



Subject Benchmark Statement

History of Art, Architecture and Design

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SOS!UK

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How can I use this document?

This is the Subject Benchmark Statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design. It defines the academic standards that can be expected of a graduate, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies, and describes the nature of the subject.

The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (Quality Code) sets out the Expectations and Core practices that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. Providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland must also meet the Common practices in the Quality Code.

The Quality Assurance Agency for UK Higher Education (QAA) has also published a set of [Advice and Guidance](#), divided into 12 themes, and a number of other resources that support the mandatory part of the Quality Code. Subject Benchmark Statements sit alongside these resources to help providers develop courses and refine curricula but are not part of the regulated requirements for higher education providers in the UK.

This Statement is intended to support you if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses of study in history of art, architecture and design or related subjects
- a prospective student thinking about studying this subject, or a current student of the subject, to find out what may be involved
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of a graduate in this subject.

Subject Benchmark Statements provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the course but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in course design within a framework agreed by the subject community.

It may be helpful to refer to the relevant Advice and Guidance when using this Statement.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in QAA's [Glossary](#).

About the Statement

This Subject Benchmark Statement refers to bachelor's degrees with honours in history of art, architecture and design.¹

It has been produced by a group of subject specialists drawn from, and acting on behalf of, the subject community. The process is facilitated by QAA, as is the full consultation with the wider academic community and stakeholder groups each Statement goes through.

In order to ensure the continuing currency of Subject Benchmark Statements, QAA initiates regular reviews of their content, five years after first publication, and every seven years subsequently, or in response to significant changes in the discipline.

Relationship to legislation

Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example by funding bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. The responsibility for academic standards remains with the higher education provider who awards the degree.

Higher education providers may need to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and industry or employer expectations.

Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Subject Benchmark Statement where appropriate. Individual higher education providers will decide how they use this information.

¹ Bachelor's degrees are at level 6 in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and level 10 in *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland*, as published in [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#)

Summary of changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement (2016)

This version of the Statement forms its fourth edition, following initial publication of the Subject Benchmark Statement in 2002, and review and revision in 2007 and 2016.

This latest version of the Statement is the consequence of the revision to the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) which was published in 2018. It has been revised to update references to the Quality Code and other minor changes within the sector. Changes have been made by QAA and confirmed by a member of the most recent review group.

There have been no revisions to the subject-specific content of the Statement.

1 Introduction

1.1 This Subject Benchmark Statement seeks to make explicit the nature and standards of bachelor's degrees with honours courses which have 'history of art', 'history of design', 'history of architecture', 'history of film', 'visual culture', 'material culture' or 'museum studies' and 'curatorial practice' in their title, or which, under other titles, include a substantial element of this sort of study. This Statement provides guidance; it is not a template designed to be used to prescribe or proscribe any particular honours degree course 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 courses. 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. Courses 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.

1.3 In all courses and components, HAAD is distinguished by a concern with visual and material culture in both the past and the present. Courses may be concerned with a wide range of entities, with everyday objects, images and environments, with works of art, and with a range of artefacts not made as 'art or design objects' but which have come to be considered as such, and with critical, historical and theoretical writing on all these forms. The concepts of 'art' and 'design' are widely understood within the subject areas to be contested and historically contingent, and imprecise and inappropriate for many of our objects of study.

1.4 Most courses are concerned primarily with visual and material culture; that is, with the historical study of artefacts that communicate meaning and value through being looked at and handled. For the sake of convenience, the Statement refers to the range of spaces, buildings, images, objects, digital media, projects, performances, ephemeral displays and texts studied as 'artefacts'. They may include buildings and the built environment; gardens; designed objects (whether industrially produced or individually crafted); drawings and designs; paintings; photographs; prints; posters and other forms of graphic design; sculptures; dress 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. Those working in the area also pay attention to other sensory aspects of artefacts such as their tactile, spatial and audible qualities.

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

2.1 The study of HAAD equips its graduates to address issues of fundamental historical and contemporary significance. It enables them to engage thoughtfully with key aspects of the contemporary world: the **historic and cultural context**, range of processes, institutions and technologies that rely on and produce visual and material culture. HAAD also enhances graduates' capacities for critical awareness and informed **understanding of significance and value, both personally and more widely**, 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 **natural** landscape forms, architecture, monuments, images, treasures, displays and consumer goods, students develop the critical expertise and resources **required of a relevant professional and useful to 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 **an informed and robust** 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 By critically analysing the social and political structures and hierarchies; economic systems; and natural and built environments present throughout historical and contemporary forms of HAAD, students gain a deeper, more inferential understanding of current and future societies. HAAD also critically engages with issues of sustainability, exploring the issues facing and solutions presented for both the conservation and study of historic art and design, and development towards an environmentally and socially sustainable society more broadly. Example topics include studying the production and use of robust tools and objects made when only local, more natural materials were available; the preservation of artefacts today in the face of climate change; and the maintenance, sensitive retrofitting and repurposing of historical buildings to reduce carbon emissions and protect them against changing local climates. Increasingly, HAAD as a discipline is becoming a more apt environment for informed discussions of cultural representation by engaging with the voices and knowledge of historically marginalised and currently under-represented communities and challenging historical narratives where appropriate. As a result,

HAAD graduates are well placed to interact with and make significant positive changes to today's complex fast-paced society on both global and local levels.

2.3 In the UK, scholarly and educational interest in design history, architectural history, and art history long precedes their formal establishment as taught subjects in higher education providers. 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 courses in other humanities disciplines.

2.4 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 design 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.

Furthermore, individuals and institutions in HAAD are beginning to use their understanding of past art and design approaches to learn highly relevant lessons for today's cultural, environmental and wider sustainability needs. Discussion of environmental perspectives in the 'built environment', for example the use of the [Roman aqueducts and Mayan water management systems](#) in past environmental practices, can continue to inform contemporary sustainability discourses within HAAD studies.

2.5 HAAD works with many sorts of artefacts and texts, from design entities as large as entire urban areas to trinkets that fit in a child's hand (as described in 1.4), 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. Courses in HAAD 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 study the institutions in which such people participate, including the context and culture these institutions functioned under, contributed to or pushed against over time and how this impacted those who engaged with them and who could engage with them. HAAD courses also study the ways in which art and design have been used as forms of activism and advocacy and how people can continue to use them to address systemic and structural inequalities and social justice issues.

2.6 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. Historically, the study of HAAD has contributed to colonial efforts, the unequal treatment of individuals and communities of colour, and White supremacist ideologies by justifying theft of cultural artefacts from their communities and cherry-picking the artefacts and practices from colonised groups investigated to present these groups as less advanced or intelligent and excluding individuals from these groups from HAAD research. As such, despite improvements in recent decades, it is of the utmost importance that commitments to decolonising HAAD through critical awareness of underrepresented communities and regions by incorporating students, practitioners and ideas from a broader range of geographical contexts, non-Western perspectives and marginalised communities.

2.7 Some courses address artefacts from periods which predate the invention of writing, and some concentrate on works produced during the last century. Therefore, in addition to decolonisation, students and practitioners need an awareness of social justice in order to begin to understand and recognise the positive contributions new and incoming communities to the UK have had on HAAD in the UK. Although the range is wide, the focus in some respects is close: courses in HAAD place great importance on the observation of artefacts at first hand and the development of skills of visual analysis. Thus, courses make use of resources of all kinds, including virtual resources. Study visits to examine relevant sites, archives, performances and collections may often be entailed.

2.8 Courses in HAAD attract students from a wide range of academic backgrounds. While the qualifications they 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.

2.9 Graduates in this group of subjects command a range of the generic skills that are fostered by training in critical analysis, together with those developed by a grounding in historical **understanding and** investigation. They are equipped with subject-specific skills, including 'visual literacy', **relevant established methodologies** and a confidence in engaging with both abstract and material objects of study, skills increasingly relevant in the contemporary world. **Graduates also possess an awareness of the social responsibilities of galleries, museums and historic areas to acknowledge the ethical issues of acquiring, using and displaying of artefacts and the management and interpretation of historic sites, including the processes of restitution and repatriation of culture objects.** 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, courses 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 **diverse** historical arguments and narratives.

Production and consumption

3.4 HAAD is often understood to concentrate on what artists, designers **and craftspeople** 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 (that is, 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, have been shaped by **people** living at particular historical moments, **influenced by specific cultures, and constrained by their local geography** 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 (**whether for a specific intended purpose e.g. a key to open a door, a broad intended purpose, e.g. a doll for play, in a manner other than its intended purpose e.g. a grass sickle to cut hair, or depleted of resources e.g. a rice paddy after harvest**), of the evolution of the 'built environment' **and physical 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, **environmental, communal**, 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, **as well as to understand the importance of specific artefacts to communities throughout time up until today**. This involves attention to the aesthetic and material qualities of artefacts **with reference to known facts about the context of their production**. Such critical engagement promotes reasoned and accountable enjoyment of visual experience. **Thus, HAAD engage7s 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 **physical and practical** qualities of artefacts and their position in systems of cultural value.

Visual interpretation

3.7 Courses 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, systematic examination **or material or scientific investigation** for the purposes of cataloguing or conservation. This training instils 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 including political, social and cultural contexts**. Many courses 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 omit altogether some basic orientation in the 'methods and approaches' necessary to any useful engagement with the subjects in this area. Where such topics, **alongside an understanding of the diversity of individuals and their roles, habits, values and needs in the community in question**, form a substantial part of a course, they enable students to understand better the limits and ambiguity, and the constructed nature, of the discipline with which they are engaged.

4 Knowledge, understanding and skills

Introduction

4.1 Teaching and research in the subjects within HAAD are **wide in scope and interdisciplinary**. The group of subjects continually develops its relationships with other disciplines and professional contexts beyond academia 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 are various and evolving.

Subject-specific knowledge and understanding

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

- i a broad and comparative knowledge and understanding of aspects of the culture of more than one geographical region and/or chronological period **as relevant to the specific course**
- ii a concentrated knowledge and understanding of one or more periods and places
- iii a knowledge and understanding of the processes through which artefacts are designed and made in the cultures studied
- iv familiarity with some substantive areas of current research in the field addressed by the degree course
- v an engagement with the concepts, values and debates that inform study and practice in the field addressed by the degree course, **including an awareness of the limitations and partiality of all historical knowledge**
- vi a knowledge of the development of the field addressed by the degree course, and of its key intellectual tools
- vii an awareness of the field's relationship with professional contexts, including the arts and heritage sector beyond academia, the art market and media attention to the arts
- viii **a broad understanding of the field's relationship with economics, the climate emergency and global and local social issues, its impact on them both historically and today, and the underestimated value of these relationships in order to engage new audiences and decision makers**

- ix an awareness of the principle international guidelines and relevant national legislation concerning the management of artefacts.

Subject specific skills and attributes

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.

4.4 Students develop skills in the following areas:

- i observation: close and systematic visual examination, informed by appropriate knowledge of materials, techniques and cultural contexts
- ii description: recording and describing 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
- iii interrogation: including the technical evaluation of artefacts, objects, and pieces against practice and process, which considers materiality, production, **sustainability**, methodology, entwined with underlying concepts and cultures
- iv innovation: the application of new or emerging techniques from associative subjects, either technological or theoretical, to further explore the connection between culture and context
- v interpretation: the ability to:
 - set the artefacts studied within appropriate historical, intellectual, cultural, **socioeconomic** 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
 - understand the iconographic value, informing culture, and the creative and production values
 - identify and analyse the development of and interrelation between forms and genres
- vi **contextual recognition: the ability to:**

- understand the historical, social, political and cultural differences of meaning and value across all global contexts
 - critically evaluate the environmental and social impact of the production, distribution, and conservation of artefacts in the past, present and future, including how sustainability principles apply to creation and preservation processes
- vii **ethicisation: identifying the [ethical](#) and legal considerations of studying, consuming and acquiring artefacts.**

Historical skills

4.5 Students develop the ability to:

- i use appropriate methodologies for locating, assessing and interpreting primary sources
- ii select relevant evidence from the wide range of types of evidence used in the subject area, and apply it to the examination of historical issues and problems
- iii produce logical and structured narratives and arguments supported by relevant evidence
- iv marshal and appraise critically other people's arguments and to argue on the basis of familiarity both with relevant evidence and with specialist literature
- v **challenge traditional historic narratives and critically engage with diverse global perspectives and experiences.**

Generic intellectual skills and attributes

4.6 In addition to specific abilities 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. Students are not expected to have them all in equal measure.

Cognitive skills

4.7 Students develop skills and attributes in:

- i analysis: the ability to break down an argument, a task or a body of evidence, and deal effectively with its component parts
- ii synthesis: the ability to bring evidence or ideas of different sorts or from different sources together in a productive way
- iii summarisation: the ability to identify and present the key elements of an argument or a demonstration
- iv critical judgement: the ability to discriminate between alternative arguments and approaches
- v 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 develop:

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

Open-mindedness

4.9 Students develop the ability to:

- i be open and receptive to new things and ideas
- ii identify the merits of unfamiliar arguments or cultural artefacts and the merits or shortcomings of familiar ones
- iii appreciate and evaluate divergent points of view and to communicate their qualities
- iv recognise their own unconscious biases and begin to mitigate these withing their interpretation of artefacts and beyond.

Transferable skills - communication

4.10 Students develop:

- i 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
- ii 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
- iii the ability to listen effectively, and to participate constructively in discussion.

Teamwork

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

Diligence

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

Autonomy

4.13 Students develop the ability to:

- i develop an independent argument that is informed by, but not dependent on, authorities in the subject area
- ii define one's own brief, and to formulate arguments that effectively structure relevant information
- iii employ a variety of current and emerging digital technologies, demonstrating digital literacy.

Time management and personal initiative

4.14 Students develop the ability to:

- i work to briefs and deadlines, including managing concurrent projects
- ii take responsibility for one's own work
- iii reflect on one's own learning, and to make constructive use of feedback
- iv take shared responsibility for one's own course 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, vary depending on the content of the course, the mission and policies of the provider 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 are 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. The strategies developed for teaching, learning and assessment encourage and support the autonomy, confidence and independence of the learner. Providers are 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 courses and the interaction between teaching and research makes a central and indispensable contribution to the dynamism of the subject. The character of teaching and learning reflects the research base of curricula, introducing diversity and an experimental character to courses. 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 to enrich the curriculum.

5.3 Students taking degrees in HAAD are taught within a **holistic** environment conducive to learning, which is intellectually stimulating, and which embraces intellectual diversity. There is 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, and may include good definition images or resources accessed electronically. This could further include emerging technologies allowing in-depth 2D and 3D evaluations, productions, or investigations or objects, artefacts, or pieces for detailed interrogation. 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 are generally expected to undertake organised or independent study visits further afield. Students are able to access current and emerging audiovisual resources as appropriate, including digital resources.

Teaching and learning

5.4 The principal teaching and learning methods that a HAAD student may experience depend on the aims and objectives of the course. 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 in distance-learning courses. Courses are likely to include an appropriate selection of the following:

- lectures: which are often 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 among 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 out with the immediate subject area
- study visits to appropriate locations for direct experience and in situ discussion according to the focus of the course
- mediated online discussion, critique and evaluation within the specialist field of the subject area and in related subjects
- visual explorations of object, piece or artefact, which complement associated techniques (written, spoken, or produced)

- digital, video, time-based, or moving image presentations and explorations, 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
- technology-enhanced learning for the examination of artefacts, and related databases for research, comparison, techniques of production
- where HAAD constitutes more than half of a degree course, students 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 course.

Progression

5.5 Honours level study 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, is different for every student, depending on personal qualities and prior experience.

5.6 Entrants to HAAD degree courses demonstrate a particularly rich mixture of existing knowledge, abilities and qualifications. Courses 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 have little or no prior experience of academic study in the subject area, the early stages of most courses 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 courses 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 course of study to meet the developmental and intellectual needs of the student, whether the course 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 courses 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 is constructive and encourages deep approaches to learning, while the methods are both a fair reflection of the course aims and content, and appropriate to them. Modes of assessment are 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 courses. 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 logbooks or diaries
- oral presentations
- online discussions

- assessed work presented in other forms: for example, videos, exhibitions, web pages, blog sites, interactive digital applications, audio files and podcasts
- 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 numbered lists in this section characterise levels and areas of achievement in HAAD. All graduates with an honours degree in HAAD have demonstrated a minimally acceptable repertoire of achievement across these areas of performance. However, most graduates 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 display. These 'typical' characterisations may be read as indicating the sorts of competence that students in the subject area 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.

Benchmark standards for honours degrees

6.3 A graduate who has reached the honours degree threshold level demonstrates:

- i a knowledge of the visual and material culture of more than one geographical region and/or chronological period **as relevant to the specific course**
- ii a more concentrated knowledge of one or more of the above
- iii knowledge of the processes through which artefacts are constructed
- iv some knowledge of current research in the field addressed by the degree course
- v some ability to engage with a range of the concepts, values and debates that inform study and practice in the subject areas
- vi some knowledge of the development of the subject
- vii **some understanding of HAAd's relationship with economics, the climate emergency and global and local social issues**
- viii **some understanding of HAAd's relationship with economics, the climate emergency and global and local social artefacts.**

6.4 A graduate who has reached the honours degree typical level demonstrates:

- i a broad and comparative knowledge and understanding of the visual and material culture of more than one geographical region and/or chronological period **as relevant to the specific course**
- ii a more concentrated and systematic knowledge of one or more of the above
- iii knowledge and understanding of the processes through which artefacts are constructed in the cultures studied
- iv a familiarity with some substantive areas of current research in the field addressed by the degree course
- v 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
- vi an understanding of the development of the subject, and of its key intellectual tools
- vii **a broad understanding of HAAD's relationship with and impact on economics, the climate emergency and global and local social issues**
- viii **an awareness of the principal international guidelines and relevant national legislation concerning the management of artefacts.**

Subject specific skills and abilities

6.5 A graduate who has reached the honours degree threshold level demonstrates:

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

6.6 A graduate who has reached the honours degree typical level demonstrates:

- i the ability to use critical skills of visual observation, description, interpretation, **contextual recognition and ethicisation**
- ii the ability to locate artefacts within appropriate historical, intellectual, cultural or institutional contexts
- iii 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
- iv the ability to evaluate a range of different methodologies and approaches within the subject
- v the ability to produce well-structured and relevant arguments supported by visual, textual or other evidence as appropriate
- vi 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
- vii **the ability to challenge traditional historic narratives and critically engage with diverse global perspectives.**

Generic intellectual skills

6.7 A graduate who has reached the honours degree threshold level demonstrates:

- i skills of analysis, synthesis and summary
- ii critical judgement: awareness of the difference between alternative arguments and approaches
- iii problem-solving: the ability to apply knowledge and experience to address problems
- iv research: the ability to locate and record information relevant to a given task
- v **open-mindedness: some ability to be receptive to unfamiliar artefacts, issues and ideas and recognise their own biases when interpreting such items or concepts.**

6.8 A graduate who has reached the honours degree typical level demonstrates:

- i developed skills of analysis, synthesis and effective summary
- ii critical judgement: the ability to discriminate between alternative arguments and approaches

- iii problem-solving: the ability to apply knowledge and experience resourcefully in complex and open-ended contexts
- iv research: the capacity for critical, effective and verifiable information retrieval and organisation relevant to a given task
- v 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; the ability to recognise their own unconscious biases and mitigate their impact when interpreting artefacts and concepts.

Transferable skills

6.9 A graduate who has reached the honours degree threshold level demonstrates:

- i the ability to communicate adequately in written and spoken form, using visual aids where necessary
- ii the ability to listen effectively and so to learn from discussions
- iii the ability to work in groups
- iv the ability to work to briefs and deadlines
- v the ability to use IT
- vi some ability to use feedback to improve performance
- vii some ability to integrate green skills and sustainability considerations into their work.

6.10 A graduate who has reached the honours degree typical level demonstrates:

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

vii the ability to integrate green skills and sustainability considerations into their work.

Appendix 1: Membership of the benchmarking and review groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design

Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design (2019)

The fourth edition, published in 2019, was revised by QAA to align the content with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published in 2018. Proposed revisions were checked and verified by a member of the review group of the Subject Benchmark Statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design from 2016.

Dr Margherita Sprio
Dr Andy Smith

University of Westminster
QAA

Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design (2016)

Details provided below are as published in the third edition of the Subject Benchmark Statement.

Dr Marta Ajmar

Victoria and Albert Museum and Royal College of Art

Dr Paul Bailey

Yeovil College University Centre

Professor Colin Cruise

Aberystwyth University

Dr Patrizia Di Bello

Birbeck College

Professor Mignon Nixon

Courtauld Institute of Art

Dr Grant Pooke

University of Kent

Dr Carol Richardson

Edinburgh College of Art

Dr Margherita Sprio
Dr Leon Wainwright
Professor Evelyn Welch (Chair)
Dr Chia-Ling Yang
Student reader
Claudia Tobin
QAA
Dan Murch

University of Westminster
The Open University
King's College London
University of Edinburgh

University of Bristol

QAA

Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design (2017)

Details provided below are as published in the second edition of the Subject Benchmark Statement.

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	Birbeck 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

Membership of the original benchmark statement group for history of art, architecture and design (2002)

Details below are as published in the original Subject Benchmark Statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design.

Professor Christopher Bailey

Dr Barbara Burman

Professor Ian Christie

Dr Tom Gretton (Chair)

Professor Deborah Howard

Professor Catherine King

Ms Pauline Ridley

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