

REVIEW OF HUMANITIES

Report by the Strategic Education Committee

The aim of the review commissioned by the SEC was to assess current Humanities teaching for UG courses in the College and to explore a future strategy for the delivery of such courses. Since the majority of these courses are delivered during “protected” lunchtime hours, the review also encompassed the format of the “College Day”, which defines these sessions.

1.0 Terms of Reference

1. To review the current provision for the teaching of humanities and other non-core subjects to UG students in the College and make recommendations for change as appropriate
2. To identify the current and planned future requirements for Humanities teaching in each of the UG degree courses (timing and volume).
3. To consider the role of Humanities in the Transferable Skills training programme for PG students across the College
4. To consider whether the current arrangements for the College Day are appropriate

2.0 Format of the Review and the Review Committee

The review committee met twice, firstly without representation by the students or the Department of Humanities and then a second time with the Head of the Department and two student representatives. Information supplied, for the review, by the Department was supplemented by a series of interviews carried out by the Chairman with the respective heads of section.

Chair	Bernie Morley	Director of GSLSM
SEC	Julia Buckingham	Pro Rector (Education)
Registry	Nigel Wheatley	Deputy Academic Registrar (Academic Affairs)
FoE	Esat Alpay	Senior Lecturer in Engineering Education
Business School	Dot Griffiths	Deputy Principal & Head of Programmes
FoM	John Laycock	Senior Admissions Tutor
Business School	Colin Love	Teaching Fellow Strategy & Marketing
FoNS (Physical Sciences)	Alan Spivey	Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Dept of Chemistry
FoNS (Life Sciences)	Denis Wright	Dean of Natural Sciences
Humanities	Andrew Warwick	Head of Humanities
Student Representative	Hannah Theodorou	Deputy President (Education & Welfare)
Student Representative	Alexander Grisman	4th year undergraduate, Aeronautical Engineering

3.0 Background

The Humanities Department at Imperial College has recently formed from a merger between CHoST the Centre for History of Science, Technology and Medicine together with the extant Humanities Programme.

It is unique amongst departments at Imperial College since it has a significant undergraduate teaching load, delivered to all other departments and divisions within the College whilst having no undergraduate degree programmes of its own. This is in contrast to comparable Institutions to Imperial such as MIT and Caltech where the extensive humanities programmes delivered as part of the Science and the Graduate Degrees also form components of stand-alone Humanities Degrees.

Oxford and Cambridge, for comparison, operate differing policies. In Cambridge, the Natural Sciences degree allows for a number of Humanities options, while at Oxford, there is no such leeway. Interestingly, the presence of the Humanities options does not seem to be a major factor in the selection of Imperial by students as determined in a recent survey (2007/08 intake); of 350 students asked whether the presence of humanities options influenced their decision to come to Imperial College, only one third were aware of the humanities options and of these two thirds did not feel it influenced their decision.

4.0 Organization of Humanities Department

The Head of the Humanities Department is Professor Andrew Warwick. The specifics of the individual Sections are given below although staff numbers are an approximation given that a large number of part-time staff provide the majority of the teaching.

History of Science, Technology and Medicine - Andy Mendelsohn

4 full time staff – the top ranked history department in the country in the 08/09 RAE.

3/4 PhD students per year

MSc History of Science Technology and Medicine, 20/30 students per year (Run jointly with the Department of Science and Technology Studies at UCL, and the Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL).

UG teaching options of History of Medicine, History of Science and Technology, European History, Controversy in Science, Ethics, Global History of Twentieth Century Things

Languages – Charmian Brinson

6 full time staff plus 3 part-time equalling about 1.5 FTEs plus 28 on hourly basis.

5/7 PhD students

No MSc courses

UG courses are available from Level 1 (Basic) to 7 (Degree), with level 5 equating to A Level. Languages available are Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian and, Spanish. All but French are available at introductory Level 1 and 2

Two new combined BSc Hons degrees in Biology/Chemistry with a language started this October. Total enrolments 6

Science Communication Group – Stephen Webster

3 full time staff

2/4 PhD students per year

MSc in Science Communication 35/40 students per year

MSc in Science Media Production (TV and Radio) 12/15 students per year

UG teaching: Communicating Science and the Medical Humanities course to Medicine Undergraduates in intercalated BSc year.

Translation – Mark Shuttleworth

2 full time staff /2-5 part-time staff plus more than 20 on hourly basis

3/4 PhD students per year

MSc in Scientific Technical and Medical Translation with Translation Technology, 35 students per year
UG teaching: No contribution.

Additional sections within the Humanities Department are:

1. English Language Support Group headed by John Hughes sets entrance test for post graduate students who are not native English speakers and provides support post-test. They also provide considerable support informally to non-native English speaking UG students.
2. Evening classes co-ordinator Ms Anna Nyberg; 50 classes per week.
3. Additional undergraduate subjects taught: Philosophy, Politics, Modern Literature and Drama, Art in the Twentieth Century, Music, Roman History, Creative Writing, Music Technology and Film Studies.

5.0 Current Provision for UG Teaching

Humanities courses offer undergraduates the opportunity to study subjects that make important contributions to their general education. The courses aim to provide practice in ways of thinking about human affairs and creative activity that are not always amenable to the quantitative techniques of science and technology. All humanities and language courses are open to all students at South Kensington Campus in whichever years their departments permit them to be taken.

The basic premise is that students can exchange part of their degree course for a Humanities option which then contributes to the final mark for their degree (5-8%). However there is enormous variation in options available from department to department; even the contribution to the final examination for the same Humanities course can vary between departments.

There were a total of 2085 enrolments to the undergraduate humanities programme in 2007-08, 1306 of these were on language courses. Other popular courses include Philosophy (124 enrolments) and Politics (100 enrolments).

6.0 The College Day

The College Day was originally established in 1991 in order to ensure that specific time during the day was set aside to allow students to have lunch and to participate in sporting activities, Humanities and language courses, and clubs and societies' activities. The College Day runs from 9.00 to 17.50 with 12:00 – 14:00 protected. Wednesday afternoon is protected from 12.30 for sport.

7.0 Future Strategy

The current provision is complex and diverse with a lack of clarity as to the purpose of Humanities teaching. This was in part due to the ad hoc manner in which Humanities expanded in recent years, with limited reference to the requirements of the Faculties. Hence, the committee was in agreement that refocusing the direction of the Humanities department was necessary, to bring it into line with the strategic aims of the College. A major aspect of this was that, in future, all UG students should be trained in the ethics of their discipline, and in science communication. It is also desirable that students have a broad understanding of the history of their subject, though this should not be compulsory. Further development of the Humanities Department should build upon current strengths in Science Communication and History of Science, Technology and Medicine, following wherever practicable the CHoSTM "research-led" model. However, it was agreed that other aspects of the Humanities programme are valuable adjuncts to the UG programme at Imperial College, providing an avenue for broadening students' general education, transferable skills and developing creativity. The following changes, which are supported by Management Board, are therefore **recommended**:

8.0 Recommendations

1. The Humanities Committee does not currently function to ensure that Humanities teaching is geared towards the strategic goals of the College. The Committee should be restructured to ensure that all the Faculties are suitably represented and that the College's strategic aims are uppermost in decision making regarding current and future programmes.
2. Every UG programme should have science communication and ethics modules as components of the course. Teaching will be Faculty-specific with input from Humanities. An expansion of Humanities to include specialist(s) in ethics is envisioned. Any such expansion should be on the CHoSTM "research-led" model and hence RAE returnable. The history and philosophy of science, technology and medicine will currently remain as a Humanities "option" but in the future it may be desirable to add this to the science communication/ethics modules.
3. Humanities options that contribute towards examinations should carry the same number of ECTS in each year of the course in all departments, hence contributing the same percentage to the examination within the course year on all courses. Options that contribute to the final degree classification should not be available in the final year of courses.
4. Members of the review committee felt it was inappropriate for the College to be teaching languages at GCSE level and below (levels 1 & 2) as options which contribute to examinations. Such courses could be taught as part of the evening class programme (see recommendation 9). Language teaching should focus on the major European languages of German, French and Spanish, however, a watching brief should be kept on Mandarin. Currently very few students have studied Mandarin at GCSE level, but this may well change in the future. Any other non-European language courses should be offered only as evening classes.
5. The method of teaching language courses should be reconsidered such that they can be delivered in 2 timetabled hours per week. This, coupled with a more flexible College Day, will make language options available to students on other campuses.
6. For non-language provision, the following options should become available only as evening classes (see recommendation 9 re evening classes): Modern Literature and Drama, Art in the Twentieth Century, Roman History, and Film Studies. These non-language humanities courses are the ones least in line with the strategic goals of the College and the least popular with students. The remainder should be maintained but must have a focus on developing transferable skills.
7. It is recognised that the College day is too inflexible to meet the needs of the faculties, therefore a more flexible arrangement is recommended with the proviso that the number of taught hours in a week does not increase and teaching does not continue beyond 6pm. Furthermore an expansion of Humanities teaching to campuses other than South Kensington is recommended. Due to the impact on timetabling, a much wider consultation is required before specific recommendations can be made, it is anticipated that this will be reviewed in one year's time.
8. The Committee recognised that the English Language Support Group performs a very important task in a highly commendable way. It functions very differently from the rest of the Humanities Department, however, providing support for PG students rather than running specific courses which contribute to examinations.

9. All evening classes must cover direct costs and there should normally be an optional assessment for students who wish to gain a qualification.
10. The Graduate Schools should discuss with the Humanities Department the possibility of delivering additional courses as part of the transferable skills training for PGR students. This may require additional funding from the Graduate Schools.