

## Feedback for the QAA SBS Advisory Group for History of Art, Architecture and Design

### Overview

Students Organising for Sustainability ([SOS-UK](#)) has been working with the Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges ([EAUC](#)) to support QAA Subject Benchmark Statement (SBS) advisory groups with increasing student voice in their process and integrating sustainability and climate justice into their subject. This is critical and necessary work that will help ensure SBSs are representative and inclusive, whilst providing students with the necessary skills and knowledge to go into green careers and support our collective sustainable future. On 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024, SOS-UK held an online student consultation to gather views relating to the Subject Benchmark Statement for History of Art, Architecture and Design (HAAD). Current students and recent undergraduates from a diverse variety of UK universities reviewed the current SBS through a sustainability and climate justice lens, finding positive examples and developing suggestions for how the SBS can become more accessible, inclusive, sustainable and forward-facing.

### Positive elements of the existing document

- Students felt that the existing document does a good job of summarising the fundamentals of a HAAD course, and was a useful overview of most key themes and concepts.
- The group were interested in the breakdown of skills and many reflected that they had not considered the plethora of skills they were gaining from their degree.
- Students appreciated the interdisciplinary links made, and referenced that HAAD is often seen as a ‘frivolous’ academic pursuit, and this document underlines the critical importance of the subject.

### Suggestions for improvements or amendments

- Students referenced the significant current lack of content relating to sustainability and urged the group to use a forward-looking approach, that safeguards the future of this subject and of our planet. An example of this would be the impact of production, materials and media, and the relationship between consumption and HAAD. The group discussed the intersectionality of sustainability, and urged the group to also deeply consider justice issues, such as inequitable student access to the subject, and racial and gender bias within fields of study, and how this can be interwoven into every section of the document.
- Students urged the panels to deeply consider the roles of museum and galleries, and the ethics of display and the relationship of objects to their display environment, as they felt this was missing from the current document.
- Students highlighted that the current document uses complex academic language and is not accessible for those with dyslexia, or younger students considering the subject for study at higher education. They suggested that an executive summary or shorter, bullet-point style document is produced that is aimed towards students in further or secondary education.
- Students stated that the new iteration of this document must address the issue of AI, although there was differing opinion within the group over the role that it should play within HAAD. Some students particularly reflected on the environmental impact of AI data centres, and the potential negative impact on student knowledge and skills, and others were excited about the possibilities that AI may open up.

### The future of History of Art, Architecture and Design

- Students were highly positive in regards to the future of the subject. They were excited about increasing meaningful representation of student voices within the QAA advisory groups and review process, and wished the panel to know that they were eager for the new Subject Benchmark Statement to be widely circulated to students following publication in 2026.

For more information about this student consultation, including more detailed feedback, please contact Hannah Fitzpatrick, Senior Project Manager for Education at SOS-UK: [hannah.fitzpatrick@sos-uk.org](mailto:hannah.fitzpatrick@sos-uk.org).