

University of Cambridge: Programme Specifications

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POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN THE CONSERVATION OF EASEL PAINTINGS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	Department of History of Art
3	Accreditation details	None
4	Name of final award	Postgraduate Diploma
5	Programme title	Conservation of Easel Paintings
6	UCAS code	None
7	JACS code(s)	
8	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	History of Art, Architecture and Design
9	Qualifications framework level	FHEQ Level 7
10	Date specification produced/ last revised	19 September 2005
11	Date specification last reviewed	15 July 2010

Teaching Provision and Facilities

The core teaching staff consists of four conservators/restorers and one conservation scientist. In addition conservators from UK and abroad, without formal university affiliation, assist with the programme of lectures and workshops.

The Hamilton Kerr Institute is situated in the Mill, Whittlesford, Cambridge. The Institute has a conservation library, laboratories, studios and workshops.

Educational aims of the programme

The course aims:

- i) to provide high calibre students with training in practical skills and to offer excellent specialist supervision of studio work and applied research;
- ii) to educate painting conservators to the highest standard and to provide them with the means to contribute to research in the field of easel paintings conservation and preventive conservation.
- iii) to provide a stimulating environment in which students can reach their full intellectual potential;
- iv) to help students develop a wide range of intellectual abilities and skills which will enable them to make a significant contribution to research and communication of their work in conservation.

On completion of the Diploma, students should have acquired competence in, or gained knowledge of:

1. practical skills in the conservation of easel paintings – cleaning, restoration and structural treatment of paintings on canvas or panel;
2. historical painting techniques and materials;
3. science of materials, theory of conservation, historical contexts and ethical issues;
4. technical and analytical examination of paintings;
5. preventive measures for the creation of suitable environmental conditions for painting collections; packing and transport of paintings;
6. art historical research
7. all aspects of general occupational safety, risk assessments and knowledge of the Safety Code of Practice under the 1988 Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH).
8. students should have gained experience in oral and written presentations, and in the writing of a sustained piece of research.

Teaching

In the first term, teaching is delivered through the supervised reconstruction of paintings in oil and tempera on canvas and on panel. In addition to practical instruction, students are required to read the documentary sources and compare them with practice. The formal teaching of theory is delivered in series of seminars held in the second and third term. Throughout the taught course, students are encouraged to undertake independent reading and study, in order to consolidate what is under discussion in the seminars. In addition they attend other lectures, workshops and art-history seminars. During the second and third terms of the first year, students are taught practical conservation techniques in the studio. In the first, second and third years, students are instructed at the easel during the progress of studio work and supervised at all stages in the writing of essays and projects.

Assessment

Assessment in the first year is based on

- three written examinations (Practical Conservation, Science of Materials, Theory of Conservation);
- three practical examinations (Laboratory Practical, Examination of a Painting, photography);
- continuous assessment of studio work.

In the second year, assessment is based on

- continuous assessment of studio work;
- four essays (3,000 to 5,000 words each);
- two seminar presentations of about 30 minutes.

The essays and seminars must be selected from set subject areas.

The examination for the third and final year of the Diploma shall consist of:

- a project (5,000/10,000 words) to include a practical component;
- a copy, i.e. the examination of a painting and the reproduction of the artist's technique, accompanied by documentation (5,000/10,000 words);
- a port-folio of studio work;

- a *viva voce* examination in July.

Skills

On completion of the course, the University expects students to have acquired the following skills.

- i) Practical Skills: to be competent to assess the condition of a work of art; to undertake the conservation and restoration of easel paintings; to assess and suggest means to provide suitable environmental conditions for paintings; to carry out the technical examination of paintings using a range of techniques (e.g. infra-red reflectography, photography, analysis of cross-sections); to undertake in-situ work on paintings in various collections.
- ii) Intellectual skills: To make ethical and empathetic decisions regarding a painting; intellectual mastery of the conservation theory; the ability to carry out research independently; knowledge of the primary and secondary sources; the ability to make measured critical judgements; the ability to organise a mass of material in the form of a coherent argument; the ability to write lucidly.
- iii) Transferable skills: the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing; to analyse and set priorities; to work independently and with initiative; to present papers in a lecture/seminar context; linguistic skills; skills of analysis and interpretation; self-discipline.

Career Destinations

Students who have been awarded the Diploma, are employed in conservation studios and laboratories in Museums in the UK and abroad or they are employed in private practice. They are also employed in conservation education.

Quality Management

The Faculty Board is responsible for all teaching in the Department. The quality of the course is maintained by:

- i) scrutiny of the reports of the External Examiner by the Faculty and the Education Section. Suggestions by them for improvement are acted on where necessary;
- ii) student feedback through end-of-term assessments;
- iii) student participation in the Staff-Student meetings;
- iv) appraisal and evaluation of staff, and the provision of staff development programmes; and
- v) the General Board's programme for reviewing Faculties and Departments every six years.