

Periodic Review Report Template

School	School of Arts and Social Sciences
Discipline Name	English & Creative Writing
Date of Review	4-5 March & 24 May 2010
Review Panel (approved by University Learning and Teaching Committee)	<p>Dr Kevin Robertson (Acting Chair), Associate Dean Learning and Teaching, School of Psychology and Sports Sciences</p> <p>Dr Linda Allin (Chair): Director of Quality Enhancement (Department of Sport Development, Management and Coaching), School of Psychology & Sport Sciences</p> <p>Dr Chris Wigginton (Additional Internal Panel Member), Associate Dean Learning and Teaching, School of Arts and Social Sciences</p> <p>Carol Stephenson, Programme Director, School of Arts and Social Sciences</p> <p>John Carson: Senior Lecturer, School of Health Community and Education Studies</p> <p>Alison Jones: Students' Union Vice President, Communications & Involvement</p> <p><u>External reviewer</u> Dr Elspeth Graham, Reader in Early Modern Studies/Head of English Department, Liverpool John Moores University.</p>
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook (2008 version), available from http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/lts/review/intrev/

Section 1

Discipline Aims and Context

The English and Creative Writing subject group, along with History, is located within the newly constituted Department of Humanities, one of the four new academic departments that comprise the School of Arts and Social Sciences in the recent restructuring exercise that took place in September 2009. The English and Creative Writing subject group consists of staff in English literature (17fte), English language and linguistics (8fte), and creative writing (4fte). This is a tightly knit team that delivers provision in the following undergraduate programmes:

BA (Hons) English Literature,

BA (Hons) English Language,

BA (Hons) English Language and Literature,

BA (Hons) English Literature and Creative Writing.

BA (Hons) English Literature and Film will be retired from September 2010.

BA (Hons) British and American Cultures will see its final cohort graduate in July 2010.

BA (Hons) English Language and Literature was introduced in September 2009. It recruited in excess of its original target of 39 with a first year cohort of 44. BA (Hons) Psychology and Linguistics, a Major/Minor programme, has been approved and will run for the first time in September 2011 with a provisional target of 25 students. The programme will be managed in the School of Psychology and Sport Sciences. The English literature staff also teach, with their departmental colleagues in History, on the BA (Hons) English Literature and History programme. Teaching and administrative duties are therefore fully integrated across the Department giving ample opportunity to share good practice in both learning and teaching and research. Provision in English literature is also delivered in BA (Hons) Journalism and English, located in the Department of Media.

Undergraduate provision in English and Creative Writing is under a process of revision. The core literature modules at level 4 are being rewritten for delivery in 2010-11 and new modules are being introduced to take account of research from new and existing staff at levels 5 and 6. This is similarly the case in relation to core modules and advanced modules in BA (Hons) English Language Studies.

In line with the Department Business Plan that fed into the School Academic Plan, postgraduate provision has also undergone revision and expansion. English and Creative Writing currently deliver three successful

taught MA's: one in Creative Writing; one in TESOL and one in Applied Linguistics. The latter two are in a process of revision to accommodate the research interests of new staff. An MRes in English Literature is in the first year of delivery with a cohort of five students. This will be complemented by a new MA in English: Literature and Place that awaits validation in semester 2, 2009-10, for delivery in September 2010. An MRes in Language / Linguistics is being planned for 2010-11, alongside exploratory talks with Psychology for a joint postgraduate programme. An MRes in Gender Studies expected to come on line in the same year.

The Head of Department, Programme Director, academic and administrative staff for English and Creative Writing, are located in the Lipman Building. Two Professors and three Readers provide research leadership. This includes contributing to the Department Business Plan, assessing individual Personal Research and Enterprise Plans, mentoring early career researchers and chairing the School sub-committee for research degrees and the Department Research Committee. English Literature was submitted for the 2008 RAE, where 25% of research activity was assessed as either 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent'. The subject has also been earmarked within both the School Academic Development Plan and the University's Strategic Investment Fund as an area of research activity worthy of future investment and development for the REF. To this end 10 PhD studentships per year for three years have been awarded to English and Creative Writing by the School of Arts and Social Sciences. Together with new postgraduate developments, a ladder of opportunity is provided for students to progress from BA to PhD. Areas of research strength are concentrated in research clusters: Early Modern Literature; Eighteenth-Century Literature; Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature; Creative Writing; Language and Linguistics; Pedagogy.

Provision in English and Creative Writing is diverse and underpinned by the efficient delivery of an extremely popular set of programmes that recruit very effectively. Single honours degrees in English literature and English language, and joint programmes in language and literature and literature and creative writing have an average tariff points well in excess of the required 300 for 2009-10. English and Creative Writing have experienced a considerable growth in recent applications and also growth in student numbers. No programme in English and Creative Writing recruited students through clearing. Total student numbers on all undergraduate programmes is 634. The staff-student ratio in English and Creative Writing is 1:22.

The growth in student numbers has been accompanied by growth in the staff base. All areas of provision in English and Creative Writing have been favoured by the School with a considerable expansion in the staff base, which has doubled in the last two years. The School operates a rigorous recruitment procedure that has ensured the appointment of high quality staff and is very supportive in terms of research. Additional appointments are planned for a September 2010 start to support linguistics, creative writing and early modern literature. The sabbatical scheme – currently 1 in 6 semesters for fully research active staff – not only facilitates the production of high quality research outputs but also supports the research into teaching agenda grounded in best practice. This is in line with the School's learning and teaching strategy, in which the Department played a significant part.

The programmes in English and Creative Writing aim to combine academic rigour with a concern for practicality and employability. At all levels the programmes focus on providing a breadth of period and discipline-based knowledge and a thorough training both in current modes of literary-historical and/or linguistic thought and in the skills of the professional specialist in literature, language and creative writing. The programmes are designed to offer a broad portfolio of modules, within an expansive frame of reference, taking into account such inter-disciplinary approaches as literary and linguistic theory, cultural, social, political and intellectual history. The scholars who deliver the programmes work at the cutting edge of their discipline. All modules that comprise the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are fully informed by subject research.

All programmes in English aim to produce graduates with advanced skills in independent critical thinking, communication and knowledge transferability. Employability skills are embedded at every level throughout the programmes. Accordingly, students who graduate in English language, literature and / or creative writing from Northumbria should be highly motivated, highly articulate and self-confident individuals fully equipped to enter the workplace or to go on to postgraduate study. Similarly, these graduates will be equipped through their knowledge of language, literature, creative writing and cultural history to develop and enhance critical and analytical skills to assist them to fulfil a worthwhile role in the community to which they belong. It is with these principles in mind that the declared aim in all of the programmes is to combine academic rigour with a corresponding care for the employability skills required by students to fit them for the job market. In the literature programmes and in creative writing, period coverage from the Renaissance to the present day is delivered through core modules. Students have the opportunity at levels 5 and 6 to choose modules that supplement and complement the core. Level 6 also has a dissertation as core. In

language, students are introduced to key subject areas and approaches to language analysis through a mixture of core modules and advanced module choices before choosing level 6 advanced modules and completing a mandatory dissertation. Creative Writing students have the opportunity to submit a portfolio of their creative work as an alternative to an academic dissertation.

Although there have been problems in the past with the Lipman Building, the last two years have seen a considerable improvement in the physical learning environment. The lecture, seminar and staff rooms provided within the Lipman Building are in a process of refurbishment and refitting. There are a number of good quality lecture rooms, including one excellent main lecture theatre that is fully equipped with IT provision that can accommodate over 250 students. Several smaller spaces that can cater for up to 50 students, all with permanent computer facilities for PowerPoint or audio visual presentations also exist. There are also a smaller number of seminar size classrooms, particularly on the ground and third floors. Currently postgraduate research students in the Department of Humanities share with the School the Glenamara Centre and its facilities, including individual work stations. There are plans to convert one of the larger classrooms in Lipman Building into a postgraduate work-room dedicated to Humanities students, with individual work stations and IT facilities. The School is recommending to the University plans to create a new state-of-the-art lecture theatre to accommodate 300 students. Refurbishment of Lipman floor 4 has led to the ongoing creation of a student hub and the re-decoration and refurbishment of all staff offices with new furniture. Recently, a shared space for English and Creative Writing staff (with coffee and tea facilities) has been created on floor 4 to provide an opportunity for staff to meet with a small number of students, while improvements have also been made to corridors and notice boards on Floor 4.

Section 2	Curricula and Standards
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent staff growth has resulted in the evolution of a rich tapestry of option modules at levels 5 and 6 of the undergraduate programmes, creating a distinctiveness about the Northumbria provision. • Learning and teaching is strongly influenced by research, both in terms of curriculum development and pedagogy. • The recent postgraduate programme developments are clearly strategic in terms of providing opportunity up to and including PhD level. • The quality standards are endorsed by all stakeholders and are clearly evidenced in the QA documentation. • Subject developments are in accordance with the national academic benchmarks and subject-specific expectations. • Robust systems and procedures are in place for the design, approval and review of programmes. • An appropriate level of thoughtfulness within the Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy, that is responsive to changing trends and student needs. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the option clusters across the programmes to ensure that all students exit with the requisite skills (e.g. presentation skills) and subject knowledge, and have an equitable exposure to the innovative learning and teaching initiatives that have been incorporated within the disciplines. 	

Section 3	Management Information
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notable positive trends within the data indicate: increased tariff points on entry; improved student recruitment; reduced reliance on clearing; improved SSRs; high proportion of 'good' degrees. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None. 	

Section 4	Student Experience
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commendable level of School and Departmental support for students via the SASC and the guidance tutor system. • The panel were particularly impressed with the collegiate and mutually respectful relationship between staff and students. • Staff with strong reputations (nationally and internationally) have created a vibrant dynamism that is proving attractive for the recruitment and retention of quality students. • The provision provides an extremely positive learning experience for students from a wide range of backgrounds. • Transparent and equitable assessment and feedback processes operate across all modules. • Students are well represented by a mature and effective Rep system. • The breadth and depth of outreach work impacts positively on the widening participation ambitions <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the creation of a policy with regards to the reviewing of assessment drafts (particularly in the dissertation module). • To consider increasing the number of office hours offered by academic staff for student support in line with other departments in the School. 	

Section 5	Enhancement Strategies
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some very positive relationships with the external communities were evident in some of the provision (MA Creative Writing), and these clearly enriched the student experience. • The relationship between research and teaching is a very significant strength, and this should be further enhanced by the School sabbatical scheme. • Some extremely innovative learning, teaching and enhancement initiatives permeate throughout the provision and typify a positive culture of enhancement that is embraced by the whole department. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the opportunity for 'internships' within the curriculum. • Consider strategies to further engage with the wider community using the excellent practice evidenced in the MA Creative Writing programme. 	

Section 6	Discipline Response to Report
<p>Curricula and Standards</p> <p><i>Review the option clusters across the programmes to ensure that all students exit with the requisite skills (e.g. presentation skills) and subject knowledge, and have an equitable exposure to the innovative learning and teaching initiatives that have been incorporated within the disciplines.</i></p> <p>New modules have been prepared which have enriched subject knowledge and learning skills. Level 4 core modules have been substantially revised and changes made to Level 5 core modules to guarantee more exposure to innovative learning and teaching initiatives.</p> <p>Student Experience</p> <p><i>To consider the creation of a policy with regards to the reviewing of assessment drafts (particularly in the dissertation module).</i></p> <p>A policy has been created for each of the dissertation modules and these have been made clear in the</p>	

module guides. The new enhanced dissertation module will ensure students have full knowledge of the assessment draft. A review has been undertaken of how assessment drafts are to be dealt with in other modules and a policy has been developed.

To consider increasing the number of office hours offered by academic staff for student support in line with other departments in the School.

The School recommends that staff be available for 2 hours a week and that availability is made clear to students. All English and Creative Writing staff have provided the Student Advice and Support Centre with their office hours and this information is displayed on office doors and via the website.

Enhancement Strategies

Investigate the opportunity for 'internships' within the curriculum.

These are now in operation.

Consider strategies to further engage with the wider community using the excellent practice evidenced in the MA Creative Writing programme.

Strategies are already being considered, building on the experience of the MA Creative Writing. A, and a Humanities Graduate Society has been created so that contact with graduates can be maintained and networks created within the wider community. The Division is now actively engaged in working with teachers in local schools and has scheduled a conference involving school teachers in May 2011.