UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE REVALIDATION PANEL FOR UNIT 5C1: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT / MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP (UG/JN)

2 November 2017

PANEL PRESENT:	Prof D Hassan, Associate Dean (Global Engagement), Faculty of Life and Health Sciences, Ulster (Chair)
	Mr S Banga, Head of Lancaster University International Study Centre, Lancaster University
	Ms M Downey, VP Academic and Student Affairs, Belfast, Ulster University Students' Union
	Mrs D Fraser, Senior Lecturer, Belfast School of Art, Ulster
	Dr T Hurley, Head of School of Management, Dublin Institute of Technology
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mrs S Stewart, Academic Office, Ulster
REVALIDATION UNIT COORDINATOR:	Mr S McPeake, Lecturer in Human Resource Management, Department of Management and Leadership, Ulster University Business School

1. INTRODUCTION

The Panel was convened to consider revalidation of:
- BSc Hons Human Resource Management (with AB exit award and DPP/DPP(I) associate award), FT
- BSc Hons Management and Leadership Development (with AB exit award), FT

The programmes share eight 20 credit point modules including the two project modules BMG620 *Management Project I* and BMG621 *Management Project II.*

a) BSc Hons Human Resource Management (HRM)

Applicants are required to specifically have a minimum GCSE grade C in Mathematics for entry. At levels 4 and 5 all modules are compulsory. At level 6 students may choose one from a choice of three 20 credit point modules and all other modules are compulsory.

The Diploma in Professional Practice/Diploma in Professional Practice (International) (DPP/DPP(I)) placement module BMG412 is compulsory. Modules BMG244 *Employability* (year 1 semester 2) and BMG301 *Personal and Professional Development* (year 2 semester 1) are preparatory modules for the 48-week placement.

Graduates of the programme may be eligible for exemptions for professional qualifications with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

b) BSc Hons Management and Leadership Development (MLD)

All modules are compulsory. There is no DPP/DPP(I) but there is emphasis on real world application of the curriculum. This programme has smaller annual intakes of students.

In addition to modules being shared with the BSc Hons Human Resource Management, MLD modules are also shared with the BSc Hons Business Studies. Nine modules remain unique to the BSc Hons Management and Leadership Development.

MEETING WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Panel met with: the Ulster University Business School Associate Dean (Education); the Acting Head of Department of Management, Leadership and Marketing; the Revalidation Unit Coordinator and Course Director for the BSc Hons HRM; and the Course Director for the BSc Hons MLD.

2. OVERVIEW

The Team outlined the provision within the Faculty and explained that the Ulster University Business School comprises four Departments across Ulster's four campuses with links to branch campuses with QAHE in Birmingham and London.

The Panel asked how the HRM and MLD programmes were different from the BSc Hons Business Studies. The Team explained that the BSc Hons Business Studies is the most general of Ulster's Business programmes with the largest intake numbers at undergraduate level. The HRM and MLD programmes are more specialised and students may continue their studies in their respective areas by progressing to identified specialised Master's programmes.

The MLD programme is not considered to be a direct competitor of the BSc Hons Business Studies because the MLD programme has greater emphasis on developing focused skills and theoretical knowledge with practical application. Smaller cohort numbers for the programme help to facilitate ongoing direct engagement between students and employers.

3. PROPOSED CHANGES

The Panel heard that the changes proposed for the programmes were designed to refresh it in response to student and employer demand rather than to introduce significant changes.

With regards to the HRM programme, in recognition of the HR market moving from comprising generalist roles to more specialist roles, Levels 4 and 5 will build a foundation of knowledge in HRM and optional modules at Level 6 will offer opportunities for students to specialise. The Team confirmed that revisions for the HRM programme are being discussed with the CIPD and changes will be formally proposed for their approval after the revalidation is complete.

4. INDUCTION AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Students share a two-day induction at the beginning of the programmes and an extended induction continues throughout the programmes.

MLD students also attend a two-day residential, which nurtures peer and staff/student relationships and a collegial spirit.

In terms of ongoing support and advice, the Course Teams operate an "open door" policy. One-to-one sessions with students are scheduled for weeks four and five. The Team reported that students have fed back that staff are very approachable.

The Team attributed the 6.8% attrition rate for the Ulster University Business School in part to the effective student support and guidance mechanisms.

5. DIPLOMA IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (INTERNATIONAL) (DPP/DPP(I))

It is University policy that work-based learning is included in all undergraduate and Integrated Master's degrees. The MLD programme does not include the DPP/DPP(I) placement. The

Team said this was appropriate because the curriculum and assessments put great emphasis on work-based scenarios.

The DPP/DPP(I) is compulsory for students of the HRM programme. The Team explained that exceptions may be made for more mature students with work experience and for students who were not able to secure placements. In such cases, students may be permitted to transfer directly from Level 5 to Level 6.

6. NSS SCORES

The Panel commended both programmes on their strong NSS scores (MLD: 93%; HRM: 100%). Members noted that the HRM programme has gained 100% satisfaction in three of the last four years, making it joint first in the UK for a programme of this type.

The Team confirmed that the figures enhance the appeal of the programmes to potential applicants and they attributed in part the high scores to the extensive "ground work" with students from before they register on the programmes. At the pre-application stage, staff visit schools and explain the programmes and associated career opportunities, and invite pupils to complete a case study. Such activities manage student expectations and ensure that applicants are well-informed about the programmes.

7. INTERNATIONALISATION

The Team reported that curricula for the programmes have an outward, international perspective and include global examples and case studies.

Many global companies are establishing themselves in Northern Ireland and creating a need for skills and knowledge in international recruitment. The HRM programme therefore addresses international HRM in the first year. Incoming global companies are also bringing opportunities for student and graduate mobility, and links with them have facilitated placements for HRM students in the US and Spain.

The Team reported that the programmes had not traditionally attracted high numbers of international students but they have had enrolments of Erasmus students.

8. RESEARCH-INFORMED CURRICULUM

The School plans to increase the number of staff with PhDs and to develop their research to enhance the research-informed teaching in the curricula. The Team therefore recognised that time should be allocated to staff PhD study and research within teaching schedules.

The quality of student research linked to the programmes is increasingly gaining recognition. £3,500 of funding has been secured to highlight student research and promulgate findings, which may be done through conferences and events. Such activities are expected to build the School's reputation in research and may also be opportunities to forge even stronger relations between students and employers.

9. PROJECTED STUDENT NUMBERS

The Panel asked why, given the strengths of the programmes, stronger growth in student numbers was not projected. Figures included in the programme document suggested that over the next four years student numbers would remain at 60 for the HRM programme and would grow from 19 admitted in 2017/18 to 25 for the MLD programme. The Team explained that the student numbers were capped under the MaSN and were judged to be appropriate within the Faculty.

Student numbers had increased in recent years for the HRM programme and the Team did not wish for further expansion in the shorter-term. The MLD programme is linked to Foundation Degrees in Colleges and takes into consideration the possibility of numbers of College graduates wishing to progress to Ulster.

10. EXIT AWARDS

Both programmes have AB exit awards. The Team said that students have rarely availed of them and added that students are more likely to transfer to another programme than to exit early from their studies altogether.

11. BMG403 DIGITAL ENTERPRISE MODULE

BMG403 within the MLD programme is offered at Jordanstown and at the QAHE Birmingham and London branch campuses in each of the three semesters. The Panel asked how a parity of delivery and assessment was managed. The Team explained that BMG403 was one of a number of modules offered at the QAHE branch campuses. A series of planning meetings is held with regular additional contact with QAHE tutors. Assessments are agreed with QAHE staff and a sample of submissions are moderated before moderation of all the assessments is undertaken.

The arrangement with QAHE has operated well for approximately five years. All QAHE tutors are approved as having Ulster Recognised Teacher status to ensure that they are suitably qualified and have the same level of knowledge and experience as "home" Ulster teaching staff.

MEETING WITH STUDENTS

The Panel had discussions with a first year student, two second year students and a final year student from the HRM programme and a first year student, a second year student and a graduate from the MLD programme.

12. FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

The group was very positive about their experiences on the programmes and commended the following:
- The placement for the HRM programme.
- The smaller cohort numbers for the MLD programme.
- Staff were accessible, approachable and encouraged students to take advantage of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Additional support and support was available.
- The relevance of the curricula.
- The range of guest speakers.

The students highlighted the following for enhancement:
- A greater number of HR managers as guest speakers would be welcomed earlier in the HRM programme.
- The interview simulator was very popular with students and they would welcome its introduction at an earlier stage of their studies.

13. INDUCTION AND STUDY SKILLS

The students told the Panel that the induction was enjoyable and staff were friendly. Students had received an induction for the library and an introduction to library databases at the

beginning of the programme. Half-day refresher induction sessions had been offered at the start of the second and final years.

MLD students said that they had thoroughly enjoyed their residential at Castle Ward. As part of the residential students had completed competence and personality tests, which had been used to inform lecturers' decisions on compositions for student groups. Challenges had promoted relationship building, which had been useful for group work and peer learning later in the programme.

The students reported that in first year they had been taught Harvard referencing skills and presentation skills. The module handbook had included reading lists and lecture slides had been available online.

14.   LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

a) Group Work

The Panel asked about the students' experience of group work. The students explained that they had usually completed tasks as a group and had been assessed on their individual write-ups.

The students' experience of group work had varied depending on the dynamics of their groups. Students had been encouraged in resolving any issues that arose themselves. Students had understood the value of group work (even if it had been challenging on occasion) and they believed that it had been beneficial to learning how to interact with different personalities and with students from different backgrounds and perspectives. Some students within the group welcomed a greater extent of individual-based assessments in the final year.

b) Shared Modules

The programmes share modules with disciplines outside Business. A student said they had felt a little intimidated in shared sessions with larger numbers of students and felt more comfortable in smaller sessions with students from only her programme.

c) Assessment and Feedback

Students were satisfied with the assessment load and schedule, and were of the opinion that assessment types were appropriate.

Submissions had usually been made via Turnitin and students had received feedback within two weeks. Students had had the option to discuss first drafts of submissions with teaching staff for formative assessment before final submission.

15.   DIPLOMA IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (INTERNATIONAL) (DPP/DPP(I)) PLACEMENT – HRM PROGRAMME

The Panel heard that placement was compulsory and had been necessary for students pursuing CIPD accreditation. HRM students were encouraged to secure their own placements independently but the Business School had promoted leads and links with existing and potential placement employers. Students had received details on placement opportunities via direct emails at least twice a week from the HRM Course Director. Students had found the recorded mock interviews particularly useful for their preparation for securing placements.

Students confirmed that support from the Business School had been ongoing throughout the placement period and staff had been helpful in resolving difficulties, including an instance where one students had had to change their employer midway through the placement.

An academic supervisor visits students on placement and meets with the student's Industrial Supervisor. Students on placement are assessed by: their portfolios of evidence from the placement year (including a research report or essay) (20%); a report written by the Academic Supervisor (20%); the students' placement project (40%); and the Industrial Supervisor's reports (20%).

All placements are paid. It was the students' view that the placement had been very beneficial and had enhanced their performance for Level 6.

Students who are not successful in gaining placement are required to build a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that they had tried to gain placement. This might include examples of CVs and interviews attended. If portfolios are accepted, such students may proceed directly to final year but are not be eligible for the DPP/DPP(I) award. The group said that there had been very few instances of such cases (approx. two each year).

Some students were anxious about the competition associated with securing a placement but were reassured by other students that links between the Business School and employers were growing, and that information on additional placement opportunities was usually disseminated to students in January.

It was the MLD students' view that placement was not necessary for their programme because of the direct and ongoing nature of skills-based work throughout the programme, and projects were based on real issues (e.g. a student's project had worked with a local gym to identify ways to encourage younger consumers to use smaller independent gyms rather than chain gyms).

MLD students reported that they had had many alternative opportunities to link with industry from the early stages of the MLD programme to enhance their employability (e.g. in first year they had interviewed manager and written a report on comparing theory with application).

16.   INTERNATIONALISATION

The group confirmed that opportunities to study abroad had been promoted from first year, ranging from semester-long periods to academic years abroad in the US and Europe. Placement opportunities had included options for international placements. A number of students in the group said that international students had studied alongside them for a semester.

17.   FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

Students said that they had felt engaged with the development of the programmes and that their feedback had been addressed. One member of the group was a SSCC representative and said that staff had been very responsive to any issues that had been raised (e.g. scheduling of assessments).

Students had also fed back directly via anonymous end of module surveys and more informal dialogue between staff and students in class and during one-to-one sessions.

18.   STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Attendance had generally been monitored by students signing themselves in for sessions.

An HRM student told Panel members that in first year attendance had dipped a little after the first fortnight but this had not been unique to the HRM programme. Attendance had been better in the second year, and final year had seen attendance at almost 100%.

MLD students reported that attendance had generally been good (which could be attributed to the smaller cohort numbers), although it had not been quite as good for modules shared with other programmes, which usually had bigger classes and non-attendances were less noticeable.

MEETING WITH THE COURSE TEAM

19. CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The Panel asked which stakeholders had been consulted with when the Course Teams were identifying areas for change for the programmes. Course Teams told the Panel consultation had taken place with current students, external examiners, the Business School's Industrial Board, placement employers, Visiting Professor practitioners, guest speakers, Master's students and graduates. In addition, the HRM programme had considered CIPD requirements.

20. CURRICULUM DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The HRM programme has two 10 credit-point modules and all other modules for the programmes have 20 credit points.

The majority of modules aligned with the Curriculum Design Principle that modules should typically have no more than four learning outcomes and two items of assessment.

The Panel noted, however, that LAW101 *Introduction to Employment Law* had 12 learning outcomes and LAW515 *Employment Law* had 16 learning outcomes. The Course Team confirmed that students achieved all the learning outcomes as presently set out in the document but recognised that the numbers of learning outcomes for these modules were inconsistent with other modules.

21. STUDENT EXPERIENCE PRINCIPLES

   a) Ulster Learning Model

The Course Teams confirmed that the Learning and Teaching Strategy for the programmes had taken into account the Ulster Learning Model, placing students at the centre of the learning experience, and promoting a staff/student two-way participative approach to learning.

Panel members heard of the extensive use of case studies and problem-solving exercises, the integration of group work activities, and the extent to which the programmes' curricula was based on current industry issues to enhance students' employability and career prospects.

   b) Employability

The Course Team reported that the Edge Award, opportunities for work experience and to study abroad, and other extra-curricular activities were promoted to students of both programmes to enhance their employability.

The Panel noted that a DPP/DPP(I) placement year was compulsory for the HRM programme. The Course Team stated that preparation for the placement has been brought forward in the

revalidation proposals from the first semester of second year to semester two of first year through BMG244 *Employability*, and would be continued by BMG301 *Personal and Professional Development* in the second year. Preparation would include analysis of students' personalities.

Panel members noted that there was no compulsory placement year within the MLD programme. Panel members asked about alternative measures in place to develop MLD students' workplace skills. The Course Team responded by saying that work-based learning is integrated throughout the MLD programme and theory is blended with practice. In the first year students exploit their own links with organisations to explore the world of work e.g. to interview managers. In the second year students act as consultants within groups as part of projects for set topics. In the third year students move to completing projects on an individual basis e.g. for project modules BMG620 *Management Project I* and BMG621 *Management Project II*. The Course Team added that the project process provided valuable material for discussion at graduates' job interviews, although a portfolio of evidence was not an output for the modules. Other MLD modules rely heavily on case studies and support students in applying their knowledge to solving problems.

c) Internationalisation

Panel members asked how the programmes addressed internationalisation. The Course Team explained that HRM students were strongly encouraged to consider international options when making choices for their placement year, and students have taken placements abroad in the US, Spain and Germany.

Study abroad opportunities (e.g. through Erasmus programme) were also promoted. The programmes have attracted international students, mainly from EU countries and the US (e.g. a student from the US studied on the HRM programme and a Swedish student studied on the MLD programme). The central University International Department also helps to support international students at Ulster.

For the HRM programme students address international talent management and global mobility within BMG241 *Fundamentals of HRM*, and the module's reading lists also takes cognisance of the international perspective. The Course Teams also highlighted HRM option BMG570 *Managing Equality and Diversity*, MLD module ACF556 *Governance, Risk and Ethics* and the shared module BMG245 *Business and Society* as further examples of modules that embraced the theme of internationalisation.

The Panel heard that a further factor for enhancing the global themes within the HRM programme was that internationalisation is also a priority within the CIPD's agenda.

d) Digital Literacy

Students of both programmes are introduced to the more foundational aspects of digital literacy at Level 4 through modules such as BMG242 *Academic Foundations for Business* and BMG243 *Economic and Financial Awareness*, which are shared across the programmes. Level 5 MLD modules BUS303 *Managing, Leading and Developing People* and BMG403 *Digital Enterprise* and shared Level 6 modules BMG620 *Management Project I* and BMG621 *Management Project II* introduce more advanced technologies that are utilised in both teaching and assessment strategies and consequently enhance students' digital literacy skills.

The Panel asked why the HRM programme did not include BMG403 *Digital Enterprise* and the HRM Course Team explained that there had not space within the programme to accommodate it after including curriculum specific and pertinent to HRM.

e) Research/Teaching Nexus

The Panel asked how content was informed by research. The Course Teams explained that case studies from the Child Support Agency are used for HRM module BMG563 *Leadership and Change.* Case studies from other areas of industry are used for HRM modules BMG619 *Dispute Resolution* and BMG502 *Occupational Psychology.* The HRM programme also integrates examples of case work from Ulster's Law Clinic to modules LAW101 *Introduction to Employment Law* and LAW515 *Employment Law.*

Examples of information management systems are also considered for MLD module BMG403 *Digital Enterprise.*

Members of the Course Teams also bring their research and contributions to professional publications to teaching.

f) Ethics and Sustainability

The Course Teams confirmed that ethics ad sustainability were themes within both programmes and were addressed specifically by a number of modules e.g. BMG241 *Fundamentals of HRM* for the HRM programme.

22. STUDENT INDUCTION

Panel members heard that the two programmes shared a two-day induction at the start of the programmes, which was designed to facilitate peer interaction and develop the foundations for group work later in the programmes. A number of students had subsequently set up their own Facebook and online chat groups.

23. CURRICULUM

a) Programme-Level Learning Outcomes

A Panel member said that the critical learning components were evident in the programme-level learning outcomes for the MLD programme. However, while they were evident in the modules for the HRM programme, the panel member suggested that they could be made more evident in the programme learning outcomes.

b) Shared Modules – Both Programmes

The programmes share four modules in the first year and gradually specialise in their respective areas as students progress in their studies.

The Panel commended the inclusion of BMG245 *Business and Society* in the first year for both programmes for the extent to which it reflected the sectors. Panel members also praised BMG620 *Management Project I* and BMG621 *Management Project II* and how students were enabled to make use of a full year to develop the report associated with these modules. The Course Team explained that inclusion of two project modules had previously been a feature of only the MLD programme but they had been revised and included for the present revalidation of both programmes. For the project modules, students address current problems in the sectors (e.g. issues identified by business-community outreach charity Business in the Community) and they are assessed by submission of a project proposal and a presentation for BMG620, and a 3,000 report with data and a poster presentation for BMG621.

c) <u>New and Optional Modules – HRM Programme</u>

The Panel asked about the rationale for the introduction of the new first year HRM modules. The Course Team explained that year one will comprise modules with greater direct focus on HRM because students had fed back that they wanted more HRM content from the early stages of their studies. It is intended that year one will develop a foundation of understanding of HRM within a broader business content (e.g. accounting and finance).

In response to findings that the HRM sector is seeking specialist HR practitioners rather than generalists, HRM students will specialise in their studies at level 6 by choosing one of three optional modules. Student feedback had demonstrated that the introductory LAW101 *Introduction to Employment Law* had been popular and students wanted to further develop their employment law knowledge so the optional module (*Total Quality Management*) has been replaced with LAW515 *Employment Law*. The other two options BMG502 *Occupational Psychology* and BMG570 *Managing Equality and Diversity* have been retained.

The Course Team added that there had always been options in the HRM programme, although previously options had been available at Level 5. To inform students' choice of modules, module coordinators will provide a presentation on each during week 0 of the final year and will field any queries.

d) <u>Study Skills</u>

The development of study skills permeates across the programmes. The programmes share Level 4 module BMG242 *Academic Foundations for Business*, which introduces core skills needed for learning at HE level including academic referencing and presentation skills.

24. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Panel heard how a new member of staff had come from industry and had been required to complete Ulster's PgCHEP as part of conditions for their probation. The same individual planned to begin their PhD and confirmed that support would be available and allocations for teaching would facilitate time needed PhD study.

Panel members also heard that there was an excellent level of peer support within the Course Teams to balance teaching, research and study within the School.

25. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROGRAMMES

To ensure the viability and sustainability of optional modules for the HRM programme, BMG570 *Managing Equality and Diversity* is particular to the HRM programme while BMG502 *Occupational Psychology* and LAW515 *Employment Law* are shared with Law and Business programmes. Similarly, around half of the MLD programme's modules are shared with other programmes. The external examiner has commended the arrangement because it enhances interdisciplinary learning.

26. CONCLUSIONS

The Panel commended the following:

i) The excellent pastoral care and accessible support for students.

ii) The responsiveness of the Course Teams to feedback from students and employers in terms of shaping the course provision.

iii)   Outstanding NSS and DLHE results for the HRM programme.

iv)   The strong preparation for University study provided by the programmes' inductions and the MLD residential.

The Panel agreed to recommend to the University's Learning and Teaching Committee that the unit be re-approved for a period of five years (intakes 2018/19 to 2022/23 inclusive), subject to the condition and recommendations of the Panel being addressed and a satisfactory response and a revised submission being forwarded to the Academic Office by 1 February 2018 for approval by the Chair of the Panel.

Condition

i)   All issues identified by the Academic Office and detailed in the appendix to the Panel report are addressed.

Recommendations

i)   Review from the international perspective the content of the programmes and the broader support mechanisms available to international students coming to Ulster and to Ulster students travelling abroad.

ii)   Review the currency of the reading lists for all the modules.

iii)   Monitor the student numbers on the MLD programme to maintain viability and to protect the high quality student experience.

iv)   For the HRM specification, that the critical learning aspect of the programme be made more explicit in the programme level learning outcomes.

v)   Consideration is given to compilation of a work-related portfolio comprising the assessment components from the two Management Project modules (BMG620 and BMG621), in particular for the MLD programme to highlight its practical relevance.

vi)   In response to student feedback on the HRM programme, that preparation for placement is brought forward to year one and that there is greater direct exposure to HR managers at earlier stages of the programme.

vii)   For modules LAW101 Introduction to Employment Law and LAW515 Employment Law the number of learning outcomes is reduced to align with the recommendation of the new Curriculum Design Principle that modules have no more than four learning outcomes.

27.   APPRECIATION

The Chair thanked the Course Teams, Revalidation Unit Coordinator and Panel members for their contributions to the revalidation process,

The Acting Head of Department thanked the Chair, Panel members and the Academic Office representative for her support.