

The “outcomes” from the UK history tuning process

It is something along these lines that we will be expected to agree upon with our colleagues in the system. It would be simplest if we started with these and edited and modified according to our needs and perceptions.

Source: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, “Subject Benchmark Statements, History (2007), Sect. 3.1:
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/statements/history07.asp>

The historians’ skills and qualities of mind:

1. The ability to understand how people have existed, acted and thought in the always different context of the past. History often involves encountering and sensing the past's otherness and of learning to understand unfamiliar structures, cultures and belief systems. These forms of understanding also shed important light on the influence which the past has on the present.
2. The ability to read and analyze texts and other primary sources, both critically and empathetically, while addressing questions of genre, content, perspective and purpose. Primary sources include visual and material sources like topographical evidence, paintings, coins, medals, cartoons, photographs and films.
3. The appreciation of the complexity and diversity of situations, events and past mentalities. This emphasis is central to history's character as an anti-reductionist discipline fostering intellectual maturity.
4. The understanding of the problems inherent in the historical record itself: awareness of a range of viewpoints and the way to cope with this; appreciation of the range of problems involved in the interpretation of complex, ambiguous, conflicting and often incomplete material; a feeling for the limitations of knowledge and the dangers of simplistic explanations.
5. Basic critical skills: a recognition that statements are not all of equal validity, that there are ways of testing them, and that historians operate by rules of evidence which, though themselves subject to critical evaluation, are also a component of intellectual integrity and maturity.
6. Intellectual independence: a history program is not simply or even primarily a preparation for research in the subject, but it should incorporate the general skills of the researcher, namely the ability to set tasks and solve problems. This involves: bibliographic skills; the ability to gather, sift, select, organize and synthesize large quantities of evidence; the ability to formulate appropriate questions and to provide answers to them using valid and relevant evidence and argument. It should develop reflexivity, i.e. an understanding of the nature of the discipline including what questions are asked by historians, and why.
7. Marshalling of argument: in written and oral form drawing on and presenting all the above skills. Such argument should have structure; it should be relevant and

concise. In the case of written argument it should be expressed in clear, lucid and coherent prose. Orally, it should involve the capacity to sustain a reasoned line of argument in the face of others, to listen, to engage in sustained debate, and amend views as necessary in the light of evidence and argument. It is, of course, recognised that some forms of distance-learning will make it difficult for students to engage in face-to-face discussion or to make oral presentations to a group. Where this is the case, the institution should explain how any such reductions in opportunity for the marshalling of argument are compensated for.