SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC REVIEW OF DEGREES IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

1. Programmes covered by the Periodic Review

   MA in Modern History
   MA in Franco-British History
   BA in History
   BA in (Part-time) History
   BA in History and Economics
   BA in History and English Literature
   BA in History and European Literature and Culture
   BA in History and French
   BA in History and German
   BA in History and History of Art
   BA in History and International Relations
   BA in History and Italian
   BA in History and Philosophy
   BA in History and Politics
   BA in History with European Literature and Culture
   BA in History with French
   BA in History with German
   BA in History with Italian
   BA in Modern History and International Relations
   BA in Modern History and Politics


3. Objectives of the Periodic Review

   The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:

   - Monitor the quality and standards of the degree programmes under Review;

   - Enable the Department of History to evaluate its taught programme provision, particularly student achievement of the appropriate academic standards, and the learning opportunities offered to students;

   - To enable an independent Panel to review this self-evaluation through consideration of documentation and discussions with staff and students;

   - Provide a means by which the School was able to reflect on the success, development and possible improvement of its taught programmes;
• Ask fundamental questions about the rationale, structure and resourcing of the programmes under Review;

• Consider the educational aims and objectives of the programmes;

• Review teaching, learning and methods of assessment in their contexts;

• Consider whether the programmes under Review should continue to run for a further period of up to six years.

4. Conduct of the Periodic Review

The Periodic Review was conducted by Panel chaired by the Director of Teaching and Learning of the University’s Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and also comprising two other internal members of academic staff (neither from the Department of History) and two members of staff from other universities.

The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, including a Self-Evaluation Document prepared by the Department and also relevant programme specifications. During the Review visit, the Panel considered other documentation and met with relevant staff from the Department and from the University Library. Members of the Panel also met with current students studying on many of the degree programmes under review.

5. Evidence Base

In addition to the meetings held with academic staff and current students, the Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including examples of student work, copies of programme handbooks, minutes of relevant committees and statistical data. The Panel was able to see External Examiners reports for the three previous years, as well as comprehensive responses written by the Head of Department.

6. External peer contributors to process

The external members of the Panel were present for the duration of the Periodic Review. They were appointed by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Board for Teaching and Learning after considering nominations from the Department of History. The role of these External members was to provide subject expertise and judgement of the validity and appropriateness of the programmes under Review.

7. Overview of the main characteristics of the programmes covered by the review

The Panel agreed degree programmes in the Department of History offer a comprehensive education in British, European and North American history spanning the pre-modern, early modern and modern periods.

The distinctiveness of the programmes lies mostly in the structure of the curriculum. Part 1 of the undergraduate programme is an innovative review of landmarks in history
coupled with an equally creative introduction to approaches to history. Part 2 and Part 3 of the curriculum allow students to develop a chronological range of historical understanding in a manner that extends students beyond academic history alone to consider also public history before specialising in an area of particular historical interest.

The Department’s approach to teaching historiography is to embed it throughout the curriculum. By so doing the Department challenges students to reflect on historical method at all stages of their intellectual development. Whilst the Panel welcomes this approach, it raises the issue of introducing some freestanding historiography to augment current provision.

The Department’s Masters-level programmes comply with the Department’s innovative approach to programme structure. In particular, the MA in Franco-British History provides a template that if developed might provide students a number of exciting pathways at M-level towards developing specialised interests along collaborative lines between disciplines within the arts, humanities and social sciences.

8. Conclusions on innovation and good practice

Examples of good practice identified included:

(a) excellent levels of support provided for students by all members of staff. Despite a large increase in student numbers in recent years, the Department continues to provide a level of personal attention to students that in many other parts of the higher education sector has been lost. Students benefit from teaching delivered by a close-knit, supportive and inclusive community of scholars.

(b) impressive team-teaching.

(c) an innovative approach to programme structure.

(d) distinctive use of primary sources at Part 1 of the undergraduate curriculum.

(e) a rigorous Part 3 of the undergraduate curriculum, including both a dissertation and a special subject offering considerable opportunity for interaction with primary sources.

(f) an innovative and creative approach to exploring public history alongside academic history, which the Panel would suggest is particularly encouraging in the context of developing the employability of graduate historians.

9. Conclusions on quality and standards

The Review Panel concluded:

(a) that the intended learning outcomes of the undergraduate programmes were clear and appropriate and were being obtained by students.

(b) that quality and standards were in general being achieved; and
that the programme specifications were being delivered.

10. Conclusions on currency and validity of the programmes under Review

The Panel recommended to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Board for Teaching and Learning that, subject to the programme team addressing the issues shown below, the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years:

- MA in Modern History
- MA in Franco-British History
- BA in History
- BA in (Part-time) History

The Panel also recommended that the following programmes be re-approved to run until such time as the next Periodic Review of programmes in the relevant Schools/Departments in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities or the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences:

- BA in History and Economics
- BA in History and English Literature
- BA in History and European Literature and Culture
- BA in History and French
- BA in History and German
- BA in History and History of Art
- BA in History and International Relations
- BA in History and Italian
- BA in History and Philosophy
- BA in History and Politics
- BA in History with European Literature and Culture
- BA in History with French
- BA in History with German
- BA in History with Italian
- BA in Modern History and International Relations
- BA in Modern History and Politics

11. Summary of Recommendations

The Review Panel agreed there were no necessary conditions to the re-approval of programmes, but did agree the following recommendations; that:

(a) the Department considers some freestanding historiography to augment established teaching in this area.
the Department considers how it might improve upon the incorporation of the 5-credit university-wide Careers Management Skills module into the curriculum.

c) the Department re-writes those sections of programme handbooks that set out how skills are developed throughout the three (or four) years of an undergraduate programme. This is to provide students with a clearer insight into the progressive nature of their learning, and is recommended in the light of student comments suggesting a number of students were not especially aware of the progressive nature of skills development driven by successive formative and summative assessments.

d) the Department reviews its assessment regimes for the ‘Skills’ modules at Part 2 of the undergraduate curriculum to ensure that different arrangements across these modules are demonstrably comparable and consistent, so that students can be assured that marking is done in an equitable manner throughout.

e) that, generally, the Department reviews how across its entire provision its assessment regimes are explained to students.

f) the Department reviews the appropriateness of its double marking arrangement.

g) the Department considers whether it might be able to build greater diversity into its assessment regimes for its postgraduate programmes.

h) the Department introduces formal deadlines for the return of student work.

i) the Department re-drafts programme handbooks to better prioritise and delineate information in order to add to the general feeling of user-friendliness of these documents. The Panel considers that currently some programme handbooks present information in a less than fully helpful way for students.

j) the Department does more to foster student expectations regarding learning technology and electronic resources.

k) in the context of considerable pressure on library resources, especially library books, the Department considers how it might develop students’ awareness of the full range of library resources available to them, including electronic sources of information that might in some cases serve as alternatives to books.

l) the Department considers formalising its information on its staff development and mentoring practices.

m) the Department re-considers the amount of work required of new staff. In particular, the Panel recommends the Department considers:

   i) whether a reduced teaching load should apply to new staff that are required by the University to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in
Academic Practice. This is to offset the time these members of staff are required to spent on the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice;

(ii) whether a reduced teaching load should apply to new staff that are required to develop a corpus of new lecture notes and other teaching materials. This is to offset the time spent on doing these types of preparatory work;

(iii) whether new staff new to academia should be given only very limited administrative roles to allow them to give greater priority in the early years of their academic careers to their academic work.

(n) the Department considers whether more might be done to assist new staff with forward thinking around career progression. The Panel makes this recommendation in the light of feedback from some new members of staff.

(o) the Department reviews its ‘first-come-first-served’ approach to Parts 2 and 3 module selection on the basis such an approach cannot be deemed equitable to all students as issues of accessibility and mobility will apply.

(p) in the context of seeking always to better develop student engagement, the Department is pro-active in ensuring a robust student commitment to the Student/Staff Committee.

(q) the Department reviews its methods for communicating back to students the actions it has taken in response to student evaluation.

12. **Action by the Board for Teaching and Learning of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities**

*pending the Summer Term Meeting 2008*