‘Curricula have been reviewed and enhanced in light of student NSS’ feedback’

Talent of Humanities’ students
2014/15 has been a busy year for both staff and students. We have been impressed, as always, by the range and quality of dissertations produced by final year students across the School. More general, the standard of work has been a testimony to the hard work and talent of Humanities students at the University of Bristol.

NSS response rates
We are pleased that 84% of those eligible filled in the National Student Survey. This was the highest response rate the School has ever had, and above average within the University. We appreciate students taking the time to complete the survey. I’d like to thank all staff for their efforts in publicising the survey, and conveying how we use the survey results to improve teaching and learning in the School. Across the School, curricula have been reviewed and enhanced in the light of student feedback. Next academic year will see, for instance, significant revisions to the first year in both History and History of Art that will better support the transition from School to University.

This year we’ve held a number of successful teaching and learning workshops for staff, focusing on feedback and the new marking criteria, on best practice in Blackboard, and on personal tutoring. We’ve run a small pilot exploring the value of different ways of doing online marking.

James Thompson
May 2014

Head of School report
May means exams and the business end of the academic year in the School of Humanities. We held the last School Meeting of the year on 14 May during which we were delighted to congratulate two members of staff who have been honoured in the 2014 Bristol Teaching Awards. Nicoletta Momigliano, who holds a joint position in Classics and Archaeology (School of Arts) received the Students’ Award for Outstanding Teaching and Tom Sperlinger received the University Award for Education for the Faculty of Arts. Both will be honoured in a glittering ceremony on 17 June during which the overall winner for the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Education will be announced. Since teaching is in the air it good to give over this issue of the HUMS Digest large­ly to teaching-related concerns and the busy portfolio of DHTL James Thompson.

The School Meeting was also the occasion to thank outgoing School officers and to welcome the incoming team for 2014/15. Thanks to the forethought of an earlier Head of School, there was a stock of wine on hand to do this is the appropriate style. Thank you to Danny Karlin (HSU English), Bob Fowler (SLead Classics), Bella Sandwell (DSU CART), Evan Jones (DSU HS), Pantelis Michelakis (DEX CART), Jane Wright (DEX ENGL) and Dot Price (DEX HS) and the three Directors of Student Progress: Nicoletta Momigliano, Hester Jones and Lucy Donkin (whose role will be replaced by that of Senior Tutor).

Welcome to incoming officers who will take on their roles from 1 August 2014: Ad Put­ter (HSU English); Gavin D’Costa (DSU CART), Ken­neth Austin (DSU HS), Lau­rence Publicover (DEX Eng­lish) and Grace Brockington (DEX HS). The role of DEX CART, tentatively Rita Langer, will be confirmed soon. I am particularly grateful to Ulrika Maude who takes on the challenging new role of Impact Officer where she will be working closely with DHR Beth Williamson. I also wish to thank all those officers whose terms continue into the new academic year. The School of Humanities is a community of scholars and students committed to learning and research. It is the willing efforts of our governance team which brings the community together and makes it an enjoyable pro­cess.

Before signing off I might also mention the outcome of the most recent round of AHRC grants. Lovers of cats and poets will recall that Christo­pher Smart (1722-1771) wrote an enormously long and rather mad poem which included some magical lines about his cat Jeoffry: ‘For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it a chance./ For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying.’ Currently Jeoffry’s success rate is much better than that of most researchers in the School - but not every hunt brings back a prize. So let me offer congratulations and com
Head of School report (continued)

miseries to those whose efforts were not rewarded this time around. Meanwhile the School provides a little seed funding by way of consolation and warm encouragement to persist.

For more information about what is going on in the School don’t forget that you can now access minutes from School meetings, workload data and the research leave rota in the School of Humanities Blackboard site.

Hilary M. Carey
May 2014

DSU, CART

At the start of this academic year RETH began to roll-out their new renamed programme, Religion and Theology. This includes new mandatory units for first and second years. Approaches to Religion and issues in the Study of Religion, and a raft of exciting new units for all year groups. Particularly pleasing has been the introduction of units on the philosophy of religion, taught by new staff member David Leech. No such large-scale changes in Classics and Ancient History, but for the first time we held a unit fair for second years to help them select their units for their third year. Each member of staff had ten minutes to show-case each third year unit they will be teaching in 2014-15. This event was well-attended and students say it was really useful in helping them make their choices. A number of the units on offer next year are new ones brought in to reflect the research interests of staff and we think we offered a strong set of units to our students. Finally, Classics and Ancient History are very proud that Dr Nico Morpiglio received a university teaching award.

Bella Sandwell
Deputy Head of Subject, CART

DSU, ENGL

As in TB1, English organised a number of diverse activities for the TB2 Curriculum Enhancement Week. 26 first- and second-year students participated in a cross-disciplinary workshop run by David Harry (HS) and Ian Burrows (English) that helped students to develop both subject-specific and transferable skills. Students worked together investigating how historical sources illuminate the portrayal of power and kingship Shakespeare’s history plays. Later that week undergraduate and postgraduate teams exhibited research posters on the theme ‘Influence: Shakespeare and his Contemporaries.’ The judges (Laurence Publicover, Tamsin Badcoe and David Hopkins) were deeply impressed by the posters’ quality. The winning entry was particularly impressive in finding a visually stimulating way to locate its ideas about Shakespeare’s presentation of selfhood within a wider intellectual framework. Other Enhancement Week events included: screenings and discussions of film adaptations of literary texts ranging from Beowulf to A Clockwork Orange by way of Snow White; Jenny Batt and John McTague’s rare books workshop in Special Collections at the Arts and Social Sciences Library; Jen Baker’s popular interactive workshop Re-reading Children’s Literature; and a dialogue with novelist Jonathan Coe, author of What a Carve Up! and The Rotters’ Club. Attendance was variable, but participating students were warmly appreciative.

In late-March students from the intercalated BA in Medical Humanities (iBAMH) programme spent a Saturday at the Tobacco Factory working with Wattle & Daub Figure Theatre and Prof. Judith Hawley (Royal Holloway, University of London). Responding to the medical case of an eighteenth-century French polyphagist, subject of Wattle & Daub’s show The Depraved Appetite of Tarrare the Freak, students participated in cross-disciplinary demonstrations and debates about monstrosity, science and spectacle. At the end of May iBAMH continued to show their creative side in a public exhibition of their work, Medical Minds, in the Spielman Centre, Arnos Vale Cemetery.

On 7 May English MA students organised a very successful Half-Day Postgraduate Conference ‘Perchance to Dream: Sleep and Related Phenomena in English Literature’ (as part of a 20-credit unit). Student organisers showed ambition and nous in putting together successful funding bids to fly leading sleep studies expert, Prof. Garrett Stewart (Penn State), from the US to give the plenary on sleep in Spenser’s Faerie Queene. Postgraduate speakers from Europe, Canada and Japan as well as other UK universities joined Bristol MA and PhD students in given papers on topics ranging from medieval dream visions to Angela Carter exploring literary responses to this ‘still largely mysterious biological necessity’. On 8 May Prof. Garrett led a cross-disciplinary sleep studies seminar co-organised with Matt Jones (UoB, Neuroscience). Both events were very well attended by a diverse audience from the sciences and humanities.

Research-led teaching remains at the core of the English undergraduate programme. As part of Laurence Publicover’s Literature and the Sea special subject unit, students had a seminar on the SS Great Britain, followed by time with maritime collections in the Brunel Institute (passenger diaries, ship plans, etc.). Research-led teaching is just as evident on mandatory period units such as Literature 2 (Early modern). John McTague introduced second-year students to dramatic manuscripts via a diplomatic transcription of Middleton’s play The Second Maiden’s Tragedy. This work on the material text produced some really exciting coursework, including an outstanding essay on actors as props in Middleton and Webster. The impact of research-led teaching is clear in dissertation proposals that second-year students have just submitted for 2014-15: topics include sleep studies, literature and the sea, and early modern metatheatre.

Sam Matthews
May 2014

NSS
84% of those eligible filled in the National Student Survey. This was the highest response rate the School has ever had, and above average within the University.
Bristol’s History and History of Art finalists celebrate the end of their exams

On 29 May, the final-year students in Historical Studies completed their last assessment for their BA degrees - a 24-hour take-home exam that ended at noon. The above photograph was taken by a student at the party that followed the exam, following an impromptu call for a group photograph. The picture itself was taken in the garden behind the Humanities Student Common Room, a space that was recently improved by the addition of outdoor seating by the School. The main door to this garden (next to the entry to LT2) will have an entry keypad installed on it this summer, providing direct access to this lovely garden from the Common Room. The installation of the keypad will also create an additional point of entry to the School and Faculty, the door being accessible via the steps leading down from the exterior walkway that runs above the main ‘spine’ corridor of the Arts Complex. This should relieve some of the congestion in the corridor next year, which is becoming a particular problem as the number of students in Humanities rises.

Online Option Form increases student choice

In 2013 the School of Humanities shifted to an on-line form to enable students to choose their option units for the following year. This apparently minor technical innovation has had a major impact on the ability of the School’s education directors to analyse student demand and ensure that students get to do the units they really want to do. The impact of this is explained by Dr Evan Jones, Deputy Head of Subject for Historical Studies, who this Easter oversaw the allocation of two thousand unit places in his department:

’Until a couple of years ago, it was very difficult to ascertain just how popular units were, or to determine whether it was worth running a unit twice or cutting a unit that was unpopular. The paper-based system we used meant that there were too many variables in play and the analysis couldn’t be done in a timely or efficient fashion. The result was that our Department almost never ran units twice and we only withdrew a unit if it had almost no takers. The new system, first implemented by Amy Thomas in the School Office, has changed all that. We can now see exactly what the uptake of different units are at an early stage and determine what the impact would be if we ran a popular unit twice or withdrew an unpopular one. Combined with the information in the Workload Model, this has enabled me to marry supply and demand far better than was ever possible before. The practical impact has been to increase greatly the number of students who get their first choice of units. In the past many students would have to settle for second, third and even fourth choices. This year, by contrast, a typical student entering final year in History will get three first choices and perhaps one second. Given that were choosing from a list of about ten different units, this was a pretty phenomenal result. So we’re not just offering students a fantastic range of option units to take - we’re also ensuring that they get to study the units they want.’

Cabot Project Schools Group hosts second conference

In March one of the School’s outreach projects ran a conference for local Year 7-8 school children. Aimed at ‘Gifted and Talented’ children, this project gives children who are as young as eleven a taste of what university work is like at a research-intensive university. They do this by undertaking group research projects that mirror those undertaken by first-year students in Historical Studies. The projects are supervised by our own undergraduate students, who will themselves have completed similar projects during their time at Bristol.

The culmination of the five-LT5 project was a conference for the two schools involved (Cotham and St Mary Redcliffe) in which twenty-five young people presented their findings within the Faculty. As last year, the standard was excellent, with the best of the groups receiving 2.2. marks, judged by the standards applied to our own first-year undergraduates.

The value of this initiative was recently noted by Chris Skidmore M.P., Vice Chair of the All Parliamentary Party Group on History and Archives and member of the House of Commons Education Select Committee:

’The Cabot Project helps schools to instil a passion for history amongst their pupils at an early age...particularly high-performing pupils whose need for additional challenge in their progress has recently been highlighted by Ofsted. The Cabot Project’s establishment of a schools group is a pioneering approach to raising aspirations amongst pupils to achieve, and promoting greater integrated working between universities and schools.’

Evan Jones
May 2014
Foundation Year success!

The Foundation Year is nearing the end of its successful first year. This course was designed by Tom Sperlinger and Richard Pettigrew (Philosophy), who have been working with Josie McLellan as course directors this year, alongside Jess Dunton, April Gallway, and Margery Masterson as tutors. A wide range of staff from the School have also given lectures. The course was set up to engage with those who are no longer in the education system and provides a foothold for anybody wishing to continue a degree in the Arts. The students range in age from 18 to 71 and are from an exceptionally diverse range of backgrounds. The Evening Post featured an article this month on the Foundation Year, which includes case studies written by students.

Read more at [http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Bristol-University-course-people-qualifications/story-21039603-detail/story.html](http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Bristol-University-course-people-qualifications/story-21039603-detail/story.html)

Tom Sperlinger
May 2014

DHR report

Faculty conference and research fund

The Faculty Conference and Research Committee met on 27th May for the final time this academic session. The original budget for the year was already almost completely spent by the meeting of the committee that took place in the middle of the spring term. However, thanks to the Dean generously finding some extra money to support research in the Faculty, the committee was able to meet once more to consider a final batch of applications from researchers wanting to go to conferences and carry out research. Some hard decisions had to be made, and some requests could only be met in part, rather than fully. Individual notifications of awards will go out from the Chair of the committee (Kate Robson-Brown, the acting FRD) soon.

British Academy Small Grants Scheme

As we begin to look towards plans for next year’s research activities, may I remind colleagues of the British Academy Small Grants Scheme? This has two deadlines a year, with the next round due to open in September 2014 (deadline in October 2014), for research beginning between 1 April 2015 and 31st August 2015. It is likely (if this year’s pattern is followed) that there will then be another deadline in April 2015, for research beginning between 1 September 2015 and 31 March 2016. Colleagues are asked to think about preparing applications for this scheme if possible, and are invited to contact Valerie Aspin and Jean Pretlove for guidance on preparing such applications to support research activity in the near to medium term.

Research leave 2015/16

We have already begun considering research leave for 2015/16. Funding deadlines have been moving earlier and earlier which is why colleagues need to know as soon as possible if their leave has been approved, so that they can take full advantage of funding opportunities. The DHR, together with HSUs/SLeads, will ensure colleagues know which schemes are best suited for them. Valerie and Jean are also on hand for help and support.

Beth Williamson
Deputy Head Research
May 2014

New Creative Writing unit

This year, undergraduates in English have had the option of taking the new Creative Writing unit in poetry. This course requires students to write in a range of forms, old and new, and to reflect critically upon the writing process. Students have penned ballads, sonnets, sestinas, pantoums, villanelles, blank verse, free verse and lipograms. They have drawn upon their own lives, language and concerns, but they have also entered into the lives, language and concerns of others, writing dramatic monologues and imitations, and versifying prose translations. Along the way, the students have learned numerous aspects of poetic craft and terminology, as well as skills of critical analysis that will feed into the remainder of their studies here. A selection of poems written by students on the course will be included in an anthology of Bristol Poetry which is to be published at the beginning of June.

William Wootten
Lecturer in English (Poetry and Creative Writing) and tutor of the Creative Writing unit

May 2014
Student news

History Undergraduate Organises Badger Culling Debate

Final year undergraduate History student Ben Eagle recently organised a debate at the University on the controversial issue of culling badgers in the United Kingdom (15 May). Former National Farmers’ Union Vice-President and livestock farmer Adam Quinney and Secretary to the Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management, Dr Lewis Thomas, proposed the motion ‘This House believes that badger culling is necessary to eradicated bovine tuberculosis in the United Kingdom.’ Dominic Dyer of the Badger Trust and Care for the Wild and wildcatter and nature film maker Simon King and spoke for the opposition. The debate was chaired by Professor Peter Coates of the History Department.

Although the final vote favoured the opposition (72 v 11), the proposition managed to win round one attendee. Audience participation was lively with Bristol students and staff as well as guests of the sponsors (NFU, Badger Trust and Care for the Wild) pushing all debaters to justify their views scientifically and ethically. Quinney took to Twitter afterwards to say the vote was ‘fairly predictable’, but said that he had a good discussion with students afterwards. Ben organised the debate (which was covered the following day in the Western Daily Press) to bring both sides together on an equal footing, giving each a fair chance to present their views in a structured way. Looking for consensus was key and Dyer recognised this afterwards, remarking that ‘It often feels like wildlife organisations and the farmers are polar opposites on this issue, which to some extent is true. But the real enemy is bTB – so in this case, let’s hope the enemy of our enemy can become our friend, so we can work together and overcome bTB.’ Members of the academic community are those most likely to answer the question of how best to tackle bTB, but as part of the process universities must engage with those involved in the debate outside academic circles, to ensure that the solutions are agreeable to as many parties as possible.

Stop press!

Tom Sperlinger
(with Richard Pettigrew in Philosophy)

Nicoletta Momigliano, Reader in Aegean Prehistory

The Foundation Year in Arts and Humanities: An inspiring example of engaged teaching that has involved a wide range of people from across the Faculty.

Tom Sperlinger
May 2014

I’m very grateful to the colleagues who nominated me for this award, and also to everyone in the School who has helped support both ELCE and the Foundation Year over the last few years. It’s a pleasure and privilege to work with students from such different backgrounds, many of whom have been waiting to return to education for a very long time - and I'd like to thank them too. I'm really proud that we're seeing such a diverse range of students completing both programmes this year.

Tom Sperlinger
May 2014

This most welcome but totally unexpected teaching award feels like a great honour as well as a great responsibility for me! Above all, though, this award is a great incentive for me to improve further my teaching and I am extremely grateful to all the students who nominated me: I do not know who you are, even if I have few suspects in mind, but I’d like to say to all of you as well as to my other students: it has been a privilege and a pleasure for me to teach you and I plan to use the award to improve your experience of Bristol University.

Nicoletta Momigliano
May 2014

Awards galore!

University Engagement Awards

Tom Sperlinger (Director of Part-time teaching, English) and Richard Pettigrew (Reader in Philosophy) have won one of this year’s prestigious University of Bristol Engagement Awards for their work establishing the Foundation Year in Arts and Humanities. Tom and Richard have put an enormous amount of work and effort into designing this programme, and have worked alongside Josie McLellan (Reader in History) as course directors. The Steering Committee who decided the award commented particularly on the ambitious aims of the Foundation Year in Arts and Humanities and how much has been achieved in such a short space of time. They say it is an inspiring example of engaged teaching that has involved a wide range of people from across the Faculty, not to mention the tangible impacts on the students themselves.

The Editor

University Award for Education for the Faculty of Arts:
Tom Sperlinger

Students’ Award for Outstanding Teaching:
Nicoletta Momigliano

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Nicoletta Momigliano
May 2014
Many congratulations to History of Art PhD student Maria Hadjiathanasiou who has been awarded a Leverhulme Study Abroad Studentship to fund her research into visual culture in Cyprus under British colonial rule. The 12-month studentship will enable her to conduct original research in the Cyprus National Archives and other collections, and aural history interviews with artists. The project is supervised by Grace Brockington and Simon Potter.

History of Art are delighted to announce that Tessa Kilgarrif has been awarded a collaborative doctoral award between the University of Bristol and the National Portrait Gallery to research The production, transmission and reception of engraved and photographic theatrical portraiture in the mid-19th century and its contribution to the promotion of celebrity.

Tessa was amongst five shortlisted applicants for the fiercely competitive award who was interviewed at the National Portrait Gallery on 30 April by Dr Dorothy Price (History of Art), Dr Catherine Hindson (Drama) and Robin Francis, (Head of the Heinz Library and Archives at the National Portrait Gallery).

Tessa graduated from the University of York with starred First Class honours in History of Art in 2013 and is currently completing her studies at York with an AHRC-funded MA. Her postgraduate research interests are British art of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and portraiture. Her MA dissertation will consider banditti as a subject for the Royal Academy in the late eighteenth century. Tessa has also been awarded a Michael Bromberg fellowship in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum for the Autumn 2014, prior to her uptake of her AHRC funded collaborative doctoral award. Congratulations Tessa!”

Ellen Howard, one of our Year Six ELCE students, has written a column about her experiences on the degree course, which was featured in the Bristol Post this month, in the ’Speaker’s Corner’ section. The piece is said to be fantastic by ELCE administrators so do look out for it, and congratulate Ellen if you see her! Please do also show it to anyone you know who might be thinking of applying for next year. The piece is said to be ‘fantastic’ by Gareth Griffith, Director of Part-time Programmes and Sarah Lefanu, ELCE tutor says: “Wonderful - what a great piece! Read more at http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/year-shared-adventure-education/story-21103336-detail/story.html?YBORgAboQHGbmP7E.99

Congratulations to Robert Bickers whose latest book, Getting Stuck in for Shanghai, has just been published as a smart paperback by Penguin and is part of the new wave of the iconic Penguin Specials range which aims to be short, informative and entertaining in a digital format. More information can be found on the University’s news pages, which include a link to Robert’s blog:


As reported in the last Digest, our Graduation Teas are taking place in-house this year, in the grounds of the School of Humanities on Friday 18 July 2014. If you are graduating this summer, you will shortly be receiving an invitation, if you have not received one already. The morning ‘sitting’ will be from 12.30pm, just after the ceremony. We hope to see you there with up to two guests, for a glass of Prosecco and some canapés, before you go off to family celebrations. The afternoon ‘sitting’ will be from 3.45pm and an English tea will be served. At both sittings, there will also be a cash bar available. We will be linking up the student and staff common rooms with the front and back gardens, as well as Link Rooms 1 and 2 with the Graduate School gardens. There will also be a presentation to students who have been awarded prizes by the Examination Board. Many academic colleagues will also attending and will be happy to see you and your guests there. Do come along to celebrate under the marquees, in the common rooms or gardens, with your fellow students, family and teachers!

This is the last issue of the HUMS Digest for this academic year. From next year, this Digest will be called the HUMS Newsletter and will be published twice a term. Alongside this, I will circulate a fortnightly communication with events and research news which will be headed HUMS Digest. Our first issue of the Newsletter for 2014/15 will be out in early October, so please get any news and items to me by Friday 3 October 2014 (r.jacks@bristol.ac.uk).