

# **CHEAD**

**(Council for Higher Education in Art & Design)**

**Review of the Year 2007/08**

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\* The typeface used for this document is Sylexiad Sans, a typeface for the adult dyslexic reader. Sylexiad was designed by Rob Hillier, Norwich University College for the Arts. NCA is also a member of CHEAD,.

## **The Council for Higher Education in Art & Design (CHEAD)**

CHEAD is the association of 80 educational institutions with degree or postgraduate provision in art and design, represented by their most senior academic concerned with art and design. CHEAD is a long standing Association, which brings together senior figures in UK Art, Design and Media education.

CHEAD's specific aims are:

- To provide a forum for debate and exchange of information for senior managers
- To inform, influence and initiate policy in higher education in art and design at national and other levels
- On matters of policy relating to higher education in art and design to consult government, quality assurance and funding bodies for higher education in the UK
- To work closely with major arts organisations, e.g. the Arts Council, England and the Design Council, through the CHEAD/Links Group
- To provide a forum and co-operate with the various subject associations (e.g. National Association for Fine Art Education, the Association of Fashion/Textiles Courses, Design Education Association).

CHEAD has an Executive Committee of elected officers and members. which meets 6 times a year. Council (the full membership) meets three times a year, including a two/three day residential conference each Spring at various venues throughout the UK and elsewhere in Europe. Business meetings are held in London in November and May and are followed by CHEAD Forum, with guest speakers on key agenda issues.

### **Activities in 07/08**

This year we managed to carry the momentum of our strategic review from 2006/07. A number of new insights and initiatives have grown from this, which are outlined in this report and which we hope to implement in dialogue with our members and related organisations.

For our ongoing activities, CHEAD business maintained its focus on the existing core themes of research, knowledge transfer and progression. In particular, we made positive progress on a number of projects, such as the AHRC initiative on practice-led research, and laid the groundwork for further projects due to launch in 08/09. In addition, the closing seminar from our UCAS analysis of CHEAD members' admissions data generated a lively debate.

Besides these three themes, we continued to work very hard to strengthen CHEAD's relationships with other related organisations. It cannot be repeated too many times that much of our ability to engage with policy agendas has stemmed from such meetings, even though they may largely be unreported, and significant progress has again been made. For example, CHEAD has continued to be closely involved in the development of the Design Skills Alliance's Design Blueprint. We hope to use this experience also in our dialogue with other Sector Skills Councils in the future in order to strengthen our sector's links with industry. With a number of other organisations, such as the Crafts Council, the ADM HEA and the Arts Council England, we have launched a number of joint initiatives, such as the seminar on minority specialism subjects, which will be held in October 2008. We are excited about the opportunities that these collaborations promise for our members and for our future work, and we look forward to keeping our members updated on their progress.

As usual, the highlight of the year was the Annual Conference, which was held in Belfast and took as its theme the links between art & design and science & technology and how these links may be accommodated within art and design curricula.

Overall, we have continued to carry the ambition from 2006/07. As another reflection, we have increased our capacity with the appointment of a new part-time administration and finance assistant. So, a warm welcome to Natalie Marr and we look forward to introducing her at CHEAD activities throughout 08/09! We do hope that our members and related organisations continue to feel that our efforts provide a valuable service, as we look forward to working with them 2007/08.

## **CHEAD Strategy**

Throughout 2007/08 CHEAD continued the review of its long-term strategy. As members will recall, it had been prompted by a number of internal and external developments. It was partly a continuation of the professionalisation of CHEAD operations, which had begun with our move to London offices in 2006. It had been further prompted by the developments outlined below, and it was thought that CHEAD would need to absorb and reflect these changes in order to ensure that it can continue to provide leadership and value for money for its members:

- A perceived change of the HE A&D landscape: agendas had evolved and the number of organisations involved in strategic decision-making increased.
- Increasing overlap of issues affecting not only HE but also other sectors and their representative bodies, such as schools, FE and industry. It was thought that this offered opportunities for sharing practices and extending networks.
- Institutional restructuring and mergers. As a consequence, in many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) the most senior A&D academic might not be involved in or be affected by some key policy developments. Similarly, decision-making and key expertise has become more widely spread across the schools / faculties and not necessarily concentrated in the office of the CHEAD member representative. It would be therefore be important to be able to find a way to tap into the expertise and to engage with key staff beyond the CHEAD members' representatives.

We feel that our current activities provide the appropriate structure to meet our organisation's remit and to remain flexible to identify and respond to changes in the wider sector. Yet, we are aware of the need to disseminate information more effectively to our member institutions and to different levels of the institutional hierarchy. This also means that we need to provide more opportunities for our members to engage with debates and to contribute to CHEAD activities. We do hope to discuss a number of proposals with our members at various meetings throughout the year.

### *Leadership support*

As part of the strategy review, supporting leadership had been identified as one of the key challenges currently facing the sector. The quality of leadership and management in the subject is deemed to be high but, as set out above, there are challenges facing the sector arising from the high level of interest in and importance attached to the creative and cultural industries, and to initiatives like the Government's Strategy Paper, *Creative Britain*.

Member organisations have been reporting that it is difficult to fill senior level vacant posts in the subject. Such posts are very varied in nature, reflecting the complex profile of the sector. For example, there are specialist, free standing colleges – some with a mixed HE/FE economy; there are Schools/Faculties/Departments in large Universities; and there are large Colleges within specialist organisations like the University of the Arts, London, or the University for the Creative Arts (in Kent and Surrey). Also, the 'subject' of Art and Design encompasses many disciplines and is often found in combination with other subjects (e.g. media; performing arts; technology). The infrastructure that supports Art and Design is often complex involving studios, laboratories, workshops an extensive range of small and large scale equipment. Leaders in Art and Design management frequently span a huge range of disciplines and/or manage teams of subject specific leaders.

To address the above challenges, CHEAD has been drawing up plans for a long term programme to support leadership development. An initial meeting with Ewart Wooldridge, Chief Executive of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, generated a number of new ideas and a basis for further action. In particular, the LFHE had expressed its support for the development of the programme and we look forward to taking this further as a key activity in 08/09, with a view to starting the first training sessions in early 2010.

Another outcome of our discussions with E Wooldridge was an invitation for CHEAD to join as observers the steering group for a research project, jointly organised by LFHE and the Arts Council England, to explore issues of innovation in HE leadership in arts and culture. Chris McIntyre, University of Hertfordshire, and Dr. Gerard Moran, De Montfort University, have taken the two places on behalf of CHEAD, and we will be keen to evaluate how insights from that project might be able to enhance our own leadership development.

### **Research**

CHEAD's activities in the field of research were again dominated by the RAE and our main objective therefore was to keep a watching brief and to block space in the CHEAD calendar for follow-up events in Spring 2009. In addition, announcements in 2006 by Professor David Eastwood, HEFCE Chief Executive, of proposals for a new research assessment framework, resulted in the publication of the Research Excellence Framework for consultation in autumn 2007. The principles of the new framework were proposing two distinct processes for assessing quality, one for science-based subjects and another for all other subjects. Research quality in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and mathematics and statistics would be assessed through a light-touch process, based on peer review and informed by statistical indicators in common with the science-based disciplines.

There were significant reservations over these proposals among CHEAD members, which were collated in our response to Hefce. In particular, concerns focused on the possible implications for A&D of a split into science and non-science subject areas. In particular, the response pointed out how such a split might adversely affect interdisciplinary or pedagogic research. Concerns were also raised that there is a need to clarify what 'light touch' peer review and user value meant in relation to the arts and humanities. Moreover, it was pointed out that the use of quantitative indicators based on bibliometrics might show efficiency but did not indicate effectiveness, quality or innovation. The CHEAD consultation response can still be accessed on the CHEAD website, along with other CHEAD outputs.

The government's response to the consultation was detailed in a press release on April 24. Importantly, it was announced that there is no longer going to be such a clear distinction between the arrangements for science-based subjects and those for all other subjects. For all subjects the assessment would therefore include metrics-based indicators as well as input from expert panels. Moreover, in order to allow sufficient time for the development of the new approach, the timetable for designing the new framework has been extended by 12 months. We are pleased that the direction of this policy development has changed. However, much more work needs to be done and we will do our best to continue to represent CHEAD members' voice in any further debate.

Also continuing from 06/07 was CHEAD's engagement in the AHRC Review of Practice Led Research, which had originally been set up together with CHEAD in 2005 to discuss the

nature of the scholarly infrastructure in practice-led creative and performing arts research. The work had been progressed in four sub-groups, Music, Visual arts design and media, dance and drama, and creative writing. However, the project had paused for a review of its remit for a significant period of time over the past two years due to an intervention on behalf of CHEAD. In this period, primarily thanks to the energy and commitment of Anne Boddington, University of Brighton, and Ian Montgomery, University of Ulster, CHEAD remained engaged with the project and maintained a productive dialogue with the AHRC. It was ultimately agreed to produce a review of existing documentation, such as RAE criteria, results from related research project, etc., to draw out key insights that address the questions set out in the original project brief. For that purpose the project employed a research associate, Dr. Michael Wilson, at the University of Brighton. The final report of the review is expected for October 2008. We expected that this report will usefully tie into our planned activities emerging from the RAE and that it will also inform the wider CHEAD strategy for research.

### **Curriculum**

CHEAD's activities with regard to the HE A&D curriculum focus on the policy-making level, where policy developments may have an impact on A&D delivery. Our underlying role there remains to make sense of any developments and articulating these to our members. Beyond that, we also consider our objective to articulate the value-added of a degree in HE A&D. We hope that this helps to strengthen the subject's confidence and to raise its ability, among others, to attract students and to interact more effectively with employers and industry on the issues of employability and employer engagement in curriculum delivery. As such, CHEAD complements other organisations with a more explicit focus on teaching and learning, such as the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Art, Design and Media, or the Group for Learning in Art & Design.

### *Minority Specialism Subjects*

A key issue affecting member institutions has been the continued provision of minority specialism subjects. This encompasses those subjects that are concerned with the teaching and learning of core skills, materials and processes; specifically this would cover subjects that are concerned with non-digital issues, and with the physicality of processes / materials.

There are great strengths and traditions in craft education in the United Kingdom. However, there are increasing challenges to the future of craft education in schools and universities, not least significant economic pressures. To address these issues CHEAD, the Crafts Council and the National Arts Learning Network (NALN) agreed to organise a seminar, which will be held in October 2008. The aim of the seminar will be to explore how schools, universities and leading organisations can create a common agenda that addresses current weaknesses and maps out how we can work together to sustain craft education in the future. The seminar will be strongly informed by the NALN 'Niche Specialist Subjects' research project, which had been led by the University of Cumbria with eight other NALN member institutions – all of which are also CHEAD members.

We strongly feel that this seminar is going to be only the start of a long-term dialogue and one, in which we hope to play a leading role and be of value to CHEAD members.

### *QAA Subject Benchmark Statement*

This year saw the 5-yearly review of the QAA subject benchmark statements (SBS). CHEAD had proposed *minor* revisions – as opposed to *major* or *minimal* – in light of working with it for four years and to ensure it reflected contemporary issues in teaching and learning. CHEAD was subsequently invited by QAA to convene and chair the working group to review the Art and Design SBS. The group was led by Professor Gordon Kennedy, Nottingham Trent University, supported by Dr. Gerard Moran, De Montfort University,

The revised SBS have since been published on the QAA website. The original SBS had proved to be enduring and robust, and has a strengthened relevance at a time when the creative industries are exercising an even greater influence in the UK and world economies. These industries are driven by a graduate-rich work force to which UK HE art and design has contributed significantly. However, in light of the current trends towards greater employer engagement in the delivery of HE A&D, we are aware that this may need to be reflected both in terms of the statement's content and the language in which it is written in future review. In the meantime, however, it is from a position of confidence that we hope that CHEAD has helped to ensure that the SBS will continue to provide the best possible support to colleagues across the UK.

### *National Student Survey*

In addition to the above activities, CHEAD is keeping a close watching brief on issues emerging from the National Student Survey and to identify possible action to support our members. To this end at the November Business & Forum meeting Professor John Last, Arts Institute at Bournemouth and Chair of the Group for Learning in Art & Design, gave a presentation of the research undertaken by GLAD. GLAD has since secured further funding from ADM HEA and the HEAD Trust to undertake further research into the way in which art, design and media students have responded to the NSS. As Chair, John is also formally co-opted to the CHEAD Executive Committee, which ensures that we will be able to keep in touch with these issues and update our members on any developments.

### **Progression & Widening Participation**

Progression and Widening Participation covers a broad range of issues and correspondingly a significant share of CHEAD activities focused on related issues, much of which had been continuing the work from the previous project on widening participation in HE A&D.

### *Research into Widening Participation in HE A&D*

Readers will recall from last year's Annual Report that in May 2007 CHEAD had held a seminar with the generous support of a number of key individuals in the field of WP from CHEAD member institutions. The purpose of the seminar was to explore how to take further the recommendations that had emerged from CHEAD, ACE and ADM HEA research projects into widening participation in HE A&D. The discussions had produced several useful ideas, which were subsequently taken further by CHEAD, together with ACE, ADM HEA and NALN. In particular, there was a sense that further research was needed in certain areas and, more importantly, that there remained an insufficient overview of the range and quality of existing research in the field. This has further meant that target audiences may not have been aware of the types of resources available. To address this