



**QAA**

# **Subject benchmark statement**

**Art and design**

**2008**

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## Preface

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.

This subject benchmark statement, together with others published concurrently, refers to the **bachelor's degree with honours**<sup>1</sup>. In addition, some subject benchmark statements provide guidance on integrated master's awards.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions (HEIs) when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to HEIs in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards. Subject benchmark statements allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design and can stimulate academic discussion and debate upon the content of new and existing programmes within an agreed overall framework. Their use in supporting programme design, delivery and review within HEIs is supportive of moves towards an emphasis on institutional responsibility for standards and quality.

Subject benchmark statements may also be of interest to prospective students and employers, seeking information about the nature and standards of awards in a given subject or subject area.

The relationship between the standards set out in this document and those produced by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies for individual disciplines will be a matter for individual HEIs to consider in detail.

This subject benchmark statement represents a revised version of the original published in 2002. The review process was overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) as part of a periodic review of all subject benchmark statements published in this year. The review and subsequent revision of the subject benchmark statement was undertaken by a group of subject specialists drawn from, and acting on behalf of, the subject community. The revised subject benchmark statement went through a full consultation with the wider academic community and stakeholder groups.

QAA publishes and distributes this subject benchmark statement and other subject benchmark statements developed by similar subject-specific groups.

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<sup>1</sup> This is equivalent to the honours degree in the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (level 10) and in the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* (level 6).

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) came into force on 4 December 2006<sup>2</sup>. The DED requires public authorities, including HEIs, to act proactively on disability equality issues. The Duty complements the individual rights focus of the *Disability Discrimination Act* and is aimed at improving public services and outcomes for disabled people as a whole. Responsibility for making sure that such duty is met lies with HEIs.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission<sup>3</sup> has published guidance<sup>4</sup> to help HEIs prepare for the implementation of the Duty and provided illustrative examples on how to take the Duty forward. HEIs are encouraged to read this guidance when considering their approach to engaging with components of the Academic Infrastructure<sup>5</sup>, of which subject benchmark statements are a part.

Additional information that may assist HEIs when engaging with subject benchmark statements can be found in the *Code of Practice (revised) for providers of post-16 education and related services*<sup>6</sup>, and also through the Equality Challenge Unit<sup>7</sup> which is established to promote equality and diversity in higher education.

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<sup>2</sup> In England, Scotland and Wales.

<sup>3</sup> On 1 October 2007, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission merged into the new Equality and Human Rights Commission.

<sup>4</sup> Copies of the guidance *Further and higher education institutions and the Disability Equality Duty, Guidance for Principals, Vice-Chancellors, governing boards and senior managers working in further and higher education institutions in England, Scotland and Wales*, may be obtained from [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/forbusinessesandorganisation/publicauthorities/disabilityequalityd/pages/disabilitye.aspx](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/forbusinessesandorganisation/publicauthorities/disabilityequalityd/pages/disabilitye.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> An explanation of the Academic Infrastructure, and the roles of subject benchmark statements within it, is available at [www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure)

<sup>6</sup> Copies of the *Code of Practice (revised) for providers of post-16 education and related services*, published by the Disability Rights Commission, may be obtained from [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Disability/Pages/Education.aspx](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Disability/Pages/Education.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> Equality Challenge Unit, [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)

## Joint foreword

The subject benchmark statements for art and design and for the history of art, architecture and design have been subject to minor revisions.

Both statements continue to be separate and self-contained, modified by the two groups established to undertake those revisions. The review groups renewed the contact and the spirit of reciprocity that accompanied the writing of the original statements, and they ensured that the statements not only remained complementary, but also that the relationship between them was enhanced.

The two subjects have their own histories yet are mutually interdependent. Each subject benchmark statement will interact with a number of other statements, as explained in the respective sections dealing with the nature and scope of the subjects, but the strength of the relationship between the two subjects makes it only right that they should continue to be published in tandem.

Both subjects share a fundamental concern with creative practice. For art and design, primacy is given to the preparation of students for professional, creative practice. For the history of art, architecture and design, the main concerns are with the historical and cultural role of artefacts, their production and consumption. Although the approaches may differ, and the emphases fall in differing places, the concern with visual, material, performative and other forms of cultural practice is central to both subjects. It is important that students in art and design disciplines study the works of other practitioners past and present to locate their practice in an evolving historical context, just as it is important for the history of art, architecture and design students to gain insight into the processes and practices that result in the artefacts, buildings, environments and other objects of study.

In practical terms, the history of art, architecture and design provides supporting study to art and design, including the development of some key skills, and this supporting study has become embedded in creative practice. Staff from each subject will regularly enhance the other's discipline in multifarious ways and achieve mutual benefit in so doing. The two statements do embody fundamental differences and principles as reflected in the nature of subject knowledge, skills, and methods of teaching, learning and assessment. However, student research, nuanced according to the subject and focused on the artefact, is an important element common to both subjects.

So the history of art, architecture and design may be studied as a component of an art and design award; it may be taught and assessed as a separate subject or in combination with many other subjects; it may be a discrete element of the art and design curriculum; or it may be fully integrated with the main practice-based components. Whatever form the relationship takes, the links between the two subjects have been and continue to be strong and productive.

Neither of the two subject benchmark statements prescribe the content of the curriculum, nor the form of delivery in which the connections between the objects are made manifest. Each leaves it to be determined at the level of the institution and the individual programme. When compiling, reviewing or enhancing programme specifications, some course teams will find it sufficient to refer only to one of the statements, while for other teams it will be entirely appropriate to refer to all or

parts of both, for example in joint and combined honours. Whatever the balance of use might be, the respect that each subject community has for the other, and the sense of commonality across the subjects is something we hope to have kept in the foreground when revisiting the subject benchmark statements and we are grateful for the comments made and support offered by those communities in this exercise.

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**June 2007**

# **1 Introduction**

1.1 This subject benchmark statement has been subject to minor revision. It continues to recognise the richness and diversity of art and design higher education (HE) and the important and substantial contribution that graduates in this subject make to the creative and cultural industries, commerce, culture and society. Its revision has been conducted in consultation with the review group for the subject benchmark statement for the history of art, architecture and design.

1.2 The original benchmark statement for art and design was always recognised as a robust, comprehensive document and the decision to propose only minor revisions turned out to be vindicated in practice.

1.3 References and statistics that dated the statement to the time when it was first authored have been removed. The review group have tried to avoid making contemporary references that might soon date this revised statement. Material that has been deemed to be less crucial than it was originally has also been removed. This includes some of the earlier history of the subject and part of the argument for the subject's contribution to the creative industries and to different forms of entrepreneurial activity, which is now widely accepted. In addition, a statement of the threshold level of achievement was added.

1.4 In reflecting a more established, confident and mature sector, the review group has also added material that acknowledges the wider responsibility of the subject towards social well-being and concern for the environment.

1.5 Art and design has grown significantly and achieved greater prominence in United Kingdom (UK) HE in the time since the original statement was written. The hope is that, through these minor revisions, a sense of the continuity, growth and the responsive development of the subject has been conveyed.

1.6 This subject benchmark statement addresses undergraduate provision where art and design is the sole or major component of the final award. Currently, the term 'art and design' is used both within and outside education to embrace a wide and diverse range of disciplines that are cognate with one another to varying degrees (see section 3). For the purpose of clarity in this statement, art and design is referred to as the 'subject', while the distinct areas of activity within the subject are referred to as 'disciplines'. These disciplines are in a state of continuous and dynamic evolution - a characteristic shared with the creative industries and visual cultures with which they have clear and fundamental ties. This breadth and diversity has demanded benchmark standards that accommodate the wide and evolving spectrum of provision.

1.7 The objective remains to provide a benchmark statement that provides HEIs with the flexibility to place greater or less emphasis upon specific aspects within the overall expectations. This statement is deliberately couched in ways that permit interpretation in curricular terms at the local level of the specific discipline, thus allowing HEIs to update and innovate in terms of programme design, content, delivery and assessment.

1.8 The art and design sector has made a significant contribution to the HE agenda in the UK and is a valued member of the HE community. HE programmes in art and design are currently provided by a range of institutions which include universities, institutes and colleges of HE, specialist schools, colleges and institutes of art and design, and colleges of further education in partnership with HEIs with degree awarding powers. A large proportion of students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland still continue to undertake a preparatory art and design course before progressing to the HE programme of their choice. In Scotland, the four-year degrees incorporate this experience. Other forms of access also exist through, for example, application direct from secondary education, access programmes and accreditation of prior learning. The art and design sector has helped to widen access in UK HE for many years and is committed to developing inclusive approaches to student recruitment within the subject.

1.9 The undergraduate's learning experience varies according to which art or design discipline(s), and in which institution, they have chosen to study. Typically, programmes in art and design emphasise imagination, creativity and, where appropriate, craft skills, and are designed to develop students' intellectual powers and their ability to communicate. The student experience embraces both subject-specific and generic knowledge and understanding, attributes and skills (see section 4). Learning in art and design stimulates the development of an enquiring, analytical and creative approach, and develops entrepreneurial capabilities. It also encourages the acquisition of independent judgement and critical self-awareness. Most students work in studio environments supported by a wide range of workshops and other dedicated facilities. Commencing with the acquisition of an understanding of underlying principles and appropriate skills, students normally pursue a programme of staged development progressing to increasingly independent and personally-focused learning.

1.10 New approaches to learning and to the form of the learning environment have been developed, both in response to the increased levels of participation in HE, and to developments in teaching, learning and assessment in HE. Independent and peer group learning are considered to be valuable components of the student experience in these environments. These developments have also been driven by the changing nature of the disciplines and the advent of new disciplines that are creating alternative synergies and modes of practice.

1.11 The study of art and design as an academic and intellectual pursuit develops a range of cognitive abilities related to the aesthetic, the moral, ethical and social contexts of human experience. The capacity to visualise the world from different perspectives is not only intrinsically worthwhile as a personal life skill, but is also an essential part of the human condition. The engagement in the study of art and design is therefore a commitment to improving the quality of one's own and others' cultural experiences. The manifestation of these essential human capacities has always been through the production of artefacts, often for cultural consumption. Thus the study of art and design has always provided a vocational outlet for creative endeavour. In a world that is becoming culturally more sophisticated and requires greater innovation and challenge, the cognitive abilities and practical skills of artists and designers are in increasing demand.

1.12 The creative and cultural industries sector continues to expand at a fast rate. Increasing demand for visual communication, rapid developments in technology, expanding public interests in the visual arts and media, and a growing awareness of what creativity and innovation can bring to many different industrial, commercial and service sectors, all contribute to the demand for education in the subject. Graduates in art and design disciplines have demonstrated that they are equipped with the appropriate skills and abilities to operate effectively in the marketplace. In particular, they display resourcefulness, entrepreneurial skills, and the capacity to establish new and innovative enterprises. Many are active as independent creative artists, designers or designer/makers, while some work in other fields where their attributes and skills are increasingly acknowledged, needed and valued as having wider application.

## **2 Defining principles**

2.1 Art and design is the term widely used to embrace a complex, diverse and evolving constituency of disciplines which share important conceptual characteristics but which are differentiated in significant respects. While it is the very nature of this difference which contributes to its richness as an area of study and practice, the different disciplines share numerous defining qualities. Yet, through modern media and the rapid technological development, the boundaries between the disciplines continue to become more diffuse.

2.2 Learning in art and design develops:

- the capacity to be creative
- an aesthetic sensibility
- intellectual enquiry
- skills in team working
- an appreciation of diversity
- the ability to conduct research in a variety of modes
- the quality of reflecting on one's own learning and development
- the capacity to work independently, determining one's own future learning needs.

2.3 The outcomes of engagement with these characteristics are equally varied in art and in design, but both require the development of particular cognitive attributes. The role of imagination in the creative process is essential in developing the capacities to observe and visualise, in the identifying and solving of problems, and in the making of critical and reflective judgements. While convergent forms of thinking, which involve rational and analytical skills, are developed in art and design, they are not the only conceptual skills within the repertoire employed by artists and designers. More divergent forms of thinking, which involve generating alternatives, and in which the notion of being 'correct' gives way to broader issues of value, are characteristic of the creative process.

2.4 The outcomes of the study and practice of art and design in HE contribute to both the cultural development and the economic well-being of the individual and of society. In both cases, an understanding of the context of the practice is essential. In the former, it enhances their intellect through critical awareness and by locating the individual in an historical continuum. In the latter, it provides knowledge of how an individual's practice relates to that of others which is the cornerstone of originality and personal expression. Without such knowledge, an individual would not have any sense of the nature of their own creativity or the culture in which it is set. Students also understand the broad vocational context within which their study sits and the range of professional practices that inform it, such as anticipating and responding to change; knowledge and application of business systems; presentation; distribution and dissemination of work; skills in entrepreneurialism and social enterprise; and client/audience negotiation skills.

2.5 In learning about the contextual setting of their discipline(s), students also engage with appropriate various related theories within global, historical, contemporary and cultural settings which inform that context and add purpose to their activity. As a consequence, students develop and may challenge their own critical disposition in relation to their discipline(s) and even the conventions of the discipline themselves.

2.6 Experiential, activity and enquiry-based learning are features of the art and design curriculum in HE. Through this approach, students have been encouraged to develop both the capacity for independent learning and the ability to work with others. Students not only develop the ability to solve set problems in a creative way, but they also develop the ability to identify and redefine problems, and to raise and address appropriate issues.

2.7 The outcomes of art and design practice almost always combine the conceptual, theoretical and the practical. Along with the development of their cognitive attributes when learning, students produce outcomes that require the application of practical skills. Some of these skills may be appropriate only to specific contexts, whereas others have a generic or transferable applicability, often within a professional context.

2.8 Both artists and designers produce their work mindful of an audience and/or professional need. The principal forms of communication in these settings involve aesthetics and functionality through which visual presentation skills are developed. Students also develop verbal and written communication skills as a result of interaction with their peers and tutors, both formally and informally. They use a variety of written forms to articulate and synthesise their knowledge and understanding.

### **3 Nature and extent of art and design**

3.1 Art and design is a subject that embraces an overlapping and changing community of many disciplines. It also engages with many other subjects, including media and communications; the performing arts; the built environment; information technology and computing; engineering; business; and, notably, the history of art, architecture and design. The nomenclature of disciplines changes and discipline content may change within conventional nomenclature. The boundaries of art and design have become increasingly blurred, and many disciplines within the subject have become generic and interdisciplinary but less singularly focused.

3.2 This erosion of traditional parameters, which were often based in part on differences in media and processes, has been fuelled by the significant impact of newer media and technologies that are increasingly common across disciplines, replacing some of the traditional discipline-specific skills with skills of a more generic nature.

Art and design has to varying degrees responded to, assimilated, manipulated and appropriated the creative potential of many of these technologies as they have emerged, prompting the advent of new disciplines - a process which can be expected to continue in tandem with further technological innovation.

3.3 Among the common characteristics shared by the broad range of disciplines in art and design are the conception, production, promotion and dissemination of the outcomes that constitute our visual culture. These encompass artefacts intended for intellectual and aesthetic contemplation to functional products, systems and services. The processes from conception to dissemination employ a range of predominantly visual languages to articulate concepts and ideas in two and three dimensions, while in some disciplines the time dimension, narrative, sound and interactivity are of equal importance. These are combined with the exercise of creative skills, imagination, vision and innovation.

3.4 In the education of artists and designers, the constituent disciplines traditionally emphasise the development of visual literacy. Drawing ability is regarded as a prerequisite skill for observation, recording, analysis, speculation, development, visualisation, evaluation and communication. Considerable importance is attached to the acquisition of technical skills in the use of discipline-specific materials and processes. The majority of students pursue broad-based study in art and design prior to more specialist undergraduate study. Some disciplines require a broad knowledge and understanding of aspects of art and design but do not require so much practice in conventional drawing or manipulation of materials and processes traditionally associated with the more popular disciplines. Such disciplines include conservation and restoration; arts, museum and gallery management and administration; curation; design management; and publishing. Other disciplines and combinations of disciplines explicitly prepare students for portfolio careers, emphasising the need for mutability in evolving, creative communities.

3.5 Most programmes attach great importance to students' acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the historical developments of their disciplines. Institutions employ a range of ways to impart historical, theoretical and critical dimensions of their disciplines and to make such dimensions integral to and manifest in student work: common to this range is an emphasis on the essential need to conduct research in all discipline activities.

3.6 Many art and design programmes have also broadened their curriculum by the inclusion of, for example, ecological and sustainable enterprise, business, marketing, modern languages and other professional contextualising subjects. Most disciplines within art and design have been identified as major contributors to the creative industries, and this has led to national recognition of the wealth-creating and culture-enhancing achievements of art and design. Increasingly, graduates in art and design disciplines are finding employment in areas unrelated to the subject but which value and actively seek their creative abilities and skills.

3.7 The art and design community acknowledges the commonalities between the disciplines which comprise the subject. These include features such as practice located in and informed by current critical debate; a shared reliance on curiosity, imagination and empathy; and a creative and speculative approach to the manipulation of ideas, materials, methods and processes. Yet, the separate practices of art and design embody characteristics that are distinct to each.

3.8 The practice of art is a creative endeavour that constantly speculates upon and challenges its own nature and purpose and which demands high levels of self-motivation, intellectual curiosity, speculative enquiry, imagination, and divergent thinking skills. Students learn to recognise the interactive relationship between materials, media and processes, between ideas and issues, and between producer, mediator and audience. Similarly, contemporary art practice demands the ability on the part of the artist to position the individual's practice within an appropriate critical discourse and contextual framework.

3.9 Many graduates continue their practice as artists, and support this through the sale of their work, commissions, grants and residencies, and/or other employment. Most find an application for their learning through, for example, teaching, community arts work, curating, arts management and administration, or within other areas of the creative industries including advertising, film and video production, software design, or as a self-employed artist or designer/maker.

3.10 Designers address practical and theoretical concerns through a broad spectrum of two-dimensional, three-dimensional and time-based media, materials and processes. Design is an activity of creative reasoning that is dependent upon flexibility of ideas and methodologies informed by an awareness of current critical debates. It ranges between the expressive and the functional and can be, for example, stylistically driven or socially motivated or mediated. It is also an iterative process based upon evaluation and modification. Design is reliant upon constantly evolving dialogue and negotiation between the designer (working individually or within teams as proactive collaborator/mediator) and the client, manufacturer, audience, user, customer, participant or recipient.

3.11 At its core, design involves both analysis and synthesis, and is frequently solution-focused, culminating in the creation of design outcomes as prototypes, models or proposals. It is equally concerned with all aspects of material culture across a wide range of interrelated sub-disciplines. There is no single definition or methodological approach to the discipline, and there are no limitations in terms of interdisciplinary relationships. Design covers all aspects of decision-making in relation to the aesthetic, operational, user, market, production and/or manufacturing characteristics of artefacts and systems. The increasing diversity of design education is reflected in a similarly wide variety of careers that graduates pursue in contexts which vary from research to education, management, the media, and the creative and cultural industries.

3.12 Within art and design, there are a number of significant disciplines which employ the practices and methodologies of both art and design. One important group of these disciplines - variously known as craft, applied arts, decorative arts or designer/makers - includes ceramics, glass, jewellery, metalwork, furniture and textiles. Other major disciplines which can embody characteristics of either or both art and design include photography, film, media production, illustration and animation.

## **4 Subject knowledge and understanding, attributes and skills: typical standard of achievement**

4.1 The principal aim of undergraduate education in art and design is to facilitate acquisition of appropriate knowledge and understanding, development of the necessary personal attributes, and application of the essential skills which will equip and prepare students for continuing personal development and professional practice.

4.2 The emphasis given to the following learning outcomes will vary according to the main discipline(s) studied and the aims of the specific programme, while individual levels of achievement will be reflected in the classification of the award. At the typical level of achievement, students graduating with an honours degree in art and design should be able to:

- articulate and synthesise their knowledge and understanding, attributes and skills in effective ways in the contexts of creative practice, employment, further study, research and self-fulfilment
- apply, consolidate and extend their learning in different contextual frameworks and situations, both within and beyond the field of art and design.

### **Subject-specific knowledge and understanding, attributes and skills**

4.3 These are considered to be fundamental to the study and practice of the student's chosen discipline(s). Many are also potentially transferable to other contexts. At the typical level of achievement, these will be evidenced in a body of work which demonstrates the graduate's ability to:

- generate ideas, concepts, proposals, solutions or arguments independently and/or collaboratively in response to set briefs and/or as self-initiated activity
- employ both convergent and divergent thinking in the processes of observation, investigation, speculative enquiry, visualisation and/or making
- select, test and make appropriate use of materials, processes and environments
- develop ideas through to outcomes, for example images, artefacts, environments, products, systems and processes, or texts
- manage and make appropriate use of the interaction between intention, process, outcome, context, and the methods of dissemination
- be resourceful and entrepreneurial.

4.4 Graduates in art and design will have developed skills in communication and expression through visual and plastic forms and, typically, will be able to use visual languages to investigate, analyse, interpret, develop and articulate ideas and information. Their work will be informed by and will inform professional practice in their discipline(s), including:

- the critical, contextual, historical, conceptual and ethical dimensions of the student's discipline in particular, and art and design in general
- the artist's or designer's relationship with audiences, clients, markets, users, consumers, participants, co-workers and co-creators
- the implications and potential for their discipline(s) presented by the key developments in current and emerging media and technologies, and in interdisciplinary approaches to contemporary practice in art and design.

4.5 An honours degree in an art and design discipline also confirms that the holder has acquired relevant technical knowledge and practical skills, and will be able to employ materials, media, techniques, methods, technologies and tools associated with the discipline(s) studied with skill and imagination while observing good working practices, and professional/legal responsibilities relating to the subject.

### **Generic knowledge and understanding, attributes and skills**

4.6 These are normally integrated into the subject curriculum but are neither specific nor unique to art and design. They have applications in a wide range of contexts. Typically, holders of an honours degree in an art and design discipline(s) will have demonstrated the following.

- **Self-management** - students will have the ability to:
  - study independently, set goals, manage their own workloads and meet deadlines
  - anticipate and accommodate change, and work within contexts of ambiguity, uncertainty and unfamiliarity.
- **Critical engagement** - students will have the ability to:
  - analyse information and experiences, formulate independent judgements, and articulate reasoned arguments through reflection, review and evaluation
  - source and research relevant material, assimilating and articulating relevant findings
  - formulate reasoned responses to the critical judgements of others
  - identify personal strengths and needs, and reflect on personal development.
- **Group/team working and social skills** - students will have the ability to interact effectively with others, for example through collaboration, collective endeavour and negotiation.
- **Skills in communication and presentation** - students be able to:
  - articulate ideas and information comprehensibly in visual, oral and written forms
  - present ideas and work to audiences in a range of situations
  - use the views of others in the development or enhancement of their work.
- **Information skills** - students will have the ability to:
  - source, navigate, select, retrieve, evaluate, manipulate and manage information from a variety of sources
  - select and employ communication and information technologies.
- **Personal qualities** - students will have an enthusiasm for enquiry into their discipline and the motivation to sustain it.

## **5 Teaching, learning and assessment**

### **The teaching and learning environment of art and design**

5.1 Art and design HE provision is characterised by the diversity of disciplines available to students (see section 3) and employs a wide range of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment based on an appropriate physical resource. Drawing upon well-established contacts with art and design-related industries in the UK and abroad, professional development is emphasised and practical studies are underpinned by business awareness. Curricula are directly informed and their currency maintained by the research, scholarly activity and professional practice of staff. Practising artists, designers and designer/makers make valuable contributions as part-time and visiting tutors, and facilitate important links to professional and creative practice. Students regularly practise their subject outside formal taught sessions and at such times require support from a range of staff: the contribution of technicians and library/learning resources staff in this context is highly important.

5.2 Access to high quality infrastructure and resources, whether in the learning environment or in suitable equivalent environments, is necessary to provide a challenging and professional locus which usefully mirrors the context of professional practice.

### **Curricula**

5.3 Art and design curricula are designed to support individual development and creativity as artists, designers, communicators and craftsmakers, as well as the progressive acquisition of independent learning skills. Curricula also provide progression at each level, through the sequence of units or projects and by the articulation of appropriate learning outcomes. Core components, prerequisites and academic guidance may also contribute to programme coherence.

5.4 In most programmes, curricula are designed to encourage the development of intellectual maturity, curiosity, personal innovation, risk-taking, independent enquiry, and effective management and planning skills. Practice-based programmes also provide opportunities to develop technical skills and understanding, and the development of generic skills alongside students' subject-specific knowledge and skills. Theoretical, critical, historical and contextual elements of art and design are either integrated into practical projects or units, or are delivered through discrete but complementary units of study, which provide additional opportunities for the development of generic skills.

5.5 Art and design programmes encourage and prepare students to take increasing responsibility for the content and direction of their creative work, and require students to undertake significant and sustained periods of independent study. Typically, this takes the form of a major project presented in the latter stages of the programme.

5.6 Group projects engage art and design students in extending their creative abilities into the arena of collaboration and negotiation, employing interpersonal skills and working as members of teams, and developing their understanding of project management.

## **Teaching, learning and assessment methodologies**

5.7 Studio-based activities are a significant feature of art and design education, providing loci for both individual and group tuition. Effective learning environments are engendered in studios, workshops, production units and computing units, with staff and students sharing experiences as partners in the process of learning. Distinctive features of the subject include, for example, the use of projects as a vehicle for learning, and the group critique, where students present and discuss their work with their peers and tutors. These, together with the individual tutorials, promote reflective learning and the development of generic skills. Other teaching and learning methodologies include team-teaching, demonstrations, seminars and lectures, and peer-learning. Live projects, competitions, work-related learning and student exchanges also provide vehicles for teaching and learning.

5.8 The development of students' independent learning skills is promoted through self-directed and self-initiated study, which may be formalised through individually-negotiated learning agreements. Such personal and professional development is typically expressed in a range of forms including reflective journals and personal development records.

5.9 Formative, summative and diagnostic assessment are regarded as positive learning tools and feedback from assessment offers students clear guidance with regard to future development. Assessment strategies support students' understanding of their learning processes and are designed to foster a deep approach to learning. Strategies also promote autonomous learning and self-evaluation as vital elements within the overall learning process. Self- and peer-evaluation constitute an important part of formative assessment and, on occasion, of the formal summative assessment process. Assessment criteria accommodate the speculative enquiry common to most disciplines in art and design, and provide fair and accurate assessment of team work and individual contributions to the overall outcome of collaborative projects.

5.10 Feedback on assessed work is an important feature of students' learning. Art and design has a strong tradition of providing students with comprehensive oral feedback through tutorials and critiques, but written feedback has increasingly supplemented this predominantly oral tradition, reflecting the art and design community's awareness of good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. Support systems at institutional and discipline levels identify student needs and provide relevant help and advice for both academic and pastoral matters. Research indicates that dyslexia is more prevalent amongst students of art and design than in other subjects, and most institutions have well-established support systems for this need.

## **6 Benchmark standards: threshold level of achievement**

6.1 This section of the statement describes the learning outcomes that undergraduate education in art and design aims to facilitate. The best graduates will have accumulated a body of work that demonstrates excellence in most if not all areas of the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, development of personal attributes, and the acquisition of skills described in section 4. This section concentrates on the threshold standards, ie the minimum acceptable levels of achievement which students must demonstrate to be eligible for the award of an honours degree in an art and design discipline(s). The typical standard is described in section 4.

6.2 These threshold standards are intentionally phrased in broad terms to provide scope for the variations in emphasis and interpretation that individual programmes will rightly wish to place upon them according to the nature of the discipline and their institutional mission and context. The standards are articulated as learning outcomes which provide a reference point that will enable the providers of undergraduate education in art and design to continue to develop diverse and innovative programmes.

### **Subject-specific knowledge and understanding, attributes and skills**

6.3 On graduating with an honours degree in art and design, students should be able to:

- present evidence that demonstrates some ability to generate ideas independently and/or collaboratively in response to set briefs and/or as self-initiated activity
- demonstrate proficiency in observation, investigation, enquiry, visualisation and/or making
- develop ideas through to outcomes that confirm the student's ability to select and use materials, processes and environments
- make connections between intention, process, outcome, context, and methods of dissemination.

6.4 At the threshold standard, a student's work will have been informed by aspects of professional practice in their discipline(s). This will be evidenced by some knowledge and understanding of:

- the broad critical and contextual dimensions of the student's discipline(s)
- the issues which arise from the artist's or designer's relationship with audiences, clients, markets, users, consumers, and/or participants
- major developments in current and emerging media and technologies in their discipline(s)
- the significance of the work of other practitioners in their discipline(s).

6.5 At the threshold standard, an honours degree in art and design confirms that the holder has acquired technical knowledge and practical skills. The student will be able to use materials, media, techniques, methods, technologies and tools associated with the discipline(s) studied, and will be familiar with good working practices.

6.6 On graduating with an honours degree in art and design at the threshold level, students will have demonstrated that they have some ability to:

- exercise self-management skills in managing their workloads and meeting deadlines
- accommodate change and uncertainty
- analyse information and experiences, and formulate reasoned arguments
- benefit from the critical judgements of others and recognise their personal strengths and needs
- apply interpersonal and social skills to interact with others
- communicate ideas and information in visual, oral and written forms
- present ideas and work to their audiences
- apply information skills to navigate, retrieve, and manage information from a variety of sources
- select and employ communication and information technologies.

## **Appendix A: Consultation groups**

During the preparation of this subject benchmark statement for art and design, the review group consulted with the following organisations and projects.

- Art & Design: Empowering Part-time Tutors (a three-year project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning Phase 4 (FDTL4))
- Association of Fashion and Textile Courses
- Association of Photography in HE
- Council for Higher Education in Art and Design
- Design Education Association
- Design Research Society
- Group for Learning in Art and Design
- Life Work Art (FDTL4)
- Interiors Educators
- National Association for Fine Art Education
- National Association for Higher Education in the Moving Image
- National Association for Ceramics in Higher Education
- National Association of Jewellery and Silversmith Design Education
- The Subject Centre for Art, Design and Media
- Writing Purposefully in Art & Design (Writing PAD) (FDTL4)

## **Appendix B: Membership of the review group for the subject benchmark statement for art and design**

Carolyn Bew	The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Art, Design and Media
Dr Cheryl Buckley	Northumbria University and the Design History Society
Professor David Buss	University College for the Creative Arts at Epsom, Farnham, Rochester, Canterbury and Maidstone
David Butler	Newcastle University and the Life, Work, Art (project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning Phase 4 (FDTL4))
Dr Linda Drew	Chelsea College of Art and Design
Professor Judy Glasman	University of Hertfordshire and the Art & Design: Empowering Part-time Tutors (FDTL4)
Professor Gordon Kennedy (Chair)	Nottingham Trent University
Dr Gerard Moran	De Montfort University
Christoph Raatz	Council for Higher Education in Art and Design
Brenda Sparkes	Nottingham Trent University and the Association of Fashion and Textile Courses
Andrew Stone	London Metropolitan University and the Interiors Educators
Professor Evelyn Welch	Queen Mary, University of London and the Association of Art Historians
Professor John Wood	Goldsmiths College, University of London and the Writing Purposefully in Art & Design (FDTL4)

## **Appendix C: Membership of the original benchmarking group for art and design**

Details below appear as published in the original subject benchmark statement for art and design (2002).

Ms Glenda Brindle	University of Central Lancashire
Professor David Buss (Chair)	Kent Institute of Art and Design
Mr Tim Coward	University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
Mr Allan Davies	Centre for Learning and Teaching in Art and Design, London Institute, Royal College of Art and Wimbledon School of Art
Mr Anthony Dean	The Central School of Speech and Drama, London
Ms Linda Drew	Learning and Teaching Support Network for Art, Design and Communication, University of Brighton
Mr David Henderson	The Robert Gordon University
Professor Jamie Hobson	Southampton Institute
Ms Jill Journeaux	Coventry University
Professor Terence Kavanagh	Loughborough University
Ms Joyce Palmer	London Guildhall University
Ms Sue Tuckett	Norwich School of Art and Design



**QAA**

## **Subject benchmark statement**

**History of art, architecture and design**

**2008**

QAA 239 03/08

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## Preface

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.

This subject benchmark statement, together with others published concurrently, refers to the **bachelor's degree with honours**<sup>1</sup>. In addition, some subject benchmark statements provide guidance on integrated master's awards.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions (HEIs) when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to HEIs in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards. Subject benchmark statements allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design and can stimulate academic discussion and debate upon the content of new and existing programmes within an agreed overall framework. Their use in supporting programme design, delivery and review within HEIs is supportive of moves towards an emphasis on institutional responsibility for standards and quality.

Subject benchmark statements may also be of interest to prospective students and employers, seeking information about the nature and standards of awards in a given subject or subject area.

The relationship between the standards set out in this document and those produced by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies for individual disciplines will be a matter for individual HEIs to consider in detail.

This subject benchmark statement represents a revised version of the original published in 2002. The review process was overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) as part of a periodic review of all subject benchmark statements published in this year. The review and subsequent revision of the subject benchmark statement was undertaken by a group of subject specialists drawn from, and acting on behalf of, the subject community. The revised subject benchmark statement went through a full consultation with the wider academic community and stakeholder groups.

QAA publishes and distributes this subject benchmark statement and other subject benchmark statements developed by similar subject-specific groups.

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<sup>1</sup> This is equivalent to the honours degree in the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (level 10) and in the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* (level 6).

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) came into force on 4 December 2006<sup>2</sup>. The DED requires public authorities, including HEIs, to act proactively on disability equality issues. The Duty complements the individual rights focus of the *Disability Discrimination Act* and is aimed at improving public services and outcomes for disabled people as a whole. Responsibility for making sure that such duty is met lies with HEIs.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission<sup>3</sup> has published guidance<sup>4</sup> to help HEIs prepare for the implementation of the Duty and provided illustrative examples on how to take the Duty forward. HEIs are encouraged to read this guidance when considering their approach to engaging with components of the Academic Infrastructure<sup>5</sup>, of which subject benchmark statements are a part.

Additional information that may assist HEIs when engaging with subject benchmark statements can be found in the *Code of Practice (revised) for providers of post-16 education and related services*<sup>6</sup>, and also through the Equality Challenge Unit<sup>7</sup> which is established to promote equality and diversity in higher education.

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<sup>2</sup> In England, Scotland and Wales.

<sup>3</sup> On 1 October 2007, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission merged into the new Equality and Human Rights Commission.

<sup>4</sup> Copies of the guidance *Further and higher education institutions and the Disability Equality Duty, Guidance for Principals, Vice-Chancellors, governing boards and senior managers working in further and higher education institutions in England, Scotland and Wales*, may be obtained from [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/forbusinessesandorganisation/publicauthorities/disabilityequalityd/pages/disabilitye.aspx](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/forbusinessesandorganisation/publicauthorities/disabilityequalityd/pages/disabilitye.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> An explanation of the Academic Infrastructure, and the roles of subject benchmark statements within it, is available at [www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure)

<sup>6</sup> Copies of the *Code of Practice (revised) for providers of post-16 education and related services*, published by the Disability Rights Commission, may be obtained from [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Disability/Pages/Education.aspx](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publicationsandresources/Disability/Pages/Education.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> Equality Challenge Unit, [www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)

## Joint foreword

The subject benchmark statements for art and design and for the history of art, architecture and design have been subject to minor revisions.

Both statements continue to be separate and self-contained, modified by the two groups established to undertake those revisions. The review groups renewed the contact and the spirit of reciprocity that accompanied the writing of the original statements, and they ensured that the statements not only remained complementary, but also that the relationship between them was enhanced.

The two subjects have their own histories yet are mutually interdependent. Each subject benchmark statement will interact with a number of other statements, as explained in the respective sections dealing with the nature and scope of the subjects, but the strength of the relationship between the two subjects makes it only right that they should continue to be published in tandem.

Both subjects share a fundamental concern with creative practice. For art and design, primacy is given to the preparation of students for professional, creative practice. For the history of art, architecture and design, the main concerns are with the historical and cultural role of artefacts, their production and consumption. Although the approaches may differ, and the emphases fall in differing places, the concern with visual, material, performative and other forms of cultural practice is central to both subjects. It is important that students in art and design disciplines study the works of other practitioners past and present to locate their practice in an evolving historical context, just as it is important for the history of art, architecture and design students to gain insight into the processes and practices that result in the artefacts, buildings, environments and other objects of study.

In practical terms, the history of art, architecture and design provides supporting study to art and design, including the development of some key skills, and this supporting study has become embedded in creative practice. Staff from each subject will regularly enhance the other's discipline in multifarious ways and achieve mutual benefit in so doing. The two statements do embody fundamental differences and principles as reflected in the nature of subject knowledge, skills, and methods of teaching, learning and assessment. However, student research, nuanced according to the subject and focused on the artefact, is an important element common to both subjects.

So the history of art, architecture and design may be studied as a component of an art and design award; it may be taught and assessed as a separate subject or in combination with many other subjects; it may be a discrete element of the art and design curriculum; or it may be fully integrated with the main practice-based components. Whatever form the relationship takes, the links between the two subjects have been and continue to be strong and productive.

Neither of the two subject benchmark statements prescribe the content of the curriculum, nor the form of delivery in which the connections between the objects are made manifest. Each leaves it to be determined at the level of the institution and the individual programme. When compiling, reviewing or enhancing programme specifications, some course teams will find it sufficient to refer only to one of the statements, while for other teams it will be entirely appropriate to refer to all or

parts of both, for example in joint and combined honours. Whatever the balance of use might be, the respect that each subject community has for the other, and the sense of commonality across the subjects is something we hope to have kept in the foreground when revisiting the subject benchmark statements and we are grateful for the comments made and support offered by those communities in this exercise.

Professor Gordon Kennedy  
Nottingham Trent University (for art and design)  
and

Professor Evelyn Welch  
Queen Mary, University of London (for the history of art, architecture and design)

**June 2007**

# 1 Introduction

1.1 This subject benchmark statement seeks to make explicit the nature and standards of undergraduate honours degree programmes which have 'history of art', 'history of design', 'history of architecture', 'history of film', 'visual culture' or 'material culture' in their title, or which, under other titles, include a substantial element of this sort of study. An increasing number of programmes also deal with museum studies or curatorial practice. This statement provides guidance, not a template that might be used to prescribe or proscribe any particular honours degree programme or component.

1.2 The history of art, architecture and design (HAAD) is a diverse and dynamic group of subjects, both in terms of the objects studied and of the methods and goals of study. As well as in named degrees, disciplines that make up this group of subjects are taught as part of a wide variety of programmes. In some form, HAAD continues to be an integral component of most degrees in the area of art; design; visual and material culture; curatorial practice; architecture; and film and media studies. Programmes in many other single subject degrees, as well as degrees in area studies and general humanities degrees, may also include components or modules in HAAD. Despite this wide and flexible scope, some distinctions are fundamental: HAAD is qualitatively different in its approach from practice-based subjects in art and design on the one hand and from solely text-based humanities subjects on the other.

1.3 In all programmes and components, HAAD is distinguished by a concern with visual and material culture in both the past and the present. No single word or phrase neatly encapsulates all the objects and concepts that programmes in HAAD may address. Programmes may be concerned with a very wide range of entities, with everyday objects, images and environments, with works of art, and with a range of artefacts not made as 'art objects' but which have come to be considered as such, and with critical, historical and theoretical writing on all these forms. The concept of 'art' is widely understood within the subject areas to be contested and historically contingent, and in any case not to be an appropriate categorisation for many of our objects of study.

1.4 Most programmes are concerned primarily with visual and material culture, ie with the historical study of artefacts that communicate meaning and value through being looked at and handled. They may include buildings and the built environment; gardens; designed objects (whether industrially produced or individually crafted); drawings (including design drawings); paintings; photographs; prints; posters and other forms of graphic design; sculptures; clothes and textiles; and many other sorts of artefact, both individually and in combination as display or performance. HAAD addresses both luxury and everyday artefacts, and objects and projects whether realised, ephemeral or unrealised. Though the primary focus of HAAD is the range of things which have been designed to be seen, those working in the area also pay attention to other sensible aspects of the artefacts with which they are concerned, in particular their tactile, spatial and audible qualities. For the sake of convenience, we refer to the range of spaces, buildings, images, objects, digital media, projects, performances, ephemeral displays and texts studied as 'artefacts' in this document. When this benchmark statement refers to 'objects', it indicates both the more or less material artefacts produced and consumed in the processes of culture, and the cognitive notion of 'the object of study', which may be wholly an intellectual construct (eg modernism, the Renaissance).

## **2 Relevance, history and scope of history of art, architecture and design**

2.1 HAAD equips its students to address issues of fundamental historical and contemporary significance. It enables them to engage thoughtfully with key aspects of the contemporary world: the range of processes, institutions and technologies that rely on and produce visual and material culture. HAAD also enhances students' capacities for critical awareness and informed pleasure in relation to the range of artefacts that they may encounter. Through a study of the material culture of the recent or distant past, its urban and landscape forms, architecture, monuments, images, treasures, displays and consumer goods, students develop the critical expertise and resources demanded of a responsible citizen in a world that is both increasingly globalised and sensitive to the politics and ethics of cultural diversity and difference. HAAD provides a unique perspective on issues of identity, and on the making and sustaining of underlying cultural values across a very wide range of geographical and historical contexts. HAAD can provide a practical and critical stance on issues of creativity, heritage and areas that are now termed the creative or cultural industries.

2.2 In the United Kingdom (UK), scholarly and educational interest in design history, architectural history, and art history, long precedes their formal establishment as taught subjects in HEIs. From the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, 'professional' scholarship in this group of subjects was conducted in a wide variety of contexts. Scholarship was characterised by an interest in the description and classification of material objects, by a concern with artefacts from a global range of cultures, and by a widely shared remit to support teaching, both in the national system of schools of design and elsewhere. HAAD also formed part of a range of university and art school curricula as an aspect of the training of artists, architects and designers, and as part of programmes in other humanities disciplines.

2.3 HAAD today is characterised by its adaptive openness to new methodologies and concerns. Over the last generation, its objects and methods of study have diversified. Increased interest has emerged in the study of the institutions which support and promote the production and collection, display and interpretation of artefacts in response to such trends as the rapid development of global contemporary art and the continuing expansion of 'heritage culture'. Similarly, there has been increased interest in the scientific and technical analysis of works of art and the cognitive analysis of aesthetic response.

2.4 HAAD works with many sorts of artefacts and texts, and addresses a wide and constantly evolving range of objects of study. HAAD also addresses the wide sphere of visual and material culture, expanding its objects of study to film, video and other time-based media and performance, as well as electronic images and digital media. Programmes in HAAD also study people and groups of people, for example: artists; architects; designers; inventors; patrons and craftspersons; dealers and collectors; people in manufacturing; advertising and marketing; critics and curators; users and viewers; and others involved in any of the stages of producing and consuming artefacts, and in establishing value. They also study the institutions in which such people participate. The potential geographical and temporal range of HAAD is wide and there is a growing focus on the culturally diverse nature of both historical and contemporary societies. Some programmes address artefacts from periods which predate the invention of

writing, and some concentrate on works produced during the last century. Although the range is wide, the focus in some respects is close: programmes in HAAD place great importance on the observation of artefacts at first hand and the development of skills of visual analysis. Thus, programmes make use of resources of all kinds, including virtual resources. Study visits to examine relevant sites, archives, performances and collections may often be entailed.

2.5 Programmes in HAAD attract students from a wide range of academic backgrounds. While the qualifications they will gain are directly relevant to many fields of employment, many students take up the subjects in this area because they are drawn to them by well-founded expectations of intellectual excitement, cultural stimulation and visual pleasure.

2.6 Graduates in this group of subjects command a range of the generic skills that are fostered by a training in critical analysis, together with those developed by a grounding in historical investigation. They are moreover equipped with subject-specific skills, including 'visual literacy' and a confidence in engaging with both abstract and material objects of study, skills increasingly relevant in the contemporary world. They are well-equipped to take up careers in arts and heritage management, in galleries and museums and archives, in journalism and the media, in publishing, and in a wide range of positions in and around the creative arts and industries. This is particularly true when combined with language-learning. Many go on to graduate study, either in the subject area or to pursue further professional development.

### **3 Nature and extent of history of art, architecture and design**

3.1 In general, programmes in HAAD are concerned with the production, circulation and reception of meanings and values in history. They examine the ways that these have been mediated by artefacts, and how these artefacts have actually been used. Students may consider artefacts broadly from four points of view: as things which have been made; as things which have been designed; as things which carry meaning and value; and as things whose understanding is enriched by contextual study; these points of view are mutually reinforcing.

3.2 Within this broad characterisation, HAAD has distinctive cognitive and investigative concerns, which require students both to attend to the specific material features of artefacts, and to engage with objects of study which are immaterial, abstract or generalised. These cognitive concerns include those listed below.

#### **Time depth**

3.3 HAAD is a historical study. Change and continuity may be studied over a range of durations and themes. Patterns of change and continuity can be identified by the study of more than one culture area. These concerns ally HAAD closely with the methods and ambitions of history: it shares and endorses history's critical concerns with the evaluation of archival, literary and other forms of evidence. In addition, HAAD develops specific competence in the identification, evaluation and deployment of visual, material, textual and performative evidence in historical arguments and narratives.

## **Production and consumption**

3.4 HAAD is often understood to concentrate on what artists and designers did, and on why they did it: on influence, inspiration and creativity. However, it is concerned both with the historical, cultural and personal conditions which shape the production, use and valuing of artefacts in the societies for which they were made, and also with the ways in which such artefacts have been subsequently interpreted and treated. When HAAD considers the production of artefacts, it considers them both as things which are made (ie as things that have a distinctive material form, dependent on materials and techniques that must be understood historically), and as things which have been designed (that is, that have been shaped by men and women living at particular historical moments who were interested in specific formal and functional issues). However, the artefacts studied in the subject area have been historically instrumental, not because of their life in the mind of their designers or their passage through a workshop, but because they have met needs as objects of consumption and of other forms of appropriation. This leads HAAD to the study, for example, of patronage, of collecting, of the everyday use of designed objects, of the evolution of the 'built environment' as well as to the study of critical, theoretical and historical writing on art, architecture and design.

## **Artefacts and signification**

3.5 HAAD considers artefacts to support meaning in a range of ways. Groups of artefacts may, for example, be meaningfully connected through their iconographic, stylistic or generic features. HAAD is also concerned with the way that artefacts form part of wider signifying systems, for example in their connections beyond the field of visual culture to literature or religion, to medical, scientific, economic, social or philosophical discourses, or to other shared beliefs or behaviours.

## **Artefacts and values**

3.6 HAAD seeks not only to explain meaning but also to engage critically with, and understand, value as it has been understood in cultures. This involves attention to the aesthetic and material qualities of artefacts. Such critical engagement promotes reasoned and accountable enjoyment of visual experience. Thus HAAD engages with the logics of cultural hierarchy and difference. Whether it concentrates on works of art, or looks at 'everyday' forms, it is concerned to explore the relationship between the sensible qualities of artefacts and their position in systems of cultural value.

## **Visual interpretation**

3.7 Programmes in HAAD are characterised by the training which they offer in close, informed and rigorous looking at artefacts, including the examination of critical texts, and in other forms of sensory and intellectual attention to objects or performances. This training might take the form of descriptive work, formal or iconographic analysis, critical or theoretical interpretation or systematic examination for the purposes of cataloguing or conservation. This training inculcates competencies which are often called critical analysis or visual literacy.

3.8 The distinct origins and contexts of the disciplines within HAAD help to provide the subject area with its creative energy and dynamic character. This also comes from continued controversy over the role and status of 'art' in contemporary societies both now and in the past, and over the relationship of visual culture to other structures of power and meaning. Many programmes deliberately emphasise the diversity of methods which are put to use in HAAD as a result of its lineage and its current functions, and few will omit altogether some basic orientation in the 'methods and approaches' necessary to any useful engagement with the subjects in this area. Where such topics form a substantial part of a programme, they will enable students to understand better the limits and ambiguity, and the constructed nature, of the discipline with which they are engaged.

## **4 Knowledge, skills and attributes**

4.1 Teaching and research in the subjects within HAAD are distinctively interdisciplinary. The group of subjects continually develops its relationships with other disciplines and is responsive to a wide range of innovative methodologies in the construction of new areas of knowledge. It follows that the range of skills and attributes which graduates in the subject area acquire will also be various and evolving.

### **Subject-based knowledge and understanding**

4.2 Depending on the focus of their programme, and the formation of their own cognitive style, students should acquire:

- a broad and comparative knowledge and understanding of aspects of the culture of more than one geographical region and/or chronological period
- a more concentrated knowledge and understanding of one or more periods and places
- a knowledge and understanding of the processes through which artefacts are designed and made in the cultures studied
- familiarity with some substantive areas of current research in the field addressed by the degree programme
- an engagement with the concepts, values and debates that inform study and practice in the field addressed by the degree programme, including an awareness of the limitations and partiality of all historical knowledge
- a knowledge of the development of the field addressed by the degree programme, and of its key intellectual tools.

## **Subject-specific skills and abilities**

4.3 The attributes which characterise graduates in HAAD derive principally from the combination of visual, critical and historical abilities particular to this group of subjects.

### **Visual and critical skills**

4.4 Students should develop skills in the following areas:

- observation: close and systematic visual examination, informed by appropriate knowledge of materials, techniques and cultural contexts
- description: recording and describing such artefacts with clarity and precision, using ordinary and specialist language as appropriate to the topic and the intended audience, and with consideration for the differences between the visual and the verbal
- interpretation: the ability to:
  - set the artefacts studied within appropriate historical, intellectual, cultural and institutional contexts
  - draw upon personal responses to artefacts while recognising how these should be distinguished from other relevant meanings
  - develop arguments concerning production processes, and concerning formal and functional ambitions and effects from close observation of artefacts
  - relate the processes of making artefacts to their cultural functions
  - understand the role of artefacts as carriers of meaning and value
  - identify and analyse the development of and interrelation between forms and genres.

### **Historical skills**

4.5 Students should develop the ability to:

- use appropriate methodologies for locating, assessing and interpreting primary sources
- select relevant evidence from the wide range of types of evidence used in the subject area, and to apply it to the examination of historical issues and problems
- produce logical and structured narratives and arguments supported by relevant evidence
- marshal and appraise critically other people's arguments and to argue on the basis of familiarity both with relevant evidence and with specialist literature.

## **Generic intellectual skills and attributes**

4.6 In addition to specific abilities necessarily developed in a subject area which deals with visual culture in a historical way, and which requires the development of the ability to express in written language both the description and the analysis of artefacts, and to build these into coherent and persuasive texts, HAAD provides opportunities and incentives for students to develop the following skills and attributes. We do not expect any student to have them all in equal measure.

## **Cognitive skills**

4.7 Students should develop skills and attributes in:

- analysis: the ability to break down an argument, a task or a body of evidence, and deal effectively with its component parts
- synthesis: the ability to bring evidence or ideas of different sorts or from different sources together in a productive way
- summarisation: the ability to identify and present the key elements of an argument or a demonstration
- critical judgement: the ability to discriminate between alternative arguments and approaches
- problem-solving: the ability to apply knowledge and experience so as to make appropriate decisions in complex and incompletely charted contexts.

## **Research skills**

4.8 Students should develop:

- the capacity for critical, effective and testable information retrieval and organisation
- the ability to design and carry out a research project with limited tutorial guidance.

## **Open-mindedness**

4.9 Students should develop the ability to:

- be open and receptive to new things and ideas
- identify the merits of unfamiliar arguments or cultural artefacts and the merits or shortcomings of familiar ones
- appreciate and evaluate divergent points of view and to communicate their qualities.

## **Transferable skills**

### **Communication skills**

4.10 Students should develop:

- the ability to communicate information, arguments and ideas cogently and effectively within a range of discourses as appropriate to particular audiences, and in written, spoken or other form using appropriate visual aids and information technology (IT) resources
- in addition to the generic communication skills to be expected of all humanities students, particular abilities in the deployment of visual material in conjunction with written, oral and other forms of communication, such as illustrated essays and seminars, slide, moving image or multimedia presentations
- the ability to listen effectively, and thus to participate constructively in discussion.

## **Teamwork**

4.11 Students should develop the ability to work constructively and productively in groups.

## **Diligence**

4.12 Students should develop the ability to undertake and complete set tasks, whether routine and familiar or requiring the acquisition and application of new skills.

## **Autonomy**

4.13 Students should acquire the ability to:

- develop an independent argument that is informed by but not dependent on authorities in the subject area
- define one's own brief, and to formulate arguments that effectively structure relevant information.

## **Time management and personal initiative**

4.14 Students should develop the ability to:

- work to briefs and deadlines, including managing concurrent projects
- take responsibility for one's own work
- reflect on one's own learning, and to make constructive use of feedback
- take shared responsibility for one's own programme of studies.

# **5 Teaching, learning and assessment**

5.1 The strategies for teaching learning and assessment in HAAD, and the learning environments created by different providers will vary depending on the content of the curricula offered, the mission and policies of the institution as they relate to the student profile, and the extent of engagement of different providers with national and international debates about pedagogy in the subject area. There will be a variety of teaching and assessment methods, including those forms common to all disciplines in the humanities, and others that are specific to the subject area. Strategies will encourage and support the autonomy, confidence and independence of the learner. Providers will generally be concerned with, and interested in, effective new approaches to teaching and learning in the subject area, and in learning supported by communication and information technologies, especially for the display, analysis and manipulation of still and moving images.

5.2 Staff engaged in research and scholarly activity in the subject play a major part in the delivery of all HAAD programmes; interaction between teaching and research makes a central and indispensable contribution to the dynamism of these disciplines. The character of teaching and learning reflects the research base of curricula, introducing diversity and an experimental character to programmes. In many the dynamic interaction with local collections, through research partnerships with external organisations, provides special opportunities for students. Such connections may also be forged at national and international level and should enrich the curriculum.

5.3 Students taking degrees in HAAD should be taught within an environment conducive to learning, which is intellectually stimulating, and which embraces intellectual diversity. There should be access to relevant and recent published literature, IT facilities, appropriate primary sources and (for conservation courses) access to appropriate artefacts and to properly equipped and staffed laboratories and studios. The study of artefacts at first and second hand is fundamental to teaching and learning in the subject area. Access to primary sources may be via teaching collections, institutional collections, local galleries and gallery collections, performance venues, film and sound archives, or the local built environment; students will generally be expected to undertake organised or independent study visits further afield. Students should have access to current and emerging audio-visual resources as appropriate, including digital resources.

### **Teaching and learning methods**

5.4 The principal teaching and learning methods that a HAAD student may experience will depend on the aims and objectives of the programme. What follows is not an exhaustive list, and a single session might incorporate a number of activities. Further diversification in teaching and learning methods is to be expected above all in distance-learning programmes. Programmes are likely to include an appropriate selection of the following:

- lectures: which will often be supported by artefacts and still or moving images, to inform and also to motivate by capturing interest and exciting curiosity; these may be interactive or may be delivered online as well as in person
- seminars: that provide the context for group work, small-group discussions and team-based exercises; these may be virtual seminars; they may be led by the students themselves as well as by the tutor
- student presentations or online discussions amongst students, which provide opportunity for oral communication and argument
- problem-based learning or enquiry-led learning, where students explore problems or questions in groups
- tutorials and supervisions for structured, regular contact with tutors and supervisors
- directed reading, viewing or handling within the specialist field of the subject area, and in related subjects
- student-directed reading, viewing or handling of an exploratory and speculative kind, both within and outwith the immediate subject area
- study visits to appropriate locations for direct experience and in situ discussion according to the focus of the programme
- moving image presentations, to provide experience of the object of study or supply evidence for interpretation
- object-based work, including demonstrations, artefact handling and identification work, and practical exercises and science-based experiments

- placement or workplace experience
- where HAAD constitutes more than half of a degree programme, students will normally undertake some form of independent research work in the subject, often in the form of a personal research project assessed by a dissertation presented in the later stages of the programme.

## **Progression**

5.5 Honours level studies in HAAD may be understood as a framework within which the student exercises considerable autonomy, and where study methods are developed and sustained largely by students themselves as they take responsibility for their own learning. For most students, this contrasts with the more closely supported and task-orientated environment of secondary and further education. The journey, however, will be different for every student, depending on personal qualities and prior experience.

5.6 Entrants to HAAD degrees demonstrate a particularly rich mixture of existing knowledge, abilities and qualifications. Programmes may support individual development in a variety of ways, including the formal recognition of prior learning and experience, the design of courses to enable the acquisition of appropriate study skills, and guided opportunities for choice within the curriculum. In this context, progression may be demonstrated by students' general maturity of scholarship rather than by a particular sequence of competencies.

5.7 However, in recognition of the fact that many students will have little or no prior experience of academic study in the subject area, the early stages of most programmes are designed to foster the skills and understanding necessary for more advanced studies. Initial courses may, for instance, introduce disciplinary debates and methodologies, involve focused study of restricted groups of artefacts, and are likely to pay particular attention to the development of visual awareness and analytic skills.

5.8 The majority of programmes use systems of optional courses, at least in later stages, enabling students to study a chosen range of themes, periods or genres, alongside a core of courses that extends the knowledge base and the understanding of the principles and methodologies which underlie the study of HAAD. Appropriate guidance, and rules governing prerequisites and combinations, ensure the adequacy of the programme of study to meet the developmental and intellectual needs of the student, whether the programme leads to a single honours, joint honours or combined award.

5.9 Subject matter may be presented in non-sequential ways; it is for individual programmes to articulate appropriate principles of progression and make clear how the curriculum design promotes increasing maturity in the integration of theory, practice and specialist knowledge.

## **Assessment**

5.10 Assessment is a key element in the support of effective learning, and is used for diagnostic, formative and summative purposes. The design should be constructive and encourage deep approaches to learning, while the methods should be both a fair reflection of the course aims and content and appropriate to them. Modes of assessment will be appropriately matched to intended learning outcomes. Self-assessment and student diaries used as a record of experience during the course - or as part of it - can support reflective learning as an alternative to, or in addition to, more traditional forms of assessed writing such as essays and standard examinations.

5.11 The following list provides a general indication of the range of current practice and is not intended to be a specific checklist against which to measure individual programmes. Peer or self-assessment may be appropriate modes for some of these tasks under some circumstances; some forms of assessment may derive from negotiated learning contracts. Methods deployed may include:

- tests of visual knowledge
- case studies which can be produced by individuals or groups
- personal research projects; reflective log books or diaries
- oral presentations
- online discussions
- assessed work presented in other forms: eg videos, compact discs, exhibitions, web pages
- written assignments
- timed examinations, seen and unseen
- work placement diaries and/or reports, internship diaries and/or reports, treatment reports
- portfolios including a variety of completed work which can include some or all of the above approaches.

## **6 Benchmark standards**

6.1 The bulleted lists below characterise levels and areas of achievement in HAAD. All graduates with an honours degree in HAAD will have shown a minimally acceptable repertoire of achievement across these areas of performance. However, most students will demonstrate considerably greater sophistication and depth and a wider range of achievements, making evident the great variety of intellectual strengths (and comparative weaknesses) which students graduating with 'typical' results will display. These 'typical' characterisations may be read as indicating the sorts of competence that students in the subject area will aspire to achieve or exceed.

6.2 We have not attempted a characterisation of 'excellent' achievement. We confidently expect that excellent students will surprise us, will find ways of doing and saying things that we had not imagined; some of the best performances will be based on or result in productive critiques of established characterisations.

6.3 We expect that at every level of overall achievement, Boards of Examiners would accept the logic that strength in some areas may compensate for weakness in others.

### **Subject-specific knowledge and understanding**

#### **Typical level of achievement**

6.4 On graduating with an honours degree in HAAD, students should be able to demonstrate:

- a broad and comparative knowledge and understanding of the visual and material culture of more than one geographical region and/or chronological period
- a more concentrated and systematic knowledge of one or more of the above

- a knowledge and understanding of the processes through which artefacts are constructed in the cultures studied
- a familiarity with some substantive areas of current research in the field addressed by the degree programme
- an ability to engage with the concepts, values and debates that inform study and research in the subject area, including an awareness of the limited and partial nature of all historical knowledge
- an understanding of the development of the subject, and of its key intellectual tools.

### **Threshold level of achievement**

6.5 On graduating with an honours degree in HAAD, students should be able to demonstrate:

- a knowledge of the visual and material culture of more than one geographical region and/or chronological period
- a more concentrated knowledge of one or more of the above
- a knowledge of the processes through which artefacts are constructed
- some knowledge of current research in the field addressed by the degree programme
- some ability to engage with a range of the concepts, values and debates that inform study and practice in the subject area
- some knowledge of the development of the subject.

### **Subject-specific skills and abilities**

#### **Typical level of achievement**

6.6 On graduating with an honours degree in HAAD, students should be capable of demonstrating:

- the ability to use critical skills of visual observation, description and interpretation
- the ability to locate artefacts within appropriate historical, intellectual, cultural or institutional contexts
- the ability to locate and evaluate evidence from a wide range of primary and secondary sources (visual, oral or textual) and interpret it in relation to relevant issues and enquiries
- the ability to evaluate a range of different methodologies and approaches within the subject
- the ability to produce well structured and relevant arguments supported by visual, textual or other evidence as appropriate
- the ability to balance and present alternative points of view held within the subject, to use unfamiliar arguments and artefacts constructively, and to engage critically with familiar or established ideas.

### **Threshold level of achievement**

6.7 On graduating with an honours degree in HAAD, students should be capable of demonstrating:

- the ability to use basic skills of visual observation, description and analysis
- some ability to locate artefacts within appropriate historical or cultural contexts
- the ability to locate evidence from primary and secondary sources (visual, oral or textual) and use it in relation to relevant issues and enquiries
- an awareness of a range of different methodologies and approaches within the subject
- the ability to produce relevant arguments supported by evidence
- the ability to present alternative points of view held within the subject.

### **Generic intellectual skills**

#### **Typical level of achievement**

6.8 On graduating with an honours degree in HAAD, students should be capable of demonstrating:

- developed skills of analysis, synthesis and effective summary
- critical judgement: the ability to discriminate between alternative arguments and approaches
- problem-solving: the ability to apply knowledge and experience resourcefully in complex and open-ended contexts
- research: the capacity for critical, effective and verifiable information retrieval and organisation relevant to a given task
- open-mindedness: the ability to be open and receptive to unfamiliar artefacts, issues and ideas and to deploy these constructively; the ability to deploy productive criticism of familiar artefacts and arguments.

### **Threshold level of achievement**

6.9 On graduating with an honours degree in HAAD, students should be capable of demonstrating:

- skills of analysis, synthesis and summary
- critical judgement: awareness of the difference between alternative arguments and approaches
- problem-solving: the ability to apply knowledge and experience to address problems
- research: ability to locate and record information relevant to a given task
- open-mindedness: some ability to be receptive to unfamiliar artefacts, issues and ideas.

## **Transferable skills**

### **Typical level of achievement**

6.10 On graduating with an honours degree in HAAD, students should be capable of demonstrating:

- the ability to communicate ideas and arguments cogently and effectively in written, spoken or other form, with appropriate use of visual aids
- the ability to listen effectively and so to learn from and participate constructively in discussion
- the ability to work constructively and productively in groups
- the ability to work diligently, to fulfil briefs and deadlines, and to take responsibility for one's own work
- the ability to make effective use of IT for research and communication
- the ability to update knowledge and skills, seek and use feedback, reflect on, and improve performance.

### **Threshold level of achievement**

6.11 On graduating with an honours degree in HAAD, students should be capable of demonstrating:

- the ability to communicate adequately in written and spoken form, using visual aids where necessary
- the ability to listen effectively and so to learn from discussions
- the ability to work in groups
- the ability to work to briefs and deadlines
- the ability to use IT
- some ability to use feedback to improve performance.

## **Appendix A: Membership of the review group for the subject benchmark statement for history of art, architecture and design**

Dr Marta Ajmar	Victoria and Albert Museum and Royal College of Art
Carolyn Bew	The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Art, Design and Media
Dr Louise Campbell	University of Warwick
Dr Patrizia Di Bello	Birkbeck College, University of London
Professor Mignon Nixon	Courtauld Institute of Art
Dr Jeanne Nuechterlein	University of York
Dr Margherita Sprio	University of Essex
Dr Leon Wainwright	Manchester Metropolitan University
Professor Evelyn Welch (Chair)	Queen Mary, University of London
Dr Chia-Ling Yang	School of Oriental and African Studies University of London

## **Appendix B: Membership of the original benchmarking group for history of art, architecture and design**

Details provided below are as published in the original subject benchmark statement for the history of art, architecture and design (2002).

Professor Christopher Bailey	University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Dr Barbara Burman	University of Southampton
Professor Ian Christie	Birkbeck College, University of London
Dr Tom Gretton (Chair)	University College London
Professor Deborah Howard	University of Cambridge
Professor Catherine King	Open University
Ms Pauline Ridley	University of Brighton
Dr Evelyn Welch	University of Sussex
Professor Shearer West	University of Birmingham
Professor Alison Yarrington	University of Leicester