In December 2016, Art History postgraduate Student Reps collated feedback from their peers and met with the Head of School to discuss the issues raised.

“1. Clarify difference in curriculum between MA Art History and Theory and MA Curating (dissertation vs. exhibition project) and that students are aware that they should only register for the corresponding module (ie: Researching Art History for dissertation and Managing Galleries for exhibition project).”

Apologies again for any confusion caused at the beginning of the year. We will implement changes for 2017-8 to avoid any such confusion in the future. These changes will concern Enrol and other electronic databases and systems, but also the handbook and the advice we will give in person, notably at the induction meeting in Welcome Week. Key here is that students on either degree scheme (AHT or Curating) will be presented with two bundles – one consisting out of the co-curricular “Researching Art History” (AR932) and the Dissertation; the other out of the co-curricular “Managing Galleries and Exhibition Projects” (AR912) and Exhibition Project. It will be made clear that one cannot mix elements of one bundle with elements from the other bundle, and students will be clearly told by when they need to make their final decision (basically within the first two teaching weeks of the Autumn Term). While most curating students will want to do the exhibition bundle, a few might not, but they would still choose the curating modules and focus their dissertation on curating issues. And also AHT students might want to do the exhibition project, but adopt a more theory-driven angle to their individual portfolio and also take more of the theory modules. That way the two degrees will remain distinct.

“2. Review module descriptions before posting them on Moodle (ask that professors verify that assessment due dates are the same on Moodle as they are on Faser; that assessment and essay guidelines and grading criteria are up to date; that assessments accurately correspond to new departmental course offerings, etc.).”

Such a review anyway happens as a matter of long-established routine, but it seems that this year something has slipped through despite the review. We apologies for that too. My sense is that our processes are basically intact, but we have to clarify them to all staff involved and redouble our efforts to avoid any inconsistencies and inaccuracies.

“3. Make a more explicit recommendation (during Fall Term orientation?) that ESL students attend English courses to supplement their studies.”

Yes, this too we happily take on board and will implement it for the 2017-8 intake.

“4. Solve scheduling/timetable issues in a more efficient manner (ie: the Managing Galleries module, which was moved from Tuesdays to Wednesdays and students were informed at the last minute).”

Apologies for the sub-optimal information flow and late changes in Autumn Term. I discussed this with the staff member involved and am confident that in the future we are better equipped to solve such issues in a timelier and more helpful way (or not have them arise in the first place).

5. Ask that professors check Moodle from a student’s point of view to make sure that it is comprehensive and clear (ie: the Art and Politics module is organized according to Spring Term weeks, even though it is being offered in the Fall).

As noted in my response to 2, reviewing Moodle content and making sure that it is comprehensive and clear is something that anyway happens as a matter of course, but in this example too it seems that something was not spotted. As everyone gets more used to Moodle, these sorts of mistakes should become less common and, as noted above, we will redouble our efforts to make sure that they do.

“6. Organization of more socials (an MA student has volunteered to organize socials and has posted a FB poll to decide what day of the week suits everyone best).”
My understanding is that organisations of more socials is something that is happening now, led by students. This seems to me exactly the right approach, as this has to evolve from ground-up, not top-down. Having said this, we happily assist you in what you want to do – such as in publicising events. Also, there will be other School-wide socials like the Xmas party – notably the summer picnic. And there will be socials around research events, including the Art History Mini-course in early June.

“7. Ask the department to organize an employability session tailored to address specific Art History and Curating concerns.”

We happily take this on board too. We will try to put something suitable on this academic year.

“8. Ask the department to organize an Art History writing seminar (similar to the Philosophy writing seminar) in order to improve writing skills, but tailored to specific course.”

Noted. My sense was that colleagues in Art History thought that support for academic writing in Art History and Curating might be best provided at an individual level by supervisors or module teachers. But I will raise this with colleagues, and ask them to reconsider the matter in the light of this helpful feedback. It might be that instead of a co-curricular module like the MA Writing Workshop in Philosophy, there might be a session or two on essay writing and dissertation writing as part of a revised version of the existing co-curricular modules (AR912 and 932). Anyway, I’ll put it on the agenda for the away day later this academic year and we will discuss it and see what should be adopted for 2017-8.

“9. Promote more communication between the Philosophy department and the Art History and Theory department.”

We happily do so. As a first step, I wonder whether Art History students should come to the Graduate Seminar, organised by the philosophy students, Fridays in term-time at 5pm (or to the bar afterwards). Also, please feel free to advertise events to the whole postgraduate (PG) community, such as by sending messages to all research PG students in the Scholl (pahgr) and/or all MA students (pahpgt) or all Art History PG students (artpgall) and/or all philosophy – or to ask our PG administrator to do so, if your email account does not allow you to send emails to these groups.

Head of School
Spring 2016