

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW
Academic Standards Committee

**Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of History held on
13 March 2015**

Mrs Clare Barnes, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Panel:

Professor John Briggs	Clerk of Senate, Vice Principal, Convener
Professor Andrew Jotischky	University of Lancaster, External Subject Specialist
Ms Hannah Curley	Students' Representative Council, Student Panel member
Dr Christine Ferguson	School of Critical Studies (English Literature), Cognate member
Professor Christine Forde	School of Education, Senate Assessor on Court
Dr Amanda Sykes	Academic Development Unit, Learning and Teaching Centre
Ms Clare Barnes	Senate Office, Clerk to the Panel

1. Introduction

- 1.1 History is one of six Subjects in the School of Humanities, within the College of Arts. The Schools and College were formed in 2010, when a major restructuring exercise reshaped the University from nine Faculties to four Colleges.
- 1.2 The Subject last underwent internal review (the Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment) in May 2008 as the Department of History when it was one of thirteen Departments and Schools within what was previously the Faculty of Arts. The outcome of that review was very positive with no concerns regarding the quality of teaching provision or operation, and the Panel had been impressed by the clear commitment shown by academic and administrative staff. Many of the recommendations made referred to issues identified by the Department. A number of the recommendations made have been implemented since the last review, particularly in relation to support for GTAs, and in relation to assessment and feedback.
- 1.3 The Subject is located in four converted houses, numbers 1, 2, 9 and 10 University Gardens, space which includes two lecture rooms, five seminar rooms and staff offices which are also used for tutorials and seminar meetings.

1.4 History has one of the largest cohorts in the College of Arts with Level 1 classes of at least 450, approximately 260 at Level 2 and approximately 170 students taking single and joint Honours History degrees.

2. Background information

Student numbers

2.1 Student numbers for the 2013-14 session were as follows:

Level 1	512
Level 2	280
Level 3	161
Level 4	182
Level 5	5
Undergraduate Total	1140
Postgraduate Taught	75
Total students	1215

Staffing

2.2 History has 32 core funded Research & Teaching staff (30.1 FTE), including one 0.5 FTE post shared between History and Celtic & Gaelic and one 0.6 post. There are five externally funded research staff (4.6 FTE), some of whom contribute to teaching in their research areas.

Professor	9
Reader	5
Senior Lecturer	10
Lecturer	8
Research Assistant/Associate	5
Total staff	37

Range of Provision

2.3 The Review Panel considered the following provision:-

MA in:

- History (single or joint)
- Scottish History (joint only)

2.4 Taught MLitt/MSc in:

- History
- Medieval History
- Early Modern History
- Modern History
- Scottish History
- Gender History
- War Studies
- American Studies

3. Context and Strategy

Current PSR

- 3.1 The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) was prepared by a large team consisting of all office-holders with responsibilities relating to teaching (including the Head of Subject, Heads of the Medieval, Modern and Scottish History areas, the L&T Convenors (both current and his immediate predecessor), Postgraduate Taught (PGT), Honours and Pre-Honours Convenors and the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) Coordinator) providing individual sections which were coordinated by the L&T Convenor and Head of Subject. Drafts of the document were discussed at a History subject meeting, History subject management group meeting, SSLC and meetings with Postgraduates and administrators. All students were offered the opportunity to comment via Moodle and some also submitted comments via email. The Head of School of Humanities commented that History had gone about the PSR process in an exemplary fashion, drawing on the expertise of administrative support. Despite the wide-ranging consultation on the draft SER, Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who met with Panel had not contributed to the SER. The undergraduate students were not aware of the SER although only a small number were available to speak to the Panel and may not have been representative. Although only a small number of PGT students met with the panel, they commented that they had seen and read the SER on Moodle. All key staff confirmed that they had contributed to the SER.
- 3.2 During the review visit, which took place on 13 March 2015, the Review Panel met with Dr Lynn Abrams, Head of Subject, Dr Jeremy Huggett, Head of School and Dr Don Spaeth, Dean of Learning and Teaching for the College of Arts. The Panel also met with 14 members of key staff, 4 GTAs and 4 Early Career staff members, 3 Postgraduate Taught students and 11 Undergraduate students. All but two of the UG students were Levels 1 and 2. The Review Panel had been expecting to meet with 23 UG students, and was conscious that, as only a small number were available, the views of those they did meet with may not have been representative of the whole UG cohort.

Context and Vision

- 3.3 From the SER and from discussion with the Head of Subject, it was evident that the Subject had identified areas for development within the SER. These included:
- the development of non-Western History while strengthening current subject specialisms;
 - reactivation of the Learning and Teaching Committee to enhance the teaching culture;
 - introduction of a new PGT Convenor role;
 - development of student skills and employability through consideration of diverse assessment methods and placements;
 - strengthening consistency and quality of feedback and marking,
 - encourage a more diverse international student body; and
 - exploration of uses of new technology in teaching and assessment.
- 3.4 The Subject of History at Glasgow was ranked equal fourth in the UK in terms of overall 'research power' in the Research Excellence Framework 2014 (REF2014). It was evident to the Review Panel, from the SER and in discussion with the Head of Subject and Head of School that one of the key strengths of the teaching culture was the provision of outstanding research-led teaching. (See also curriculum paragraph 5.1.1).
- 3.5 The Review Panel was however somewhat concerned to hear that preparation for REF2014 had directed focus away from developments in Learning and Teaching. The competing priorities between Research and Learning and Teaching were acknowledged and it was recognised that, despite competing pressures, and with no dedicated University Teachers, delivery of teaching had evidently remained a high priority. The

Panel welcomed the reintroduction of the Learning and Teaching Committee and the opportunities it presented for driving forward initiatives and enhancements in learning and teaching, particularly developments to the curriculum and assessment.

- 3.6 The National Student Survey (NSS) scores for History indicated extremely high levels of satisfaction amongst UG students (overall satisfaction 99%). However, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results indicated lower levels of satisfaction amongst PGT students (see also paragraph 5.2.12).

4. Enhancing the Student Experience

4.1 Admissions, Retention and Success

- 4.1.1 The SER highlighted that there had been an upward trend in recruitment both at UG and PGT in recent years. It was also highlighted during the review, that History was a popular second or third subject for students from the College of Arts. From 2015-16 the number of students at Honours level would increase further (see paragraph 5.4.4).

- 4.1.2 The Panel noted that some of the cohort sizes reported in the SER at PGT Level were small. The Panel was informed that the PGT programmes had been re-packaged in a hub and spoke approach 2 years ago, as a marketing drive to introduce a number of named programmes. This was in response to research on why people did not select the University of Glasgow for PGT History, evidence from which indicated that prospective students wanted specialism. The Panel was informed that the development of the hub and spoke approach had required re-labelling rather than significant restructuring. In response to the questions raised about small numbers of students on PGT programmes, the Head of Subject commented that current student numbers were not a cause for concern, as generally there were 6-12 students per course, sometimes more (see also paragraph 5.1.5).

- 4.1.3 Since its introduction, there was a sense that the hub and spoke approach was working relatively well, and there were plans to exploit the marketing potential further, working to the strengths, for example, Medieval History. The Subject recognised that there could be more effective marketing and the Head of Subject was of the view that they were well placed to take advantage of that potential (see also paragraph 5.1.4).

- 4.1.4 The War Studies MLitt experienced exceptionally healthy recruitment and equated to 25 percent of all PGT students. Most of the students on this programme were external and overseas students.

- 4.1.5 The PGT Convenor raised concern about funding arrangements for Masters courses and the implications for student numbers and consequent availability of GTAs (see paragraph 5.4.4). It was remarked that fees for Masters courses had increased by 20 percent for next year, which was a real concern for the Subject, particularly when there were other institutions offering much more generous scholarships than were available at the University of Glasgow.

- 4.1.6 The Review Panel learnt from the SER and from the Head of Subject that History performed well in terms of retention both at UG and PGT and that there were a number of mechanisms in place to support this.

4.2 Equality and Diversity

- 4.2.1 The Review Panel explored a concern they had about gender balance of firsts awarded. It was evident from the SER that, despite 57 percent of undergraduate students being female, the number of females who achieved first class degrees was a much smaller proportion (29 percent in 2014, 41 percent in 2013). The Panel shared the concern identified in the SER, that the balance of assessment being weighted towards final exam could be disadvantaging female students as evidenced by research that suggested that

females perform better in coursework assessments [see also paragraph assessment and feedback 5.2.1].

- 4.2.2 The Panel acknowledged the Subject's concern about staffing gender imbalance and welcomed plans to take this into consideration with a view to a possible application for a Gender Equality Mark, this has now been superseded by Athena Swan
- 4.2.3 The SER and discussion with members of staff highlighted that the accommodation in University Gardens presented real difficulties for students with mobility issues (see paragraph 5.4.6).
- 4.2.4 The Review Panel **recommends** the subject area ensures that issues of Equality and Diversity are embedded in course design and delivery, incorporating the proposals identified in the SER.

4.3 Supporting Students in their Learning

Support mechanisms

- 4.3.1 It was clear from the student meetings that all students particularly valued the supportive culture provided by the Subject. Students unanimously commented on the approachability and supportiveness of staff and they considered it to be a very nurturing environment. Comments from PGT students indicated to the Panel that they felt very valued by lecturers and were comfortable approaching staff. It was evident to the Panel during the review that members of staff were dedicated to supporting students. Staff informed the Panel that any student experiencing difficulty would be signposted to student counselling, although it was noted that the current considerable wait for an appointment was a cause for concern.
- 4.3.2 The Review Panel **highly commends** the Subject area for the strong sense of community, and the dedication of the staff in providing a rewarding and supportive student experience, particularly for UG students, which is highly valued by students.

Good academic practice

- 4.3.3 The Review Panel explored how the Subject prepared students to develop good academic practice and the decision that had been taken not to use Turnitin. The Panel was informed that History conformed to the University policy on plagiarism but there was not a specific School policy on plagiarism - this was devolved to Subjects within the School. The Panel heard that when Turnitin had been trialled by the Subject, when the University introduced the software, but it had not been used for all submission of coursework and had not been used at Honours Level. Turnitin was found to be unsatisfactory as it includes relatively few books. The decision was taken to stop using Turnitin last year, when considerable issues were experienced.
- 4.3.4 The Panel had some concerns that the Subject was solely reliant on plagiarism detection by staff, particularly as it was easier to detect plagiarism from some sources than from others. It was however acknowledged that Turnitin was not always reliable.
- 4.3.5 UG students commented that there was plenty of information about good academic practice on Moodle and that guidance about plagiarism and the declaration of originality was reiterated by tutors and was covered in introductory lectures. Some students who had experienced Turnitin spoke positively about it, as they found it a useful tool in checking their own work, prior to submission. Students spoke very positively about the 'writing with style guide' produced by the Subject, which provided valuable information enabling them to understand good academic practice.
- 4.3.6 PGT students considered the information they received about good academic practice and specifically plagiarism to be sufficient as they were expected to already understand what constitutes good academic practice at PGT Level.

Course Allocation

4.3.7 The Panel heard from the UG students that the system used for the allocation of option courses was very good. Students listed their preferences and, allocations were made, taking these into account. Students felt this was a much better way of allocating courses, rather than first come, first served approach on MyCampus. The Panel noted that this system, while admirable, was onerous for staff involved.

4.4 Student Engagement

How Subject/School engages students in their learning

4.4.1 The Subject had evidently made concerted efforts to maintain the intensive, student focused teaching, which, due to the increase in student numbers had meant that workloads had also increased. The Panel recognised that the Subject staff were clearly committed to small group teaching and tried to keep the numbers to 12, as there was a strong sense that larger numbers diminished the experience for students. Despite the increased workload, there was consensus that the Subject would be reluctant to see a change to the teaching delivery. The Panel heard from staff that first year remained very successful, which was attributed to only being possible with the very good input from GTAs (see also paragraphs 5.2.9, 5.3.7).

4.4.2 It was evident that staff were dedicated and committed to providing the best possible experience for their students. It was evident from the NSS results and from talking with students who were available to meet with the panel that UG students are extremely satisfied with the experience they received. Students were extremely positive about staff and the Panel was impressed with the emphasis on one to one and small group interaction with students, particularly given the large student numbers. The Review Panel **commends** the intensive contact teaching with small numbers of students per seminar group, despite the challenges of high student numbers.

4.4.3 In terms of delivery, PGT students commented that they were happy with the support they received and their experience. They were very positive about the blend of lecture and seminar teaching and about the guided discussion seminars, which they thought was a good way of structuring class time (see also paragraph 5.1.6).

Graduate Attributes

4.4.4 With regards to the delivery of Graduate Attributes. The Panel was informed that the rubric for course 1A had been recently changed to include greater emphasis on Graduate Attributes. These were mapped onto each of the elements of the course, for example, being ethically and socially aware and plagiarism in the digital world, to enable students to learn how to set their own ethical boundaries.

4.4.5 The Panel also heard that the day long Honours Induction included a focus on Graduate Attributes and career paths and that a range of skills that students were required to develop were embedded within courses, such as presentational skills, communication skills and developing constructive arguments.

4.4.6 The Panel identified an apparent disconnect between staff and students in relation to Graduate Attributes. While it was evident from discussion with the Head of Subject and with key staff that Graduate Attributes were embedded within some courses, it was evident that the term 'Graduate Attributes' was not familiar to students and was not used to signpost the skills being developed. Undergraduate students, when questioned by the Panel, noted that they were required to undertake presentations but otherwise were not able to identify Graduate Attributes and were not aware these were embedded within courses. The Head of Subject conceded that more could be done to signpost students to Graduate Attributes and it was recognised as something that could be taken forward by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

- 4.4.7 The Review Panel **recommends** that Graduate Attributes are made more explicit to students through ensuring that they are embedded in course delivery and are regularly flagged at appropriate points throughout the curriculum.

Graduate Destinations

- 4.4.8 The Panel heard that, although some information about destinations was captured from students who kept in touch, little was currently done administratively at School level to keep track of students once they had graduated. In the past, the School had employed a Careers Officer, who organised for graduates to come back and give talks to current students. Not only was this valuable for students to have the opportunity to hear from recent graduates but it also developed links that could potentially lead to internship opportunities. It was highlighted that History staff would welcome support to introduce a more systematic approach to recording graduate destinations but it was recognised that there was an associated workload issue. The Panel supported a more systematic approach to gathering and recording of information about graduate destinations.

Internationalisation

- 4.4.9 The Review Panel commented that the University of Glasgow was keen to encourage study abroad opportunities for its students and asked staff about the Subject's approach to this initiative. It was explained that there tended to be a split between Erasmus schemes, which often students did not have the language requirements for and opportunities outwith Europe. Students who studied abroad tended to opt for Canada, USA, New Zealand and South Korea. Staff reported that students who studied abroad were given support when they were away, but that one of the biggest challenges tended to be translation of marks and credits. Some of the students who met with the Panel were going abroad to study for a year, other students however commented that they had been put off by the complexities of the process. It was acknowledged that the financial aspect was the biggest barrier, as only small numbers of student were in a position to be able to afford to undertake a study abroad opportunity. Staff spoke about how beneficial it was to have students who had studied elsewhere, as these students tended to be very focused and generally perform well, often using the experience as a basis for their dissertation.
- 4.4.10 The Panel noted that there were small numbers of international students; however it was the view of the External Subject Specialist that it was fairly typical of History not to attract many international students. Nevertheless it was recognised that there was scope to build on current levels and staff commented on the positive aspects of having more international students on programmes.

5. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

5.1 Learning and Teaching

Curriculum Design

Undergraduate

- 5.1.1 The Review Panel was informed that UG courses were developed based on the research and teaching strengths of staff. A good chronological spread was ensured, but otherwise staff essentially had free choice with regards to courses. The Head of Subject explained that, due to the popularity of the Subject, they were able to fill every course, which allowed members staff the freedom to deliver courses on their own subject specialisms; for example, a new pre-honours course had been developed in Modern European/International History, based on appointments made in recent years and the desire to utilise this knowledge. It was evident to the Panel that staff were very engaged as a result of the autonomy available in the development of courses. It was recognised

as an important contributory factor in delivering the exceptional student experience that was clearly apparent. The Panel **commends** the strong focus on and commitment to research led teaching at all levels and the matching of depth and range of knowledge with staff experience.

- 5.1.2 The SER explained that in 2011-12 the pre-Honours courses were redesigned to introduce students to the full range of expertise of staff within the Subject. The Head of Subject spoke about the UG programme and explained that it was designed so that, at Level One, teaching included Scottish and Medieval History. The Scottish History course provided a good basis for students studying in Scotland and acts as an introduction to the discipline of history at university level. Medieval History was an area of strength at the University of Glasgow and it was regarded as important that students were introduced to this early in the programme. For most students, it was a new topic and facilitated development of knowledge and an introduction to skills. Level Two introduced more challenging conceptual, theoretical and methodological aspects. Honours focused on more in-depth study, via dissertation and the Special Subject course, which utilises the skills developed in earlier years and allows students to demonstrate their ability to articulate ideas.
- 5.1.3 The Panel heard generally very positive comments from Undergraduate students about the first year courses, and particularly Medieval History although some were less enthusiastic about the subject matter of the Scottish History course than others. Key positives were highlighted as being “that the courses provided an insight into areas that students might want to choose later on” and “the fact that they included lots of methodology meant we were aware that we were developing skills for future years”. Courses 1A and 1B were considered well organised, however comments from students suggested less satisfaction with 2B which the students found to be less clear in structure which meant it was harder to prepare for Honours. It was unfortunate that the Panel were not able to hear views from students at Honours Level.

Postgraduate

- 5.1.4 The Review Panel thought that, in terms of PGT provision, there was a rich and diverse range of courses but there was concern that this resulted in a heavy demand on teaching. The introduction of a hub and spoke approach was highly regarded by the Panel but the Panel remained concerned about the balance of diversity of offering with efficiency of teaching at PGT level, as it was apparent from the SER, that there were low numbers of PGT students on some of the courses.
- 5.1.5 The Panel heard that the hub and spoke model had been introduced two years ago and that all students were required to undertake the Skills, Methods and Theory course, which was staff efficient. Dissertation proposals and presentations were considered to be effective and contributed to a strong PGT community. It was necessary to run sufficient courses to allow options, which limited flexibility in terms of delivery, as students were required to take four courses in total. Each PGT programme has certain requirements. Students take a core course, at least two courses from their specialist area and three further courses. Provision of courses could be challenging, but some courses cut across larger subject areas and therefore were relatively efficient in terms of teaching and student satisfaction. The Head of Subject commented that they were not overly concerned about the numbers and that generally they had 6-12 students per course, sometimes more. The Panel was informed that topic courses would not run if there were fewer than five students, whereas other topic courses were oversubscribed, such as War Studies, which meant that it has to be taught twice (see also paragraphs 4.1.2 and 4.1.3).
- 5.1.6 PGT student comments were very positive about the courses, particularly liking the flexibility and opportunities to benefit from links to other disciplines (see also paragraphs 4.4.3). One student commented that they “welcomed the opportunity to look at a

particular subject in depth” and that “having students from other disciplines on the course was beneficial”. The students told the Panel that they thought the courses contained a good range of themes and approaches and welcomed the fact that courses allowed recognition of the wider subject area. One student pointed out that, although the hub and spoke design worked well for most options, for some specialisms, there were limited subject options available, particularly with Early Modern History, which shared content with an UG course and therefore could not be taken if that course had already been completed at UG Level. It was clarified that there was a differentiation between taking the course at PGT from UG, with a different seminar and assessment regime attached to the teaching for each.

- 5.1.7 The Panel asked members of staff about the mechanisms for proposing new courses, designing modes of delivery and assessment and how this fitted with the coherence of the programmes overall. Staff commented that they had a free choice about what to teach and that new proposals were scrutinised by the subject Staff and Student Liaison Committee and through the Programme Information Process (PIP) (see paragraph 5.1.1).

Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes

- 5.1.8 The Review Panel formed the view that innovative delivery was happening in pockets but was concerned that there did not appear to be a great deal of coherence, particularly in consideration of programmes as a whole. The Panel identified a need for a more systematic approach to innovative delivery methods and TELT and for curriculum mapping with better tracking of progression of student learning and assessment. The Panel was aware that work had already been undertaken as part of the Leading Enhancements in Assessment and Feedback (LEAF) project and was informed that the member of staff who had led on the LEAF project was currently on sabbatical. The Panel **recommends** that the Subject builds on the work already done as part of the LEAF project and existing good practice to map courses, programmes and progression so that course development is coherent and allows for the curriculum to foster diversity of pedagogic, learning, assessment and feedback practices.

Evaluation of Work Based Learning / Placements

- 5.1.9 There was evidence of good practice in terms of work placements and the SER reported ambition for further developments. However, due to restricted numbers and the process for selection of pairings, there had not been as much progress to date as the Subject would have liked. It was acknowledged that the quality of opportunities was key to successful work-based learning. The Subject was confident that there would be prospective opportunities from existing collaborations. The Panel was informed that this was a priority area for the College and there was a dedicated College Placement Officer in post. It was recognised that some other Subject areas were further along the process for considering how to achieve a more integrated approach and therefore were likely grappling with the same issues. The Head of Subject thought there would be an advantage in engaging with these Subject areas, to understand the lessons they had learnt from engagement with this process. The Panel supported this approach.
- 5.1.10 The Panel had some concerns that existing placements were additional rather than credit bearing which meant there was an issue of parity. During the review meetings the Panel explored whether the development plans included the intention for placements to be established as credit bearing. The Head of Subject stated that they were starting to think about how placements and work based learning might be integrated into the curriculum, but as yet there had not been discussion about whether these would be credit bearing. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject conduct a feasibility study with a view to development of credit bearing work based learning and placements in order to achieve parity for all students.

5.1.11 UG students informed the Panel that placements were recommended in 3rd year, however they were of the view that there would be benefit in having the opportunity earlier in the programme. Students currently received emails regarding work placement opportunities, but spaces were very limited. Students who met with the Panel were very interested in the prospect of placements being an embedded element of the programme.

Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching (TELT)

5.1.12 PGT students commented that there was limited use of technology in the teaching received; however, the rooms were not always equipped to allow the use of technology enhanced learning and teaching.

5.1.13 Staff were also asked about TELT initiatives, and the Panel heard that reading list software was provided via an integrated online portal which was beneficial for students. Students were still required to explore the catalogue independently but resources were available on the same platform or could be held at the library.

5.1.14 Some members of staff had engaged with social media with varying degrees of success. Twitter had been used effectively to engage students on various topics. However, there had been limited success in using Twitter as a way for students to participate when lectures were delivered at different sites. Success had been limited because not all students had the technology to engage and it was disruptive to the flow of the lecture. Staff stated that they would like to explore other methods of engaging with students when delivering to multi-sites and other ways of enhancing teaching and learning through technology. The Panel **recommends** that the Subject develops initiatives to enhance learning and teaching through the use of technology.

5.2 Assessment and Feedback

Range of assessment methods

5.2.1 The Review Panel voiced concerns about the current guidance in terms of the balance for modes of assessment that required at least 60 percent of the assessment for each UG course – levels 1-2 and Special Subject and 70% in other Honours courses to be unseen exam. It was acknowledged that this guidance had recently been relaxed and that there were some exceptions. Concern was raised by the Panel that this did not represent a great deal of non-exam assessment which was particularly concerning in view of the balance of female students achieving first class degrees (see paragraph 4.2.1).

5.2.2 The Panel was informed that a recent mapping of assessments had identified a tendency towards fairly standard and non-exam assessments including a large number of essays. The Review Panel acknowledged the Subject's concern that the increase in student numbers made the current assessment methods increasingly difficult to manage. The Subject had accepted that, where appropriate, it made sense to introduce different assessment methods. Students and staff regarded the year long Special Subject course, very positively. Assessment for these courses tended to be traditional, but it had been identified that there was scope for more innovative assessment methods. There was recognition that introduction of new assessment methods would need to be balanced with supporting and preparing students for the different forms of assessment being introduced. It was also acknowledged that new assessment methods would require different marking models. It was noted that new marking criteria for some assessments were currently being developed.

5.2.3 The Panel was encouraged to hear that the subject planned to vary assessments to develop a broader range of assessment skills and that staff were beginning to be more innovative with methodological and theoretical courses using methods of assessment such as reflective diaries, presentations, seen examinations etc.

- 5.2.4 UG students spoke positively about seminar 'entry ticket' assessments, which they found encouraged engagement in seminar discussion. They also spoke about the fact that seminar marking was inconsistent and that for some courses it was not always clear how marks were obtained. Mixed views were expressed about the current balance of assessments with some expressing a preference for more coursework.
- 5.2.5 The Panel heard from PGT students that all courses were assessed in the same way: a presentation and essay and a larger essay worth 70-80 percent.
- 5.2.6 The Panel noted the conservative modes of assessment being utilised and commented that there were much more innovative assessments being used both elsewhere in the University of Glasgow, but also in History at other institutions. It was apparent that one of the recommendations from the DPTLA in 2008 had recommended introducing greater flexibility with regards to modes of assessment.
- 5.2.7 The Review Panel recommends that the current requirement for UG course assessment to consist of minimum 60 percent unseen final exam and a maximum of 40 percent for other modes of assessment, be discontinued in favour of an assessment regime which has less reliance on final exams, to ensure that a range of assessment methods, are engaged across the curriculum as a whole programme, driven by learning outcomes

How students receive feedback

- 5.2.8 UG students were unanimous that the feedback they received on their assessments from History was extremely good, particularly in comparison to other subject areas.
- 5.2.9 The results of the NSS for assessment and feedback demonstrated that students were very satisfied (90 percent). The results for feedback were very good, which seems to be as a result of the substantial amount of individual contact, both pre- and post- essay tutorials. The students who met with the Review Panel spoke very highly about the tutorials and valued them immensely. It was highlighted to the Panel that students would also welcome the pre-essay tutorials in course 2B and stated that they thought the fact that this did not happen, was responsible for a decline in grades experienced in this course. The Review Panel **commends** the very strong feedback provided to UG students, and the resulting NSS scores [see paragraph 4.4.1].
- 5.2.10 It was recognised that there was significantly less provided by way of exam feedback, which given the weight of examinations should be reviewed.

Postgraduate

- 5.2.11 The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results indicated lower levels of satisfaction amongst PGT students. The discussion the Panel had with PGT students was very positive which was in contrast to the PTES results. It was evident from speaking to PGT students that a key concern had been the late return of a particular piece of coursework that had been significantly delayed. Steps had been identified to improve the PGT experience and a new PGT Convenor role had been created to coordinate taking forward these initiatives and to have an overview of standards for assessment and feedback. The Panel heard that considerable effort was being made to address issues and more contact time had been introduced. Marking and feedback were currently under review as there had been a lack of consistency to date. The Panel was interested to learn whether there was guidance on how PGT dissertation supervision operated. The Panel was informed that the allocation of supervisors happens just before Easter, but that guidance for the amount of supervision time was not available, although this was under development.
- 5.2.12 The Panel formed the view that PGT subject areas lacked coherence, with the exception of War Studies and concluded that PGT teaching perhaps suffered due to the high demands of UG teaching and PGR supervision. The Panel welcomed the steps identified by the Subject to support the PGT experience.

5.3 Engaging and Supporting Staff

Early Career support

- 5.3.1 Three of the four Early Career staff had or were currently undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP). The fourth had been exempt. The Panel noted that no formal School or Subject induction programme had been received by the members of Early Career staff, but, they had all found the informal support they had received from colleagues to be exceptional, in particular the support received from the PGT Convenors. They had also found administrative staff to be very helpful but it was not always clear who was the right person to contact in terms of administrative processes.
- 5.3.2 The experience of Early Career staff who were currently or had recently undertaken the Early Career Development Programme (ECDP) was generally positive. There had been some delays experienced in getting signed up, due to start dates and in another case the mentoring had yet to start. One member of Early Career staff who met with the Panel had been part of the first cohort to undertake the ECDP and the experience had not been as positive as for his colleagues. Early career staff mostly complete the ECDP programme and had mentors outwith the Subject, but within the School. They were supported and integrated into teaching teams. Mentoring tends to work within subject areas on an informal basis.
- 5.3.3 The Review Panel heard from Early Career staff that they had received very good informal inductions but would have benefited from a more formal, structured approach including provision of a staff handbook. It was also identified that there had been no opportunities to meet other new lecturers in other disciplines and new staff did not always feel part of the School. The Panel was informed by the Head of Subject and Head of School that currently induction was patchy across the School, but the process had improved somewhat and a staff handbook was being developed. There was already an extensive A-Z on the website, but staff did not always know it is there. Articulation of roles and responsibilities was also in development to provide clarification and would be incorporated into the staff handbook. There was recognition that it would be worth drawing on the experience of current new staff. The Review Panel **recommends** that the School put in place procedures for a formal induction event including provision of a handbook for all new staff across the School to introduce them to relevant School and University procedures.
- 5.3.4 The Early Career staff confirmed that as part of the ECDP they had a reduced teaching load. It was stated that a number of administrative tasks had to be carried out by academic staff due to the limited experience of newly appointed support staff. However, the new School administrative staff were considered excellent and pro-active and therefore support was expected to improve.

Support and training for Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)

- 5.3.5 The Panel heard that GTAs were selected and were not formally interviewed for positions. GTAs submitting letters of interest to say what they were interested in teaching. The Panel was interested to find out whether there was a requirement for GTAs to have passed their most recent Annual Progress Review before they were able to teach, or whether there was potential for a GTA who was struggling with their own work to have teaching responsibilities. . Although this was not currently a condition, it was recognised as a good idea and one worth introducing. The Panel suggested this be taken forward in the requirement for GTAs to have passed their most recent APR to undertake teaching. . The Panel was informed that appointment and training procedures were defined in a recently approved College policy. The relevant Course Convenor provided mentoring. GTAs who met with the Panel were positive about their experience and the support they received from staff. They spoke positively about the opportunity to

teach and some would have liked to have also taught PGT. GTAs reported that they very much felt part of the teaching team and valued the opportunity to input into course design and assessments. The Review Panel **commends** the way GTAs are supported and integrated as part of the team including the extent to which they are involved in course and assessment design.

- 5.3.6 GTAs did not normally teach during year one so teaching tended to be done by second year and some third years, teaching loads then increased at the thesis pending stage. Initially GTAs would have one seminar group and this would increase up to three or sometimes four. In terms of workload the burden was considered to be marking assessments, although guidelines for each essay question reduced the workload. Pre and post essay tutorials were time intensive but were seen as extremely worthwhile and highly valued by students [see paragraphs 4.4.1].
 - 5.3.7 The Panel queried whether the GTAs were appropriately remunerated for work undertaken outside formal teaching such as preparation for seminars and informal meetings. The Panel heard that these were voluntary and no longer paid.
 - 5.3.8 The Panel was informed that the School had a standardised GTA policy that, for every contact hour, 30 min preparation was allocated and there was also an assessment formula which stipulated that the expectation was to mark three 1,500 word essays in an hour.
 - 5.3.9 GTAs stated that they would appreciate a formal way of gathering and measuring feedback. Although module evaluations were shared with GTAs, unless specific reference was made to the GTAs then there was no specific feedback. It was suggested that the Learning and Teaching Committee might consider how feedback for GTAs could be obtained.
- 5.4 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)

Staffing

Workload model

- 5.4.1 It was recognised that workloads were high. The Review Panel was conscious that the balance of students and associated workload seem very intense and there was some concern about the potential impact of development plans on existing workloads. The Panel was pleased to hear that Pre-Honours Convenorships were rotated, due to the workloads involved.
- 5.4.2 The SER stressed the importance of subject-specific research led teaching. All staff were expected to teach across all levels and it was commented that this tended to be the norm. The Panel received a strong impression that there was a great sense of staff satisfaction and enthusiasm for Honours teaching. The Review Panel heard that there had recently been a refreshment of honours programmes.
- 5.4.3 The Panel was informed that, at the time of restructuring, the workload model in place was dropped due to the lack of administrative staff at Subject level. The Head of Subject expressed a preference to use the College model, but in the absence of this being introduced, the old model had been re-introduced. A University workload model was also being piloted by the School of Humanities. It was expected that information would soon be available and would be reviewed ahead of the main marking period with a view to next academic year, taking into consideration the increase in student numbers. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject area continues to adopt a workload model and recognises that this is currently being taken forward by the College.
- 5.4.4 It was highlighted that there was a very large cohort of pre-Honours students, who were coming to Honours next academic year and that there was some concern about the significant workload implications for staff including GTAs. The Panel heard that, for two

to three years there had not been enough GTAs but that recent recruitment had been good. It was recognised that the number would need to continue to increase if UG numbers continued to grow. Staff spoke very highly about the input from GTAs, which they considered invaluable.

- 5.4.5 All staff spoke very highly of administrative colleagues and informed the Panel that their input was hugely valuable to the operation of the Subject area, and particularly with managing the large numbers of students.

Physical space

- 5.4.6 The Subject is located in four terraced properties on University Gardens. The Panel was informed that the current space was viewed very positively by staff and by students. Students spoke very positively about teaching taking place in staff offices, which they felt encouraged informal contact. Staff were also very positive about the sense of community fostered by the accommodation and the ability for staff to host seminars and tutorials in their offices. However it was recognised that the existing space was not ideal in some respects, such as in terms of accessibility [paragraph 4.2.3], and it was acknowledged that there was still much debate to be had about any changes to the space in which the Subject was housed.
- 5.4.7 The location for teaching of large courses had been fragmented over recent years with students being allocated to different venues, which varied on different days and led to confusion and frustration [see paragraph 5.4.8]. The Review Panel heard from staff and students that the fragmented teaching was not ideal as the student experience for those receiving the lecture via video link was inferior. Students were understanding of the need to deliver the teaching in such a way, but inevitably would rather all be able to attend the live lecture. The Subject stated that it would benefit from the ability to teach the class in one venue and welcomed the plans for accommodation for large lecture classes.

CTT and IT

- 5.4.8 Delivery of large Level 1 courses was reliant on CTT and IT support for video linking to the Crichton campus and across multiple lecture halls on the Gilmorehill campus. Efforts had been made by staff to overcome some of the difficulties by rotating the location in which the live lecture was delivered, however video-linking between venues had often proved problematic, as there had been experiences of technical difficulties and disruption.
- 5.4.9 Recorded lectures had been provided as remedial action. The SER reported that feedback from students had indicated dissatisfaction with recorded lectures in place of streamed delivery. Some UG students who met with the Panel commented that they had found value in recorded lectures particularly when they had received the streamed lecture, so that they had the opportunity to review the content.

6. Academic Standards

- 6.1 Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

6.1.1 The Panel was satisfied with this aspect of the Subject's provision.

- 6.2 Assessment

6.2.1 The Panel noted that the SER stated that where a difference in marking between the two internal markers was identified, this would be looked at. The Panel was interested to hear in more detail the approach taken. External Examiners were noted to have commented that they were unclear on how inconsistencies in marking were dealt with and how final grades were agreed in these instances. It was evident that some areas had addressed this concern but it was recognised that there was a need for consistency

across the Subject. The Panel was informed that marking was monitored very closely and that there was a great deal of preparatory work so markers were very well prepared in advance. There was a high proportion of second marking and, in any instance where an anomaly between markers was identified, a third marking would occur. When a new GTA was involved in marking, the second marker took a full sample of that work. Second marking in this case would usually be undertaken by the course Convenor in consultation with the GTA.

6.3 Course and Programme Approval

6.3.1 The Head of School was positive about the Subject's approach to refreshment of its course provision. It was commented that one of the challenges could be that the School was often left out of the process but that was not the case with History [see section 5.1].

6.4 Student Feedback

6.4.1 Students who met with the Review Panel had a mixed awareness and understanding of the class representative roles. PGT students did not consider student representatives necessary because they were able to speak to lecturers directly about any concerns they had. It was noted however that there is a PGT Staff Student Liaison Committee.

6.4.2 From the SER and from the meetings with the Head of Subject and staff, it was evident that the Subject was highly responsive to student feedback both formally and informally. The Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) appeared to work well, and was consulted on new proposed courses and changes to courses. One of the PGT students commented that he had been surprised to the extent to which his comments had been taken into account. He had also been surprised at the willingness to adjust and refine courses on an ad-hoc basis, which he found to be much more responsive than he had experienced elsewhere. The Panel **commends** the Subject's responsiveness to student feedback. Some comments from students however suggested that they thought more could be done to disseminate information about changes implemented as a result of student feedback.

6.5 Subject Benchmark Statements

6.5.1 The Head of Subject confirmed that the Benchmark Statements informed the curriculum.

6.6 Quality Assurance

6.6.1 The Panel was satisfied that quality assurance procedures operated in line with University policy and were applied effectively.

7. Collaborative provision

There was no collaborative provision within the Subject.

8. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

8.1 Key strengths

- Strong community and supportive and responsive environment provided for UG and PGT students and for GTAs.
- Commitment to the students and provision of a high quality student experience including feedback provision, which is reflected by the high NSS student satisfaction rates.
- Commitment to the provision of research-led teaching.
- The Panel was impressed by the strong sense of student focus, despite high student numbers; this has been supported in all the meetings during the Review.

- Strong sense of collegiality, particularly with staff teaching across curriculum. GTAs feel part of the team in terms of design, delivery and support.

8.2 Areas for improvement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for improvement:

- Ensure Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are effectively and consistently communicated, that the objectives and the nature of assessment are transparent to students.
- Ensure that Graduate Attributes are embedded and signposted in course delivery and documentation.
- Diversification of assessment methods
- Engage with e-learning initiatives.
- The Subject had identified the reinstatement of the Learning and Teaching Committee at Subject level as an opportunity for development.
- Induction provision for new staff including staff handbook to provide information such as appropriate University/College/School documentation, role and responsibilities of staff, administrative processes and procedures.

8.3 Conclusion

- 8.3.1 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialists, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, programmes offered by the School were current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and of practice in its application.
- 8.3.2 This Review has identified that attention should be given to the diversification of assessment methods and making the development of transferable skills more explicit to students.
- 8.3.3 The Review Panel observed a successful, dedicated and hard-working Subject that provided a very strong student-focused environment. The Panel was extremely impressed with the focus on, and enthusiasm for, face-to-face delivery of teaching with small numbers of students and the one-on-one support given to students. It was evident that with the numbers of students this required a substantial commitment from staff, but it was evidently very beneficial to the student experience.

Commendations

The Review Panel commends History on the following, which are listed in order of appearance in this report:

Commendation 1

The Review Panel **highly commends** the Subject area for the strong sense of community, and the dedication of the staff in providing a rewarding and supportive student experience [paragraph 4.3.2].

Commendation 2

The Review Panel **commends** the intensive contact teaching with small numbers of students per class, despite the challenges of high student numbers [paragraph 4.4.2]

Commendation 3

The Panel **commends** the strong focus on and commitment to research led teaching at all levels and the matching of depth and range of knowledge with staff experience [paragraph 5.1.1].

Commendation 4

The Review Panel **commends** the very strong feedback provided to UG students, and the resulting NSS scores [paragraph 5.2.9].

Commendation 5

The Review Panel **commends** the way GTAs and supported and integrated as part of the team including the extent to which involved in course and assessment design [paragraph 5.3.5].

Commendation 6

The Panel **commends** the Subject's responsiveness to student feedback. [Paragraph 6.4.2].

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made to support the Subject in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. The Review Panel recognises that several of the recommendations relate to issues that the subject area itself had highlighted for further development in the course of the review or in the SER. The recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer and are grouped together by the areas for improvement/enhancement and are ranked in order of priority within each section.

Recommendation 1

The Review Panel **recommends** that the current requirement for UG course assessment to consist of minimum 60 percent unseen final exam and a maximum of 40 percent for other modes of assessment, be discontinued in favour of an assessment regime which has less reliance on final exams, to ensure that a range of assessment methods, are engaged across the curriculum as a whole programme, driven by learning outcomes [paragraph 5.2.7].

Action: Head of Subject

For information: Head of School

Recommendation 2

The Panel recommends that the Subject build on the work already done as part of the LEAF project and existing good practice to map courses, programmes and progression so that course development is coherent and allows for the curriculum to foster diversity of pedagogic and learning practices [paragraph 5.1.8].

Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 3

The Review Panel **recommends** that Graduate Attributes are made more explicit to students through ensuring that they are embedded in course delivery and are regularly flagged at appropriate points throughout the curriculum [paragraph 4.4.7].

Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 4

The Panel **recommends** that the Subject develops initiatives to enhance learning and teaching through the use of technology [paragraph 5.1.14].

Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 5

The Review Panel **recommends** the development of an approach to ensure issues of Equality and Diversity are embedded in course design and delivery [paragraph 4.2.4].

Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 6

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject conduct a feasibility study with a view to development of credit bearing work based learning/ placements [paragraph 5.1.10].

Action: Head of Subject

Recommendation 7

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject area continues to adopt and progress a workload model and recognises that this is currently being taken forward by the College [paragraph 5.4.3].

Action: Head of Subject

For information: Head of School

Recommendation 8

The Review Panel **recommends** that the School put in place procedures for a formal induction event including provision of a handbook for all new staff across the School to introduce them to relevant School and University procedures [paragraph 5.3.3].

Action: Head of School