Queen Mary
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Senate

Paper title	**Response to the Periodic Review of the School of History (2014)**
Outcome requested	EQB is asked to **consider** the paper.
Points to note and further information	The paper details History's response to the recommendations and commendations from the periodic review that took place in 2014.
Questions to consider	Are the School's responses appropriate and sufficient?
Regulatory/ statutory reference points	UK Quality Code for Higher Education
Strategy and risk	
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	Considered by Education Quality Board (13 May 2015), which recommended that Senate should approve the response.
Author(s)	School of History
Sponsor	Professor Susan Dilly Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching & Learning)

School of History
Response to the Periodic Review held on 19 February 2014

The School has considered the commendations and recommendations in the report and offers its responses below. These were also discussed at the School's Annual Programme Review meeting with the HSS Dean for Taught Programmes. Action on all recommendations is well advanced or complete.

Commendations:

School organisation
> The success of the revised leadership and management structure was recently reflected in Queen Mary's 2014-15 Staff Satisfaction Survey, which indicated exceptionally high satisfaction rates within the School.

Admissions and outreach
> The School continues to benefit from its concerted efforts to improve its admissions position, with a succession of year-on-year increases in applications since 2011-12, including, for the 2015-16 intake, a 40% increase in applications over the previous year. Outreach work with secondary school and college teachers continues to play a vital role in this success, as well as in our understanding of the educational needs of incoming students.

Support and assessment of students on taught programmes
> The School continues to work towards these goals and to benefit greatly from the contributions of both the Student Experience Manager and the E-Strategy Manager.

Postgraduate research students
> The School continues to implement these policies and to work towards creating a rich research culture among postgraduates.

Staff support
> The workload model continues to play a vital role in balancing teaching and administrative loads among staff.

Learning support resources
> The School continues to enhance the capabilities of e-Clio, including most recently developing it for use during the moderation process, and it also continues to encourage and support module organizers in their use of QMplus.

Recommendations:

Educational governance
> 2.1 *The Panel recommends that the organisation of the educational governance structures should be reviewed and clarified, and that the Director of Taught Programmes should be made a full member of the MA Committee.*

> The Director of Taught Programmes is now a full member of the MA Committee. The School has reviewed its educational governance structure, and it has created

Admissions and Employability committees, which report to the Management Committee. The Risk Register is scrutinised by the Management Committee. Minutes of meetings and action points are circulated within a fortnight.

Undergraduate programmes

2.2   *The Panel recommends that the School should review intellectual progression through the curriculum and review learning outcomes at undergraduate level. This should include the policy of allowing students in different developmental years to study on the same modules at the same academic level (particularly first and second year students).*

The UGTC reviewed the issue of intellectual progression through the curriculum. With regard to learning outcomes, the committee affirmed that the length and types of assessment stipulated for each academic level represent appropriate degrees of academic development. These stipulations are outlined in the Staff area of QMplus, and adherence to them is monitored by the School's Module Approval Committee. Regarding the policy of allowing students in different developmental years to study on the same modules at the same academic level, the UGTC considered that this was beneficial to students in two respects. First, that it allows students to study on modules that they might otherwise miss (because of staff sabbaticals or the capping of oversubscribed modules). Second, it allows second-year students to benefit from exposure to a higher level of learning. It should be noted, though, that this policy operates within the academic regulations (e.g., a second-year student may take 30 credits at level 6). Moreover, the most intensive third-year modules (the 60-credit Special Subjects) are without exception taken only by third-year students.

2.3   *The Panel recommends that the School should consider approaches to encourage independent learning and training in research skills for all second year students in preparation for the final year special subject module and the associated dissertation.*

The School has initiated a series of lunchtime skills workshops for students embarking on the Special Subject. These are designed to enhance student skills in areas directly relevant to research for Special Subject dissertations. Topics include Library research skills, Gobbet analysis, Oral History, Visual Sources and Dissertation Writing. The UGTC decided that these are best situated at the beginning of the third year, but also that a dissertation planning workshop should held at the end of the second year.

2.4   *The Panel recommends that the School should ensure that progress is made in using the full range of marks in assessment.*

In consultation with the UGTC, the Director of Taught Programmes has written more extensive and detailed Assessment Guidelines, which outline the defining characteristics not just of a single classification but characteristics within classes. This is to help markers assess work across a broader spectrum of the first-class range in particular (e.g., the characteristics of work awarded 70-74%, 75-80%, and above 80%). More detail is also being given on lower categories, including fails. The SEB is also reviewing the School's policies on moderation in order to assure that moderation encourages markers to comment on each other's marking and feedback practices.

2.5   The Panel recommends that the School should continue to monitor data on progression and retention with a view to ensuring that the most appropriate support mechanisms are always in place, to increase these rates.

The School is addressing these issues through a number of different means and at every level:

Field Trips in week 0 for first year students, led by their advisor, are designed as 'icebreakers' and a means of enhancing the relationship between advisors and advisees at the outset of their degree.

Advisors also offer annual appraisal meetings to discuss student experience and progress.

Absence monitoring has been tightened and action is taken more quickly to identify and address students at risk of disengagement.

An extensive programme of extracurricular activities aims to build a sense of community and belonging among students.

The School has agreed to adopt the new Late Summer Resit policy a year early (in 2015) and the Student Support Manager has drawn-up plans to offer pastoral support, tutorials and revision sessions to re-sitting students during the summer. We will reflect on the data, and the efficacy of this new initiative, in the Autumn Term of 2015-16.

Joint programmes
2.6   The Panel notes the School's efforts to ensure consistency of treatment for undergraduate students on joint honours programmes, and recommends that the initiatives used for BA History and Politics students be extended to all joint honours programmes. The Panel also recommends that the School should consider approaches for highlighting differences in policies between the two schools (for example, annotated handbooks) and to provide a guide to each joint programme to bridge the two disciplines.

The Director of Taught Programmes is a member of the HSS Joint Honours Programme Coordinators Group and has brought its recommendations to the UGTC, which has agreed to their implementation. This makes separate student handbooks unnecessary. The pathway for each programme is stated on the School's website. The School continues to pursue initiatives, such as guest speakers and joint events, that bridge the disciplines of each programme.

Postgraduate taught programmes
2.7   The Panel recommends that the School continues to develop its thinking on how postgraduate taught programmes can respond to changes in the HE environment, and to increase the numbers that go on to study on research programmes. This may include consideration of research pathways at PGT level.

The School's new initiatives on careers and employability highlight postgraduate opportunities and the benefits of a postgraduate degree. The appraisal system also encourages third-year students to consider postgraduate study. The School also expects its enhanced provision of Special Subjects – now compulsory for third-year students – to increase student interest in postgraduate taught programmes at a time when the new government loans system promises to allow greater numbers of students to study to Master's level.

All taught programmes

2.8   *The Panel recognises that the School has made great efforts in embedding employability skills into the undergraduate curriculum, and recommends that positive initiatives including the writing skills programme be extended to the postgraduate MA curriculum, and that consideration should be given as to how to embed quantitative skills into the curriculum at all levels. Consideration should also be given as to further supporting UG and (especially) PGT students considering non-academic careers.*

Quantitative skills now feature significantly in modules at all levels; for example, the level 4 *Building the American Nation*, the level 5 *History in Action*, and the level 6 *We the People*. Through PAR, the School is seeking a new post in Early Modern Global History which will extend teaching in economic history.

The School has made employability initiatives a major priority for 2014-15 and 2015-16, and has begun offering a series of events designed to engage and inform students on career matters. These have been well attended and student feedback has been very positive.

2.9   *The Panel recommends that more key texts should be placed on restricted loan arrangements in the Library to enable more students to access them, and that a review of the overall book budget and its distribution across modules should be considered.*

The School has doubled its expenditure on Library provision in order to allow students greater access to learning resources. Each module now has a budget for library expenditure and, as orders for new books are placed through QMplus, spending can be monitored to ensure that no module falls short. NSS scores demonstrate that these initiatives have been successful, as the School's scores for learning resources increased markedly in 2014.

2.10   *The Panel recommends that the School should continue to monitor the appropriateness of a four-week turnaround time (or one week before the next submission date) on the delivery of assessment feedback on taught programmes.*

The Director of Taught Programmes now monitors the timeliness of feedback to ensure that it is offered within 4 weeks. Additionally, the Student Support Manager consults with the SSLC to monitor student satisfaction in this area.

2.11   The Panel recommends that the School should pay ongoing attention to its communications with students, especially in ensuring that they fully understand details of assessment methods, marking criteria and career advice opportunities.

Assessment methods and marking criteria have been given increased importance in the first-year module History in Practice, to ensure that students are offered a full understanding of these issues during their first term.

As noted above, the School is placing increased importance on employability and careers, and the response to this has suggested both effective communication and great interest in the events.

Postgraduate research students

2.12   The Panel recommends that the School should continue to work to embed the points-based PGR training system, to encourage students to participate in QML Doctoral College training events, and to ensure that training and mentoring is provided to all PhD students involved in teaching.

The School's postgraduate students engage enthusiastically with the PGR training system, and their engagement is monitored through annual appraisals. Training and mentoring is mandatory for all PhD students involved in teaching, and offered through a dedicated team, including a member of staff who oversees training and monitors the performance of all Teaching Assistants.