

Periodic Review Report Template

Department and Faculty	Humanities Department – History Programmes, Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences	
Date of Review	29 & 30 April 2015	
Review Panel (approved by Programme Approvals & Review Sub-committee)	Chair: Suzanne Crozier, Director of Review and Approvals, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Non-Faculty: Dr Roger Penlington, Teaching Fellow, Department of Mechanical & Construction Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Environment Faculty Internal: Dr Rachel Edwards, Principal Lecturer, Linguistics, Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences Students' Union: Nichola McKenzie, Vice-President Activities and Development Quality and Student Learning: Dr Sue Mathieson, Academic Development Officer External Membership: Professor Mary Vincent, University of Sheffield Facilitator: Dr Scott Burgess, Academic Development Officer	
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook available from http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/review/intrev/	
Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review reports are expected to be short and succinct, typically 3 to 4 sides of A4 Sections highlighted in blue below, together with the header above, make up the published summary of this review. This will be published on the University's Teaching Quality Information web pages (http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/tqinf/) 		

Section 1	Department Context
<p>Since 2008, History at Northumbria has been one of the fastest growing communities of historians at any UK HE institution. In the period since History's last periodic review, staff numbers have trebled from 8 to 24. In the recent REF2014 exercise, 31.4% of History's research was rated world leading and 45.7% internationally excellent. Overall, History at Northumbria was ranked 18th out of 83 nationally in terms of outputs. This research informs every aspect of History's curricula and Learning & Teaching activity. History's commitment to high quality, evidence-led empirical inquiry therefore forms a key element of the subject group's ethos.</p> <p>History Staff</p> <p>History has four broad areas of expertise: Modern Britain and the British World; Modern Europe; Medieval and Early Modern Britain and Europe; Modern America. Americanists in History constitute one of the largest groups of scholars working on the US at any UK university. At a time when some history departments have been cutting back on their chronological coverage, History's commitment to the pre-modern past as a core part of its curriculum is evident from the recent appointment of historians working on the 15th, 17th, and 18th centuries. History's staff base currently consists of an enthusiastic and highly proactive group of skilled</p>	

teachers and researchers who provide a rich and diverse range of subject expertise at all levels. 96% hold PhDs (compared to a Faculty average of 51% in 2014) and 80% were submitted to REF2014 (the average for the Faculty was 52%). History staff are committed to helping students to become confident, self-motivated, and independent learners, able not only to demonstrate the intellectual and critical skills required to succeed professionally, but also capable of the independence of mind necessary for meaningful participation in civil society. This is reflected in History's overall performance in NSS Q 22.

History Programmes

The significantly increased profile of the staff base has transformed History's curriculum. Through a series of review groups (coordinated with the Department Learning & Teaching Lead), colleagues have since 2009 reviewed all of History's existing core modules and redesigned or replaced them with new provision to ensure currency. In doing this, the History team has ensured that the key QAA subject benchmarks are embedded within the subject's programmes. At the same time, the remarkable expansion in research expertise has been reflected in the rich and diverse range of option modules now offered at second and third year (breadth and depth of choice being one of History's USPs). This has placed History's UG programmes at the forefront of the University's initiative to promote Research-Rich Learning (RRL) and resulted in a vibrant and diverse portfolio of academically rigorous and intellectually challenging undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. History currently has within its portfolio four undergraduate programmes and two postgraduate courses: BA (Hons) History; BA (Hons) History and Politics; BA (Hons) English and History; BA (Hons) American Studies; MA History; MRes History.

The overarching aim of programmes within the History subject group is to produce graduates who are capable of independent critical thinking and who are equipped with excellent practical, communication, research, and transferable skills.

Skills and Attributes

Graduate attributes, employability skills, leadership, and enterprise-based learning have been embedded across History's courses through the redesign of core modules, the introduction of innovative new assessment tasks, and the recalibration of learning outcomes. This is currently being reviewed as part of the University's Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards. Key transferable skills feature in all History programmes, with a strong emphasis at UG level on supporting student skill development and employability through option modules, the guidance system, and the bespoke second-year employability module HI0546 Your Graduate Future. History works closely with the University Careers Service and Volunteering Service to provide students with advice, support and preparation for their chosen career paths.

Student Profile

History programmes currently have 372 UG students: 71% are reading for BA (Hons) Honours, 15% History and Politics, 9% English and History, and 5% American Studies. History's MA has 19 students and the MRes has 11 students. As of March 2015, the PGR community in History comprises 20 PhD students.

Facilities and Resources

History's teaching accommodation is based in and around the Lipman Building. Single occupancy offices facilitate one-to-one tutorial teaching and confidential student support. The need for larger lecture theatres and specialist IT facilities occasionally necessitates the scheduling of classes in other parts of the City Campus. Students use open-access computer facilities in the Squires Building and in Lipman Building. Specialist facilities onsite include microfilm collections and a microfilm reader (located in the Glenamara PGR Centre). History's physical resources and space will benefit enormously from £500,000 of investment over the next eighteen months, including the creation of a student hub, the renovation of the Glenamara PGR Centre, and the opening of a new Institute for the Humanities. The principal investment in specialist equipment for NU History (exceeding £500,000 between 2009 and 2015) has been in the area of electronic resources and online collections. History has also invested heavily in enhancing its hardcopy collections to reflect its growing subject coverage.

Section 2	Judgement Criteria	
Focus of judgements	Judgements	Outcome
The setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards	• meets UK and NU expectations,	X
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations,	
	• does not meet UK and NU expectations.	
The quality of students' learning opportunities	• commended,	X
	• meets UK and NU expectations,	
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or,	
	• does not meet UK and NU expectations.	
Information about higher education provision	• commended,	
	• meets UK and NU expectations,	X subject to recommendation
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or,	
	• does not meet UK and NU expectations.	
The enhancement of students' learning opportunities	• commended,	X
	• meets UK and NU expectations,	
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or,	
	• does not meet UK and NU expectations.	

Section 3	Standards and Quality
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in staffing and resources for research rich learning. • Strong strategic alignment with all pillars of the Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards (PFNA). • Clear faculty vision for the future of the discipline. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>[Timescale: as per the Department's PFNA schedule]</i> Capitalise on opportunities within PFNA to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Explicitly express the difference between Level 5 and 6 modules; ◦ Engage more directly with programme and module learning outcomes at all levels; • <i>[Timescale: September 2015]</i> Accelerate pace of compliance with moderation regulations as specified in the Examiners' Handbook. • <i>[Timescale: September 2015]</i> Review processes for the management and retention of Level 4 assessment in line with university requirements. 	

Section 4	Student Experience
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong community of learning and student engagement. • Academic staff who are passionate about their subject and trusted and respected by students. • Personal engagement with alumni is a testament to the community of learning which continues past graduation. 	

- Broad range of curriculum content and approaches to learning.
- Embedding of research rich learning across the curriculum to develop graduate attributes.
- Broad range of option modules creates a rich learning experience, is clearly valued by students and constitutes one of the real strengths of the programmes.

The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:

- *[Timescale: as per the Department's PFNA schedule]* The programme team to consider the means by which student expectations for level 4 modules can be managed to provide the degree of specialism requested by students to provide students with a greater sense of ownership of their academic development in level 4 (within the context and confines of PFNA).
- *[Timescale: January 2016]* Review procedures for managing learning experiences/expectations while on placement.

Section 5	Enhancement Strategies
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong public engagement (eg Bede's World, other cultural institutions in the north east). • Imaginative and developed level of engagement with placement providers. • Clear commitment to reviewing and enhancing the student experience. • Commendable provision of and support for outward mobility opportunities for students. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>[Timescale: May 2016]</i> The review panel observed good practice in supporting students on the joint programmes with dissertation preparation which improved student grades. The panel recommends that the programme team considers extending this best practice across all programmes to improve student achievement. • <i>[Timescale: as per the Department's PFNA schedule]</i> Build on existing innovative assessment practices to extend further across the programmes. • <i>[Timescale: January 2016]</i> Ensure that the team develops the proposed placement provider/employer engagement forum. 	

Section 6	Management Information Trends
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative strength of recruitment standards. • High percentage of good awards. • Success across a range of University performance indicators, including NSS scores and retention. • Responsiveness to and evident engagement with data trends. <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>[Timescale: July 2016]</i> Monitor and analyse the proportion of first class degrees awarded to gain a greater understanding of patterns of student attainment. 	

Section 7	Further Quality Assurance Monitoring	
Affirmations ¹	Please list any affirmations identified and accompanying actions (<i>add extra rows as needed</i>)	
	Issue	Action
	Enhance guidance arrangements	Appointment of Senior Tutor for September 2015 to lead on guidance (see Section 4.7)
	HI0701 Research Development: misalignment of learning outcomes and assessment	Realignment as a result of programme team meeting and review in autumn 2014.
	Creation of Lipman hub	Submission and endorsement of Capital Expenditure bid to NU Estates; projected completion 2015 (see

¹ examples of developments, planned or in train which seek to address issues previously identified

		Section 1.6).
	Embedding summatively assessed oral presentations across History programmes	Discussions with Faculty L&T Leads concerning moderation procedures; implementation ETA 2016/17 (see Appendix, Table 4.4, Q 19)
Audit Trails	No Panel Comments.	
Compliance Checks	No Panel Comments.	

Section 8	Department Response to Report
<p>Short summary response by Department on follow up action for inclusion in published report:</p> <p>Standards and Quality</p> <p><i>Capitalise on opportunities within the Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards (PFNA) to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly express the difference between Level 5 and 6 modules; • Engage more directly with programme and module learning outcomes at all levels; <p>The Department has incorporated into the programme assessment strategy clear levels for student work. Assignments grow in size and expectation. In Level 4, students complete 4,000 word assessments for each 20 credit module, in Level 5 it is 5,000 words, at Level 6, 6,000 words, and at Level 7, 7,000 words. In addition, the marking criteria has been transformed to include expectations for students at each level. PFNA has allowed the Department to revamp the entire programme along these lines as well as consider the learning outcomes more holistically. With programme learning outcomes as the starting point for student learning, each module is moulded around the programme.</p> <p><i>Accelerate pace of compliance with moderation regulations as specified in the Examiners' Handbook.</i></p> <p>In compliance with Faculty guidelines and Assessment Regulations for Northumbria Awards, the Department ensured that moderation, rather than second marking, of all work occurred across the programme, including Level 4. The only exception to this rule is the capstone dissertation.</p> <p><i>Review processes for the management and retention of Level 4 assessment in line with university requirements.</i></p> <p>The Department has begun keeping a sample of all assessed work and copies of moderation records at Level 4. Registry has helped with compliance and the records on Turnitin also help make this a very straightforward process.</p> <p>Student Experience</p> <p><i>The programme team to consider the means by which student expectations for level 4 modules can be managed to provide the degree of specialism requested by students to provide students with a greater sense of ownership of their academic development in level 4 (within the context and confines of PFNA).</i></p> <p>The programme team determined that the amount of specialism allowed in Years 2 & 3 was quite substantial, and more than competitors. The prevailing concern of the design team was the breadth of study for students. In the sector, no degree programme allows students to specialize and not engage with historical epochs or geographical zones, and the design of History and Northumbria keeps with the field in asking students to maintain such breadth of study. However, the team did remove the option banding, which restricted choice at Years 2 & 3, which allows individuals to specialize even more in those years.</p> <p><i>Review procedures for managing learning experiences/expectations while on placement.</i></p> <p>At level 5 in Your Graduate Future, students receive timetabled guidance on Curriculum Vitae (CV) and job applications, the evolving nature of the graduate market, the role of business planning in entrepreneurial activity as well as in employment, and advice on specific sectors (eg SMEs) from careers, guided independent research as well as talks by graduates. A central and assessed aspect of the module is self-reflection on personal, professional and academic progress to date through an assessed report and model personal CV. Students then have the opportunity to organise a work placement, or to develop an individual or team business plan – both of which are assessed by self-reflective reports, which are designed to develop organisational awareness and strategic thinking. In these, they are supported by academic tutors, careers staff and the University Enterprise Unit.</p> <p>Enhancement Strategies</p> <p><i>The review panel observed good practice in supporting students on the joint programmes with dissertation preparation which improved student grades. The panel recommends that the programme team considers extending this best practice across all programmes to improve student achievement.</i></p>	

HI0648 Joint Honours Dissertation module has been created to facilitate dissertation preparation for Joint programme students. The programme leader for the Joint honours programmes is now the programme leader for the single-honours History programme and has introduced several new measures to encourage students to engage further, such as the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund funded dissertation conference.

Build on existing innovative assessment practices to extend further across the programmes.

The Assessment Pillar in the PFNA process has allowed the team to consider assessment diets. Our assessment strategy is carefully designed to promote student-centred learning. Submission dates are coordinated to ensure a balanced workload while encouraging students to develop time and project management skills. Each assessment is designed to match the diverse needs of our students, and the modes of assessment are varied to achieve this aim. There is a published assessment criteria for each type of work submitted and the criteria reflects the level in which a student is studying. Assessment encompasses traditional historical essays, oral and written presentations, critical reviews, portfolios of work, and a final-year dissertation. The programme was developed with the Assessment Regulations for Northumbria Awards as the central framework. Assessments (formative and summative) are externally and internally moderated, and where possible and appropriate are anonymised, to ensure consistency and fairness throughout the programme.

Ensure that the team develops the proposed placement provider/employer engagement forum.

An exemplar from Engineering was discussed at the Humanities Executive Committee in November 2015. It was agreed that a forum would be established that would act as an advisory body and would include 4-5 representatives from the following organisations: Tyne and Wear Archives and Museum, New Writing North, Journey to Justice, the Social Enterprise sector, Secondary education sector, and the Heritage sector; plus the members of the committee. The forum will have its first meeting in summer 2016, and will consider the range of employability activities currently on offer as outlined in the employability audit.

Management Information Trends

Monitor and analyse the proportion of first class degrees awarded to gain a greater understanding of patterns of student attainment.

The Senior Guidance Tutor will lead a small working group in July 2016 to review student profiles at Levels 5 and 6 in order to identify high achievers. Students identified in this way will then be contacted by their guidance tutors (who from 2015/16 will also be their dissertation tutors) and offered tailored advice to maximise their chances of optimal performance.