

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW PERIODIC SUBJECT REVIEW

History

16-17 March 2022

Review Panel

Convener	Professor Moira Fischbacher-Smith,
External Subject Specialist, University of Edinburgh	Professor Steve Boardman
Student Representative Council (SRC)	Mr Ross Whip
Cognate Member	Dr Jackie Clarke
Elected Member from University Court	Professor Simon Kennedy
Academic & Digital Development (ADD)	Dr Vicki Dale
Review Manager	Mrs Irene Bruce

1 OUTCOME

- 1.1 The Panel **confirmed** there were no concerns regarding the academic standards of programmes delivered by History and recommended the validation of all programmes for a further six-year period.
- 1.2 The Panel **confirmed** that nothing was raised as a concern during the PSR that had not already been identified by the Subject in their Reflective Analysis and therefore the focus of the review would be on supporting the Subject's aspirations for enhancement.
- 1.3 The Panel **confirmed** that History had a transparent academic governance and quality assurance structure which aligns to the University regulatory framework.

2 SUMMARY AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 History is a large, ambitious and dynamic Subject area in the School of Humanities within the College of Arts. The previous PSR was undertaken in March 2015. The Panel were satisfied with the information provided by the Subject area and noted the significant progress made on recommendations from the previous PSR. The Panel also noted the continued commitment to the enhancement of the student experience which was evident during discussions with staff and students.
- 2.2 The Convener noted the emphasis on resourcing within the RA and within some of the discussions with staff. Particular attention was given to the concerns expressed by History about the effects of temporary staff appointments (see below) and the challenges associated with keeping in balance the need to recruit replacement posts to maintain a steady state in terms of teaching provision alongside the focus on income growth and new PGT provision. There was concern within History about the extent to which the current planning process is effective, but discussion of the University planning process is beyond the scope of the PSR process. In addition, the Convener confirmed that the Panel did not have authority for allocating resources. However, the expectation is that solutions to some of the recommendations in this report will be addressed in collaboration with key senior College and School staff and University central support services, as required, and offer the opportunity for wider resource discussions and additional support.
- 2.3 The Convener confirmed the PSR was taking place in the context of the pandemic which had resulted in all teaching and learning moving online and staff and students working remotely. While the focus of the review was on progress made since the previous PSR in 2015, it was heavily influenced by the impact of the pandemic restrictions on the student and staff experiences of the last two years.

Staff and Student Participation

- 2.4 The Panel met staff from across the Subject including those in leadership roles, key academic roles, early career academics, graduate teaching assistants and professional support staff. The Panel also met with undergraduate and postgraduate students. Comments made by staff and students were supportive and constructive and demonstrated a commitment to the enhancement of the student experience. The convener confirmed discussions with the Panel would be reported but not attributed in a manner that would identify individual students or staff.
- 2.5 The Panel noted that the UG provision was clearly student focused and, based on the good NSS scores maintained despite the disruption caused by the pandemic during the last two years, that effort was recognised and appreciated by the History students who have since graduated.

Preparation for PSR

- 2.6 The Reflective Analysis (RA) which included feedback from staff and students was drafted and coordinated on behalf of the Subject by the Head of Subject and the Learning and Teaching Convener. The Convener acknowledged the time taken to prepare for the PSR and the impact this had on the Subject and workloads during this particularly challenging time.

Student and Staff Numbers and Profile

- 2.7 The RA confirmed that History had a total of 1,459 students (659 FTE) of this 1,280 were undergraduate (UG: 564.7 FTE) and 179 were postgraduate taught (PGT: 94.3 FTE). PGT numbers had increased by over 52% since 2017, with an associated increase in the number of programmes offered. Growth is continuing. UG numbers had declined in recent years, which included a pandemic-related drop in 2020 but the Panel noted this was after a period of substantial UG growth. The Panel noted that Level 1 intake for 2021 was at pre-pandemic levels of over 500.
- 2.8 The Panel noted the growth in PGT numbers and also noted that admission targets were set at College level with no input from the Subject.
- 2.9 The Panel noted in the RA, that at the start of 2020-21, History had 32.3 FTE teaching staff on open ended contracts which compares to 32 FTE at the previous PSR. In that time, the student profile has altered. The 18% growth in PGT student numbers referred to above reflects strategic decisions to develop, support and resource new PGT portfolios. As noted in 2.7, the UG intake for 2021 level 1 has returned to pre-pandemic levels. The Panel also noted a high staff turnover since 2015, which included the loss of several key professorial and leadership posts due to departures, retirements and voluntary reduction in hours. The Panel noted the impact these changes had on the delivery of some courses as well as the resulting reliance on a high level of fixed-term contract staff.
- 2.10 The Panel noted that the proportion of graduates going on to employment or further education for History matches the College outcomes at 91.4%.
- 2.11 The Panel **commended** the Subject on the quality of teaching which is reflected in the winning of six College and University Teaching Excellence awards, several recent Student Representative Council (SRC) teaching awards and a 2020 National Royal Historical Society Innovation in Teaching Award.

3 OVERVIEW

3.1 STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Panel **commended** the Subject on the significant progress made against the

recommendations arising from the previous PSR in 2015 and the discipline-wide initiatives in Historical studies in the UK around diversifying and decolonising the curriculum. The Panel noted that some of these ambitions were long term projects which will require further implementation and will be influenced by the research/teaching areas of any new staff appointments in the Subject area and the associated delivery of pre-Hons courses. It was evident to the Panel through interviews with staff and students that the Subject had a culture of commitment to supporting and enhancing the student experience and that the staff prioritise research-led teaching.

Strategy and Resources

- 3.2 The Panel noted that in the absence of a College-wide workload allocation model/template the Subject had established a functional workload model which helped with planning and highlighted discrepancies in staff workloads. The Panel **commended** the Subject on this work.

Equality and Diversity

- 3.3 The staff gender balance has a longstanding male skew at senior level with only two women having been promoted to Professor level. The imbalance has been worsened by the departure of five women since 2015. The Subject has a clear commitment to gender balance and to ethnic diversity and plans to work with the College and University HR services to address this matter as part of their future staffing recruitment strategy. The student gender balance has a female skew at both UG and PGT (63% female/37% male) however, History has a more gender-balanced profile than the College overall (which is 68% female at UG and 74% at PGT). The student body is predominantly white (93% at UG). This falls to 81% at PGT level following recruitment of additional international students. History is confident that the ongoing diversification of the curriculum will help to attract a more diverse range of students. The Subject are encouraged to continue to work with colleagues in External Relations to incorporate relevant aspects of this data into promotional materials.
- 3.4 The Panel noted the successful achievement of an Athena Swan Bronze Award (2017) which was led by the School Gender Equality Committee and facilitated by the Subject's Equality and Diversity committee. The Panel noted the Centre for Gender History will host an interdisciplinary workshop in 2022.
- 3.5 The Panel noted History were taking into consideration recommendations outlined in the 2018 and 2020 Royal Historical Society reports on race and diversity in History teaching and staffing in the UK, and the University's 2020 report Understanding Racism. The Panel encouraged History to continue to develop its Equality and Diversity ambitions and to work with the Arts social media team and the student body to promote awareness of this work. The Panel noted History's commitment to improving the ethnic diversity of staffing in the subject.

Early Career Academic Staff

- 3.6 The Review Panel was very impressed with the dedication and commitment of junior academic staff and acknowledged the leadership responsibilities that they were carrying. However, it was notable that early career staff (often on fixed-term contracts) were undertaking a great deal of the programme leadership. They were doing so while also engaging in new course and programme developments and teaching innovations alongside building their research and scholarship of learning and teaching profiles. They were anxious to take on the full range of academic activity to maximise their future career prospects but in so doing, had ended up with difficult to manage workloads. It was noted that not all the Early Career staff were eligible for formal staff development due to the nature of their contracts. The Panel **recommends** the Head of Subject works with the Head of School to review arrangements for staff development and expectations of those staff on temporary contracts.

Graduate Teaching Assistants

- 3.7 The GTAs spoke of their commitment to students and to research-led teaching, demonstrated understanding of the importance of quality and consistency of approach, and expressed a desire to contribute as fully as possible within the scope of the GTA role descriptor. However, the GTAs also described a sense of isolation and disconnect from the staff across History and suggested this resulted in them feeling as if they were not a 'proper' member of staff. They were typically more involved in well-established courses that had little change in content and did not provide them with opportunities to contribute to the development of new courses. The GTAs confirmed they were asked to feedback ideas for improvements, but they were unaware what happened to their ideas and were generally unclear about what happens beyond their immediate tasks. The Panel noted comments from the GTAs which confirmed they were also unaware of future GTA opportunities and what courses they could teach on and at what stage. They were also unaware of the employment prospects for students who were studying History yet were keen to support students in helping to think about future employment. The Panel **recommends** the Subject looks at the approaches to GTA support and inclusion across the College of Arts and wider University with a view to further embedding good practice within History.¹
- 3.8 The GTAs confirmed the role of Head GTA, introduced in 2020-21 to help coordinate GTA input and information, had not been replaced this academic year and the absence of this post had contributed to this sense of isolation as they did not receive all-staff emails and are not invited to attend away-days. The Head GTA role had proved helpful in terms of providing guidance and advice, and as a conduit between GTAs and the wider Subject area. The Panel **commended** the Subject on the previous creation of a Head GTA role and suggested the Subject reflect on this feedback and consider re-introducing the role.

Student Recruitment Strategy

- 3.9 In order to help manage student numbers and the related staff resources, the PGT Dean and College Recruitment, Conversion and Marketing Manager (RCMM) were advised to work with the Head of Subject to review the process of data sharing and planning with the Subject to ensure timely sharing of admissions data. The Panel acknowledged this would build on work already identified within the RA and this report around recruitment and targetsetting.

4 LEARNING, TEACHING AND ENHANCEMENT

- 4.1 The Panel noted that the teaching in History is supported and coordinated by six interdisciplinary research centres, two research clusters and three administrative areas.
- 4.2 The Panel noted that History has a number of internal and external groups and societies which influence and inform enhancement. This includes the Royal Historical Society, History UK, College and School committees and internal networks along with Away Days and working parties which take forward enhancement initiatives.
- 4.3 The Panel **commended** the Subject on maintaining impressive NSS scores during a challenging period and acknowledged the drop in some scores was reflective of sectorial/institutional issues, some of which were connected to the pandemic. Based on the NSS results, History remains strong on student satisfaction and quality of teaching compared to other large subject areas across the College and University. Timeliness and clarity of feedback and the learning community outcomes were down in comparison to previous years. The Panel noted the development of an annual NSS action plan to review and address these matters which included the reinforcement of the 3-week feedback turnaround policy, the

¹ The Subject may also wish to refer to the GTA Code of Practice at <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/general/gtacodeofpractice/>

development of new marksheets with explicit assessment criteria for a wider range of assessments and the introduction of a new junior honours core course, which was introduced to inculcate a stronger sense of community across a large cohort of single and joint honours students by providing a shared experience and intellectual framework for Honours work.

Curriculum Review and Development

- 4.4 The Panel **commended** the Subject on its work on diversifying and decolonising the curriculum having established a working group with responsibility for this task. This was particularly well received by both staff and students who were keen to ensure they could input/influence. The comments from some junior honours students were particularly interesting in terms of suggesting that one of the new Honours courses had encouraged them to reflect critically on the content of the pre-Honours courses they had already taken.
- 4.5 A number of PGT students commented very positively on the range of courses on offer, and the staff expertise in the areas taught. However, they also commented very fully on a perceived mismatch in expectations between students and some staff regarding subject knowledge, prior academic writing experiences, careers support and advice in relation to the MSc (Arts) Gender History in particular. Students studying without previous history experience suggested they were at a disadvantage compared with others. They also felt that there was too little careers advice built into their experience with staff tending to advise on the basis that students were intending a PGR future whereas for the majority, that was not the case. In order to manage PGT student expectations, the Panel makes a number of recommendations which should be addressed where possible prior to the next academic year.
- 4.6 The Panel **strongly recommends** that the Subject reviews the admissions criteria and ensures expectations concerning prior knowledge, learning methods, skills development and learning outcomes are made explicit to students and to staff, and are understood when teaching is planned.
- 4.7 The Panel also **recommends** that the Subject collaborates with colleagues in Career Services and Alumni as well as with the PGT Dean in the College, to explore opportunities to better support students in developing their thinking about career opportunities beyond PGT study.
- 4.8 Students reported a lack of clarity about and coherence to the threads and themes within and between the team-taught core PGT courses. The students described the delivery model as feeling like a series of guest lectures. The diversity of the student profile and their areas of interest was a mismatch to what was being delivered and did not fully reflect their aspirations. The Panel acknowledges the rise in PGT numbers and the associated diversity of student aspirations and expectations but **strongly recommends** that the Subject reviews the structure and content of core courses, bearing in mind the increasing student diversity, to ensure that these are consistent with the expectations of prior knowledge set out in entry requirements for the programmes.

Enhanced Technology and working remotely

- 4.9 The Panel were satisfied that History had effectively responded to the challenge of moving teaching online during the last two years and to some extent had used this as an opportunity to advance the process of diversifying assessment. Active and technology-enhanced learning takes many forms in History which includes the use of traditional methods of group work, debates and breakouts to the use of new technologies.
- 4.10 History has pro-actively engaged with blended learning as part of the University's learning and teaching strategy. The Panel noted explicit examples of these activities in the RA which were evidenced in discussions with staff and students. Activities and initiatives include recording of lectures to support flipped-classroom workshops, the use of Moodle was

expanded during the pandemic to support note-taking, and other forms of communication were introduced to support various forms of feedback. Perusal, Mentimeter and Padlet were also used to allow students to engage with each other. The Glasgow Wargaming Initiative (GWI) was developed by History using funding from a Learning and Teaching Development Fund (LTDF) award in 2019 and was used by students studying War Studies. History has two dedicated computer Design and Implementation of Software for Historian (DISH) labs which are used to support historical research. Staff confirmed they were early adopters of the Talis online reading list system and that several course convenors in History were regular users of the Technology Enhanced Active Learning (TEAL) rooms for group work. The Panel noted the **good practice** associated with the use of Moodle, Mentimeter and Padlet to support peer activities. The Panel also **recommends** that History continues to reflect on lessons learned during the pandemic in order to inform the future development of the curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and feedback methods.

- 4.11 The Subject confirmed that due to space restrictions within the University estate, delivery for large cohorts of UG student would remain online for the next academic year. The Convener confirmed there were ongoing discussions taking place at University level regarding the use of teaching space within the context of the wider University Estates Strategy and asked that History engage with the central timetabling team through the College teaching planning meetings to avoid a scenario where teaching would need to continue online as a default.
- 4.12 Students told the Panel they used various social media networks such as Facebook and WhatsApp to provide peer support.
- 4.13 To ensure History maximises the benefits of new learning technologies, the Panel **recommends** the Subject continues to work collaboratively with university staff development services and IT services to ensure appropriate staff development is in place.

Assessment and Feedback

- 4.14 The Panel **commended** the Subject on introducing a range of new assessment methods which the undergraduate students described as providing them with an opportunity to develop a broader set of skills in addition to their academic learning, including communication and presentation skills. The undergraduate students also confirmed they had a good understanding of assessment methods and ILOs but had issues around clustering of assessment deadlines which had a negative impact on their ability to plan their studies.
- 4.15 Postgraduate students also described some anxiety and challenges around the clustering of assessment deadlines which were further complicated following the impact of the recent period of industrial action.
- 4.16 The Panel noted the impact of the clustering of coursework assessments on staff and student wellbeing which the External Subject Specialist confirmed as a discipline/sector wide problem. The teaching of history as a subject is based around extended analysis of textual sources understood in their specific historical/historiographic context and students must be given time for extensive critical reading on course specific topics. At Honours level in the UK History is overwhelmingly a seminar based/active learning subject and student understanding is advanced through discussion of the assigned reading in groups of a size that allows participants to contribute and debate or present their findings. The External Subject Specialist confirmed this approach impacted on the ability to change assessment types and timing. The Panel **recommends** the Subject should collaborate with colleagues in Academic and Digital Development (ADD) to help further develop its approach to assessment design and, in particular, to try to reduce the impact of clustering assessments on both students and staff.
- 4.17 The Panel **commended** the Subject on the clarity of insight and the effective communication

of the feedback from the undergraduate students who clearly understood about alignment of ILOs, assessment and skills development, noting in particular that the students spoke about this without prompt from the Panel.

- 4.18 The Panel **commended** the introduction of face-to-face formative feedback with pre- and post-essay tutorials which received particularly positive feedback from students who suggested it added value to their understanding of the feedback.
- 4.19 The Panel **commended** the Subject on the move to moderation from a historical blind double marking approach, although the Panel noted mixed understanding from staff and students around how moderation was applied and the impact it had on individual marks. As this is a core quality assurance process underpinning academic standards, the Panel **recommends** the Subject collaborates with colleagues in ADD and the Senate Office regarding staff development in order to make explicit how moderation is managed and in particular the sampling process and the impact it has on marks.

External Engagement and Collaboration

- 4.20 The Panel noted the strong emphasis on collaborative/interdisciplinary working within the University and the collaboration at national and international level. Cross university collaboration/interdisciplinary work included working with other academic schools/subjects on the development of course options including the work with the School of Social and Political Sciences (SSPS) on Masters in Intelligence, Security and Strategic Studies and new cross-college degree in Global Human Rights. The Panel noted the joint international Masters in Reparative Justice and MSc in Slavery, Forced Migration and Reparative Justice with the University of Radboud in the Netherlands, and the University of the West Indies, the collaboration with the Smithsonian who contributed to the 2020 Gender History Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) and the ongoing discussions with McGill for a PGT summer School in Global and Gender History. The Panel **commends** History for its engagement with these collaborative initiatives and its commitment to such partnership working.

Staff Development and Support

- 4.21 The Panel noted the number of formal and informal activities taking place which support the development of staff. The Subject works with Academic and Digital Development (ADD) to provide ongoing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and staff are invited to attend various forums which discuss and demonstrate best practice including the School of Humanities forum, School Learning and Teaching Committee and the annual University Learning and Teaching Conference.
- 4.22 The Panel also noted that during the last three years the Subject has been successful in securing four Learning and Teaching Development Fund (LTDF) awards which have influenced changes in teaching practice. The LTDF awards are as follows:
- Glasgow Wargaming Initiative (2019)
 - Medieval History through Money: Hunter's Coin Collection in a Big UG Class (2020)
 - Partners in Pedagogy: Synthesizing Feminist and Student-Staff Partnership approaches in the Cocreation of online teaching resources (2021)
 - AWARE: Access to Wargaming in Education (2021)

5. THE STUDENT VOICE

Responding to student feedback

- 5.1 The Panel noted that History had established an effective method of monitoring the impact of the pandemic on the student experience by doubling the frequency of the Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) and **commended** the Subject on the effort and approach taken. This was

acknowledged as important by both staff and students.

- 5.2 The students were unclear what happened to their feedback and if action had been taken. The PGT students were particularly vocal about this. As noted earlier, GTAs expressed similar views and while they did see some changes, they were unaware how/where the changes were discussed and approved. The Panel **recommends** the Subject makes explicit the feedback processes and considers methods to communicate some form of “you said, we did” information as well as a rationale for where changes could not happen for valid reasons.²
- 5.3 The Panel also suggest the Subject should review the feedback mechanisms supporting the SSLC and any submitted Course Evaluation (EvaSys) forms to ensure issues raised by students are captured at key points in the academic year. History could consider additional staff development for staff new to roles supporting and participating in key decision-making committees. This would help to demonstrate transparent governance and support staff in establishing a cohesive process which explicitly records, monitors and communicates decisions made at key committees to all concerned.
- 5.4 It was recognised that planning courses for each academic year is a process that relies on negotiation, staff preferences and staff availability. However, the Panel was concerned that confirming teaching workloads too late in the day could potentially result in non-compliance with CMA (Competition & Markets Authority) obligations and possibly also a misalignment with the QAA benchmarking statements for History programmes. The Subject is advised to review current planning practices in order to confirm with students in good time, the courses available in the next academic session. This is particularly important for PGT students who apply based on the prospect of pursuing certain courses. This planning process should tie in with mapping to benchmarking expectations (a task that may also be useful in supporting future staff recruitment).

6. SUPPORTING STUDENT WELLBEING

Widening Participation

- 6.1 The Panel noted as **good practice** the Widening Participation (WP) work undertaken by staff in History who were committed to increasing the social diversity of the student population. This was evidenced by having one quarter of the UG student population enter through an Access course, which is in line with College WP targets. The Subject collaborates with WP to provide a Summer School to support recruitment into History from areas of multiple deprivation. In addition, the Panel noted that from 2022, History would be accepting HNC students directly into second year from participating Further Education (FE) colleges.

International Summer School

- 6.2 The Panel noted as **good practice** the ambitious plans the Subject has to support applicants entering via the International Summer School (ISS) in 2022. Over 9.5% of History UG students were non-UK with 1.4% from the United States of America (USA). Staff confirmed that History attracts visiting UG students to Glasgow by coordinating a popular interdisciplinary Introduction to Scottish Culture course offered in both semesters. Two new courses would be added to the ISS for summer 2022 following delays due to the pandemic restrictions. These are, an innovative 6-week summer research project which is the first of its kind in the College of Arts, and a multi-disciplinary Scottish Studies course for the Physics International Summer School led by History which has a projected enrolment of 52 students.

² The University’s Course Evaluation Policy (<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/gea/courseevaluation/>) includes advice on responding to student feedback that may be useful in this context.

Student Transition

6.3 To support the innovations described in 6.1 and 6.2 above, the Panel **recommends** the Subject looks at developing a more transparent and explicit orientation programme of events drawing on expertise from across the University learning support services. In addition, the Panel recommends particular focus is put on the transition and induction process for PGT students who come with varied expectations and different learning and study experiences as outlined in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the Curriculum Review and Development section of this report. The Panel noted that Alumni were invited to Honours induction and suggested this could also be included for PGT students, in addition to support from the University wide learning and support services.

Student Communication

6.4 Feedback from student groups suggested a lack of consistency with regard to information relating in particular to student support and wellbeing processes. This included how to access the Good Cause application process and the use of student support officers as well as sign posting to various University wide support services. The Panel noted that the Student Support Officers were a new resource at the time of drafting the RA in preparation for the PSR.

6.5 The Panel **recommends** the Subject considers using a handbook template which would provide consistent generic information as well as Subject specific detail. This would provide a focus for information relating to support available at Subject, School, College and University level. (A handbook template is available online via the Senate Office³). The Panel also recommends handbooks be made available in various formats and mediums.

Student Learning Support Postgraduate (PGT) Dissertation

6.6 During the review, students expressed a high degree of anxiety about the dissertation and expectations associated with it. They were unclear about aspects such as how to choose a topic, about appropriate methods and about what is expected of them given differences in their prior knowledge of the discipline. The Panel **strongly recommends** the Subject discuss this with students as a matter of priority, picking up on the feedback provided by students to the Panel, and setting out for students what is expected of them in relation to the dissertation.

Postgraduate (PGT) Supervisors and Support

6.7 The students described confusion around the allocation process for dissertation supervisors and the supervisory time they were entitled to. This included the allocation of supervisors from outside the Subject area where some students who had requested a supervisor from elsewhere in the School/College/University had their requests met but others did not. The Panel **strongly recommends** the Subject develops a guide for students which sets out the allocation process for supervisors and makes explicit the supervisory time allocated, where possible, in preparation for next academic session and meanwhile, explains to the current cohort, the supervisory relationship and that supervisors external to History are involved only if they have capacity and not all do.

Good cause application process

6.8 The students described a lack of clarity around the good cause process which was causing anxiety and an inability to manage their workloads as they were unclear of timescales for who/when decisions are made. The Panel **recommends** the Subject makes explicit the good cause application process including the decision-making process and the timescales, and

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<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/centralguidanceonstudenthandbooks/>

articulates how the students can monitor their application.

Student Support

- 6.9 The Panel noted the comments in the RA regarding the increase in Disability and Mental Health issues which have influenced the overall Subject enhancement plans. Since the previous PSR in 2015, there has been a rapid rise in students declaring a disability and/or mental health condition, for example, in 2020, 28% of UG and 50% of PGT students reported a mental health condition. The Panel noted the Mental Health training for academic staff by Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) as **good practice**, but noted that staff were unable to assess if their support was sufficient or when to refer the matter to the professional qualified support services.
- 6.10 The Subject acknowledged the role of the Student Support Officer (SSO) was useful but there was mixed understanding from staff and students about what was available largely due to the newness of this role within the Advising Team. The Panel noted that some students had experience of using central university support services such as the Chaplaincy for pastoral support, and for seeking further advice for external professional mental health support and encouraged consistent signposting to this range and form of support. The Panel **recommends** the Subject should work closely with the College Advising Team to ensure they are directing students to College-level and wider resources available across central university support services as appropriate.

7. GOOD PRACTICE

Enhanced Technology and Working Remotely

- 7.1 The Panel noted the **good practice** associated with the use of Moodle, Mentimeter and Padlet to support peer activities. (Para 4.10)

Widening Participation

- 7.2 The Panel noted as **good practice** the Widening Participation (WP) work undertaken by staff in History who were committed to increasing the social diversity of the student population. This was evidenced by having one quarter of the UG student population enter through an Access course, which is in line with College WP targets. (Para 6.1)

International Summer School

- 7.3 The Panel noted as **good practice** the work the Subject was doing to support applicants entering via the International Summer School (ISS). Over 9.5% of History UG students were non-UK with 1.4% from the United States of America (USA). Staff confirmed that History attracts visiting UG students to Glasgow by coordinating a popular interdisciplinary Introduction to Scottish Culture course offered in both semesters. (Para 6.2)

Student Support

- 7.4 The Panel noted the Mental Health training for academic staff by Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) as **good practice**, but were unable to assess if this was sufficient to deal with issues which are more appropriately supported by professionally qualified staff. (Para 6.9)

8 COMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Panel **commended** the Subject on the quality of teaching which is reflected in the winning of six College and University Teaching Excellence awards, several recent Student Representative Council (SRC) teaching awards and a 2020 National Royal Historical Society Innovation in Teaching Award. (Para 2.11)

- 8.2 The Panel **commended** the Subject on the significant progress made against the recommendations made from the previous PSR in 2015 and the discipline-wide initiatives in Historical studies in the UK around diversifying and decolonising the curriculum. The Panel noted that some of these ambitions were long term projects which would require further implementation and be influenced by the research/teaching areas of any new staff appointments in the Subject area and the associated delivery of pre-Hons courses. It was evident to the Panel through interviews with staff and students that the Subject had a culture of commitment to supporting and enhancing the student experience and that the staff prioritised research-led teaching. (Para 3.1)
- 8.3 The Panel **commended** establishment of a functional workload model which helped the Subject with planning and highlighting discrepancies in workloads. (Para 3.2)
- 8.4 The GTAs confirmed the role of Head GTA, introduced in 2020-21 to help coordinate GTA input and information, had not been replaced this academic year and the absence of this post had contributed to a sense of isolation as they did not receive all-staff emails and were not invited to attend away-days. The Head GTA role had proved helpful in terms of providing guidance and advice, and as a conduit between GTAs and the wider Subject area. The Panel **commended** the Subject on the previous creation of a Head GTA role and suggested the Subject reflect on this feedback and consider re-introducing the role. (Para 3.7)
- 8.5 The Panel **commended** the Subject on maintaining impressive NSS scores during a challenging period and acknowledging the drop in some scores was reflective of sectorial/institutional issues, some of which were connected to the pandemic. (Para 4.3)
- 8.6 The Panel **commended** the Subject on the work on diversifying and decolonising the curriculum having established a working group with responsibility for this task. This was particularly well received by both staff and students who were keen to ensure they could input/influence. (Para 4.4)
- 8.7 The Panel **commended** the Subject on introducing a range of new assessment methods which the undergraduate students described as providing them with an opportunity to develop a broader set of skills in addition to their academic learning, including communication and presentation skills. (Para 4.14)
- 8.8 The Panel **commended** the Subject on the clarity of insight and the effective communication of feedback to the Panel from the undergraduate students who clearly understood about alignment of ILOs, assessment and skills development noting in particular the students spoke about this without prompt from the Panel. (Para 4.17)
- 8.9 The Panel **commended** the introduction of face-to-face formative feedback with pre- and post-essay tutorials which received particularly positive feedback from students who suggested it added value to their understanding of the feedback. (Para 4.18)
- 8.10 The Panel **commended** the Subject on the move to moderation from a historical blind double marking approach, although there was an acknowledgment that some more staff development was required to maximise the benefits of this move. (Para 4.19)
- 8.11 The Panel **commended** the Subject on its approach to student support during the pandemic by doubling the frequency of the Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) to ensure they could have an ongoing overview of the impact on the students learning experience. This was acknowledged as important by both staff and students. (Para 5.1)

RECOMMENDATIONS

	Section 3.1 Strategy for Development	Shared Enhancement Benefits	For the attention of in History	For the attention of in School/College/Uni
1	<p>The Review Panel was very impressed with the dedication and commitment of junior academic staff and acknowledged the leadership responsibilities that they were carrying. However, it was notable that early career staff (often on fixed-term contracts) were undertaking a great deal of the programme leadership. They were doing so while also engaging in new course and programme developments and teaching innovations alongside building their research and scholarship of learning and teaching profiles. They were anxious to take on the full range of academic activity to maximise their future career prospects but in so doing, had ended up with difficult to manage workloads. It was noted that not all the Early Career staff were eligible for formal staff development due to the nature of their contracts. The Panel recommends the Head of Subject works with the Head of School to review arrangements for staff development and expectations of those staff on temporary contracts.</p> <p>Section 3: para 3.6</p>	<p>Clarifying expectations of junior staff, especially those on fixed term contracts, would support their work-life balance and reduce anxiety associated with such a diverse and demanding workload. It would also allow them to engage in staff development opportunities and focus their efforts on developing their academic profile.</p>	Head of Subject	Head of School Head of College
2	<p>The GTAs spoke of their commitment to students and to research-led teaching, demonstrated understanding of the importance of quality and consistency of approach, and expressed a desire to contribute as fully as possible within the scope of the GTA role descriptor. However, the GTAs also described a sense of isolation and disconnect from the staff across History and suggested this resulted in them feeling as if they were not a ‘proper’ member of staff. They were typically more involved in well-established courses that had little change in content and did not provided them with opportunities to contribute to the development of new courses. The GTAs confirmed they are asked to feedback ideas for improvements, but they were unaware what happened to their ideas and were generally unclear about what happens beyond their immediate tasks. The Panel noted comments from the GTAs which</p>	<p>Changing the approach to supporting the GTAs would help them develop a better sense of belonging and provide them with an equal opportunity to share and contribute.</p> <p>Benchmarking across the College and wider university will ensure the Subject takes consideration of best practice.</p>	Head of Subject	Director of University Careers Service

	<p>confirmed they were also unaware of future GTA opportunities and what courses they could teach on and at what stage. They were also unaware of the employment prospects for students who were studying History yet were keen to support students in helping to think about future employment. The Panel recommends the Subject looks at the approaches to GTA support and inclusion across the College of Arts and wider University with a view to further embedding good practice within History.</p> <p>Section 3: para 3.7</p>		Head of Subject	Head of School Professional Services
	Section 4 Learning, Teaching and Enhancement	Shared Enhancement Benefits	For the attention of in History	For the attention of in School/College/Uni
3	<p>A number of PGT students commented on a perceived mismatch in expectations between students and some staff regarding subject knowledge, prior academic writing experiences, careers support and advice in relation to the MSc (Arts) Gender History in particular. Students studying without previous history experience suggested they were at a disadvantage compared with others. They also felt that there was too little careers advice built into their experience with staff tending to advise on the basis that students were intending a PGR future whereas for the majority, that is not the case.</p> <p>Section 4: 4.5</p> <p>The Panel strongly recommends that the Subject reviews the admissions criteria and ensures expectations concerning prior knowledge, learning methods, skills development and learning outcomes are made explicit to students and to staff, and are understood when teaching is planned.</p> <p>Section 4: 4.6</p>	Provides applicants with a more explicit understanding of expectations regarding their academic career and reduce the level of anxiety and confusion.	Head of Subject	College of Arts Recruitment, Conversion and Marketing Manager
4	The Panel also recommends that the Subject collaborates with colleagues in Career Services and Alumni as well as with the PGT Dean in the College, to explore opportunities to better support students in developing their thinking about career opportunities beyond PGT study.	Will provide support and clarity for the GTAs allowing them to focus on future career opportunities and staff development needs. Will provide them	Learning and Teaching Convener.	Director of Career Services

	Section 4: 4.7	with a sense of equality relating to their other “academic” colleagues		
5	<p>Students reported a lack of clarity about and coherence to the threads and themes within and between the team-taught core PGT courses. The students described the delivery model as feeling like a series of guest lectures. The diversity of the student profile and their areas of interest was a mismatch to what was being delivered and did not fully reflect their aspirations. The Panel acknowledges the rise in PGT numbers and the associated diversity of student aspirations and expectations but strongly recommends that the Subject reviews the structure and content of core courses, bearing in mind the increasing student diversity, to ensure that these are consistent with the expectations of prior knowledge set out in entry requirements for the programmes.</p> <p>Section 4: 4.8</p>		Head of Subject	Dean of PGT Programmes
6	<p>The Panel also recommends that History continues to reflect on lessons learned during the pandemic in order to inform the future development of the curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment and feedback methods.</p> <p>Section 4: 4.10</p>	Reflecting on lessons learned will provide the Subject with an opportunity to ensure the capture best practice and develop as appropriate any further staff development needs. This outcome could also contribute to the NSS Action Plan.	Learning and Teaching Convener.	Dean of Learning and Teaching
7	<p>The Panel noted that the impact of the clustering of coursework assessments on staff and student wellbeing which the External Subject Specialist confirmed as a discipline/sector wide problem. The teaching of history as a subject is based around extended analysis of textual sources understood in their specific historical/historiographic context and students must be given time for extensive critical reading on course specific topics. At Honours level in the UK History is overwhelmingly a seminar based/active learning subject and student understanding is advanced through discussion of the assigned reading in groups of a size that allows participants to contribute and debate or present their findings. The External Subject Specialist confirmed this approach impacted on the ability to change assessment types and timing. The Panel</p>	<p>This could reduce the level of anxiety amongst the student population and hopefully reduce the number of mental health referrals.</p> <p>Working collaboratively with colleagues in ADD will provide the staff in History with a wider support structure rather than feeling they are working in isolation.</p>	Learning and Teaching Convener.	Assistant Director, Academic and Digital Development Services (ADD)

	<p>recommends the Subject should collaborate with colleagues in Academic and Digital Development (ADD) to help further develop its approach to assessment design and, in particular, to try to reduce the impact of clustering assessments on both students and staff.</p> <p>Section 4: para 4.16</p> <p>To ensure History maximises the benefits of new learning technologies, the Panel recommends the Subject continues to work collaboratively with university staff development services and IT services to ensure appropriate staff development is in place.</p> <p>Section 4: para 4.13</p>	Working collaboratively with colleagues in staff development and IT services will help to underpin the ambition of staff to maximise the benefits of new technologies to support the students.		<p>Head of Staff Development</p> <p>Head of IT Services</p>
8	<p>The Panel commended the Subject on the move to moderation from a historical blind double marking approach, although the Panel noted mixed understanding from staff and students around how moderation is applied and the impact it had on individual marks. As this is a core quality assurance process underpinning academic standards, the Panel recommends the Subject collaborates with colleagues in ADD and the Senate Office regarding staff development in order to make explicit how moderation is managed and in particular the sampling process and the impact it has on marks.</p> <p>Section 4: 4.19</p>	Providing clarity around moderation will reduce any potential risk to academic standards. It may also reduce the number of academic appeals and or complaints.	Learning and Teaching Convener.	<p>Assistant Director, Academic and Digital Development Services (ADD)</p> <p>Director of Senate Office</p>
	Section 5 The Student Voice	Shared Enhancement Benefits	For the attention of in History	For the attention of in School/College/Uni
9	<p>The students were unclear what happened to their feedback and if action had been taken. The PGT students were particularly vocal about this. As noted earlier, GTA's expressed similar views and while they did see some changes, they were unaware how/where the changes were discussed and approved. The Panel recommends the Subject makes explicit the feedback processes and considers methods to communicate some form of "you said, we did" type information as well as a rationale for where changes were unable to happen for valid reasons.</p> <p>Section 5: 5.2</p>	<p>Making explicit the feedback provides an opportunity for the Subject to demonstrate further its enhancement focus. It will also provide the students with an opportunity to see the value in making constructive contributions.</p> <p>This will also help to raise the outcomes in any PGT related league tables.</p>	Learning and Teaching Convener.	School Quality Officer

	Section 6 Supporting Student Wellbeing	Shared Enhancement Benefits	For the attention of in History	For the attention of in School/College/Uni
10	<p>Student Transitions</p> <p>To support the innovations described in 6.1 and 6.2 above, the Panel recommends the Subject looks at developing a more transparent and explicit orientation programme of events drawing on expertise from across the University learning support services. In addition, the Panel recommends particular focus is put on the transition and induction process for PGT students who come with varied expectations and different learning and study experiences as outlined in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the Curriculum Review and Development section of this report. The Panel noted that Alumni were invited to Honours induction and suggests this could also be included for PGT students in addition to support from the University wide learning and support services.</p> <p>Section 6: 6.3</p>	<p>Providing a more explicit and transparent orientation programme will help to manage student expectations and provide a more supportive experience for the students.</p>	<p>Head of Subject</p>	<p>Head of Alumni</p>
11	<p>Student Communication</p> <p>The Panel recommends the Subject considers using a handbook template which would provide consistent generic information as well as subject specific details. This would provide a focus for information relating to support available at Subject, School, College and University level. (A handbook template is available online via the Senate Office). The Panel also recommends the Handbook be made available in various formats and mediums.</p> <p>Section 6: 6.5</p>	<p>Providing coherent and consistent information will help to enhance the student experience. The Subject would have shared responsibility with university central support services who provide the generic information. Working to a standard template should also make annual updates easier and quicker.</p>	<p>Head of Subject</p> <p>Head of Subject Administration</p>	<p>School Quality Officer</p>
12	<p>Postgraduate (PGT) Dissertation</p> <p>Students expressed a high degree of anxiety about the dissertation and expectations associated with it. They were unclear about aspects such as how to choose a topic, about appropriate methods and about what is expected of them given differences in their prior knowledge of the discipline. The Panel strongly recommends the Subject discuss this with students as a matter of priority, picking up on the feedback provided by students to the Panel, and setting out for students what is expected of them in relation to the dissertation.</p>	<p>This recommendation should reduce the level of anxiety and confusion for the students. It will also provide a more coherent framework for PGT students to plan their workloads.</p>	<p>Learning and Teaching Convener.</p>	<p>Dean of PGT Programmes</p>

	Section 6: 6.6			
13	<p>Postgraduate (PGT) Supervisors and support</p> <p>The students described confusion around the allocation process for dissertation supervisors and the supervisory time they were entitled to. This included the allocation of supervisors from outside the Subject area where some students who had requested a supervisor from elsewhere in the School/College/University had their requests met but others did not. The Panel strongly recommends the Subject develops a guide for students which sets out the allocation process for supervisors and makes explicit the supervisory time allocated in preparation for next academic session and meanwhile, explains to the current cohort, the supervisory relationship and that supervisors external to History are involved only if they have capacity and not all do.</p> <p>Section 6: 6.7</p>	<p>This recommendation will provide clarity for the students and reduce the level of confusion and anxiety. It will also set boundaries and manage expectations.</p> <p>Providing clarity regarding the appointment process and the allocation of time should reduce the time spent by staff fielding queries.</p>	Learning and Teaching Convener.	Dean of PGT Programmes
14	<p>Good cause application process</p> <p>The students described a lack of clarity around the process which was causing anxiety and an inability to manage their workloads as they were unclear of timescales for who/when decisions are made. The Panel recommends the Subject makes explicit the good cause application process including the decision-making process and the timescales, and articulates how the students can monitor their application.</p> <p>Section 6: 6.8</p>	This should provide the Subject with the ability to manage student expectations and hopefully reduce the number of ad-hoc enquiries to staff.	Head of Administration	Head of School Professional Services
15	<p>Student Support:</p> <p>The Subject acknowledged the role of the Student Support Officer (SSO) was useful but there was mixed understanding from staff and students about what was available largely due to the newness of this role within the Advising team. The Panel noted that some students had experience of using central university support services such as the Chaplaincy for pastoral support, and for seeking further advice for external professional mental health support and encouraged consistent signposting to this range and form of support. The Panel recommends the Subject should work closely with the College Advising Team to ensure they are directing</p>	A number of benefits will result from this recommendation including providing clarity for the student on who/what/where to go for support and help. It will also provide staff with appropriate information to sign post students and hopefully reduce time spent dealing with enquiries that could be better addressed by training and qualified professional support staff.	Head of Subject	Head of School Professional Services

	students to College-level and wider resources available across central university support services as appropriate. Section 6: 6.10			
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