

Department of Education & Policy

Biomedical Science Programme Approval

Executive Summary and Recommendations

1. Introduction

1.1 Integrated Degrees

The Director was invited to attend an Industrial Liaison Group meeting at Kingston University held by the Faculty of Life Sciences regarding Biomedical Science programmes. The meeting was very helpful in clarifying a number of issues regarding the training of biomedical scientists. The Director was able to inform the University and their industrial partners (including NHS representatives) about the move towards integrated degrees. The University was very keen to further develop the work they have been involved with regarding a co-terminous degree to deliver a fully integrated degree but issues regarding funding would have to be resolved with the associated Strategic Health Authority. This would mean that there would be no requirement for a Certificate of Competence to be awarded by the Institute of Biomedical Science and that the full programme, including the practice element, would be approved by HPC Visitors with no involvement by the Institute in the approvals process for regulatory purposes.

There appear to be issues regarding funding for fully integrated degrees for biomedical science in England as each Strategic Health Authority currently has autonomy over resource allocation for education and some have indicated they would provide funding for placements whilst others have not. At her meeting with Sue Hill, the Chief Scientific Officer, on 25 January, the Director will raise the issue of Department of Health funding throughout England for these programmes. In Scotland the NHS Executive has already taken a decision to provide bursaries to biomedical science students whilst they are on placement, due to the severe shortage of professionals in this area. At present there are no details of how much will be available, when or how it will be paid but the indications are that the five Higher Education Institutions offering these programmes in Scotland will be moving towards co-terminous degrees. Two applications have already been received from the five and the Director has spoken to one of the institutions with a view to redesigning their co-terminous application for approval into one of an integrated degree to be considered under the new HPC Approvals process with no requirement for a Certificate of Competence. She is about to contact the other institution plus the University of Essex (from whom an application for co-terminous approval has also been received) on the same matter.

1.2 Top-Up Degrees

At the meeting at Kingston University questions were raised about the validity of the Institute of Biomedical Science stating that MSc degrees could no longer be used as a top-up for registration with the regulator and that candidates had to undertake a number of undergraduate modules in addition to the Masters programme. The Director will explore this further with the relevant Council members but indicated to the University that her initial thoughts were that if the programme met the Standards of Proficiency and the Standards of Education and Training then there should be no problem. She agreed to investigate further.

As with integrated degrees funding of placement elements may well be an issue with top-up degrees.

Decision

The Committee is asked **to note** the contents of the paper. No decision is required.

Background information

None

Resource implications

There are no resource implications.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications.

Background papers

None

Appendices

None