



**Subject Centre for  
History, Classics  
and Archaeology**

## **WHY HISTORY MATTERS**

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### ***Marginalisation/ Relevance of History***

There is now a need to proactively make the case FOR history. This means academics need to engage with a broader audience and not just write for each other. Universities have a role to play in raising the national profile of the subject.

It seems that there is a real danger that history is already becoming the 'new Latin'. For instance:

- In 2006, 1,479 schools did not enter any students for GCSE history.
- Future Primary school teachers on B.Ed courses, unless they choose history as their specialist subject, may only receive 4 weeks training and then be expected to teach half the National Curriculum in history.

History seems to be losing-out in the battle for classroom timetable space. This will clearly impact on the numbers of candidates applying for history at university as well.

It is therefore in the interests of university academics to support school history teachers in their promotion of the subject at Primary, GCSE and A Level.

### ***School History and HE History***

It was suggested that attempts should be made to reintroduce university input into exam boards. This would be an opportunity to reflect the diversity of the subject at HE level in the school curriculum.

In general it seems that there is a need for HE institutions to have a clearer idea about what is being taught at schools and colleges.

One way for school teachers to update their subject knowledge and also improve links with HE institutions would be to regularly attend history conferences and maybe have sabbaticals to undertake research. This is potentially an interesting initiative, but currently its scope seems to be limited due to the restraints of the curriculum.

Progression from schools to universities – it might be possible to widen access to existing initiatives such as vacation courses run by universities that are designed to give students a sense of what history at HE is all about.

Greater focus on induction courses – highlight what is expected of students and what support/ additional course are available.

## ***Teaching and Research***

There is a need for incentives and recognition for those HE staff that actively develop their teaching skills. Currently this does not seem to feature in HE career progression.

But we should still recognise that some of the best HE teaching is often closely related to ongoing research interests. It should be possible to get a better balance.

Universities may benefit from looking at how schools implement quality assessment and sharing of best practice in relation to teaching.

But university courses should avoid the restrictive curriculum and formulaic assessment schemes that are widely recognised as an obstacle to good history teaching at school level.

## ***Implications for History at University***

Many suggestions have been made at this conference about how to make history more relevant and interesting to students at HE.

These included: Providing a broad overview framework; incorporating elements of citizenship; increasing opportunities for cross disciplinary study and a greater emphasis on world history.

Some of these initiatives have already been implemented by departments across the country. But what is not always known is how effective these courses have been.

There is a need for greater communication between history departments throughout the country so that as a subject we can raise the status of history.

This does not mean that all departments need to be following a national curriculum – but simply that they engage with each other more and share examples of best practice in teaching and research.

## ***Why Study History?***

- We need to understand why undergraduates choose history?
- What are their expectations and are those expectations being met?
- How much can we tailor courses to individual needs, and should we?
- Could we promote a scheme where successful history graduates, from a range of careers, visited schools to talk about how history had benefited them (this may already exist, I'm not sure?)