

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Education Committee - Monday 14 June 2004

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Report
of the Review of the Department of History of Art - Wednesday 4 February
2004

Ms Jane McAllister, Administrator, Senate Office

The Review Panel

Professor Chris Morris, Vice-Principal (Staffing) and Territorial Vice-Principal (Arts-based)
[Convener]

Professor Francis Ames-Lewis, Pevsner Professor of the History of Art, Birkbeck College,
University of London

Professor Christine Geraghty, Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies

Dr Judy Wilkinson, Senate Assessor on University Court

Dr Erica McAteer, Teaching and Learning Service

Ms Jane McAllister, Senate Office [Panel Secretary]

Introduction

1. The Department of History of Art was last reviewed internally in 1995. It received a 'Highly Satisfactory' rating in the Teaching Quality Assessment held in 1995 and a 5 rating in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.

2. The Department provided a Self Evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documentation in accordance with the University's requirements for the Review of Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The Panel noted that the writing of the SER had been delegated to the Teaching Committee and were pleased to hear that all members of the Department had had the opportunity to comment and provide input. The draft SER had been written by the Convener of the Teaching Committee and the Departmental Quality Assurance Officer and then discussed by all staff (including external teaching staff) at a departmental 'In-day' and by students at a meeting of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee before receiving final approval by the Teaching Committee. The Department reported that the process of writing the SER had been useful and constructive. The Panel commended the Department for its inclusive and collegial approach to producing the SER and **recommended** that this approach be put forward as an example of good practice.

3. The Panel met with the Head of Department, Professor Alison Yarrington, who had taken up post in August 2003. Due to her relatively recent appointment, Professor Yarrington was accompanied for the first meeting by Mr Pearce, former Head of Department, who was able to provide historical perspective on the developments within the Department. Subsequently, the Panel met with key staff, a probationary member of staff, four Graduate Teaching Assistants who represented hourly-paid staff and with the Dean. The Panel also met with five MPhil students and thirteen undergraduate students.

4. The Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Department:
 - a) Level 1 and 2 courses that are recognised components of MA designated degrees in arts;
 - b) MA (Hons) programme in History of Art - This programme could be taken as Single Honours or as part of a Joint Honours programme;
 - c) MPhil (Taught)/Diploma in Decorative Arts and Design History.

Overall aims of the Department's provision

5. The overall aims of the Department's provision were stated in the SER and were readily available to students through their inclusion in all course handbooks. The Panel considered the Department's overall aims to be entirely appropriate.

Undergraduate and Taught-Postgraduate Provision

6. Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

6.1 The Panel noted that the programme aims for Levels 1 and 2, Honours and were set out for students in the relevant course handbooks. The Panel agreed that the programme aims were fully relevant to the overall aims and were appropriate to the corresponding level of study. They were also in line with the Benchmark Statement on History of Art, Architecture and Design.

6.2 The Panel noted that ILOs were provided in the course handbooks for Levels 1 and 2 and in the course documentation for each Honours option. ILOs were also provided in the PGT programme handbook. The Panel was pleased to note from the SER that ILOs were kept under constant review in order to bring their expression into line with current educational requirements.

6.3 The Panel noted that the manner in which the achievement of ILOs would be demonstrated, e.g. essays, presentations, visual tests, web-design and dissertations, were mentioned in the SER but not explicitly mentioned in the ILOs as set out in the handbooks. The Panel also noted that the ILOs for Level 2 mentions 'using clear, convincing prose in essays, visual tests and other exercises' but do not include any reference to other skills such as oral skills or web-design. The Panel **recommended** that the Teaching Committee consider amending the ILOs to include some reference to the skills that would be developed in demonstrating their achievement.

7. Assessment

7.1 The Panel noted that the Department's assessment regime was varied and that the Department's thinking in relation to assessment showed some fluidity which was appropriate at the current stage of the Department's development. There was general consensus that there should be some consideration of the appropriateness of assessment methods and staff confirmed that alternative methods of assessment were being considered. Professor Yarrington expressed the opinion that some form of "seen" examination would be a positive development but felt that the weight of tradition in the University was stacked against it. The Convener's view was that there was no reason why such a development should not be taken forward and the Panel **recommended** that the Department further investigate the possibilities with the Faculty and the Teaching and Learning Service.

Coursework vs examination-based assessment

7.2 The Panel asked for clarification on the differing proportions of assessment through coursework which amounted to 50% at Levels 1 and 2 but only 20% at Honours. The Department explained that the double weighting of the dissertation brought the proportion of non-examination assessment up to an equivalent level. The Department agreed with the Panel's view that the proportion of coursework assessment should increase and less emphasis be put on

examinations at higher levels of study and stated that it was moving towards raising the proportion of coursework assessment at Honours. Staff noted that examinations did suit some students who made extra effort to do well on the day. However, the group of undergraduate students met by Panel offered opinions which suggested that the change towards examination-based assessment made the transition from Level 2 to Honours difficult for some students and reported that the 50:50 balance was preferred. The Panel **recommended** that the Department revisit this issue.

Oral presentations

7.3 The Panel noted that the Department intended to re-introduce assessed oral presentations at all levels of the undergraduate curriculum. This had been undertaken in response to student requests through the Staff-Student Liaison Committee and had been approved at a recent Teaching Committee. The balance between formative and summative aspects of the assessment of presentations was still to be discussed with the student representatives but the introduction of a progressively higher level of assessment from Level 1 to Honours was being considered.

7.4 The undergraduate students met by the Panel supported the re-introduction and agreed that oral presentations should contribute to their overall assessment. The students considered that the opportunity to practice and receive feedback on presentations to a small group would improve their transferable skills. They were content that the assessment of the presentation would be carried out by only one member of staff as it was likely to carry significantly less weight than an essay. The Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) with responsibility for teaching tutorial groups commented that the students were likely to apply themselves more if the presentations were assessed. The Panel **recommended** the Department do indeed reintroduce assessed oral presentations.

Peer Assessment

7.5 Mr Pearce reported that the Department had previously used some minor elements of peer assessment but not on a department-wide basis. It had found that comments made by students were not always constructive. The Panel suggested that taking on the role of peer assessor could be a valuable learning experience in itself, encouraging reflection on other students' work and that making constructive contributions could form part of the assessment. The undergraduate students were not enthusiastic about the possibility of peer assessment although one student who had experienced it in another department reported that it worked well.

Dissertation

7.6 The Panel noted that, in common with most departments, choice of dissertation topic was dependent on the availability of an appropriate supervisor. Staff reported that every effort was made to give students free choice but considered that it was better for the students to be allocated a supervisor who had a good working knowledge of their proposed topic of study. The system of approval of dissertation topics purposely scheduled an early decision-making stage to ensure students received feedback on their proposals and had their practicality assessed while there was still time to change the topic if it turned out to be unfeasible.

Code of Assessment

7.7 Staff reported that they were becoming accustomed to the requirements of the Code of Assessment and the new 20-point grading scale. They did not report any particular difficulties with its implementation, although they noted that they had not yet had experience of using it for dissertations. GTAs were also happy with the operation of the scale and reported that it had been fully explained to them and that they had received help as necessary.

Second marking

7.8 The issue of second marking was raised and the Department reported that it was felt to be impractical to do it for all course work. The Department considered that sample checking provided an adequate safeguard against inconsistencies in course work marking between tutors backed up by second marking where inconsistencies were identified. Where marking duties were divided among several internal markers, the relevant course convener was responsible for internally moderating the marks awarded. All Honours examinations scripts and dissertations were second marked.

Anonymity

7.9 The Panel noted that all examinations were marked anonymously and that the Teaching Committee had recently discussed the possibility of also marking Honours essays anonymously. This had not been pursued because the students felt that markers should be aware of the background to each student's work in order to offer more relevant feedback.

8. *Curriculum Design and Content*

8.1 The Panel was impressed by the range of provision but felt that there were some areas where the curriculum could be stronger, particularly in terms of Early Medieval, Late 20th Century, Scottish Art and Photography. The Department agreed that the coverage of some areas could be improved but explained that they were constrained by the expertise available from existing staff. The four recent appointments would allow the Department to better fulfil its aims concerning the scope of the curricula.

8.2 The Panel noted that all Honours options related to staff research interests to a greater or lesser extent and that the Department did not wish to insist on staff teaching courses that were not related to their interests despite the gaps in the curriculum noted above.

Undergraduate Programme

8.3 The undergraduate students commented that more introductory material on vocabulary and common reference points at the beginning of Level 1 would be useful. They noted that many of the group had had particular difficulty becoming familiar with architectural terms. The class representatives reported that they had raised this at a Staff-Student Liaison Committee and had been directed to helpful texts. The Panel asked the staff for their views on the students' suggestion of an introductory module and were told that there were plans to include more introductory material as part of a restructuring of Level 1.

8.4 In terms of the provision on offer, some students requested more modules on modern art and more staff with that area of expertise to enable more students to undertake dissertations in the area. They also requested courses on vocational aspects of art history. Some of the Senior Honours students expressed regret that Architectural History 1 (a module offered in collaboration with the Glasgow School of Art) had been withdrawn as they felt it had been a useful and popular option.

8.5 *Level 2*

8.5.1 The Panel noted that the Level 2 programme consisted of six module components each broken down into shorter sections. It raised concerns that this structure might result in a lack of coherence across the year and that some students might find the frequent changes perplexing. The Department acknowledged that there were some disadvantages but felt that these were outweighed by advantages. Staff explained that the aim of the programme was to introduce diversity and reinforce the idea that different treatments should be applied to different topics but that the Level 2 Convener monitored the programme through overview and review, with moderation of the marking of written coursework to ensure a degree of continuity and coherence. It was reported that, in

general, students coped very well although some, perhaps the weaker students, did struggle.

8.6 *Representing Abstract Expressionism - Distance learning option*

8.6.1. The Panel queried the place of the 20-credit distance-learning option, *Representing Abstract Expressionism*, in the Level 2 curriculum as it did not seem to fit with the diversity and non-chronological approach promoted by the rest of the programme (paragraph 8.5.1). The Panel wondered whether this longer module created a tension in the programme structure to which staff responded that the appreciation of diversity of approach and material were achieved by the modules taken during the second semester.

8.6.2 In response to the Panel's concern, the Department explained that the course had been introduced in 1997-98 as a result of a member of staff's enthusiasm for the subject matter and interest in the possibilities of distance learning as a teaching method. Funding had been made available for the development of the course and it had been seen as the first of a number of distance learning options which were to be developed into an entire distance learning programme to contribute to Widening Participation initiatives. (The module may be taken by students enrolled on full-time programmes and by other individuals as a stand-alone course.) Staff reported that the module was a rigorous option which took a text-based approach, concentrating on methodology, and was popular with students. The Panel noted that the number of places available on the course was limited due to the time investment required of the staff involved for each student, however, it was reported that no student had yet been denied a place as demand seemed to be in line with manageable numbers.

8.6.3 The one weakness of the module was acknowledged as being its reliance on one individual member of staff. The Panel **recommended** that the Department consider ways in which some back up might be provided.

8.6.4 The Convener commented that the Faculty of Arts was looking at part-time provision generally and asked if the Department would be interested in pursuing further development in the distance learning area. Professor Yarrington responded positively but noted that current workload levels made it unlikely that any staff would take up the opportunity.

8.7 *Honours programme*

8.7.1 The Panel noted that the Department was discussing the distinction and progression between Junior and Senior Honours. The undergraduate students confirmed that they were aware of the differences between Level 2 and Junior Honours and that the dissertation was a distinguishing feature leading to further progression and a different approach at Senior Honours.

8.7.2 Staff reported that several methods of introducing a greater degree of progression were under consideration and the Panel was reassured to hear that the Department intended to maintain the current range of options by continuing to teach the two groups together but introducing different assessments in accordance with the requirements of the different levels. The Department was also considering separate tutorial groups for Junior and Senior Honours students although it was concerned that smaller groups would not be as cost-effective. At the time of the Review, a radical restructuring of the Honours programme was favoured and the Panel **recommended** that this be taken forward in the near future.

8.7.3 The Panel queried the credit level attached to Honours options which was, unusually, 34 credits. The Panel wondered how this number had been arrived at and how it fitted with other courses across the Faculty. The Department reported that the decision to award 34 credits was historical and that it was not aware of any continuing reason for 34

credits. Credit levels would be changed to fit in with new Faculty guidelines on credits as and when new courses or course changes were introduced. The Panel **recommended** that the Department address the issue of credit levels as a matter of urgency for Honours options, and for other courses when new ones are introduced.

8.8 *Historiography and Methodology of History of Art*

8.8.1 The Panel welcomed the Department's plan to re-introduce *Historiography and Methodology* as a core Honours option. The Head of Department reported that the previous course had been withdrawn after the departure of the member of staff responsible and that, to prevent a similar problem recurring in future, the Department had decided that the new course would be team taught with contributions from most members of staff based on their expertise.

8.8.2 The Panel was also pleased to note that the Department was considering a number of alternative proposals for the format of the course and that a focus on current methodology was the favoured format at the time of the Review. The Panel considered this core option to be important for student learning and for dissertation preparation and, therefore, questioned the positioning of the course in Level 3. This was also in response to student comments which indicated that they would welcome an earlier introduction to the topic. With regard to alternative timings for the course, the Department reported that it had considered offering a course at Level 2 but had concluded that the material was not appropriate or appealing to students who did not intend to progress to Honours in History of Art. However, Staff acknowledged the desirability of an earlier introduction to methodology and reported that there were plans to do this at both Level 1 and 2 where material would be integrated into other modules. This would mean some reconstruction of the current programme and discussion about how this might happen was underway. The Panel felt the core option and the earlier introduction of Methodology constituted a well-founded enhancement and **recommended** that the Department take the developments forward as soon as possible.

8.9 At the end of discussions on the UG curriculum, the Panel was much reassured and was pleased to note that all the minor concerns raised were already under consideration. The Panel encourages the Department to continue discussions with all members of the Department, including students, in order that the Programme might be developed in the most effective manner possible.

Postgraduate Taught Provision

8.10 The Panel noted that the Department hoped to move towards developing new Postgraduate Taught programmes in accordance with Faculty directives and building on its core strengths and research interests of staff. *History of Collecting* had been identified as a potential subject area where the Department sensed growing demand but it was acknowledged that market testing would need to be carried out in conjunction with Student Recruitment and Admission Service (SRAS) to assess the true extent of the market for this and other possible PGT programmes. The Panel supported this proposed development and **recommended** that the Department approach SRAS with a view to initiating a market testing exercise.

8.11 Another area the Department was interested in exploring was PhD by distance learning, although it was recognised that this would also be labour intensive and would also require some form of Summer School or other on-campus activity. The Panel **recommended** that the Department seek out similar existing initiatives across the University which may have already resolved some of the problems that were foreseen.

9 *Student Recruitment, Support and Progression*

Support

9.1 The Panel noted that the students found the Department supportive and encouraging. The students reported that the Department encouraged everyone to continue to Honours and offered a 'polishing class' to help raise their grades to the required C1 average. It was also reported that all staff held office hours and were usually available at other times. The Departmental Secretary was also much appreciated by the students as another source of useful help and assistance. This appreciation was solidly echoed by the Departmental staff.

9.2 During discussions with the students about the levels of support provided, the Panel asked for any suggestions for improvement. One MPhil student reported that she would have benefited from attending the induction programme for international students but had not heard about it until it was too late to rearrange her flights. The MPhil students expressed the opinion that the induction period at the beginning of the course was too long and suggested that some aspects of the information might be incorporated into the main part of the programme. The Department explained that there had been some problems with inductions that were particular to this year due to staff illness. The Panel **recommended** that the Department note these comments and consider whether it wished to take action in response.

Advisers of Studies

9.3 The Panel asked for the views of undergraduate students on the Adviser of Studies system. They were unanimous in their opinion that selecting their Adviser from staff based within one of the departments in which they were studying or from a cognate department would be a more useful arrangement. One student spoke of distress experienced when their Adviser had gone on study leave and been replaced by another who had given incorrect advice resulting in problems with the student's level 2 curriculum. The students generally felt that such problems were easier to resolve with someone they were more familiar with and had regular contact with. The Panel **recommended** that the Faculty note these comments and address the concerns expressed.

Special needs

9.4 The undergraduate students reported that they had found the Department of History of Art to be more proactive than others in handling special needs requests and that alternative arrangements for examinations had been very good but they were not aware of the Departmental Special Needs Adviser. The Panel commended the Department on its supportive approach but **recommended** that the name of the member of staff recently designated as Special Needs Adviser be included in the list of staff responsibilities posted on the departmental notice boards.

9.5 The students expressed concern that there was no wheelchair access to the Department. The Panel acknowledged this but there was no straightforward remedy due to the nature of the building that the Department was located in. The Panel noted that the University was developing plans to address the problems of access to older buildings at a strategic level.

Spread of workload

9.6 The Panel asked the students if their workload was evenly spread across the year. They reported that there tended to be busy periods when many departments expected submissions at the same time. They considered this to be inevitable and dealt with it by organising and planning their work. They confirmed that workloads were manageable because they were informed of essay titles and other assignments well in advance of the deadlines.

9.7 The MPhil students commented that their programme was intensively taught in some weeks while others were quiet. They felt that the programme could be more evenly timetabled although they were aware that the availability of external lecturers was likely to remain a factor.

Support for Students embarking on Study Abroad

9.8 The Panel was interested to hear how the Department supported students who chose to spend their Junior Honours year abroad. It was explained that the outgoing students (normally 2-4 per year) were fully advised by the Honours Convener and Student Recruitment and Admissions Service in terms of the appropriateness of their chosen destination and proposed curriculum. They were also encouraged to keep in touch with the Department through regular emails throughout their time away. One student who had spent a year in Toronto reported that it had been left to him to keep in touch and that he had not done so until he experienced a problem. He had initially taken on too many courses but, after consulting the Department, changes were approved and the problem resolved. He also reported that there was a record of this on his departmental file so that any adverse affects on his academic performance might be taken into account by the Board of Examiners.

9.9 The Panel noted that there were no formal mechanisms for debriefing the students on their return or for providing feedback to other students and staff on their experiences. The Panel **recommended** that the Department consider asking returning students to provide a report, either in written form or as a presentation, in order that other students considering this option might benefit from their experience.

9.10 The Panel noted that students who were abroad during Junior Honours would miss the proposed core Honours option on Historiography and Methodology. Professor Yarrington reported that these students would be required to take the course during their Senior Honours year. The Panel considered that this was an adequate solution despite the timing being slightly disadvantageous in terms of preparation for dissertation work.

MPhil in Decorative Arts and Design History

9.11 The Panel discussed the reasons for choosing the Decorative Arts and Design History Programme with the MPhil students. They reported being drawn to the specialist nature of the Programme, particularly the links with the Auction House, Bonhams, and the opportunities that that afforded. They also mentioned the location in Glasgow, the quality of the local architecture and the opportunity to gain experience in handling objects.

9.12 The Panel commented positively on the cohesiveness of the group despite their diverse backgrounds (seven out of the eleven MPhil students were from overseas) and asked if they considered themselves integrated into the Department as a whole. They reported that they had almost full-time access to the staff involved with their programme and had some contact with other staff. There had not been any contact with the undergraduate students. The Panel **recommended** that the Department endeavour to ensure that the MPhil students are included in departmental activities and are represented at the appropriate meetings.

Course documentation

9.13 The Panel received copies of the course handbooks for the Level 1, Level 2, Honours and MPhil programmes. All included descriptions of the aims, intended learning outcomes and assessment schemes along with other useful information on the Department's expectations. The Panel was also pleased to see the inclusion of good, clear advice on writing skills in the handbooks.

9.14 It was noted that the course information for the second semester of the MPhil had not been available at the time of the documentation being submitted for the review but the students confirmed that they had received it at the start of the semester. They also confirmed that they had received sufficient information at the beginning of the programme to know what to expect during the second semester and to be able to appreciate the overall aims of the programme.

Feedback

9.15 The students reported that there were opportunities to get feedback on drafts of papers but that they often did not time their work well enough to take advantage of it. They confirmed that they received adequate feedback on their submitted coursework, both at meetings with staff and in written form.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

9.16 The Panel asked the GTAs whether their teaching duties interfered with their PhD work. They reported that it could be time consuming but that it was very beneficial because it was stimulating and offered a useful opportunity to articulate their ideas. The Panel asked the GTAs about the level of support they received from the Department and they confirmed that they were well supported and able to seek advice from course conveners when necessary. The support they received from the Department was supplemented by the Teaching and Learning Service module for GTAs and by the mutual support they were able to give each other. They also reported that they felt included as an integral part of the teaching team.

10 *The Effectiveness of Provision*

Team Teaching

10.1 The Panel was interested to hear the Department's view on how team teaching would operate for the core Honours option on Historiography and Methodology. Professor Yarrington reported that team teaching was currently implemented to some extent at Level 1 and would be central to the core option. She explained that teaching would be co-ordinated by a course convener and staff would sit in on each other's lectures, as time permitted, to promote continuity. Professor Yarrington also reported that discussions were ongoing between staff to explore the possibilities for Honours options that could be jointly taught in collaboration with each other.

Peer Review of Teaching

10.2 The Department was eager to undertake some peer review of teaching but, unfortunately, time pressures had not permitted anyone to take up the opportunity to date. Staff were in agreement that observing their colleagues' teaching would be a valuable activity for both parties.

External Lecturers

10.3 The Panel congratulated the Department on its links with external organisations and use of external experts to provide additional teaching. They asked about the external lecturers' contribution to assessment and the support provided to them. It was confirmed that all external staff were experienced teachers in their own right and were, therefore, familiar with the assessment methods in use. In addition, the external lecturers were thoroughly briefed by the relevant course convener on the particular arrangements for their involvement.

Seminars

10.4 The Panel discussed the operation of seminars with the undergraduate students and GTAs. There were some comments from undergraduate students that the tutorials were not as well organised as those in other departments. Other students disagreed and it became apparent that different groups had different experiences. The GTAs reported that a meeting was held at the beginning of each session to discuss the programme and the seminar themes which relate to lectures. They recognised that all the seminar groups were different in that some were more forthcoming than others, this meant that some operated a more defined structure while most adopted an informal approach.

10.5 The students suggested that a lack of general background knowledge on the part of some students was another aspect contributing to the variability of the seminar experience. The GTAs agreed that this was a difficulty, noting that for some groups they had to spend more time explaining the background material than on the tutorial topic itself. The students suggested that optional 'foundation' seminars on iconography, vocabulary/glossary etc would complement the main teaching programme. The Panel **recommended** that the Department give some consideration to this in tandem with the increase in introductory material noted in Paragraph 8.3.

The Maintenance and Enhancement of Standards of Awards

Maintenance of Standards

11.1 The Panel was confident that the Department was operating effective measures to maintain the standards of awards. The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) indicated that assessment procedures, external examiners' reports, grade profiles and student feedback were being monitored as required by the University. The SER also indicated that action was taken to enhance standards where monitoring highlighted potential improvements. This is illustrated by the introduction in 2000-01 of a new system for the development and approval of suitable subjects for Honours dissertations and for closer monitoring of progress. Although this did result in a significant improvement in the standard of dissertations, the Department felt that there were still some areas of weakness and addressed these for the following session. The Department reported that its dissertation support strategy would continue to be monitored and refined.

Extensions on Essay Deadlines

11.2 The Panel asked the students about the Department's attitude towards extensions on submission deadlines which appeared from the documentation to be lenient. The students reported that staff across the Department acted consistently and were generally sympathetic but did insist on medical certificates. An extension would only be given for a short period and the students did not feel that the Department's attitude could be taken advantage of as repeated requests from any one student would be noted and investigated.

Timetabling of independent study/research

11.3 The MPhil students considered the Decorative Arts programme to be at a higher level than an undergraduate programme with more independent learning and requirements for using initiative, which enabled them to tailor their studies to their own interests. However, the Panel noted comments relating to the time available to them to use the Departmental Library and suspected that the intense timetabling of the Decorative Arts programme might not offer sufficient time for the students to develop their independent research skills. The Panel **recommended** that Department consider whether the programme might be too intensively taught and might benefit from a more flexible approach.

The Maintenance and Assurance of Quality

Staff-Student Liaison Committee

12.1 The Panel noted that the Department operated a single Staff-Student Liaison Committee including all groups of students and asked if consideration had been given to meeting the groups separately. Professor Yarrington confirmed that separate meetings had been considered and that both advantages and disadvantages had been noted. The Department had decided, on balance, to retain the single committee to encourage the different year groups to feel part of the Department as a whole. There was the added benefit of the senior students being able to provide objective opinions from a position of further experience to the students following them. However, the Department did express concern that the MPhil student representatives were not always able to attend due to their intensive timetable and that attempts to ensure that this

group of students was involved in departmental activity were not always as successful as might be hoped. (see recommendations at paragraphs 9.12 and 11.3)

12.2 The MPhil students reported that they were aware of the opportunity to raise issues with the Department through their class representatives but had not had occasion to use formal procedures. They felt they could communicate easily and directly with the members of staff responsible for the programme. Any problems that had been raised so far had been dealt with promptly.

12.3 The Panel asked the undergraduate students how they raised issues at the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. The class representatives present reported that all students could raise issues with the class representatives either in person or by email (a list of email contacts for all class representatives was posted on the notice board in the foyer of the building) who would then pass the issues on to the member of staff collating the agenda. The outcomes of the discussions were fed back to students through the minutes of the meetings which were distributed to all students by email. The undergraduate students who had been class representatives for some time reported that they considered the Staff-Student Liaison Committee to be an effective forum for getting their views across to the Department. Some noted that they were now seeing the introduction of courses that had been developed as a direct result of their suggestions.

Learning Resources - Copyright

12.4 The Panel noted problems associated with the expense of dealing with copyright issues related to the use and reproduction of images for teaching purposes and that organisations such as Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network (SCRAN) and Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) were taking the issues forward in conjunction with other Universities.

Library Resources

12.6 The undergraduate students considered the Departmental Library and the presence of a Departmental Librarian to be a valuable resource. They expressed a desire for the Library to be open for longer hours and suggested that student volunteers could be used to make this possible. The students felt that the restricted opening hours impacted on their studies particularly when preparing for slide tests.

12.7 The MPhil students also complained of the lack of time available to use the Departmental Library because their lectures were scheduled during the Library's opening times and there was no access out of normal working hours. Staff reported that they endeavoured to allow at least one afternoon per week for study but timetabling was such that it was not always possible. In addition, the Head of Department and Dean confirmed that the Departmental Library was only intended to be a supplementary resource and that the more specialist collections in the Main Library were the primary source of material.

12.8 The MPhil students reported that they were looking forward to a session on the resources available in the University Library in the near future but felt that it would have been of more benefit if it had taken place earlier in the course. The students also suggested that earlier information on the databases available through the Library would have been useful. The Panel suggested an early introduction to the Subject Librarian might enable the students to seek advice and help as they needed it and **recommended** that the Department investigate ways of addressing the points made by the students above.

12.9 The undergraduate students felt that access to the Glasgow School of Art Library would be an important expansion of the learning resources available to them. They were aware that there was a reciprocal arrangement, which allowed them reference access, but felt that they should have borrowing rights, particularly as they were under the impression that the GSA students had full access to the University of Glasgow Library. The Panel noted that this was not a true reflection of the arrangements and pointed out that the only GSA students who had

automatic borrowing privileges were those who were matriculated on programmes jointly taught with the University.

Management

12.10 The Panel welcomed the establishment of a Teaching Committee whose membership consisted of all course conveners and any member of staff or GTA that wished to attend any particular meeting. It was noted that the establishment of a Teaching Committee had been recommended by the SHEFC Teaching Quality Assessment in 1995. It was confirmed that a Teaching Committee had operated between 1995 and 1998 but had been disbanded in 1998 when the relevant business was transferred back to the main Departmental Committee.

12.11 The GTAs welcomed the Panel's suggestion of formal representation on the Teaching Committee. They reported that they had had meetings with the new Head of Department and were happy that the Department was receptive to their ideas which they often saw being taken forward and put into practice. The Panel **recommended** that the Department invite the GTAs to be formally represented on the Teaching Committee. The Head of Department agreed to this but also felt that it was important that they also had a direct route to the Head of Department and, with that in mind, intended to continue to meet with the GTAs separately from other teaching staff on occasion. The Panel also welcomed a report from the Dean that the Faculty of Arts was considering the introduction of a Code of Practice in relation to the support and integration of GTAs and the facilities that should be made available to them.

12.12 The Panel had various concerns regarding the management and support of the MPhil and Diploma in Decorative Arts and Design History programme, with particular reference to staffing and funding.

12.13 The Panel noted that the programme was run by one full-time dedicated member of staff supported by an Administrator. Staff acknowledged and agreed with the Panel's concern that the programme generated a heavy workload and reported that there was a move to look at what other members of the Department might contribute to alleviate the burden. The students had reported some problems with induction at the start of the session which had arisen from the Programme Leader falling ill. The Panel considered that it was important some kind of provision was in place to ensure the Programme continued to run smoothly in the event of an unforeseen absence. The Panel also considered that it was important for students to have regular input from a wider group of staff and **recommended** that the Department review the structure of the programme with a view to addressing these points.

12.14 Staff identified the link with Bonhams Auctioneers as problematic. Bonhams had inherited the course from the original partners, Phillips Auctioneers, when Phillips had withdrawn from Glasgow. Bonhams were now operating at a reduced level in Scotland and were not able to offer the same extent of input to the programme. This was confirmed by the MPhil students who reported that they had expected more from the auction house in the form of specialist lectures and also in the type of work offered for their placements. It was noted that Phillips had originally committed to providing two year's funding and had indicated, at that time, that there was a possibility of a continuance for a further third year. While, Bonhams had taken on Phillips' commitment for the first two years they had not yet confirmed whether they would consider providing a further year's funding for session 2004-05.

12.15 The Panel was deeply concerned by the uncertainty of the commitment from Bonhams and raised the possibility of using another auction house. Staff indicated that the position with Bonhams would have to be clarified before they could enter into another partnership but they were endeavouring to fulfil the high expectations of the students through other alternative opportunities and making adjustments to the programme to ensure that the best use was made of the placements available at Bonhams. An example of one such change under consideration was the introduction of an extended placement as an alternative to the dissertation. This would allow students to take advantage of the best opportunities for experience/placement at Bonhams during their biggest sale which currently coincides with the peak of dissertation work in August.

12.16 The Panel discussed other aspects of funding with the Dean of the Faculty who reported that the Programme brought in a reasonable amount in fees but considered that it was under priced given its nature and the level of teaching involved. He had asked the Department to produce a business plan for the Programme which could include an increase of the fee to £10K and possibly an increase of student numbers to fifteen. The Dean also expressed the view that the Programme could feature fewer visits and encourage more independent study, a view that was echoed by the Panel. The Department and Faculty were both supportive of the Programme and reported that meetings were planned for the end of the session to discuss its structure.

12.17 The Panel **recommended** that the Department and the Faculty work together to resolve the issues noted above. Primary importance should be placed on resolving the uncertainty over the relationship with Bonhams, which should be followed by the development of a business plan to secure the future of the Programme and of the staff involved.

[Clerk's note: It should be noted that, at the time of the Review, the Department was already in the process of preparing such a business plan.]

Staffing issues

12.18 The Head of Department drew the Panel's attention to the Department's particular concerns that certain key members of staff were currently on temporary contracts. She expressed the view strongly that these individuals should be given permanent contracts as soon as possible to secure the future of their courses, including the MPhil *Decorative Arts and Design History*, and to maintain the stability of the Department. The Panel agreed that stability was essential to future development of undergraduate and postgraduate provision as well as for the security, motivation and well being of the individuals concerned. The Dean confirmed that the Faculty was giving priority to making the posts concerned permanent as soon as possible. The Panel welcomed this news and **recommended** that the Faculty resolve the issue as soon as possible.

Staff development

12.19 The Panel met with one member of staff who was a Probationary Lecturer to discuss her experience of the University and the Department. Dr Lewer reported that the Department had been welcoming and open and that she had been included in the teaching team and given responsibility from an early stage. She also reported that the New Lecturer programme (NLP) had been very good although her participation had been delayed because the course had been full during her first year resulting in an extension of her probationary period. The Panel noted that she had been entitled to exemption from the NLP because she already had significant teaching experience but had decided to participate because she felt it would be useful.

12.20 The Panel asked Dr Lewer about her workload which she confirmed had increased over time. She had found the work involved in the NLP to be considerable particularly as her teaching commitments had meant that she had had to complete parts of the programme through self-directed learning which she felt required a greater effort. Time had been factored in during her first year but her workload and responsibilities were increasing as she took on more dissertation supervision and had higher numbers in her Honours options. She confirmed that the Department was accommodating of the time she required to complete the NLP and that she had also been allowed study leave to work on her research.

12.21 Dr Lewer reported a very negative experience with the New Lecturer Group whose role it was to confirm her in post at the end of the probationary period. The Group had not mentioned her teaching work and had been very critical of her research. She believed that the criticism had been based on a misunderstanding caused by the Members of the Group being from science/engineering backgrounds. She reported that, although she had had the full support of the Department, the experience had been interrogative and discouraging. Professor Yarrington also expressed the view that the experience had been unnecessarily distressing and demotivating. The Panel **recommended** that the University reconsider the composition and operation of the New Lecturer Group in particular to ensure that members of the Group include those from cognate

areas when interviewing probationary lecturers. The Panel further suggested that the information sought and guidance provided on the web be reviewed and that the Group seek any follow-up information before the meeting with the probationary lecturer takes place.

Enhancing the Student Learning Experience

13. The Panel considered that the Department was continuously enhancing the student learning experience by its current developments noted throughout this report.

Summary of Key Strengths and Areas to be Improved or Enhanced in relation to Learning and Teaching

Key strengths

- The Department demonstrated a collective approach to the review and gave a strong sense of staff pulling together, looking forward and developing for the future.
- The Department is reported to be friendly, approachable, encouraging and supportive by its students including those with special educational needs.
- The Department offers a good range of undergraduate provision which is being continuously monitored and enhanced.
- The Department showed a considerable degree of reflection on its own practice and a willingness to consider alternatives. The Panel was impressed that the Department had already begun to take action on many of the issues they had identified from the documentation.

Areas to be improved or enhanced

- The stability of the MPhil in Decorative Arts and Design History needs to be secured for the future.
- The portfolio of Postgraduate taught programmes should be extended.

H. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The Review Panel commended the Department for the overall quality of its provision and for its commitment to and support of its students.

The Panel complimented the Department on its positive outlook which was noted by the External Panel Member who had been an external examiner in the Department many years previously. He commented that the Department was 100% improved in its provision and attitude. The Panel was impressed by the sense of the Department looking forward and developing for the future and was confident that this momentum would continue.

The recommendations interspersed in the preceding report and summarised below are made in the spirit of encouragement to the Department of History of Art to continue on its current path. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are ranked in order of priority.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The Panel recommended that the Faculty seek to address the position of key staff in the Department of History of Art who are currently on temporary contracts as soon as possible. (*Paragraph 12.18*)

For the Attention of: The Dean of the Faculty of Arts

Recommendation 2:

The Panel recommended that the Department and the Faculty work together to resolve the management issues raised in connection with the MPhil Decorative Arts and Design History programme. Primary importance should be placed on resolving the uncertainty over the relationship with Bonhams, which should be followed by the development of a business plan to secure the future funding of the programme and of the staff involved. (*Paragraph 12.12 - 12.17*)

For the Attention of: The Dean of the Faculty of Arts
The Head of Department
The Programme Leader of the MPhil Decorative Arts and Design History

Recommendation 3:

The Panel recommended that the Department put in place measures to ensure that cover can be provided in the event that a member of staff with sole responsibility for a programme was absent for any reason. This might include distributing the workload across more than one member of staff. The Panel's particular concerns were related to the MPhil in Decorative Arts and Design History and the distance-learning module in Representing Abstract Expressionism. (*Paragraphs 8.6.3 and 12.13*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Recommendation 4:

The Panel recommended that the Department review the structure and intensity of teaching of the MPhil Decorative Arts and Design History programme with a view to reducing the level of teaching and encouraging more independent learning on the part of the students. (*Paragraph 11.3*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department
The Programme Leader of the MPhil Decorative Arts and Design History

Recommendation 5:

The Panel recommended that the University reconsider the composition and operation of the New Lecturer Group in particular to ensure that members of the Group include those from cognate areas when interviewing probationary lecturers and suggested that the information sought and guidance provided on the web be reviewed and that the Group seek any follow-up information before the meeting with the probationary lecture takes place. (*Paragraph 12.21*)

For the Attention of: The Vice Principal (Staffing)

Recommendation 6:

The Panel recommended that the Teaching Committee consider amending the Intended Learning outcomes to include some reference to the skills that will be developed in demonstrating their achievement. (*Paragraph 6.3*)

For the Attention of: The Convener of the Teaching Committee

Recommendation 7:

The Panel recommended that a review and restructuring of the Honours programme be taken forward in the near future to introduce a greater degree of progression between Junior and Senior Honours and to address the issue of credit levels for Honours options as a matter of urgency. (*Paragraph 8.7.2 and 8.7.3*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Recommendation 8:

The Panel noted the proposed introduction of a core Honours option in Historiography and Methodology which they considered to be a welcome and well-founded enhancement. The Panel recommended that the students also be provided with an earlier introduction to methodology through material integrated into modules at Level 1 and 2. The Panel recommended that the Department also give some consideration to the students' suggestion for optional 'foundation' seminars on iconography, vocabulary/glossary which would complement the main teaching programme. (*Paragraph 8.8.2 with additional references in Paragraphs 8.3, and 10.5*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Recommendation 9:

The Panel recommended that the Department endeavour to ensure that the MPhil students are included in departmental activities and are represented at the appropriate meetings. (*Paragraph 9.12*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Recommendation 10:

The Panel commended the Department for its inclusive and collegial approach to producing the SER and recommended that the approach be put forward as an example of good practice. (*Paragraph 2*)

For the Attention of: The Convener of Education Committee

Recommendation 11:

The Panel recommended that the Department further investigate the possibilities for alternative assessment methods with the Faculty and Teaching and Learning Service. (*Paragraph 7.1*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department
The Dean of the Faculty of Arts
The Director of the Teaching and Learning Service

Recommendation 12:

The Panel recommended that the Department re-visit the proportions of course work assessment at higher levels of study. (*Paragraph 7.2*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Recommendation 13:

The Panel recommended the Department do indeed reintroduce assessed oral presentations. (*Paragraph 7.4*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department
The Director of the Teaching and Learning Service

Recommendation 14:

The Panel supported the Department's intention to develop a Postgraduate Taught programme on the History of Collecting and recommended that the Department approach SRAS with a view to initiating a market testing exercise. (*Paragraph 8.10*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department
The Director of the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service

Recommendation 15:

The Panel suggested that the Department seek out existing initiatives to offer PhDs by distance learning across the University where staff could offer advice on potential problems and solutions. (*Paragraph 8.11*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Recommendation 16:

The Panel recommended that GTAs be formally represented on the Teaching Committee. (*Paragraph 12.11*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Recommendation 17:

The Panel suggested that the Department consider asking students returning from a year abroad to provide a report, either in written form or as a presentation, in order that other students considering this option might benefit from their experience. (*Paragraph 9.9*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department
The Honours Convener

Recommendation 18:

The Panel recommended that the MPhil students have an early introduction to the Subject Librarian to enable the students to seek advice and help as they needed it. (*Paragraph 12.8*)

For the Attention of: The Programme Leader of the MPhil Decorative Arts and Design History

Recommendation 19:

The Panel recommended that the Department note comments from students concerning University and programme inductions and consider whether it could take action to address the points made. (*Paragraph 9.2*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Recommendation 20:

The Panel recommended that the Faculty note the comments made by students on the Adviser of Studies system. (*Paragraph 9.3*)

For the Attention of: The Dean of the Faculty of Arts

Recommendation 21:

The Panel commended the Department on its supportive approach but **recommended** that the name of the member of staff recently designated as Special Needs Adviser be included in the list of staff responsibilities posted on the departmental notice boards. (*Paragraph 9.4*)

For the Attention of: The Head of Department

Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Report of the Review of the Department of
History of Art - Wednesday 4 February 2004

Prepared by: Janet Anderton, Senate Office

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