

# UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

## Academic Standards Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016

### Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of Archaeology

Held on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Mr Daniel Chandler, Clerk to the Review Panel

#### Review Panel:

Professor James Conroy	Vice-Principal Internationalisation (Convener)
Professor Jim Crow	Head of Classics & Archaeology, University of Edinburgh (External Reviewer)
Professor Lindsay Farmer	Senate Assessor
Mr Liam King	SRC President (Student Reviewer)
Dr Victoria Price	Theatre, Film & Television Studies (Cognate Reviewer)
Dr Amanda Sykes	Learning & Teaching Centre
Mr Daniel Chandler	Senate Office (Clerk)

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 Archaeology has been taught at Glasgow for over 50 years. Following the restructuring in 2010, the Subject of Archaeology (henceforth, 'the Subject') was located within the School of Humanities in the College of Arts. The cross-over of academic disciplines in Humanities with Archaeology (most notably with Classics, History and Celtic & Gaelic) has resulted in significant collegiate teaching, research and other academic work across the School by Archaeology. The Subject, with the provision of the BSc, has an additional collaboration with the College of Science and Engineering. Student numbers on these programmes, however, are much smaller than on the MA degrees.

1.2 The Review Panel (henceforth, 'the Panel') noted that Archaeology is one of the smaller Subjects within the School and the strength of its organisational identity has waxed and waned over the years. The Self-Evaluative Report (SER) highlights the abandoned proposal to merge Archaeology with History in the Court review of 2011. The steady decline of staff numbers over the years and the loss of GUARD were considered to be the major challenges. The Panel noted the Subject's concerns about recent staffing numbers as a theme in the SER and whilst the PSR process did not cover resource allocation, the Panel was mindful of the current size and shape of the Subject in its discussions and judgements in the review.

1.3 The Panel considered that the SER was well-presented and detailed although it noted that the self-reflective parts often returned to the theme of resources and external factors.

The Panel was content with the level of staff involvement in the preparation of the SER and the efforts to involve students in the process.

The Panel met with the Head of Subject, 12 members of staff (including two staff probationers), 5 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), 13 undergraduate students and 6 postgraduate taught students. The Panel also met with the Head of the College of Arts and the College of Arts Dean of Learning and Teaching.

## 2. Background Information

### 2.1 Student and staff Numbers

Academic Staff	9 (8.5 FTE)*
GTAs	12
Research / Technical Support Staff	3
UG students	363 (headcount) (126.4 FTE)
PGT students	24

*\*[does not include 1.3 FTE research only]*

### 2.2 Range of Provision

#### Undergraduate (UG)

- Single Honours degrees in Archaeology in both the College of Arts (MA) and the College of Science and Engineering (BSc).
- Joint Honours degrees in Archaeology and another subject offered in the College of Arts (MA) or Social Sciences (MA)
- Joint Honours degrees in Archaeology and Earth Science, and Archaeology and Geography, through the College of Science and Engineering (BSc).
- A non-Honours designated degree in Archaeological Studies (BSc) in the College of Science and Engineering
- Level 3 options contribute to non-Honours designated degrees in the College of Arts (MA in Ancient Studies, European Civilisation, Historical Studies and Scottish Studies).

#### Postgraduate (PGT)

- MLitt/PGDip Archaeological Studies
- MLitt/PGDip Celtic & Viking Archaeology
- MLitt/PGDip Material Culture and Artefact Studies
- MSc Landscape: Integrated Research and Practice  
*Contributes to:*
- MSc/PGDip in Museum Studies, including Artefacts and Material Culture strand
- MLitt in Ancient Cultures
- MLitt/PGDip Conflict Archaeology and Heritage
- MLitt in Celtic Studies
- PGT course in Public Humanities

### **3. Context and Strategy**

#### **3.1 Context and vision**

3.1.1 The Panel noted from the SER and background information that the Subject had achieved and maintained exceptionally high levels of student satisfaction in the NSS. There was evidence of good student support and a strong and varied teaching curriculum with the maintenance of an emphasis on practical archaeology, considered by the Sector to be a particular strength of the Glasgow provision. It appeared that the Subject had so far maintained this position despite perceived concerns about re-structuring and the closure of GUARD.

3.1.2 The Panel explored with the Head of Subject the vision laid out in the SER. The Head of Subject reiterated the points in the SER: that the disappointing REF results and subsequent review had been the impetus for a new research and teaching strategy with the aim to revise the teaching curriculum with a view to producing greater efficiencies that in turn would give staff more time to mutually support each other in their research. Perhaps more significantly, the organisation of fieldwork was highlighted as expensive in staff time and strategies for new approaches to fieldwork in the curriculum were being considered, again with a view to enhanced efficiency (see 3.2.4-9.). In a similar vein, the redesign of the PGT provision, with a view to rationalising and consolidating an admittedly small number of students spread over a large number of programmes, was a theme investigated by the Panel (see 5.1.1.2-4.).

3.1.3 The Panel was impressed by the Head of Subject's positive ideas on taking the Subject forward but it did not feel it was given a strong sense of how the vision would be achieved or where the Subject saw itself on this journey. The Panel noted that the Head of Subject, referring to the teaching and research reviews that would inform the strategy, regarded the Subject as just starting out on the process. In contrast, feedback from the rest of the staff indicated that they felt they were well advanced in the process of review. This suggested to the Panel that whilst it was recognised that colleagues had embarked on a process of development and had already put valuable time and effort into this, there was still some way to go in instilling a collectively agreed strategy. In general, whilst it was recognised that staff had put time and effort into finding solutions and dealing with current challenges, the Panel detected a less positive and less ambitious view among the staff with more of an emphasis on 'keeping going' rather than strategic advancement.

#### ***Recommendation:***

*Actively and strategically supported by the Head of School, the Head of Subject should meet with staff to articulate a robust and ambitious vision for the Subject for the next 5 years.*

- *There should be collective agreement of the specific strategic plans to achieve this vision, and an agreed time frame for their implementation.*
- *The overall plan should tie together both future research strategy and teaching strategy. Specific consideration should be given to the formation of 3 or 4 research groupings representing the strengths of the Subject and teaching provision, especially PGT provision, should link in with these themes.*

- *Further, specific consideration should be given to how the new resources of the Kelvinhall development could be exploited by the Subject and an appropriate business plan for this drawn up.*
- *This task should be completed by the end of the current academic session.*

### **3.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching**

3.2.1 The Panel noted in the SER that the Subject was striving to enhance learning and teaching, adopting high level precepts within the University Strategy (e.g. a 'learning partnership with staff and students') and more specific precepts in the College of Arts Learning & Teaching Plan, with regard to developments in assessment and feedback. It was also expected that the research strategy would lead to an enhancement in research-led teaching but the Panel did not investigate how this would connect in detail. The Panel praised this strategic approach but expressed some concern that the delivery of these aspirations had been overshadowed by the Subject's anxieties about resources and the imperative to rationalise aspects of teaching delivery.

3.2.2 Collaborative research and teaching with other subjects was cited as important to, and a strategic strength of, Archaeology. The Panel noted the extent of interdisciplinary teaching and found very positive support from the UG students for the choice of courses and combinations of subjects offered.

3.2.3 Given the Subject's repeated anxieties about staff workload the Panel suggested that staff may be overstressing themselves by offering a broad range of teaching both within and beyond their core programmes. The Panel acknowledged that the Subject did reciprocally receive teaching (e.g. from Classics) which was important in the provision of choice in the honours years and it was explained that the BSc Archaeology programmes offered in the College of Science and Engineering required the provision of no additional courses. The Head of Subject further explained that staff enjoyed teaching in their areas of interest outside core Archaeology (e.g. History courses) and there was no feeling of being overburdened or fractured by their collegiate work. The Panel's concerns were allayed on this point, especially after its discussion with staff and with the Head of College, and it praised and supported this interdisciplinarity as a worthwhile strength for the Subject. However, the Panel believed that within the total provision there was substantial room for considered rationalisation.

#### ***Fieldwork and Field School***

3.2.4 The Panel investigated this area in detail, as it was clearly an important factor in a number of discussions and reviews concerning student satisfaction, curriculum design and resources. The Panel established from its discussion with the Head of Subject and staff, that the expected ending of the Field School next year would have a major effect on the provision of fieldwork which would notably increase the demands on staff time in this area. As the resource issue of the Field School and the academic and curricular issue of fieldwork within the Archaeology programme were closely linked, the Panel considered this as a discrete topic.

3.2.5 It was not entirely clear to the Panel why the Field School had become an unjustifiable expense. Staff informed the Panel that the Field School was considered by the College as a research project requiring research funded costing, which was in 'the red'. The Panel ascertained that staff did use the Field School for their research and the students gained field experience working on these projects. It was unclear to the Panel if the heavy demand on staff time was due more to the practical research projects than the provision of fieldwork experience for the students, nor was it clear why the business model could not be overhauled, removing the research aspect and costing the Field School as teaching time. The Panel did not explore these matters further, acknowledging the loss of the Field School, and that the Subject was now planning alternative solutions.

3.2.6 The Head of Subject informed the Panel that the Subject was pursuing a resource-based alternative to the Field School in its negotiations with York Archaeological Trust, which runs fieldwork projects. Unlike the Field School, this could be costed in staff time as teaching activity. The Panel was interested in the solutions around reviewing the curriculum and programme design, noting that the Field School provided 18 days out of the 55 days of fieldwork required in the honours degree.

3.2.7 The Panel queried whether the number of days of fieldwork in the degree could be reduced, especially given the fact that most students did not expect to be professional archaeologists. When compared to provision in comparable archaeology programmes across the UK, the Panel was aware that Glasgow had one of the most substantial requirements for compulsory fieldwork in its degree (35 days for joint honours and 55 for single honours) and students had to make up most of this by finding their own projects, approved by the Subject's conveners. In their on-going curriculum review, the Head of Subject and staff were currently considering the award of credit for field work. The Panel detected, however, amongst the staff, that there was no agreement whether fieldwork should be compulsory in the degree. The External reviewer also pointed out to the Panel that the subject benchmark for Archaeology required an element of practical work but this need not be in the field (e.g. conservation work).

3.2.8 The Panel acknowledged that the practical aspect of the Glasgow Archaeology degree was regarded highly in the Sector. This was confirmed by the UG students who informed the Panel that the fieldwork opportunities were an essential and rewarding part of their experience. The students also praised the Field School and indicated that it was an excellent way of developing a sense of community between staff and students. The Panel also acknowledged that the fieldwork was an obvious source of transferrable skills for students.

3.2.9 The Panel concluded that the Subject had accepted the loss of the Field School and were aware that, generally, the current fieldwork requirement and its intensive demands on staff time were unsustainable. Whilst the Panel acknowledged that solutions were being considered, it detected that there was again, a lack of agreement on a clear way forward and time was pressing given that reportedly the Subject had the use of the Field School only until the end of the summer 2016.

***Recommendation:***

*The Head of Subject and staff should meet to specifically agree a plan to address the issue of fieldwork in the curriculum and the loss of the Field School. The current ideas for future*

*fieldwork provision (outlined in 3.2.6) should be distilled into a single, clear and agreed strategy and time frame. Any solution should seek to preserve the sense of community amongst the student body, fostered by group field trip activity. The plan should be implemented ready for the start for the 2016-17 academic year.*

## **4. Enhancing the Student Experience**

### **4.1 Admissions, Retention and Success**

4.1.1 The Panel did not detect any major problems in this area with the possible exception of recruitment and low conversion to honours. The Panel was reassured, however, that the Subject's recruitment figures were comparable to other Archaeology schools in the Sector, all of whom were suffering a recent downturn in UG applications. The Panel also noted the observation of staff that the number of Archaeology honours students did not nearly reflect the amount of teaching carried out by the Subject, given the popularity of the subject at Levels 1 and 2 and the large number of students enrolling at this level but not going on to honours in Archaeology.

4.1.2 The Panel expressed concern about poor PGT student recruitment. The Panel was aware of the comment in the SER, that the Subject had lost some good PGT applicants due to miscommunication with the Marketing, Recruitment & International Office (MaRIO) in applying the Subject's criteria correctly. It was suggested, however, that MaRIO had taken control of the process because, in the past, applications sent on to School and Subject staff for decisions, were returned too late or in some cases, not returned at all. The Panel heard, however, from the School administrator with knowledge of this area that the process for the consideration of applications at School level had greatly improved. The Panel concluded that it did not have enough information to determine why good applicants had been lost but it was clear to the Panel that the Subject would benefit from meeting with MaRIO to discuss the recruitment process in detail and agree a way forward.

4.1.3 The Panel regarded the PGT student recruitment problem as partly the issue of the number of PGT programmes offered, some of which were poorly recruiting and appeared non-viable. The Panel noted that the Subject was reviewing PGT provision (see curriculum design, 5.1.1, below) and that academic staff involved considered that there were some weaknesses in the provision.

4.1.4 In general, the Panel concluded that there was a lack of direction or clear strategy for PGT recruitment and that the Subject would benefit from discussing this with MaRIO and devising a market driven strategy in this area.

#### ***Recommendation:***

*The Subject should meet with colleagues in MaRIO and, if necessary, the School and College, to resolve any miscommunication concerning the PGT recruitment process and work out a clear and agreed process for the consideration of applications that efficiently captures all appropriate applicants. More generally, the Subject should work with colleagues in MaRIO to create a market driven strategy, with the aim of re-shaping the extant provision and increasing PGT recruitment.*

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity**

4.2.1 The Panel did not investigate this area in detail as it noted that the number of staff constituted a sample too small to be indicative of any trends. The Panel also noted that the statistics for recognised groups in the student body was typical for Arts and for Archaeology in the Sector.

## **4.3 Supporting Students in their Learning**

4.3.1 The Panel was impressed by the extremely positive feedback it received from the UG students it interviewed. The students were very vocal in their praise for the teaching and support they received from staff and the excellent experience they had shared in the Subject. The students specifically praised the Head of Subject for his commitment to academic and pastoral support work. They also praised the strong community of the Subject and indicated that the fieldwork programme was key in forging this sense of community early on.

4.3.2 The Panel also noted from the SER some good practice examples of how the Subject had innovated in supporting students. In particular, the Subject's approach to the honours progress committee, providing extra support to students with medical and personal issues. The Panel did not follow this up in discussions, beyond noting that whilst this must be commended, it may be another example where staff are trying to do too much in one area, given resource issues.

4.3.3 The Panel heard a less contented appraisal from the PGT students it interviewed. The Panel acknowledged that PGT student numbers were small but there was clearly a lack of a sense of community or mutual support amongst the PGT students, in contrast to the UG students. The lack of collective fieldwork projects for PGT students was seen as a factor here.

4.3.4 The PGT students generally felt they were well supported by staff and said they were attracted to Glasgow as it was seen as a centre of excellence for the specialist fields they were interested in, especially those who were doing the MSc/MLitt as a springboard to PhD research.

4.3.5 The PGT students voiced specific criticisms, however, about the programmes and courses offered. The Panel heard how certain specialised courses, which had partly attracted the students to the programmes, had not run and they had only learnt that this would be the case after enrolment. The Panel noted that there was an obvious grievance about the cancellation of a course on aerial photography which had originally been offered as part of Conflict Archaeology & Heritage (formerly Battlefield Archaeology) but this may well have been an isolated problem. The Panel accepted the fact that this course had ended with the staff member who taught it coming to the end of his contract. The Panel was surprised, however, to see the aerial photography course still available in the online course catalogue.

4.3.6 Staff also mentioned that on occasion a lone PGT student on a course had been given independent study but this was clearly not a long term solution. In the Panel's view, however, the problem with undersubscribed and cancelled PGT courses appeared to be a symptom of the wider problem of too many PGT programmes chasing too few students (see curriculum design, 5.1.1.).

**Commendation:**

*The Subject is commended for its support for its UG students and the academic and pastoral experience it provides, vocally demonstrated to the Panel by a very content and enthusiastic group of students. In addition, the students' strongly praised the varied, flexible and interesting curriculum and commitment offered.*

**Recommendation:**

*The Subject should consider ways to develop a clear strategy to promote a more cohesive PGT community and involve PGT students more in the wider Subject.*

**Recommendation:**

*The Subject should immediately review the course catalogue to check for any inaccuracies and confirm that the incorrect listing of the aerial photography course was an isolated occurrence.*

**4.4 Student Engagement and Student feedback mechanisms**

4.4.1 The Panel was impressed by the articulate and enthusiastic feedback it received from the UG students. The Panel had noted from the SER and supporting documentation, that all the required student feedback mechanisms, such as SSLCs and course evaluation were in place. In addition, it noted that as this was a small and cohesive Subject, with good relationships between staff and students, there were many informal opportunities for students to engage and give feedback to staff. The Panel had no concerns in this area and did not investigate it in detail.

**5. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching****5.1 Learning and Teaching****5.1.1 Curriculum Design**

5.1.1.1 The Panel praised the Subject's review of the undergraduate curriculum and the work being done on the honours years which obviously had the most impact for the Subject. It noted that there were two important themes in the curriculum review: to partly reduce the teaching burden of fieldwork and to investigate ways to improve assessment feedback (see above, 3.2.4 and below, 5.1.3).

5.1.1.2 The PGT provision required an altogether more radical review. The Panel acknowledged that the Subject was seeking a solution to the problem of a thin spread of PGT students across too many programmes. The Head of Subject reiterated the aim, noted in the SER, to rationalise by creating an 'umbrella' programme with individual specialisms or a 'hub and spoke' model, where more core courses would be taught in common. The Panel considered that whilst ideas were under consideration there was again a lack of agreement as to form and substance, and a clear plan. The Panel were told that the current PGT students would not be consulted on the proposals until a specific plan had been formed. The HoS also informed the Panel that the School was recommending subject areas reduce the numbers of programmes taught, replacing them with broader 'umbrella' programmes. The



Panel considered that there was a need for Archaeology to demonstrate a greater sense of urgency in pushing through a clear plan of PGT provision.

5.1.1.3 In connection with this matter, the Panel investigated the specific case of the MLitt Battlefield Archaeology which now appeared to be fully owned by History as the rebranded Conflict Archaeology & Heritage. It was unclear to the Panel if this change of ownership was part of a planned strategy or an erosion of the Subject's provision, relating to the loss of GUARD staff. The Panel was concerned that without the emergence of a clear and effective plan, the Subject might well lose position and influence within the School's PGT portfolio.

5.1.1.4 The Panel had discussed with the Head of Subject the Subject's post-REF research strategy, which entailed focussing on three main research strengths (i.e. Landscape, Material Culture and Engagement Archaeology) based on staff expertise and forming three research groupings, allowing staff to collaborate and support each other in these research areas. The Panel suggested that PGT teaching could be revised and redesigned to reflect these research areas, as part of the rationalisation of PGT provision. This might also help foster a greater sense of community amongst the PGT students.

***Recommendation:***

*The Subject should specifically agree a plan to rationalise its PGT provision, working with the School as necessary, creating some form of 'umbrella' programme and withdrawing non-viable programmes and courses. In general, linkage of PGT provision with the development of themed research groupings, should be considered as a way forward and an opportunity to enhance the Subject's long term reputation internally and externally.*

**5.1.2 Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes**

5.1.2.1 The Panel was impressed by the range of teaching methods and content in the UG courses, particularly at honours level. This was confirmed by the UG students interviewed, who praised the variety and interdisciplinarity of teaching. They also praised the elements of problem-based or case-based learning which they found absent from some of their courses in other Subjects. The honours, Mahara ePortfolio work was also popular.

5.1.2.2 When asked, the students were aware of Graduate Attributes (GAs) and reflected that the practical elements of Archaeology (fieldwork or artefact and museum work) provided a number of transferable skills. The Panel was impressed that the students had a clear understanding of these concepts. The honours students at least, reported that they had had sessions on GAs and the Mahara ePortfolios were noted by the Panel as an example of the conscious commitment to employability in the curriculum.

***Commendation:***

*The Subject is commended for its problem-based and case-based approach to teaching and the excellent practical emphasis of the degrees (fieldwork and artefact work), including a strong commitment to embedding Graduate Attributes in the curriculum.*

**5.1.3 Assessment and feedback**

5.1.3.1 The Panel went into greater depth in this area as it had noted the obvious weakness in the NSS results around assessment feedback and the Subject acknowledged this as an area needing improvement.

5.1.3.2 The Panel was aware that the Subject utilised a varied range of assessments, including portfolios, posters and scrapbooks, and this was to be commended. There was clearly positive support for this approach to assessment amongst the UG students.

5.1.3.3 The quality and quantity of feedback was also commended by the Panel, particularly the use of a standard feedback proforma and the range of approaches to feedback (e.g. trialling exam feedback at Level 2) some of which was regarded as bravely innovative.

5.1.3.4 The weakness was clearly in feedback turn-around times and the UG students acknowledged delays but told the Panel that reasons for delays were always explained to them by staff, which they appreciated. Nonetheless, the NSS feedback suggested that such communication on its own was insufficient to assuage their anxieties.

5.1.3.5 The Panel suggested that delays in feedback could be linked to the volume and range of assessment offered, some of which required intensive staff time in organisation and marking. The Panel also felt that teaching staff may again be overstretching themselves with too much assessment. The Panel had noted consistent external examiner comments about over-assessment and the UG students suggested that they were challenged by their workloads but 'in a good way'.

5.1.3.6 The Panel's view was that the amount and types of assessment could be re-balanced against a more reasonable allocation of staff time, thus speeding up feedback turnaround times and relieving the staff workload generally. This could be achieved, without loss of good practice in assessment, by mapping the curriculum to understand where different types of assessment occur and balancing the provision of formative and summative assessment. With this understanding, the curriculum could be reviewed, focussing on the student's experience of assessment or route through the programme rather than narrowly designing assessment for each course in isolation.

**Commendation:**

*The Subject is commended for its commitment to innovation and variation in assessment and its good practice in providing high quality feedback to students.*

**Recommendation:**

*The Subject must take on board the issue of overassessment and an imbalance in staff time devoted to assessment and feedback, leading to delays in feedback turn-around times. As a remedy, it is suggested that the Subject should carry out a mapping of the UG curriculum to understand where different types of assessment occur in the students' programmes and the balance of formative and summative assessment. The Subject may also seek advice on this exercise from the Learning & Teaching Centre which has carried out work on such mappings. With information from this mapping, assessments should be reimagined and rationalised across programmes and students' routes through them.*

## **5.2 Engaging and Supporting Staff**

### **5.2.1 Probationer and early career support**

5.2.1.1 The Panel met with two probationary and early career staff. Both staff members generally felt that they had been well supported by the Subject. They reported that they had experienced a good induction programme with objective setting and had been assigned mentors. The staff member who had started the PGCAP had found this useful with novel ideas and the fact that it was not Humanities specific was regarded as a positive point. They confirmed that they had been involved in the Subjects' staff activities and organisation and shown opportunities to learn more about the wider School and College. They were happy with the teaching loads they had been assigned so far, which had been sensitive to their development needs and had allowed them to pursue their own teaching and research interests as far as possible.

5.2.1.2 The Panel was aware that the two staff members were in different contractual positions and had different priorities; one on a fixed term teaching contract and the other in a permanent role bringing her own research projects and external research funding. The Panel drew no conclusions, therefore, other than having no concerns in this area and noting the staff interviewed felt welcomed and well supported, as the Panel expected in a small and cohesive staff team.

### **5.2.2 Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs)**

5.2.2.1 The Panel met with 5 GTAs who gave generally positive feedback about their work and support they had received from the Subject. They explained that they taught level one courses and had preparation meetings with staff. On large field trips, the GTAs would also attend.

5.2.2.2 They confirmed that they had all undertaken the statutory training or further training offered by the Learning & Teaching Centre, and that they had the advantage of further training within the Subject, although this seemed to be focussed on marking practice and guidance. The GTAs appeared generally enthusiastic about their work and noted that they were gaining some transferable skills (e.g. public speaking), they would value in their careers.

5.2.2.3 The GTAs agreed that whilst their teaching loads were acceptable and they were supported in this by staff, they put in more time than they were paid for on essay marking. This was mainly due to the inadequate time allocated to providing quality feedback on assessed work.

5.2.2.4 The GTAs also criticised the impact of the introduction of the new guaranteed hours contracts although the Panel noted that this was not a matter for the Subject and School. The discussion led on to whether the GTAs had any kind of network with other GTAs in the School, College or wider University. They reported that beyond meeting other GTAs on training courses or social events, there was no formal network.

## **Recommendation**

(further recommendation made by the Academic Standards Committee)

*The Subject Area should consider how efficiently its GTAs could carry out their roles, in supporting and engaging with students, if the new GTA contracts precluded them from holding office hours.*

5.2.2.5 The Panel noted that the GTAs felt they were involved in the Subject's discussions and planning around teaching. They confirmed that they attended teaching meetings and considered student feedback. They received feedback on their own teaching, now through EvaSys, and some GTAs sought their own feedback which they found useful.

**Commendation:**

*The Subject is commended for its management of its GTAs, the support it provides for them and their involvement in the Subject as a whole.*

**5.2.3 Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)**

5.2.3.1 It was noted that the issue of staffing levels had pervaded the SER and the Panel had seen the effects of this in a number of areas discussed throughout the review.

5.2.3.2 In the area of physical resources, the Subject had raised concerns about the availability of teaching space and room bookings and its detrimental effect specifically on their object-based learning. The Panel acknowledged these comments whilst noting that the resource issue was not directly within the remit of the PSR. It would, however, pass on the concerns to the Vice-Principal (Academic and Educational Innovation).

**6. Academic Standards**

6.1 The Panel did not investigate this area in detail as it was assured by the documentation submitted by the Subject and School that all expected Quality Assurance (QA) processes were in operation to maintain and review academic standards. The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that the programmes offered by the Subject remained current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline, and practice in its application. The Panel were also assured that the expected feedback mechanisms were in place, including action on External Examiner reports (though some questions remained about the timely response to concerns about assessment and feedback). The Panel did note that due to the small, cohesive body of staff, these processes would be effectively carried out informally, without the need for separate committees and named role holders. The Panel also noted from the SER, the key roles some Subject staff played in the QA and other organisational areas of the School.

**7. Collaborative provision**

7.1 It was noted that the Subject was not involved in any external or international partnerships. The Panel noted from the SER that there were international mobility opportunities for students in the study abroad programme and staff regularly visited overseas institutions mainly for research activities.

## **8. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement**

### **8.1 Key strengths**

- A strong and cohesive community in the Subject with an excellent relationship between staff and students and amongst the students themselves.
- A very positive and enthusiastic undergraduate student body suggesting a strong commitment from staff to student support and engagement.
- The maintenance of an attractive reputation in the Sector for practical Archaeology in the curriculum.
- A curriculum benefiting from a long standing commitment to interdisciplinary teaching within the School, offering a wide and interesting choice of courses for undergraduate students.
- A sensitive and supportive environment for staff, including GTAs.

### **8.2 Areas for improvement**

- The amount of assessment and feedback and its impact on staff time.
- The amount of staff time dedicated to the provision of fieldwork in the curriculum.
- The maintenance of undersubscribed PGT programmes and courses and low PGT recruitment in general.
- The lack of clear and unified strategic planning.

### **8.3 Conclusion**

In its discussions with students and staff, the Panel heard many positive reports on activities and teaching in the Subject, which corroborated feedback sections in the SER. There was clear evidence of a strong commitment to supporting undergraduate students in their learning and providing a rich, varied and flexible curriculum. In addition, the Subject had committed itself to innovation in assessment and feedback and had preserved the practical elements of the undergraduate degrees which the Panel understood were a recognised and marketable aspect of Archaeology at Glasgow and popular with the students. It was acknowledged, however, that the PGT area lacked vigour and focus, and that a new approach to PGT provision and recruitment was needed.

The Subject's concern over recent staff losses, post-REF, was acknowledged by the Panel. The PSR was not a review of resources, however, and the Panel urged staff to respond to these challenges by following the lead of the Head of Subject, in creating a longer term vision for the Subject and working collectively on specific strategic plans to achieve that goal.

## **Commendations**

### **1) Commendation**

The Subject is commended for its support for its UG students and the academic and pastoral experience it provides, as articulated for the Panel by a very content and enthusiastic group of students. In addition, the students' strongly praised the varied, flexible and interesting curriculum and commitment offered (para. 4.3.6).

## **2) Commendation**

The Subject is commended for its commitment to innovation and variation in assessment and its good practice in providing high quality feedback to students (para. 5.1.3.6).

## **3) Commendation**

The Subject is commended for its problem-based and case-based approach to teaching and the excellent practical emphasis of the degrees (fieldwork and artefact work), including a strong commitment to embedding Graduate Attributes in the curriculum (para. 5.1.2.2).

## **4) Commendation**

The Subject is commended for its management of, and support for, its GTAs as well as the commitment of the GTAs to supporting the Subject (para. 5.2.2.5).

## **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 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**. The following recommendations should be taken forward by the Head of Subject and should be noted by the Head of School, for information.

### **1) Recommendation:**

Actively and strategically supported by the Head of School, the Head of Subject should meet with staff to articulate a robust and ambitious vision for the Subject for the next 5 years.

- There should be collective agreement of the specific strategic plans to achieve this vision, and an agreed time frame for their implementation.
- The overall plan should tie together both future research strategy and teaching strategy. Specific consideration should be given to the formation of 3 or 4 research groupings representing the strengths of the Subject and teaching provision, especially PGT provision, should link in with these themes.
- Further, specific consideration should be given to how the new resources of the Kelvinhall development could be exploited by the Subject and an appropriate business plan for this drawn up.

- This task should be completed by the end of the current academic session.

(para. 3.1.3).

*Action: Head of Subject*

## **2) Recommendation**

The Head of Subject and staff should meet to specifically agree a plan to address the issue of fieldwork in the curriculum and the loss of the Field School. The current ideas for future fieldwork provision (outlined in 3.2.6) should be distilled into a single clear and agreed strategy and time frame. Any solution should seek to preserve the sense of community amongst the student body, fostered by group field trip activity. The plan should be implemented ready for the start for the 2016/17 academic year (para. 3.2.9).

*Action: Head of Subject*

## **3) Recommendation**

The Subject should meet with colleagues in MaRIO and, if necessary, the School and College, to clear up any miscommunication concerning the PGT recruitment process and work out a clear and agreed process for the consideration of applications that efficiently captures all appropriate applicants. More generally, the Subject should work with colleagues in MaRIO to create a market driven strategy, with the aim of re-shaping the extant provision and increasing PGT recruitment (para. 4.1.4).

*Action: Head of Subject*

## **4) Recommendation**

The Subject should specifically agree a plan to rationalise its PGT provision, working with the School as necessary, creating some form of 'umbrella' programme and withdrawing non-viable programmes and courses. In general, linkage of PGT provision with the development of themed research groupings, should be considered as a way forward and an opportunity to enhance the long term reputation internally and externally (para. 5.1.1.4).

*Action: Head of Subject*

## **5) Recommendation**

The Subject should consider ways to develop a clear strategy to promote a more cohesive PGT community and involve PGT students more in the wider Subject (para. 4.3.6).

*Action: Head of Subject*

## **6) Recommendation**

The Subject must take on board the issue of overassessment and an imbalance in staff time devoted to assessment and feedback, leading to delays in feedback turn-around times. As a remedy, it is suggested that the Subject should carry out a mapping of the UG curriculum to

understand where different types of assessment occur in the students' programmes and the balance of formative and summative assessment. The Subject may also seek advice on this exercise from the Learning & Teaching Centre which has carried out work on such mappings. With information from this mapping, assessments should be reimagined and rationalised across programmes and students' routes through them (para. 5.1.3.6).

*Action: Head of Subject*

### **7) Recommendation**

The Subject should immediately review the course catalogue to check for any inaccuracies and confirm that the incorrect listing of the aerial photography course was an isolated occurrence. In addition, the complete database of courses should be reviewed to ensure that only active courses are uploaded on PIP (para. 4.3.6).

*Action: Head of Subject*

### **8) Recommendation (further recommendation made by the Academic Standards Committee)**

The Subject Area should consider how efficiently its GTAs could carry out their roles, in supporting and engaging with students, if the new GTA contracts precluded them from holding office hours (para. 5.2.2.4).

*Action: Head of Subject*