

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee – Friday 27 January 2017

**Periodic Subject Review: Responses to Recommendations Arising  
from the Report of the Review of the Archaeology Subject Area  
held on 25 February 2016**

**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.

**Recommendation 1:**

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*

**Response:**

The R&T staff, and post-docs, met together in December 2015 to begin the process of drawing up a strategy document of the type outlined in this recommendation. There followed a series of meetings between all staff, one with Head of School present, and several smaller working groups, with the strategy document completed to everyone's satisfaction by the end of that academic year, as recommended in the PSR.

The strategy document contains a high-level mission statement as well as an articulation of the three research themes which unite us in various configurations: Landscape, Material Culture and Engagement Archaeology. As well as outlining the nature of these research strengths, the strategy document also breaks down to a series of sub-sections, under which are a series of actions, targets and performance indicators; these are aligned to the most recent REF structure. The sections are Publication, Grant Capture, Impact, Esteem, Visibility and Research Environment, and in each case, longer background documents were prepared by colleagues in order to inform and support our activities going forwards.

There are several key components to this document. Firstly, as a group, we are committed to research-led teaching and so this document articulates our teaching strengths as well as our research activities and interests. To this end we have mapped our teaching to align with this strategy. Secondly, this is a living and target-driven document, subject to review, and this will be done informally at staff research meetings twice per semester, and our annual Research Review meeting, while a second research away day like the one that prompted the beginning of writing the strategy document in 2015 has already been organised for reviewing the strategy and its robustness one year on. The document also contains a series of five-year forward planning objectives related to outputs and research activities. Thirdly, this document is the fundamental basis of our ongoing staffing strategy, with all business cases for new posts, and proposals for post-doctoral researchers, aligned with the strategy; in this case for instance the soon to be advertised Frontier Archaeology Post (Landscape / Engagement Archaeology / Material Culture) and Spatial Archaeometry (Landscape) align with our collective strategy.

Alongside this strategy document, a series of small mentoring and peer support groupings have been established, which meet usually twice per year, to review progress, share experiences and explore synergies. These consist of a spread of staff across grades 7-9 and are underpinned by personal research portfolios which each of us maintains in a shared digital space. The configuration and efficacy of these groups is constantly under review. Furthermore, the Research Themes in at least one case (Engagement Archaeology) is in the process of being established as an active working group. All of these process, documents and reviews are intended to support our aspirations of 4 star research in a mutually supportive environment.

The connections to the Kelvin Hall (KH) are being exploited as far as possible although there are still teething problems with access and a lack of clarity about resources and how archaeology relates to this development. Discussions are ongoing about the marketing of our MSc and MLitt programmes via the KH website, as well as access to teaching spaces, collections and resources. Teaching sessions in newly proposed Honours courses e.g. Reflexive Archaeological Practice, Experimental Archaeology, and the new MSc Archaeology core course, have been proposed that explicitly use spaces and resources in the KH. The level of formality of the relationship between Archaeology and the Hunterian at KH has yet to be fully realised, with a decision on how this might be developed (e.g. via a business case) to be made in semester 2, 2016-17. In the meantime, we are using the current academic year as a pilot to test the systems and will review at the end of this period. To begin this process, staff were given a guided tour of the new KH facilities in October 2016 by the Director, David Gaimster.

The key development in our research connections to the Hunterian Museum, which the KH development plays an important role, is our new Frontier Archaeology post (to be advertised January 2017). This innovative post will be shared between Archaeology and the Hunterian, with the post-holder tasked with utilising the collections of the Hunterian linked to the Antonine Wall Roman Frontier World Heritage Site; this innovative and exciting post will we believe catalyse relationships between Archaeology and the Hunterian, and encourage broader research and teaching synergies, as well as promote our use of KH spaces, collections and resources.

**Recommendation 2:**

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*

**Response:**

Substantive changes have been made to our fieldwork requirement and teaching, most of which was being explored before the PSR due to the (a) impending end to the SERF Fieldschool in summer 2016, (b) the requirement for Fieldwork to be directly credit-bearing and thus recognised on student transcripts, (c) pressure on staff time and resources under current model, (d) ongoing Honours teaching review, and (e) a desire to give our students more flexibility and promote recruitment and retention of students into Honours archaeology. The comments in the PSR Report related to the effectiveness of the SERF Fieldschool in fostering cohort identity and delivering valuable practical teaching, very high student satisfaction rates related to the Fieldschool via our feedback and NSS, and the wider reputational issues around the quality of our graduates and their high employability in the heritage sector, were all upmost in our minds when developing new models of working.

The following key decisions and actions have been taken since the PSR:

- Fieldwork requirement has been lowered to 25 compulsory days of practical heritage experience for all students, single and joint. This figure has changed from 55 and 35 days for single and joint Honours students respectively. This will be implemented for students entering Honours in September 2017 and has been approved via wide consultation. A new Honours course specifically connecting experience to credits will be going to Board of Studies in semester 2 2016/17.
- A clear commitment has been made to encourage students to undertake a recommended minimum of 50 days across the course of their degree; to facilitate this, opportunities for practical heritage experience will be made available more clearly to level 1 students, we will align with several in-house and external fieldwork projects, museums and so on, to provide sanctioned opportunities for work experience, and we are currently collecting testimonies from employers about the value of undertaking 50 days or more for employability in various sectors.
- Definition of what counts as practical heritage experience widened to encourage flexibility and accommodate mature students, part-time students, and other students who perhaps have work or family commitments that make extended periods of time away in the field problematic.
- We have reached an agreement with an external provider to run a Fieldschool for us, with a pilot, based in New Lanark and the Clyde Valley, to run in August 2017 for current level 2 students. This will substantially reduce staff time commitments and costs, but allow us to offer our students an innovative and broad fieldwork experience that will be more aimed towards the current job market and heritage sector (e.g. with greater emphasis on public engagement and community archaeology). A strategy document has been prepared in the development of this Fieldschool, and the students will, as before, have a three-week residential experience, thus retaining cohort cohesion. We believe the geographical location of this project will also help us to deliver the University of Glasgow's social commitment to Greater Glasgow and West Central Scotland.
- Curriculum mapping exercise over 2016-17 is targeted specifically at considering how we teach fieldwork and practical archaeology at all levels of the undergraduate degree, with recommendations developed already for how this journey can be delivered from 2017-18 onwards.

**Recommendation 3:**

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*

**Response:**

This process has begun, with a meeting already held with James Brennan, MaRIO and Heather Murphy (College of Arts PGT marketing) and clarification sought on issues such as marketing, misinformation and caps on applicants. As part of this a strategy was agreed for numbers being accepted for each programme, as well as overlaps in recruitment between programme e.g. Material Culture and Artefact Studies / Museum Studies which share some core teaching. A key and significant development in PGT recruitment for 2016-17 has been more concerted conversion activity, which has resulted for instance in a big increase in numbers for MLitts Viking and Celtic Archaeology, and Material Culture and Artefact Studies. Marketing will become ever more crucial in the lead up to relaunching our Masters portfolio (see Recommendation 4) and we will continue to liaise and seek advice from MaRIO over the coming 18 months.

**Recommendation 4:**

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*

**Response:**

This process is well underway and several staff meetings have focused on this topic. It has been agreed in order to await new staff arrivals in late summer 2017 and to allow a decent marketing period, to relaunch our Masters provision for the 2018-19 academic year.

This will centre on the launch of a new Archaeology MSc programme. Development of this programme is well underway with a working group developing the shape and content of the course. The plan is to have several pathways through the degree, with cohesion offered by a single Core course called Themes and Debates in Contemporary Archaeology (this course spec has been written and ready to go to Board of Studies in semester 2 2016-17). Pathways will focus on existing and emergent strengths e.g. possibilities include Celtic & Viking Archaeology, textiles, experimental archaeology, Mediterranean Archaeology, public engagement archaeology. Key to these developments are the use of existing courses, utilising hub-and-spoke models and drawing on current staff research areas and new staff interests.

The new Ancestral Studies MSc programme has its origins and core in Archaeology, and we expect this course to be high recruiting and a successful cross-School initiative. We will also offer an active contribution to the Ancient Cultures MSc, another cross-School programme.

Existing high recruiting programmes will continue to run – Material Culture and Artefact Studies MLitt (aligned with Museum Studies) and Conflict Archaeology and Heritage MLitt. We will continue to review the position of the Celtic and Viking Archaeology MLitt which has recruited highly in the current academic year due to the tireless conversion activity of staff running this programme.

New opportunities will be afforded by the incoming R&T staff members, namely the development of a potentially very popular Spatial Archaeometry MSc and contributions to Material Culture and Artefact Studies.

In line with marketing advice, we will look to convert all of our remaining MLitt programmes to MSc by the re-launch in 2018-19.

**Recommendation 5:**

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*

**Response:**

We have substantially re-designed the MLitt Research and Professional Skills course (core for all of our PGT students) following several years of highly unsatisfactory student feedback and external examiner concerns about over-assessment. Our PGT orientation week now includes three taught core seminars for Research and Professional Skills, which bring the whole PGT Archaeology cohort together as a group early on in the induction process. The seminars discussions encourage students to think about archaeology as a discipline more broadly and beyond their immediate study programmes, the ways in which archaeological knowledge is produced and what criteria should be applied to critically evaluate it.

Further activities aimed at community building during induction week include a half-day field-trip to Pollock Park and a tour of historical structures and archaeological sites as well as one of the galleries of the Burrell Collection. A social event involving all members of staff, PGT and PGR students concludes induction week.

All PGTs are required to attend the Archaeology Research Seminars each Wednesday afternoon, which have been aligned more explicitly with Archaeology's research strategy and teaching areas. This means that these important weekly sessions now closely align with, and are branded as such, our themes of Landscape, Material Culture or Engagement Archaeology, thus engendering a sense that PGT provision (as they are one of the main audiences) is a close fit with our wider strategy. The first five Research Seminars form part of the first assessed element of the Research and Professional Skills Course (reflexive essay) and are, therefore, well attended. All PGTs are encouraged to join the speaker, UG and PGR students and staff for a social gathering following each Seminar.

All PGTs are brought together again for poster presentations in Week 12, which all members of staff are encouraged to attend. The event includes another social element, with coffee and mince pies in the common room to encourage students to interact and gel across different programmes. Finally, we will hold a social event to mark the end of PGT teaching at the end

of Semester 2, as it is from this point onwards that students tend to focus on dissertation or work placement activities and opportunities to meet again after this are extremely limited.

**Recommendation 6:**

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*

**Response:**

The issue of over-assessment has been raised by external examiners as well as in the PSR process. A number of initiatives have been undertaken to alleviate this problem, some of them rather simple but effective with the objective of retaining robustness in our procedures while becoming more nimble and flexible.

We are actively streamlining assessment across the board and making things simpler for ourselves – and the students. This has involved in some cases the restructuring of coursework content for students e.g. at Level 2 Archaeology in Theory and Practice, to thin down the content students are expected to provide. This will ensure students are not doing too much for their credits. In this case assessment was appropriate but we were asking students to do too much within each element of assessment. Courses with complex and multiple elements of coursework have in some cases been dropped altogether as part of wider Honours restructuring. For instance, the Honours core courses RIAD and the Portfolio (60 credits) have been amalgamated into one new 40 credit course (which went to School Board of Studies in December 2016) called Reflexive Archaeological Practice. This changes student assessment load to four equally weighted pieces of coursework as opposed to 12 diverse and differently weighted pieces of coursework across the previous two courses. There has also been a major rationalisation of assessment in the current PGT core course, Research and Professional Skills, which has moved from cumbersome and complex to grade, to simple and effective, without any loss of robustness and challenge for the students. And the core course for the MLitt Material Culture and Artefact Studies programme has moved from five pieces of assessment, to two, changes which have been approved by the Higher Degree Board of Studies.

We have made a conscious decision to mark smarter from 2016-17 onwards, which means team marking for major Level 1 courses exams (all staff take a small share as opposed to three doing it all) and sharing our marking for other courses which have broad content. There has also been a move towards more moodle quizzes at Level 1 and 2, and poster presentation style elements at Honours level are replacing in some cases oral presentations which take up huge amounts of time for big classes. We have also tightened up our moderation procedures in line with External Examiner suggestions, and use these where regulations allow as opposed to second marking.

Assessment and curriculum mapping have underpinned much of this rationalisation. This is an ongoing process, commenced in Spring 2016, and includes data collected on teaching *and* marking workloads. This document, to be completed in early 2017, alongside the emergent Workload Model, will allow oversight of overall loads and help share assessment

out equitably. It is also worth noting that as a group of colleagues, we have a well-established collegiate practice of supporting one another during pressure times in semesters, and related to research paper and grant deadlines, often in the form of taking on marking load to help one another.

**Recommendation 7:**

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*

**Response:**

This review was undertaken in semester 2, of 2015-16 and all erroneous course and material was removed from the course catalogue and PIP.

**Recommendation 8 (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*

**Response:**

In 2016-17 we introduced GTA training alongside the more robust and transparent GTA recruitment process. This has had a substantial and positive impact on GTA marking in particular, with less interventionist moderation required, more equitable marking across the board and more confident GTAs. The implementation of this was commended as good practice in the School ACM report on that academic year, and we have continued to implement this process in the current academic year.