

# ULSTER UNIVERSITY

## REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE REVALIDATION PANEL UNIT: 3F Food (CAFRE)

4 March 2019

### PANEL:

Professor Una McMahon-Beattie, Head of the Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Ulster University (Chair)

Dr Derek Watson, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Business & Law, University of Sunderland

Mrs Mandy Lloyd, Lecturer, Faculty of Hospitality Management, University College, Birmingham

Professor Aine McKillop, Associate Dean (Education), Faculty of Life & Health Sciences, Ulster University

Mr Liam McComish, Senior Lecturer in Graphic & Advertising Design, Belfast School of Art, Ulster University

Miss Rachel Johnston, Student representative

### REVALIDATION UNIT CO-ORDINATOR:

Dr Gillian Stevenson, College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (Loughry campus)

### IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Ayla Guarino, Academic Policy and Standards Officer, Academic Office, Ulster University

Mr Jerome Marley, Faculty Partnership Manager, Biomedical and Environmental Sciences, Ulster University

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Panel was convened to consider the following provision within Revalidation Unit 3F Food (CAFRE):

- FdSc Food Manufacture and Nutrition (with CertHE exit award) [previously FdSc Food Nutrition and Health\*]
- BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition (with CertHE and AB exit awards) [previously BSc Hons Food Design and Nutrition\*]
- BSc Hons Food Business Management (with CertHE and AB exit awards)
- BSc Hons Food Technology (with CertHE and AB exit awards)

\* subject to APAG approval

The following are the minimum and maximum student intake figures recommended by the Faculty (based on available staff and physical resources on each campus).

#### Minimum and Maximum Cohort for FdSc Food Manufacture and Nutrition

	Mode of Attendance	Year of 1 <sup>st</sup> Intake	Year of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Intake	Year of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Intake	Year of 4 <sup>th</sup> Intake	Year of 5 <sup>th</sup> Intake
Maximum cohort size for each site recommended by Faculty	FT	25	25	25	25	25
Minimum cohort size for each site recommended by Faculty	FT	15	15	15	15	15

#### Minimum and Maximum Cohort for BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition

	Mode of Attendance	Year of 1 <sup>st</sup> Intake	Year of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Intake	Year of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Intake	Year of 4 <sup>th</sup> Intake	Year of 5 <sup>th</sup> Intake
Maximum cohort size for each site recommended by Faculty	FT	25	25	25	25	25
	PT	10	10	10	10	10
Minimum cohort size for each site recommended by Faculty	FT	10	10	10	10	10
	PT	5	5	5	5	5

#### Minimum and Maximum Cohort for BSc Hons Food Business Management

	Mode of Attendance	Year of 1 <sup>st</sup> Intake	Year of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Intake	Year of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Intake	Year of 4 <sup>th</sup> Intake	Year of 5 <sup>th</sup> Intake
Maximum cohort size for each site recommended by Faculty	FT	25	25	25	25	25
	PT	10	10	10	10	10
Minimum cohort size for each site recommended by Faculty	FT	10	10	10	10	10
	PT	5	5	5	5	5

#### Minimum and Maximum Cohort for BSc Hons Food Technology

	Mode of Attendance	Year of 1 <sup>st</sup> Intake	Year of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Intake	Year of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Intake	Year of 4 <sup>th</sup> Intake	Year of 5 <sup>th</sup> Intake
Maximum cohort size for each site recommended by Faculty	FT	25	25	25	25	25
	PT	10	10	10	10	10
Minimum cohort size for each site recommended by Faculty	FT	10	10	10	10	10
	PT	5	5	5	5	5

## 2 DOCUMENTATION

The Panel received the following documentation:

- Agenda and programme of the meeting;
- Guidelines for Revalidation Panels;
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Foundation Degree Characteristics (2015);
- QAA Subject Benchmark Statement Agriculture, Horticulture, Forestry, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Sciences (July 2016),

- QAA Subject Benchmark Statement Business and Management, (February 2015)
- Preliminary comments from the Faculty Partnership Manager (Form CA4);
- External Examiners' reports for the last two years;
- Preliminary comments from panel members; and
- Course submission.

Prior to the meeting, the Panel was taken on a tour of the facilities available to support delivery of the provision by Mr Shane McKinney, Head of Food Education. The Panel found the tour to be beneficial and informative and was very impressed with the specialist facilities available to both the staff and students.

### 3 MEETING WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

#### 3.1 Background and Rationale

The senior team provided the Panel with some background information in relation to the provision and how it sits within the College's strategy explaining that the provision was in line with the College's Strategic Plan which supports the development of Foundation and Honours Degrees across the range of agri-food disciplines. The senior team advised the Panel that the courses met industry needs for well-trained new entrants and provide opportunities for the existing workforce within the agri-food sector to upgrade their qualifications. The Panel was informed that the College worked alongside the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to realise the "Knowledge Framework" Strategy which, among other things, aims that by 2025 all new manager level appointees in the food processing sector have at least a Level 5 qualification in a relevant discipline. The senior team added that in line with the College's ethos, the provision was designed in consultation with industry partners while ensuring academic underpinning.

#### 3.2 Differentiation Between the Programmes

The Panel asked for clarification on the distinguishable marketing points of difference between the three BSc courses in light of the high number of modules they shared. The senior team replied that the BSc in Food Technology was a broad degree, which will focus on aspects of food safety, quality and the application of new technologies and processes. The BSc Food Innovation and Nutrition, while sharing many modules with the BSc Food Technology, will focus on innovation, namely, the development of innovative, nutritious, safe, healthy foods that meet the needs of the marketplace. The BSc Food Business Management will include such topics as: management of supply chains, sales, management and marketing. The Panel noted, that students will have the option to move between programmes after the first year of study.

#### 3.3 Title Changes

In response to the Panel's query, the senior team outlined the rationale for the two proposed title changes:

FdSc Food Nutrition and Health (proposed new title, 'Food Manufacture and Nutrition'):

The foundation degree presented for revalidation was an amalgamation of a recently discontinued programme (2018), FdSc Food Manufacture, and an existing foundation

degree, the FdSc Food Nutrition and Health. The senior team explained that the former programme was withdrawn due to low recruitment numbers. It was proposed to name the remaining, revised programme, 'Food Manufacture and Nutrition'. The focus of the foundation degree will be on both food technology and food nutrition, allowing students to progress to BSc [Hons] Food and Nutrition at Ulster.

#### BSc Hons Food Design and Nutrition (proposed new title, 'Food Innovation and Nutrition')

The new degree title of BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition was perceived to be more factually relevant to the content and received favourable feedback from students.

The Chair advised the senior team, that a CA3 for the proposed title changes would need to be submitted.

#### 3.4 Staff Development

The Panel was advised of the College's comprehensive staff development policy which allowed staff to engage in relevant staff development activities, which in turn enhanced the student experience and the quality of teaching and learning.

The Panel was informed that a large number of the staff members had industry background and that over 80% of staff would have opportunities to further work closely with local industry. In addition, staff members teaching from BSc level were all technically trained. The senior team added that further development of skills and knowledge was achieved via the informal dissemination of learning acquired following participation in staff development activities and conferences.

#### 3.5 Transition to Higher Education

The team informed the Panel, in regard to the FdSc students, that all articulation routes both to Ulster University programmes and programmes offered by the College were promoted to students, and that students were encouraged to participate in the University's open days.

#### 3.6 Recruitment Strategy

The Panel was impressed by the dedicated CAFRE recruitment team which formed and maintained close links with a high percentage of schools in Northern Ireland. The senior team reported that their staff had visited 180 out of the 200 post primary schools in Northern Ireland, raising awareness to the opportunities and benefits of careers in the food industry with both teachers and students. Other examples of the marketing activities provided by the senior team included: participation and giving talks in careers' fairs to promote the College; hosting school children events at the College; and profiling of alumni of CAFRE – illustrating their career progression as well as inviting them to participate and give talk at recruitment events.

#### 3.7 Student Attrition

The Panel queried the student attrition rates reported in the course document in relation to the BSc Food Business Management Cohort in 2017/18. The senior team advised that this was contained to the year in question and did not reflect the provision's attrition rates

over the past years, adding that it was caused due to personal circumstances, and that the students in question were able to leave the programme with exit awards.

### 3.8 Physical Resources

The Panel commended the senior team on the campus' impressive open spaces and the outstanding, up-to-date, specialised teaching facilities available to students. Specifically, the Panel mentioned the Food Technology Centre and the Food Innovation Centre which support practical activities and the development of skills and knowledge which are highly beneficial in delivering the curriculum and providing real life scenarios. The senior team assured the Panel that this was the case in all three CAFRE campuses, and that investment in both staff and physical resources were a priority, with further investment plans going forward.

## 4 MEETING WITH STUDENTS

The Panel met with a group of students from the existing provision.

The Chair welcomed the students noting that they are an important part of the quality assurance process, helping in assessing the quality of their experiences and to identify areas where improvement can be made.

### 4.1 Induction

All students were very positive when asked about the 3 day-long first-year induction, mentioning both the content which was covered and the social benefits of getting acquainted with others in their cohort. Some of the students felt they would have benefited from a longer induction feeling the existing three days felt short. Others suggested that instead of finishing at 5pm, adding evening activities such as quizzes, was another way to go in order to enhance the induction experience.

The Panel noted that although study skills such as writing, referencing and report writing were not addressed during induction, those were included in the various modules throughout the degree, as were skills such as communication, leadership and teamwork.

### 4.2 Placement

The students felt the placement was extremely beneficial, enhancing various skills such as leadership and teamwork. The students reported no issues relating to placement and felt that there was ample support in place throughout the whole process. They specifically commended the availability and support of the placement coordinator. The students outlined support received in preparation for placement. They felt the Placement module was specifically helpful in such areas as CV writing and preparing for interviews, as were experiences from practicals and mock factories which also prepared them for the placement.

In regard to securing placement, although the responsibility laid with the students, they felt that there were plenty of placement opportunities available and that potential placement opportunities were well communicated on the CAFRE Online Moodle. The Panel noted that the majority of placements were in Northern Ireland, but that international

opportunities were also available to students. The induction given to students after returning from placement was deemed as extremely beneficial by the students.

#### 4.3 Course Structure

In response to the Panel, the students explained that as they progressed from first to second year, the link between the modules became clear, feeling that the stand-alone modules were beneficial to their understanding of alternative career paths available to them upon graduation.

#### 4.4 Internationalisation

The Panel queried about the international outlook of the provision. The students mentioned CAFRE's student exchange with a range of countries such as the Netherlands and the USA. The students added that international content was brought into the provision and that international companies were also invited to give talk to the students, sharing their international perspective.

#### 4.5 Student Support

The students praised the high level of support and pastoral care they received from staff who, in their view, made every effort to always be available. This was in addition to meeting with the head of year at least once each semester to both discuss their progression as well as provide advice going forward.

#### 4.6 Attendance

The students felt attendance was closely monitored and were clear on the procedures that were in place in case they exceeded the allowed absence days.

#### 4.7 Group Work

The students reported no issues relating to group work, explaining that they felt working with others was extremely beneficial and that the marks they received accurately reflected each individual's contribution to the work.

#### 4.8 Contribution to the Revalidation Process

In response to the Panel's query, the students outlined their contribution to the revalidation process, which included end of module feedback as well as consultation meetings with staff. The students felt that their feedback was taken on board during the revalidation process.

The Panel thanked the students for their engagement and speaking openly and honestly about their experiences and wished them well for their studies and future careers.

## 5 MEETING WITH THE COURSE TEAM

### 5.1 Differentiation Between the Programmes

More information was sought on the differentiation between the three BSc programmes. The team reiterated the difference between the programmes outlined by the senior team, outlining the benefits of having three close linked programmes, such as having one course committee and an integration of classes on specific modules, allowing for a crossover of talent and ensuring a high level of content delivery and student experience.

The Panel was of the view that there was no sufficient differentiation in the programme learning outcomes for each of the awards (Honours and AB degrees) in the BSc Hons Food Technology and BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition. The team agreed to redesign the programme learning outcomes to ensure they are specific and distinct from one another.

### 5.2 Internationalisation

The Panel queried how internationalisation was embedded in the curriculum. The team explained that given the global nature of the food industry, the provision assured opportunities of internationalism as part of the student learning experience and associated staff developments. The Panel noted that the provision offered various opportunities for student mobility. This was exemplified by the student exchange programme available to CAFRE students, giving them the opportunity to study the full 15-week fall semester during the third year of study at Michigan State University, allowing students to gain first-hand knowledge of the American food sector and experience overseas study. Another example provided by the team was the students' opportunity to undertake, during their placement year, a semester of study in Van Hall Larenstein in the Netherlands.

In response to the Panel's query regarding an international dimension in the curricula, the team advised that students would be made aware of the global perspective of the agri-food sector. Specifically, the team explained that the second year Business Economics module would include such topics as the impacts of: Brexit, UK competitiveness, and the alignment with commercial requirements of industry in relation to efficiency, productivity and sustainability.

In response to the Panel query regarding the destination of graduates, the team explained that although most graduates would stay and work locally, some would be employed in multinational companies offering global opportunities.

### 5.3 Title Change to the BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition

More information was sought on the rationale for changing the title of the programme from BSc Hons Food Design and Nutrition to Food Innovation and Nutrition. The team explained that the latter was a more widely known terminology within the agri-food industry. They felt that food design might have been misleading, and that innovation aligns more closely with the programmes content. The team explained that the decision was based on consultation with both industry and students.

The Chair reiterated that approval by the Panel would be subject to approval by the University's Academic Planning Advisory Group, and that a CA3 for the two proposed title changes would need to be submitted.

#### 5.4 Preparation for the Workplace

In response to the Panel's query, the team listed various modules which prepared students for work in a culture of food industry and enhanced their employability. These modules included: Food Product Design, Contemporary Global Issues in Food and Nutrition, Supply Chain Operations, Work Placement and Food Enterprise Studies.

#### 5.5 Assessment of Group Work

The Panel queried the strategy relating to group assessment. The team assured the Panel they had devised an assessment procedure to ensure individual work would be marked separately, giving the example of Food Product Design module, in which each member of the group would be expected to contribute approximately 1500 words as a part of the final dossier. The Panel was assured that Ulster University's policy on group work recommending that at least 25% of each student's assessment should be based on his or her individual contribution, would be adhered to. The team added that peer assessment would also be included in the mark scheme explaining that from previous experience those had proven to be realistic and fair.

#### 5.6 Integration of Part-time and Full-time Students

The Team advised the Panel that the part-time students were fully integrated and not a separate cohort, attending classes with the full-time students. The integration would begin during the team building stages during induction and continue throughout the provision. The team added that, as the part-time would normally comprise of older students with industry experience, working closely with them has extremely proven beneficial to the full-time students.

#### 5.7 Induction

The team explained that the final year, two-day induction, given to students after returning from placement alongside final year students, which also included study skills, was found to be beneficial by students and helped with cohort cohesion at this final stage of the provision. The Panel noted that this was initiated following feedback from both students and external examiners' recommendations.

#### 5.8 Industry-Informed Curriculum

The Panel asked the team to outline the extent and nature of stakeholder engagement in the development and design of the programme. The team confirmed the curriculum had been informed, developed and refined based on specific industry needs and feedback from key stakeholders. The team had met numerous times during the revalidation process, gathering information through consultations and feedback from students as well as employers to ensure the design was fit for purpose.

## 5.9 Assessment and Feedback

The Panel expressed concern in relation to the heavy reliance on more traditional methods of assessment, namely exams and reports. The Panel were of the opinion that more innovative methods of assessment could be implemented to better reflect the needs and working practices of the food industry. The team explained that they have innovated in the type of examinations used as well as introduced the use of technology enhanced assessment into various modules. The examples given by the team were the use of open book exams, practical exams and podcasts. Innovative formative assessment was also utilized in various modules, with open discussion and online exercises and quizzes given as examples.

The Panel felt the use of innovative summative and formative assessments was not clearly outlined in the course document and suggested the module description be revised to fully reflect these innovative practices.

The Panel expressed concern in relation to the 3-hour examination alongside a written piece of coursework utilised at five of the level 6 modules, suggesting the team consult the University's Assessment Workload Equivalence Guide to ensure equity of assessment. The team explained that they have used a standardised approach to assessment at each level and believed that the 3-hour examination was suitable for a level 6 module, as it provided students with ample time to structure and develop their answers. The Team added that positive feedback had been received from students in relation to this assessment strategy.

## 5.10 Student Support

The Panel commended the high level of support and 'family culture' which was evident from the course document and the discussion with the student. The Panel queried how the team would provide support to students with diverse backgrounds, such as those coming from an industry background, or mature students, who might lack the study skills required. The team assured the Panel that they would have robust mechanisms in place to support students having difficulties with their studies. The team explained that they would utilise the initial few weeks of the provision to assess the skill levels of each student. Following this period of assessment, varied groups would be created, which would also include part-time and full-time students, to encourage integration and support.

In response to the Panel's query, regarding data handling skills and mathematics, the team explained that data handling opportunities would be explored in practical and lab reports. In addition, students would have access to the Maths Hub for numeracy support classes.

## 5.11 Study and Research Skills

The team outlined the scaffolding nature of the course structure delivery, explaining that the content would become more complex as the students advanced through the provision. The team explained that mapping of skills was conducted to ensure that they were developed from year 1 and throughout the provision.

## 5.12 Physical Resources

In response to the Panel's query, the team outlined the accessibility to the Loughry campus's Library, explaining its opening hours were 9.00 to 21.00 hours, Monday to Wednesday, from 9.00 to 22.00 hours on Thursday, and 9.00 to 12.30 hours on Friday. 24-hour online access was available through the Moodle VLE and Knovel Database.

## 5.13 Complimentary Qualifications

The Panel commended the team on the range of complimentary qualifications and opportunities offered to students throughout their programme. The team listed the qualifications currently available to students. Those included the Level 2 Food Safety for Manufacturing and Level 2 Health and Safety, which were compulsory for all students, as well as the optional Level 2 HACCP offered during second year and Level 3 Food Safety for Manufacturing and Level 3 HACCP offered during the final year of study. The team added that they were currently exploring further qualifications, such as auditing qualifications, which will be incorporated into the programme in due course. In response to the Panel's query the team confirmed the high uptake of these additional qualifications, adding that they were subsidised by the College.

## 5.14 Placement

The Panel commended the team on the priority given to placement opportunities within the programmes, highlighting the substantial benefits of completing a placement in respect to employability. The Panel asked the team to elaborate on how they ensured the module learning outcomes would be achieved. The team assured the Panel that they were involved throughout the process to ensure the placement was pitched at the appropriate level to ensure it adds value both to the students and the employers. In response to the Panel's query the team explained that if students encounter any problems during their placement, they would be able to contact their supervisor for guidance and support. Initially the students would be encouraged to address the issues themselves, but if that failed the College would step in and assist. The Panel noted that on rare occasions where students wanted to change their placement this was supported successfully by the College. The team explained that these instances would be very rare as a lot of effort was put in place during the placement preparation, including conducting talks with employers to ensure the best fit possible, as the importance of balancing employers' expectation with students' abilities was crucial.

## 5.15 Content

The Panel were of the opinion that further clarity was needed in relation to the content outlined in the module descriptions, requesting the team elaborate on the content to reflect contemporary issues such as: globalisation, sustainability, compliance, auditing, food security, food culture, and consumer behaviour. The Panel also queried the balance between the two elements named in the titles of the BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition and FdSc Manufacture and Nutrition programmes, asking the team to contemplate on the balance between the two.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The Panel commended the team on the following aspects evident from the validation:

- The comprehensive documentation, providing a very good example of curriculum design, with a clear assessment strategy.
- The clear evidence of student demand, with the programmes addressing the needs of the food industry and the local economy.
- The high level of employer engagement in the revalidation process.
- The student support structure, guidance and feedback and, linked to this, excellent student satisfaction in terms of the quality of teaching and links with industry as evidenced by the NSS and external examiner reports.
- The priority given to placement within the programmes and the opportunities available via an international network.
- The high levels of employability achieved by graduates.
- The range of specialist facilities to support practical activities and development of skills and knowledge.
- The rich blend of academic and commercial profiles of the teaching team.
- The opportunities offered to students for external recognition and awards.

The Panel agreed to approve the change in the titles to BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition and FdSc Food Manufacture and Nutrition starting from September 2019, subject to approval by the University's Academic Planning Advisory Group. The Panel agreed to recommend to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee that the provision within Unit 3F be approved for a period of five years (intakes 2019/20 to 2023/24 inclusive) subject to the conditions and recommendations of the Panel being addressed and a satisfactory response and a revised submission being forwarded to the Academic Office **by 15 April 2019** for approval by the Chair of the Panel.

### Conditions

- i) That matters of detail and clarification as identified in the notes by Academic Office to the Panel are addressed;
- ii) That the programme learning outcomes at level 5 and level 6 for the BSc Hons Food Technology and BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition be revised to reflect differentiation between the two programmes; and
- iii) That the team clarify the balance between the two elements named in the titles of the BSc Hons Food Innovation and Nutrition and FdSc Manufacture and Nutrition programmes.

### Recommendations

- i) To elaborate on the content in the module descriptions to reflect contemporary issues such as: globalisation, sustainability, compliance, auditing, food security, food culture, and consumer behaviour;

- ii) To consider further the use of technology enhanced assessment and other innovative methods;
- iii) To elaborate on approaches to formative assessment in the module descriptions;
- iv) To provide a clear articulation of module coherence and progression throughout the programmes; and
- v) To consider workload equivalence at level 6 in modules using 3-hour examinations.

## 7 APPRECIATION

The Chair thanked the Panel members and, in particular, the external members, for their valuable contribution to the validation process. The external Panel members commended the University and particularly the Academic Office for the professional planning and execution of the event.

*Ref: AGu/panelreport/25/5/19*