

**University of Glasgow**

**Academic Standards Committee - Friday 19 May 2017**

**Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of Information Studies (formerly known as Humanities Advanced Technology & Information Institute [HATII])<sup>1</sup> held on 7 February 2017**

**Ms Fiona Dick, Clerk to the Review Panel**

**Review Panel:**

Professor John Briggs	Clerk of Senate and Vice Principal, Panel Convener
Professor Marc Alexander	English Language & Linguistics, Cognate member
Ms Fiona Dick	Senate Office and Clerk to the Review Panel
Professor Lindsay Farmer	Senate Assessor on Court
Ms Jessica Mac Sweeney	SRC Vice President Education, Student Member
Mr Simon Mahony	University College London, External Subject Specialist
Mr Robert Mulholland	Academic Collaborations Office, Observer
Dr Matthew Williamson	Learning Enhancement & Academic Development Service

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Information Studies (formerly known as the Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute (HATII/the Subject), established in 1997, is one of six Subject Areas (including Archaeology, Celtic and Gaelic, Classics, History and Philosophy, that form the School of Humanities in the College of Arts. The Subject is the only academic department in the United Kingdom (UK) to offer programmes in the fields of museum, archive and library studies and digital humanities, the only university in Scotland and one of only five universities in Europe, to have both undergraduate and postgraduate accreditation, and one of only three in the UK with dual Archives and Records Association (ARA)/Chartered Institute of Librarian and Information Professionals (CILIP) accreditation.
- 1.2 The previous review of the Subject carried out by the University was the Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning & Assessment (DPTLA) review in February 2010. The Panel noted the dedication and enthusiasm of the staff and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), a focus on employability, practical work and a personalised approach to learning and teaching, which was highly valued by students.
- 1.3 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was coordinated by Ms Ann Gow (Head of Subject prior to September 2016), in liaison with Professor Lorna Hughes (current Head of Subject) and relevant staff members. Comments from teaching and School administrative staff (including GTA/Student Laboratory Demonstrators and External Examiners) on SER drafts were provided through Subject meetings, teaching meetings and on-line. Students' views on their learning experience/PSR were invited by email and during Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings, and discussed at a focus group meeting held in November 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> A proposal to rename HATII to Information Studies was approved by Council of Senate on 13 April 2017.

- 1.4 The Review Panel met with: Professor Lynn Abrams (Head of the School of Humanities); Professor Lorna Hughes (Head of Subject); Dr Wendy Anderson (Deputy Dean of Learning & Teaching in the College of Arts); Ms Ann Gow (PSR Lead); 15 members of staff (including four early career); four Graduate Teaching Assistants/Student Laboratory Demonstrators; 19 undergraduate students from Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4; and ten postgraduate taught students.

## 2. Context and Strategy

### 2.1 Students

Student numbers (2016-17) are summarised as follows:

Level	Headcount	FTE
Level 1	174	51.7
Level 2	61	20.4
Level 3	3	0.4
Jun/Sen Honours	117	52.9
PGT	84	59.9
<b>Total</b>		<b>185.3</b>

### 2.2 Staffing

Information Studies currently has 9.7 FTE teaching staff, including 7.7 FTE on Research and Teaching contracts and 2 FTE staff on Teaching contracts.

Staff	Headcount	FTE
Professors	1	1.0
Grade 9	4	3.0
Grade 8	3	2.5
Grade 7	4	3.2
Learning, Teaching and Scholarship	2 <sup>2</sup>	
Administrative/Technical	3 <sup>3</sup>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9.7<sup>4</sup></b>

### 2.3 Range of provision under Review

The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the Subject:

At undergraduate level the Subject offers:

Single honours in Digital Media and Information Studies<sup>5</sup> in the College of Arts (MA) and a Joint MA degree in with another subject from the College of Arts or Social Sciences, subject to timetabling restrictions.

At postgraduate level the Subject offers:

- MSc/PgDip/PGCert in Information Management and Preservation (IMP)<sup>6</sup> ;

<sup>2</sup> Recorded within graded posts above.

<sup>3</sup> School staff.

<sup>4</sup> Includes four ECDP and one academic probationary staff (total FTE 4.2).

<sup>5</sup> Accredited by CILIP.

- MSc/PgDip/PGCert in Museum Studies: Theory and Practice;
- MSc/PgDip/PGCert Museum Studies: Artefact and Material Culture;
- MSc/PgDip/PGCert Museum Studies: History of Collecting<sup>7</sup>;
- MRes (Information Studies).

The Subject also contributes to the MSc in Information Technology run through School of Computing Science<sup>8</sup>.

## 2.4 Strategic Approach to Enhancing Learning and Teaching

- 2.4.1 There was clear evidence from the SER and supporting documentation of progress towards clarifying a vision for the Subject, as a research-led subject area undergoing significant development of its research provision. The SER was constructive and reflective, acknowledging the particular issues faced during a transitional period, and it articulated recent and future strategic challenges. The Subject was undertaking good practice in terms of engagement and support of students and staff members, and its focus on the learning experience, which included a core strategy of embedding professionalism into teaching. The Review Panel recognises the Subject's achievement as one of only three institutions in the UK with dual Archives and Records Association (ARA)/Chartered Institute of Librarian and Information Professionals (CILIP) accreditation as **good practice**.
- 2.4.2 The Panel noted from the SER that the Subject was a small well-established unit, offering a wide range of popular undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, with strong industrial and professional links to enhance employability. Provision had undergone significant expansion with new postgraduate taught programmes developed strategically by identifying gaps in the market. Strategic objectives at School and University level also included a consolidation of the Masters programmes with defined and accredited options, and at undergraduate level, now offered as single honours, a focus on employability, through the development of Intended Learning Outcomes.
- 2.4.3 Supporting documentation included copies of the HATII Review of 2014 and the HATII REF Review of 2016, which had recommended the appointment of two additional staff members to meet teaching delivery necessitated by increasing student numbers and the need for an alignment of research with teaching. The SER noted the development of a new honours course on Data Analysis, Visualisation and Communication, which would be offered from 2017-18. Furthermore, all early career staff members were encouraged to develop 'special subjects' at honours level in their areas of expertise.
- 2.4.4 The Review Panel noted from the SER that '*ideally we will develop a five-year learning and teaching strategy that all staff are aligned to and engaged in*' and the Panel explored with the Head of Subject the impact on staffing in terms of workload, given the high proportion of early career staff with reduced teaching loads. The Head of Subject reported that there had been an intensive and challenging period of redevelopment, which had focused on teaching, recruitment and staff numbers, but the Subject had been successful in the management of capacity issues, while maintaining a quality learning experience for students. The Review Panel encourages the Subject to continue with plans to develop its five-year learning and teaching strategy, which addresses various objectives (School, College, University) to expand and enhance provision of a quality student learning experience.

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<sup>6</sup> Accredited by ARA and CILIP.

<sup>7</sup> Until 2016-17 Museum Studies: Dress and Textile History.

<sup>8</sup> Information Studies' contribution to this MSc programme will end in 2016-17.

## *Rebranding*

- 2.4.5 Recommendations from the HATII Review 2014 and HATII REF 2016 Review had also suggested a change of name for the Subject to 'Information Studies' to increase recruitment and manage marketing, as well as the potential for REF in relation to cognate Units internationally. The SER noted that there was broad staff agreement with this suggestion, although some were not convinced that it reflected the breadth of research and teaching provision. Panel members noted that students who met with the Panel more often used the term 'Digital Media' in reference to the subject area and raised with staff the appropriateness of rebranding to 'Information Studies'. Key staff who met with the Panel reported that the new name needed to capture all of their teaching and research activities, so that the subject area role/activities were clearly identifiable across the University, and would be flexible for future growth.
- 2.4.6 The Head of Subject reported that substantive research had taken place with regard to the proposed name change (market research and surveys of cognate/national/international recruitment bodies), and, while the Subject is keen to address gender balance, the new name needed to reflect the range of research specialisms. The Panel was pleased to note that the Subject had consulted students regarding the name change proposal, which would have no implications for current degree titles. The Panel also noted that a paper, addressing the name change for the Subject to Information Studies, was considered by the College of Arts and approved by Council of Senate on 13 April 2017.

## **3 Enhancing the Student Experience**

### **3.1 Admissions, Retention and Success**

- 3.1.1 The SER noted a high level of recruitment of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students by the Subject because of its unique selling points (Digital Media and Information Studies and dual accredited postgraduate taught provision). Provision is has a strong, mainly practice-led, element, offering a diverse range of programmes representative across the sector, and has clear links to industry and professional bodies nationally and internationally. The attractiveness of programmes on offer was reflected in increasing student numbers and during conversations with students who met with the Panel. Students liked the specialist programmes and courses, which they found stimulating and which developed their technical skills, and enhanced career prospects. Undergraduate students also appreciated the flexible programme entry at Level 2. The Panel also noted positive rates of retention and progression rates to Honours at undergraduate level.
- 3.1.2 Student numbers have increased significantly since 2010 across all of the Subject's programmes, despite reduced staffing numbers that resulted from the University's Voluntary Severance Scheme with no replacement post for the Professorial lead who departed in 2011. However, following the 2014 HATII Review, two new posts and one replacement professorial post were approved and had been recently filled. The Subject continues to address staffing issues with the College to accommodate further student demand. The Review Panel noted that while there remains considerable demand for places in undergraduate and, in particular, numbers of students on postgraduate taught programmes capped, due to limited staffing resource.
- 3.1.3 The Panel noted the popularity of the Museum Studies programme, especially for international students, which was partly due to the Subject's location in Glasgow. The Head of Subject reported that she had discussed plans to expand the international student cohort with colleagues in the Marketing, International and Recruitment Office. However, she recognised that growth needed careful management to maintain the quality of student learning and teaching provision, while factoring in associated

implications for resources, which included placements as well as staffing costs. The Panel noted that there were funding opportunities for international students in relation to professional training, and the Subject should continue to be aware of requirements to meet funding criteria.

- 3.1.4 The SER stated that '*Level 3 and honours courses in Philosophy and Psychology were offered under the ARTMED code and delivered by Subject staff.*' However, the Panel noted that courses were restricted to students with honours level Psychology or Philosophy experience and did not map onto Digital Media and Information Studies undergraduate programme specifications. The Panel also noted that the course was mostly aimed at senior honours Philosophy students, and students were considered on a case-by-case basis (including postgraduates). The Panel enquired whether the Subject could justify the delivery costs, given its limited resources. The Head of School explained that there were historical staffing reasons for the provision, and the Subject would like to be able to offer the course to Information Studies students, as it was a popular and innovative course. The Panel took the view that there was much scope for including philosophy within Museum and Information Studies (e.g. Epistemology), which would strengthen the programme and provide a rationale for its inclusion.

## **3.2 Equality and Diversity**

- 3.2.1 The Review Panel welcomed School efforts to obtain the Athena Swan Bronze Award. However, the Panel noted that the student body averaged 69% female across all Subject programmes, which was higher than the College average of 66%, and members explored with the Head of Subject whether she had any concerns for future funding, given the student gender imbalance. The Head of Subject confirmed the proportion reflected the sector trend, but hoped that rebranding through a change of name to Information Studies would attract more male students and that new courses would be introduced to appeal to all genders.

### *Disability Access*

- 3.2.2 The Review Panel noted the logistical challenges of the Subject's accommodation in University Gardens, although members were confident that alternative arrangements would be made for disabled access if required. The Review Panel encourages the Subject to consider the physical accessibility of teaching and administrative space of their current accommodation in University Gardens in the development of a contingency plan to meet the needs of disabled students, in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy and the Equality Act (2010).

## **3.3 Supporting Students in their Learning**

### *Pastoral Support*

- 3.3.1 Students who met with the Panel were enthusiastic about staff members, both teaching and administrative, who were accessible, responsive and who worked collegially to create a close community. The nurturing and inclusive ethos fostered by staff members included an open-door policy, and was clearly appreciated by all students, particularly the international cohort. The Panel also noted robust measures in place for supporting students, offered through a wide variety of formal and informal activities (Induction Week, Study Skills, Moodle, Facebook and social events). Both undergraduate and postgraduate students reported that the opportunity to meet teaching staff during Induction Week and find out about their respective specialisms had been helpful in terms of future project work. Key staff who met with the Panel were also aware of the need for induction at other points in the student journey, such as Level 1 students joining in Semester 2 and students transferring to 1B in Level 2, and were streamlining processes to meet students' learning needs. The availability of teaching and administrative staff members to support students in their learning,

despite the challenges resulting from increasing student numbers, was recognised by Panel members as **good practice**.

#### *Support for International Students*

3.3.2 The SER and external examiners raised concerns regarding support provision for international students in relation to English language and familiarity with resources available through University Services. The Panel noted the Subject's proactive approach through Moodle, email and class discussions to promote the English-Language classes and support offered through the English for Academic Study unit within the University. The Subject also ensured that international students were provided with details of other support available across the University, such as the Advisor of Studies scheme at UG and PG levels, through Student Handbooks, Moodle and face-to-face meetings. However, international undergraduates who met with the Panel reported that guidance could be clearer regarding the availability and access of support and resources (addressed below in Section 3.3.5).

#### *Graduate Attributes*

3.3.3 The Panel was pleased to note the Subject's emphasis on placements, practical work, and an awareness of the job market and industry needs. In particular, industry input to the curriculum, and the use of guest speakers, ensured that graduates had relevant skills and knowledge to be competitive in the job market and enhanced the student experience. While the SER did not specifically address graduate attributes in its account of student engagement, there were positive reports from the accrediting bodies, which suggested that the courses contributed significantly to employability. The Review Panel recognises the Subject's wide range of work-based learning opportunities offered to students and the focus on graduate attributes embedded throughout the curriculum as **good practice**.

3.3.4 Undergraduate and postgraduate students who met with the Panel were positive about the placements attended, which they considered beneficial for their future employment (e.g. networking opportunities/potential work contacts). Postgraduate students reported that arrangements were well organised, and they were supported by staff members who were accessible and sensitive to competing deadlines. Undergraduate students valued the opportunity to hear about work experiences from alumni invited to give presentations in Level 2. However, they wanted more work-based opportunities and suggested that the Subject could be more proactive in advertising placements, with sufficient notice and which were cognisant of the students' other commitments. The Review Panel noted from key staff that the Subject was meeting demand for postgraduate taught student placements and was considering ways to increase provision to meet the needs of undergraduates.

#### *Student Handbooks*

3.3.5 The information provided in student course handbooks was comprehensive and included sections on the University Lecture Recording Policy and an explanation of Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC). However, the Panel noted some inconsistencies regarding the format and accuracy of information provided, which included a lack of programme aims and outcomes in the postgraduate taught course handbooks and misleading statements regarding the assessment of study abroad. The Panel also took the view that some terminology needed updating in line with current practice (e.g. use of letters for grading, which should be expressed as grade point averages, which would make things clearer for students new to the UK academic system). Students who met with the Panel had also asked for more guidance around students' understandings of assessment criteria and the weighting of assessment components. The Panel suggested that the Subject might want to consider using more hyperlinks to avoid having multiple descriptions which all need to be updated if/when

any changes are made to policy/regulations. The course handbooks might also usefully present details of resources and support available by type (e.g. academic, mental health etc.) rather than by provider (School, College etc.). The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject liaise with their students and the School Learning and Teaching Convenor, in a review course handbooks, to ensure that students are aware of support and resources available, and have a clearer understanding of relevant policies and regulations (including the University's Code of Assessment).

### 3.4 Student Engagement

#### *Staff Student Liaison Committee*

3.4.1 Meetings of the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) were held regularly (once per semester) for both undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. Students who met the Panel reported that staff members were responsive, minutes of meetings were available (mainly on Facebook) within 24 hours and most actions were dealt with. However, there were some recurring issues for postgraduate taught students in Museum Studies (mostly around the return of feedback on assessment). Furthermore, minutes were not available on Student Voice, which limited access for the wider student body and, in particular, other student representatives. The SER Lead acknowledged that feedback on actions should be more systematic, and agreed to liaise with the relevant administrator to ensure that future copies of SSLC minutes were available on Student Voice. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject undertake a review of the operation of Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings, to ensure that actions are clearly identified and progressed, and outcomes reported to students on-line, through Moodle/Facebook and the Student Voice.

#### *National Student Survey*

3.4.2 The Subject's National Student Survey (NSS) results were indicated within the results from Computing Science, as student numbers at honours were historically too small to be returned on their own and had therefore been aggregated with Computing Science returns. This was an on-going issue for the subject area, reflected in current discussions around the Subject's name (see Sections 2.4.5-6) and applicable JACS codes. The Panel noted that the School was currently consulting with Dean of Learning and Teaching, to explore how this might be progressed. The Subject was also liaising with Mr David Martin, Planning and Business Intelligence, regarding JACS code and for undergraduates to be included under Information Systems. The College response to the SER noted that it was important that a successful and growing programme provision, such as that offered by the Subject, should be included within a suitable JACS code and suggested that the Subject coordinate with Mrs Kirsty Scanlan, Planning and Business Intelligence, to move forward on this matter. The Review Panel encourages the Subject to consider how Information Studies' outcomes in the National Student Survey, could be disaggregated from School of Computing Science scores.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey*

3.4.3 Results from the 2016 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) highlighted positive feedback from students on the Information Management and Preservation Masters programme but there were poorer outcomes for the Masters in Museum Studies. The Head of Subject reported that it had been difficult to interpret feedback from Museum Studies' students as uptake was low (10%) and findings needed to be disaggregated from the subject areas of Archaeology and History. The Subject planned in future to offer evaluation sessions that included survey completion, to

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<sup>9</sup> The Panel acknowledged post-report feedback from the College of Arts that noted that the process was not within the subject's control and it was difficult to make changes.

manage student expectations by explaining the provision of feedback by the University.

## 4 Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

### 4.1 Learning and Teaching

#### *Curriculum Design*

4.1.1 The SER stated that the Subject's approach to curriculum design, blended theory and practice, with a strong engagement with professional bodies and museums in the subject area, to enhance graduate attributes. The Panel also welcomed the reflective approach to learning and teaching with an emphasis on embedding professionalism. There was also evidence of a strong staff commitment to excellence (e.g. in teaching awards). In particular, members were impressed with the Peer Observation of Teaching scheme, which provided a framework for reflection on learning and teaching provision, while disseminating good practice, both in terms of academic content and teaching practice. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject's use of the Peer Observation of Teaching scheme to facilitate coordinated peer reporting on teaching practice and encourages continued professional development. However, there was some concern regarding the consistency of academic practice, with such a diverse range of individual teaching practices, and the Panel encourages the Subject to clarify and align academic practices in future pedagogical monitoring/reviews.

4.1.2 Student feedback from course evaluation and meetings with undergraduate and postgraduate students highlighted an issue with shared core courses. Key staff members who met with the Panel explained that the decision to use PGT courses for honours' students was a response to pedagogic challenges during the staffing crisis (from 2011). However, staff realised that this approach was not sustainable as they were aware that it was undermining the confidence of honours students and had not been effective in terms of reducing staff workload. The Panel noted that while there was some relief from additional staff and use of collaborative partners to maximise resources, the pressure to increase the size of the postgraduate taught cohort had implications for workload in provision of teaching and support (this issue was considered in more detail in Sections 4.3.1-3).

#### *Course Review*

4.1.3 The Subject identified a need for a more proactive approach to embed student feedback and staff reflection into course and programme development, through a series of teaching away-days and an Advisory Board resourced by the College and part of the implementation of the recent REF action plan. It was noted that the board would include external representatives (e.g. employers) to provide *ad hoc* advice on course and programme content and alignment, to support student transition to honours and from honours to Masters. The Subject has developed a list of key advisors from the Library, Archive and Museum Sector, and there are plans to convene a meeting of this group in the summer of 2017.

4.1.4 The Panel was concerned that copies of annual monitoring reports submitted for the review, were overly focused on staff activities and did not include reports prior to 2015-16. While members acknowledged the recent challenges due to staff numbers and workload issues, annual monitoring ensures that programme and course delivery meet the expectations of staff and students and is an opportunity to develop and enhance provision. The Panel encourages the Subject to follow guidance available on the Senate Office website to ensure continuous monitoring and enhancement of provision, and identification of good practice

[www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/gea/annualmonitoring/#tabs-2](http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/gea/annualmonitoring/#tabs-2)).



## *Innovation*

- 4.1.5 The SER reported that reflections ahead of the review had highlighted a number of areas in which the Subject could move forward as staffing numbers increased, which included the dissemination of good practice. Currently a smaller number of staff members were able to cascade good practice to each other through informal discussions. However, the Subject acknowledged that it needed to ensure a more formal and systematic method of disseminating good practice to early career as well as mid-career staff, and were considering the introduction of Teaching Seminars (similar to Subject's Research Seminars), which would mirror practice at School level including an item on good practice at School Forums. The Head of Subject also reported that good practice was a standing item at School Learning and Teaching meetings, and was discussed at the Subject's monthly meetings.
- 4.1.6 The Panel was also pleased to hear that a Subject staff member had been invited to be a Subject Ambassador for the University's new Teaching and Learning initiative 'Glasgow University's Teaching Tips Online' (GUSTTO), which allowed staff to access and share good practice teaching activities online. The SER noted that early and active engagement with GUSTTO would provide a useful opportunity for Subject expertise and best practice in teaching with technology to be disseminated across the University.
- 4.1.7 Key staff who met with the Panel confirmed that the Subject took a collegial approach in the delivery and reflection of best practice and that development opportunities were available through that the University's Teaching and Learning Conferences, the Teaching and Learning network in the College of Arts (Dr Spaeth) and talks within the School.

## *Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching*

- 4.1.8 Panel members were impressed by the Subject's blended model of teaching, which included Moodle-based fora, quizzes, wikis and blogging technology to encourage collaborative learning and student engagement. Undergraduate students who met with the Panel described this learning model as enjoyable and helpful for revision, as it allowed them to access other students' work and feedback. The Subject's use of technology-led teaching through Moodle in a blended model, which builds on student knowledge to facilitate productive learning and support student engagement, was recognised as an area of **good practice**.

## *Study Abroad*

- 4.1.9 Students who met with the Panel reported that staff members were knowledgeable and supportive about Study Abroad but opportunities were limited, and could be more effectively communicated. The SER provided details of Erasmus links with the University of Malta and the University of Utrecht and Junior Year Abroad (single or joint honours DMIS) studying in the USA, China and Australia. Information sessions on Study Abroad are offered annually in October, followed by individual meetings with key staff to agree course choices. However, staff needed to take a flexible approach, to accommodate the broad range of student requirements, so they liaised with other subjects/schools across the University to find equivalent courses across the curriculum, e.g. Media and Communication, Politics, Library and Information Studies and Computing Science. Key staff who met with the Panel reported that the recent appointment of an internationalisation champion had also highlighted that a lot of information currently available was inaccurate and required updating. The Subject has also started to develop new links, e.g. the University of Manila (English taught) and through personal contacts following staff exchanges. The Review panel encourages the Subject to continue to expand and promote Study Abroad opportunities to meet the

University's strategic objective of 20% of students by 2020 having an international experience.

## 4.2 Assessment and Feedback

4.2.1 Assessment procedures employed by the Subject included a wide range of assessment methods that were commended by external examiners. The Panel was also pleased to note the College of Arts' recent appointment of an E-Learning Innovation Officer, who would provide staff with a range of technical support and facilitate easy dissemination of reflection on practice.

### *Feedback on Assessment*

4.2.2 The undergraduate and postgraduate students who met with the Panel raised issues in relation to the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback. Comments from external examiners noted inconsistencies regarding the depth of feedback between some markers and suggested that the Subject could usefully provide more guidance on assessment criteria. Students reported that feedback on assessment varied between courses and while they considered most provision useful and constructive, they had found some feedback too generic and informal. Similarly, while the majority of the return of feedback met the University's three-week deadline, for some students there had been lengthy delays and for some undergraduate students no explanatory updates. The Panel acknowledged that a uniform approach was not always possible, given the variety of appropriate feedback, and while some delays were unavoidable, expectations should be managed more effectively, by notifying students of a problem and the announcement of a revised return date.

4.2.3 The SER Lead confirmed a holistic approach at Subject level with support from School administrative staff to communicate delays but acknowledged that feedback on assessment could be more systematic and sustainable. The Panel noted the Subject's participation in the University initiative Leading Enhancement in Assessment Feedback (LEAF) project (workshops at College/School level). The Head of Subject reported plans to evaluate practice, which would include a review of marking in Museum Studies and would be an opportunity to identify good practice. The Review Panel **recommends** a review of current feedback procedures focusing particularly on the quality and consistency and timing of feedback, with a view to ensuring that students have appropriate feedback to help guide and inform their next assessment.

4.2.4 The Panel recognised that a three-week turnaround on coursework feedback, given increasing student numbers, was admirable but challenging for teaching and administrative staff members. Students who had met with the Panel were also aware of staff workloads. The Panel noted that the University's NSS Action Plan had identified the need for calendars to provide more strategic and effective management of assessment and feedback. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject liaise with the Dean of Learning and Teaching (College of Arts) to produce a feedback calendar, which should document assessment and feedback activities for all programmes across a full session (2017-18).

4.2.5 The Panel noted that large amounts of summative assessment were used with students, and while formative feedback was provided, it appeared to be mainly on summative work. Members enquired whether the Subject had considered increasing opportunities for more and earlier formative experiences, to improve student retention. The SER Lead reported that there had been some progress to increase formative assessment in Levels 1 and 2, but less so at honours and postgraduate taught level. However, the Subject was aware of the need to provide more formative assessment opportunities, which would also allow them to address issues of staff workload. The Panel pointed out that students needed to be aware that formative feedback was given in many different ways and not restricted to the written comments on work submitted.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject adopt a strategic approach to feedback on assessment, with a view to increasing the amount of formative assessment compared to summative assessment, particularly for postgraduate taught students.

#### *Engagement with the Code of Assessment*

4.2.6 The College of Arts' response to the SER highlighted concern regarding the text used to explain moderation practice by external examiners:

*'Where a particular student's performance places them within the zone of discretion, as defined by the Code of Assessment, the External Examiners and members of the Exam Board take an overview of each student's performance across the entire programme'* (SER Section 5.1.7.).

Dr Anderson noted that the wording did not fully conform with procedures outlined in the Code of Assessment guidance and confirmed that the College would liaise with the Subject, to verify the role of external examiners in reviewing the work of borderline candidates and clarification of 'the entire programme'.

4.2.7 Postgraduate students who met with the Panel reported that details of dissertation weightings could be clearer. The Review Panel also noted a paragraph in the undergraduate student handbook detailing marking arrangements for Study Abroad students:

*'Like your other undergraduate work from Glasgow itself, the portfolio from your year abroad will be reviewed by the Honours Board of Examiners (including external examiners) according to established procedures. To make sure no injustice is done, the Board always looks at both the 'raw' transcript from your host institution and the conversion-marks resulting from this formal review of the work completed while away. In the process, we take account of the fact that spending a year abroad can be both an exciting and a challenging experience, and we make sure no student is disadvantaged by a set of marks that may appear out of line with marks achieved in the Senior Honours year at Glasgow University.'*

4.2.8 The Panel took the view that the phrasing was unfortunate and most likely reflected normal practice of discretion on Honours classifications. However, there was concern that the current wording could be misinterpreted (e.g. as disregarding marks out of line, which is not permitted under the University's Code of Assessment). Members also found instances where letters had been used for grading, which are now expressed as grade point averages. The Review Panel noted that the need to clarify students' understanding of the Code of Assessment had been included in a previous recommendation to update student handbooks in Section 3.3.5 above.

#### *Similarity Checking*

4.2.9 The Panel explored with the Head of Subject the School and College policies on plagiarism, given large student numbers. There had also been student feedback that suggested some unevenness in plagiarism checking at Levels 1 and 2, and for honours dissertations. The Head of Subject pointed out that there was an element of self-plagiarism in the subject area, particularly for Museum Studies' students. However, the Subject's approach was very clear that this activity should be viewed as a learning and development tool to develop best practice, rather than a negative and punitive exercise, which was implied when using the term plagiarism. The Subject therefore preferred to use the similarity checker software (URKUND<sup>10</sup>). The Panel noted that this stance was similar to the approach taken by the College of Arts.

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<sup>10</sup> Noted that URKUND is branded as a 'Plagiarism Checker'.

- 4.2.10 The Head of Subject reported that practice for similarity checking varied across courses, and while students were encouraged to use URKUND, current uptake was mostly with honours and postgraduate students. She also acknowledged that increased use of URKUND would benefit students and staff, as it included a specific functionality, which was more effective than Moodle in providing feedback on assessments. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject's use of 'similarity checking software' (i.e. URKUND), as a learning and development tool to help students develop citation and referencing skills should be adopted on a more consistent and routine basis, in accordance with Senate Office regulations (available on website [www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_477756\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_477756_en.pdf)).
- 4.2.11 The Review Panel noted that the format of minutes used for the Subject's Board of Examiners' Meetings were inconsistent and there was a lack of clarity around arrangements for the uploading of examination results. The Review Panel **recommends** the Subject utilise the Template for Minutes of Board of Examiners' Meetings (available at: [www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_196809\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_196809_en.pdf)) in accordance with University policy, and ensure that roles and responsibilities regarding the uploading of examination results are clearly articulated to relevant staff members.

### 4.3 Resources for Learning and Teaching

#### *Staff Workload*

- 4.3.1 The Review Panel recognised that the Subject's strategic objective to align teaching and research with increasing student numbers relied on appropriate staffing levels. They were therefore pleased to note that the College of Arts was currently rolling out a workload model, and the availability of a Work-Life Balance group at school level. The Panel also welcomed plans for new posts in an expansion (including modularisation) of the Museum Studies programme. However, the number of fractional posts and a high proportion of early career staff meant that managing staff workload would be a particular challenge.
- 4.3.2 Early career staff members who met with the Panel reported that although research time had been protected within the Subject's current workload model, the rationale in the allocation of teaching responsibilities/load was not clear. The SER described the challenges of rotating staffing roles equitably given relatively few staff (including fractional) with competing training and research commitments (discussed further in Section 4.4.2). It was also clear from the staff survey conducted in 2015-16 that work/life balance was an issue for staff, given the drivers for teaching excellence, REF, and meeting Performance and Development Review (PDR) and promotion criteria.
- 4.3.3 The Head of Subject explained that the subject area operated a separate workload management practice, based around good citizenship, due partly to difficulties accessing teaching data and staffing shortages. However, the matter had been discussed at School and College level and the Subject was currently developing a collegial approach to achieve consensus and transparency around roles, which would be considered at the next annual meeting<sup>11</sup>. The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of Subject undertakes a review of workload management and adopts the College workload model to help plan work effectively and to bring about greater transparency for all staff (particularly early career) regarding roles and responsibilities [Section 4.3.3].

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<sup>11</sup> Clerk's note from feedback on draft report that the College workload model is currently at pilot stage, focusing in particular on teaching, with the School of Humanities fully engaged and the College has discussed with ITS how to make individual reports more transparent.

### *Learning and Teaching Space*

- 4.3.4 The Panel noted concerns in the SER regarding timetabling, the availability and location of appropriate learning and teaching space, and facilities not always meeting the needs of the Subject's blended theory and practice approach. Students who met with the Panel reported they were often given little notice of changes to teaching room/laboratories and that some space lacked specialist IT software/equipment and network connectivity required for project work. Key staff recognised that while changes made by the Space Management and Timetabling Team (SMTT) were efficiency-driven, re-allocation of space was confusing for students, negatively impacted on administrative support staff and that sometimes the physical distance between venues made it difficult for students to attend classes in a timely manner. The Head of Subject noted the growth of the PGT cohort was limited by a lack of large flexible laboratory space and that student dissatisfaction was reflected in PTES feedback.
- 4.3.5 Space allocations for teaching, was discussed at Subject SSLC meetings and was an on-going University-wide issue, and had been raised through AMRs, by the College of Arts Dean of Learning and Teaching at the University's Learning and Teaching Committee, and directly with SMTT. Comments provided by the College of Arts in response to the SER pointed out that while some amendments to processes were being adopted to alleviate some of the problems, there was no simple solution in the current estate. Dr Anderson also suggested that the Subject might consider the viability of the new TEAL accommodation (e.g. Hugh Fraser, which held 60 students on 10 group tables, each equipped with its own PC). The Head of School reported that a planning meeting to take account of current room issues had been brought forward to March 2017.

### **4.4 Engaging and Supporting Staff**

- 4.4.1 Staff engagement and support was clearly articulated in the SER, including details of a new mentoring initiative (offered from Semester 2, 2017 through the School of Humanities and focusing on career goals and professional effectiveness and development) and encouraging staff development through leadership and development programmes, and associate fellowships (see Section 4.4.15 below).
- 4.4.2 The Review Panel recognised the challenges for a small Subject area to fulfill the numerous leadership roles required to provide appropriate support for staff and representation at School and College level, given the number of early career and fractional staff. Although convening roles, teaching responsibilities and subject roles for the following year were allocated annually and on a regular basis, the SER acknowledged a lack of a clear planning structure for staff roles beyond each session, and the issue had been raised with the School of Humanities and College of Arts. While the Panel noted the Subject's ongoing commitment to ensure all staff take on appropriate roles as part of PDR and School workload modeling, the Panel encouraged the School and College to consider how they would incentivise staff roles to ensure promotion was available to staff on a teaching track so that they felt valued, and that the focus was not just on research, and research output.
- 4.4.3 The SER stated that while teaching processes were not always clear, particularly for new staff members, the Subject could benefit from good practice disseminated through the School Learning and Teaching Committee. Panel members explored with staff whether the Subject had considered providing guidance through a more formal method such as training days. Key staff members who met with the Panel reported co-teaching of courses facilitated knowledge transfer through observation and that the Subject were scheduling a series of teaching away-days to develop reflective planning of teaching. The Subject also planned to produce a new handbook for staff to clarify and provide guidance on teaching practices.

- 4.4.4 Key staff members who met with the review Panel reported that the impact of teaching, learning and assessment policies on pedagogical practice and particular staff cohorts (e.g. early career staff), were highlighted through the School's Learning and Teaching Committee, and considered at monthly Subject meetings.

#### *Early Career Support*

- 4.4.5 Early career staff who met with the Panel confirmed that they received training through the Early Career Development Programme (ECDP), which included the Teaching and Supervision Course, as part of the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP), provided by Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEADS). While the PgCAP was considered useful in the development of and reflection on their teaching practice, early career staff suggested that additional CPD opportunities might be more tailored to the College of Arts.
- 4.4.6 Early career staff who met with the Panel appreciated the support provided by their line-managers, which included observation of lectures and feedback on teaching performance. However, Panel members were surprised that some staff were unaware of the provision within ECDP of workshops to agree objectives for progress towards meeting the promotion criteria, and were unable to identify the School ECDP champion. The Panel encourages the Head of Subject to engage more effectively with early career staff to ensure the provision of appropriate guidance and support in relation to ECDP.

#### *Graduate Teaching Assistants*

- 4.4.7 The Review Panel met with one of the Subject's four Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and noted that GTAs were appointed through Course Convenors, worked in tutorials and laboratories, and were able to contribute to course evaluations through Moodle. The GTA who met with the Panel noted support provided by teaching and administrative staff members, who were friendly and approachable.
- 4.4.8 The SER stated that GTAs attended training provided centrally through LEADS but had acknowledged that the Subject '*could offer more bespoke support*'. During the review visit, the SER Lead reported that current arrangements for support and development were *ad hoc* and informal due to the relatively low numbers of GTAs. The Review Panel suggested that designated mentors could be identified to provide guidance on managing workloads, developing a portfolio of teaching, and personal and professional development. Given the small numbers, GTAs should also be encouraged to participate in appropriate training opportunities elsewhere in the School and the College of Arts, which would allow them to further develop their teaching experience. The Review Panel **recommends** the Subject ensures that GTAs receive appropriate support and development, including local training through the School of Humanities, in line with University requirements.

#### *Student Laboratory Demonstrators*

- 4.4.9 The Review Panel met with four of six honours-level students employed by the Subject to provide technical support and guidance in relation to subject knowledge during laboratory sessions. The Student Laboratory Demonstrators Scheme, was pioneered by the Subject and in its second year of operation, was offered to Level 4 students to develop graduate attributes, while addressing the issue of student support with increasing numbers. The student laboratory demonstrators who met with the Panel reported that they were well supported (by a designated member of teaching staff) and that they valued the opportunity, which had increased their confidence and communication skills, consolidated and enriched their learning experience, and enabled them to interact with students from other levels. They also appreciated that the role was recognised through the Higher Education Achievement Report and would be selling point for future employers. It was clear from meetings

with undergraduates that they too benefitted from access to more experienced students in relation to their knowledge of courses and programmes. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject's use of senior honours-level students as laboratory demonstrators.

- 4.4.10 It was noted from the SER and during discussions with the GTA and Student Laboratory Demonstrators, that the Subject encouraged staff to apply for associate fellowships through the Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme and the Higher Education Academy. Participation provided students with opportunities to consolidate and reflect on their learning and valuable professional recognition of their contribution. The Review Panel **commends** the Subject's engagement with the Recognising Excellence in Teaching scheme, which encouraged applications from all staff, including GTAs/student laboratory demonstrators.

## **5 Academic Standards**

- 5.1.1 The Review Panel noted from the supporting documentation that reports from external examiners were positive and confirmed that actions were being taken to follow up on comments. There was also positive feedback from the accrediting bodies with respect to the content and the delivery of courses. Panel members concluded that the standard procedures for setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards were in place.
- 5.1.2 While details of entry qualifications for the PGT programmes were considered accurate and appropriate, descriptors used were not consistent. The Subject is therefore encouraged to ensure alignment of entry qualifications details for PGT programmes in programme specifications, which are submitted annually by the School of Humanities through the University's Programme Information Process (PIP).

### *Currency and Validity of Programmes*

- 5.1.3 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirmed that, at the time of the Review, the programmes offered by the Subject were current and valid in light of developing knowledge in the discipline and practice within the subject area.

## **6 Collaborative Provision**

The SER described formal international partnerships through Erasmus agreements, and with the wider university international exchange programme, which had facilitated staff exchanges, and close links with professional organisations and industry, across West Central Scotland and abroad. Review Panel members were pleased to note arrangements for students to take opportunities outside of the University of Glasgow that were wide ranging and discipline focused.

## **7 Conclusion**

The Review Panel concluded that despite significant challenges of increasing student numbers and staffing shortfalls, the Subject had continued to build on its strengths, in a re-development and expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, had aligned research with teaching, and had included innovative pedagogical tools to enhance provision. The Review Panel was particularly impressed by the quality of support provided by dedicated staff members, whose efforts were being used most effectively and clearly appreciated by students who valued the community atmosphere. The Review Panel made a small number of recommendations where it identified opportunities for further enhancement. The Head of Subject commented that the review had been timely given the Subject's recent transition and that the recommendations would enable the Subject's strategic objectives.

## 7.1 Commendations, Key strengths and Good Practice

Following a meeting of Periodic Subject Review Conveners held on 16 December 2016, it was agreed that reports should present examples of good practice separately from commendations, with the latter being used to identify innovative and exemplary activities for wider dissemination.

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

### Commendation 1

The Review Panel **commends** the Peer Observation of Teaching scheme to facilitate coordinated peer reporting on teaching practice and encourages continued professional development [Section 4.1.1];

### Commendation 2

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject's use of Senior Honours-level students as laboratory demonstrators [Section 4.4.9];

### Commendation 3

The Review Panel **commends** the Subject's engagement with the Recognising Excellence in Teaching Scheme, which encouraged applications from all staff including GTAs/student laboratory demonstrators [Section 4.4.10].

The Review Panel identified the following key strengths and areas of good practice. These are listed **in order of appearance** in this report:

### Good Practice 1

The Review Panel recognises the Subject's achievement as one of only three institutions in the UK with dual Archives and Records Association (ARA)/Chartered Institute of Librarian and Information Professionals (CILIP) accreditation as **good practice** [Section 2.4.1].

### Good Practice 2

The availability of teaching and administrative staff members to support students in their learning, despite the challenges resulting from increasing student numbers, was recognised by Panel members as **good practice** [Section 3.3.1].

### Good Practice 3

The Review Panel recognises the Subject's wide range of work-based learning opportunities offered to students and the focus on graduate attributes embedded throughout the curriculum as **good practice** [Section 3.3.3].

### Good Practice 4

The Subject's use of technology-led teaching through Moodle in a blended model, which builds on student knowledge to facilitate productive learning and support student engagement, was recognised as an area of **good practice** [Section 4.1.8].

## 7.2 Areas for enhancement

The Review Panel highlighted the following areas as opportunities for further work. These and the recommendations that follow are intended to support Subject in its reflection and to enhance provision in relation to teaching, learning and assessment:



- To continue with plans to develop a five-year learning and teaching strategy;
- Consideration of the physical accessibility of teaching and administrative space of their current accommodation in University Gardens;
- Disaggregation of Subject NSS outcomes from the School of Computing Science scores;
- Clarification and alignment of academic practices in future pedagogical monitoring/reviews;
- Continuous monitoring and enhancement of provision, and identification of good practice;
- Expansion and promotion of Study Abroad opportunities;
- Strategy to ensure effective allocation of rooms for the Subject;
- Incentivise staff roles;
- More systematic engagement with early career staff by Head of Subject to ensure provision of appropriate guidance and support in relation to ECDP;
- Alignment of entry qualifications details for PGT programmes in programme specifications through PIP.

### 7.3 Recommendations

Specific recommendations addressing the areas for work are listed below, as are a number of further recommendations on particular matters.

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**.

#### *Student Handbooks*

##### **Recommendation 1**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject liaise with their students and the School Learning and Teaching Convenor in a review course handbooks, to ensure that students are aware of support and resources available, and have a clearer understanding of relevant policies and regulations (including the University's Code of Assessment) [Section 3.3.5].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject**

**For information: Dean of Learning & Teaching, College of Arts**

##### **Recommendation 2**

#### *Staff Student liaison Committee*

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject undertake a review of the operation of Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings, to ensure actions are clearly identified and progressed, and outcomes reported to students on-line, through Moodle/Facebook and the Student Voice [Section 3.4.1].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject**

#### *Assessment and Feedback*

##### **Recommendation 3**

The Review Panel **recommends** a review of current feedback procedures focusing particularly on the quality and consistency and timing of feedback, with a view to ensuring that students have appropriate feedback to help guide and inform their next assessment [Section 4.2.3].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject**

#### **Recommendation 4**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject liaise with the Dean of Learning and Teaching (College of Arts) to produce a feedback calendar, which should document assessment and feedback activities for all programmes across a full session (2017-18) [Section 4.2.4].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject**

**For information: Dean of Learning & Teaching, College of Arts**

#### **Recommendation 5**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject adopt a strategic approach to feedback on assessment, with a view to increasing the amount of formative assessment compared to summative assessment, particularly for postgraduate taught students [Section 4.2.5].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject**

#### **Recommendation 6**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Subject's use of 'similarity checking software' (i.e. URKUND), as a learning and development tool to help students develop citation and referencing skills should be adopted on a more consistent and routine basis, in accordance with Senate Office regulations (available on website [www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_477756\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_477756_en.pdf)) [Section 4.2.10].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject**

#### **Recommendation 7**

The Review Panel **recommends** the Subject utilise the Template for Minutes of Board of Examiners' Meetings (available at [www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_196809\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_196809_en.pdf)) in accordance with University policy, and ensure that roles and responsibilities regarding the uploading of examination results are clearly articulated to relevant staff members [Section 4.2.11].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject and the Head of School**

#### *Staff Workload*

#### **Recommendation 8**

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Head of Subject undertakes a review of workload management and adopts the College workload model to help plan work effectively and to bring about greater transparency for all staff (particularly early career) regarding roles and responsibilities [Section 4.3.3].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject**

**For information: Head of School**

#### *Engaging and Supporting Staff*

#### **Recommendation 9**

The Review Panel **recommends** the Subject ensures that GTAs receive appropriate support and development, including local training through the School of Humanities, in line with University requirements [Section 4.4.8].

**For the attention of: The Head of Subject**

**For information: Head of School of Humanities**