

# PERIODIC REVIEW OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Reviewing programmes delivered by the Department  
of Archaeology in the School of Archaeology,  
Geography and Environmental Sciences

## INTRODUCTION

1. An internal review of programmes in Archaeology was held on 24 and 25 May 2018. The members of the Panel were:
  - Prof Orla Kennedy, Teaching and Learning Dean (*Chair*)
  - Gill Hey, Director and Chief Executive Officer: Oxford Archaeology (*external member, industry*)
  - Prof Douglas Baird, Garstang Professor of Archaeology: University of Liverpool (*external member, subject specialist*)
  - Dr Melanie Giles, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology: University of Manchester (*external member, subject specialist*)
  - Dr Claire Collins, Associate Professor: Henley Business School (*internal member*)
  - Rebecca Jerrome, School Director of Teaching and Learning: School of Agriculture, Policy and Development (*internal member*)
  - Cristina Radulescu, MA student, School of Law (*student member*)
  - Richard Sandford, Senior Quality Support Officer: Centre for Quality Support and Development (*Secretary*)
2. The Panel met the following:
  - Dr Nick Branch (Head of School)
  - Dr Alan Howard (School Director for Teaching and Learning)
  - Dr John Creighton (Head of the Department)
  - Professor Martin Bell
  - Ms Amanda Clarke (Associate Professor and Co-Director of Archaeology Field School)
  - Dr Hella Eckardt (Undergraduate Admissions and Research Impact)
  - Dr Duncan Garrow (Programme Director: Undergraduate)
  - Dr Robert Hosfield (School T&L Technology lead)
  - Dr Mary Lewis (School Director of PGR and Programme Director: Taught Postgraduate)
  - Professor Roger Matthews
  - Dr Wendy Matthews
  - Dr Gundula Muedner (Undergraduate Dissertations co-ordinator)
  - Dr Aleks Pluskowski (Part 1 Tutor, Admissions)
  - Dr Gabor Thomas

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- Dr Stuart Black Associate Professor (Examinations Officer, School of Geography and Environmental Sciences)
  - Dr Rhi Smith (Director of UMASCS Academic Learning and Engagement)
  - Dawn Aggas (Marketing and Engagement Business Partner – Marketing & Campaigns)
  - Shiela Lloyd (Programme Administrator – Support Centre)
  - Tania Lyden (Careers Consultant – Careers & Employability)
  - Ellen Owens (Disability Advisor – Disability Advisory Service)
  - Rhian Walker (Programme Manager – Support Centre)
  - Dr Karen Wicks (Technical Cluster Manager)
3. The Panel met students who represented the following degree programmes:
- BA Archaeology
  - BA Archaeology and Ancient History
  - BSc Archaeological Science
  - MA Archaeology
  - MSc Environmental Archaeology
  - MSc Environmental Archaeology (Part-time)
4. The Panel met recent graduates from the BA Archaeology and BSc Archaeology programmes, and employers representing Archaeological Units and the heritage sector.

## **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

5. The Review Panel met with a range of staff from across the Department, and senior leadership from the School, alongside a number of professional services staff who worked in partnership with the Department. The staff were fully engaged with the process and made the Panel feel very welcome. The review benefitted from a comprehensive and well-organised Blackboard organisation, and any additional information requested by the Panel was supplied in a timely fashion. The Panel found the resources provided invaluable in their review of the Department's activities. The Panel welcomed the opportunity to tour the extensive facilities which were available to all students. The Panel extends its thanks to the Department for its hospitality and full engagement with the process.
6. The Panel was pleased to meet and question current undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. They found the students to be passionate about their subject and enthusiastic about the opportunities afforded by the Department, in particular the experience afforded by the Field School and the collegiate learning environment. The Panel wishes to express its thanks to these students, and to the students who contributed to the Student Submission, for their valuable input into the Review.
7. The Panel met with recent and more established alumni and found them to be both a credit to, and enthusiastic advocates of, the Department. The Panel wish to thank them for their valuable input. The Panel also met with key employers in the field, who attested to the skills, knowledge and dedication of Reading alumni in their employ. The Panel was grateful for the insights provided during their discussions with alumni and employers and thanks them for their generous engagement with the process.
8. The Panel heard that the Department had engaged in two University sponsored projects in recent years, the Archaeology Project in 2015 and Archaeology Review (referred to as 'Formal Review' below) which was sponsored by the University's Executive Board in 2018. These projects afforded the Department the opportunity for portfolio review, and they engaged in further critical self-reflection through the University's Curriculum Framework project. The Department showed considerable resilience throughout this time and the Panel noted their enthusiasm for the Periodic Review and the opportunities it might afford, especially in light of these recent

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reviews. The Panel was impressed by the Department's management of activities during the reviews, especially in ensuring that students felt little or no disruption to their studies. The Department managed to deliver programmes to a high level, provided support during a period of rapid change and uncertainty, whilst demonstrating a high degree of commitment to current and prospective students.

9. The Panel commended the excellent research culture that exists within the Department and how this permeates throughout the teaching and learning experience. The Panel noted that this research culture, alongside the Field School, played a large role in cementing the Department's standing in the field. The Panel was impressed by the Department's ability to nurture and leverage their positive national and international reputation in order to foster links with potential academic and industrial partners. **[Good practice a]**
10. The Panel commended the innovative work that the Department had undertaken in partnership with the Museum of English and Rural Life (MERL) in order to launch the suite of Museum Studies degrees and modules. The Panel commended the excellent student learning experience that the museum studies modules afforded in terms of skills development and employability.
11. The Panel noted the collegiate way in which the Department worked with colleagues in Central Services. The proactive and effective engagement with Central Services (including Marketing and Engagement, Careers and Technical Services) was felt to be exemplary (see also sections 55, 73, and 78). **[Good practice b]**

## **Committee structures**

12. The Panel was satisfied that the committee structures in place were appropriate and effective for the governance, quality management and enhancement of the programmes. The Panel was pleased to note that the Department had convened a Teaching Enhancement Group which meets three times a year to consider and explore issues around pedagogy and curriculum design.
13. The Panel considered that the membership of the committees appears appropriate. However, the Panel noted that a lot of responsibility rested with the Programme Director for Undergraduate Programmes (the Formal Review's recommendation that a Departmental Director for Teaching and Learning was made, in part, in response to this issue). The Panel heard that a number of these responsibilities were being delegated to colleagues as a result of recommendations from the Formal Review (including the appointment of Programme Directors for separate undergraduate areas) (see also section 51 below).
14. The Panel found evidence, in the form of minutes of meetings, that the Department was giving due consideration to matters around quality management enhancement. This is achieved through the timely and thorough consideration of National Student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey results, annual programme reports and External Examiners' reports.

## **Programme design**

15. The Panel was provided with a range of evidence including programme specifications, programme handbooks, core and optional module descriptions (and module handbooks), annual programme reports, samples of student work with both formative and summative feedback, External Examiners' reports, student module feedback forms, and access to VLE sites for each module. This wealth of materials enabled the Panel to compare current design with the timely and forward-looking action plans for the near future.
16. In considering the materials provided, and through discussions with staff and students, and the Panel's own deliberations, the Panel were able to confirm that the academic standards of the

programmes under review were appropriate and comparable with programmes at other universities.

17. The Panel noted that the aims and learning outcomes (at both Programme and Module level) were well-publicised in the main degree handbook as well as online module handbooks and VLE content. Programme leaders had evidently taken note of minor but significant revisions to the QAA Benchmark Statement for Archaeology<sup>1</sup> (updated in 2014), and the Panel was particularly impressed by the way in which individual modules adhered to and foregrounded professional standards from the newly Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CifA), as well as sub-disciplinary guidelines and heritage institution practice e.g. UNESCO, WHO, Historic England, Historic Scotland, British Association for Biological and Anthropological Osteoarchaeologists (BABAO), the Museums Association and relevant 'Finds' Group Guidelines.
18. The Panel felt that using the CifA matrix of technical competence in the design of courses and learning outcomes is welcome, as is the readiness to apply for the proposed CifA and UAUK (University Archaeology UK) accreditation of UK university degrees when that becomes available.  
**[Desirable recommendation j]**
19. The Panel felt that there was a very effective alignment of aims and learning outcomes within the design of the programmes. In addition, learning outcomes and assessment were well matched within the design of programmes and their constituent modules. However, the Panel noted that there may be scope to improve the way assessments support programme learning outcomes (see section 36 below). Programme design has been effective to date in identifying and achieving effective learning outcomes as seen in student performance, External Examiner reports and the Panel's observations of student work. This includes a particularly strong element of research-led teaching that the Department is committed to continuing whilst developing their programme provisions, as it is viewed as being key in ensuring the delivery of high quality programmes which produce sought-after graduates. **[Good practice c]**
20. The Panel engaged with the Department in the wake of an internal institutional review and thus the Department are currently in the progress of significant overhaul of the degree programme provision, module range and content offerings. In particular the Department is very clear of its need to increase student numbers in a challenging national admissions environment for archaeology (see also section 54 below). Its programme design considerations going forward have been very well thought through for addressing this issue. The concepts we discussed with the Department clearly showed that they will maintain the best of current programme design, which has clearly led to highly satisfied and well qualified students, combining this with the opportunity to capture new markets.
21. The Panel was impressed by the ambitious and forward looking development of new programmes which are specifically designed to address current recruitment issues at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The programmes' content has been carefully considered in the light of current gaps in the market. The new MSc Professional Human Osteoarchaeology programme is designed to provide distinctive learning experiences and practical elements useful for those going forward in a range of professions, as well as archaeology and will fill a gap in the current market. Anthropology has rising student recruitment in the UK and a joint degree of the nature proposed should tap very effectively into the relevant market. Geography is a subject with significant student numbers and makes a natural joint degree at Reading in the context of the wider strengths of the School. **[Good practice d]**
22. The Panel noted that research-led teaching is built into the curriculum through contact sessions but also through assessment tasks, with these activities mutually reinforcing each other, and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/sbs-archaeology-14.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/subject-benchmark-statements/sbs-archaeology-14.pdf)

involving a number of instances of authentic assessment (based on 'real world' issues or analogous to 'real world' tasks). **[Good practice e]**

23. The Panel commended the Department's curriculum design mechanisms, including their Teaching Enhancement Group, engagement processes for liaising with employers, and student consultation activities (including end of degree questionnaires). The Panel felt that these activities have been highly effective in programme and module development and have clearly fed into considerations for new and revised programmes. **[Good practice f]**
24. The Panel met with a number of employers and identified very effective mechanisms for working with them in programme design. So far the focus has particularly been on archaeological employers, but the Panel also felt that a broader range of employers could be involved in the future, including departmental alumni. Additionally, the Department makes regular use of student input in the design of programmes and modules (see above). **[Good practice g]**
25. The Panel found that the Department is well positioned for their Curriculum Review (as part of the Curriculum Framework). The effective curriculum development process and mechanisms provide a solid bedrock for further reflection and development. The Panel had a number of recommendations for the Department to consider in their implementation of the Curriculum Review (outlined below and under 'Assessment and Feedback').
26. The Panel noted that the development of research skills is of key importance. Within the archaeological sector, fieldwork and post-excavation analysis is having to become more selective in its approaches, and learning how to make informed choices is vital. It is a skill that is relevant for all types of work and the Panel recommends that the Department identifies ways in which to introduce research skills and data analysis at an earlier stage in the curriculum, and embeds them throughout the programme. **[Advisable recommendation a(i)]**
27. During the Curriculum Review consideration should be given to enhancing employability by providing report-writing opportunities and chances to learn self-organisation skills and understanding the principles of project management. It takes many years of experience to become an able project manager, but learning the key issues and the techniques (including software) would be of considerable benefit to graduates embarking on that journey (whether in archaeology or elsewhere). **[Advisable recommendation a(ii)]**
28. The Panel noted that professional archaeology is increasingly using digital means to collect, manipulate and display data, and that this is also true of many other careers. Teaching aspects of digital technology already forms part of the Field School and is found elsewhere in the curriculum, including in the Museum Studies modules, in a module on archaeological illustration and in the use of GIS as part of the courses elsewhere. However, the Panel felt that there is potential to enhance digital literacy skills within the curriculum, both to attract undergraduates, but also to provide highly marketable career skills. **[Advisable recommendation a(iii)]**
29. The Panel suggested that engaging with employers could help identify 'live' collections from which to develop dissertation topics. Students undertaking dissertations might also assist commercial archaeology companies to undertake more detailed research into their assemblages, especially where project budgets cannot cover costs (thus benefitting employers, students and the Department as a whole). This could form part of an enhanced design of the dissertation module (including earlier delivery of research design). **[Advisable recommendation a(iv)]**
30. Noting the ongoing issues around student engagement with placement options (see section 79 below), the Panel suggested that the placement modules be redesigned to either make them more appealing, or to design a degree of compulsion into the modules. **[Advisable recommendation a(v)]**

## Assessment and feedback

31. The External Examiners found the assessment strategy to be well thought-out at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Their reports verified that the standards achieved by learners met the minimum expectation for awards, as measured against the Subject Benchmark Statements and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. Their reports also indicated that assessment are such that they produced highly employable graduates. The assignments at postgraduate level were noted to be critically aligned, and marking criteria is well explained and consistently applied. The assessment process provides formative and summative assignments that both support and challenge the students.
32. The External Examiners and the Panel found that marking was fair and consistent with rigorous moderation processes in place. The Department should be commended for this area of excellence. Feedback and feedforward was of a very high quality and supported student progression. This was delivered to students by a variety of methods – online and verbally at timetabled feedback sessions. Staff were also making very good use of Quickmarks via online marking tools. The Panel found that feedback was not only being delivered in line with the School's Principles of Fair Assessment but also evolving in order to instil the graduate attributes as laid out in the Curriculum Framework. **[Good practice h]**
33. The Panel was impressed by the Department's NSS results, which were well above the School, University and national average – 94.29% of students found that marking had been fair and consistent and 97.14% of students said that they had received helpful comments on their work. Student satisfaction with regards to assessment and feedback was evidenced not only in NSS and PTES scores but also in the Panel's discussions with the students. **[Good practice i]**
34. The Panel noted that the Department is acting on feedback from both the External Examiners and students regarding the dissertation module. Marks for the dissertation had a low overall average and a lower than average number of students were achieving First and 2:1 classifications. This may reflect a lack of understanding by students on how to undertake research, particularly when including quantitative data research methods. In addition, supervisory arrangements did not always ensure that students managed their research effectively. The Panel noted, however, that the Department had made some progress in responding to this issue by delivering additional sessions on research design, methodology and analysis of results. A supervisory log and clear timetable of expected meetings had also been introduced to ensure students were meeting supervisors regularly and monitoring their own progress. It was important that the Department monitored the success of these measures to ensure that there was an improvement in results and student experience (see section 29 above).
35. The Panel found that the progression between the Parts of the undergraduate programme was well-designed. The depth of critical and analytical challenges posed in formative seminar tasks and summative assessment was matched by the breadth of those tasks, where intellectual and practical skills were stretched to an impressive extent. The Panel was pleased with the range of assessment modes employed by the Department, including fieldwork portfolios with reflective statements, posters, creative museum display panels, exhibition design, and laboratory studies on individual burials or suites of environmental evidence. These assignments tested and developed professional skills in impressive ways.
36. The Panel noted that assessment is designed at a modular level with oversight by Programme Directors. The Panel recommends that the Department take a more programme led approach as part of the implementation of the University's Curriculum Framework and via its Curriculum Review. This would provide the opportunity to review the types of assessment and feedback strategies (including formative) in order to ensure that they fully meet programme learning outcomes. **[Advisable recommendation a(vi)]** This is particularly important as it was noted that there was a lack of variety in assessment at Part 1. In light of the higher than average percentage

of students who failed to progress from Part 1 to Part 2 (see also section 61), a review would help ensure that the assessment was designed to be inclusive to a diverse range of students.

37. The Panel noted some inconsistencies in the number, type and weighting of assessments across the undergraduate programme, and that there was too close a similarity in contact hours and amount of assessment between 10 and 20 credit modules. Both undergraduate and postgraduate students reported this as a workload issue; the Department can go some way to temper expectations by ensuring that Module Description Forms correctly detail contact hours and assessment requirements. The Panel noted that the SAGES Principles of Fair Assessment and Module Assessment Weighting provides a good framework model for assessment and recommends that the Department use this as a guide to review their pattern of assessment across modules and year groups. **[Advisable recommendation a(vii)]**
38. The Panel also noted that undergraduate students only experience one assessed presentation during Parts 1 and 2 of their programme. In the final year nearly every module includes a presentation as a summative assessment. However, the Panel also noted that students in both the undergraduate and postgraduate discussion groups reported that they had ample opportunity to present on an informal basis throughout their degree via seminar sessions and in-class discussions. The NSS results indicated a lower than average (and declining) percentage of students who felt that their course had helped them to present with confidence and improved their communication skills. As such, the Panel felt that it would be beneficial for the Department to ensure a more measured approach with regard to opportunities for students to formally present their work. The Panel recommends that the Department takes step to ensure that an appropriate variety of assessments are utilised throughout all stages of the programmes in order to more effectively meet the different learning styles of students. **[Advisable recommendation a(viii)]**
39. The Panel found that staff have readily embraced online submission and marking as an early adopter of the 100% online assessment initiative. The quality of feedback from most staff is excellent, both formative and summative. The Panel commended the statistics on meeting the 15-day turn-around for first marking, noting the considerable challenges this poses for those with heavy teaching and assessment loads. The Panel was impressed with the way the Department had embraced the electronic delivery of feedback and found that this enabled a consistency of feedback through their employment of Quickmarks. **[Good practice j]**
40. The Panel noted that the Department has employed a new generic marking criteria. This has been modified to suit different assignment types and meet the needs of non-standard activities. The Panel applauded this attempt at delivering homogeneity in feedback delivery, but noted some concerns expressed by students. Indeed, the Student Submission suggested that some students in the current academic year were confused with the feedback forms, perhaps owing to the employ of differing rubrics for activities. The Panel recommends that the Department revisit the standard electronic marking rubric and consider whether it is suitable for all assessment types. **[Advisable recommendation a(ix)]**
41. The Panel noted that the standard assignment brief was not consistently applied across all modules. This lack of consistency could lead to confusion amongst students. The Panel urges the Department to review the rubrics and assignment briefs in order to ensure that they are fit for purpose and able to be applied consistently and that there is parity of content in assignment briefs. **[Advisable recommendation a(x)]**

# QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY THE PROGRAMMES

## Teaching and learning

42. The Panel was particularly impressed by the quality of teaching and learning in the Department. There was clear dedication by members of faculty and support staff to provide an excellent learning experience across all programmes. Students at all levels reported that they were very pleased with the quality of teaching and recognized the value of their lecturers as experts in their respective fields.
43. The Panel heard from alumni who were equally complimentary about the programmes. Feedback from the alumni showed that the skills acquired had been applied to move into archaeology and other professions. The wider utility of the curriculum was noted by alumni and employers.
44. The Panel found that innovative teaching and learning methods are being employed in order to enhance engagement in the programmes (especially through the employment of technology).
45. The Field School is seen to be a real asset to the Department with all students interviewed feeling that they had benefitted immensely from the experience gained. This exercise also helped students to acquire agile skills and project management expertise and the Panel felt that it was a key element of the undergraduate programmes and transformational experience for all who participated.
46. The Panel felt that an earlier experience of field work, probably in Part 1, might be beneficial and could help motivate and engage students at an earlier stage. Additionally, such early exposure would build awareness of practical skills and help give context to theoretical work. The Panel noted that it might be helpful to introduce new students to a field work experience during Welcome Week or week six.
47. The Panel felt that the degree programmes equip the students with broader, transferable skills relevant to future employment, such as self-organisation, gathering information, problem-solving, and enquiry.
48. The Panel heard from some taught postgraduate students who expressed some dissatisfaction with how communications around changes to the curriculum had been managed. As an example, the credit weighting of the dissertation on the taught postgraduate programme was changed with some students seemingly unaware of the changes. The Panel noted that staff plan to introduce more innovative assessments in Part 1 and to ensure engagement with data so as to build research skills as early in the programmes as possible. The Panel suggests that the Department remain mindful of the challenges around change management and ensures that students are well-informed of upcoming changes and their rationale.
49. The Panel found that staff are dedicated to offering a wide variety of relevant teaching in their fields of expertise. These include archaeology from different regions, time periods and techniques. Staff research and scholarship are clearly built into the programmes and teachers are committed to ensuring that students learn, assimilate and apply their knowledge and skills within the practice of archaeology. The introduction of a new postgraduate degree in osteoarchaeology was seen as a welcome addition to the curriculum.
50. The Panel noted the dedication of staff and found them to be very hard-working, going beyond requirements in order to offer the best student experience that they can. The Department has fostered a supportive and responsive environment to support student learning. This has helped found a collegial environment, culture of resilience and strong sense of community. **[Good practice k]**

51. However, the Panel was mindful of the burdens that this places on staff and counsels that workloads should be monitored and measures taken to ensure fair distribution of work and of management responsibilities. The Panel recognised that the recent Formal Review had recommended that a Departmental Director for Teaching and Learning be appointed, but encourages the Department to:
- a. consider appointments to other roles at a Departmental level (eg Disability Rep, Examinations Officer), and monitor the effectiveness of the newly created roles;
  - b. ensure that line management and leadership responsibilities are appropriately allocated and supported (eg teaching relief);
  - c. ensure that there is parity of workloads and recognition across the Department; and,
  - d. develop succession plans, including identifying support for senior roles (including administrative support and teaching relief for HoD role).
- [Advisable recommendation b]** (see also section 13 Committees).
52. The Panel noted that the Department has made significant improvements in managing their relationships with other departments who co-deliver programmes (for example, by including them in the undergraduate Boards of Studies and vice versa). As the Department is reliant on joint programmes, the Panel recommends that they continue to work on maintaining the improvements in relationships with those partners co-delivering joint programmes. **[Advisable recommendation c]**
53. The Panel noted the Department's use of collections in exploring issues, themes and debates in material culture. Students have direct access to materials and artefacts and are provided with the skills to identify and interpret them. The Department's access to University collections and the development of Museum Studies modules is key in this regard. Given the importance of the Department's ties with UMASCS (and especially MERL) the University is encouraged to further consider the unintended consequences of the resource model which threatens students' uptake of the Museum Studies modules which were co-designed, and are quality assured and administered by, Archaeology. The Panel notes that the current situation may not be sustainable and could lead to severe reduction of numbers of highly successful Museum Studies modules, whereas a model of split of FTEs would enhance income to both subject areas as well as ensuring development of interdisciplinary heritage skills and improving employment. **[Necessary recommendation to the University k]**

## **Student admission, retention, progression and attainment**

54. The Panel noted that recruitment to the undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes had been in decline for the past three academic sessions. This is in line with falling recruitment to the subject across the sector. It was noted that the University had undertaken a Special Project in 2015 to support recruitment and admissions, with a further Formal Review undertaken by members of the University Executive Board in 2018. The Panel was cognisant of the outcomes of these reviews.
55. The Panel met with the Department's Marketing Business Partner, and was assured that the central marketing function were working closely with the Department to define their marketing strategy and the operationalisation of the strategy. The challenging external environment was noted by all, and as a discipline Archaeology, through University Archaeology UK (UAUK), was beginning to work to address pipeline issues with activities such as the University Archaeology Day now held annually at the British Museum. External factors include the rising costs of degree programmes (and associated debts) seeing more students being encouraged to study more familiar programmes in the Humanities, or in other areas with perceived enhanced job prospects, and the discontinuation of the A-level in Archaeology.

56. The Panel noted a University decision made in 2015/16 to remove pre-offer interviews (which came into effect 2016/17), and considered the data which showed the impact of this decision on student conversion. The external members of the Panel noted that in response to declining applications across the sector their institutions had recently taken the decision to introduce interviews in order to support conversion to Archaeology programmes. Given this move externally, the Panel recommends the Department work with central services to consider the re-introduction of interviews as part of the undergraduate recruitment process and to align with competitors.
57. The Panel noted the importance of staff-student and staff-parent interactions in the recruitment process. Open, visit and interview days afford opportunities to speak with parents as well as prospective students and sell them the benefits and applications of studying archaeology and of studying at Reading.
58. In order to increase and diversify the applicant pool, the Panel recommends that the Department works with central services in order to continue to develop plans to support admissions. Such activities would include:
- Targeting marketing appropriately to attract a wider audience of applicant to all programmes;
  - Further investment in marketing collateral (including digital) in order to attract a more diverse audience;
  - To consider the re-introduction of interview days for undergraduate admissions; and,
  - Greater flexibility around offers (eg using prior experience in order to promote widening participation).

**[Advisable recommendation d]**

59. The Panel welcomed the Department's work to review and rationalise their programme offerings, and the work done in remodelling the undergraduate offering in order to offer two new joint programmes, Geography & Archaeology and Archaeology & Anthropology. The Panel agreed that these would be an attractive offering and brought the Department's portfolio in line with that of competitors.
60. The Panel commended the steps taken to grow the postgraduate taught market, noting the recent approval of the MSc Professional Human Osteoarchaeology. The Panel were aware that the new programme has a target home to international ratio of 50:50. It was noted that appropriate and targeted marketing would be required to ensure successful recruitment to this programme, and this would necessitate a step change for the Department which would need dedicated central support. The Panel recommends that the University ensures that appropriate resources are provided through Marketing for the promotion of the new MSc in Professional Human Osteoarchaeology, particularly in targeting international student recruitment.

**[Advisable recommendation to the University m]**

61. The Panel were disappointed to see the poor progression from Part 1 to Part 2, given the efforts that had been put into place in terms of recruitment. The Department were taking steps to address this, and have recently reviewed the progression rules from Part 1 to Part 2. The Department are also engaged with a thorough review of their approach to assessment and feedback, with the aim to better support student learning and progression (see section 36).
62. The Department fully participates in the University's Welcome Week activities, including assigning STaR mentors to all Part 1 students in order to support transitions to Higher Education. The Panel heard that some students noted issues with making their module choices and the support that they received with this. Students also noted that it took some time to feel part of the Department and that this sense of belonging was mainly engendered during the Field School activities at the end of Part 1. In light of this, the Panel recommends that the school review their approach to Welcome Week activities in order to further enhance student induction,

to provide further support in module selection, and develop activities to help enhance cohort cohesion (eg a combined undergraduate/postgraduate field trip) (see also section 76).

**[Advisable recommendation e]**

63. The Panel reviewed the data in relation to undergraduate students' learning gain, charting students' performance from Part 1 to part 3. The poor performance in Part 3, in particular in the 40 credit dissertation module, was disappointing to see given the Department's research reputation and strength. Elsewhere in this report (see section 34), recommendations are made to address this in terms of supporting student's research and data literacy at an earlier stage in the programme, in order to better support students' performance in their capstone project. This in turn will go some way to address the lower than University average awards of 2.1s and Firsts (71% compared to 81%).
64. The Panel noted that students in the Department had a high rate of declared disabilities, and that the Department is taking steps to assess progression and attainment against a number of protected characteristics. It was noted that male and disabled students achieved lower numbers of 2.1s and Firsts compared to the rest of the cohort. The Panel met the Department's Central Disability Advisory Services partner, who explained the procedures in place to support students and staff in schools. Further consideration of this issue is given below (see section 66) with associated recommendations.

## **Learning environment and student support**

65. Staff in the Department have an abundance of specialist experience to support the delivery of the highly regarded programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Students acknowledge and respect this expertise and reported finding the staff to be friendly, supportive and accessible. Students at all levels lauded the high degree of support offered to them in creating a stimulating learning environment. Postgraduate students particularly appreciated the manner in which their academic needs were met, in spite of abrupt staff changes (with a key member of staff leaving at short notice before the start of term in 2017).
66. The Panel found that student support by Personal Tutors was highly effective in most cases. The Panel noted, however, that the degree courses attract a higher than average number of students with disabilities and mental health issues and that the Department had requested more support from Central Services to help in supporting such students. Staff and students reported long delays in procuring needs assessments, which was exacerbated by a lack of communication from the Disability Advisory Service. Staff felt that the delays may have an impact on progression rates. The Panel suggested that by working with Student Wellbeing Services the Department could implement a number of changes which could help ameliorate the situation, including:
  - a. Investigating ways to better communicate waiting times for support from Student Wellbeing Services (including Disability Advisory Service) and ensure that student expectations around support are managed according to their needs;
  - b. Clarifying details for referral and support of students to Student Wellbeing Services and exploring ways to exploit the 'quick track' referral mechanism where appropriate; and,
  - c. Considering the appointment of a Department level Disability Rep.

**[Advisable recommendation f]**

67. The Panel noted that the Department was very responsive to feedback on their processes and practices and acts upon the feedback in a proactive and appropriate way. The teaching and learning team were very collegiate and supportive of each other and worked hard to improve the student experience, despite the difficulties outlined above. This was recognised by all students during student group meetings.

68. The Department was praised for its 'Inclusive Archaeology' strategies, both within the University and in the field. The legacy of this can be seen on-the-ground through student praise for staff support with both learning and mental health or pastoral issues, as well as professionally, in ClFA's 'Equality and Diversity' sub-committee with which the Department continues to have strong links. The Panel was pleased to note that there was significant evidence that the Department considers the learning environment for those students with disabilities both within the curriculum and in the field, particularly via the Field School. The Department clearly works hard to provide an inclusive learning environment for all. **[Good practice l]**
69. The Panel enjoyed a tour of the teaching and learning facilities and were impressed by both the aesthetic appearance and inspiring atmosphere of the main Archaeology building where staff offices, coffee room, undergraduate and postgraduate study spaces and administrative hub are located. The Panel were informed that the building's 'boat-shape' internal infrastructure apparently symbolises famous Viking burials. This airy, open and welcoming building is a key asset to the Department, and staff have maximised its internal furnishing to display recent finds from the Field School excavations, posters on Staff and Student Research, featured 'success' stories of alumni, relevant professional and academic information (e.g. conferences, job opportunities, placements), and marketing/advertising literature. The Panel praised the use of this space to generate a strong sense of identity and community amongst undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as staff collegiality.
70. The Department benefits from interlinked spaces for other staff and researchers, seminar and meeting room space, a lecture room, laboratories and professional offices for the QUEST staff. The provision of 'dirty' and 'clean' lab space allows staff to facilitate post-excavation processing and analysis, undertake large-scale wet-sieving, provide lab-bench analytical space and store collections such as the human remains material. Plans to expand space for the latter collection were lauded as part of the strategic support for the new MSc Professional Human Osteoarchaeology (see also section 60).
71. The quality of the lab facilities supports science based and practical archaeology; both key elements of any archaeology curriculum. The facilities are well supported by a well-managed technician pool. Management of technician time appears to have been very effective in supporting labs and student projects in labs. The Panel found the technical support to be very well organised across the School and students felt well supported as a result.
72. The Panel found that students had access to well-resourced and high quality study and laboratory spaces that appeared to be well used and were highly valued by students. Students across years formed supportive friendships as a result of shared access to the study space and there was a pleasing atmosphere of collegiality between students and staff. The central departmental space was welcoming and had many examples of student success (eg best dissertation award poster). **[Good practice m]**
73. The Department works extremely well with the Support Centre and Careers, such that students were well supported. There was also evidence of exemplary working relationships between University Museums and Special Collections Services (UMASCS) and Departmental staff, which has led to an innovative suite of modules being developed. These links are effectively exploited with the collections used as a resource within teaching and students also having access to collections for research projects. These resources, related curatorial expertise and fruitful partnership provide a particularly rich addition to the learning environment. **[Good practice n]**
74. The Panel noted that the British Museum's external stores would soon be relocating to the University premises. This provides an exciting opportunity to enhance the curriculum and offer a learning environment that would undoubtedly enhance student experience. The Panel felt that the University should work to foster new opportunities for students to utilise the collections and curatorial expertise in teaching and learning, noting that discussions are ongoing around how the

British Museum's collections can be best used for research. The Panel noted that there would be great opportunities for guest lectures, behind-the-scenes tours and handling opportunities etc. for students. The Panel agreed that if properly provisioned and championed, this partnership could become a major selling-point for the programmes, using the notion that Reading is the place where this internationally famed institution has chosen to locate its 'treasure house'. The Panel felt that it was important that this opportunity be maximised. **[Necessary recommendation to the University I]**

75. The Panel felt that the flagship Field School activities deliver sector-leading initiatives and outcomes throughout the student journey: from widening participation and acting as a recruitment tool, to delivering long-term, ongoing research projects which train students to professional standards from their first year onwards. The Field School also acts as a forum for returning alumni and provides mentoring opportunities. The Field School was an experience which impressed at every level of the Review: from student experience to alumni reflections and employers' praise for the programmes. The Panel felt that the Field School forms an enduring legacy for Reading's Archaeology Department and forms a unique selling point for the study of archaeology at Reading. **[Good practice o]**
76. The Panel noted that postgraduate students would like to have more involvement with the Field School and that all students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, reported wanting more external field trips as part of their course. Additionally, the Panel felt that it would be helpful if new undergraduate students had exposure to the field School earlier in their studies (see also section 62).

## **Employability**

77. The Panel reviewed the approaches that the Department has undertaken to address employability, both within the curriculum and through co-curricular activities. The Panel was surprised by the poor performance of students in DeLHE, especially given the excellent reputation of the Department and the high esteem with which employers hold its alumni.
78. The Department has traditionally relied on the Field School experience to enhance employability and inculcate the skills required for employment in the archaeology sector. However, more recently they have moved to embed employability more widely in the curriculum through their engagement with the Curriculum Framework. This exercise was undertaken in conjunction with the Department's Careers Consultant. The Panel commended this joint working arrangement which had undertaken an analysis of key skills and attributes desired by employers of archaeologists and those required more generally by graduate recruiters. In addition, a more recent appointment has been a placement co-ordinator to work across the School and to broaden the experience beyond field work. The Panel commended the proactive and effective engagement with the Careers Service (see also section 11).
79. The Panel noted the poor uptake of optional placements and year-long placements. The Panel suggested that the Department review placement provision in line with the recommendation under section 30 above; the Department should redesign placement modules to make them more appealing, or to include a degree of compulsion as this would provide placement experiences beyond the Field School which would promote engagement and enhance student employability. In relation to year-long placements, it was felt that more active promotion and engagement with this scheme was needed. The Panel noted that the Department provides opportunities to work and study abroad, and it is encouraging to see that the Department is engaged in improvements to the curriculum to ensure an increased understanding of, and reflection on, how archaeology is relevant to 'real-world' issues.

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80. The Panel noted the large number of employability schemes on offer, but the poor uptake in the Department. The Panel noted that the Department is currently investigating the reasons behind this and wondered if it was an area where advice and support from potential employers could be used. The Panel recommended that Departmental staff need to become more active in the promotion of placements, internships and volunteering opportunities (UROP, RIS, THRIVE) in order to help students develop and identify transferable skills and widen their awareness of careers outside of archaeology. **[Advisable recommendation g]**
81. The Panel's discussions with the Department's Careers Consultant suggested that much thought and time had gone into encouraging students to look at non-archaeological careers as well more traditional roles. The Panel was pleased to note that the relationship between the department and the Careers service seemed very close and interactive (see also section 11).
82. The THRIVE initiative seemed very positive from this point of view. Archaeology can provide all kinds of skills that are useful in the non-archaeological workplace, as for example discussed with the graduate who now works for Thames Valley Police. The Panel noted the difficulty faced by the Department in getting students to recognise and articulate their transferable skills.
83. The revision of the curriculum following the recent Formal Review should embed employability skills more firmly into the programmes, and this is not just targeted on archaeological careers but recognising that archaeology provides expertise and knowledge that are transferrable to many other contexts. The Department's engagement with employers and with students in curriculum design is to be commended (see also section 24).
84. The Panel noted that the Department has an extremely good reputation for providing graduates and postgraduates with the key skills and knowledge required for future careers in the archaeological sector. Whilst this is, in part, the product of student engagement with the Field School (which is an exemplar for teaching archaeological practice – see also section 75) it was apparent to the Panel that a wide variety of archaeology skills are taught as part of the undergraduate skills, such as 'professional practice', GIS and archaeological illustration. The meetings with the undergraduates, postgraduates and alumni showed that the Field School is highly valued by students and was one of the key attractions of the Department when they applied. It is recognised by employers, too, as providing valuable experience and it should be cherished. The Panel welcomed the recommendation from the Formal Review to retain the Field School.
85. The Panel welcomed the Curriculum Framework focus on the primacy of the discipline and its mastery, as it was noted that there is a danger that programmes can become too workplace focused. The Panel recognised that employers depend on and value the fact that degrees inculcate knowledge and background understanding of the subject. The Panel had a number of recommendations on how issues around employability can be considered during the Curriculum Review (these can be found under section 25-30 above).
86. The Panel noted that the Department has a good relationship with archaeological employers in the region, who have considerable good will towards the Department. The Department is showing itself very flexible and able to take on board changing needs within the sector, an example has been the recent creation of the MSc Professional Human Osteoarchaeology. The BA in Museum Studies is another example of a course designed for sector needs (see also section 9).
87. The Panel wondered whether a more formal, regular meeting with employers might be useful, noting that it would ensure that the dialogue continues and that courses are enhanced and amended as circumstances change. For example, helping to designing more attractive placements would be a useful project with which to engage. **[Advisable recommendation h]**

## ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY AND ACADEMIC PROVISION

88. The Panel was happy with the quality of teaching provision and the application of academic expertise. The Panel found that a range of approaches are employed in order to create and maintain engagement and to enhance the learning experience.
89. The Panel noted that External Examiner reports comprised useful feedback of both critical and developmental natures. The Panel found that this feedback is being used to give support to programme development and that the recommendations are being addressed by the Department.
90. The Panel noted that the majority of staff in the Department have engaged with the University's FLAIR programme for accreditation by the Higher Education Academy (now Office for Students). However, the Panel were disappointed to note some of the more senior members of staff had not engaged in the scheme. The Panel recognised that this was also an issue elsewhere in the University, but that Schools had, with the support of colleagues in CQSD, been able to encourage senior members of staff to engage with the scheme. The Panel counsels the Department to seek support from CQSD in order to explore the underlying issues around non-engagement of senior staff. The Department should continue to implement the University strategy for staff with a recognised teaching qualification by working with CQSD and creating time for more senior colleagues to complete FLAIR. **[Advisable recommendation i]**
91. The Panel found that staff are generally engaged with their continuing professional development and that participation was encouraged on a systematic basis. The Department and School have support mechanisms in place in order to promote mutual development and the sharing of best practice.
92. The Student Staff Liaison Committees are meeting regularly and participation is reasonably good. It was noted that issues raised were generally addressed by staff in a timely and appropriate way.

## MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMMES UNDER REVIEW

93. The Department has a long-standing world-wide reputation and offers a rich research-informed curriculum. Students are given an excellent grounding in archaeological theory and practice. Students are afforded opportunities, even at undergraduate level, to engage with more specialist courses in more technical subjects such as osteology, material culture and environmental analysis, which not only helps prepare them for employment but encourages them to apply to the Masters programmes to deepen this expertise.
94. Reading's reputation for integrating theoretical and philosophical ideas with archaeological practice, from prehistory to the historic period, and from landscape and environment to material culture and human remains, is a noted strength in the content of its programmes. Programmes have been strategically designed, wherever possible, to address the core objectives of the wider School (SAGES) on issues such as global poverty, social inequality, natural disasters and climate changes: providing both the intellectual frameworks and processes through which Archaeology can provide a long-term evidential base and historical perspective on human responses to these pressing current issues.
95. The Department's impressive facilities and equipment provide excellent support for students' learning. The Field School is a sector-leading activity, and the Department's access to Museum

collections (through UMASCs and the upcoming partnership with the British Museum) provides first-class opportunities for students.

96. The Panel found a Department with a dedicated and renowned faculty who endeavour to provide the best outcomes for their students. The Panel commends the Department on its resilience and ongoing willingness to engage in self-reflection and enhancement of offering.

## **CONCLUSIONS ON INNOVATION AND GOOD PRACTICE**

97. The Panel identified the following as representing particularly good practice:
- a. Extremely supportive and responsive environment provided by the staff to support student learning leading to a collegiate environment, culture of resilience and sense of community
  - b. Outstanding levels of student satisfaction with regards to student teaching and assessment & feedback, as evidenced in results in the NSS and the PTES and as reported by students in face-to-face meetings
  - c. Rich research-informed teaching that leads to pedagogic initiatives, and the development of modules and assessments based on real-world issues
  - d. Effective curriculum development processes and mechanisms which should ensure the smooth implementation of the curriculum framework
  - e. Ambitious and forward looking development of new programmes to address current recruitment issues at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level
  - f. Working with employers and engaging students in the design of programmes
  - g. Proactively and effectively engaging with Central Services (including Marketing and Engagement, Careers and Technical Services)
  - h. Exemplary Department-level understanding of issues around disability and inclusivity (within the curriculum and in the field)
  - i. Providing students with rich and strategic feedback both online and face-to-face as a routine part of their module support, including the wide-spread provision of feed forward. Not only in line with the School's principles of fair assessment but evolving their approaches to instilling the graduate attributes as laid out in the Curriculum Framework
  - j. Embracing the electronic delivery of feedback, ensuring consistency of feedback through the employment of Quickmarks
  - k. Good use of space and facilities, including providing dedicated study spaces for both undergraduate and postgraduate students and open access to laboratories
  - l. Exemplary interdisciplinary work with museum resources and staff expertise
  - m. Nurturing and leveraging their positive national and international reputation in fostering links with potential academic and industrial partners
  - n. Translating their internationally recognised research strengths into producing high quality programmes and sought after graduates
  - o. The flagship USP of the Field School which delivers sector-leading initiatives and outcomes throughout the Student Journey: from widening participation and acting as a recruitment tool, to delivering a long-term, ongoing research project which trains students to professional standards from their first-year onwards, to acting as a forum for returning Alumni and mentoring opportunities – this is an experience which stood out at every level of

the review, from student experience to alumni reflections and employer's praise for the programmes. An enduring legacy for Reading's archaeology department.

## CONCLUSIONS ON QUALITY AND STANDARDS

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

## CONCLUSIONS ON NEW DEGREE PROGRAMME

99. The Panel received no submissions with regards to new programme proposals but was supportive of the new programme initiatives that the Department is currently undertaking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

100. The Panel recommends to the University Programmes Board that the following degree programmes taught by the Department of Archaeology are re-approved to run for a further six years:
- BA Archaeology  
(including "...with Professional Placement", "...with Study Abroad", and "...with Placement and Study Abroad" variants)
  - BSc Archaeological Science  
(including "...with Professional Placement", "...with Study Abroad", and "...with Placement and Study Abroad" variants)
  - BA Archaeology and Ancient History  
(including "...with Professional Placement", "...with Study Abroad", and "...with Placement and Study Abroad" variants)
  - BA Archaeology and Classical Studies  
(including "...with Professional Placement", "...with Study Abroad", and "...with Placement and Study Abroad" variants)
  - BA Archaeology and History  
(including "...with Professional Placement", "...with Study Abroad", and "...with Placement and Study Abroad" variants)
  - BA Museum Studies and Archaeology  
(including "...with Professional Placement", "...with Study Abroad", and "...with Placement and Study Abroad" variants)
  - MA Archaeology
  - MSc Environmental Archaeology (discontinued from September 2019)
101. 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.
102. The Panel has made the following recommendations which must be addressed as a condition of re-approval:

**The Panel makes the following recommendations to the Department:**

**Necessary**

There were no necessary recommendations

**Advisable**

- a. Use the Curriculum Review to
  - i. identify ways to introduce research skills and data analysis earlier in the curriculum and ensure that it is embedded and enhanced throughout the programme;
  - ii. help students further develop employability skills, including providing opportunities for report writing, project management and self-organisation;
  - iii. develop digital literacy skills (including data collection, analysis and management);
  - iv. deliver enhanced design of the Dissertation module (including earlier delivery of research design) and develop ways of working on 'live' collections from professional units or research bodies;
  - v. consider the development of a compulsory placement module;
  - vi. review forms of assessment and feedback strategies (including formative) in order to support the programme learning outcomes;
  - vii. review delivery of 10 and 20 credit modules to ensure that contact hours and assessment requirements are in line with the Module Description Forms;
  - viii. ensure that an appropriate variety of assessments are utilised throughout all stages of the programmes in order to meet the different learning styles of students;
  - ix. revisit the standard electronic marking rubrics and consider whether they are fit for purpose in relation to all assessments; and,
  - x. ensure parity of content in Assignment Briefs.
- b. Recognising the move to appointing a DDTL, the Department is encouraged to
  - i. consider appointment to other roles at a Departmental level (eg Disability Rep, Examinations Officer), and monitor the effectiveness of the newly created roles;
  - ii. ensure that line management and leadership responsibilities are appropriately allocated and support (eg teaching relief);
  - iii. ensure that there is parity of workloads and recognition across the Department; and,
  - iv. develop succession plans, including identifying support for senior roles (including administrative support and teaching relief for HoD role).
- c. Work to maintain improvements in relationships with partners for the delivery of Joint Programmes
- d. Work with central services to continue to develop plans to support admissions, including:
  - i. targeting marketing appropriately to attract a wider audience of applicant to all programmes;
  - ii. further investment in marketing collateral (including digital) in order to attract a more diverse audience;
  - iii. to consider the re-introduction of interview days for UG admissions; and,

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- iv. greater flexibility around offers (eg using prior experience in order to promote widening participation).
- e. Enrich Welcome Week activities to further enhance student induction, to provide further support in module selection, and develop activities to help enhance cohort cohesion (eg a combined undergraduate/taught postgraduate field trip)
- f. Work with the Student Wellbeing Services to review provision and support for students with disabilities, including:
  - i. investigating ways to better communicate waiting times for support from SWS (including DAS) and ensure that student expectations around support are managed according to their needs;
  - ii. clarifying details for referral and support of students to Student Wellbeing Services and exploring ways to exploit the 'quick track' referral mechanism where appropriate; and,
  - iii. considering the appointment of a Department level Disability Rep.
- g. Department staff to become more active in the promotion of placements, internships and volunteering opportunities (UROP, RIS, THRIVE) in order to help students develop and identify transferable skills and widen their awareness of careers outside of archaeology
- h. Create formal mechanisms to engage alumni and employers (especially in the enhancement of the curriculum)
- i. Continue to implement the University strategy for staff with a recognised teaching qualification by working with CQSD and creating time for more senior colleagues to complete FLAIR

**Desirable**

- j. Continue to develop plans for ClfA accreditation in readiness of the scheme coming online

**The Panel makes the following recommendations to the University:**

**Necessary**

- k. Consider the unintended consequence of the resource model which threatens student uptake of Museum Studies modules which were co-designed, and are quality assured and administered by Archaeology. The Review panel notes that the current situation may not be sustainable and could lead to severe reduction of numbers on highly successful Museum Studies modules, whereas a split of FTEs would enhance income to both subject areas, as well as ensuring development of interdisciplinary heritage skills, improving employability.
- l. To ensure early, strategic conversations involving diverse members of the Department are held at high levels, to maximise the opportunities offered by the arrival of the British Museum stores on the University of Reading campus and the mutual benefits this might bring.

**Advisable**

- m. To ensure appropriate resources are delivered through Marketing, for the new MSc Professional Human Osteoarchaeology, particularly targeted at international student recruitment.