

QUALITY PROGRESS REVIEW

The full report following the recent Quality Progress Review of the School of Healthcare Studies is shown below. The School finds the report helpful and is grateful for the hard work put in by the reviewers. The report is regarded as generally favourable, although it does point out some areas for improvement. It includes a number of specific recommendations and most of these have already been actioned. The remainder will be acted upon in the near future. The School will be making a formal response to the University's Academic Standards and Quality Committee by September.

I would like to thank all those staff and students who helped with the preparations for the review or met with the reviewers at the time of the visit.

Roger Mansfield

Head of School

QUALITY PROGRESS REVIEW REPORT

SOHCS

FEBRUARY 2009

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THE QUALITY PROGRESS REVIEW PROCESS

At its meeting of 8 February 2006, ASQC agreed that the second round of QPR activity would focus upon enhancement. QPR, therefore, seeks to provide assurances that School procedures are being used effectively to consider, promote, and implement the enhancement agenda of the University and School. The key enhancement themes include:

- Accessibility Issues
- Equality & Diversity Issues
- Assessment Issues/ Assessment Strategy
- Peer Review of Learning & Teaching
- Student Support/ PDP/ Personal Tutoring
- Programme Information for Students
- Management Information
- Collaborative, Distributed & Flexible Learning
- Postgraduate Issues

QPR also continues to build upon the elements from the previous process and establish the extent to which Schools are continuing to discharge effectively:

- their responsibilities for the quality of education provided to students
- their duties and responsibilities under the University's various quality assurance procedures
- their responsibilities for the maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered by the University.

this includes:

- ensuring that appropriate documentation is in place
- ensuring University procedures are in place
- forming a judgement as to the effectiveness of the School's procedures as a basis for Periodic Review
- seeking assurances on the clarity of the School's record-keeping and audit trails.

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QUALITY PROGRESS REVIEW IN SOHCS

BACKGROUND

The Quality Progress Review Team comprised: Professor Stephen Denyer (Chair), Dr Wendy Ivins (COMSC), Dr Paul Murphy (OPTOM), Secretary: Karen T Moore (REGIS), Assistant Secretary: Miss Sarah Chandler (REGIS).

The School was asked, in advance of the Review date, to complete a copy of the 'QPR Proforma: Information Available in Schools' and provide copies of the following documents:

- Current Student Handbook(s) (undergraduate, postgraduate and research)
- Current Staff Handbook
- School Strategic Plan
- Organisational Structure

REGIS then liaised with the School's administration to gain a clear picture of the evidence available in the School and to develop the 'Areas for Review' proforma. The Team visited the School on 26th February 2009 where the following core documents were made available throughout the morning:

- School Board/School Management Board minutes
- Senior Management Team minutes
- Board(s) of Studies/Course Boards minutes
- Student/Staff Panel(s) minutes
- Minutes of Committee/Group dealing with postgraduate matters
- Teaching and Learning Committee minutes
- Minutes of other Committee(s) with significant involvement in academic matters
- Module and programme/course assessment questionnaire outcomes (including Research)
- School Policies (where there are local supplements to University policies)

A meeting was held with students drawn from across the School's programmes to discuss their experience of the School. In the afternoon, the Team met with Professor Roger Mansfield (Acting Head of School), Mr John Connelly (School Manager), Mr Gwilym Roberts (Vice Dean and Director of Department of Occupational Therapy), Mr Martin West (Vice Dean and Director of Department of Radiography), Mr Tony Everett (Acting Director Department of Physiotherapy), Dr Alun Morgan (Vice Dean and Director of Operating Department Practice), Dr Nicola Phillips (Vice Dean and Director of Postgraduate Healthcare Studies), Mrs Liz Evans (BSc Programme Manager – Physiotherapy), Miss Liz Harmer (School Research Administrator), Mr Adrian Rolls (Lecturer / Examinations Officer – Department of Radiography), Mrs Denise Russell (Undergraduate Admissions Officer) and Dr Gail Boniface (Programme Manager – Occupational Therapy [Accelerated]). Using the 'Areas for Review' document as an agenda, the meeting allowed the Team to:

- open a dialogue with staff concerning the School's response to key priority areas and enhancement themes for the institution
- explore the School's approach in key areas and, where appropriate, provide advice on opportunities for further enhancement
- identify noteworthy practice for wider dissemination across the University
- determine with the School whether the structures and procedures in place constitute a clear and robust means by which the School can address the quality and standards of its academic provision.

The Team wishes to thank all members of the School for their co-operation throughout the whole of the Quality Progress Review process.

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REPORT

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE & COMMITTEES

Clarity of Organisational Information

The Staff Handbook contains terms of reference and composition for the School's committees. A calendar of committee dates is circulated to staff each year via the School newsletter, which is also made available on the web. The Handbook also includes detailed descriptions of the responsibilities of a number of key roles in the School, including Head of School, Head of Department, Programme

Manager, Admissions Tutor, School Manager and Programme Administrator. Similarly, the Undergraduate Student Handbook provides information on the roles and responsibilities of key staff, as do a number of Programme Handbooks.

Support staff are represented on the School Board, Research Committee, Equality & Diversity Committee, Health, Safety & Environment Committee, and Student/Staff Panels. Undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research students are represented on the School Board, Equality & Diversity Committee, Health, Safety & Environment Committee, and Student/Staff Panels; undergraduate and postgraduate taught students are represented on the Learning & Teaching Committee and Boards of Studies, whilst research students are represented on the Research Committee.

Effectiveness of Committee Structure

The School Board is the Senior Committee in SOHCS. The Senior Management Team has responsibility for the direction and function of the School, and comprises the Head of School and all Directors of Departments. It meets on a fortnightly basis. Terms of reference for this Group are not included in the current Staff Handbook, but the School confirmed that they are now available and will be included in the next edition of the Handbook.

There are five Boards of Studies within the School, one in each of the Departments of Occupational Therapy, Operating Department Practice, Physiotherapy and Radiography, and a Board of Postgraduate Studies. The Departmental Boards have jurisdiction relating to all undergraduate, Diploma and Certificate programmes (pre-registration) within their Department. In addition, the Board of Studies in Occupational Therapy has jurisdiction relating to the Postgraduate Diploma in Occupational Therapy (pre-registration) and the MSc in Occupations and Health (post registration), whilst the Board of Studies in Operating Department Practice has jurisdiction relating to the Post Graduate Diploma and MSc in Surgical Care Practice (post registration). The Board of Postgraduate Studies has jurisdiction over all remaining postgraduate taught programmes.

Each Board of Studies within the School has its own Student/Staff Panel. In addition, there is a separate Student/Staff Panel for Postgraduate Research students, and a School-level Student/Staff Committee established in session 2008/09.

The QPR Team noted there is a the lack of clarity regarding the locus of responsibility for research students, as this is not explicitly addressed in the Research Committee's terms of reference. The School confirmed that the Research Committee has responsibility for research student candidatures, student experience, and monitoring progress.

School-wide Staff Meetings are held three times a year. There are no terms of reference for this meeting in the Staff Handbook, but the School confirmed that all staff (academic and support) attend, and that School finance is a standing item on the agenda.

The School established an Equality & Diversity Committee in October 2007, and the QPR Team queried to what extent it had been able to make an impact to-date. The School explained that the Committee has been assigned a number of extensive roles, and has been addressing them in order of priority. The first priority identified was to raise staff awareness in the area, and most staff have now attended Equal Opportunities and Disability training sessions. The Committee has also been in discussion with the central University to arrange an up-coming seminar to identify individual training needs. The School feels that once the planned training has been completed, the Equality & Diversity Committee will find its proper place in the committee structure, and be able to concentrate on affecting

School policy development. It was noted that attendance at the Committee meetings has been modest in the past, but has improved now that the Committee has a clearer role.

The School informed the Team that, although it has no formal mechanisms for ensuring that the committee structure remains fit for purpose, the Head of School reviewed the structure on his arrival in 2006. The Senior Management Team revisited the structure and made further refinements during session 2007/8. In addition, improvements have occurred outside these reviews with the establishment of the Equality & Diversity Committee and Advisory Board. The QPR Team was satisfied with the operation of the School's committee structure.

Equality & Diversity Aspects of Committee Membership

The Staff Handbook contains the terms of reference and memberships for School committees, but there does not appear to be guidance for ensuring balanced committee membership from diverse constituencies.

The School explained that, in terms of constitution of committees, SOHCS takes a pragmatic approach. The aim is to keep membership from becoming too large, and to identify what membership is essential. Equality & Diversity issues are part of these considerations, but within the context that certain posts have to be represented and free election needs to take place for some of the membership.

Summary

The Team recommends that SOHCS:

- makes responsibility for research students explicit in the terms of reference for the Research Committee
- considers developing a formal mechanism for periodically reviewing the membership and composition of School committees, for example in relation to gender/ethnicity/fixed term staff representation
[For further advice & guidance in this area contact: Catrin Morgan, COCOM & Isabella Santamaria, HUMRS]
- considers producing formal guidance to staff and students on committee membership (e.g. role of committee member, opportunities for participation).
[For further advice & guidance in this area contact: Ms Katya Hosking, REGIS & Catrin Morgan, COCOM]

Areas of noteworthy practice:

- the opportunities for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research student representation on a range of School committees.
[School Contact: Gwlym Roberts]

POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Communication of Policy Information

The APRE Synopsis 2007/8 notes that SOHCS has worked hard at standardising all policies and procedures across the School, and that the development of an all School Academic Handbook, for use by both staff and students, has ensured that such policies and procedures are agreed and well understood

by both parties. This information is also supplemented by the new Staff Handbook, which was published at the start of the 2008/9 session.

School Approach to Policy Development

The remit of the Equality & Diversity Committee notes that it is responsible for devising and recommending to the School Board policies, procedures and actions plans to ensure that appropriate ways of dealing with equal opportunities and diversity matters are integral to all areas of the Schools activities. It is also responsible for monitoring existing policies and procedures; collecting and reviewing data relevant to diversity and equality matters in relation to students and staff on a regular basis, and recommending changes to policies and procedures to the School Board as appropriate. The School explained that it plans to arrange training on Impact Assessments as a first step towards the Equality and Diversity Committee feeding into policy development. The Committee will then be better able to review School policies and affect their development.

In terms of considering management information data as part of the process of producing School policy documents, the School informed the QPR Team that the Learning & Teaching Committee has considered global statistics on applications, but acknowledged that better use could be made of MIS data. It is an area that the School is looking at further.

Summary

The Team recommends that SOHCS:

- continues with its efforts to improve the ways in which management information data is considered as part of the process of producing School policy documents.

[For further advice & guidance in this area contact:

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PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW

Portfolio Management

The School's Academic Handbook contains sections on the Programme Approval and Annual Programme Review and Evaluation processes. The Periodic Review & Revalidation Report 2007 notes that the School identified the rationalisation of post registration programmes with consistently low student numbers as an area requiring further action. The report highlights that the School is considering this issue, and will continue to do so, with the intention of reviewing more aggressively those modules with low numbers of students.

The School Strategic Plan notes that virtually all the income to SOHCS derives from a number of contracts with the Welsh Assembly Government for the provision of pre-registration programmes. The number of home and EU students which the School is contracted to admit and educate changes from year to year, and is geared to NHS Workforce Planning in Wales. This makes both operational and strategic planning for the School exceptionally difficult. The Plan notes that creating alternative sources of income is a priority for the School, and that efforts to recruit additional overseas students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level is part of this. The APRE Synopsis 2007/8 notes that most undergraduate programmes have successfully recruited additional overseas (or other self funding students), a trend which is being monitored by the marketing team. The School explained that it is trying to increase the number of self-funders on undergraduate programmes, as it is validated by the professional bodies to offer more places than are funded by the Government. The School confirmed that

work is on-going at post-registration and postgraduate taught levels to develop further the School's offerings in this area, and to explore the possibility of making programmes more suitable for overseas students, where appropriate.

The School does not have a marketing strategy, but a SOHCS Marketing, Fundraising and Alumni Relations Working Group is under development, established under the chairmanship of the Head of School. The QPR Team queried whether the School has difficulty recruiting sufficient numbers to its programmes. The School reported that, in general, this is not an issue. Recruitment in Radiotherapy is marginal and can be a struggle, but this is the case across the UK. Physiotherapy applications have been affected by the unemployment situation in the profession, but it has not become a problem for the School as yet, and Physiotherapy is still selecting rather than just recruiting students. The School also noted that SOHCS is probably the only school in the UK not going to clearing to find students for these types of programmes.

Engagement with APRE

The School reported that it is currently making efforts to streamline the management information data being presented to the Boards of Studies in order to ensure that all Departments are considering similar elements. The Learning and Teaching Committee was aware of the diversity of data being generated within SOHCS, and is working to collate a uniform set of data so that the School can progress with evaluating changing trends during the next APRE.

The School noted that it has a problem with the way in which SIMS records qualifications on entry. For instance, Operating Department Practice students are not typically A level entrants, and the system has difficulty recording accurately their prior qualifications. In one case, this resulted in a PhD student being shown as entering the programme with no prior qualifications.

Accessible Curriculum

The APRE Synopsis 2007/8 notes that statistics on diversity of entrants are provided by the School's admissions department for consideration during APRE.

(See also Equality & Diversity Issues in Learning & Teaching, page 8.)

External Influences

The School's Learning and Teaching Committee ensures that all programmes are mindful of the need to include and keep abreast of all policy documents affecting modern day practice in health and social care from both the Welsh Assembly Government and the UK Department of Health. The School reported that it has responded positively to external drivers for inter-professional education. This learning method has been advocated in the Designed for Life Strategy from the Welsh Assembly Government, reports from the Quality Assurance Agency and The Health Professions Council (HPC), and the School has implemented a cross-school Inter-Professional Learning thread on all undergraduate programmes as a result. It was also noted that annual monitoring reports to each respective professional body are considered as part of APRE.

The School established an Advisory Board in September 2008, and the expectation is that this Board will allow SOHCS routinely to receive advice from a range of managers and clinicians in the professions related to the School, and will also add to the School's profile.

Summary**Areas for further consideration by ASQC:**

- the issue raised by SOHCS with regard to the way in which SIMS records qualifications on entry where students are not typical A level entrants.

LEARNING AND TEACHING**Communication of Learning & Teaching Information to Students**

The Academic Handbook contains SOHCS' Learning and Teaching Strategy, and is available to all students via the School's Current Student web page. The undergraduate Programme Handbooks also contain detailed Learning and Teaching information. The BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook has a chapter on Course Philosophy, including definitions of the various Learning and Teaching methods. The Physiotherapy Handbook has a section on Learning and Teaching Methods. The BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice Handbook has a section on Learning and Teaching for students. The BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook has sections on Overview of Course, PBL Tutorial Group Guidelines and Learning Methods. The BSc Occupational Therapy P/T Handbook has a section on Programme Philosophy. The Diploma in Operating Department Practice Handbook has sections on Programme Philosophy & Aims and Programme Delivery & Structure. The postgraduate taught Programme Handbooks do not make reference to the School's approach to Learning and Teaching or to the information available in the Academic Handbook.

The undergraduate Programme Handbooks all contain information on the skills acquired during the programmes. The BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook contains Module Descriptions which detail the intellectual, discipline-specific and transferable skills associated with each module; the Course Philosophy section also makes reference to the skills acquired during the programme. The Physiotherapy and BSc Intra & Perioperative Practice Handbooks detail the skills acquired during the programmes in sections on Programme Learning Outcomes. The BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook contains Module Outlines which detail the intellectual, discipline-specific and transferable skills for the module. The BSc Occupational Therapy P/T Handbook contains Module Descriptors which detail the intellectual, discipline-specific and transferable skills for each module. The Diploma in Operating Department Practice Handbook contains information on skills under Intended Programme Outcomes. The postgraduate taught Programme Handbooks make brief reference to skills in the list of Programme Aims & Learning Outcomes.

The relationship between learning, teaching and research is a key theme in the School's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Strategy states that the School aims to provide programmes that are research-based and evidence-led. The undergraduate and postgraduate Programme Handbooks do not specifically address the contribution which research makes to the curriculum. However, the Physiotherapy Handbook contains reference to staff and students being involved in the work of the Research Centre for Clinical Kinaesiology, and the Diploma in Operating Department Practice Handbook makes reference to the value of current research in informing practices. The QPR Team asked whether students are aware that their teaching is research-led. Students who met with the Team reported that they are beginning to appreciate that the teaching they receive is leading edge, and noted that there is now an opportunity to look ahead at emerging skills because of the School's research activities. For example, Occupational Therapy students noted that as a result of staff involvement in research, they are being introduced to emerging theories that some professionals are not aware of yet. Postgraduate taught students noted that the involvement of their Tutors in research has been of direct benefit, as the recent shift to evidence-based medicine is reflected in the School's teaching. In general, students are positive about the increasingly research-led and evidence-based nature of the teaching they

receive, and have a sense of the taught elements of their programmes moving forward with the professions. However, a number of students also noted that they are aware that staff are under pressure to involve themselves in research as well as teaching, and feel that this puts limits on staff availability and the time staff have to devote to students. Despite these concerns, students who met with the Team noted that they regard it as one of the School's strengths that staff are interested in teaching and students, and are not obsessed with research to the detriment of teaching, as can be the case in other universities.

The QPR Team discussed with SOHCS the challenge of maintaining excellence in teaching whilst endeavouring to expand their research activity. The School reported that the introduction of a workload model has helped staff manage their time, but tensions between the two areas of activity are inevitable. The Team highlighted student concerns regarding the pressures on staff time, and noted that whilst it commends the School for being research-led in teaching, it is important to manage the risk this involves. The School confirmed that it is alive to this need, and regards the workload model as an important feature in managing the risk.

The Team asked the students present their views on Inter-Professional Learning (IPL). Students feel that it is a good idea in theory, but in practice they are less certain. They feel it is a positive first step, and SOHCS students gave a presentation to the Wales Healthcare Student Forum on the issue recently; however, it suffers from students being unclear as to its relevance. The Team recognises that IPL is limited to the professions in SOHCS at the moment, but once it is strengthened and embedded in the School, SOHCS could look at wider options and include other professions. The Team believes that students would welcome this development.

Equality & Diversity Issues in Learning & Teaching

Equality & Diversity is a key theme in the School's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The School is now engaged in the University's Inclusive Curriculum Project, with active consideration being given initially to all pre-registration programmes. The work is ongoing, and is being reported to the Learning & Teaching Committee. The School also noted that it is in the process of extending the Project to cover its post-registration provision.

The Team learnt that developments in the area of Equality & Diversity are at an early stage. The School does not anticipate that major changes will be required, as an awareness of disability issues is intrinsic for SOHCS professionals. The School began its work in this area by looking at the alignment of departmental approaches to Equality and Diversity, and trying to ensure consistency across the School. A Handbook is being developed to support this work, and SOHCS has been liaising with the University's Inclusive Curriculum Officer. She has also identified priority areas for the School to address, such as training, and this is in train. Once the Handbook has been completed, the School feels it will be in a better position to assess the impact of its work on learning and teaching.

The School also drew the QPR Team's attention to its work in the area of Welsh language provision. SOHCS works with practitioners to place Welsh speakers in Welsh speaking Placements. There is also a Welsh language route for assessment and marking in Welsh. The School's work in this area is being presented at the up-coming HEFCW/HEA Festival of Learning.

The Teams feels that the School is engaging with Equality and Diversity issues in a pragmatic and appropriate way.

Peer Review of Learning & Teaching

SOHCS refers to its process of Peer Review of Learning & Teaching as Peer Reflection, and the Academic Handbook contains a description of its operation. Staff are positive about the contribution which Peer Reflection makes to their development, and it is seen as an important aspect of developing approaches to learning and teaching. The School also uses Peer Reflection outcomes to inform CPD, and new learning, teaching and assessment styles are developed through this method. For instance, an increased awareness of research meant that staff were anxious about marking projects, so the School ran a series of sessions on standardising marking, thus increasing skills and ensuring consistency. ‘Working Smarter’ discussions have also arisen from Peer Reflection as a result of staff concerns about managing the balance between research and learning & teaching.

The issues identified as part of Peer Reflection also feed into staff appraisal, which regularly reflects the importance placed on developing staff’s approach to learning & teaching. The School informed the QPR Team that during its recent Periodic Review it consulted with practitioners, service users and carers, and the views and ideas of these stakeholders were sought on the School’s teaching, the content of its programmes and the type of student being produced.

The Team commends the School’s Peer Reflection process, its link to CPD, and the specific events organised by the School to support Learning, Teaching & Assessment. The Team was also pleased to note the School’s use of Periodic Review to develop stakeholder understanding and seek views on course development, design and delivery.

HEA Links

The School reported that the national HEA representative for Wales lectures on postgraduate programmes in SOHCS, and plays a key role in keeping the School informed of developments.

Summary

The Team recommends that SOHCS:

- pays particular attention to the balance of staff effort between teaching and research in its workload model. This recommendation is made in recognition of the students’ expressed concern about the pressure on Tutors in their teaching and pastoral care roles
- makes more explicit in the Programme Handbooks the contribution which research makes to the curriculum
[For further advice & guidance in this area contact:]
- considers looking at wider options and including other professions in IPL, once it is strengthened and embedded in the School

Areas of noteworthy practice:

- the School’s use of Periodic Review to develop stakeholder understanding and seek views on course development, design and delivery
[School Contact: Gwilym Roberts]
- the School’s Peer Reflection process, its link to CPD, and the specific events organised by the School to support Learning, Teaching & Assessment.
[School Contact: Tony Everett]

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

School Issues

The School Strategic Plan notes that space continues to be a significant issue for the School. SOHCS feels that there is not enough of it for current activities to be run in a high quality way, and in a number of cases the nature of the space is not wholly suitable. The Head of School highlighted that the standards of learning environment at the Heath Park Campus are significantly different to those at the Cathays Park Campus. The School also noted that the physical environment is problematic in terms of Equality & Diversity. SOHCS believes that the School will not be able to achieve its strategic objectives unless significant extra space is made available, and ideally this would involve moving the whole School from its current location to one where the School could operate in a unified manner in appropriate conditions. Preliminary work has been carried out to examine the possibility of funding a new building to be occupied jointly by SOHCS and the SONMS away from the Heath Park Site.

The School explained that adjustments have been made to the available space in an effort to make it workable, but only new space will fully address the problems. The School noted that the option of making intensive use of the facilities to solve the space issue causes its own problems, and puts pressure on resources. This was reflected in the feedback from research students who met with the Team and reported difficulties in accessing the Kinaesiology laboratory due to it being made use of for other purposes. The School reported that it has negotiated with the NHS Trust to utilise some of its rooms and facilities on the Heath site in an effort address some of the space problems. For example, the skills room of the department within the Trust is now used for Occupational Therapy, and Operating Department Practice uses the facilities at Merthyr for skills training. SOHCS also informed the QPR Team that it is presenting a business case to the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NLIAH) to try to persuade them to let the School switch from paying rent to paying the mortgage.

Students on the Radiotherapy Oncology and Diagnostic Imaging programmes who met with the Team commented that books for their areas are limited due to the smallness of the programmes. They gave access to a large number of journals, but not many up-to-date books, and the issue has been raised in the Student/Staff Panel.

Students who met with the Team confirmed that registration for Blackboard occurs in a timely fashion. Postgraduate students noted Blackboard had not been available during their undergraduate study at Cardiff, and reported that having access to it now has been a significant improvement. Students identified a number of minor issues, which they would like to see addressed. These include the occasional, unexplained delays in receiving documents on Blackboard, the lack of clarity regarding which year of study the posted information is aimed at, and the location of the literature search engine (which students would like to see put into Blackboard, as it is not clearly signposted or easy to find at the moment). Some students also expressed concern that there may be too much reliance on Blackboard, as not everyone has access to the web at home.

Mechanism for Addressing Strategic Issues

The QPR Team discussed with SOHCS the mechanisms it uses to identify strategic priorities for the learning environment. The School explained that student evaluations provide the main source of information on these issues, and are the means by which the School identifies pressure points. The School is making use of a number of routes to alert the University to these issues, including the Strategic Plan and Annual Report, and the Head of School's discussions with Pro Vice Chancellors and the Vice Chancellor. The School is trying to advance its list of priorities up the agenda, but noted that the

University response is slow. The School feels that, in as much as it does not yet have a new building, it cannot be said that University mechanisms for addressing these problems are effective.

The Team wishes ASQC to note that the School has made considerable efforts to work within its constrained environment, but the Team recognises the pressures making this difficult and hopes that the representations of the School will be responded to at the earliest possible time.

Summary

The Team recommends that SOHCS:

- considers the issues raised by students relating to Blackboard, including the lack of clarity regarding which year of study the posted information is aimed at, and the location of the literature search engine
- considers the issues raised by students relating to the availability of Radiotherapy Oncology and Diagnostic Imaging books in the library

Areas for further consideration by ASQC:

- the School has made considerable efforts to work within its constrained environment, but the Team recognises the pressures making this difficult and hopes that the representations of the School will be responded to at the earliest possible time.

ASSESSMENT

Explicitness of Assessment Information

The Academic Handbook contains a copy of the School Assessment Strategy, which provides a clear explanation of the purpose of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment. Many of the Programme Handbooks also contain useful sections on assessment: the BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook provides a bulleted list of the aims of assessment; the Physiotherapy Handbook clarifies the aim of assessment and provides definitions of formative and summative assessment; the Handbooks for the Diploma in Operating Department Practice and the BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice provide a bulleted list of the aims of assessment and a list of assessment methods for formative and summative assessments; the BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook section on Module Outlines explains the rationale for each assessment task, under formative and summative headings; the Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks make reference to the further information on assessment available in the Academic Handbook.

The School's generic Assessment Criteria are included in the Academic Handbook, and cover a range of assessment types. Most of the Programme Handbooks include Assessment Criteria or a cross reference to their availability in the Academic Handbook. The Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks include Criteria for marking written and oral assignments, and make reference to further assessment information available in the Academic Handbook. The BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice and the Diploma in Operating Department Practice Handbooks refer students to the School Assessment Criteria in the Academic Handbook. The Physiotherapy Handbook contains Marking Criteria for a range of assessments. The BSc Occupational Therapy P/T Handbook includes Assessment Criteria. The BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook has a particularly noteworthy section on assessment, which includes Mark Schemes for each module, Assessment Criteria and summary tables of the results achieved by the previous cohort for each module, which identify the grades achieved, what was generally done well, frequent mistakes and suggestions for improvement. The BSc Radiotherapy &

Oncology Handbook does not appear to include Assessment Criteria or a cross reference to the Academic Handbook Criteria, despite having a detailed section on assessment.

Information on the volume, range and loading of assessment tasks is included in the Programme Handbooks: the BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook contains a table detailing assessments and submission dates; the Physiotherapy Handbook provides descriptions of assessment for each module, detailing the range, weighting and general timing of assessments, and also lists assessments on an Academic Calendar; the Handbooks for the Diploma in Operating Department Practice and BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice refer to a published timetable of assessment submission deadlines; the BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook has tables which provide an overview of the volume, range and loading of student assessment tasks; the BSc Occupational Therapy P/T Handbook contains tables which give some details of the assessment for each Level of the programme; the Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks make reference to a timetable for assessment submission available on Blackboard.

The QPR Team learnt that guidance on Academic Integrity is available on Blackboard, and is also conveyed via a lecture in the first year. A number of students indicated that they would like to see this lecture repeated in the second and third year, as it can be easy to slip into plagiarism unintentionally, and reinforcement of Academic Integrity issues throughout the programmes would be beneficial.

Students who met with the Team appeared happy with the clarity and quality of information provided on assessment. They noted that assessment information is also provided in lectures, and students can speak with the person marking an assessment. Operating Department Practice and Diagnostic students in particular reported that submission deadlines are very clear, as they are included in their Programme Handbooks. In general, the Team was impressed with the quality of assessment information provided to students, and in particular the summary tables in the Occupational Therapy Handbooks.

Mechanisms for Ensuring Reliability & Validity of Assessment

The QPR Proforma notes that the mechanisms in place for monitoring the volume, range and loading of assessment tasks include the Departmental Academic Calendar in Physiotherapy, the Assessment Calendar for postgraduate taught programmes and Module Handbooks for Operating Department Practice. The School confirmed that assessment loading for the year is considered at each Department's Board of Studies.

The Team was pleased to note that the BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook and the Physiotherapy Handbook specify which Learning Outcomes are being assessed by each assessment task. It was also noted that the HPC/Professional Body Revalidation Report 2007 commends the wide range of assessments offered on the Occupational Therapy programme.

The School confirmed that staff dealing with special circumstances do not receive training in the area, and the School relies on the experience of the relevant individuals in dealing with such matters. An Extenuating Circumstances Sub-Committee is held prior to all Exam Board meetings, and the Academic Handbook offers guidance on categorizing circumstances in an effort to achieve a standardised approach.

The School reported that all summative assessment tasks are scrutinised at departmental level a year in advance by an appropriate group, such as the Teaching Team. They are reviewed again after being sent to the External Examiner. This is a process typical across the School, but it is not detailed in the Academic Handbook as the School did not wish to be prescriptive about how it is undertaken. The QPR Team queried whether the School has mechanisms in place for considering the consistency of assessment challenge across its Departments, and learnt that the School has developed cross-school

Assessment Criteria, but these are in their first year of implementation. Comparators of their professional standards (HPC/Professional Bodies) also contribute.

The Team feels that some of the School's examination processes are a little too implicit, and suggests that SOHCS make the process of arriving at exam papers more explicit via the Academic Handbook. The Team also suggests that the School consider further the consistency of approach and level of challenge in assessment across its Departments.

Feedback to Students on Assessed Work

The Academic Handbook has a section on Quality Assurance within Assessment. It advises that wherever possible the mark awarded for each summative assessment should be accompanied by written feedback to students highlighting their strengths and areas for further development, and preferably linked to each of the Assessment Criteria. It also notes that students should be provided with at least an approximate indication of when they may expect to receive feedback on their assessed work, and that this should be by means of the provision of an assessment schedule to indicate when each piece of assessment is due for submission, when students may expect to receive a mark for that piece of assessed work, and when they may expect to receive feedback.

This approach is not reflected in all the Programme Handbooks. There does not appear to be explicit reference to the methods for receiving feedback on assessed work or the timescale within which students can expect to receive feedback in the BSc Occupational Therapy P/T or BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbooks. The Physiotherapy Handbook specifies that procedures are in place to ensure students are informed of the type of feedback and when this will be given, but the procedures are not described (although feedback proformas are included in the appendices). The Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks make reference to a provisional mark and appropriate feedback being provided within a set time period following submission of written work, but gives no further detail. A number of the other Handbooks provide more detailed information: the BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook contains a table specifying the assessment due date, the type of feedback to expect and the timing of the feedback; the Diploma in Operating Department Practice and the BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice Handbooks make reference to a provisional mark and appropriate feedback being provided within approximately 4 weeks of submission following submission of assessment.

Students who met with the Team confirmed that feedback is linked to the Assessment Criteria, but noted that the quality of feedback can be variable depending on the marker. A number of students reported that feedback can sometimes be too positive, and they find they need to request follow-up meetings if they want to discuss how to improve their work. Students confirmed that they receive feedback on practicals, but again noted that it tends to take the form of praise rather than constructive criticism. Student gave the QPR Team the impression that they would appreciate a robust critique at all levels of the programme, both on written and practical work, in order to clearly identify how to improve. Students reported being unclear as to the return dates for their work, and some noted that on occasion they had not receive feedback in time to apply it to their next assignment.

The QPR Team learnt from postgraduate taught students that there had been problems with the feedback from a number of Tutors on the Research Methods Module. Students had reported their dissatisfaction via the module questionnaires, but had received no response or feedback on how this issue was being addressed. As a result, resentment is growing amongst those students concerned. The School acknowledged that the issue with the Research Methods Module is ongoing, but noted that it is being addressed. The School explained that the postgraduate taught students involved are already senior professionals and are undertaking an assignment in an area in which they are not comfortable. As this is their first assignment and their first feedback, the School believes that the students are finding it difficult

Students who met with the Team reported that the Open Days they attended in the School were very good, and provided plenty of opportunity to ask questions. A number of students highlighted that there can be an issue with applicants failing to grasp the group-based nature of the work, and that some subsequently withdraw from the programmes as a result. The length of the working day can also come as a surprise to some students.

The School informed the QPR Team that it goes to great lengths to ensure that students understand what is involved in the programmes and in the professions. With the exception of Physiotherapy, all Departments in the SOHCS interview applicants. International students may be given an assignment to complete instead of being asked to travel to interview, but the assignments are scored as if they were an interview. The ODP Department highlighted that it encourages students to gain Operating Department Practice experience prior to application, and this is reflected in the interview criteria. The School noted that this is true to some extent for all the SOHCS professions.

The transition to Problem Based Learning (PBL) is explained to prospective Occupational Therapy students, but staff noted that it is not the same as experiencing it on the course, and this may be the difficulty described by students who met with the QPR Team. The Occupational Therapy Department includes a PBL scenario as part of the interview process, but reported that despite this taster there are still students who decide after they start the programme that this method of learning does not suit them. However, the School does not consider retention to be a problem, and highlighted that funding bodies for pre-registration programmes regard SOHCS as being particularly strong in this area and NLIAH (WAG) references the School as an example of noteworthy practice for student retention.

The School brochure has been revised recently as a result of feedback from the Inclusive Curriculum Project on how best to present information. SOHCS is confident that its recruitment information is now as clear as possible, and comparable with other providers. The School also reported that it is currently applying to the University's Learning & Teaching Committee for funding for an E-package aimed at intended students in Physiotherapy.

The Team was impressed with the considerable efforts made by Admissions Tutors to ensure that students understand what is involved in their programmes and professions, and noted with pleasure the School's work on the Pre-Entry Pre-Learning Resource Project, which could be disseminated as noteworthy practice.

Student Handbooks (accuracy, accessibility, content)

There is a School-level Undergraduate Student Handbook, which is made available to students electronically via Blackboard and the web. It is easy to navigate and written in a warm, student-friendly style. The School noted that it is currently considering developing this into a generic Student Handbook, rather than limiting it to undergraduate students.

The School Academic Handbook is also available to students on the current student page of the School web site. The Undergraduate Student Handbook makes reference to this additional source of information in its introduction and to the Departmental Programme Handbooks that are also issued to students. The Academic Handbook has a clear contents page and is easy to navigate.

There are Programme Handbooks for each undergraduate and postgraduate programme, produced separately within individual Departments. There are also a number of Placement, project and supplementary Handbooks for some programmes. Students on the BSc Occupational Therapy (Part time) programme are issued with the Curriculum Document rather than a Programme Handbook. It is a lengthy document and not student-friendly.

The Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks are all produced to the same template, and most of the information included is common across all of them. They are clear and easy to navigate, but lack the student-friendly tone and the range of information of the undergraduate Programme Handbooks. They make reference to the Academic Handbook containing further information, but only in respect to assessment. They also note that additional module information is available from the Postgraduate Office. There is a separate School-level Handbook for research students, which is detailed and student-friendly.

Students who met with the Team feel that the Handbooks contain all the information they need, and are not aware of any discrepancies or omissions. Students noted that the Handbooks are readily available on Blackboard. Research students highlighted that their Handbook has been improved in response to student feedback.

The Undergraduate Student Handbook has a section on Harassment, which refers students to the Student Support Centre of SUON for further guidance on how to deal with harassment. There is also a section on Equality & Diversity which advises students to direct complaints about discrimination to the Departmental Director via the Programme Manager, Course Leader or Personal Tutor. The Research Student and Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks do not make reference to procedures for raising complaints of harassment or other unlawful discrimination.

The QPR Team learnt that efforts were made to standardise the Handbooks during SOHCS' recent Periodic Review. The School confirmed that this involved identifying standard items which should be included in all Programme Handbooks, although generic templates are not used. The production of the Undergraduate Student Handbook was also part of the efforts to standardise, and the School's intention in developing an Academic Handbook was to have a definitive text that all Departments could draw upon in producing their Programme Handbooks. The Team encourages SOHCS to continue with these efforts, and would like to see still greater consistency across the Handbooks.

Summary

The Team recommends that SOHCS:

- continues with its efforts to achieve greater consistency across the School's Handbooks
- continues with its plans to develop the School-level Undergraduate Student Handbook into a generic Student Handbook for all students
- ensures that Programme Handbooks contain cross-references to the additional information in the Academic Handbook and generic Student Handbook
- considers producing a student-friendly Programme Handbook for the BSc Occupational Therapy (Part time) programme, in line with the Handbooks produced for other programmes in the School
[For further advice & guidance in this area contact:]

Areas of noteworthy practice:

- the considerable efforts made by Admissions Tutors to ensure that students understand what is involved in their programmes and professions
[School Contact: Denise Russell]
- the School's work on the Pre-Entry Pre-Learning Resource Project.
[School Contact: Gwyn Owen]

SUPPORT TO STUDENTS (UNDERGRADUATE & POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT)

Monitoring Academic Progress

The School indicated that the procedures for monitoring student progress can be found in the terms of reference for the Boards of Studies, and that student progress is a standing item for the Boards under reserved business. The Undergraduate Student Handbook has a section on School Support, which notes that Personal Tutors monitor and support students in their studies, and also cites the role of the Module Co-ordinator as a source of support. From the information provided in the Programme Handbooks, it appears that the role of the Personal Tutor in monitoring academic progress may vary between Departments, but the Programme Handbooks contain only brief references to how a student's academic progress is monitored, so this is not as clear as it might be.

The BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook refers to monitoring progress via the Personal Tutor, and via the Clinical Lecturers whilst students are on clinical education Placements. The Physiotherapy Handbook has a brief section on Student Support, which specifies that the role of the Personal Tutor involves monitoring the progress of students. The BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook refers to a PBL Tutorial Group, but does not appear to make reference to any other type of student support. The BSc Occupational Therapy P/T Handbook has a section on Personal and Academic Tutorials, which notes that the focus of the academic tutorial is on the student's academic progress through each of the modules, and that Academic Tutors will change in line with each module studied; the Handbook also makes reference to students receiving regular weekly supervision sessions whilst on Placements to allow the student and the Practice Educator to review and monitor progress. The Diploma in Operating Department Practice Handbook does not appear to explicitly address the issue of monitoring academic progress: there is a brief reference to the role of assessment in monitoring academic progress; the section on Academic and Pastoral Tutoring makes reference to the Personal Tutor holding regular pastoral tutorials, but notes that students requiring academic tutorials must make an appointment with the Module Leader or can discuss academic progress generally with the Director of the Department. The BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice Handbook describes a similar system. None of the Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks make reference to monitoring academic progress.

Information on attendance requirements is provided in most of the Programme Handbooks and in the Undergraduate Student Handbook, which notes that attendance is required and that the policy for monitoring attendance complies with University requirements. However, the mechanisms for monitoring non-attenders and identifying and supporting students who may be struggling are less clearly described in some of the Handbooks. The Diploma in Operating Department Practice Handbook refers to attendance being obligatory, but does not explicitly refer to the mechanisms for monitoring non-attenders and failing students. The same is true of the BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice Handbook. The BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 and BSc Occupational Therapy P/T Handbooks do not appear to make explicit reference to the mechanisms for monitoring non-attenders and failing students. The Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks do not make reference to the mechanisms for monitoring non-attenders and failing students, nor does the Academic Handbook. In contrast, the BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook stresses that attendance is mandatory, registers are kept, and poor attendance may affect a student's progression through the course and final outcome. There is also information on the minimum hours of clinical attendance required to attain the degree. The section on Learning and Teaching strategies notes that Tutorials provide an opportunity to discuss individual learning problems or have remedial tuition. The Physiotherapy Handbook makes it clear that attendance is required, registers are kept, and poor attendance may affect a student's progression. It sets out the procedure for

dealing with non-attenders, and notes that the Board of Studies has the responsibility of monitoring the academic progress/attendance of students. It explains that if the Board of Studies decides that the academic progress of a student is unsatisfactory, a formal written warning of possible exclusion may be issued. There is also information on attendance requirements for Placements.

Students who met with the Team appeared to be clear on who to contact for support whilst on Placements. For example, Diagnostic students reported that they have a designated Clinical Tutor in each hospital, who they see regularly. Students noted that staff in the School are supportive, and some exceptionally so. However, students are aware that some Tutors are overburdened with requests for support, for instance the First Year Lead Tutor is helpful, but can get inundated with student problems. It was also noted that Personal Tutors are not always in a position to help with specific academic issues, and have to redirect students to other sources of support.

The Team queried whether students feel prepared for dealing with difficult behaviour from patients, and learnt that, whilst there is support for students dealing with difficult patients, students do not believe that there is a need to 'learn' coping mechanisms prior to Placements, as they expect to develop these skills on the job. It was also noted that the reflection process is helpful in this respect. Students reported that they never feel out of their depth whilst on Placement, and are well supported. However, students suggested that reinforcement of the support available might be useful, and would find it helpful to have examples early on of the problems that might be encountered, and to have it stressed that they must make it clear to the University if they are having difficulties in these instances.

The Team discussed with the students present their understanding of 'Fitness to Practice'. Students confirmed that they are aware of the professional standards they need to maintain, and noted that information on this area is provided via guidelines and lectures. Students feel that the guidance is helpful, and the concept is made clear to them. With regard to procedures for dealing with a student who slips from the norm in terms of Fitness to Practice, the School explained that serious cases would trigger the University Fitness to Practice procedure. However, there are safeguards in place to prevent problems reaching this stage. Programme Managers are informed of potential problem so they can take remedial action. Tutors from the School also visit students on Placements to help avert these problems. In addition, the School provides support and formal training for Practice Educators to ensure they are able to identify these issues and deal with them appropriately. Practice Educators use proformas to assess a student's Placement learning, and these were recently scrutinised by the HPC during Periodic Review to ensure that the mechanisms for identifying Fitness to Practice issues are effective. The School also noted that the MEDIC Fitness to Practice documentation had been used by all Schools in UWCM, and that after merger this documentation had fed into the development of the University's Fitness to Practice procedures.

The Team asked whether the School undertakes any analysis of general trends in student progression, and learnt that, although Academic Progress is a standing item on the Departmental Boards of Studies agendas, is not generally considered to the extent of whether ethnicity, gender or disability is affecting progress. Some work was undertaken in this area in relation to postgraduate programmes when the School noticed that international students were achieving marks at the low end of the scale. The School responded by offering extra tutorials and support to address the specific weaknesses of these students. This has been very successful, and international students are now performing very well.

The Team was pleased to note the level of student appreciation for the support and commitment from staff in the School. In terms of explicitness of information on academic support, the Team recommends that the School make it clear to students via the Programme Handbooks that Personal Tutors will signpost them to more appropriate academic support. The Team also suggests that the School consider

making more explicit its procedures for dealing with situations where a student may not be demonstrating Fitness to Practice, possibly via a policy.

Personal Tutoring System

The Academic Handbook contains a section on the Personal Tutoring System which makes reference to the University Framework. It notes that the School provides students with a clear written statement on the provision of Personal Tutoring support, a copy of which appears in Appendix 6. In-line with the University requirements, the statement outlines the arrangements for consulting Personal Tutors, and the roles and responsibilities of students and Personal Tutors within the process. The statement notes that alternative arrangements are made if the Personal Tutor is absent for a significant period, but it does not specify how to access assistance during any short term absences.

The Undergraduate Student Handbook notes that all students are allocated a Personal Tutor, but does not cross reference to the fuller Personal Tutoring Statement in the Academic Handbook. Similarly, the BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook refers briefly to the role of Personal Tutors; the Diploma in Operating Department Practice Handbook contains a section on Academic and Pastoral Tutoring, which provides some limited details of the system; the BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice Handbook only briefly mentions the Personal Tutoring System under the section on Academic and Pastoral Tutoring; the BSc Occupational Therapy P/T Handbook refers briefly to Personal Tutors: but none of these Handbooks cross-reference to the fuller School statement in the Academic Handbook. The BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook does not appear to mention Personal Tutors, nor do the Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks. Only the Programme Handbook for Physiotherapy includes detailed information on Personal Tutoring, with all relevant information except how to access assistance in the Tutor's absence.

Students are aware that they can change their Personal Tutor if they wish, but see this as a drastic step, and possibly something that might have repercussions. The Team informed the School that some students have a perception of there being a penalty to pay for changing their Personal Tutor. The School confirmed that changing Tutor is not regarded as a problem. However, it is the School's practice to promote the need for students to develop skills for working through their problems with individuals, as this is essential in their professional lives.

PDP

The Academic Handbook contains a section on the School's approach to PDP, which is linked to HPC requirements for professional development. Information on the process for Research students is available in the Research Student Handbook. PDP for undergraduate students is dealt with via specific modules on the various programmes, and is recorded via student portfolios. The School indicated that for postgraduate taught programmes the guidance is available in the Programme Handbooks, and that, in terms of the facility for recording PDP, support is provided for mandatory professional CPD. However, this information does not appear in the Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks.

Careers Support

The Undergraduate Student Handbook has a section on Support Services which provides a web link to the University Careers Service, as does the School web page for current students. The BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook has a section on the scope of practice for therapeutic radiographers, and the Physiotherapy Handbook has brief guidance on Applying for Jobs, but they do not specifically address careers guidance, and nor do any of the other Programme Handbooks.

The School confirmed that it provides careers activities, and noted for example that Radiography has careers support and guidance, including mock interviews, built in to the teaching programme. All Departments in SOHCS have similar arrangements in place. Other careers events organised by the Departments or outside agencies are advertised to students via Blackboard.

Central University Support Services for Students

The Academic Handbook section on Personal Tutoring notes that Personal Tutors are informed as to further sources of support within the University and Students' Union via their receipt of the Student Support Handbook. In addition, the Undergraduate Student Handbook has a section on Support Services which lists the range of central services available to students, along with web links. The School web page for current students also provides links to the range of central support services.

Mechanisms for Considering Student Feedback

As mentioned under Organisation Structure & Committees, there is a Student/Staff Panel for each Board of Studies including postgraduate taught, a separate Research Student Student/Staff Panel, and a School-level Student/Staff Committee. A system of Student Questionnaires is operated within SOHCS, including separate questionnaires for Placements. There is also opportunity for student representation on the School's key committees. This information is reflected to varying degrees in the SOHCS Handbooks. The Academic Handbook contains sections on the operation of Student/Staff Panels and Student Appraisal of Teaching Questionnaires. The Physiotherapy Handbook has a section on Quality Assurance, which mentions committee representation, Student/Staff Panel, evaluation questionnaires and other methods of student feedback; it also has an appendix with detailed information on student representation. The BSc Occupational Therapy P/T Handbook has a section on Quality & Standards, which details the mechanisms for student feedback including student representation on committees, evaluation questionnaires and the Student/Staff Panel. The BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook makes reference to the Student/Staff Panel and evaluation questionnaires. The Diploma in Operating Department Practice and the BSc Intra and Perioperative Practice Handbooks cross reference to the information in the Academic Handbook for further information on the School's quality mechanisms. The Undergraduate Student Handbook briefly mentions departmental student evaluation questionnaires, and refers to the Academic Handbook for information on Quality Assurance. The BSc Occupational Therapy Level 1 Handbook does not make reference to the Staff/Student Panel or to feedback made from it. The Postgraduate Taught Programme Handbooks make no reference to the mechanisms for students to make their views known to the School.

In terms of feedback to students on the outcomes from completed Student Questionnaires, the BSc Radiotherapy & Oncology Handbook notes that students are asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire at the end each academic and clinical block, and that the Student/Staff Panel receives feedback from the evaluation. The Physiotherapy Handbook notes that students are informed of the changes that have taken place as a result of their evaluation and feedback wherever possible, and that results of Placement Learning Evaluations are circulated to students at regular intervals. The School confirmed that this is not common practice across all Departments, but reported that the area is under review. The School is seeking to improve its feedback to students on the input they provide. The Learning & Teaching Committee currently has a paper out for discussion on student feedback and how to close the loop. The paper is aimed at developing a School-wide policy on feedback. The School has also set itself the task of improving student attendance at its committee meetings. The issue was raised at a recent meeting of the Staff/Student Committee, where students were asked for suggestions on how SOHCS might encourage and support students to volunteer for School committees.

Students who met with the QPR Team reported that the Student/Staff Panel system works well and has been further improved recently. This view is reflected in the minutes of the Staff/Student Committee from December 2008, where students reported that they feel that their feedback is taken seriously and that their departmental Student/Staff Panels are extremely useful. Students appear to be very positive about SOHCS' efforts to become more student orientated. The QPR Team learnt that the School has recently changed to the Panels being chaired by students rather than staff, and students find that this has made it easier for them to follow up on actions from previous meetings and find out what has happened in response to the issues raised. Students also reported that they have been invited to attend more School committees, some of which they had been unaware of previously. There is now greater clarity about student roles on committees, and students feel this will improve student involvement in this area. However, students noted that the School might find it easier to get more students involved if the successes resulting from student involvement and feedback were disseminated more widely.

The Team commends the Schools efforts to achieve greater involvement of students on its committees, and encourages SOHCS' to continue with this work. The School's plans to improve feedback to students on their involvement in the various Quality mechanisms will also lead to improvement in this area.

The identity and role of the Director of Postgraduate Research is made clear in the Research Student Handbook. The introduction to the Handbook includes welcoming statements from the Head of School and the Director of Postgraduate Research, and the section on Roles and Responsibilities covers the Head of School, Supervisors and students, as well as the Director.

Research students who met with the QPR Team highlighted the School's impressive contacts across the NHS Trusts in the various disciplines, which provide good opportunities for research collaboration.

Monitoring & Supervision

The Research Student Handbook details the procedures for monitoring of research students, and states that six-monthly and annual progress reports are completed for each student. It also details the use of supervisory teams and Research Plans for mapping progress. Copies of the six-monthly and annual progress report forms are included in the appendices. The School confirmed that operation of this process commenced during the 2008/9 session. A Supervisors Handbook has recently been developed, and is now available for circulation. The School's progress monitoring procedures are overseen by the Director of Postgraduate Research, with the Head of School having responsibility for arrangements for formal monitoring of research student progress. Both of these responsibilities are set out in the Research Student Handbook.

Progression requirements are made explicit to students via the Research Student Handbook. The Handbook details the annual progress procedures and operation of the Appraisal Panel for all years of the programmes, full time and part-time, and for qualitative and quantitative research.

The research students who met with the Team reported that the system for monitoring progress is helpful and effective in keeping students on track, without being too intrusive. Meetings take place six-monthly and annually. The system provides structure and sets deadlines for work to be completed.

The Team learnt that the Research Committee is currently revising the procedure for reviewing six-monthly reports. The School explained that to-date the reports have been reviewed by the Director of Postgraduate Research (unless he was also the supervisor for the student, in which case the report would be sent to the Head of School). The School confirmed that in future the reports will be reviewed by the Research Committee.

Skills & Training

The Research Student Handbook section on Skills Development notes that the Research Plan will include courses to attend and technical skills to be taught, that training and development needs are discussed as part of the six-monthly and annual monitoring, and that the School's monthly research seminars are advertised through SOHCS' weekly newsletter. The Handbook also includes information on the opportunities offered by the Graduate Centre and Graduate Schools, with links to the relevant web sites.

Students who choose to be involved in teaching and assessment support duties are required to attend the teaching skills and assessment courses offered by the Graduate School, and this is stipulated in the Research Student Handbook section on Teaching/Assessment. There is also a web link to the Code of Practice for the Involvement of Postgraduate Research Students in Teaching Activities. The School informed the QPR Team that research students do not currently undertake much teaching, but that this may change in future. The School's intention is that students undertaking teaching activities will be involved in Peer Reflection and be closely monitored. The School does not anticipate difficulties in providing this support to research students. Clinicians are supported in their teaching in the same way,

and are involved in the School's Peer Reflection process. Also, the School does very little traditional style lecturing, and most of its teaching is already undertaken in pairs or groups in labs or practicals.

Student Representation & Feedback

The Student Feedback section of the Research Student Handbook notes that students are asked to complete an annual on-line questionnaire, and that the results are discussed at the Student/Staff Panel. The School confirmed that this process was introduced for the 2008/9 session. The Handbook also describes research student involvement in the Annual Review and Evaluation of Postgraduate Research Activity, student representation on the Research Committee, and the operation of the Student/Staff Panel for research students.

Summary

The Team recommends that SOHCS:

- ensures that the Research Student Handbook makes reference to the induction provision made for student with non-traditional start dates
[For further advice & guidance in this area contact:]

Areas of noteworthy practice:

- the School's deliberate efforts to develop its research portfolio and the documents that support it.
[School Contact: Robert van Deursen]

STAFF SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

Clarity of Information for Staff

SOHCS produces a Staff Handbook and an Academic Handbook, which together provide comprehensive information on School procedures and protocols. The Staff Handbook contains, inter alia, committee remits, roles of School Officers, Staff Development Policy, Equality & Diversity Policy, Sickness & Absence Policy, and practical/logistical information relating to the operation of the School. The Academic Handbook addresses areas such as the School's Learning & Teaching Strategy, Assessment Strategy, APRE, Personal Tutoring, details of the University's Quality Assurance Structures, and Quality Assurance systems within assessment and during Practice Placement Learning. The School confirmed that the Academic Handbook is intended to cover academic issues, whilst the Staff Handbook concentrates on the management and operation of the School. The Staff Handbook has a section on Induction, and contains much useful information for new staff.

Both the Academic and Staff Handbooks have clear contents lists, are easy to navigate, and are available electronically on the School web site. The SOHCS Equality & Diversity Policy in the School Handbook notes that any member of staff who wishes to raise a complaint of harassment or discrimination should, in the first instance, refer to the University HR Division website and consult the Grievance Procedure.

Communication with Staff

The School Strategic Plan notes that the Investors in People (IiP) report of 2007 acknowledged that the improvements in communication brought in during 2006-2007 had had a positive effect. These included starting a weekly School Newsletter, which is e-mailed to all staff and research students, and

the rapid dissemination by e-mail of draft minutes of the fortnightly meetings of the School's Senior Management Team and those of all the School's main committees.

Staff Review & Training

The School Staff Development Policy is included in the Staff Handbook available on the web. Staff development is the responsibility of the Senior Management Team, and the School explained that it plays a key role in determining major areas of staff development. For example, the Senior Management Team discussed the arrangements for staff wishing to pursue a higher degree after it was noted that a considerably lower percentage of SOHCS staff had a higher degree compared to staff in other Schools in the University. As a result, a policy document on higher degrees training for staff was developed. This approach has been successful, and the HPC/Professional Body Revalidation Report of 2007 commends the strength of staff CVs reflecting their continued commitment to higher education study.

The QPR Team learnt that other staff development needs are addressed through appraisal, the line manager or the Head of School. These smaller requests for staff development from academic and support staff can normally be approved without problem, and therefore do not need to be prioritised. The School highlighted that there is a legal requirement for the professions within SOHCS to keep their CPD up-to-date. It was also noted that the School obtained accreditation under the IiP Scheme in October 2007, becoming the first School within Cardiff University to obtain such recognition in its own right. The School drew the QPR Team's attention to the fact that in the recent University staff survey SOHCS had scored highly in the area of colleagues supporting each other compared to the University average.

The QPR Team noted that a review of the completed QPR documentation will also help the School highlight areas of staff development that may need to be addressed.

Summary

Areas of noteworthy practice:

- the weekly School Newsletter, which is e-mailed to all staff and research students
[School Contact: Ceri Petersen]
- the rapid dissemination by e-mail of draft minutes of the fortnightly meetings of the School's Senior Management Team and those of all the School's main committees.
[School Contact: John Connelly]

CONCLUSION

The QPR Team had a positive impression of a School continuing to take seriously its duties and responsibilities under the University's various quality assurance procedures for the quality of education provided to students, and willing to engage positively with the QPR process.

There is evidence that SOHCS' procedures are being used to consider, promote, and implement the enhancement agenda of the University and the School. SOHCS is engaging with Accessibility, Peer Review of Learning & Teaching, Student Support/PDP/Personal Tutoring, the University Assessment Strategy, programme information for students, postgraduate research issues and Distributed & Flexible Learning. It is also beginning to engage with Equality & Diversity, and Management Information.

The School's commitment to enhancement is evident in areas such as the engagement with the Inclusive Curriculum Project, Peer Reflection and its links with CPD, the Pre-Entry Pre-learning Resource

Project, and SOHCS' efforts to improve student representation on its committees. The School is aware that further work is required to address issues relating to Equality & Diversity, use of management information data, feedback to students on their involvement in the School's Quality mechanisms, and consistency of information provided to students via the School Handbooks. The Team encourages the School in these endeavours.

Not all issues covered in the Areas for Review document were discussed during the meeting, but the School has been provided with the document and the Team encourages SOHCS to consider the issues highlighted by the questions as part of its on-going work in enhancement. Review of the completed QPR document proforma will also help highlight for the School areas that may need to be addressed.

Summary

The Team recommends that SOHCS:

- considers the issues highlighted by the questions in the Areas for Review document as part of its on-going work in enhancement
- reviews the completed QPR document proforma to identify the areas that may need to be addressed.