



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A new era for art history education in the UK

Today's announcement from Pearson Education regarding the development of a new GCE History of Art specification is a significant occasion for art history in education. The statement regarding the new specification - available for teaching from September 2017 - also serves as an important milestone in ensuring that young people will continue to have the opportunity to learn about art history through a formal, accredited level 5 qualification. The GCE is a qualification with a long and important history, recognised by parents, teachers and universities as a benchmark qualification.

Earlier announcements regarding the possible discontinuation of GCE History of Art triggered unprecedented support for our subject, within and beyond education. This level of media coverage, political engagement and public petitioning has scarcely - if ever - been witnessed for art history. Such support conclusively demonstrates the continued importance and relevance of the subject and with the new GCE specification enables us to champion the study of art history as an important opportunity for learning and insight.

Alongside the Cambridge Pre-U certificate, Extended Project Qualifications (EPQs) and other subject opportunities, the continued offer of a GCE means that art history education will remain a vibrant field of study and offer students the chance to engage with the world through a lens of art, culture and creative practice.

We are confident that recent events signal the start of a new era for the study of global art history and visual culture in the UK; an era typified by a more inclusive and diverse approach to the subject, reaching out to schools and learners in new ways and in new places.

The new specification will allow us to build upon the successes of the previous A Level whilst developing new approaches to understanding art history and visual cultures and discovering new abilities, skills and modes of inquiry:

'I gained a lot of confidence upon entering the upper-sixth, and a lot of that I attribute to taking up art history as one of my core subjects. Up to GCSE I was a fairly lackadaisical student..., and though I learnt to like maths and appreciate history, art history was the first written subject in a long time that I was made to feel I had a natural aptitude for.... due to its flexible and all-encompassing nature it reignited my curiosity in many other topics.'

Recent History of Art A Level student, Saint Paul's Girls' School

Craig Clunas, FBA, Professor of the History of Art, University of Oxford, says:

'The study of the history of art deals with things that are among the most complex products of human creativity across time and across cultures, things which continue to act and to have effects on us today, enriching as well as troubling people's lives.

Rigorous and intellectually demanding, it stretches students and their teachers, it makes them look and makes them think. It underpins the presentation of art through museums and galleries, exhibitions, and a wide range of other media like TV and social media, to huge and passionate audiences.

As a university subject it offers all the skills and employment possibilities of any other humanities degree, plus the focus on the analysis and interpretation of images and things which has become so central to our lives today'.

Christine Riding, Head of Arts and Curator of the Queen's House, Royal Museums Greenwich and Chair of the Association of Art Historians said:

'The Association of Art Historians is delighted by the news that Pearson have decided to make available the History of Art A level from September 2017. We welcome this vital addition to the study of art history which will both enrich creative education in the UK and enable us to further develop our own education campaign work with schools, universities and cultural organisations.'

Developing new audiences for art history in education is a central aim of our Thinking About Art campaign, supported by the first UK textbook for the field and complemented by a website providing thematic learning and teaching resources. Working with educational partners such as Pearson is a key part of our campaign work to ensure a vibrant, long term future for art history in education within the UK. The new GCE will be an important addition to the learning ecology and we look forward to supporting its development & delivery over the coming months and years.

You can find out more about our campaign work at www.aah.org.uk/campaigns or by contacting our Campaign Manager Trevor Horsewood at Trevor@aah.org.uk

End of release

Notes to Editors

- The AAH is a UK-based organisation for those with a professional commitment to and interest in art history and visual culture. Formed in 1974, the AAH plays a key role at national level in helping shape and secure the future of art history in education.
- The AAH is a charity working within arts and education. We run a broad programme of events, publications, and funding opportunities for those involved with art history and visual culture in further & higher education, museums & galleries and schools, as well as those studying art history or undertaking freelance work. We provide resources and networks for our 1300 members and the wider art history community.

- The AAH publishes the leading academic journal, *Art History*. We run an internationally respected AAH annual conference, which offers a valuable platform for current, interdisciplinary research and critical debate around art and art history.
- *Thinking About Art* - Building on the success of our 2015 text book, by Penny Huntsman, the next 2 years of our work in both formal and informal education and takes the book's title as a campaign umbrella and call to action. Visit www.thinkingaboutart.org.uk to find out more about our work with secondary schools and museums and galleries and to keep up to date with the latest art history education news and resources.
- Support us by following us on Twitter on @arthistorians @AAHeducation and on facebook.