ST GEORGE'S, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

PERIODIC REVIEW REPORT

MSc Genomic Medicine

22nd May 2020

Panel Membership

Prof Jane Lindsay (Chair)	Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching), Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, Kingston University & St George's University of London
Dr Andrew Bell	MSc Genomic Medicine Programme co-lead, Institute of Immunology and Immunotherapy, College of Medical and Dental Sciences, University of Birmingham
Maureen Lovelace	Student Reviewer, St George's, University of London
Dr Anna Murray	Associate Professor in Human Genetics, Programme Director, Masters in Genomic Medicine, University of Exeter Medical School
Dr José Ignacio Saldaña	Senior Lecturer in Biomedical Sciences, St George's, University of London

In attendance

Glen Delahaye	Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager, St George's, University of London

Introduction and context

1) HEE developed an MSc in Genomic Medicine in 2014/15. Ten higher education institutions (HEIs) or HEI consortia across England were chosen by HEE as preferred providers to deliver the MSc. SGUL entered into a consortium arrangement with King's College London (KCL) to design and deliver the course based on prior existing collaborations between the two HEIs and associated NHS Trusts (e.g. Genomic Network Alliance) and their combined and complementary areas of research and clinical excellence. The MSc Genomic Medicine was then validated at SGUL in July 2015 for a September 2015 launch and has been running since then. The lead contractor for the MSc for HEE is SGUL. Both consortium members (SGUL and KCL) contribute modules providing both teaching and assessment.

2) The primary aim of the MSc Genomic Medicine is to educate the NHS workforce about genomics and the modern application of the theory and technology in the clinical workplace. However, due to the exciting nature of the course as well as to ensure financial viability, the course is also open to non-HEE-funded students (typically recent life science graduates).

3) At the time of the periodic review event, HEE were performing a "light touch" review of the curriculum and had assured HEIs that any changes would be relatively minor and easy to incorporate.

Conduct of the meeting

4) The periodic review event took place during the current Covid-19 outbreak and was therefore held online, through Microsoft Teams.

5) Prior to the meeting, the Panel received the documents listed in Annex A. Documents were received three weeks ahead of the review.

6) The Panel members held a private meeting at which they confirmed the range of issues that they wished to discuss with the course team. Meetings were then conducted by the Panel. These included a meeting with students and a meeting with the course team. At the conclusion of these meetings, the Panel members held a private meeting in which they agreed the outcome, including areas of good practice and action points. These are recorded in paragraphs 14 to 16.

Outcome of the meeting

7) The Panel recommended to Senate that the period of approval of MSc Genomic Medicine should be extended for five years. The courses would therefore next be reviewed (or revalidated) in the academic year 2024/25 to enable further intakes to enrol on the course in the subsequent academic year 2025/26. The Panel agreed a number of action points and identified areas of good practice. The course team would be required to respond to the action points through the annual programme monitoring process.

8) The Panel also concluded that the MSc Genomic Medicine was in principle compliant with the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education published by the QAA.

Good practice

9) The following points were highlighted by the Panel as Good Practice:

10) The strong leadership skills at both SGUL and KCL, which was evidence through the meetings with the students and the course team.

11) The course team's commitment to listening to and responding to feedback, which was clear from the student feedback and the past and current external examiner reports that were provided to the Panel.

12) The MOOCs were considered a strong point of the course and the course team was advised to consider being more explicit with the students about how the MOOCs may support their studies.

Advisable action points

13) The following advisable action points were agreed by the Panel:

<u>Action 1</u>

14) Review the full assessment process, including the diversity of assessments, the assessment burden and consistency of assessor feedback. Ensure that information provided to students is explicit about the role of formative assessment and the peer and tutor feedback on seminars and drafts (paragraphs 29-31 and 43-44).

Action 2

15) Ensure that students are aware of the role of the personal tutor system and the support that they can access through it (paragraphs 28 and 41-42).

Action 3

16) As a number of students joining the course may not recently have completed essays, ensure that support, including study skills, is promoted and easily accessible to students (paragraph 40).

Meeting with students

17) The Panel met with four current students, of which two were part-time, as well as two students who had already completed the course.

Admissions

18) The students' reasons for joining the course included: having studied genetics at undergraduate level; the desire to find a flexible course; and the friendly and welcoming environment at St George's in comparison to other institutions with comparable courses. One student had discovered the course through its MOOCs, which he had selected at random on FutureLearn.

19) The MOOCs form part of the recommended pre-course learning for all students, but particularly for those who have not studied at university for some time. The students that met with the Panel stated that individuals on the course who had not recently been in education found the MOOCs to be helpful in getting back into the mindset, as well as for providing a good introduction to SGUL.

Structure

20) The students who had already completed the course welcomed the move of the *Omics techniques and technologies: their application to genomic medicine* module to earlier in the course, which they had felt came too late in the course. Contact time on the course occurred across five working days, either Monday to Friday, or split by the weekend (e.g. Wednesday to Friday in week 1 and Monday and Tuesday in week 2). The students appreciated the five-day format, which made it easier for them to manage their time and to hold a job alongside the full-time course.

21) The students found the course to be challenging at the beginning, due to the large amount of content within a short time space and would have welcomed an extra day for some modules. They also stated that the same content was repeated in numerous modules, but they recognised that this was largely linked to the requirements of HEE.

Research Projects

22) The research module could be approached by two different routes depending on student preference: a full research project of 60 credits or a literature review dissertation of 30 credits. If the latter was chosen, additional optional modules would need to be undertaken to fulfil the requirements of 180 credits for a Masters degree.

23) Some of the students stated that they would have enjoyed a longer research option and perhaps one less module, while others were of the view that the 30 credit literature review was sufficient for them and that they wouldn't have been able to commit to anything longer. The option to select between a full project or a literature review had been helpful for the students, as they had different circumstances.

24) The students working in labs had the option of completing their projects in their place of work, SGUL, King's College London or any other institution deemed acceptable by the course team.

25) The students were very satisfied with the supervision they had received throughout their projects, stating that all members of staff had been available to support them.

VLE

26) The students had found the online resources useful, but noted that lectures provided by KCL were not available on Panopto, although they were able to access the slides through Canvas. Across both institutions, the students agreed that they would have appreciated the slides being uploaded earlier.

27) It was apparent from the different experiences of the past and current students that information on assignments and their due dates had been made increasingly clear and easy to access. Such information was posted on Canvas.

Personal Tutoring

28) The students that the Panel met had not made use of the personal tutorial system. One student reported that they had an initial meeting with their personal tutor, but no follow-up afterwards. Despite this, the students felt well supported and often turned to the course director and course team for support, who tended to have a greater familiarity with the course than the personal tutors.

Assessment

29) The students found the number of assessments and the assessment types on the course to be reasonable and appropriate for the modules they were assessing. The deadlines were fair and the modules spaced apart and there were extensions available if needed.

30) They noted that there wasn't much variety in the assessments. Depending on their module choices, students could face eight essays in a row.

31) The assessment feedback was inconsistent, depending on who had marked the work. Feedback from SGUL was typically more detailed than from KCL. Overall, they considered the feedback from both institutions to be adequate, despite its variability.

Additional points

32) The students were regularly consulted about their experiences on the course, through handwritten feedback forms and electronic surveys. They found that the team was very receptive and keen to hear both positive and negative feedback and were open to adapting the course to address concerns.

33) A number of the students that met with the Panel stated that the course had been immensely impactful on their careers, including on their current jobs and opening up new opportunities. The course provided a "nice friendly steppingstone".

Meeting with the course team

Covid-19

34) The current cohort of students had been impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak, which had meant that the module *An introduction to counselling skills in genomics* could not be delivered. Students were given the option of continuing their enrolment into the next academic year and completing the module at a later date or they could complete *Ethical, legal and social issues in applied genomics* instead. The students who had chosen to continue were mostly HEE funded and were relieved to have a break.

35) The team was preparing to deliver the next term remotely, mainly through Canvas.

Induction

36) There is an induction week at SGUL, which includes course specific and general information. Students also enrol at King's. In cases where students delay their entry and miss induction, the course administrator enrols the students, provides a tour of the site and is available to them throughout the day.

Structure

37) One of the reasons for developing the two MOOCs had been to cover information at the beginning of the course, so that it did not have to be repeated in each module after that. However, HEE required that all modules be standalone and so there was a need to repeat content. The team was ensuring that it was delivered differently in each module, focussing on different clinical or research points of view. They also believed that a certain amount of repetition could be useful for the students, whilst acknowledging that some may find it tiresome.

38) The Panel considered that the MOOCs provided a great advantage to the students who completed them. The course team reported that they send the MOOCs to students as they join the course. They were also available on the website and referred to during the open evening. They did not consider the MOOCs to be a formal prerequisite for the course, but agreed that they would be helpful for students joining from HEE who had not recently studied.

VLE

39) All module leads had been trained on the use of Canvas and were responsible for maintaining their own Canvas pages. The team acknowledged that some were better than others in uploading materials ahead of sessions. The course administrator was responsible for maintaining information about assessment on Canvas, as well as intervening when module pages were not being updated.

Study Skills

40) The course team acknowledged that there was a need to ensure that students who had accessed the course from different backgrounds were receiving sufficient support to have equal success on the course. They also noted that many part-time students were not currently accessing the support that might benefit them. As the course team was in the process of preparing to deliver the next term remotely, there was room for the course team to consider incorporating study skills into the course more formally.

Personal Tutoring

41) The team had not yet reviewed how many students were engaging with the personal tutor system, but were aware that in some examples the personal tutors had been very involved and supportive. All of the personal tutors were involved in the course, but they were not necessarily geneticists. The personal tutorial sessions were not timetabled and were optional for students. As the students were familiar with the course director, they would often refer to her for guidance instead of their tutors, but there was a need to spread the workload.

42) They acknowledged that the system could be formalised further. SGUL had recently recruited a postgraduate personal tutor coordinator, with an aim to develop a system across postgraduate courses that was more in line with other institutions.

Assessment

43) The course team acknowledged that the course could be intense. The course director met with all students at the beginning of the course to help them to navigate the course and to balance it with their day-jobs. Assessment due dates for each module were made available at the beginning of the course, to allow students to plan around them.

44) Having two assessments for a 15-credit module was high and the team suggested that ideally those modules should be 20 credits and that therefore fewer modules would be required to complete the course. However, the amount that could be changed was limited as the curriculum and structure of the MSc was largely dictated by HEE with overall course aims and module aims, learning outcomes and indicative content being designed by them.

Marked demand

45) There had been a steady increase in non-HEE funded students over the last few years and there had been occasions were applicants were turned down, as the course had been at full capacity. The team did not expect that Covid-19 would impact their recruitment, particularly as they did not rely on international students. They were confident that the course could run without HEE funding and if this was the case, they would likely make adjustments to the design of the course and the way in which it was marketed.

46) The limited availability of academic staff and support from professional services including admissions and marketing meant there could not currently be a significant increase to the cohort size. An investment in these would be required if the course were to grow.

GD/July 2020

Annex A: Documents

Self-evaluation Document
Programme Specification
Programme Regulations
Scheme of Assessment
Module Descriptors
Annual Programme Monitoring Reports
External Examiner Reports
Staff CVs
Timetable 19-20 with Assessment Dates

Annex B: List of Attendees

Dr Kate Everett – Course Director
Georgia Baines – Postgraduate Officer and Course administrator for MSc Genomic Medicine
Kat Henley – Head of Postgraduate Administration
Dr Maxine Esser – Programme Manager for Taught Postgraduate Programmes
Prof Guy Tear – Project Lead at KCL and Deputy Lead for Fundamentals of Human Genetics and Genomics Module
Dr Andrew Walley – Project Lead at SGUL