

**UNIVERSITY SUBJECT REVIEW**

**Provision provided by the School of Accounting, Economics and Statistics**

**May 2009**

## **Preface**

### **Purpose of University subject review**

The purpose of University subject review is to provide a mechanism which enables the University to be confident that the academic standard set and approved for all credit bearing and non-credit bearing provision and the quality of learning opportunities offered to all students meet University and Scottish Funding Council expectations.

### **Outline of the procedure**

University subject review is implemented in three complementary stages: preparation, led by a School Quality Committee and monitored by the Head of School; scrutiny, led by Academic Development; and, implementation of a school enhancement plan, led by a School Quality Committee and monitored by the University Quality Committee. Faculty Quality Committee provides support, advice and guidance to schools throughout the process as appropriate. The procedure is evidence-based and is reliant on information gathered during faculty and school-based quality assurance and enhancement activities typically within a six-year cycle. University subject review has been designed to be developmental in nature and encourages self-critical reflection through promoting dialogue between peers on areas where quality might be improved.

### **Evidence**

In order to obtain evidence for the review, the Panel carries out a number of activities, including scrutinising a self critical reflection produced by the school with responsibility for the subject areas being reviewed, reviewing the effectiveness of quality mechanisms and their associated documentation, and holding discussions with relevant staff and students. The Panel's discussions are also informed by University policy and procedures and external subject benchmark information.

### **Outcome of the review**

The outcome of the review is a school enhancement plan developed by the School Quality Committee using information from the review report. The report records the Panel's findings in relation to the effectiveness of the measures being implemented by the school to set and maintain the academic standard of its provision and to enhance the quality of the learning experience of all of its students. The report includes areas of good practice worthy of further dissemination and recommendations made by the Panel to improve the school's management of its provision. A draft school enhancement plan noting the good practice identified by the review panel and any recommendations made will form part of the review report.

### **The school enhancement plan.**

Within a timescale agreed by the Head of School and Academic Development the school completes an enhancement plan by identifying: the action to be taken to either share good practice or address recommendations; the individual with responsibility for implementing the action; a completion date; and, the means by which the success or otherwise of the action will be evaluated and reported. School Quality Committee will monitor the implementation of the enhancement plan and provide their Faculty Quality Committee with regular progress reports. Faculty Quality Committee will provide University Quality Committee with a progress report on the implementation of the enhancement plan as part of the annual reporting procedure.

## Executive summary

### Summary

The School of Accounting Economics and Statistics is one of three schools within Edinburgh Napier University Business School. There are three subject groups within the school: accounting; economics and financial services; and, statistics. The scope of this review includes all provision developed and delivered by the school which takes account of the expectations set out in the following subject benchmark statements:

- Accountancy
- Business and Management
- Economics
- Statistics and Operational Research.

A list of the current and proposed programmes at the time of the review is included as Appendix 1.

The provision in all three subject groups is effectively managed by the school and the academic standards set continue to meet subject, University and sector expectations. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and current and influenced by research and professional interests of staff. The provision is delivered using a variety of relevant learning, teaching and assessment approaches. A range of effective mechanisms are in place to manage the student experience across all levels of the school's provision in line with University expectations. The self-critical reflection contained areas of good practice and a reflection on areas where developments are required which demonstrated to the Panel that the school was effectively engaging in enhancement-led activities.

### Good practice

The Panel identified the following areas of **good practice** for further dissemination University-wide:

- the school's liaison with other schools and subject areas regarding their teaching needs (paragraph 5)
- the strong relationships developed between the accounting and economics and financial services subject areas with their overseas partners and those in Hong Kong in particular (paragraphs 7 and 8)
- the long-standing and well-established relationships with the accountancy and financial service sectors and a range of relevant and appropriate professional bodies (paragraphs 11 and 16)
- strong student support arrangements and the implementation of the Personal Development Tutor scheme in particular (paragraph 27, 28 and 31)
- the steps taken to encourage international student integration into its programmes through the use of group activities at SCQF level 7 (paragraph 34).

## Recommendations

The Panel recommends that the School of Accounting, Economics and Statistics:

- continues to explore ways in which students might be encouraged to better engage with group and peer assessment (paragraph 23)
- continues to provide staff with support advice and guidance to enable them to take full advantage of the scope of the virtual learning environment as an inter-active learning tool and that it is used consistently by all subject areas (paragraph 24)
- takes appropriate and timely action to ensure that all students are provided with written feedback on all coursework assessments in accordance with University expectations. In so doing the school is encouraged to take account of the examples of existing good practice in the School and ensure that this is consistently applied to all students in all subject areas (paragraph 26)
- continues to monitor and review the effectiveness of its student retention initiatives with a view to ensuring that students are provided with sufficient and relevant information to enable them to engage fully with their programme (paragraph 35)
- continues to monitor and evaluate the learning experience of its research students as a means of ensuring that their personal development expectations and needs are being met (paragraph 36)
- reviews its Week 1 programme of activities and its engagement with the *Confident Futures* programme to ensure that these are tailored to the needs and expectations of all of its students. In so doing, the school should take account of good practice identified in other areas of the Business School and University as appropriate (paragraph 40)
- reviews its mechanisms for providing students with information on how a matter raised by them has been addressed and ensures that this information is readily available to all students and staff and consistently applied across all subject areas (paragraph 41).

# **EDINBURGH NAPIER UNIVERSITY**

## **UNIVERSITY SUBJECT REVIEW**

**Provision provided by the School of Accounting, Economics and Statistics: May 2009**

### **Conduct of the review**

1 This report presents the findings of the University subject review of provision provided by the School of Accounting, Economics and Statistics (the School). The review was carried out by:

Rowena Pelik, Director Academic Development (Panel Convenor).

Dr Ailsa McKay, Acting Head, Division of Public Policy, Caledonian Business School, Glasgow Caledonian University.

Edward Kerr, Principal Lecturer in Financial Management, University of Hertfordshire.

Prof Morag Gray, Associate Dean (Academic Development) Faculty of Health, Life and Social Sciences.

Caroline Turnbull, Associate Dean (Academic Quality and Customer Service), Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Creative Industries

Dr John Ensor, Head of School of Marketing, Tourism and Languages, Edinburgh Napier University Business School.

Grant Horsburgh, Head of Quality Enhancement (Panel Secretary).

### **Setting the review in context**

2 The School of Accounting Economics and Statistics is one of three schools within Edinburgh Napier University Business School. The school operates with three subject groups, that is, accounting, economics and financial services, and statistics. At the time of the review the School employed 43 academic staff, two research assistants, and one full-time and two part-time administrative staff. Among the academic staff, there are three Professors, one in each of the three subject groups; a Reader in Statistics; two Senior Lecturer/Senior Teaching Fellows, one in economics and one in statistics; and seven Senior Lecturers. There are also three Lecturer/Teaching Fellows within the accounting group.

3 A significant number of students enrolled on compulsory, core and option modules developed by the accounting and economics and financial services subject groups are from programmes delivered elsewhere in the Business School. There is also some inter-faculty provision of teaching, most notably by the statistics subject group almost half of whose teaching takes place in the other two faculties. The statistics group is also responsible for the operation of both the undergraduate and postgraduate research methods modules within the Business School which are taken by in excess of 500 UK-based students each year and are also offered on Business School programmes delivered in Hong Kong.

4 The school noted in its critical review liaison with other schools with regard to their teaching needs as an area of good practice. During discussions the Panel noted that there is a strong drive across the Business School to be seen as such and not as separate schools. The matrix structure was working well and enables schools to act as academic groupings to drive the University's academic agenda. All three subject groups provided examples of contextualising their subject through case studies and workbook examples to provide relevance to subject areas outside the Business School. In addition, the statistics group undertakes joint teaching with other subject areas to contextualise delivery to particular student cohorts.

5 The Panel noted that school staff do not feel constrained by Business School programme design rules. The support and encouragement to develop new programmes provided by the Business School is welcomed and viewed as a positive feature. The Panel supports the school's view that its liaison with other schools and subject areas regarding their teaching needs is good practice.

### **Culture and distinctiveness of the subject areas**

6 The school is engaged in a diverse range of activities, and each subject group makes a valuable contribution to its overall profile and operation. The accounting and economics and financial services groups deliver a range of programmes at home and overseas while the statistics group is significantly involved in research and service teaching activity. All subject groups maintain a range of relevant professional body links which assist the school in maintaining effective links with relevant industries.

7 The school's provision has experienced steady growth in undergraduate and taught masters student numbers over the preceding three years. The number of direct entry students to UK-based programmes has increased significantly over the same period with many such students joining from partner universities in China, having completed a previously agreed programme of study to enable this articulation to take place. Staff have undertaken teaching visits to Shandong University of Finance to allow students to experience the school's learning and teaching methods prior to their arrival in Scotland. Over the same period, a rising number of Higher National students have entered the school's programmes at both the second and third stages of study which has resulted in an inherently diverse student population within the school.

8 A particular feature of the school's provision is the continued and accelerating growth in accounting and financial services programmes offered in partnership with Hong Kong University (School of Professional and Continuing Education) and City University (School of Continuing and Professional Education). The school is the highest contributor of international income to the University and has the highest number of students overseas. Consequently, the school makes a significant contribution to the University Strategic plan in terms of the development and growth of overseas programmes. The strong relationships the school has developed with its overseas partners and those in Hong Kong in particular are a strength of the accounting and economics and financial services subject areas.

9 A less successful part of the school's portfolio is part-time UK-based provision. A combination of non-viable student numbers and changes in accrediting body demand led to the withdrawal of accounting part-time programmes. With the exception of a small number of part-time financial services and completing part-time accounting students the recruitment of UK-based part-time students remains a challenge for all three subject groups. In contrast part-time student numbers on Hong Kong-based programmes continue to rise, as do those on the MSc Investment Promotion and Economic Development programme, a part-time distance learning programme delivered in association with DIAS Management (Switzerland). The school believes that the intended approval of additional taught masters programmes will help to address the low take-up of part-time places.

10 The school is home to the accounting and finance and the statistics research clusters, the EU-China Development research centre, a vehicle for collaborative research with Chinese universities, and a number of staff are associated with the Faculty's Employment Research Institute. There are currently fifteen research students based in the school and a number of staff are part of the supervisory teams for research students based in other schools. The school is a founder member of the Scottish Institute for Research in Economics one of the research pooling arrangements established by the Scottish Funding Council.

11 During their discussions throughout the review visit the Panel noted that each subject group had a clear vision and a determination to set achievable targets which will enable them to support the University's strategic plans. The school has long-standing and well-established relationships with the accountancy and financial services sectors and a range of relevant and appropriate professional bodies which in the Panel's view are a distinctive feature of the provision in all three subject areas.

### **The effectiveness of the subject's management in setting and maintaining academic standards**

12 The provision in all three subject groups is effectively managed by the school and the academic standards set continue to meet subject, University and sector expectations. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and current and influenced by research and professional interests of staff. The provision is delivered using a variety of relevant learning, teaching and assessment approaches. A range of effective mechanisms are in place to manage the enhancement of the student experience across all levels of the school's provision in line with University expectations.

13 In common with University practice the school's committee structure includes a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, a Quality Committee, Boards of Studies and Boards of Examiners. All three subject groups have appropriate representation on all committees and student representatives are full members of all committees except Boards of Examiners. While the school's committees have a key role in maintaining standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience, ultimately responsibility lies with the Head of School, subject group leaders and individual staff delivering modules and programmes. The Convenors of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Quality Committees represents the School on the corresponding University and Business School committees and liaise closely with the Assistant Faculty Manager (Quality) and the Associate Dean (Academic Quality, Customer Service and Recruitment) on a wide range of matters relating to standards and quality.

14 All three subject groups take account of and fully engage with the University's Quality Framework: Procedures as a means of approving, monitoring and reviewing their provision. Definitive versions of module descriptors and programme specifications which the Panel confirmed met University expectations are held centrally at faculty-level.

15 All modules and programmes of study scrutinised during this review have been approved during the University's move to a 20-credit modular structure and are subject to annual review and monitoring in accordance with University procedures. Curriculum design was informed by University, faculty and school strategic plans, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) expectations and subject benchmark statements for Accountancy, Economics, Business and Management, and Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research. Where appropriate, professional body requirements were taken into account to ensure continuing accreditation of programmes.

16 A large proportion of academic staff in the accounting group are professionally qualified accountants and members of the major UK professional accountancy bodies. The BA (Hons) Accounting is accredited by a range of professional bodies including: the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland (ICAS); the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA); the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA); and, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA), which entitles students to exemption from a range of professional body examinations on a module by module basis. The BA (Hons) Accounting (Hong Kong) is accredited by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants (HKICPA) and was the first programme offered by a university in the UK to achieve this recognition for its delivery. Members of the statistics group are also actively involved in a range of professional body activities including the Royal Statistical Society, the International Institute of Forecasters, the Operational Research Society and the Operational Research Group of Scotland. The economics and financial services group have links with the Chartered Institute of Bankers in Scotland, the Chartered Insurance Institute, the Royal Economic Society, and the Scottish Economic Society.

17 Other factors which influenced curriculum design included staff research interests and emerging areas of subject-specific interest such as risk management and regulation within the financial services sector. The identification by the Business School of a number of programme design parameters to help to ensure that all Business School graduates obtained a minimum level of business expertise included the introduction of generic compulsory modules. Such modules include an introductory economics and finance module at SCQF level 7, a business and management challenges module at SCQF level 8 and a leadership, creativity and innovation module at SCQF level 10. However, the school received an exception from the Business School to enable the SCQF level 7 introductory economics and finance module to be replaced with both an accounting and an economics module in recognition of the fact that these more specialised requirements were appropriate to the nature of the school's provision. Similarly, the BA (Hons) Financial Services Management (flexible) programme and Hong Kong based undergraduate programmes do not include the *Leadership, Creativity and Innovation* module as entrants into these programmes have already covered such topics during their previous studies.



18 Final year undergraduate accounting students expressed strong opinions regarding the *Leadership, Creativity and Innovation* module being a compulsory element to their programme. Students were of the opinion that the absence of an option module in their final year disadvantages them in gaining some professional body examination exemptions. Discussions with staff indicated that they were aware of this disquiet and had explained to students the rationale behind the compulsory nature of the module concerned. The Panel noted that the school continues to monitor this situation to ensure that final year accounting students are not being disadvantaged in gaining any professional body examination exemptions because of a lack of option choice and that they are provided with full and accurate information to ensure that they understand that they are not being disadvantaged.

19 Given that the majority of students on the school's overseas undergraduate programmes are in full-time work and studying part-time, there is a clear relationship between their studies and the working environment. In light of a request from the school's Hong Kong partner the BA (Hons) Financial Services has been granted an exemption from University academic regulations to permit it to be offered without a dissertation or final year project in the programme structure. The rationale for granting this exemption is based on the fact that all students are in subject-specific employment which enables equivalent learning outcomes to those associated with a dissertation or final year project to be set and achieved through the component assessments within approved modules contained in the programme structure. The Panel noted that the teaching team is confident that while the programme structure is driven by partner expectations and requirements, the rationale provided to the University's Regulations Committee remains valid and tenable. During the discussion the Panel suggested that the teaching team may wish to review the programme structure to offer two parallel routes to the award; one with a 40-credit dissertation and the other with two 20-credit modules which would enable students to achieve the same learning outcomes and an equivalent learning experience to the dissertation. The Panel indicated that this approach may help to better engage students in a learning experience associated with a dissertation or final year project in accordance with subject benchmark statement expectations.

20 Work-based learning in trimester two of stage three is a feature of the BA (Hons) Economics with Management and BA (Hons) Financial Services Management. The accreditation of accounting programmes and the embedding of employability skills within modules also help to provide relevant vocational and employability skills. The move to the 20-credit modular structure enabled the school to embed employability skills within all undergraduate and taught masters modules in accordance with University expectations.

21 Internationalisation of the school's student body is taking place through an increase in the number of collaborative programmes and partnerships overseas, and through a more internationally diverse student population on the school's programmes. This in turn feeds back into the increasing internationalisation of the school's modules and programmes. Academic staff are encouraged to reflect international issues within modules and to use the experience gained in teaching overseas, participation in international conferences, etc, to support and inform the student experience.

## **The effectiveness of the subject's approaches to learning, teaching and assessment**

22 The school's Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee provides a formal forum for discussing learning, teaching and assessment topics which compliments discussion at programme and subject levels. The Committee also receives, considers and disseminates University and faculty policy and refers learning, teaching and assessment matters to the equivalent faculty and University committees for consideration. The Committee played a key role in ensuring that all three subject groups contributed fully to the University's Consistency in Assessment Reviews.

23 Group work and presentations are a feature of all modules during the second stage of all programmes. Students indicated that assessed group work is not popular as poorly performing individuals within a group can adversely affect the mark awarded to the entire group. Students mentioned that peer-group assessment had been introduced in some modules to alleviate this problem but there was a general feeling that students were uncomfortable with this form of assessment. Discussions with staff indicated that the statistics and accountancy groups had explored a variety of methodologies for improving peer assessment including individual students completing reflective logs and filling in assessment forms. Accounting group students are also given the option of expelling non-participating individuals from their groups. In noting the progress made in implementing group and peer assessment, the Panel recommends that the school continues to explore ways in which students might be encouraged to better engage with group and peer assessment.

24 The Panel noted that the school employs a wide-range of appropriate learning and teaching methods designed to engage students with their learning. These include examples of imaginative inter-active learning using the University's virtual learning environment, for example, in-built quizzes which must be answered before access can be gained to succeeding lecture notes and lecturers providing partial sets of notes as a means of encouraging students to attend lectures. However, students indicated that there is an inconsistent approach to the use of the virtual learning environment within and between subject groups. Some staff were recognised as using the virtual learning environment as an inter-active and useful learning tool while others used it merely as an information storage platform. Discussions with staff acknowledged that this inconsistency exists and that staff are being encouraged to take full advantage of the scope of the virtual learning environment as an inter-active learning tool. The Panel recommends that the school continues to provide staff with support advice and guidance in achieving this aim.

25 The majority of the school's modules use a combination of continuous assessment and examination. In accordance with University assessment regulations time constrained examination of students during stage one of an undergraduate programme does not take place in trimester one. Formative assessment and formative feedback on non-assessed activities is encouraged in order to assist students in developing their scholarly skills. Scholarly skills development is also provided through *Maths Plus* and *Stats Plus* drop-in sessions run by the statistics group University-wide in all three trimesters.

26 Students indicated that they are provided with a good range, variety and balance of assessment methods. Feedback is provided on all coursework but there was some debate regarding the quality of the feedback provided and the appropriateness of the timeframe in which feedback should be provided. The Panel noted that students were unaware of the University's *Student Charter* expectation that feedback on coursework will be provided within three weeks of the submission date. Chinese students acknowledged that they found coursework difficult especially in their first year of study at Edinburgh Napier and indicated that more formal and structured feedback would be appreciated. While the sample of student work scrutinised by the Panel confirmed the students' views, the Panel noted many examples of excellent written feedback being provided to students which would enable them to improve their future learning. The Panel recommends that the school takes appropriate and timely action to ensure that all students are provided with written feedback on all coursework assessments in accordance with University expectations. In so doing the school is encouraged to take account of the examples of existing good practice in the School and ensure that this is consistently applied to all students in all subject areas.

27 One of the main challenges for the school relates to implementing the University's widening access policy. For example, UK-based entrants into stage three of programmes appear to have some difficulty in making the transition from predominantly continuous to more formal examination assessments. Conversely, Chinese entrants to stages three and four are familiar with examinations but have little experience of coursework as a means of assessment. This situation is further complicated as the accrediting body requirements need to be taken into account when designing assessments. While the move to the 20-credit modular structure enabled the subject areas to take account of this challenge when designing module assessments, the school continues to provide additional support to students through the Business School bridging programmes. The school also provides introductory workshops to enable students to place the skills learnt within the bridging courses in a subject-specific context.

28 Discussions with staff indicated that the school has taken a number of effective steps to ensure that there is continuity between the learning, teaching and assessment strategies employed on programmes delivered in Edinburgh and Hong Kong. These include module leaders and teaching teams participating in all module routine monitoring activities, peer review of teaching and the provision of teaching packs for Hong Kong-based colleagues. Examples were provided of teaching practice in Edinburgh having been influenced by good practice and enhancement activity in Hong Kong and *vice versa*. The school's Teaching Fellows' key role in facilitating the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning was noted by the Panel as was the close working relationship between teaching teams in Edinburgh and Hong Kong. The Panel concluded that the commitment of the Edinburgh-based staff to the collaborative programmes is a major contributing factor to its success which is demonstrated by their partners' continuing desire to offer more programmes and by the continuing accreditation of the accounting undergraduate provision by the HKICPA.

29 Staff pursue a range of research interests across the school's subject areas and beyond, for example, in health. This has resulted in the school successfully generating a number of high profile research and consultancy activities. The school also has two research papers series, one for subject-based and one for pedagogic research in disciplines covered by the school. All of the school's research active academic staff are involved in teaching, and the primary focus of the school is on applied research. The Panel were provided with examples of staff research activity and interests being embedded in their teaching and of examples where pedagogic research undertaken by Teaching Fellows has been incorporated into modules.

### **The effectiveness of the subject's management of the enhancement of the student learning experience**

30 Responsibility for the operation of quality processes at module level is devolved to module leaders and this includes the production of assessments and assessment briefs; the review of assessments, the preparation of module evaluation reports and, for modules at SCQF levels 9, 10 and 11, providing assessment samples for external examiners. The programme annual report provides the principal mechanism for evaluating and reporting on quality processes at programme level. The programme annual report is compiled by the programme leader using quantitative and qualitative data gathered from a variety of sources including student-staff liaison committees, Boards of Studies, Boards of Examiners and external examiner reports. The School Quality Committee has a key role in considering the outcome of module and programme routine monitoring activities to ensure that good practice is identified and used to enhance the student learning experience in other subject areas and that any areas of concern are addressed and the outcome reported to students and other subject areas.

31 The school has well-established mechanisms to ensure that students are provided with effective academic and pastoral support, previously through the year tutor scheme, and now the University-wide Personal Development Tutor scheme. All students are invited to meet with their Personal Development Tutor twice a year to discuss matters relating to their studies. Students may request additional meetings as the need arises. In assisting students through the scheme, Personal Development Tutors draw upon the support of colleagues from across the University, for example the Faculty Academic Support Advisor, and professional service areas such as the Napier University Learning Information Service and Student Affairs. The Panel supports the school's view that the strong student support arrangements and the implementation of the Personal Development Tutor scheme are examples of good practice.

32 The rising number of international students enrolled on the school's Edinburgh-based undergraduate provision has presented challenges relating to assisting international students to integrate fully into programme or module cohorts. For some SCQF level 9 and 10 modules, the direct entry Chinese students account for over half of the module enrolments and this has made integration difficult to achieve. Some continuing students have been unsettled by the sudden expansion of student numbers on modules and programmes as they reach stages 3 and 4 and this has become a recurring theme at recent student staff liaison committees and Boards of Studies, particularly within the economics and financial services area.

33 The school highlighted in their critical reflection the integration of direct entry students at stages three and four as an area that required continuing enhancement. The Panel noted that the school has adopted a multi-faceted approach to encourage all students to integrate with other ethnic groups. For example, students are formed into mixed ethnic groups for induction and Week 1 activities. As noted above, Chinese students are given the opportunity to experience the school's teaching and learning methods before joining the Edinburgh-based programme and assistance with English-language training is provided if required. Chinese students met by the Panel appreciated the measures taken by the school to ensure that they integrated into their programme, particularly the opportunity to experience the teaching methods before joining their programmes. In so doing students indicated that they would welcome greater assistance in coming to terms with the technical and subject specific language particularly during their first year of study.

34 The Panel commended the school for the steps taken to encourage international student integration into its programmes through the use of group activities at SCQF level 7.

35 The school has identified that UK-based and to a lesser extent European-based students are more likely to leave their programme prior to achieving their expected award. Work undertaken by the school to identify why these students are more difficult to retain than their overseas counterparts indicates that while academic failure is a contributing factor, the majority of students leaving programmes do not do so for this reason. For example, students from the BA (Hons) Accounting degree are choosing to leave with ordinary degrees due to both the continuing availability of graduate employment in this area and the fact that no further exemptions from professional body examinations can be gained by completing the honours year. The school also provides opportunities for students who have failed academically to be transferred to either the Business Finance suite of programmes or the Business School's flexibly-managed programmes. Discussions with staff suggested that some anecdotal evidence was available to indicate the move to a 20-credit modular structure might have improved student retention statistics. In acknowledging the work already undertaken by the school the Panel recommends that the school continues to monitor and review the effectiveness of its student retention initiatives with a view to ensuring that students are provided with sufficient and relevant information to enable them to engage fully with their programme.

36 Research students met by the Panel provided several criticisms regarding the academic environment within the school. These included: an informal and unstructured approach at the start of their studies which in their view was an unhelpful introduction to the University; a lack of research clusters; and, accommodation which is not conducive to research studies. Students also indicated that they would appreciate better opportunities to integrate more into school and Business School activities such as research and teaching. However, in contrast, the students were unanimous in their praise of the support provided by their supervisors. The Panel recommends that the school continues to monitor and evaluate the learning experience of its research students as a means of ensuring that their personal development expectations and needs are being met.

## **The effectiveness of the subject's enhancement activities**

37 Evidence in support of the review included an extensive range of material supplied by the School on a cd-rom which accompanied the self-critical reflection and this was supported by a sample of student work and other printed documents which were made available to the Panel. The Panel agreed that the self-critical reflection was easy to read, made effective use of referencing to additional information and was open and honest. The self-critical reflection contained areas of good practice and a reflection on areas where developments are required which demonstrated to the Panel that the school was effectively engaging in enhancement-led activities.

38 The scrutiny of student work and other evidence supplied by the school and the meetings with a sample of students from a wide-range of the school's provision indicated some inconsistencies in practice between subject areas, in addition to those noted earlier in this report.

39 While the Week 1 activities provided to undergraduate students starting stage one of a programme were regarded as helpful and informative, students starting their second, third and fourth stages were less enthusiastic regarding the programme of activities available to them. Students did not seem to understand the rationale behind introducing a dedicated Week 1 for continuing students and could see no value in attending. Students in stage one noted that fewer students attended events as each day passed. Overseas students indicated that they found Week 1 activities more useful than UK-based students. Similar criticisms were made of the *Confident Futures* events with the majority of undergraduate students indicating that they did not understand the rationale behind the programme of activities on offer. Some students indicated that the same activities had been delivered twice in the same trimester and could not understand why. However, students did acknowledge that some *Confident Futures* activities would be of benefit to articulating to the University if they were unfamiliar with higher education study.

40 In acknowledging that Week 1 activities and *Confident Futures* events have been successfully implemented in some areas of the school, the Panel recommends that the school reviews its Week 1 programme of activities and its engagement with the *Confident Futures* programme to ensure that these are tailored to the needs and expectations of all of its students. In so doing, the school should take account of good practice identified in other areas of the Business School and University as appropriate.

41 Students were unaware of any formal mechanism for providing them with information as to how the school had addressed a matter raised by students. Discussions with staff indicated that the student-staff liaison committee provided the formal mechanism for providing students with this information but acknowledged that this was not explicitly described as a formal mechanism. Staff cited a number of informal examples of how staff provide students with information on how matters raised by them have been addressed, including the campus information screens and lecturers passing information verbally at the start of lectures. The Panel recommends that the school reviews its mechanisms for providing students with information on how a matter raised by them has been addressed and ensures that this information is readily available to all students and staff and consistently applied across all subject areas.

**Provision included within the scope of the review**

- 1 UK undergraduate programmes:
  - a) BA (Hons) Accounting (including named routes – with Law, with Finance, with Economics, with Entrepreneurship, with Marketing Management, with Human Resource Management)
  - b) BA (Hons) Business Finance (Accounting)
  - c) Certificate in Accounting (being withdrawn)
  - d) BA (Hons) Economics with Management
  - e) BA (Hons) Financial Services Management
  - f) BA (Hons) Business Finance (Economics)
  - g) BA (Hons) Business Finance (Financial Services)
  - h) BA (Hons) Financial Services Management (flexible)
  
- 2 Overseas undergraduate programmes:
  - a) BA (Hons) Accounting (Hong Kong) full time
  - b) BA (Hons) Accounting (Hong Kong) part-time
  - c) BA (Hons) Financial Services (Hong Kong)
  
- 3 UK masters programmes:
  - a) MSc Accounting and Finance
  - b) MSc Corporate Strategy and Finance
  - c) MSc Applied Statistics (being withdrawn)
  - d) MSc Computer Enhanced Mathematics Education (being withdrawn)
  
- 4 Overseas masters programmes:
  - a) MSc Investment Promotion and Economic Development
  
- 5 Professional programmes:
  - a) Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
  
- 6 New (proposed) programmes for 2009-10:
  - 6.1 Approved programmes:
    - a) BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance
    - b) BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance (Hong Kong)
    - c) Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Accounting (validated but not currently running, now in the process of being validated as an MSc qualification to commence in 2010)
    - d) MSc International Finance
  
  - 6.2 Programmes subject to approval:
    - a) MSc Wealth Management
    - b) MSc Wealth Management (Hong Kong)
    - c) MSc Professional Banking

<b>Draft School enhancement plan: School of Accounting, Economics and Statistics, May 2009</b>						
<b>Good practice</b>						
	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The school's liaison with other schools and subject areas regarding their teaching needs (paragraph 5)	Maintenance of effective liaison with other schools and subject areas	Indefinite	Subject Group Leaders	Continuation of current provision of service teaching and/or adaptation to changing needs as appropriate	School Executive	
The strong relationships developed between the accounting and economics and financial services subject areas with their overseas partners and those in Hong Kong in particular (paragraphs 7 and 8)	Maintenance of strong overseas partnerships	Indefinite	Overseas programme leaders	Renewal of existing overseas partnerships	Collaborative Programmes Committee	
	Dissemination of good practice in this area across the university	2010-11	As above	Wider awareness of good practice in overseas activities	School Quality and LTA Committees	
The long-standing and well-established relationships with the accountancy and financial services sectors and a range of relevant and appropriate professional bodies (paragraphs 11 and 16)	Maintenance of relationships with professional bodies	Indefinite	Programme leaders (for accreditation purposes)	Renewal of accreditation	School/Faculty Quality Committees	
			All staff with links to professional bodies	Continuing active membership of professional bodies	Subject Group Leaders	



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**Good practice**

	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Strong student support arrangements and the implementation of the Personal Development Tutor scheme in particular (paragraph 27, 28 and 31)	Dissemination of the School's practice in this area via, for example, Academic Development seminars	2010-11	Personal Development Tutors	Events held to disseminate good practice in this area	School LTA Committee	
The steps taken to encourage international student integration into its programmes through the use of group activities at SCQF level 7 (paragraph 34).	Examples of group activities designed to encourage international student integration to be collated and disseminated	June 10	Programme and module leaders	Examples of good practice identified and shared across the School/Faculty	School LTA Committee	

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**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the School:	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Continues to explore ways in which students might be encouraged to better engage with group and peer assessment (paragraph 23)	Review of modules containing group and peer assessment	June 2010	Module leaders whose modules include group and peer assessment	Improved feedback from students regarding these forms of assessment in 2010-11	Subject Group Leaders via module evaluation reports for 2009-10 and 2010-11	
Continues to provide staff with support advice and guidance to enable them to take full advantage of the scope of the virtual learning environment as an interactive learning tool and that it is used consistently by all subject areas (paragraph 24)	Encourage staff to attend VLE associated Academic Development events	2010-11	Module leaders	Further innovation in use of VLE within the School	School Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee	

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**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the School:	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Takes appropriate and timely action to ensure that all students are provided with written feedback on all coursework assessments in accordance with University expectations. In so doing the school is encouraged to take account of the examples of existing good practice in the School and ensure that this is consistently applied to all students in all subject areas (paragraph 26)	Dissemination of outcomes of Business School Rapid Improvement Event on feedback  Enhancement of current practice in the light of both the above and existing good practice within the School	July 2010  2011	School Representatives involved in the Rapid Improvement Event  Module leaders	Increased awareness of the issues surrounding assessment feedback  Improved student satisfaction with feedback processes as evidenced from internal sources (2010-11) and via the National Student Survey (2011)	School Quality and LTA Committees  School, Faculty and University Quality Committees	

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<b>Recommendations</b>						
<b>It is recommended that the School:</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Continues to monitor and review the effectiveness of its student retention initiatives with a view to ensuring that students are provided with sufficient and relevant information to enable them to engage fully with their programme (paragraph 35)	Comparison of retention rates for 2009-10 with those for 2008-09.	November 2010	Programme leaders via the Annual Reporting Process	Improved retention rates	School/Faculty Quality Committees	
	Identification of key reasons for student non-continuation of studies via PDT interviews and continued provision of tailored support information to "at risk" students.	2010-11	Personal Development Tutors	Continuation and enhancement of good practice in student support identified above.	As above	
Continues to monitor and evaluate the learning experience of its research students as a means of ensuring that their personal development expectations and needs are being met (paragraph 36)	Identify principal issues arising in this area via annual research student reviews	July 2010	Directors of Studies	Issues identified and where possible addressed	School RKT Committee	
	Augment the provision research student related activities as and when required, for example, induction.	2010-11	Directors of Studies in consultation with Associate Dean (RKT) and Faculty Higher Degrees Co-ordinator	Increased research student satisfaction	Faculty and School RKT Committees	

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<b>Recommendations</b>						
<b>It is recommended that the School:</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Reviews its Week 1 programme of activities and its engagement with the Confident Futures programme to ensure that these are tailored to the needs and expectations of all of its students. In so doing, the school should take account of good practice identified in other areas of the Business School and University as appropriate (paragraph 40)	Review the effectiveness of week 1 trimester 1 and week 1 trimester 2, 2009-10	February 2010	Programme teams and Week 1 Co-ordinator	Review completed and any issues arising identified	Programme Boards of Studies	
	Identify good practice in other areas	May 2010	As above	Good practice identified	As above	
	Week 1 trimester 1 and week 1 trimester 2 2010-11 revised to incorporate good practice identified	July 2010 and November 2010	As above	Improved student attendance and engagement with week 1 activities	Programme Boards of Study and School LTA Committee	
Reviews its mechanisms for providing students with information on how a matter raised by them has been addressed and ensures that this information is readily available to all students and staff and consistently applied across all subject areas (paragraph 41).	Improved recording and dissemination of responses to issues raised by students via Staff Student Liaison Committees and Boards of Studies	2010-11	Programme Leaders, Staff Student Liaison Committee Convenors, Programme Administrators and Student Representatives	Greater student awareness regarding how matters raised by students have been responded to by staff	School/Faculty Quality Committees via Annual Reporting process	