

PERIODIC REVIEW OF ART

INTRODUCTION

- 1 An internal review of programmes in the Department of Art was held on 13 and 14 December 2017. The members of the Panel were:
 - a. Professor Simon Sherratt, School of Biological Sciences (*Chair*)
 - b. Mr Brendan Fletcher, Programme Leader: Visual Arts, University of Salford (*external member, subject specialist*)
 - c. Dr Sharon Kivland, Reader in Fine Art, Sheffield Hallam University (*external member, subject specialist*)
 - d. Dr Katrina Bicknell, School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy (*internal member*)
 - e. Dr Angelique Chettiparambil Rajan, Real Estate and Planning, Henley Business School (*internal member*)
 - f. Mr Mike Baxter, Part 2 BSc Ecology and Wildlife Conservation, University of Reading (*student member*)
 - g. Ms Jennie Chetcuti, Senior Quality Support Officer, Centre for Quality Support and Development (*Secretary*).

- 2 The Panel met the following members of staff:
 - a. Dr John Gibbs (*Head of School*)
 - b. Dr Rachel Garfield (*Head of Department*)
 - c. Ms Christine Ellison (*School Director of Teaching and Learning*)
 - d. Dr Kate Allen (*Careers Co-ordinator*)
 - e. Professor Susanne Clausen (*former Head of Department*)
 - f. Dr Lina Dzuverovic (*Careers Co-ordinator*)
 - g. Dr James Hellings (*Senior Tutor/Disability representative*)
 - h. Dr Galia Kollektiv (*Director of Postgraduate Studies*)
 - i. Dr Phil Kollektiv (*Director of Postgraduate Studies*)
 - j. Ms Wendy McLean (*Teaching Fellow/Studio Workshop Manager*)
 - k. Mr Mark Nader (*Teaching Fellow/Studio Workshop Manager*)
 - l. Ms Tina O'Connell (*Examinations Officer*)
 - m. Mr Tim Renshaw (*Undergraduate Admissions Tutor*)

- n. Mr Florian Roithmayr (*Teaching Fellow*)
 - o. Professor Alun Rowlands (*Taught Postgraduate Admissions Tutor*).
- 3 The Panel met students who represented the following degree programmes:
- a. BA Art
 - b. BA Art and Film
 - c. BA Art and Psychology
 - d. MFA Fine Art.
- 4 The Panel met a recent graduate from the BA Art and MFA Fine Art programmes who was currently employed as a Technician by the Department.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- 5 The Review Panel held meetings with a range of staff from across the Department and wider School. The staff were fully engaged with the review process and made the Panel feel very welcome. They provided a useful tour of the Department's facilities. The Review benefitted from a comprehensive and well-organised Blackboard organisation, and any additional information and documentation requested by the Panel was supplied in a timely manner. The Panel extends its thanks to all staff members who participated in the Review.
- 6 The Panel welcomed the opportunity to meet with a small number of current and former students, who were passionate about their subject and gave a very positive endorsement of the Department and the programmes under review. The Panel wishes to express its thanks to these students, and to all those who contributed to the written Student Submission, for their valuable input to the Review.
- 7 The Panel was impressed by the strong sense of community which was evident across the Department at all levels. Current and former students with whom the Panel met praised the highly supportive, open and inclusive atmosphere and the friendly and approachable staff team. This was also reflected in the Student Submission. Regular, open interaction with staff helped students to feel confident and supported to take risks in their art work (**Good practice a**).
- 8 The Panel noted that the Department had been affected by a number of changes since the last Periodic Review in 2012, including the closure of the Department of History of Art in 2014, and changes in administrative support as a result of the Professional and Administrative Services (PAS) review conducted by the University. The Department had also experienced significant growth in student numbers and a number of changes in staffing.
- 9 The Department had been actively engaged in recent consultations on a large-scale capital project to refurbish the URS Building to provide a new home for the wider School of Arts and Communication Design and the School of the Built Environment. However, the project had been delayed and it remained unclear how long the Department would need to remain in its current accommodation and where it would be located in future. The Panel shared the Department's concern regarding the uncertainty around the move to new accommodation and noted the potential impact on recruitment and on the morale of current students and staff (see also the section on **Learning environment and student support** below).
- 10 The Panel wished to commend the committed and devoted management team within the Department and, in particular, the new Head of Department and School Director of Teaching and Learning (**Good practice b**), who were working hard to maintain the strong collegiate atmosphere and associated high levels of support for students in the context of increasing student numbers and current limitations/uncertainty in relation to space and facilities.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS OF THE PROGRAMMES

Committee structures

- 11 Overall, the Panel was satisfied that the committee structures in place were appropriate and effective for the quality management and enhancement of the programmes. It considered that the membership of the School Board for Teaching and Learning (SBTL), Department-level Board of Studies (BoS) and Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) was appropriate and noted that suitable provision was made for student representation.
- 12 The Panel found evidence, in the form of minutes of meetings, that the SBTL, BoS and SSLC were generally fulfilling their formal responsibilities in respect of quality management and enhancement. The Panel encourages the Department to ensure that proper consideration is routinely given by the BoS and SSLC to the outcomes of student evaluation, including module evaluation summaries and National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results; External Examiner Reports, and annual programme reports, in accordance with their formal terms of reference.
- 13 The Panel noted that the Department had experienced difficulties with student representation in recent years: very few course representatives had been appointed for 2016-17; attendance by course reps at SSLC meetings had been poor, and there had been no student representative at BoS meetings during 2016-17. The Panel noted that the students met regularly in year groups with their studio module convenors, which provided a forum for discussion about programmes and resources, and the students with whom the Panel met were confident that they were able to raise any concerns and suggestions for improvement either informally or through a course representative. Nonetheless, the Panel wishes to highlight the importance of establishing a formal, transparent structure for student representation for all programmes, and of promoting regular student attendance at SSLC and BoS meetings, in order to ensure student input in discussions about curriculum development and programme delivery. It **recommends** that the Department work with the Students' Union to actively promote student representation and attendance at SSLC and BoS meetings (**Advisable recommendation a**). The Panel suggests that the Department involve student representatives in organising meetings where possible.

Programme design

- 14 The Panel was provided with a range of evidence including module descriptions, programme specifications, student handbooks, External Examiners' reports, annual programme reports and samples of students' practical and written work and feedback. These, along with discussions with staff and students and the Panel's own deliberations, enabled the Panel to confirm that the academic standards of the programmes under review were appropriate and comparable with programmes in other universities.
- 15 The Panel considered that the degree programmes offered were ambitious, coherent and well-considered and articulated, offering breadth and scope for individual development. The range of compulsory and optional components was rich and broad. This was reflected in the work of students, and confirmed by the meetings with current and former students. Students praised the breadth of the curriculum, which gave them creative freedom and enabled them to work with a variety of different media, whilst providing a coherent structure. The "plurality of practice taking place at an assured and critically engaged level" was commended by an External Examiner for the taught postgraduate programmes.

- 16 The Panel considered that the programmes were challenging intellectually, yet allowed for methods of learning that were not text-reliant. Students were exposed to rich possibilities. Many graduates would not become artists through choice, but nonetheless would leave with a range of experiences and skills, including contacts in other fields through study abroad, placements, and so on.
- 17 The Panel considered that the integration of theory and practice within the programmes was exemplary, and that it was a key contributor to the Department's strong national and international reputation (**Good practice c**). The programmes were designed to develop the acquisition of practical and academic skills, conceiving these in tandem. The students with whom the Panel met confirmed that they were content with the balance between theoretical modules and studio modules and that they felt supported in connecting knowledge and skills from different modules to form an integrated whole, particularly through the year-long studio modules. This was further enhanced by the optional modules. The Panel considered that inter/cross-disciplinary practice remained at the core of the programmes, with art practice thoroughly grounded in critical theory and vice versa, and that there was an emphasis on research skills that had a most positive effect on studio production.
- 18 The Panel noted that the aims and learning outcomes of individual modules and of the programmes as a whole were clear to staff and students and were communicated in appropriate language in the relevant module descriptions, programme handbooks and elsewhere. This was reflected in External Examiners' Reports and was commented upon by the students with whom the Panel met. The Panel considered that collective achievement of module learning outcomes was consistent with the programmes' aims and reflectively informed them. It found that the undergraduate programmes were constructed as an incremental 'narrative' over three or four years (depending on point of entry), through independent study and collective workshops, the latter exploring a range of content that was both technical and theoretical. The studio, however that might be defined, remained at the centre of production.
- 19 The Panel wished to highlight as a particular feature of good practice the opportunity for undergraduate students to participate in study abroad at a range of partner institutions as part of their programme; an opportunity which was taken up by a large number of students (20-25) each year (**Good practice d**). Students on undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes also benefited from other opportunities for international collaborative student exchanges, often through the research projects of staff. For example, in 2016, MFA students participated in a three-week UK-China bilateral exchange with the University of Wuhan.
- 20 The current and former students who met with the Panel spoke positively about the many benefits of study abroad, including the opportunity to expand their cultural awareness, and stated that the Department's provision in this area had been an important factor in their decision to study at Reading. However, they expressed some dissatisfaction that the arrangements for credit transfer had not been made clear to them in advance. A number of students, and in particular those studying on joint honours programmes, reported that they had experienced a very high workload during the Spring term when they returned from study abroad. The Panel advises the Department to give further consideration to the arrangements for awarding credit for study abroad modules and to how these arrangements are communicated to students.
- 21 The Panel found evidence that the curriculum and its delivery were informed by, and constructed upon, current and historical debates. Lecture-based modules were designed according to staff specialisms and they provided a good range, with several members of staff working on matters of diversity and inclusion. The excellent Visiting Artists lecture series, which was open to all undergraduate and postgraduate students, was diverse, offering an extended view of and approach to contemporary art and theory. The Panel noted that at least one Part 2/3 module, *Bodies of Difference*, incorporated an overtly global approach in its content.

- 22 The Panel noted that staff shared module content in advance of the academic year to ensure parity, progression and breadth and to avoid unnecessary duplication of content. Curriculum sharing meetings also helped to ensure that staff were presenting lectures that included a diverse range of artists and writers relevant to, and representative of, the student cohort. The Panel suggests that future discussions about module content include consideration of feedback from some students, noted in the Student Submission, that they would value more discussions about current events and alternative view-points/theories ,
- 23 The Panel was pleased to note that a wider curriculum review was currently underway under the leadership of the new Head of Department and School Director of Teaching and Learning, in the context of the University-wide implementation of the Curriculum Framework. The Panel supports the Department's plans to rationalise its module offering, whilst maintaining a rich and broad curriculum, which should help to address concerns in relation to staff workload and the current volume of teaching (see also the section on **Learning environment and student support** below). The Panel encourages the Department to involve students in these discussions relating to curriculum review and development.

Assessment and Feedback

- 24 External Examiners' reports verified that the standards achieved by learners met the minimum expectations for awards, as measured against the relevant Subject Benchmarking Statements and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. It was clear to the Panel that comments made by the External Examiners were properly considered and acted upon where appropriate. This was reflected in the Department's written responses to the External Examiners.
- 25 The Panel found evidence that undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes incorporated a variety of assessment methods, including essays, written reports, critical reviews, oral presentations, group projects, publications, blogs and websites, exhibitions, screenings and performances, thereby enabling all students to demonstrate their ability to meet the learning outcomes. Discussions with current and former students confirmed that students were generally satisfied with the range of assessment types, and with the procedures in place for the assessment of group work.
- 26 The Panel found that module descriptions did not always provide a clear indication of the credit weighting of different assessments. It advises the Department to review all module descriptions to ensure that information about assessment is clear and transparent and enables students to make informed decisions about module selection where relevant.
- 27 The Panel also considered that the generation of an assessment map across all single and joint honours programmes would be of benefit. This would help to address the issue of bunching of deadlines identified in the Self-Evaluation Document and Student Submission, and ensure a more reasonable distribution of student and staff workloads. It would also help to further promote the use of a wide variety of assessment types. The Panel supports related work currently underway with the relevant Student Support Centre to ensure a balanced examination schedule for joint honours students.
- 28 In response to poor NSS scores and other sources of student evaluation, the Department had made a number of changes to assessment and feedback processes in recent years. It had sought to ensure clearer and more timely communication about assessment processes and assessment criteria for all modules. The students who met with the Panel confirmed that staff had discussed relevant assessment criteria with them and that they knew what was expected of them. However, the results of the NSS 2017 indicated that there was scope for further improvement in terms of enhancing students' awareness of, and critical engagement with, assessment criteria.

- 29 The Department recognised that there had been issues with the timeliness of marking and feedback on a small number of occasions, which were reflected in the most recent NSS scores for assessment and feedback. The Panel was assured that contingency plans had since been put in place to cover future instances of staff illness or other difficulties which had an impact on marking. The Department acknowledged the importance of clear communication and managing student expectations in this area.
- 30 The Panel's discussions with students, in conjunction with NSS results, confirmed that students were generally satisfied with the level and quality of feedback provided. In addition to formal written feedback on written and practical assessments, students received ongoing formative feedback on the studio modules, through regular critiques and one-to-one tutorials as well as exhibition and written statements at appropriate points. Project presentations and critiques provided structured opportunities for peer feedback and students also brought their own self-assessment to scheduled feedback meetings. This helped to support students' self-awareness and their ability to recognise their own strengths and areas for improvement.
- 31 On the basis of the evidence provided, including samples of student work and feedback, the Panel wishes to commend the exceptional quality of the written feedback provided to students, which it considered to be thorough and thoughtful, and amply supported by individual tutorials (**Good practice e**).
- 32 The Panel noted that, in order to provide a clear and consistent assessment framework, and to support students' assessment literacy, the Department had introduced from 2014-15 a set of rubrics on Turnitin for all undergraduate assessments, including tasks with a physical submission. The Panel **recommends** that the Department review these assessment rubrics to more clearly differentiate the boundaries between grades (**Advisable recommendation b**). This should help to ensure a more consistent interpretation of assessment criteria by staff and students, and to improve student engagement with feedback.
- 33 The Panel was pleased to note that the Department had appointed an 'Assessment Champion' who would be working on an assessment and feedback project driven by the Curriculum Framework in 2017-18, with input from the Centre for Quality Support and Development. This would include further consideration of: the alignment of assessment criteria and learning outcomes; clear communication of assessment expectations to students; student engagement with feedback; the overall amount of assessment, and the balance between formative and summative assessment. The process would include consultation with students. The Panel fully supported the Department's plans and hoped they would help to improve NSS scores.

QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THE PROGRAMMES

Teaching and learning

- 34 The Panel noted from its meetings with students, and further evidence in the form of the Student Submission, module evaluations and NSS/PTES results, that students were generally satisfied with the quality of teaching on their programmes. They valued the "openness and informality of the teaching styles and approaches from teaching staff" and "really enjoyed the practical teaching side of the course". Certain lecturers were identified by students as being particularly inspiring. External Examiners praised the "excellent" teaching and commented that, "The teaching staff are obviously inspiring and push the students to ambitious levels".
- 35 The Panel noted that the programmes made use of a relatively limited, but appropriate, range of teaching and learning approaches, which were fairly typical of the discipline. These included full-

cohort lectures and studio sessions, seminars, individual tutorials, self-directed learning and experimentation and guided individual and small group projects, some with technical direction. The Panel considered that there was further scope for encouraging more diverse and innovative teaching and learning methods across the Department.

- 36 The Panel noted that the Department was constantly reviewing its methods of delivery in light of increasing student numbers, which presented a number of challenges in terms of space, timetabling and staff workload. The Department recognised the need to maintain a balance between year, group and small seminar teaching while retaining the core principles/expectations of art education of one-to-one tuition.
- 37 The Panel considered that the alignment of teaching and learning methods, assessment methods and programme-level learning outcomes was a strength of the programmes, with teaching and assessment fostering strong skills in written work and collaborative working. It noted that the programmes provided crucial space for reflection on the characteristics of the discipline and the development of students' own practice. The students appeared to be actively encouraged to respond to and reflect upon what they were learning, as well as being given opportunities to test their knowledge in external circumstances, as individuals and collectively. The Panel found evidence of high levels of student engagement with, and active participation in, their learning overall. However, it noted a small number of cases of students not attending studio modules and not engaging sufficiently in dissertation modules, which were referred to in the Student Submission.
- 38 The Panel was pleased to note that teaching and learning were clearly informed by staff research and professional activities. All staff were practitioners and research-active, and their teaching was supplemented by the lecture series of Visiting Artists at various career stages, as well as the contributions made by sessional lecturers. Programmes were therefore very current and up-to-date, as confirmed by the External Examiners. The Panel considered that curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to learn through research and enquiry were excellent and varied (**Good practice f**, see also the section on **Employability** below), including participation in staff research and professional activities, collaborative projects with partner institutions and international exchange opportunities. For example, eight undergraduate and taught postgraduate students participated in an artists in residence opportunity at the Department of Archaeology's annual field school in July 2016, which the Panel considered to be a particularly inspiring opportunity. There were student-led seminars and colloquia at postgraduate level, as well as engagement with public exhibitions and curatorial projects, particularly in the MA in Creative Enterprise. However, students did not always engage in these learning opportunities or the support offered, particularly at undergraduate level.
- 39 As referred to above, and in the sections on **Programme Design** and **Employability**, the Panel was pleased to note a number of examples which illustrated how the programmes were aligned with the academic and pedagogic principles of the Curriculum Framework, offering opportunities for student engagement in research and enquiry, considering global perspectives and developing intercultural competence, and real-world engagement in particular.
- 40 The Panel considered that the Department was making appropriate, albeit relatively limited, use of technology-enhanced learning (TEL), which was predominantly focused on communication and assessment, for example: the use of Blackboard to publish teaching materials and other module-related information; the use of Twitter to share information about industry events, exhibitions and career opportunities, and the Art Flickr account which provided an archive of images from exhibitions and the annual degree show. The Panel would encourage the Department to continue to explore additional uses of TEL, with a focus on delivering teaching and enabling student learning.

- 41 The Panel wished to highlight as a particular feature of good practice the student-led reflective blogs, which were used across all undergraduate programmes for students to record and document work in progress, reflect on teaching and learning activities and collate research material (**Good practice g**). The blogs provided a resource for peer-to-peer assessment and were used to present development work for assessment. They could be viewed by markers concurrently to the assessment of exhibition work. The benefits of the blogs for students, staff and markers/External Examiners had been noted by several External Examiners.
- 42 The Panel was pleased to note the successful implementation of the University-wide Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme, which was introduced in the Department in 2015-16 and had facilitated an increase in collaboration and support across all years. The current students who met with the Panel spoke highly of the scheme, and considered that it had helped them to gain a better understanding of what was expected of them and to develop their studio practice further.

Student admission, retention, progression and attainment

- 43 The Panel was pleased to note that recruitment to single and joint honours undergraduate programmes remained strong. The Department had consistently met/exceeded admissions targets in recent years, and numbers of Home/EU applications had increased significantly since the last Periodic Review. The Department considered that its policy of interviewing all applicants was a strong contributing factor to its success with recruitment, in conjunction with various outreach activities and staff attendance at UCAS fairs.
- 44 However, the Panel noted that recruitment to Masters level programmes was more challenging: the Department had been unsuccessful in recruiting to target in recent years. In light of its discussions with current and former students, the Panel was concerned that the small cohort sizes were having a negative impact on the student experience and on the opportunities available to taught postgraduate students. While Masters students mixed regularly with postgraduate research students, undergraduate students and members of staff, it was hard to establish a sense of community within their programmes. Opportunities for peer assessment and collaborative working were also more limited with very small cohorts. Masters students considered that they would benefit from teaching and supervision from a wider range of staff. Taught postgraduate students were welcome to attend PhD colloquia and symposia and the Visiting Artists lecture series, but expressed a desire for more research-focussed lectures aimed at Masters level. Such changes/additions would be more feasible with larger student numbers.
- 45 The Panel therefore **recommends** that the Department continue with work already underway to increase recruitment to taught postgraduate programmes (**Advisable recommendation c**). This should include:
- i. working with the Marketing, Communications and Engagement team to improve marketing of the programmes internally and externally, focussing on the strengths of the Department;
 - ii. giving further consideration to the introduction of part-time modes of study.
- 46 The Panel noted that a new one-year MFA would be introduced from 2018-19, which the Department hoped would recruit better in the current climate and would be more in line with the sector. The Department also hoped to considerably expand recruitment to the new MA in Creative Enterprise over the next few years.
- 47 The Panel noted that the current cohort of undergraduate and taught postgraduate students was somewhat limited in terms of diversity, particularly in respect of race and class. The Panel **recommends** that the Department work actively towards promoting widening participation in relation to student recruitment (**Desirable recommendation a**). It supports the plans to appoint a School-wide widening participation lecturer post with a remit to embed widening participation

thinking into the recruitment strategy and to further develop innovative widening participation initiatives, including ArtLab.

- 48 The Panel considered that appropriate arrangements were in place to support induction and transition for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students throughout their programmes. This included sessions within compulsory Part 1 modules on academic writing and presenting; refresher inductions to workshops offered to Part 2 students, and Research Methods workshops for all taught postgraduate students. The Panel was pleased to note that dissertation modules for single honours students had recently been adapted to give more structured guidance to students, supporting them to develop their critical writing.
- 49 The Panel noted that there was an expectation of some level of autonomous learning within the discipline from the outset of all programmes, particularly within the studio modules, which was a key characteristic of the programmes (**Good practice h**). The studio modules were strategically designed to support the transition to self-directed study through guided projects at Parts 1 and 2, which provided scaffolding for learning, to independent studio work and applied professional practice in real world contexts at Parts 2 and 3. The Panel's discussions with students confirmed that students felt supported in the progression from guided to autonomous learning within their discipline and in the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills.
- 50 The Department recognised the need to give further consideration to support for, and integration of, international students in light of the planned increase in numbers of international undergraduate students via the new Cambridge Education Group (CEG) International Foundation Programme. The Panel supported the Department's plans to introduce a compulsory Part 1 subject-specific language module from 2018-19 for non-native English speakers. It was also pleased to note planned initiatives to support the integration of CEG students within the Department during their foundation year. The Panel encourages the Department to continue exploring ways to integrate international students, reflecting on their prior experience with International Foundation Programme students and with integrating the three and four-year BA(Art) cohorts at Part 2.
- 51 The Panel was satisfied that student progression was appropriate to the stated aims of the programmes and consistent with the attainment of intended learning outcomes. External Examiners confirmed that student attainment was consistent with sector. The Panel had initially expressed some concern about the relatively high rate of failure at the second attempt for the BA Art and History of Art in 2016-17. However, it was satisfied on the basis of further discussions with staff that appropriate arrangements were in place to monitor and address issues with student engagement at an early stage, and to support students preparing for re-assessment. The Panel noted that the relatively high rate of failure should be contextualised in terms of the small cohort size of the programme in question.
- 52 The Panel found evidence in the form of annual programme reports, committee meeting minutes and meetings with staff that the Department reflected regularly on the performance of its students and on a range of student management information. However, it suggests that the Department might wish to reflect further on attainment patterns across key demographic categories, including ethnicity, gender and disability.

Learning environment and student support

- 53 The Panel was pleased to note the improvements to learning resources which had taken place since the previous Periodic Review, including: a new large lecture space; a reading room; a new AV studio with a green screen and recording facilities; extension of the Digital Workshop, and an overhaul of the Studio Workshop to include an expanded woodwork shop, screen printing area, new kiln and casting area. The student common room had also been reinstated and refurbished

in response to student demand. The current and former students who met with the Panel valued the 24-hour access to studio spaces and ready access to different media, and welcomed recent improvements to facilities, although they recognised that resources remained limited in comparison to many competitor institutions.

- 54 Despite the improvements noted above, the Panel expressed serious concerns over the general state of the building and the workshop facilities and equipment available to students. It did not consider that the Department was able to offer competitive resources in relation to the majority of its competitors, nor was there an adequate supply of large studio space or smaller teaching spaces to meet the demand linked to increasing student numbers. The current, ageing building was becoming increasingly unfit for purpose and the situation was exacerbated by the continuing uncertainty regarding the Department's future location. External Examiners had commented on the limitations on space and facilities: for example, "Given that space is very difficult to manage at Earley Gate, the staff and students do a very good job...but would obviously benefit from better and more space for studio practice" , "This would be for me an immediate priority, to allow them access to equipment to enable professional standards of display and equivalence with other institutions" (Burrows, 2017); "I would like to see the university invest in better technical resources and make them available to the students" (Jones, 2017).
- 55 The Panel **recommends** that the Department liaise closely with the new Head of School to identify, develop and negotiate further opportunities to expand access to physical resources across the School and the wider University (**Advisable recommendation d**). These might include central metal-working facilities, performance spaces in Film, Theatre and Television and letter-press facilities in Typography. The Panel acknowledged that this would require forward-planning on the part of both staff and students to enable access to facilities which were already well-used. The Panel considered that improving access to resources would be vital in order to maintain and improve current levels of recruitment and retention. It would also have a significant positive impact on staff and student morale and would offer students valuable opportunities to further develop their skills working with different media.
- 56 The Panel agreed that the collective expertise of the academic staff was suitable for the effective delivery of the curricula and for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. The Panel commends the resourcefulness of staff in constantly evolving their approaches to teaching and learning and making changes to the configuration of space to accommodate increasing student numbers (**Good practice i**). It was evident to the Panel that the students had also acquired a resourceful approach and the ability to be creative with limited resources, which would be useful to them should they wish to pursue a career as an artist.
- 57 Staff members' passion for, and dedication to, their subject was evident, and the Panel commends their exceptional generosity in sharing their professional practice, research and time (**Good practice j**). However, it noted that teaching staff were clearly very stretched as they were required to fulfil ever-increasing demands. The Panel raised concerns over the sustainability of current staffing levels. It considered that particularly poor NSS scores in 2017 in respect of organisation and management of programmes and communication with students, which were also reflected in the Student Submission, might be partly attributable to the current staffing situation.
- 58 The Panel **recommends** that the Department continue to review the delivery of teaching in line with staff workloads (see also paragraph 36 above) (**Desirable recommendation b**). It noted that the Department was making increasing use of PhD students and sessional lecturers in teaching, and suggests that the Department give further consideration to the appointment of Graduate Teaching Assistants to further support the delivery of their programmes. The Panel also **recommends** that the Department explore opportunities for, and actively encourage, interdisciplinary teaching and research, securing University central service provision as

appropriate (**Advisable recommendation e**). The Panel was pleased to note that some interdisciplinary learning was already taking place, such as the joint projects between Art and Typography students during Week 6, and a planned joint screening and PhD seminar with the Department of Film, Theatre and Television.

- 59 The Panel was pleased to note that the Department had appointed four Teaching Fellows since the previous Periodic Review to provide specialist workshop management and support and teaching across all programmes. The Teaching Fellows were clearly very highly regarded and had a positive impact on the student experience. However, they were being required to deliver an increasing amount of teaching and had therefore been unable to prioritise workshop-based support for students. This was reflected in the Student Submission and in discussions with current students, who commented that insufficient technical support in the workshops had at times impacted on the progress of their work.
- 60 In order to address this issue, the Department had recently engaged a fixed-term, part-time technician on a pilot basis. The Panel encourages the Head of Department and Head of School to continue discussions with the University's Director of Technical Services to secure permanent central technical support for the workshops, in line with arrangements in other Schools/Departments that offer practical provision. The Panel recognised the importance of good technical support for recruitment and retention of students.
- 61 The Panel noted from its discussions with students that they would like additional support for the staging of extra-curricular exhibitions. It suggests that the Department might consider encouraging their students to form a Student Society, if one does not already exist, as this could provide a support network for these activities.
- 62 The Panel noted that the Department's administrative support had changed since the last Periodic Review as a result of the PAS review, with teaching and learning administration and student support now provided centrally by the relevant Support Centre. The Panel was pleased to note praise for Support Centre staff from both staff and students. However, it recognised that the introduction of the Support Centres, in conjunction with the dissolution of Faculties, had increased the administrative workload of some members of academic staff, and that the full implications of the changes were still being assessed. The Panel supports the Head of Department's plans to explore whether some tasks currently being performed by academic staff might be handed over to Support Centre staff.
- 63 The Panel noted that Studio Tutors played a key role in providing academic and pastoral support to undergraduate students; many students chose to speak to their Studio Tutor about pastoral issues instead of their Personal Tutor. The Department recognised that as numbers increased, this was placing an unreasonable burden on Studio Tutors, and it therefore planned to implement a number of measures to encourage students to engage more with their Personal Tutor.

Employability

- 64 The Panel noted that the Department's Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) results for 2015-16 appeared disappointing, with a significant proportion of graduates (50%) failing to secure graduate-level employment. However, the Panel acknowledged that art education differed from many other programmes, as indicated by the career pattern of students on departure. At Reading, as elsewhere, students were prepared for the professional practice of being an artist, which would not always equate with more conventional employment. Many graduates continued their practice as artists and, during the initial stages, they were required to work part-time in a variety of roles to support their creative activity. The Panel noted that the timing of the new Graduate Outcomes Survey, which would replace the DLHE in 2018 and would

take place 15 months after graduation, might prove beneficial to the Department's destinations statistics.

- 65 The Panel noted that the programmes aimed clearly at the acquisition of transferable skills, and considered that this was part of art education generally, as art students learned a considerable number of skills, such as technical knowledge (production in workshops, the practical installation of exhibitions, editing in sound and video, for example), research skills, many kinds of writing, community engagement and so on. The Panel considered that the opportunities provided for students to make connections between discipline specific knowledge, skills and attributes and their use in the wider world were a particular strength of the programmes, of which criticality, reflection, and articulation formed the substance. The curriculum related constantly to a wider world, moving from subjective experience to reflective analysis. As described in the section on **Teaching and Learning**, teaching was informed by staff scholarship and professional activity, providing models in and outside academia. The Panel noted that the use-value of what students were learning might not quite fit into a conventional expectation of the term.
- 66 The Panel found evidence that employability was embedded and progressively developed across the curriculum, through workshops and discussions and an assessment that required students to submit a CV and cover letter. In addition to careers activity within modules, the Department provided a rolling series of extra-curricular lectures, talks and workshops by visiting professionals. However, the Student Submission, along with the Panel's discussions with current and former students, indicated a demand for more specialist careers advice and opportunities for discussion with visiting professionals, and for more practically-focussed careers workshops and seminars. The Panel suggests that the Department explore opportunities for further engagement with the Careers service, including more discipline-specific support for students.
- 67 The Panel was pleased to note that the programmes provided students with a number of opportunities for placements and work-based learning activities. As part of the new Study Placement module at Part 21, students were required to undertake an intensive investigation into an organisation, museum, gallery or studio complex, and to develop and present a portfolio. The Studio 3 module had also recently been expanded to provide students with a range of work-based learning opportunities with a number of partners, including an archive project at the Institute of Contemporary Arts and an opportunity to work in secondary schools mentored by postgraduate students in the Institute of Education. In addition to the formal placement opportunities, the Panel noted opportunities for more informal engagement with staff on research or public projects with the Department's network of connections and institutional partnerships. These opportunities appeared to be offered on a more ad hoc, individual basis. The Panel suggests that the Department continue to explore closer ties with external institutions on a more formal, long-term basis.
- 68 The Panel noted that students were encouraged to reflect upon, and articulate what they had learnt from these 'real world' learning experiences through their blogs, and through peer-assisted learning. Students were also encouraged to complete the Reading Experience and Development (RED) Award scheme, which captured their extra-curricular activities. However, the Panel was unsure whether all students fully understood the relevance of these opportunities in terms of employability.
- 69 The Panel noted that, while employability appeared to be embedded in many aspects of programme delivery, the term did not appear to be widely used. As noted above, there was a strong emphasis on transferable skills, on professional practice and on a wider field of 'creative' engagement that prepared students for work after graduation at all levels, including PhD research. However, the Panel would question how this was made evident to students and indeed, the institution, in perceptual terms, given the nature of the domain of art and art education, aligning the use and understanding of terms. The Panel **recommends** that the Department be

more explicit about how employability is introduced, developed and consolidated within the curriculum, incorporating curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (**Advisable recommendation f**).

- 70 While the Panel was impressed by the number of students gaining 'real world' experiences and noted that sufficient opportunities were offered to allow every student to benefit, it recognised that some students might choose not to apply for these opportunities to their detriment. The Panel considered that embedding these real world, experiential learning experiences in the curriculum would ensure that all students experienced at least one external-facing opportunity during their studies. It therefore **recommends** that the Department consider embedding all existing outward-facing activities into the curriculum, thereby addressing support for career development (**Desirable recommendation c**).
- 71 The Panel was pleased to note the Department's strong links with its alumni. The Department kept in touch with graduates via social media, and graduates were regularly invited to give presentations on their career paths. The Department had also introduced contributions from recent graduates to teaching in the Part 3 studio module and to the Visiting Artists programme. Meetings with current students confirmed that they welcomed the opportunities for engagement with recent alumni.
- 72 The Panel would encourage the Department to consider engaging with the University-wide THRIVE Career Mentoring Scheme, which provides career mentoring support for undergraduate and postgraduate students. This could assist students to move forward in their career decision making and to further develop their employability.

ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY AND ACADEMIC PROVISION

- 73 As referred to in a number of places throughout this Report, the Panel was satisfied that the Department made appropriate and effective use of a range of datasets to inform enhancements to its provision. The Panel was particularly impressed with the Department's efforts in constantly reviewing and evolving its methods of delivery and assessment and its provision for student support in response to increasing student numbers and current/anticipated changes in the diversity of the student body.
- 74 The Panel noted that module evaluation took place on a regular basis, in line with University policy. It was generally satisfied that issues raised by module evaluations were given proper consideration and that appropriate actions were taken in a timely manner, although it noted that annual module reports varied in their reflective approach. The Department recognised the need to report back more clearly and directly to students on any actions taken as a result of their feedback, as evidenced in the NSS 2017 results, and was taking steps to address this issue.
- 75 The Panel was pleased to note that formal committee meetings, as described in the section on **Committee structures**, were supplemented by a Departmental Teaching and Learning meeting in advance of each term and regular meetings of core teaching staff during the Summer Term to evaluate the past year's teaching and plan for the following year. Informal fortnightly staff meetings also took place in order to ensure an ongoing dialogue about teaching and learning related matters. The Panel welcomed in particular the annual curriculum content sharing event which took place amongst all staff and the module-sharing workshop introduced by the Head of Department in Autumn 2017. The Panel was also pleased to note recent initiatives which aimed to support the sharing of good practice within the Department and the wider School. For example, an annual School-wide teaching and learning event was introduced in the Summer Term 2017, which provided a valuable opportunity for staff to share experiences and disseminate good and effective practice.

- 76 The Panel was supportive of wider work underway to enhance the quality of the Department's provision, including the curriculum review which would continue into the Spring Term 2018, and the continuing work on assessment and feedback. It encourages the Department to actively seek opportunities to involve a wide range of students in discussions related to curriculum development and programme delivery, thereby ensuring that students are fully engaged in curriculum design, as envisioned by the Curriculum Framework.
- 77 The Panel was generally satisfied that appropriate arrangements were in place for induction and mentoring of new staff members. It was pleased to note that the Department had developed a teaching handbook to support sessional lecturers and PhD students involved in teaching, and that further guidance was provided by the relevant Programme Director and the Director of Teaching and Learning. However, the Panel suggests that the Department review formal training provision and support for PhD students with teaching responsibilities. This might include the development of Department/School-wide training for PhD students to complement the University's *Preparing to teach* programme.
- 78 The Panel noted that the Department was engaged with the University's Facilitating Learning and Teaching Achievement and Individual Recognition (FLAIR) scheme and was working towards the University goal of 80% of all staff holding a teaching qualification. In 2016, 58% of staff were HEA accredited.
- 79 The Panel noted that there were opportunities for staff career development through exchanges with other HE institutions and through participation in the University's Teaching & Learning Programme. However, meetings with staff indicated that current workload pressures made it difficult for them to engage fully with continuing professional development opportunities. The Panel noted that the continuing professional development needs of the Teaching Fellows were supported through their engagement with the Academic Practice Programme and through attendance at other University training sessions. Teaching Fellows confirmed that they felt valued and supported by the Department. However, the Panel acknowledged potential issues with career progression for the Teaching Fellows.
- 80 In light of the above issues, the Panel **recommends** that the Department work to embed continuing professional development opportunities for all staff and to address support for career progression, particularly for Teaching Fellows (**Desirable recommendation d**).
- 81 The Panel welcomed the recent increase in staff engagement with peer review of learning and teaching, following the implementation of a new system for completing and monitoring peer review. It encourages the Department to continue to promote staff participation in peer review, to include Teaching Fellows, sessional staff, and postgraduate research students with regular and substantive roles in teaching and supporting learning, in line with University policy.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMMES UNDER REVIEW

- 82 The Panel considers that the degree programmes offered by the Department are ambitious, coherent and intellectually challenging, offering breadth and scope for individual development. The programmes are characterised by a strong integration of theory and practice and an emphasis on the acquisition of transferable skills. They provide excellent opportunities for students to engage in research and enquiry and in a wide range of 'real world' learning experiences, and to develop intercultural competence. Students are supported in the progression from guided to autonomous learning within their discipline, in particular through the well-conceived studio modules.

- 83 The programmes are underpinned by high quality teaching and by a supportive, open and inclusive atmosphere within the Department. Staff members and students alike are passionate about their discipline and committed to the Department. The Panel congratulates the Department on its efforts in constantly evolving its methods of delivery and assessment and making changes to the configuration of space to accommodate increasing student numbers, remaining cognisant of the need to maintain a balance between year-group, small group and one-to-one tuition.

CONCLUSIONS ON INNOVATION AND GOOD PRACTICE

- 84 The Panel identified the following as representing particularly good practice:
- a. the strong sense of community which was evident across the Department at all levels, underpinned by a highly supportive, open and inclusive atmosphere and a friendly and approachable staff team;
 - b. the committed and devoted management team and, in particular, the new Head of Department and School Director of Teaching and Learning;
 - c. the exemplary integration of theory and practice within the programmes, which was a key contributor to the Department's strong national and international reputation;
 - d. the opportunity for undergraduate students to participate in study abroad at a range of partner institutions as part of their programme, which was taken up by a large number of students each year;
 - e. the exceptional quality of the written feedback provided to students, which was thorough and thoughtful, and amply supported by individual tutorials;
 - f. the excellent and varied curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to learn through research and enquiry;
 - g. the use of student-led reflective blogs, which were used across all undergraduate programmes for students to record and document work in progress, reflect on teaching and learning activities and collate research material;
 - h. the expectation of some level of autonomous learning within the discipline from the outset of all programmes, particularly within the studio modules;
 - i. the resourcefulness of staff in constantly evolving their approaches to teaching and learning and making changes to the configuration of space to accommodate increasing student numbers;
 - j. staff members' passion for, and dedication to, their subject, and their exceptional generosity in sharing their professional practice, research and time.

CONCLUSIONS ON QUALITY AND STANDARDS

- 85 The Panel has concluded that the quality and standards of the programmes reviewed are appropriate.

CONCLUSIONS ON NEW DEGREE PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

- 86 The Panel received no submissions with regards to new programme proposals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 87 The Panel **recommends** to the University Programmes Board that the following degree programmes taught by the Department of Art are re-approved to run for a further six years or, in the case of joint programmes, until the Periodic Review of the other discipline:
- a. BA Art
 - b. BA Fine Art
 - c. BA Art and English Literature
 - d. BA Art and Film
 - e. BA Art and Film & Theatre
 - f. BA Art and History of Art
 - g. BA Art and Philosophy
 - h. BA Art and Psychology
 - i. BA Art and Theatre
 - j. MA Creative Enterprise (Art pathway)
 - k. MFA Fine Art
- 88 The report will categorise any issues as follows, in order of priority:
- Those areas where the Review Team believes it is **necessary** for action to be taken urgently to safeguard the standard of provision;
 - Those areas where it is **advisable** that the issues be addressed as soon as possible;
 - Those areas where it is **desirable** that the issue be addressed over a longer time span.
- 89 The Panel does not consider that any recommendations must be addressed as a condition of re-approval.
- 90 The Panel makes the following recommendations to the **Department**:

Necessary

There are no necessary recommendations.

Advisable

The Panel **recommends** that the Department:

- a. work with the Students' Union to actively promote student representation and attendance at Student-Staff Liaison Committee and Board of Studies meetings;
- b. review the assessment rubrics on Turnitin to more clearly differentiate the boundaries between grades;
- c. continue with work already underway to increase recruitment to taught postgraduate programmes. This should include:
 - i. working with the Marketing, Communications and Engagement team to improve marketing of the programmes internally and externally, focussing on the strengths of the Department;
 - ii. giving further consideration to the introduction of part-time modes of study;
- d. liaise closely with the new Head of School to identify, develop and negotiate further opportunities to expand access to physical resources across the School and the wider University;

- e. explore opportunities for, and actively encourage, interdisciplinary teaching and research, securing University central service provision as appropriate;
- f. be more explicit about how employability is introduced, developed and consolidated within the curriculum, incorporating curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Desirable

The Panel **recommends** that the Department:

- a. work actively towards promoting widening participation in relation to student recruitment;
- b. continue to review the delivery of teaching in line with staff workloads;
- c. consider embedding all existing outward-facing activities into the curriculum, thereby addressing support for career development;
- d. work to embed continuing professional development opportunities for all staff and to address support for career progression, particularly for Teaching Fellows.

- 91 The Panel does not have a recommendation to the University Programmes Board as to whether any proposal(s) for new degree programmes should be approved, as this is not applicable.