participation Committee that the Service could do more to promote the DACE routes. In this context it was pointed out that some low-income students could only afford to come into the University through the fee-waiver scheme and that many potential applicants did not feel comfortable entering via the mainstream route but found applying to DACE less intimidating. Staff regretted that the Court Review had recommended that pre-access provision be ended and informed the Panel that this had had a detrimental effect on DACE recruitment as many intending students would undertake this were it available. The Panel **recommended** that consideration be given to unifying responsibility for mature student access and part-time degree recruitment and admissions possibly through DACE.

The Review Panel was informed by staff that the Department wished to increase its number of overseas postgraduate students. This had been discussed frequently but the resource implications—time, in the case of staff, and costs for language and cultural support in the case of students—had led to reluctance to pursue this if it could not be adequately delivered. The Panel suggested that the Department contact the International and Postgraduate Service Director to ascertain what would be available in terms of scholarships. It was further suggested that contact be made with the Scotland/Malawi Office and that the department's existing links with South America be exploited. The Panel was pleased to note that a new Senior Lecturer would be appointed who would have responsibility for overseas developments.

The Review Panel explored with the different groups of students met by the Panel their reasons for pursuing their courses at DACE. These included the quality of the tutor and teaching; being University of Glasgow graduates; personal recommendation; local availability (East Dunbartonshire); career progression (trainer); interesting courses; environment; advert in the Metro publication; stepping stone to a degree; employment related; and through attending 'ACTIVATE' course.

C.5.2 Student Support

The Review Panel was impressed by the support provided by the Guidance Officer and by her willingness to be flexible in her pattern of working so that she could see students/potential applicants at times suitable to them. She informed the Panel that funding was a major issue for students. The Guidance Officer was also the Departmental Disability Co-Ordinator and the Panel was informed that, compared with the University as a whole, DACE had a higher percentage of students with disabilities and mental health problems. The Guidance Officer informed the Panel that the part-time tutors were made aware of the range of disabilities through the Handbook which referred them to relevant websites. She also provided a training session with input to the DACE Newsletter for tutors. The Guidance Officer informed the Panel that, where appropriate, she would refer students to the Effective Learning Adviser (ELA) and would, in addition, advise them to approach their tutor. Students met by the Panel were aware of the role of the Guidance Officer and that they could approach her if they had personal difficulties. The Panel noted that no record was kept of the number of students seen by the Guidance Officer or of the number referred on to the ELA and **recommended** that such a system be put in place.

The Panel was pleased to note that some Certificate of Higher Education and all Access students were interviewed on a one-to-one basis where the interviewer took them through the year and explained the academic work involved and the support available. The Guidance Officer stressed that there was open access to these programmes and that only rarely was a potential applicant not accepted, although a second interview might be held if it was thought appropriate eg language difficulties for foreign students. The Panel heard that sometimes the commitment required proved to be too much and that it was only when students had embarked on the programme that they realised this. Illness and family problems also contributed to the high non-completion rate. The Guidance Officer noted that tutors were diligent in informing her when students withdrew and she would contact them to encourage them to return. Students met by the Panel were of the view that work and childcare problems were the main reasons for students not completing and stressed the importance of clear guidance on the time commitments required. The Panel were of the view that this should be strongly emphasised at the interview stage (see below at paragraph C.5.3.1).

Some of the Open Programme Students met by the Panel complained that registration cards had not been available until about five weeks into the teaching period, due to special circumstances, and that this had caused problems with access to library and computing facilities. Not all students were aware of which facilities they were entitled to use and one complained about the lack of a campus map. There was general support for the Panel's suggestion that a 'welcome pack' would be useful. Certificate of Higher Education students met by the Panel praised the tour of the library which had been provided with one student noting that it had removed the fear of using the library. The Panel noted that Access students were not registered students but that library and

² ACTIVATE is a 50 hour, non-accredited, community-based course for community activists, volunteers and unqualified community learning and development / community work practitioners which covers the key community learning and development (CLD) concepts, plus an introduction to CLD practice approaches.

computing access had been secured for this group by special arrangement. The Panel **recommended** that DACE give consideration to developing a welcome pack for all students entering courses run by the Department to provide essential information about the Department, Faculty and University. Where there were differences in the teaching and support available to students taking different courses, these should be clearly spelled out.

Students met by the Panel were very happy with the support and feedback they received from their lecturers. One Certificate of Higher Education student commented that students were known individually to the tutors and that problems could be sorted out more easily than in mainstream University classes. Several students informed the Panel that tutors invited students to email them if they were experiencing difficulties and those who had done so reported that they had received swift responses. Another reported that the tutor had made himself available outside class time to help him when he was struggling. The students were aware that they had academic Advisers but had never used them, preferring to approach their tutors. BCLD students met by the Panel referred to a strong support network and praised the support provided to them and the assistance given in finding placements. Access students met by the Panel referred in particular to the workshops for UCAS applications which, it was stated, had removed all the anxiety associated with the process.

C.5.3 Student Progression

The Review Panel explored with staff the 50% non-completion rate from the Access programmes and were informed that this rate was comparable to that of other such programmes. Staff explained to the Panel that research indicated that many who withdrew returned to higher education at a later stage and that most still regarded the experience as a useful one. It was suggested that realisation of the commitment required and the change to lifestyles involved in study was a contributing factor. The Panel considered that insufficient emphasis was placed on this during the interview stage and **recommended** that applicants applying to the Access programme should be more rigorously counselled with regard to the demands of the programme and that there should be an increased vigilance over Access students with a view to improving the retention rate.

As referred to above (Section B), the lack of a part-time degree route was a major issue for the Department. The Guidance Officer noted that it was demotivating for students if they were unable to find anything suitable to move on to and pointed out that it was very difficult for some students to slot into undergraduate programmes that were only available at times inconvenient to part-time students.

The Panel was pleased to hear that a number of Access students had progressed to complete first degrees, and a subset had completed postgraduate qualifications. Postgraduate students met by the Panel confirmed that the Masters programme provided an excellent preparation for research and was a useful stepping stone to a PhD.

C.6 *The Effectiveness of Provision*

C.6.1 Learning and Teaching

The Review Panel was appreciative of the overall positive attitude expressed by the students with whom they met toward the learning and teaching provided by the Department. The high levels of satisfaction and success enjoyed by the students was also noted. The Panel was informed by the postgraduate students with whom they met that the computing packages and hardware were adequate as were the resources in the

University Library. All students met by the Panel appeared to be IT literate and Tutors met by the Panel found the facilities in the University to be excellent but noted that PowerPoint facilities were not always available in external locations.

C.6.2 Teaching Accommodation

The Review Panel heard complaints from Open and Language Programme students with whom they met that they did not always know, until they arrived, where the class would be held. Staff explained that they only received the room allocations just before the start of classes and that rooms might subsequently have to be changed to accommodate students with special needs. The Department had first call on only two rooms in the St Andrew's Building. There was insufficient accommodation in the St Andrew's Building and classes had to be allocated to other buildings, some by outside arrangement, including Wellington Church and Hillhead Library. The Panel noted that the Department had established a Room Booking Group to attempt to alleviate problems. Complaints were also voiced that rooms were either very hot or very cold and one student stated that a room used in the Hetherington Building was too small and had an unsuitable layout. The students noted that there were sometimes problems with tutors not knowing how to set up equipment and with rooms requiring furniture to be rearranged before the class could begin. The latter could be a particular problem for practical art classes. Music classes also experienced difficulties due to the lack of dedicated music rooms with sound insulation. Some minor problems with accommodation at external venues were reported eg availability of equipment.

C.6.3 Office Accommodation and Social Space

The Review Panel was pleased to note that the Guidance Officer had an office in the reception area of the building and that clear visibility enabled students to know if she was free. The Panel was disappointed to hear that a probationary member of staff had been allocated office accommodation in what had been a resource centre³ and that he had to use a teaching room or the Guidance Officer's room when conducting interviews due to severe restraints on accommodation about which the Department has made frequent representations. The Panel noted that office accommodation was located in various areas of the St Andrew's Building and that this had been highlighted in the Self-Evaluation Report as having led to a decline in collegiality and interaction. Staff met by the Panel confirmed that this was a major stumbling block to interaction as staff rarely saw each other except in formal meetings. The Panel was informed that informal contact had disappeared and had had a damaging impact. The Panel was pleased to note that a staff area with kitchen facilities was being developed and that an area was also being developed for student use. During their tour of the building the Panel noted the large open spaces on each landing and wondered whether these could be furnished with tables and chairs to provide social space. Members were informed that this had already been tried but that staff had been instructed to remove the furniture on health and safety grounds. The Panel **recommended** that there be a review of the allocation of staff offices across the Faculty with a view to rationalisation of identifiable Departmental groups.

C.6.4 Library

The Self-Evaluation Report lamented the loss of the Department's own library, which had been incorporated into the main University Library as, in particular, the loss of a valuable resource for part-time students. Part-time students met by the panel bore out these comments with many, including postgraduates, stating that they did not have time

³ This staff member has now been allocated a different room.

to visit the Main Library. Other, perhaps more recent, students appeared to be unaware of its past existence. One student attending a course in East Dunbartonshire commented that, while they would like to use the University library, parking was impossible. A number of students indicated that they used their local libraries, particularly for computer access.

C.6.5 Canteen

The Review Panel raised with part-time students the effect on them of the canteen being closed in the evenings and at weekends. The majority did not find this to be a problem, as long as they had somewhere warm to sit during their breaks, as they used the vending machines for drinks.

Staff met by the Panel complained that, when they held Access taster days, Hospitality Services would only open the canteen if required numbers could be guaranteed. Staff also argued the case for evening and Saturday opening on the grounds that students were coming to DACE straight from work and were being treated like second-class students. Comments were also made about the depressing and unwelcoming appearance of the canteen when it was closed. The Dean informed the Panel that Hospitality Services had twice tried evening opening, the last over a three-week period only, and had reported a loss. The Panel **recommended** that there should be further discussion with Hospitality Services about the opening of the canteen facility until mid-evening on days when evening classes were being held and that profitability should not be regarded as the overriding concern.

C.6.6 Part-Time Tutors

The Panel explored with staff how the part-time tutors were recruited and was informed that DACE sought people with expertise in the subject area and with experience of working with adults. Each Subject Specialist had his/her own contacts but, on occasions, potential tutors approached DACE. A number of tutors were retired University lecturers and some were newer University staff who had completed the New Teachers Programme. Only in exceptional circumstances were the requirements with respect to academic qualifications relaxed and all tutors were carefully monitored.

The Panel questioned staff on the support provided to part-time tutors and heard that the University of Strathclyde provided a certificate course, the Certificate of Professional Development in Adult Teaching and Learning, which, although not compulsory, was seen by some as an aspect of career progression. DACE paid annually for a small number of part-time tutors to attend this. A joint training day with Strathclyde was also held and tutors were strongly advised to attend this. In addition there was in-house induction and training, which covered areas such as the Code of Assessment; the Disability Discrimination Act and MOODLE, which all tutors on the Certificate of Higher Education were strongly encouraged to attend. All tutors were informed that they could access staff development courses and staff needs were discussed with the Subject Specialist. The Panel was pleased to hear that DACE had financially supported a number of tutors to undertake PhDs. Language tutors were encouraged to take another language course free of charge and the Language Programme Co-ordinator explained that all new tutors undergo a full day's training in the methodology of language teaching and a two hour training session on how to conduct assessments. There is a further full day's training on methodology for all tutors before teaching starts and a half day's training before the commencement of the second teaching period. Tutors met by the Panel welcomed the Departmental Newsletters for tutors as a way of keeping them informed of developments and opportunities. They indicated that they would welcome an update to the Induction Programme at a later stage in the year and that they would appreciate opportunities to

meet with other tutors at informal events. The tutors informed the Panel that, if they experienced problems, their first point of contact would be their Subject Specialist. The Panel **recommended** that the initial and update training for part-time tutors be strengthened. The Panel further **recommended** that staff, including part-time tutors, be encouraged to meet periodically as a 'large group' for social interaction and discussion of issues of common interest.

C.6.7 University Teachers

The Review Panel was informed by the former Head of Department that the designation 'University Teacher' was used at junior level. Where appointees expressed an interest in moving towards lecturer status, the Department has sought to interpret the University Teacher's requirement to undertake scholarship flexibly in order for this possibility to remain open. The Panel was concerned that some of the University Teachers in the Department carried out research which appeared to contradict the 'raison d'être' of the University Teacher, ie, to take on additional teaching and administration duties to allow other staff more time for research. The Panel **recommended** that consideration be given to the danger that the definition and remit of University Teacher/Senior University Teacher would be undermined if appointees to such positions were research active.

C.6.8 Workload

The Review Panel was informed by the former Head of Department that many staff had heavy administrative loads but that the departmental workload model attempted to lessen the administrative load on active researchers. The Panel heard from the probationary staff present that adjustments to the points for teaching on certain courses had caused some discontent. The probationary staff met by the Panel did not believe that their workload had been reduced in accordance with the University Guidelines for Probationary Staff. They did, however, confirm that they met regularly with their mentors. The Panel noted that the workload model for DACE differed from that of the Faculty of Education. The Panel **recommended** that Probationary Staff be afforded the stipulated adjustment to workload while they were completing the requirements of probationer training. The Panel further **recommended** that the DACE workload model be reviewed and that discussions be held with the Dean as to an appropriate model for the Department.

D. The Maintenance and Enhancement of Standards of Awards

D.1 External Examiners

The Review Panel noted that a number of External Examiners did not attend the Examination Boards. The Panel was informed that there were a large number of External Examiners covering fairly short courses for the Certificate of Higher Education programme and that they were not all expected to attend in person; they were invited to do so and, if they did not, were expected to submit comments. The Panel was informed that the External Examiners' comments were taken very seriously and reported on in the Annual Course Monitoring Reports.

E. The Maintenance and Assurance of Quality

E.1 Quality of Courses

The Review Panel was pleased to note that the majority of students present were very happy with the quality of the courses and the lecturers. While one of the Open and Language Programme students commented that some courses were good but some were not, and one reported that, out of 25 attended, only 2 had not been properly prepared, another stated that all courses had been excellent with the quality of teaching superb and the preparation beyond compare. The Open and Language Programme students met by the Panel were of the opinion that the breadth of opinion reflected by these views was typical of the approximately 4000 students on these courses. One student commented that a tutor on one of the postgraduate certificate courses had performed poorly, and that, as a result, she had stopped attending. The Panel noted that student feedback for the Open and Language Programme courses indicated that 94% of students were satisfied with their courses. Areas of dissatisfaction in the remaining 6% related mainly to accommodation. Student feedback was also taken into account when deciding which courses to offer in the next session.

E.2 Course Monitoring and Student Feedback

Students met by the Panel confirmed that they were asked to complete evaluation forms although one student complained that, having been asked to complete an evaluation form via a web form, had been unable to do so due to a computer problem and lack of a paper-based alternative. Students met by the Panel were generally unaware of any follow-up to the questionnaires. Staff informed members that it was intended to put the responses to the Student Questionnaires on the web and that space for student comments might also be provided.

The Review Panel confirmed with the Guidance Officer that she received official feedback on her services. She informed the Panel that there was a question about support on the student feedback questionnaire and that she received feedback from that.

The Review Panel explored the provision for student representation and acknowledged the difficulties created by the nature of the courses, particularly the Open & Language Programmes. The majority of students met by the Panel were aware that there were class representatives and some indicated that they were, or would be willing to be, involved. The students, however, did not appear to find the student representation system very helpful. Those students who were representatives were not aware of the training offered by the SRC. The Panel explored with them whether they would prefer to have focus groups and the response to this was generally positive. Students also noted that there were informal routes for them to provide feedback, eg by e-mailing tutors and by informal discussions in the pub after class. The postgraduate students met by the Panel reported that they had had meetings to discuss their programmes and that they had found these to be more productive than the questionnaires. They informed the Panel that they felt they were listened to and their comments were taken on board. Staff met by the Panel indicated that they were now recommending the establishment of individual programme Staff/Student Committees which would feed into the appropriate Faculty Committees.

The Review Panel **recommended** that Course Representatives be appointed for all programmes except the Open & Language Programmes and that the Course Representatives be encouraged to undertake the training provided through the SRC and to participate in course meetings at least twice a year. The Panel further **recommended** that consideration be given to student inclusion in Departmental Committees where appropriate and that an overarching DACE Staff/Student Liaison Committee be

formed. The Panel **recommended** that, in seeking feedback from students, the Department recognise the limitations of paper questionnaires and consider other means, eg focus groups which provide a useful means of obtaining student comments over a wider range than is often possible using more prescriptive questionnaires.

F. Enhancing the Student Learning Experience

F.1 Student Experience

The Review Panel explored with the students present whether they identified with the University or with DACE. The majority informed members that they identified primarily with DACE and noted that, as part-time students, it was difficult to feel part of the wider university community. Students were very appreciative of the way the Department made them feel welcome. Some students indicated that they would welcome opportunities to contribute to the University as University of Strathclyde students were able to do via the Senior Studies Institute, eg through mentoring. The Panel noted that a considerable proportion of DACE students were mature students, many with skills that could be tapped into. The SRC observers on the Panel indicated that they would welcome any ideas on how to make DACE students feel more a part of the University and stressed that DACE students were eligible to join any student society or sports team. Some of those students who were eligible to do so had made use of the Sport and Recreation facilities and were appreciative of the fact that their registration card entitled them to use these for the whole academic session, not just for the duration of their course. As previously noted (C5.2.3), there was some uncertainty as to what facilities various groups had access to and an information pack, in addition to the Student Handbook, would be appreciated by students.

F.2 Quality Enhancement Themes

The Review Panel explored with staff the extent of the Department's engagement with the QAA Quality Enhancement Themes. Whilst this was described as being fairly low on DACE's agenda, the Panel noted nevertheless that staff were aware of the Quality Enhancement Themes and that these had been discussed at the Programme Management and Development Group. The Panel also noted that the former Quality Assurance Officer had attended a number of the QAA Scotland run conferences on the themes. The Panel was informed that there had been greater departmental emphasis on the Assessment theme than on Employability, which was felt to be already covered in other areas of the Department's work.

G. Summary of Key Strengths and Areas to be Improved or Enhanced in relation to Learning and Teaching and Conclusions and Recommendations

Key Strengths

- the breadth and quality of the provision and the reputation that the Department has established as a result of this
- the very positive attitude on the part of students towards the Department
- the friendly and helpful attitude of staff towards students
- the support provided to students and, in particular, that provided by the Guidance Officer

- the collegiate nature of the planning process for Open and Language Programmes and the receptiveness of staff to students' suggestions for new courses

Areas to be improved or enhanced

- the timings and duration of the Open Programme courses with a view to maximising use of accommodation
- communications with students, including the advice given to, and the retention rates for, Access students and opportunities for student representation and feedback
- assessment, in particular, the development of intended learning outcomes and the encouragement of students to undertake assessment on courses where it was optional
- the use of IT
- Support for part-time tutors including training and integration
- overseas recruitment

Improvements/Enhancements to be discussed with the Faculty and/or University

- strategic planning in harmony with Faculty and University strategic plans
- part-time undergraduate degree provision and arrangements for recruitment of part-time students
- accommodation - in particular the location of staff offices
- the workload model and the support provided to probationary teachers
- mechanisms for interaction between staff
- the provision of canteen facilities until mid-evening

Conclusions

The Review Panel commended the Department on the diversity and quality of its provision and for the high level of support provided to a wide range of students. Staff and students met by the Panel displayed loyalty and commitment to the Department and its activities. The Panel was pleased to conclude that there was a greater degree of integration with the rest of the University that had been apparent from the Self Evaluation Report and hoped that the increasing tendency for mainstream undergraduate students to gain some of their credits through DACE courses would assist this process.

Recommendations

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report and summarised below are made in the spirit of encouragement to the Department of Adult and Continuing Education to address the issues identified by the Panel. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraph in the text to which they refer and are ranked in order of priority.

Recommendation 1:

The Panel **recommended** that, as a matter of urgency, the Department examine the timing and duration of its programmes, especially the Open Programme, with a view to changing the timings and duration of the Open Courses so that they coincide with periods when ITE Students would be on school placements and considerably more rooms would be available in the St Andrew's Building [*Paragraph C.4.1*]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**
Dean of Faculty of Education

Recommendation 2:

The Panel **recommended** that the development of a wider and more structured pathway to a part-time degree be expedited as soon as possible [*Paragraph B*]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**
Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching)

Recommendation 3

The Panel **recommended** that consideration be given to unifying responsibility for mature student access and part-time degree recruitment and admissions possibly through DACE. [*Paragraph C.5.1*]

For the attention of: **Academic Secretary**
Dean of Faculty of Education

Recommendation 4

The Panel **recommended** that applicants applying to the Access programme should be more rigorously counselled with regard to the demands of the course and that there should be an increased vigilance over Access students with a view to improving the retention rate. [*Paragraph C.5.3*]

For the attention of: **Guidance Officer**
Access Co-ordinator
Head of Department

Recommendation 5

The Panel **recommended** that Course Representatives be appointed for all programmes except the Open & Language Programmes and that the Course Representatives be encouraged to undertake the training provided through the SRC and to participate in course meetings at least twice a year. [*Paragraph E.2*]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**
Course Leaders

Recommendation 6

The Panel **recommended** that consideration be given to student inclusion in Departmental Committees where appropriate and that an overarching DACE Staff/Student Liaison Committee be formed. [*Paragraph E.2*]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**
Course Leaders

Recommendation 7

The Panel **recommended** that ILOs be developed for all programmes and courses. [Paragraph C.2]

For the attention of: **Head of Department
Course Leaders**

Recommendation 8

The Panel **recommended** that assessment in the Open Courses should be reviewed and where necessary rationalised and that innovative methods of assessment, which might encourage students to undertake assessment exercises, should be explored. [Paragraph C.3]

For the attention of: **Head of Department
Open Programme Co-ordinator**

Recommendation 9

The Panel **recommended** that there should be a DACE Strategic Plan which harmonised with those of the Faculty and the University. [Paragraph B]

For the attention of: **Head of Department
Course Leaders**

Recommendation 10

The Panel **recommended** that that consideration be given to credit rating the Certificate in Counselling Skills. [Paragraph C.4.5]

For the attention of: **Head of Department
Course Leaders**

Recommendation 11

The Panel **recommended** that the Department review its Postgraduate Taught provision to explore the possibilities of attracting students from overseas; eg South America and the Middle East. [Paragraph C.4.4]

For the attention of: **Course Leaders
Director of IPS**

Recommendation 12

The Panel **recommended** that DACE give consideration to developing a welcome pack for all students entering courses run by the Department to provide essential information about the Department, Faculty and University. Where there were differences in the teaching and support available to students taking different courses, these should be clearly spelled out. [Paragraph C.5.2]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Recommendation 13

The Panel **recommended** that the initial and update training for part-time tutors be strengthened. [Paragraph C.6.6]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Recommendation 14

The Panel **recommended** that Course Leaders/Programme Co-ordinators be encouraged to review the mode of delivery and assessment in all courses with a view to a possible move to more blended learning and use of IT, while recognising constraints on some students with limited access to IT facilities. [Paragraph C.4.6]

For the attention of: **Head of Department
Course Leaders**

Recommendation 15

The Panel **recommended** that Probationary Staff be afforded the stipulated adjustment to workload while they were completing the requirements of probationer training. [Paragraph C.6.8]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Recommendation 16

The Panel **recommended** that staff, including part-time tutors, be encouraged to meet periodically as a 'large group' for social interaction and discussion of issues of common interest. [Paragraph C.6.6]

For the attention of: **Head of Department
Course Leaders**

Recommendation 17

The Panel **recommended** that the DACE workload model be reviewed and that discussions be held with the Dean as to an appropriate model for the Department. [Paragraph C.6.8]

For the attention of: **Head of Department
Dean of the Faculty of Education**

Recommendation 18

The Panel **recommended** that there be a review of the allocation of staff offices across the Faculty with a view to rationalisation of identifiable Departmental groups. [Paragraph C.6.3]

For the attention of: **Dean of the Faculty of Education**

Recommendation 19

The Panel **recommended** that, in seeking feedback from students, the Department recognise the limitations of paper questionnaires and consider other means, eg focus groups which provide a useful means of obtaining student comments over a wider range than is often possible using more prescriptive questionnaires. [Paragraph E.2]

For the attention of: **Head of Department
Course Leaders**

Recommendation 20

The Panel **recommended** that DACE review its position with regard to registering courses as eligible for ILAs. [Paragraph C.5.1]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**

Recommendation 21

The Panel **recommended** that consideration be given to the danger that the definition and remit of University Teacher/Senior University Teacher would be undermined if appointees to such positions were research active. [*Paragraph C.6.7*]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**
Dean of the Faculty of Education

Recommendation 22

The Panel **recommended** that a system be put in place to record the number of students seen by the Guidance Officer and the number of students referred on by her to the Effective Learning Adviser. [*Paragraph C.5.2*]

For the attention of: **Head of Department**
Guidance Officer

Recommendation 23

The Panel **recommended** that there should be further discussion with the University about the opening of the canteen facility until mid-evening on days when evening classes were being held and that profitability should not be regarded as the overriding concern. [*Paragraph C.6.5*]

For the attention of: **Dean**
Director of Hospitality Services

Prepared by: Zetta Brown, Senate Office

Last modified on: Monday 6 November 2006