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THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATORS EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ENGLAND

MAY 2006

Definition and Competencies of an Architectural Conservator

For the purposes of this report the following definitions and competencies were used:

A conservator is a professional who, through specialised education, knowledge, training, aptitude and experience, formulates and implements all the activities involved in conservation, in accordance with accepted ethical codes. Conservators contribute to making our heritage accessible and sustainable, thus helping current and future generations to enjoy and understand this vital asset.

An **architectural conservator** may undertake consultancy as well as preventative and practical conservation. The latter includes the repair and preservation of historic buildings, especially their carved, applied or painted decoration, as well as that of structures or individual objects within archaeological sites. The material disciplines within this are gilding, glass, metals, monuments, plaster, sculpture, stone, timber, wall and floor tiles, terracotta, and wall paintings.

The main occupational characteristics and professional activities of this group comprise:

- Understanding the character, integrity, context, evolution and significance of the fabric of a site, ruin, building, architectural element or monument
- The knowledge and ability to identify materials used in construction and their expected performances and deterioration mechanisms
- Diagnosis, documentation and interpretation of information obtained from assessments of the existing condition, pathology, past treatments, current influences and future impacts of conservation interventions
- The ability to effectively communicate and work with other conservation professionals, craftspeople, administrators and laypeople to devise holistic conservation approaches and to train others in conservation theory and practice
- The skill and knowledge to advise, commission specific analyses, undertake trials and on-site testing and carry out appropriate treatments
- The knowledge and application of established conservation principles for recommended treatment and maintenance procedures
- The ability to interpret and document research, investigation and conservation interventions in a clear, comprehensive format

Contents

Acknowledgements

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This report is the result of the collaborative efforts of the steering group members: Bill Martin, Head of the Building Conservation & Research Team, English Heritage; Robert Gowing and Seamus Hanna, Senior Architectural Conservators, Building Conservation & Research Team, English Heritage; Dr David Leigh, The Institute of Conservation (Icon); David Odgers, of Odgers Conservation and Chair of the Icon Stone & Wall Paintings Group. We are extremely grateful to Alastair McCapra, Chief Executive of Icon, for peer-reviewing the final report. Special thanks are also due to Seamus Hanna for managing the project and editing the final report.

We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of the education and training providers, employers and individual practitioners who contributed to the research. Their identities must remain anonymous, but without them this research would not have been possible, and their contribution has shaped the research findings and informed many of the report's recommendations.

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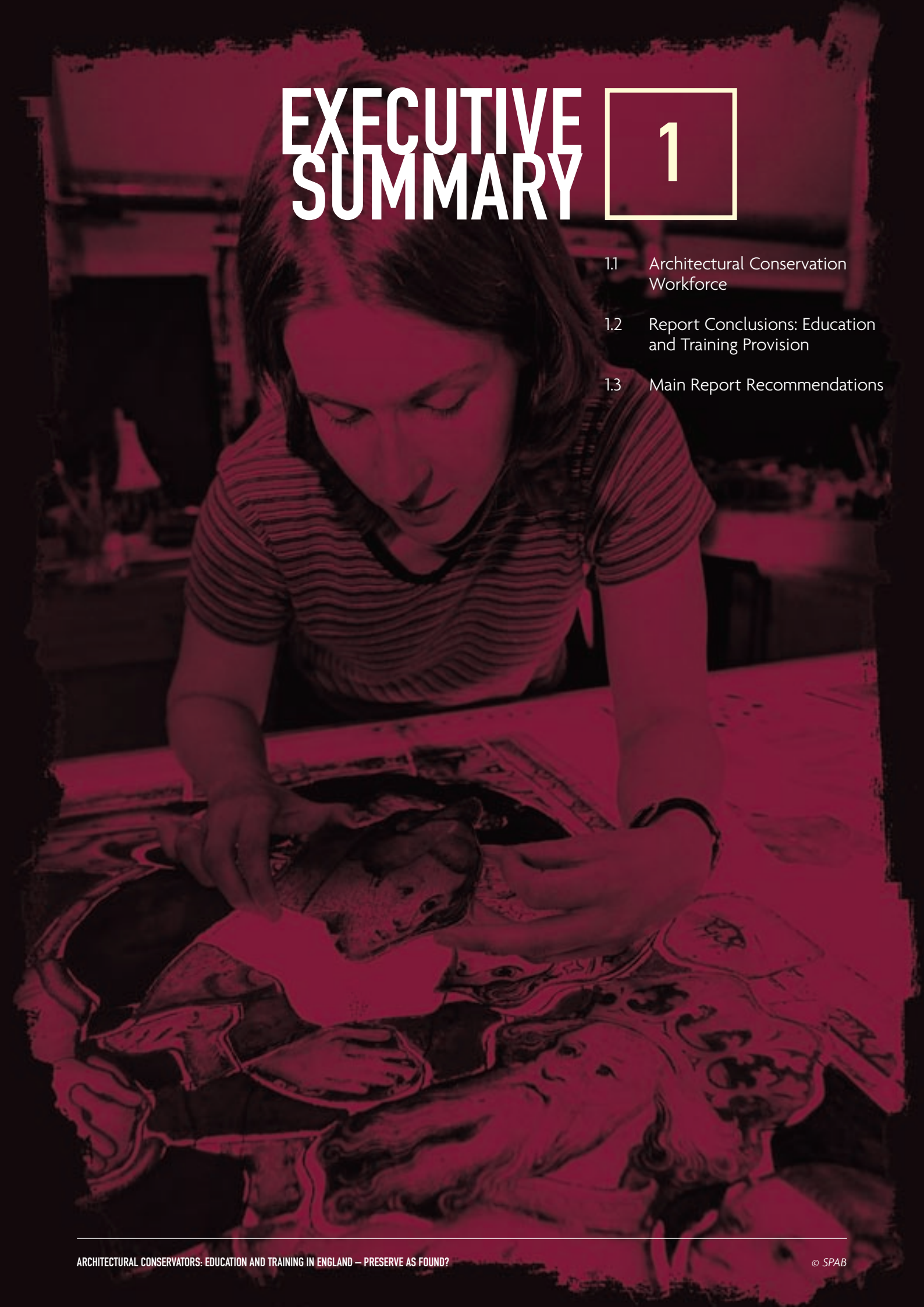
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1



Executive Summary

Effective change and sustainable long-term training and skills provision can only be achieved by the relevant stakeholder groups working together. This should be coordinated through the two sector skills councils with which architectural conservators are most closely aligned, that is, Creative & Cultural Skills and ConstructionSkills. As the NHTG is responsible for the training and development of traditional building craft skills and there is a clear link between craftspeople and some architectural conservation work, they are also integral to any partnership between the two sector-related skills councils, as well as to their relationship with English Heritage and Icon. In particular, Icon needs to ensure recognition of its role as the profession's pressure group, and work with its partners to influence better training and skills development for all conservators, including those working in the built heritage sector.

This partnership approach will provide better opportunities for collaboration and for sharing experience, vision and resources. It can assist in providing careers information and raising awareness of conservation within the built heritage sector. It will also ensure a more strategic approach to conservation skills and training provision than hitherto. The sector partnership should in the near future fund a further study to establish the need for and development of apprenticeships within conservation, linked to the NVQ system or Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR) scheme (www.pacr.org.uk).

1.1 Architectural Conservation Workforce

Architectural conservators are a small but vital community within the built heritage sector, whose practitioners are trusted to conserve, repair and preserve all the constituent elements of historic buildings, often *in situ*. These include: carved, applied or painted decoration; ancient monuments and structures or individual elements within archaeological sites or excavations; glass; metalwork; monuments; sculpture; wall and floor tiles; and wall paintings. Conservators ensure the proper preservation of our cultural heritage, sustaining it for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. To do this, they must demonstrate a unique combination of practical proficiency and a sound grasp of theory. Without this group of conservators, some of the most important parts of our cultural heritage would be at risk.

Practitioners enter the profession from a variety of routes: from undergraduate conservation courses; postgraduate conservation education and training courses, usually after first degrees in arts, architecture, archaeology or sciences; and by informal/indirect entry without formal further or higher education.

Formal education and training for architectural conservators is provided through established conservation courses within universities and colleges. Varying qualification levels exist, from foundation to postgraduate degrees. Skills and knowledge are usually gained through a combination of formal training, direct work-based learning and work experience, and by attending conferences, seminars, workshops and short courses.

Training is also provided by employers who engage staff without formal conservation training and carry out in-house training, usually to develop practical skills and theoretical knowledge. This may be augmented by the trainee attending short courses or seminars, either financed by the employer or through the individual's own personal initiative.

Numbers of Conservators

Exact numbers working as architectural conservators are not known. However, in the UK, conservation and restoration is the occupation for an estimated 3,500 people, of whom just over half work in private practices[1]. Icon specialist groups are not based around a clear distinction between architectural conservators and conservators in related disciplines, so the specialist group membership figures include both types of professional. Those groups with the highest proportion of architectural conservators are gilding and surface decoration (365), stone and wall paintings (255), stained glass (119), and historic interiors (294), while archaeology (1227) will also contain some.

Demand

No exact figures on expenditure are available. However as conservation and restoration is a sub-set of the built heritage sector, the work can be seen as part of the approximate £3.5 billion spent on conservation and restoration of historic buildings in the past twelve months[2]. It will also contribute to the 49% of total

expenditure (£149 billion turnover at basic prices)[3] and output of over £77 billion (at year 2000 prices)[4], spent on repair, maintenance and improvement within the construction industry as a whole.

Although quantitative information on expenditure was not gathered as part of this limited research, conservation practices and practitioners interviewed suggested that a moderate level of business confidence exists regarding the amount of future available work in the architectural conservation market.

Reasons for this Research

Within the next 10-15 years, a large segment of the current generation of active conservators will be retiring, raising concerns over whether there will be a sufficient number of suitably qualified and experienced conservators available to fill their place. English Heritage, as the Government's advisor on the historic environment in England, and the Institute of Conservation (Icon), as the UK professional body for conservators, share a responsibility to ensure the highest standards of conservation practice, including the provision of effective conservation training. While it seems clear that sufficient numbers of conservators are being trained each year in England, it remains uncertain whether enough of them can demonstrate the necessary skills, knowledge and relevant experience across the diverse material disciplines.

The architectural conservation community, characterised by its highly specialised sub-groups, is further complicated by a perceived blurring between the specialist work of conservators and other aspects more readily associated with traditional building craft skills. This overlap, which is more prevalent in some categories than others, raises questions about the nature and provision of appropriate training, and the need to better define career paths and roles within architectural conservation – as well as the relevance of professional accreditation.

To address these questions and concerns, English Heritage, in collaboration with Icon, commissioned the Centre for Education and Industry (CEI) at the University of Warwick to carry out directed research. The survey combined desk-based research and in-depth qualitative interviews with trainers and employers as well as employed and self-employed practitioners, in order to examine the current state of the education and training of architectural conservators in England. In particular, it sought to establish

whether the range of conservation courses meets the needs of the sector and – within this – what sort of courses seem to provide the most appropriate outcomes. There was a related need to assess the level of satisfaction graduates have with their education or training and employers' perceptions of their needs, demands and preferences for different types of training. The research, undertaken between January and August 2005, set out to:

- Assess the current state of training in architectural conservation, including employer's and practitioner's views, and the issue of career progression for architectural conservators in England
- Produce a qualitative assessment of the profession, identifying strengths and weaknesses, so as to aid the relevant bodies in planning and adapting for future needs
- Develop and support a co-ordinated national recruitment, training, career progression and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) strategy
- Provide data to complement the National Heritage Training Group (NHTG) Skills Needs Analysis (2005) report, *Traditional Building Craft Skills: Assessing the Need, Meeting the Challenge* and make comparative assessments between both sub-sets of the built heritage conservation sector

1.2 Report Conclusions: Education and Training Provision

This research provided the first-ever opportunity for architectural conservation practitioners and training providers to express their opinions about current education and training practices, skills needs, careers and employment. The research makes it clear that there is some complacency in the profession; much is done on an ad-hoc basis. The sector relies heavily upon the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals, rather than having a long-term strategy for training, skills development and career progression and retention.

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Regarding education and training, the research reveals four types of course, training people from a range of backgrounds and experience to different levels:

1 **University undergraduate or postgraduate courses:** generic in content and mainly theoretical, providing a broad-based approach and emphasising transferable skills, as not all graduates will wish to enter the conservation profession. Also offering full or part-time heritage conservation programmes which provide a general overview of conservation philosophy

2 **Specialist conservation centres:** providing a relatively large number of courses within one institution solely devoted to conservation education, sometimes having developed as a substantial department within an academic institution

3 **Traditional skills-based courses:** often within further education colleges as higher education franchises offering HND or Foundation degree courses

4 **Specialised architectural conservation departments:** found within educational institutions and often have a national and international reputation and clientele

It was also established that:

- Full-time 'traditional skills'-orientated conservation courses are well subscribed
- Foundation degrees are successful and are being given some priority by universities, but there is some evidence of limited progression of students through to full BA status
- Postgraduate courses and professional updating programmes are robust and recruit satisfactorily
- There are some excellent examples of flexible delivery, designed to suit individual students and the sector's needs alike

A detailed analysis of the architectural conservation field and the information gathered during the research is contained in the main body of this report. However, in summary, the main report conclusions can be divided into the following five categories:

The Architectural Conservation Profession

- Composed primarily of micro-businesses/small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and dependent on the availability of freelance conservators
- Largely dominated by white males and while more females are entering the profession there is no ethnic diversity
- Individualism and the competitive environment are valued, but business depends upon teamwork and the sharing of good practice through networking
- Employment market for conservation graduates is ill-defined, with little awareness of the number of current or future graduates needed
- Distinct absence of professional career structure
- Poor careers advice and guidance
- The professional accreditation scheme (PACR)[5], operated by Icon, is not well understood within parts of the architectural conservation community; there is a need for Icon to consider how to communicate the potential benefits of accreditation to this group

Heritage Sector Issues

- Need for a higher profile for conservation issues in the built heritage sector and a clearer definition of the sector's relationship to the construction industry
- Difficulties in establishing a clear professional definition of the architectural conservator greatly restricted the capacity to target this research
- Low rates of pay and a large freelance population may have a negative effect on the heritage sector by producing an unsustainable workforce that cannot afford further training. This may in turn result in a diminished knowledge base, reduced skills, and the further loss of qualified conservators
- Competitive tendering seen by many employers and practitioners as adding to bureaucratic burden; at times acts as a disincentive to the maintenance of high standards of conservation skills
- Funding constraints at national level were considered to impede the influence and involvement of English Heritage, both in training and setting practical standards

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[1] *Carter S., Hurst B., Kerr R., Taylor E., Winsor P.,* Museum Focus; Facts and figures from UK museums, *Issue 2, Chapter 3; The 1998 Survey of Public Sector Conservation Provision, Museums and Galleries Commission (MGC), London, 1999*

[2] *National Heritage Training Group (NHTG),* Traditional Building Craft Skills: Assessing the Need, Meeting the Challenge, 2005

[3] *Annual Business Inquiry, 2003*

[4] *Department of Trade and Industry, 2003*

[5] *www.pacr.org.uk*

Current Education and Training for Architectural Conservators

- Lack of strategic planning regarding future conservation education and training, potentially leading to a lowering of standards
- Little formal consultation between course providers and practitioners on course content/provision and whether it meets sector needs
- Limited practical training content in some courses is considered problematic by many practitioners
- Practical work placements severely lacking and too reliant upon an informal network
- Little evidence of expansion in the number of students, though recruitment is currently stable
- Conservation education and training faces similar problems to those of other spheres of vocational education, especially regarding low social perceptions of the value of skills-based training

Meeting Sector Needs through Current Education and Training

- Feeling of complacency regarding education and training requirements, which have remained unchanged for many years
- No clear indication from the sector of ideal education and training course content
- No professional guidelines exist to support course development by universities or colleges
- Current range of courses provide an effective general introduction to architectural conservation, though at present there are significant variations in the extent and range of discipline-specific training – including gaps, such as the lack of any dedicated training course for the conservation of stained glass
- Graduate output appears to meet demand, but employers consider some graduates not always well-equipped to enter the conservation field, in particular where there is an immediate need for practical proficiency
- Formal professional development for university and college staff is lacking and there is a need to develop effective training for current and future trainers
- Continuing Professional Development for many practitioners appears limited to 'on the job' opportunities and informal networking

Ability of Universities and Colleges to Supply this Training

- Universities and colleges appear to be coping with current resources, but financial pressures are increasing and some anxiety exists about future sustainability
- Severely limited ability of institutions to respond to demands for more practical course content
- Some undergraduate courses facing recruitment problems in an increasingly competitive market for generalist courses
- Internal and external reports on course quality are generally good and most students appear satisfied with their educational or training experience, but the quality monitoring regimes of academic institutions do not in themselves guarantee a course's vocational relevance
- Employers call for the reintroduction of an apprenticeship scheme, reflecting strong preference for experiential learning and the equipping of recruits with better practical skills
- No defined quality structures or criteria with which to assess expected outcomes

1.3 Main Report Recommendations

The main partners within this small, but vital sub-set of the built heritage sector need to work more closely to address the current problems identified from this research. This must be coordinated through the two sector skills councils with which architectural conservators are most closely aligned, that is, Creative & Cultural Skills and ConstructionSkills.

As some aspects of architectural conservation can be linked to traditional building craft skills, any training and skills partnership with Creative & Cultural Skills, English Heritage and Icon would also involve the National Heritage Training Group (NHTG), as this specialist sector skills development group has a UK-wide remit to develop training and skills provision for the traditional building crafts sector. This partnership will provide better opportunities for collaboration regarding careers paths, careers information, and promotional work to raise awareness of the conservation profession, as well as ensuring a more strategic approach to conservation skills and training provision.

Creative & Cultural Skills would provide the overall framework for this, based upon its four fundamental aims:

1. Reducing skills gaps and shortages
2. Improving business performance
3. Extending opportunities to everyone in the sector's workforce, including action on diversity
4. Improving learning supply, including the development of apprenticeships, and setting standards in both higher education and occupational training

Icon, as the professional body, will take the lead in prioritising and co-ordinating short, medium and longer-term activity that will ensure:

- Improving awareness of architectural conservation and the built heritage sector, including work in schools integrated with existing education programmes, such as the OCR History and Heritage and GCSE Construction & the Built Environment syllabi, as well as developing improved careers information
- Seeking funding for a permanent in-house education, training and skills coordinator

The following recommendations must be considered by the sector partners:

Creative & Cultural Skills

- Must rapidly define its future training and educational advisory role in relation to national conservation needs, establishing through its Heritage Skills Panel an Education and Training Working Group for conservation with representation from Icon, English Heritage and training providers

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ConstructionSkills and the NHTG

- Ensure that the NHTG liaises with Creative & Cultural Skills and Icon in its current work, which aims to improve the conservation content in mainstream construction courses and develop an appropriate strategy for the heightening of awareness of conservation needs within the construction industry
- Liaise with Icon regarding existing and developing ConstructionSkills education policy and their initiatives to promote a greater understanding of conservation issues, especially in schools

Icon

To focus upon these key roles:

- raise the profile of conservation among the general public and heritage stakeholders alike
- exert political influence by acting as the profession's pressure group
- offer improved careers guidance to people considering a career in the sector
- Icon faces an important initial phase, marketing and promoting its general role, responsibilities and functions, and raising the profile of conservation nationally
- Icon must proceed with assessing current perceptions of the professional accreditation process and promoting greater understanding of the scheme
- Icon must build the strongest possible link with both sector skills councils, representing and influencing training and skills development for built heritage conservators
- Icon must develop information and guidance to help students assess what different conservation courses are designed to do, and what students' outcomes are likely to be.

English Heritage

■ English Heritage must support a more formal approach to the encouragement and funding of work-experience and internships throughout the sector, with a future focus on placements with accredited organisations, for example through the HLF-funded bursaries scheme

Partnership Activity

Effective change, creating sustainable long-term training and skills provision and improved business performance, can only be achieved by the sector partners working together. This requires joined-up thinking on policy. The following key aspects need to be addressed by the partnership (suggested bodies or organisations who should be involved are indicated in brackets after each item):

■ Re-establish the Conservation Teaching Forum, so as to maximise opportunities (Icon)

■ Address the current lack of coherent regional, national and international marketing of conservation courses (Icon, Universities and Colleges)

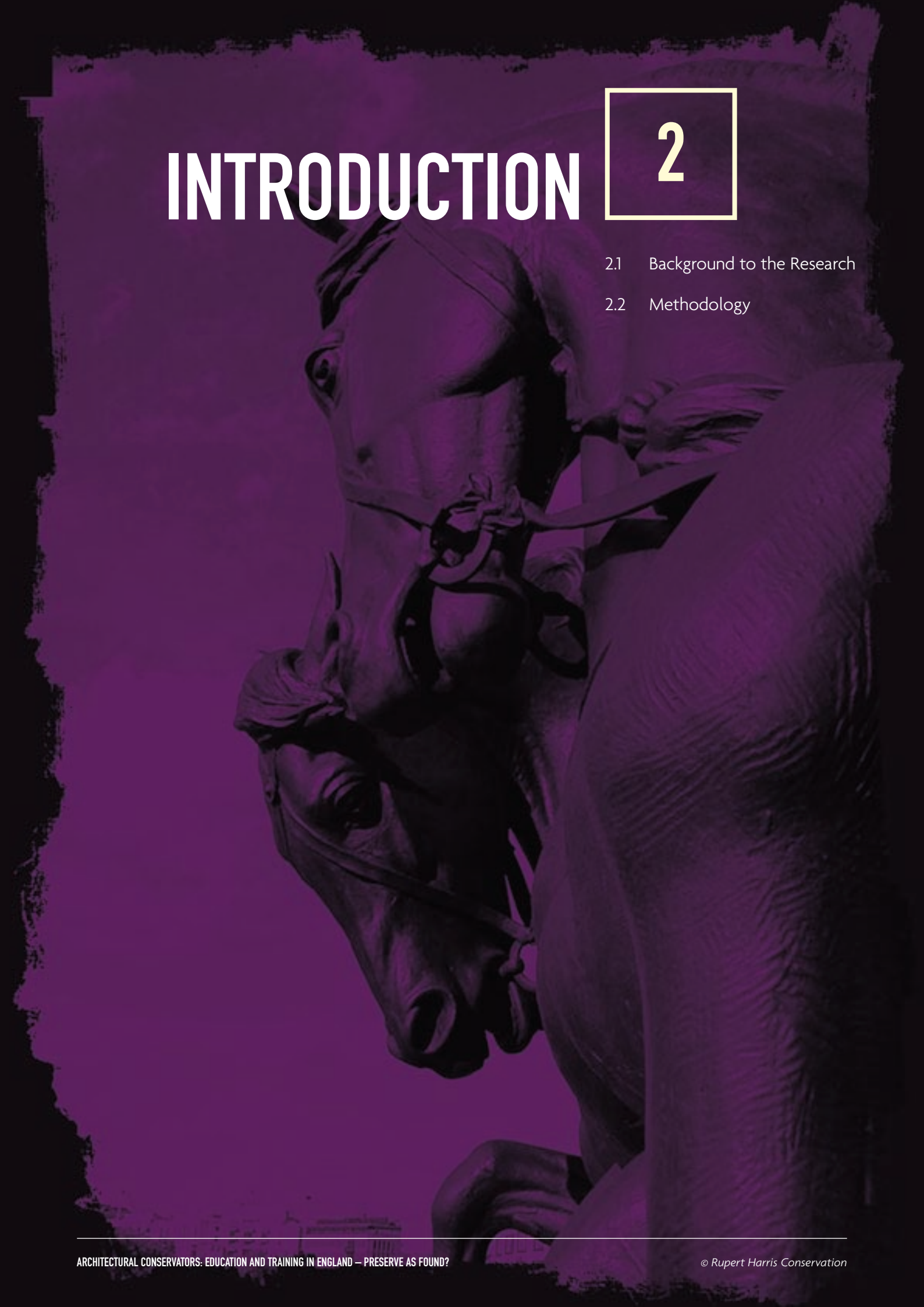
■ Access Government training funding more effectively so as to support future conservation education and training, especially apprenticeships (EH, Icon, Creative & Cultural Skills, Learning & Skills Council)

■ Rejuvenate traditional apprenticeships, for example by introducting a three-year full-time apprentice scheme in those skills areas facing greatest skills shortages. These include stained glass, stone, ceramics, metals, preventative conservation and project management. This may include funding a further review in the near future to establish the need for and development of these apprenticeships within the conservation sector, linked to the NVQ system or PACR accreditation
(EH, Icon, Creative & Cultural Skills, ConstructionSkills, NHTG, Learning & Skills Council)

■ Explore ways of maximising existing training provision, such as Centres of Excellence and of developing training so as to sustain current courses, while ensuring such initiatives are linked to the NHTG strategy within the Skills Action Plan
(Icon, Creative & Cultural Skills, ConstructionSkills, NHTG)

■ Encourage inclusion of more training within courses on aspects of business, industrial relations and professional practice issues
(EH, Icon, Creative & Cultural Skills, ConstructionSkills, NHTG)

INTRODUCTION 2



Introduction

2.1 Background to the Research

In early 2005, English Heritage and The Institute of Conservation (ICON) commissioned this research into the current state of conservation higher education and training, and the extent of the knowledge and skills base within the practical architectural conservation field. The research examined the education and training provided for those whose work would subsequently be *in situ* or site-based (often supported by studios and workshops), rather than those working within galleries, museums or other institutions.

This research complements the NHTG's Skills Needs Analysis (2005) report, *Traditional Building Craft Skills: Assessing the Need, Meeting the Challenge,* thus allowing a comparison of education, training and skills development issues for craftspeople and conservators across the built heritage sector.

As described in Section 1.1, practitioners enter this profession through a variety of routes: these include undergraduate conservation courses and postgraduate conservation education and training courses, usually followed after first degrees in the arts, architecture, archaeology or sciences. Entry is also possible without prior formal conservation training, in situations where individuals may have gained practical experience and understanding through informal in-house training and on-site experience, perhaps supplemented by attending courses, seminars and conferences or by reading conservation publications. Skills and expertise in conservation is usually gained over a long period of time and through a combination of sources: knowledge is gained from an education or training course, direct work-based learning and work experience, and attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops and short courses.

The brief for the research was to:

- Provide an in-depth review of existing built heritage conservation courses in England by assessing the

following: type and duration of courses; mode of delivery; entry requirements; student numbers; staff numbers and academic profile (age, qualifications, publications, current research, membership of professional bodies); quality of teaching; facilities and learning resources; internships/links within the profession; and the subsequent success of graduates, whether in gaining work after graduation or in their subsequent career paths. The courses were selected by the steering group

- Provide quantitative and qualitative data on the following: gaps in current teaching provision; assessing current student's perceptions of their career prospects within conservation; assessing their level of satisfaction with the knowledge and practical skills imparted during their training course
- Provide data on conservators by tracking work progression since graduation, to establish how well their courses prepared them for working in conservation and applying their knowledge/skills; their satisfaction with previous training levels; their need for, and means of achieving, further training whilst in work; their actual or representative career paths/aspirations
- Provide data from some public and private sector employers on the numbers employed within their organisation/company and the number of qualified conservators; types of work carried out; skills required from employees (dependent on whether they are graduates, untrained/have no formal training, etc); perceived gaps in training; additional skills needed by graduates when first employed; type of additional training provided by employers (work-based, paying for attendance at short courses, conferences, seminars); skills acquired during employment; career progression for employees
- Provide an overview of the current state of training and the knowledge/skills base within the conservation sector, with supporting data
- Provide an assessment of this field, with recommendations for improvements in the delivery of training and for maintaining and enhancing skills within the sector by identifying gaps in provision and future skills shortages

This research reviewed the way in which conservation skills and knowledge are gained and transferred, whether through formal or hybrid training, continuing professional development or short intensive courses. Relationships between theory and practice have been examined in the light of a specific perception staff within the English Heritage Building Conservation & Research Team:

'Concern exists regarding the current state of theoretical knowledge and practical skills of practitioners within this field. Also, a gap is developing in providing suitably qualified and experienced conservators to fill the void that may be created in 10 to 15 years' time by retirement of the current generation of senior conservators. The built heritage sector requires more systematic management of training and career development to attract, retain and provide high quality staff, who must display a balance of sound and up-to-date knowledge and well-developed practical skills.'

The research therefore set out to examine these key issues:

- The current state of undergraduate and postgraduate education and training of architectural conservators, and whether these education and training programmes meet the needs of the sector
- Whether universities and colleges are adequately equipped to supply this 'education and training
- Whether output from colleges is meeting sector demand and provides appropriate outcomes
- The level of graduate satisfaction with the training they receive
- The perceptions, needs, demands and preferences of employers involved in building conservation

The project aimed in particular to identify strengths and weaknesses within current training provision, so as to facilitate planning for future needs. The observations made and conclusions reached will support future prioritisation and the allocation of those funds that have the potential to affect recruitment, training and career progression within the profession.

2.2 Methodology

The steering group identified appropriate conservation practices and graduate contacts and assisted with the selection of education and training courses to be reviewed. The aim was to gain broad coverage across England and to canvass views from the different material specialisms within the building conservation sector – that is, metals, mosaics, floor and wall tiles, stone and plaster, timber, wall

paintings and painted and decorated surfaces.

Based upon this, the researchers undertook initial desk-based research, so as to underpin a qualitative research process. This included the development of the project plan and the drafting of questionnaires and research instruments, in partnership with the project steering group. Data was collected from the following sources:

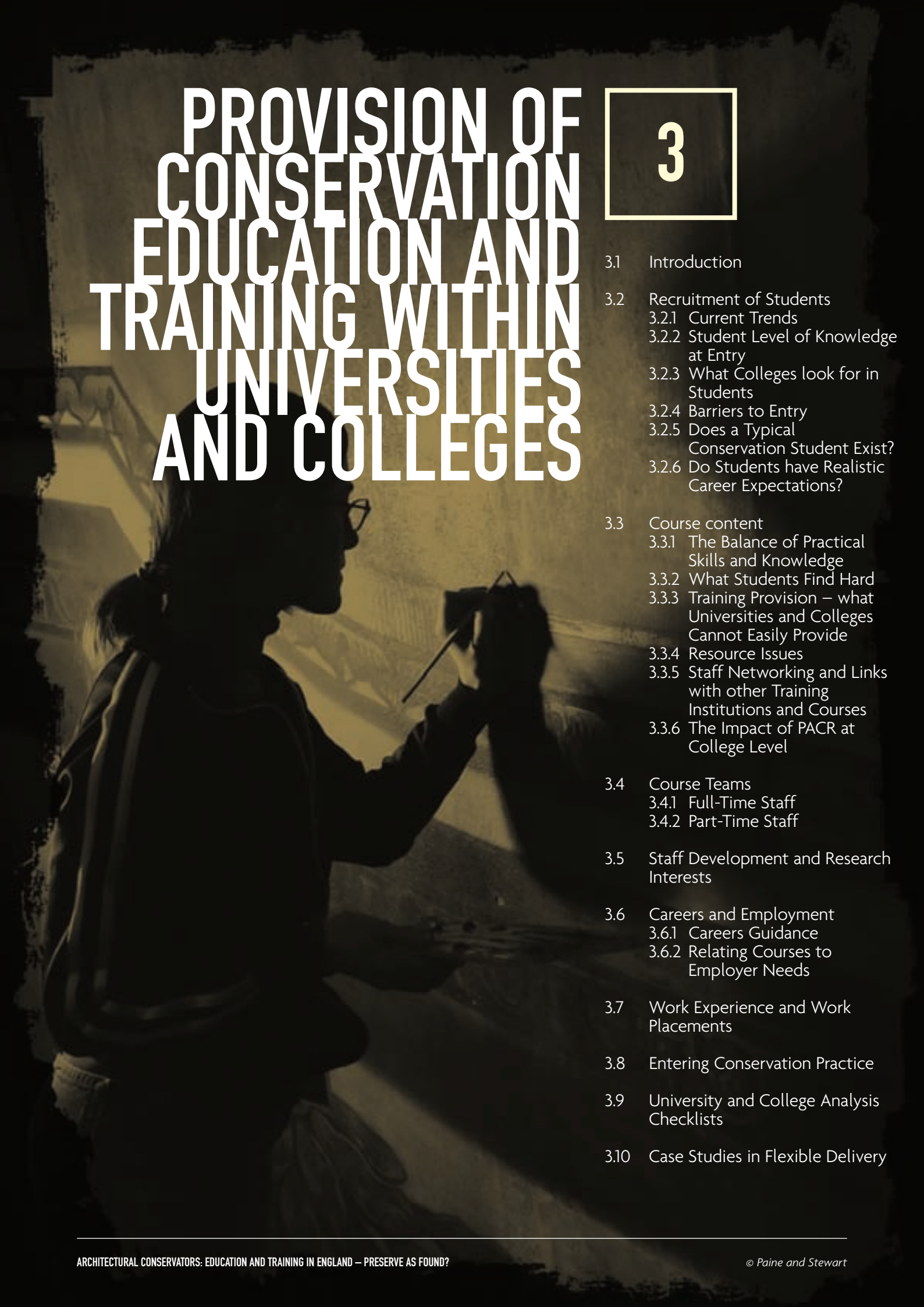
■ **Universities and colleges:**
12 institutions were visited in order to discuss and observe undergraduate and postgraduate courses in built heritage conservation. This process allowed face-to-face discussions with a range of staff and managers using a standard interview instrument, as well as the opportunity to visit facilities and to meet students.

■ **Employers:**
On the advice of the steering group, 55 companies were initially selected to be approached for their perceptions of the sector, its training provision and needs. Of these, 19 employers were visited on site so as to allow for detailed discussions using a standard interview instrument; a further 32 employers took part in telephone interviews.

■ **Graduates and practitioners:**
In addition to feedback from students on college site visits, postal questionnaires were issued to, or telephone interviews undertaken with, 40 graduates and practitioners.

Full and enthusiastic co-operation was received when undertaking the interviews, but a low response was received from the postal questionnaires.

It should be noted that, although the sector is numerically small, the limited nature of this research did not allow comprehensive cover. There was, in addition, a slight contextual difficulty in that the courses in the main education and training target group all related to building conservation. This meant a concentration on knowledge and skills relating to predominantly 'non-moveable' rather than moveable heritage. Further difficulties also emerged because the courses being reviewed ranged from those relating to very specific skills (such as wall painting or metalwork) to those with a very general focus. The review of universities and colleges therefore proved to be a more delicate task than initially expected and — by comparison — it proved far easier to identify and review employers and practitioners within their specialist fields.



PROVISION OF CONSERVATION EDUCATION AND TRAINING WITHIN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

3

Provision of Conservation Education and Training within Universities and Colleges

3.1 Introduction

The 12 universities or colleges visited included two further education colleges (both providing Foundation degrees as part of their conservation activity), seven universities and three independent training providers franchising degrees from nearby higher education establishments. In total, 18 higher education qualifications as well as numerous short courses ('Masterclasses', professional updating programmes and general interest programmes) were examined in detail.

In each instance, information and data was collected on the courses, student numbers and supporting resources. This data included entry requirements, course length, recruitment methods, mode of delivery and physical, financial and learning resources. Information gathered on students included withdrawal rates, student perceptions, professional placements and progression prospects. There was particular focus on course management issues, as well as on internal and external quality assessment.

Types of Courses

Based upon the limited number of organisations reviewed, this research suggests a typology of four groupings or 'types' of courses. The following codification is referred to for comparative purposes in this report:

Group 1: University undergraduate or postgraduate courses essentially generic in content and mainly theoretically based, aimed at providing a broad-based approach. The courses are likely to emphasise transferable skills on the basis that not all graduates will wish to enter the conservation profession. Alternatively, as full- or part-time programmes focusing on heritage, the main aim can be to give professional groups, such as architects or surveyors, a general overview of conservation philosophy and needs, under course titles such as 'Principles of Conservation' or 'Building Conservation'

Group 2: Specialist conservation centres or 'centres of excellence'. Here a comparatively large number of courses are to be found within one institution, which is solely devoted to conservation education or has developed a substantial department within an academic institution

Group 3: Traditional skills-based courses, often with HND or foundation degree status and frequently found in further education colleges as higher education franchises

Group 4: Specialised architectural conservation departments found within educational institutions, often with an international reputation and clientele

This research suggests that where there is less opportunity for strategic leadership and development, courses within the **first grouping** can face greater dangers of isolation within the institution, poor resourcing and a lack of senior staff support. There is far more likelihood of poor internal status and of being located within inappropriate university departments. The researchers believe that the **second grouping** is the most robust in servicing the ongoing professional development needs of practitioners. There is a concentrated strategic vision and students find themselves in well-resourced, sympathetic environments. Often practitioners on shorter professional development courses work alongside foundation degree, BA, BSc and higher degree full-time students. These student groups may well also benefit from participation in courses where they can associate with experienced practitioners.

The second grouping also has the most potential for growth, investment and experimentation, with the possible development of a formal concept of 'Centres of Excellence' and/or a regional brief for future conservation training.

The **third grouping** may well have high status within a further education context, but will operate in a distinctly different atmosphere from that of a higher education institution, thus facing a different range of problems. Students with fewer formal qualifications can enter such courses, but may subsequently not be especially willing to progress to full degree status. Interestingly, however, these courses may well be providing exactly the sort of traditional practical skills training conservation practitioner companies are most keen to find.

Finally, the **fourth grouping** may be seen as long established, highly specialised courses, recruiting small student numbers, often from overseas.

3.2 Recruitment of Students

3.2.1 Current Trends

Most colleges and universities face few difficulties in recruiting adequate numbers to fill their courses. However, the limited number of places available on a number of the undergraduate and postgraduate courses listed in Table 1 may partly explain why a course is perceived as 'easy to fill' by tutors.

As illustrated in Table 1, a new MA in metals conservation initially has a target to recruit only four or five people. Another leading MA course recruits 8 students every three years, while a BA course with a reputation for outstanding practical work only takes 8 students per annum. This same university provides a Postgraduate Diploma with a maximum intake of 4 students each year. In contrast a larger conservation and restoration course currently has 62 students on its 3 main programmes (BA, MA and Diploma): but almost half of these are part time and a third is recruited from Europe. Large course recruitment numbers were not the norm for most of the full-time courses reviewed. Much depends upon student perception of the quality of the programme provided.

Demands upon students at entry can be high. In one instance, a MSc course with an international reputation requires students to have already completed a one-year MA in Principles of Conservation, or to have gained an equivalent level of knowledge through other methods.

Few organisations appear to be planning to expand, for a number of reasons; resources, staffing, limited target numbers, time. Most were content with their current

'Building conservation is very much a new academic field for universities — with no general resource capacity yet established, it is still limited.'

Academic

© BCRT English Heritage

Table 1: Conservation Courses Visited

Type of course	University or College	Course title	Length	Approximate annual student recruitment
Group 1: Generic courses	1	MA Conservation Studies (Historic Buildings)	1 year	15
	2	MA in Architectural Conservation Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture – conservation option PhD in architectural conservation – a further postgraduate option.	1 year	1 20 Courses consist of a complex grouping of full-time (F/t) undergraduates or part-time (P/t) practitioners. Courses are also open to training surveyors and builders
	3	MA in Architectural Materials and Conservation (course now closed)	1 year	10-12
	4	MSc in Conservation for Archaeology and Museums	1 year	8-10
Group 2: Conservation specialist centres	5	BA in Conservation Studies	3 years F/t	8
	6	BA in Conservation and Restoration MA/Graduate Diploma in Conservation of Historic Objects	3 years F/t 1 year F/t 2 years P/t	Falling from 26 in 2004 to 18 in 2003 and 11 in 2002 Diploma: 24 MA: 12
	7	Postgraduate Diplomas in Conservation Diplomas available in: conservation and restoration of books, ceramics, clocks, furniture, metalwork Building Conservation Masterclasses (BCMS)	Mostly F/t over one year An MA in Conservation Studies may be gained in a further 10-week period of full-time study Short courses of 3.5 days duration	8-12 in each diploma 6-12 in each short course
	8	MA in Ironwork (Started September 2005) MA in Historic Environment Conservation Note: course also delivered as a Postgraduate Certificate by distance learning methods	Two years P/t Two years P/t	4-5 as the first intake 62
	9	MSc in Timber Building Conservation	2 years P/t with extended weekend work	17
Group 3: Practical skills-based courses	10	Foundation degree in Forged Metals (previously HND)	Two years	18
	11	Foundation degree in Restoration of Stonework (previously HND)	Two years	12-14
Group 4: Specialist courses	12	MA in Wall Painting Conservation	3 years F/t	8 every 3 years

annual intake size, although some course leaders felt that expansion would certainly be possible if senior management gave more committed strategic support to this area of study. Some universities in particular were recruiting overseas students to achieve recruitment targets, although aggressive overseas marketing appears to be rare, which some course tutors felt was a missed opportunity for growth.

Several respondents raised a concern that recruitment is too often from a limited social stratum. Some courses, especially those in London, appear to attract a limited clientele, especially where students must personally bear the full cost of a course and its tuition fees. Applicants often consist of affluent older students, especially middle class women. One tutor noted that most of his female students on such a programme did not have any focused expectations of a career in conservation, but were instead seeking personal fulfilment. This is not necessarily a bad thing and applies to many postgraduate courses, but it does raise an important issue. Universities are increasingly under pressure to demonstrate their commitment to social inclusion and conservation courses will face pressure in this area, even if they are popular and making money, if they skew the social inclusion figures of a department or institution.

Key Findings:

- few student recruitment problems but small course numbers
- few plans for expansion
- evidence of weak marketing

3.2.2 Student Level of Knowledge at Entry

Responses were straightforward here, with clear benchmarks laid down by colleges and universities for entry at all levels. So, for example, postgraduate students are usually expected to have a first degree. But exceptions to the entry criteria are often allowed where mature entrants have gained a level of technical expertise through practical experience. So, in one instance a conservation officer with five years' work experience, but without an undergraduate qualification, was allowed entry on to a postgraduate course.

There was repeated reference in all visits to the predominance (and value) of mature returnees, especially on postgraduate programmes; and one further education college tutor stressed that 'with fewer 18-21 year-olds entering their programme, the college must have flexibility at entry'. In one university APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) has been extensively used as a way of supporting recruitment.

In another example, an MA in Conservation Studies was specifically aimed at mid-career professionals working in conservation. Essentially multi-disciplinary, it attracted surveyors, planners, archaeologists, historians and conservation practitioners, and architects comprise 50% of the current cohort. At the same time, almost 50% of the student intake is from overseas and most British students are part time.

The gender balance varied from course to course. Some had mainly female applicants; but in some courses which in the past were male dominated, there was evidence of an apparent increase in the number of female students. For

'The building conservation education sector requires proper investment over a number of years — a sudden injection of funding on a short-term basis simply won't do it.'

College Principal

example, it was reported that 'one in five entrants in blacksmithing is now female'. This contrasts with the situation 25 years ago when the range of metalwork courses cited at one college had 'only one female blacksmith and one female farrier'.

In another MSc course with approximately 20 applications for 8 to 10 places, the gender balance was particularly uneven, with 80% of applicants being female. The majority are also recruited from overseas. One tutor raised concerns over the difficulty of recruiting male students. Another tutor had observed an increasing number of female students rather than males entering postgraduate qualifications directly from their undergraduate degree.

Key Findings:

- mature students form a large proportion of many course intakes
- there are an increasing number of female entrants on many courses
- students with previous conservation experience regularly enter courses without a traditional formal qualification
- large proportions of overseas students are found on many courses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3.2.3 What Colleges Look for in Students

The main quality sought for in students by admission tutors was a dedication to the concept of conservation. Interest in the subject and an initial basic understanding of it is essential, especially as in the view of one course tutor 'these courses are not easy; motivation will depend upon interest and potential (future) job satisfaction'.

Some college courses with substantial practical skills development content require students to take skills tests before entry. This tends not to be the case in more academic undergraduate degrees. Many colleges look for a greater breadth of experience of life in general in students undertaking higher level qualifications. Some course tutors stressed that since they work with relatively small numbers, 'we can't afford to take risks' and therefore especially favour older applicants. For example, on one stone conservation course, all but two of the current student intake was over 27 years of age.

It was noted that a special focus of many courses was on generating recruits who were multi-skilled and able to work as a member of a team. This was seen as crucial to their future work prospects and as one tutor says. 'It's all about personal input and leading them to recognise that conservation is demanding because it draws on different disciplines'. For example, one typical BA course expected potential students to be capable of gaining a broad range of experiences beyond the development of practical skills, to encompass an understanding of

science and technology, an appreciation of the arts, and to develop the social and business skills necessary for operation in a competitive environment. On this demanding course, many students were personally paying all course costs in full, but none the less readily expressed a high level of satisfaction and recognised that they were getting value for money.

Key Findings:

- interest in the subject
- practical ability
- maturity of thought and approach
- dedication

3.2.4 Barriers to Entry

The low public profile of the conservation sector was regularly cited as a recruitment concern by course staff. However, as reported in section 3.2.1, most courses seem able to fill the limited number of available places.

Course tutors also often referred to financial issues as a disincentive to recruitment. Although this element was outside the remit of the research, it is clearly of significance and may require further examination. The cost of training was seen as a particular problem for undergraduate or Foundation degree students. There were also concerns raised regarding rising course fees and the issue of postgraduate debt for younger full-time students. Course and living costs were reported as less important for those mature students changing careers and able to fund their interest in conservation, than for those in employment who had been released to attend courses. As in many other areas, only a limited number of supporting bursaries are available for conservation education. The relatively remote and rural locations of some conservation education centres visited was seen by tutors as another barrier to recruitment. Many older students are required to relocate for the full year of one metalwork course, creating financial problems and family pressures for adult returnees. Some colleges are also concerned about the distance part-time students need to travel in order to attend courses. While the issue of geographical location is common to all students, this study shows that it is more crucial for mature students and for short-duration courses.

Key Findings:

- cost a problem for undergraduate and Foundation degree students
- the remote location of some courses
- residence requirements for full-time courses

3.2.5 Does a Typical Conservation Student Exist?

It proved difficult to identify such a thing as a 'typical' conservation student. However, as research progressed the following general themes emerged:

- Male students on postgraduate courses tend to be in mid-career and often already have some practical conservation experience. However this previous experience was certainly not essential, though one tutor commented that, 'Not one of our most successful conservators actually started off as one'.
- Conservation courses attract a lot of entrants looking to change their career. Often the past academic achievement of such students is mixed.
- There remains a predominance of male entrants to stone, timber-framed building and metalwork

'We came out of an art college/FE college culture. We like hands-on, we liked being a polytechnic — the pressure now is to be a real university with quality research and all that goes with it — that's fine, but we mustn't lose contact with the profession.'

University Lecturer

courses, although successful female applications are increasing.

- In the universities in particular there are often a significant number of overseas students.
- Many tutors expressed a preference for mature students who had already gained substantial employment and social skills.

Key Findings:

- wide difference in student type, depending on course content
- many career changers
- many mature students
- regular intakes of foreign students

3.2.6 Do Students Have Realistic Career Expectations?

Course tutors suggested that students on Foundation and undergraduate degree courses have less realistic career expectations, whereas most MA students are already clearly committed and know exactly what they want.

All courses claimed to ensure that students became aware of likely future job prospects. It appears that most students are committed to future work in conservation and know that their qualification will be essential to allow them to do this. Most teaching centres claimed a good record for the subsequent movement of their graduates into employment although few maintained formal records of progression. Many students attending short or block courses are anyway already practitioners and are involved in part-time Continuing Professional Development.

One tutor stressed the importance of pre-entry selection processes, ensuring that students had made the right career choice, but practical skills pre-entry selection testing was not found to be generally applied. One stonework tutor described his students as being more interested in practicing practical skills than examining job prospects.

Examples of unrealistic expectations included students who aimed to rapidly establish a profitable independent business after graduation. 'We point out that it may cost £25,000 to create an independent workshop', said one tutor. His programme none the less examines the process of business start-up in detail; but reassures students that in the short term there is a vibrant journeyman environment, with short-term employment contracts readily available for new workers in the sector.

There was also evidence that many students are not fully aware of the low levels of pay offered in the sector after graduation. Although the researchers were not specifically tasked with providing detailed analysis of remuneration, the issue was repeatedly raised. Tutors reported that many students were unaware of conservation pay levels: but equally felt that this did not cause great concern for students when considering their career. Older students – especially those 'career changers' who might often be moving out of past lucrative employment – were seen as being more prepared to cope with this.

Key Findings:

- younger students tend to be less realistic about career prospects
- expectations vary according to the level of specialism
- there is a lack of awareness among students of low pay in the industry
- students may be over-confident of their ability to rapidly start independent companies

3.3 Course content

A range of courses was examined during the course of this research. Their aims and content are summarised in Table 2, with brief reference made to course assessment methodology.

3.3.1 The Balance of Practical Skills and Knowledge

This research revealed a wide variation in the amount of practical work contained in conservation courses (See University & College Analysis Checklist, pp.39-42); indeed the definition of what constituted 'practical content' itself varied. This ranged from hands-on training in practical skills, to external site fieldwork or simple observation of technique demonstrated in a classroom. Some tutor responses to questions on the amount of practical course content included 'none at all' and, in another instance, the vaguer response that the 'skills dimension is more in terms of raising awareness than developing professional competence'.

Foundation degree courses in further education colleges and those at specialist conservation centres are often able to provide substantial practical work in well-equipped specialist studios and workshops. Often a preferred teaching method is through short demonstrations by instructors, leading to students immediately practising the skills shown. It should be noted that students on some of

these 'traditional skills-orientated' courses have the greatest difficulty in coping with academic content. Tutors on such courses emphasise the need for flexibility in curriculum content and its delivery. Lecturers in traditional skills have long argued for the primacy of workshop practice and they substantially rely on students carrying out research and theoretical work outside the classroom.

Specialist conservation centres are also successful in the range and variety of practical experiences on offer, for example:

- One Historic Environment MA course requires students to physically make bricks
- A Heritage Management programme will spend a day recording the history of a building, examining the management of coppice woodland and visiting joinery workshops to see how joints are constructed
- Another specialist conservation centre ensures that all diploma courses 'arise from rigorous workshop practice'; claiming that the programme is basically 75% practical activity

One specialist conservation centre summarized its aims and approach: 'Our people understand the breadth and structure of the sector and where they fit into it. They are aware of what people's jobs are and they can advise them if they need any direction. They also know how to get information from partners which is appropriate and would allow them to get the job done'. This seems an ideal outcome for any conservation graduate.

In many university general courses theory predominated. Postgraduate MA courses, as might be expected, often required a higher proportion of theoretical input. Several universities felt constrained by ever-increasing health and safety regulations, which appears to be leading some institutions away from what can be perceived as potentially hazardous practical work.

One university course leader raised concerns over the past approach of the university, feeling that the course should be more dynamic, allowing her students to understand underlying practical skills in an empirical way. Future plans involve practical experiments, although there are resource implications to be considered. In this instance there was seen to be a need for more 'learning through doing', particularly in the use of regional traditional building materials. Another university team reported that they were having increased success in including practical work in course timetables.

Nonetheless, it is apparent that higher education institutions face particular pressures such as the cost of maintaining dedicated workshops, the pressure to increase numbers and a recent Government emphasis on research as an academic priority at university level. All these issues are likely to conflict with an emphasis on practical student work.

Key Findings:

- wide variation in the amount of practical input on courses
- practical experience is especially valued by students
- specialist conservation centres incorporate greater proportions of hands-on work
- universities face increasing resource pressure affecting practical content

'We have a fantastic network: public, private and international'.

Course Tutor

'The stonemasonry world would suit someone with limited family ties, plenty of time and no mortgage!'

Student

Table 2: Course Aims, Content and Assessment Methodology

	College	Course aim/philosophy	Course content	Assessment
Group 1: Generic courses	1	MA Conservation Studies The course allows students to consider the history, ethics and philosophy of conservation, coupled with the introduction of practical experience across a range of specialisms	Study and conservation of stone, timber and historic interiors. Other themes cover: decorative historic plasterwork; earth as a building material; economics and finance of conservation; project management and risk assessment; brick and terracotta. Included are modern materials and the challenges of conserving them, and the study and conservation of metals in architecture	Assessment consists of two essays, an illustrated lecture and a dissertation
	2	MA in Architectural Conservation To focus upon regional and local conservation needs in order to recruit regional architectural practitioners Postgraduate Diploma in Architecture: conservation option	The course focuses on the needs of young architects, likely to face involvement in conservation The postgraduate diploma conservation option runs for one term, containing mainly theoretical study. This includes an introduction to the principles of conservation, linking the construction industry with conservation practices	Dissertation Projects
	3	MA in Architectural Materials and Conservation To ensure a substantial knowledge of conservation materials, scientific principles and the sociology of conservation. A broad-based multi-skills approach is used so as to allow study of more obscure conservation issues	Eight freestanding units are provided over a 24-week period. They includes conservation technology, rationale and organisation; historic building materials and architectural history; and a range of supporting units including, for example, practical surveying and practical construction activity such as joining, pinning and cleaning	Coursework; 15,000 word dissertation
	4	MSc in Conservation for Archaeology and Museums Intended for those who wish to pursue a career in the practice of conservation in the broad field of archaeology and museums	Conservation processes – this course provides students with practical and theoretical knowledge and an understanding of conservation processes, including condition and risk assessment; stabilisation and reconstruction; documentation; aiding interpretation of objects; and evaluation and selection of conservation materials Conservation studies – this further course involves students in the treatment of individual objects drawn from the college collection	Portfolio including reports covering course conservation experience. Students also submit a learning journal and a Continuing Professional Development plan
Group 2: Conservation Specialist centres	5	BA in Conservation Studies To provide practice in conservation and care of historic property for those with an interest in careers in museums or the private sector	Year one: an introduction to many specialisms, including wood and stone carving; gilding; casting; study of ornamentation and drawing; colour theory and microscopy; art history; science and conservation theory Year two: introduction of sector placements Year three: introduction of major research dissertation	Practical assessments; dissertation
	6	BA in Conservation and Restoration The programme aims to develop knowledge of conservation and applied practice related to the treatment of decorative arts, social history, archaeological and ethnographic objects	Year one: foundation, covering theoretical, scientific and art historical studies. The second and third years are then spent treating historic objects and developing decision-making and project management skills, while furthering practical expertise. Second year: includes the practical study of a range of historic materials, to allow a breadth of experience of transferable skills. Units covered include ceramics; gilded objects; archaeological objects; decorated surfaces and ethnographic materials. Third year: offers opportunities for specialisation plus a placement (minimum six weeks) in an historic house, museum or private workshop, either in the UK or overseas	Final research project dissertation

Table 2: Course Aims, Content and Assessment Methodology (Cont.)

	College	Course aim/philosophy	Course content	Assessment
	7	Postgraduate Diplomas in Conservation To equip students with the advanced level practical skills sought by prospective employers and private clients. The course caters for graduates and for practitioners developing their skills; it includes substantial and vigorous workshop practice Building Conservation Masterclasses (BCMS) Supporting mature practitioners or those seeking career changes and new skills areas	Content focuses on 4 main areas: practical and technical; critical and conceptual, with a focus on scientific and research methods; contextual and historical; professional and entrepreneurial. The four domains consist of four separate study blocks Substantial practical activities supported by historical study and technical theory	Practical assessments; research tasks
	8	MA in Ironwork To provide an adaptable and flexible programme aimed at current practitioners, which will allow study in any order and over any length of time MA in Historic Environment Conservation A practical qualification to meet real needs in the conservation sector and aimed at practitioners or sector professionals	(under development) Year one: practical activity Year two: delivery of core elements Two core modules are provided in historical environment and conservation practice. Practical workshops and theoretical modules include both study of buildings and other elements such as landscape character assessment; historic gardens; preparation of conservation statements and drafting management plans. Visits to appropriate sites	Two 6,000 word assignments; a lengthy dissertation Students select six of nine practically assessed workshops; Assignments; Dissertation Provision of a college attendance award
	9	MSc Timber Building Conservation To enable practicing conservators to improve their competence and to allow other buildings professionals to specialise or change career direction	Essentially a practical course plus a 6-month research project. Covering timber science; history of timber building; timber-framing systems; biological decay repair (under development). Year one: practical activity Year two: delivery of core elements	PG Diploma issued for successful completion of 8 taught units. MSc follows completion of research
Group 3: Practical skills-based courses	10	Foundation Degree in Forged Metals Designed for students seeking to become professional metalwork artists and designers	Training in blacksmithing is provided for those wishing to work with a range of forged ironwork ranging from the traditional to the contemporary. Content includes manipulating, shaping and joining metal, in order to design and make artefacts such as tools, architectural ironwork and sculpture. 3D design crafts; business studies	Practical assessments; examination; project work
	11	Foundation degree in Restoration of Stonework To provide a foundation in stonework skills, knowledge and professional requirements. Graduates will be able to make an effective contribution when working with both new and historic stonework	Content includes stonemasonry; conservation theory and practice; carving and letter cutting. Year two: an emphasis upon creative and practical work A 25-day work placement is required	Practical assessment; project work
Group 4: Specialist courses	12	MA in Wall Painting Conservation Production of highly trained practical conservators. Research-led approach, focusing upon minimum intervention and preventative conservation techniques	Holistic (non-modular) approach with international recruitment and fieldwork. Year 1: conservation science, materials and techniques of wall paintings; documentation processes. Year 2: environmental degradation; scientific examination; cleaning and consolidation; extensive fieldwork Year 3: research project; fieldwork	Assessed by examination plus satisfactory practical work

3.3.2 What Students Find Hard

Discussions with different providers in all colleges underlined their experience of what is probably a normal division between those students who enjoy a more theoretical approach to subjects and those who prefer greater practical experience. Certainly one area of concern for many tutors was student understanding of the scientific basis for conservation processes and other intellectual aspects of conservation theory. Several colleges noted that students were often non-scientists who might have problems with difficult scientific concepts. The academic tradition of encouraging students to 'take nothing on trust' and regularly test hypotheses may disconcert some students who are more interested in gaining direct instruction and skills training.

Students studying for Foundation degrees find academic aspects such as the conservation context, legislation affecting conservation, planning processes and the need for a holistic view of the 'bigger conservation picture' very demanding. Perhaps too often here the primary focus is inwards towards skills mastery rather than outwards in the consideration of wider conservation issues. It was found that some students on Foundation degree courses in further education colleges particularly face problems linked to key skills, especially verbal presentation and concept rationalisation.

Key Findings:

- students with an arts background find postgraduate science difficult – and vice versa
- Foundation students often lack key skills

3.3.3 Training Provision – What Universities and Colleges Cannot Easily Provide

As this report reveals, universities and colleges provide good quality learning experiences for conservation students, using skilled staff. Most organisations were confident in the appropriateness of their course content, but problems remain. Course development in universities in particular appears to have been particularly constrained in the provision of adequate space for practical work, which is often seen by managers as resource-intensive.

Discussions likewise provided some evidence of differing institutional approaches to the provision of practical work placements for students. Several universities providing generic courses felt that it was increasingly hard to provide realistic site-based experience for their full-time students. This was

particularly related to limitations imposed by health and safety regulations and universities appear to be reducing their involvement in this whole area, an issue further discussed in Section 3.7.

The main concern for Foundation degree courses focusing on substantial 'hands-on' training was of limited taught hours that did not allow adequate time for directed student practice in workshops. Constrained timetables tended to lead tutors on such courses to work on the basis of 'teaching everything we think they need, quite a lot that's nice, and only omitting what isn't important'.

3.3.4 Resource Issues

Interestingly, few respondents from education and training centres expressed any major concerns over physical resources, although the need to struggle to ensure a continued adequate allocation of resources was stressed by some university tutors. Research visits confirmed that resources seem to adequately support the type of course being provided.

There were no complaints of being under-resourced in comparison with other teaching or learning disciplines. Resource problems were observed in those few instances where an institution visited was facing financial pressure as a whole or a course was moving towards closure, but university staff interviewed confirmed that several long-standing conservation courses had closed at universities in other parts of the country. One interviewee referred to a programme which was 'well-funded and resourced, well-regarded, socially-inclusive, recruited well, had an innovative approach while retaining links with traditional practice and had an excellent rapport with the industry and practitioners... and it still closed!' In fact, one of the university courses visited in this sample was due for closure in summer 2005 as part of a university cost-cutting programme. It would appear to be the case that quality does not necessarily guarantee survival, especially where a given course does not fit neatly into a university's departmental structure or the additional space required for practical elements of conservation courses might be used to house larger numbers of students from other types of courses.

However, one constant concern voiced was that of finding enough time to deal with all the demands facing hard-pressed academic staff. Staffing problems were also referred to by some course leaders, where full-time staffing or part-time budgets had been reduced.

Generally, then the level of resources supporting conservation courses is considered by the respondents of all types of courses to be appropriate to the nature of course provision. There is usually ready access to libraries, information technology and technological support. Similarly, where the emphasis was on more intensive practical content, workshops appeared to be more than fit for purpose. However, one university tutor admitted that its placement system effectively plugged course resource gaps by providing students with access to the new technology that they did not themselves have.

'Employer needs are not part of the course requirement.'

College Tutor

Among specialist conservation centres and Foundation degree traditional skills providers, in this case further education colleges, there was a good deal of evidence of new purpose-built workshops for conservation activity, but staff fears still revolved around planning for replacement. Further education colleges have faced rising costs in the provision of practical courses for many years and conservation programmes are affected by this. One tutor with substantial past industrial experience ruefully pointed out that the whole budget for his FE department was less than his expenses budget when working in industry. Another expressed concerns over the rising cost of new technology.

Finding adequate materials for use over a whole year of work can be expensive in workshop situations, especially in such disciplines as stone or metalwork. However local contacts, and the strong networks maintained by staff, lead to regular donations. Staff had to be be enterprising in pursuing these links, but subsequent storage could be a problem, as could access to new technology such as lasers.

Foundation degree courses franchised from universities do in theory have ready access to the resources of the 'mother institution'; however there was little evidence found of students using such opportunities, as distance between the organisations was often a problem for student access.

There was a general awareness in all the organisations visited that on-line materials relating to conservation education were available and there was substantial evidence to suggest that students were regularly referred to these. But the impression gained was that their actual use remained an independent student responsibility. 'Students often know more about website access than staff', said one tutor, while another stated: 'There can be no substitute for practical experience... it can take years to develop the standard and quality required'.

Some of the evidence from this research suggested that overseas students have in recent years been surprised at the poor quality of some university environments and facilities in the UK. Universities in particular can resource good library access for staff and students and give strong support for inter-library loans and professional publications subscriptions. However, these remain something of a weakness for the further education sector.

Key Findings:

- generally university courses with higher practical elements and those located in further education colleges expressed more resource concerns
- university resources appeared to be good
- specialist conservation centres often have excellent resources

3.3.5 Staff Networking and Links with Other Training Institutions and Courses

In all instances, staff networking and course links are many and varied, to the substantial benefit of course provision. In the small world of conservation education and training, tutors often serve as external examiners for other institutions and know each other personally, and nearly all course tutors had European contacts. In most organisations, substantial professional networks exist, but too often these networks depended upon personal association developed by individual staff and were easily lost once they left. Also, links between franchised courses and the franchising institution can be surprisingly weak — 'Potentially, [the students] have access to facilities; in reality they don't use them... communication [between the partners] is relatively complicated'.

Although there appeared to be no formal mechanisms, links with past students often seem to be well-maintained and used to gain information about developments in the conservation sector. Often ex-students were invited to return as part-time or visiting tutors. Some courses look to establish strong regional links, so as to support vernacular conservation issues.

Key Findings:

- strong links exist between many conservation college courses and staff
- good European contacts
- good networks with conservation organizations

3.3.6 The Impact of PACR Accreditation at College Level

The PACR (Professional Accreditation of Conservators-Restorers) scheme was established in 2000 and currently offers accreditation only to practising conservation professionals. Thus part-time tutors may seek accreditation in their capacity as working conservators, but the scheme is not intended to accredit them as teachers. Tutors, lecturers and academics who do not also practice conservation fall outside the scope of the scheme. For this reason, in most cases, the university and college curriculum has not yet been influenced at all by the PACR process. However, this accreditation scheme was not

original directed at the specific needs of the architectural conservation community, so it is understandable that it has had limited impact within the courses reviewed as part of this research, which are largely concerned with architectural conservation.

The education establishments visited appeared to take only a peripheral interest in this area of development. There was little enthusiasm for an extension of the scheme to cover the teaching of architectural conservation. Those few tutors expressing an interest voiced concerns about the likely increase in bureaucracy as a result of the process. They also felt that any assessment team must have appropriate acceptable conservation expertise; one college felt that there should also be student representation, as 'they are the next generation of practitioners'. It was generally accepted that accreditation is an issue of conservation quality monitoring and that 'certain benchmark qualifications' must be gained by individuals involved in conservation. They also felt that new standards and expectations are required so that 'the right people are recruited' to the Icon conservation register.

Key Findings:

- poor past college links with Icon
- limited awareness of the PACR process

3.4 Course teams

3.4.1 Full-time Staff

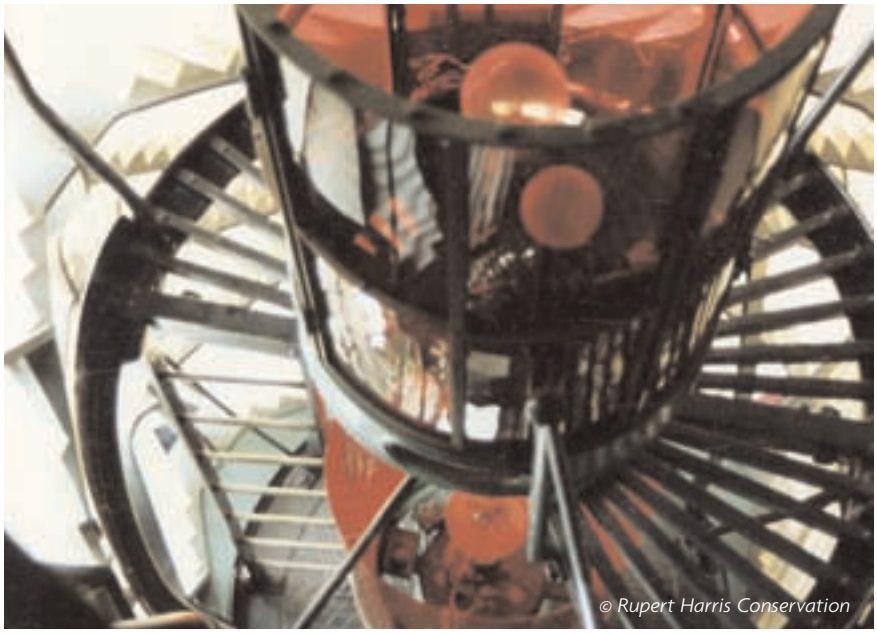
Full-time course teams are usually very small and most full-time university staff claimed to be active in conservation themselves. This could stem from their research interests, for example, one tutor had recently been awarded funds to review European conservation processes; membership of professional bodies or general spare-time involvement.

One university pointed to the increasing difficulty in recruiting specialist academic staff, due to disinterest in what is perceived as a low-paid and increasingly bureaucratic academic career environment. One tutor also warned that universities would be foolish to try to use less expensive research students to deliver parts of some courses. Although this is well-established in some academic subjects, it would not work in the conservation sector and should be resisted. Practical field experience is crucial in teaching conservation.

One issue which was observed in most colleges was the dependence for course administration and management upon a single full-time member of staff. This role not only includes curriculum design

'Pseudo self-employment is the nature of the sector — most conservation work is carried out by micro-firms of 1 to 3 people — and it's an enterprise business that tends to push individuals down the route of eventually setting up their own business or operating as consultants.'

College Tutor



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and some responsibility for delivery, but also timetabling, liaison with part-time staff, dealing with resource issues, and managing external links with many organisations. Often the course leader also holds a major tutorial role, organising all visiting lecturers and monitoring course quality. Such tutors were well aware of their level of influence and control — and of the likely impact should they either move or retire.

3.4.2 Part-time Staff

Many courses visited were dependent on considerable input from part-time staff, or sometimes the services of staff from other departments. All institutions recruited part-time staff, often conservation practitioners, selected for their knowledge and skills. Contracts could be issued for a tutoring role to be provided throughout the academic year; for shorter blocks of time; or for single visits as a 'visiting lecturer'. Often such tutors are ex-students, now successful in their respective conservation disciplines.

In one institute with relatively large numbers of conservation students, it was estimated by the interviewee that 90% of course input is currently provided by part-time staff. Real benefit was claimed for this practice given that students are also able to gain an insight into the workings of the sector. So, for example, in one recent metal course, four external specialists were employed, including an expert from the Lead Development Association and a cast iron specialist engineer.

A more extreme example of the use of practitioners as part-time staff was found in another conservation department, which had adopted a policy that all staff should be active practitioners in a specialist field. The result was that all staff — including the departmental head — were effectively part time. The benefit of this active involvement from conservation professionals was balanced against the inevitable impact on the operational efficiency of the department.

Although there is evidence of a slight difficulty in finding new staff in some conservation specialisms, no organisation felt this to yet be a critical issue. However, some concerns were raised that large organisations, such as English Heritage were increasingly unable to contribute to courses. Although this is not a formal part of the role of English Heritage, it was seen by university respondents as a real weakness, since English Heritage input could help students understand the sector and its future.

One institution displayed an example of best practice for monitoring the quality of part-time staff input: student evaluations took place after every lecture. Student feedback has been found to be perceptive and, in instances of negative feedback, the part-time tutors were not used again.

Key Findings:

- small teams of full-time staff are usual
- often a single full-time academic manager controls course structure
- some difficulty in recruiting full-time staff
- little difficulty in finding good part-time input and a heavy use of the latter, with practitioner experience being one beneficial result

3.5 Staff Development and Research

3.5.1 Staff Development

In most **universities** there is ample opportunity for staff development for individual full-time staff. However, the pressures on lecturers are reducing the time available to undertake professional networking. As a result, several institutions referred to the use of a 'flexible approach' to this, where staff were encouraged to join departmental student workshops to update their skills. Instances were also noted of staff development 'not being especially well structured', and of staff being unable to take the sabbaticals they were entitled to.

In the best examples, the updating of conservation skills is built into staff contracts, with staff usually encouraged to attend conferences, go to meetings of professional organisations and undertake research through practice. One college felt that staff gained a great deal from working alongside mature students, with their wealth of experience and good sector contacts. Opportunities for involvement in staff development activity were often also offered to part-time tutors.

The situation is more difficult for Foundation degree courses within the further education sector, where pressures upon staff time are even more intense than in universities. Such courses appear to concentrate upon updating their staff through personal contacts or through in-house events. There was perceived to be a particular danger in the further education context of losing contact with the conservation sector and staff strongly supported the principle of regular staff placements, saying these rarely took place in practice.

3.5.2 Research

This was a decidedly different matter where, as expected, universities were intensely involved in both national and international research programmes. Many examples were provided of research projects with intensely practical themes such as laser-cleaning or the use of local vernacular materials.

Universities are now assessed externally on their research record and graded accordingly; while management encourages research involvement. Most of the full-time university conservation staff interviewed was engaged in research or in studying for a further degree.

Whereas universities face strong pressure to involve themselves in academic research, feedback suggested that those specialist institutions solely devoted to conservation courses were more likely to focus upon 'applied research'. Further education colleges may deliver Foundation degree programmes, but research is not a key issue or a target for them, with staff at best peripherally involved.

Key Findings:

- Most institutions provided plenty of opportunities for staff development, but there is limited time to access them
- Few interviewees raised any major concerns over staff development issues
- Most substantial research activity is located within universities
- Specialist conservation education centres tend to have a more applied research focus
- No staff research activity was found at further education level

3.6 Careers and Employment

3.6.1 Careers Guidance

The approach to career guidance for graduates from full-time courses generally appeared to be informal and sometimes quite limited. This was true of all the institutions visited. Advice on future employment often appears to be provided, in the words of one tutor 'informally as part of the tutorial process' and in a generic rather than a personal way. Another tutor suggested that: 'It's ongoing and linked to whoever we talk to' and therefore, while many staff held some responsibility for this, no one had the specific task of ensuring it was adequately delivered.

In some instances it was suggested that, in relation to generic university courses, the relatively limited size and specialist nature of the conservation sector meant that a review of careers options was easily covered by the course content rather than through external careers advisers. Some specialist courses fed mainly Government institutions or national and international agencies and very little careers support was given on these programmes. It was felt that the careers options were 'easily negotiated by a graduate'. Interestingly, one university which attracts relatively large numbers of entrants, recognizes the potential employment problems for its future graduates, and has to be 'quite blunt' with students about their future employment prospects — but even so, applications for its courses were increasing. In one example of good practice, students were given careers advice at the initial interview stage, so as to ensure that they had made a correct career and course choice. This was seen by staff as especially important since, given the unique nature of the programme,

'Colleges are turning out too many surveyors who can write reports and manage projects... you only need so much survey work, then somebody's got to get on with it. Where will all these people come from?'

College Tutor

such advice was simply unavailable elsewhere.

In only a very few cases had the course or college established a systematic approach to help students find employment, and even then tutor support again tended to be informal or limited to providing references.

The specialist nature of conservation work appears to defeat normal university careers advice processes. University careers departments were felt to lack both information and understanding of the sector. One course tutor compensated for this lack at his university by providing several hours' study of employment and progression themes at the end of the course.

Most course leaders, however, felt that their students were adequately introduced by their programmes to those professional conservation bodies which would be helpful to them in future. For full-time students taking specialist or generic courses, the main aim of tutors was to increase student awareness of the professional organisations they might subsequently join and to encourage an appropriate choice once in the sector. Clearly this was not an issue in short courses attended by current practitioners, for example, from an architect's practice.

By contrast, Foundation degree traditional skills courses saw little value in introducing students to professional organisations. One tutor felt that, for example, UKIC (one of the predecessor bodies to Icon) had in the past been 'rather museums orientated' and therefore less appropriate for their specialist conservation skills area.

Although there was ample evidence of full-time graduates finding employment in the profession, there was little evidence of any college systematically tracking conservation graduate progression.

Key Findings:

- careers guidance was generally limited

- little evidence of formal tracking of graduate progression

3.6.2 Relating Courses to Employer Needs

The employer responses in Section 4 of this report express a substantial concern that courses are not related to their needs. This is especially the case with full-time conservation courses. However, in many cases these same employers recognise that the university or college environment in which generic courses are usually located simply cannot meet this ideal. Tutors on such courses are even-handed, however, in recognising their own limitations. One noted that 'employer needs are not part of the course requirement', focusing as his course did mainly upon 'background understanding'. His feeling, none the less, was that this course was delivered in a way which made graduates 'rapidly useful to employers'.

Traditional practical skills-based courses involving high levels of practical work were perceived as being much more 'employer-led'. One metalwork Foundation degree course sees most students moving into self-employment. Another tutor stressed the importance of practical skills, stating that qualifications which are too academic lead to 'a tendency for those who are well-qualified to assume that they don't need to get their hands dirty' and thus that a high-status theoretical approach can make conservation 'far too academic and esoteric'.

In many of these more practical courses, tutors either are or have been employers themselves. This was felt to be important as it guarded against institutionalisation. One tutor strongly supported the idea of getting teachers back into 'hands-on' work in the sector on a regular basis to re-charge their understanding.

Significantly, a number of courses did not have any effective industrial advisory group. These usually consist of appropriate academic, industrial and stakeholder representatives, who advise on and review courses. This was balanced, however, by strong claims by all course managers interviewed that there were extremely good links with external companies.

One leading university was currently going through the process of establishing a sector advisory group. The group was to include conservation architects, local authority representatives and construction and engineering representatives, as well as organisations such as English Heritage. Another example of good practice was an advisory panel composed of representatives from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), a conservation agency, practitioner companies and conservation specialists, an English Heritage inspector, staff from local Government and ex-students. In another instance, a course's employer focus group consisted of representatives from those companies that provided internships on the course.

Key Findings:

- the academic environment limits courses from fully relating to employer needs
- a significant number of courses examined had no industrial advisory group

'Even though the building and much of the equipment was new five years ago, the problem is that it will all break down at approximately the same time. Money needs to be put aside to prepare for this... further education colleges find this very difficult to do.'

Tutor

3.7 Work Experience and Work Placements

This was an area where some departments running full-time courses faced difficulty in providing quality experiences for their students. There was evidence of some full-time college courses either moving away from placements as a course element, or leaving students to identify and organise them independently.

Although courses with smaller student intakes appeared to find the placement process easier, one leading university stopped the formal use of placements some 10 years ago in favour of strong internal programme control. The university felt that placements often had vague learning objectives which could not be properly assessed against course needs.

Little evidence could be found which linked placement policy to course length or type. In a number of cases reference was also made to problems of coordination and the increased university liability for students. Placement during a year-long course was also seen as taking too much time away from the course.

A regional university noted that many of its students wished to find local placements. This strained the capacity of the sector to provide such experience and affected the quality of what was available. However, a few of the centres visited remain committed to the concept and one saw work placements as an important part of their postgraduate diploma. This included two placement sessions of three and six weeks each, one taking place in mid-course and the other during the summer term. This, and their developing network of placements in the UK and elsewhere, was seen by tutors as one of the key reasons for students selecting this college's courses.

Another university includes a second year internship within its MSc course. Students discuss careers options in their first year and an appropriate post is arranged using a well-developed network of contacts, with a focus on developing practical skills. The internship is seen as a bridge to employment; and in addition all students have the opportunity to work abroad for at least two weeks.

Where placements were provided, some colleges faced difficulties in monitoring them, given the fact that they were often in far-flung locations. Visits to students were often not carried out and there was limited follow-up or analysis of what was actually done or achieved during the work placement.

Key Findings:

- a significant number of courses did not provide work placements as part of the scheme
- health and safety and general administrative pressures cause problems for colleges
- monitoring can be problematic and difficult to manage, especially by academic establishments

3.8 Entering Conservation Practice

All the colleges interviewed stressed that in order to gain employment certain skills were essential, notably the ability to work on a number of conservation specialisms and being able to work in teams. Although it was recognised that graduates will probably go on to specialise still further, there was a real understanding of the way project contractors today pull together teams with different skills for different projects, and this was made clear to students while studying on their courses.

Evidence from tutors suggests that few graduates from full-time generic degree programmes set up businesses as sole traders within the first three years of leaving their course. They are more likely to prefer working initially in public sector or other organisations to gain experience. Tracking the future careers of their graduates would allow colleges to reflect more adequately upon the quality and appropriateness of their provision; but few colleges in fact do so.

One exception seemed to be with Foundation degree graduates in traditional skills areas such as stone or metalwork, where students tend to have a particular interest in self-employment. Tutors on a Foundation degree in forged metalwork estimated that the majority of their graduates would go on to become self-employed.

During this research, enquiries were made about the additional inclusion in all courses of a range of potentially valuable 'generic' skills, such as information technology, business management, photography, health and safety, communication skills and tendering. It was clear that all centres are making a real effort to incorporate such training into their courses.

At one leading specialist conservation centre these skills were seen as being at the heart of


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much of what was taught. The course included substantial study of what was defined as 'professional and entrepreneurial' content. Although in this centre many mature students already had a range of business skills, it was felt that 'there is still a need to look at basic concepts like the business plan'. A main theme adopted under the heading of 'entrepreneurship' was related to networking and communication skills. At another, curriculum content had been adapted to include computer applications, rather than basic computer skills, while role play was used to develop negotiation skills. One BA in Metalwork included a business management unit, covering specifications, cost projections, time-lines, and customer liaison and finance as important aspects of business operation.

Health and safety issues formed a fundamental study element in all the courses examined. In contrast, comparatively few courses looked closely at tendering processes.

But courses are not always successful in preparing students for employment. An interview with a group of mature students on a full-time Foundation degree revealed great uncertainty over employment after graduation, even though this was only a few months away. They were surprisingly unaware of pay rates in the sector, and felt that adequate 'company and conservation sector training' was a key item that the course did not cover. They felt they needed more training in preparing CVs, understanding how companies worked, setting up a business, and practical issues such as pricing and planning.

Key Findings:

- academic courses have difficulty in preparing graduates for the commercial world, but work hard to incorporate useful 'soft skills'
- few graduates from full-time courses aim to work independently in the first few years after graduation
- health and safety always appears as key course content

'Placements for lecturers or tutors could perhaps take place for six months every five years, but these would be impractical without external sponsorship from organisations like the National Trust or English Heritage.'

Further Education College Lecturer

3.9 University and College Analysis Checklist

The checklist below summarises the responses from university and college staff to a range of themes discussed during the research phase and is included for easy reference and comparison.
In each instance 'Y' reflects a positive response and 'N' a negative.

Table 3: Recruitment & Resources

	Recruitment		Courses							
University or College	Courses	Easy student recruitment	Realistic student expectations	Degrees include practical work	Good institutional resources	Sufficient resource for good practical work	PACR links or impacts on course	On-line material available	Non-technical skills included on courses	Students kept in touch with conservation profession
1	BA PG Cert Diploma	Y Y	Y	substantial	N	Y	Y	Y	substantial	Y
2	BA MA Conservation Studies Short courses	Y Very easy	N	Y substantial	Y	Y	N	limited	substantial	Y
3	MA Conservation Studies Short courses	Y	Y	limited 'as appropriate'	Y	Y	N	limited	Y substantial	Y
4	Pg Cert MA PhD	Y	Y	'very limited' 5%	Y	N	N	Y Internet	limited	Y
5	Pg Cert	N	Y	75% fieldwork	N	N	N	Y Internet	substantial	Y
6	MA	Y	Y	50%	Y	Y	N	Y Internet	good	Y
7	MSc Conservation	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y 'borne in mind'	-	good	Y
8	MA Pg Cert Short courses	Y	Y	MA 50% Dip 75% P/t 75%	Y	Y	limited	limited	substantial	Y
9	MA CPD Short courses	Y problems with Indust Arch MA	Y	MA – 33% Short courses – 'at least 50%'	Y	Y	N	Y important new develop-ment	substantial	Y aims at 'broad professional needs'
10	MSc Short courses	Y	Y	'Balance depends on individual student need'	Y	Y	N	Y plus tutoring	limited	Y
11	HND / Foundation degree	Y	Y	80%	Y	Y	N	limited	good	N
12	HND / Foundation degree	N	N	25-40%	Y	Y	N	limited Internet	good	N

Table 4: Course links

	Courses				Staffing				
University or College	Course focuses on employer needs	Good course quality review systems	Industrial advisory group in operation	Good external company links	Good staff networks with other colleges	Heard of the Conservation Teaching Forum	Staff involved in research	Good CPD possible for staff	Easy to find external tutors
1	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y but limited time	Y	Y all tutors are practitioners
2	Y from a future perspective	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y keen on 'action research'	Y	Y
3		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y only 1 F/t staff member
4	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
5	limited	Y	N	Y	weak	N	Y tutor	N	Y
6	Y usually large organisations	Y	Y	Y	Y	unsure	Y	Y but time limited	Y
7	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y 'but not well structured'	Y
8	-	Y	Y	Y	Y 'excellent'	N	Y	Y	difficult
9	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
10	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y all tutors are practitioners
11	Y strongly	reasonable	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y mainly in-house	Y relatively easy
12	N	reasonable	Y new	Y	Y	N	N	N	N

Table 5: Student Progression

University or College	Systematic help for students to find employment	Systematic tracking of graduate progression	Course covers careers options for students well	Internships or placements provided on courses	Easy to find host companies for these	Students set up as sole traders
1	Y	Y informal	Y	Y	Y	25%
2	?	Y	Y very professional	Y	N	not many
3	N	N	limited	N N/A for most students	N/A	many already employed
4	N/A	N/A	N/A students employed	N/A	N/A	limited
5	N informal	Y by tutor	limited	N	-	most in 'pseudo self-employment'
6	N	N	Y	N	N/A	-
7	N	N	Y	Y	Y	very few
8	Y	?	Y	Y (for F/t students)	Y	-
9	N	-	-	-	-	very few
10	N/A	N/A	N	N/A	N/A	good proportion – 50% are already self-employed
11	N	N informal	Y	Y (work experience)	Y	'Most' after their degree
12	N	N	N	Y	Y	25%

Table 6: General issues

University or College	Any perception of crisis in conservation education	College sees need for central control of conservation training	Importance of multi-skilled conservators today	Need for systematic management of conservation training
1	in some limited specialist areas	Y	Y	Y
2	N	uncertain	Y	Y
3	N	uncertain	Y	Y
4		Y	Y	Y
5		possibly	Y 'Essential'	Y
6		unsure	Y	Y
7	only in some specialist areas	Y	Y	Y
8	uncertain	Y	Y	Y
9	N	Y 'If an appropriate partnership'	Y	Y
10	?	Y	Y greatest in small companies	Y
11	N	unsure	Y 'Teamwork'	unsure
12	N	Y	Y	Y

3.10 Case Studies in Flexible Delivery

Flexible response – A

One specialist conservation centre presented a good example of flexible but high-quality delivery, with courses provided in three tiers:

The first (uppermost) tier consists of postgraduate degrees. In addition to theoretical modules, students are required to select six practically assessed workshops from a range of nine, with the first-year emphasis upon practical work, and taught theory then supporting the second year of study.

A Masters degree course has been specifically aimed at practicing conservators and is delivered on a part-time basis, with attendance required on Fridays and Saturdays. The course concentrates on mastering practical skills rather than focusing on theoretical content, and is designed with the sector in mind. Business elements are included, such as the preparation of conservation statements or the drafting of conservation management plans.

In addition, the centre provides a range of postgraduate diplomas and certificates in building conservation.

A second tier of courses are aimed specifically at museums and galleries, with free entry provided for museum and library staff as part of a specially funded regional training scheme.

The third tier consists of a range of low-cost short courses for the general public. Two of the subjects to be provided are 'Living with historic buildings' and 'Maintenance matters'. These courses were generated as a result of similar experiments successfully carried out in Northern Ireland. These, aimed at historic building owners, were immensely popular.

Further developments are under discussion with the local Learning & Skills Council to try to establish apprenticeships in ironwork conservation focusing on historic production methods. A new NVQ in general conservation work, covering possible subjects such as wrought ironwork, coppice work and general building conservation is also being developed through the creative partnership of the university, further education, The National Trust and a local museum.

Flexible response – B

One university building conservation section is producing a distance learning version of a Master's degree, due to become generally available in the near future.

EMPLOYER AND PRACTITIONER VIEWS ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

4

Employer and Practitioner Views on Education and Training

4.1 General Observations

During this research, 51 telephone and face-to-face interviews were undertaken with practitioners and employers. Indeed most practitioners also turned out to be employers. A number of comparatively large companies were contacted but most were small in size. The field of employment reviewed by this research meant that researchers did not specifically look at museums and conservation organisations in their role as employers. The researchers were asked to concentrate on private conservation practices and employed or self-employed practitioners.

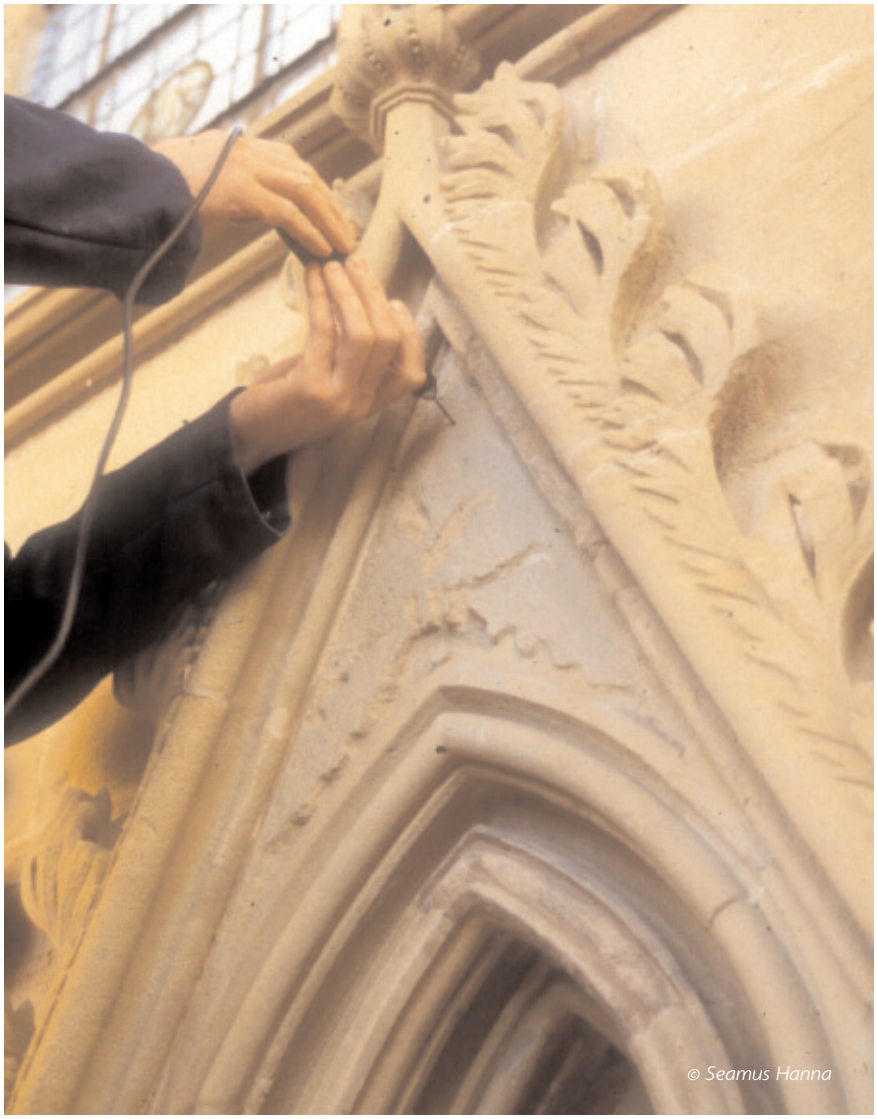
Architectural conservation is a small sector with well developed networks of practitioners whose personal contacts are crucial to the business. It was also clear that all practitioners interviewed are highly committed and know 'the standard of work to be expected'.

Qualitative feedback suggests that this is a relatively low wage profession, lacking a real career structure yet often depending upon highly trained and well-qualified staff. These individuals are expected to work on irreplaceable high-value and high-status structures or objects. Without exception, a major part of respondents' motivation for working in conservation was their committment to its importance as part of our cultural heritage.

There is clearly an immense amount of job satisfaction in conservation work. However, the levels of bureaucracy and competition are increasing and several practitioners from the sample expressed uncertainty about how long they would remain in conservation work.

The smaller companies and individual practitioners were not actively seeking growth. One or two saw simple survival as their main business objective. The market demand for conservation work fluctuates as a reflection of the wider national economic climate.

Company workload is often a sequence of 'feast or famine'. However, there was little outright pessimism and one larger employer was quite bullish in its view of the future, feeling that there would be continuing expansion in the work available. This manager pointed towards the substantial stock of old buildings throughout the country and the support the media now give to conservation. Another interviewee commented that 'in times of trouble it is often the case that people look inwards', and felt that there may well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be added focus on buildings of national importance in the next few years; the interviewee felt that buildings have never been seen as so important as today.

Key Findings:

- a small sector with many internal links between practitioners
- intense commitment of practitioners to conservation principles
- increasing bureaucracy
- few small companies are seeing or looking for growth
- a moderate level of business confidence in the amount of work available in the future

4.2 The Company Environment

Most architectural conservation practices are small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs): few of those contacted in the course of this research had more than five employees. Of the larger companies, in the last few years many have adopted a policy of reducing full-time staffing levels. This is linked to the complexities of employer legislation, the unpredictability of workflow and uncertainty over gaining contracts, and – in some instances – simple lifestyle decisions.

As a result of this, the number of part-time or self-employed conservators has increased. One practitioner queried whether the sector would be able to respond rapidly should the Government suddenly expand investment in conservation. Dependence on the availability of self-employed conservators can also cause problems in planning and completing projects on time.

In marked contrast, one large and very buoyant company — currently seeking to expand — has rejected the sub-contracting route. They feel that it would be hard to coordinate large teams of independent sub-contractors or truly control their work programmes. Staff are therefore directly employed, but paint analysis and gilding, for example, are outsourced because there is not sufficient work to fully occupy an employee.

Several interviewees further asserted that many individual conservators work from home and have thus maintained lower business overheads.

Key Findings:

- most conservation companies are SMEs
- a trend towards fewer full-time employees and greater use of self-employed specialists and the contracting-out of work

4.3 Perceptions of the Conservation Sector

Practitioners reported an increasingly competitive market-place with an ageing and predominantly white, male workforce.

Cost-effectiveness is essential to the winning of contracts within the tendering system. As a result, there are concerns that large construction companies not normally involved in and with little experience of conservation work are able to undercut small specialist architectural conservation practices, especially on large-scale projects.

There was also concern that, in this small sector, a group of

'Increasingly, churches and cathedrals are strapped for resources. One cathedral is struggling to keep its own masonry yard going, which provides training and trained masons for other businesses.'

Conservator

'It is one thing to theoretically understand something; it's another thing to actually do it.'

Employer

companies/practitioners are particularly well-known and thus tend to win contracts more regularly. This was categorised by some as 'an old-boy network' which is likely to impede and discourage newcomers. Ironically, it was also claimed that the competitive tendering system for conservation projects has had beneficial effects, in that it has slightly opened up the market.

Since the introduction of competitive tendering, one practitioner believes that companies are making far less money than they did 20 years ago. Many companies are thought to be on the borderline between profit and loss, especially with regard to cashflow and the slow payment of invoices. In the past, it is felt, committee discussions by grant-aiding bodies allowed a certain level of additional intervention, and made it possible to negotiate extra funding when circumstances justified it. This no longer exists unless there is a contingency sum included in the tendering process, and the perceived lack of leeway on cost has led to the feeling that firms, particularly smaller ones, 'end up working for nothing'.

There is also a feeling that the current tendering process actually increases the amount of work required by practices. Only two or three weeks' notice is often given before a tender deadline, allowing little time for estimation or planning. This may reflect poor planning by clients or project managers, with little appreciation of the careful assessment process required when compiling a tender.

Some employers also claimed that too many companies lack commercial understanding and submit tenders which are too low. There was also repeated reference to being undercut by firms with less concern in providing a quality conservation service.

Finally, many of the conservators interviewed commented on the professional relationships with project architects, and in particular on their limited understanding of the requirements and techniques of building conservation. This can lead to clients receiving conflicting advice.

Key Findings:

- an increasingly competitive market
- an overly demanding tendering process
- concerns over the increasing involvement of very large construction companies unversed in conservation practice and ethics
- a perception that contracts are regularly awarded to a small elite group of companies/practitioners

4.4 Recruitment and Skills Needs

4.4.1 Recruitment

Equivocal responses regarding recruitment were received from the employers interviewed. Despite the reduction by many firms of their full-time staff, some companies still experienced difficulties in recruiting staff for specific projects, or for those aspects of projects which required specialist skills beyond their own. But for many there appears to be

no observable skills shortage. The current general feeling is that there are enough potential recruits for employment, which is often achieved by word of mouth.

Some practitioners pointed to the finite and limited conservation market. Many felt there is no need for an increase in the number of new university graduates each year, since these people might not find employment. However, there are concerns about the attitudes of current graduates. Several employers referred to new graduate employees with conservation degrees being disconcerted by the unexpected request from an employer that they should carry out labouring or manual tasks associated with site work.

A real difference was noted between the various conservation specialisms, with some prepared to take on untrained staff — such as in metalwork; and some not — for example, in wall painting.

A metalwork company suggested that they were not especially interested in taking on employees with degrees, preferring instead to recruit staff irrespective of any formal qualification — but that they were still facing difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff. 'As long as we can find somebody who has the right sentiment about conservation they will be relatively easy to train', they said. The company were also concerned about their ability to guarantee long-term employment prospects for people who might be moving from another part of the country in order to work with them.

A second metals conservation practice stated that it had recently advertised two posts, for a well-qualified senior and junior conservator. The less experienced recruit proved easy to find, while the senior post remained vacant. The employer felt that this was probably due to such an experienced individual being either already self-employed or in a permanent post within a museum department.

There was little evidence anywhere of conservation companies using Government training schemes. Only one respondent referred to the New Deal and took on three apprentices, but this had proved unsuccessful.

4.4.2 Skills Needs

Employers frequently felt that a university degree was not really necessary to enter the conservation world. Indeed, it is suggested that problems could arise with graduates, who often expected rapid career progression. While recognising enthusiasm to be important, employers feel that undergraduate perceptions of their employment prospects need to be substantially more realistic, with less emphasis upon being 'a professional'. Several respondents suggested that such employees often expected to progress along a clearly designated career path when in fact one does not really exist.

Instead of focusing on an academic qualification, employers underlined the importance of staff abilities, such as liaising with clients, understanding works management, administration and business management — all additional skills to the main conservation tasks. Few new employees come to a company already equipped with these skills. The employers interviewed

'Conservation has become a business... with all that this entails.'

Company Owner

'People need more guidance and experience to decide what role they should occupy in which field of conservation.'

Practitioner

'Generally people with 10 years experience are better than people with a university degree.'

Employer

claimed that they carefully assess how well any new worker will function in their company and how much new training is required for their conservation specialism. The level of practical conservation skills amongst new graduates caused them concern. Such employers often feel that if new staff are physically adept and committed to conservation, subsequent 'on the job' experience will provide what is initially lacking, although this could take some time. One company, which trains predominantly in-house, believes that it takes about seven years for a new employee to become fully skilled in their conservation specialism.

Employers also stressed the need for multi-skilled conservators and one company observes a sea-change for the better over the last five to seven years in this respect, with a wholesale improvement in levels of collaboration and on-site team work. Often, this is related to the new ways in which architects are drafting specifications, using project management methods that require this type of collaboration. Similarly, within subject or material specialisms there is the need to be able to undertake a range of multi-skilled practical activities, rather than one aspect of work.

4.4.3 Age

The age of a recruit to a firm is not seen as an issue, in comparison to their having passion and fitness for the job. Age only seems to be an important recruitment factor where heavy site work is involved. It was suggested that employees in workshops 'can generally be of any age', while younger people are more likely to carry out site-based work. One company partnership expressed concern about the future continuance of their company when they retire (both are in their fifties). Attracting new young workers is a regular point of discussion and despite it being a high priority for the last five years there had been limited success.

Some companies feel that younger people are harder to attract and retain, especially as they need to have real patience, and be prepared to get involved in quite a lot of relatively dull, repetitive work to gain experience of practical conservation processes. Older people are considered to have a more measured approach.

Some companies voiced particularly strong support for the recruitment of more mature employees, especially those seeking a change in career direction. Employers found these recruits to be better motivated and more conscientious than younger entrants. Indeed, one company specifically liked to employ retired people who were willing to accept lower wages during their initial training and trial period.

4.4.4 Financial Remuneration

Matters are clearly not helped by levels of pay, which are particularly low for conservation practitioners and contrast markedly with those in some other professions. This is likely to contribute to the lack of incentive for many graduates to enter the profession when they could train for more lucrative management roles. There is certainly recognition across the sector that salaries are poor, but increasingly tight budgets make it unlikely that higher wages can readily be afforded. Salaries of £12-15,000 per annum were reported as being manageable, and this is despite Icon's recommendations for higher minimum salary levels. There was also some employer concern about recruiting increasingly debt-ridden university graduates.

4.4.5 Careers Advice

Employers and practitioners expressed real concern at a lack of careers guidance, both in schools and within the profession as a whole. However, they recognised that the variety of specialist careers options within the conservation sector means that careers staff in schools or the Connexions Service might find it difficult to give accurate advice.

There remains a real need for careers services to examine career options more closely and to be able to advise more specifically on the range and scope of university and college courses available. There was concern that young people are not directed to those courses most suitable for their specific aims.

There is also a need to raise the profile of the specialist architectural conservation field within the construction industry as a whole. This is being addressed for craftspeople by the National Heritage Training Group, which hopes to increase recruitment to the sector and raise standards of conservation practice.

Key Findings:

- Many companies find staff recruitment relatively trouble-free, although larger companies face problems recruiting apprentices
- Young graduates often appear to be unprepared for the physical nature of site conservation work
- Pay is low and companies are

pessimistic about affording increases

- There is an increasing preference for multi-skilled workers
- There is no evidence of the use of Government training schemes such as Modern Apprenticeships
- Greater value is perceived in older employees and 'career changers'
- A lack of careers guidance at all levels

4.5 Education and Training

4.5.1 University and College Provision

Practitioners and employers rarely raised criticisms about university and college course content, but this is not surprising as they have little contact with training providers and limited knowledge of the detail of course content. They are generally happy with the way in which colleges operate, recognising this as a different sphere of work from their own. Indeed one interviewee insisted that a university 'wasn't a practical environment anyway', intimating that one should expect and be content with a theoretical approach in conservation degree courses of all kinds.

Employers were generally supportive of university and college training, seeing great value in a degree in conservation, in that it familiarised students with materials and techniques and provided underpinning knowledge, as well as some practical skills. They recognised the constraints facing academic courses, although most would ideally like to see more practical hands-on training included on university courses.

Many employers saw university and college courses as not preparing students for the realities of conservation practice, such as working to deadlines, and new employees regularly had to be retrained by employers to cope with such demands. One employer was clear that a new graduate employee would certainly not be able to work unsupervised in his private practice, but was equally clear that he would not expect this to be the case. Instead he perceived a useful relationship between a theoretical university course, with perhaps an initial introduction to conservation skills, and the intensive training a graduate would receive within a conservation company once they gained employment.

Employers feel it is important that academic courses should 'play down' any glamour associated with conservation work and stress the reality that in today's climate there is

'Some firms may be big enough to have a training budget, but for me it's a loss of income. I can't afford if for the workers and can only just afford it for myself.'

Employer

© BCRT, English Heritage

a need to be able to respond rapidly and complete work on time. Good quality apprenticeships are seen by employers as an appropriate response to this problem.

Only one company specifically referred to entrepreneurship, pointing out that this is a key commercial skill, but also observed that it is hard to encapsulate it in an educational format: 'Running a business is far more than just administration', as they put it.

The following are typical comments on education and training courses:

- Courses of longer duration tend to provide a good theoretical foundation, as well as preparing students for some of the ethical and other issues in conservation work, but do not provide a thorough preparation in practical skills. Universities are sometimes seen as too timid in their course design and teaching approach and unprepared to experiment, 'with the same course content being repeated annually'

- It cannot be assumed that someone with a degree in conservation can work effectively when they join a company as they usually lack some of the specific skills needed for specialised conservation practice. Some employers therefore prefer to work only with people they already know

- Short courses aimed at skills development can be good and very useful, but there is no apparent coordination of provision, or clear progression routes, and there are gaps in provision. Practitioners would like to see more such courses become available

- Employers accept that formal qualifications are important in giving young people confidence and academic credibility

- There is a lack of funding in support of training

- There is a lot of 'learning on the job', with most practitioners having learnt or developed practical skills in this way, alongside experienced conservators, especially undertaking site-based work. It is important for formal training to include work placements, not only on site but also in appropriate workshop and broader business environments

- One respondent had stopped taking on additional people because they needed so much further training in practical skills. The need to provide additional supervision had led to a reduction in his own productivity

- Employers report inadequate training of students in the preparation of tenders for conservation work

Some practitioners were also concerned over the possible 'over-production' of first degrees in particular, with students encouraged to undertake significant financial commitments while having no real guidance as to what kind of future to expect after graduation.

There was general agreement from employers and practitioners on the need for more systematic management of conservation sector training, so as to determine where, when and by whom such training should take place.

4.5.2 In-house Company Training

Employers and practitioners alike suggested that there appears to be less company involvement in staff training than was the case in the past, often as a result of financial pressures. This was of great concern. Some employers reported concerns over the possible loss of workers in whose skills a company might have substantially invested.

There was a limited awareness or support for a range of innovative schemes such as Year in Industry students or SPAB Craft Fellowships. There was also evidence that many companies would not become involved in any such schemes due to increasing business pressure. In contrast there was evidence of support in some quarters for interns recruited both in the UK and abroad.

4.5.3 Ongoing Training

Some conservation disciplines are so inherently specialised that training providers cannot justify investment in expensive ongoing training/professional skills enhancement/development courses for inevitably tiny numbers of students. Companies were quick to focus on the sheer diversity of skills needs and levels.

When asked about ongoing training needs for their companies and themselves, many company managers and practitioners, perhaps understandably, prioritise health and safety courses. It is clear that in today's commercial environment time is limited, in spite of the fact that many employers and practitioners feel that they ought to keep up with recent developments in materials and techniques., The selection of training provision at all levels has

to be carefully controlled to fit the available time and budget. Otherwise the cost of being away from the workplace, alongside the additional high cost of the courses themselves, was simply too great for some companies. Nevertheless, practitioners regularly try to attend conferences and appropriate networking-related events.

Consequently, individual professional updating undertaken by employers and practitioners could only be described as 'ad hoc'. The large company which ensures that all employees have an annual training allowance for individual use was very much the exception.

There was some interest in the prospect of distance-learning as an appropriate method for those who are already working in the field. The larger companies interviewed had gained Investors in People status, assessment for which confirms an organisation's training commitment. Others are 'in-scope' with CITB-ConstructionSkills and as levy-paying members, are aware of and eligible for construction-related training grants. One such company had used distance-learning for management training purposes and for preparation for Chartered Institute of Building membership.

Key Findings:

- Many employers and practitioners have no detailed knowledge of current academic courses
- Possible over-provision of first degrees; an academic qualification will not necessarily equip graduates for practical conservation work
- The importance of lengthy 'on-the-job' experience and learning for graduate employees
- Firms are, for practical reasons, less able to support external training schemes
- Reduced company staff development, linked to lack of funding and time
- 'Ad hoc' approach to professional development

'Accreditation needs to be there... it's of paramount importance... it requires companies to adopt a broader view of what they do — to question their technique and philosophical approach.'

Employers and Practitioners

© Paine and Stewart

4.6 Professional Accreditation and Icon

4.6.1 Accreditation

The need for professional accreditation, and the process of gaining it, was a contentious issue. The question generated some strong feelings both for and against the process, an issue which needs to be addressed as a priority. There is concern over how this will be done, how standards are being developed and how they would then be applied.

There was particular concern over:

- The acceptable balance between qualifications and experience
- Who might verify the quality of a practitioner's portfolio
- The value of peer review when your peers are also your competitors
- Whether accreditation is truly worthwhile or whether it simply confirms what everybody already knows, 'those who carry out high quality work'
- What currency this will have in the public arena — how it would be understood, how it would work, and whether it could prevent poor quality providers or the unaccredited getting involved in conservation work

There was certainly evidence that some well known conservators are rejecting the concept of professional accreditation, confident that an excellent past track record alone will ensure future work. However, the majority of respondents did feel that accreditation is important, reserving judgment as to whether the possible conflicts involved — between the call for a firm accreditation structure and an equal demand for flexibility — can be resolved. Another reported problem is that the push towards professionalisation is adding to the administrative burdens of private sector employers and practitioners.

4.6.2 Icon

Many employers and practitioners confirmed that there is a need for Icon to provide clarity on future plans and a clear explanation of its approach to professional accreditation. This was seen as necessary to avoid any loss of current membership: some interviewees were already considering membership of alternative professional bodies. Considerable uncertainty exists as to what would emerge from the establishment of Icon, with queries as to what benefits the increased cost would in fact provide.

High praise came from several quarters on the past performance of the UKIC Professional Service Committee, which appears to have worked well and to the benefit of the sector. Fears exist that this may disappear within the new system, lost in the face of more centralisation and increased bureaucracy.

In respect of the Icon Conservation Register, a large number of the respondents were adamant that registration had never produced any work for them. However, these views may be out of date as the Conservation Register is now on-line and has approximately 20,000 hits per year. Companies or self-employed practitioners do not always know the source of their being recommended. There is also a link between the Conservation Register and accreditation and training, as it contains virtually all the practices which might be prepared to host internships and work placements.

Key Findings:

- Professional accreditation should continue to be addressed as a priority, but many questions remain about the process and its outcomes
- Swift action from Icon is expected
- Need for more systematic management of conservation training

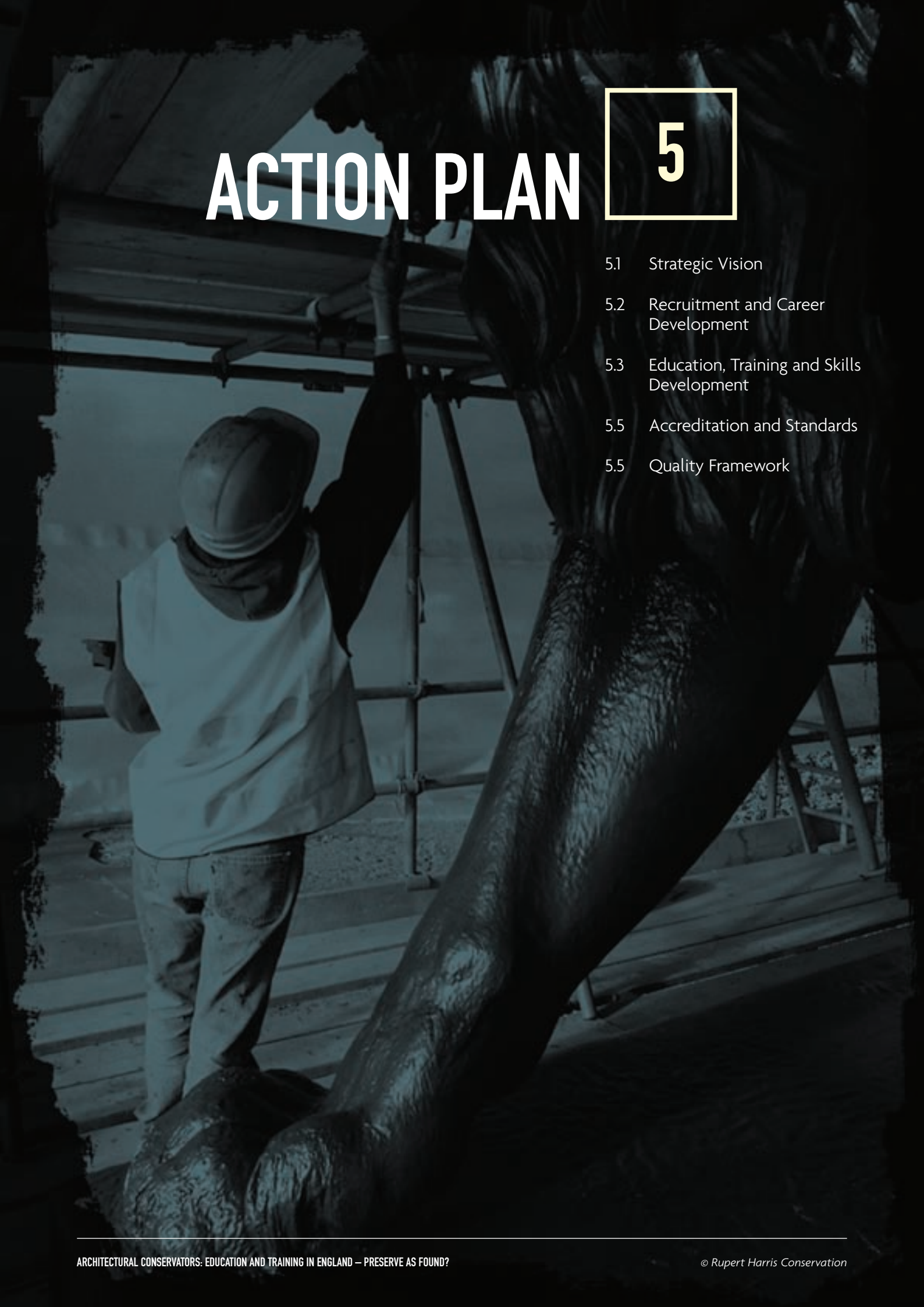
4.7 Student Work Experience and Work Placements

A number of the companies interviewed were involved in providing placements for university/college students or as part of school work-experience schemes. However there was clear evidence that smaller companies in particular tend to avoid involvement, fearful of an additional administrative burden and the extra time needed to provide the attention and training support required by students on placement. They favour the concept, but simply find it difficult to manage properly.

Where there were placement links with universities and colleges, some complaints were received of the limited back-up provided for students by the academic institution.

Key Finding:

- very limited current company involvement in university student work placements



ACTION PLAN 5

Action plan

Effective change and sustainable long-term training and skills provision can only be achieved by the relevant stakeholder groups working together. This should be coordinated through the two sector skills councils with which architectural conservators are most closely aligned, that is, Creative & Cultural Skills and ConstructionSkills. As the NHTG is responsible for the training and development of traditional building craft skills and there is a clear link between craftspeople and some architectural conservation work, they are also integral to any partnership between the two sector skills councils, as well as to their relationship with English Heritage and Icon. In particular, Icon needs to ensure recognition of its role as the profession's pressure group, and work with its partners to influence better training and skills development for all conservators, including those working in the built heritage sector.

This partnership approach will provide better opportunities for collaboration and for sharing experience, vision and resources. It can assist in providing careers information and raising awareness of conservation within the built heritage sector. It will also ensure a more strategic approach to conservation skills and training provision than hitherto. The sector partnership should in the near future fund a further study to establish the need for and development of apprenticeships within conservation linked to the NVQ system or Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers (PACR) scheme (www.pacr.org.uk).

This Action Plan highlights the key areas needing to be addressed and who within the partnership should tackle them:

5.1 Strategic Vision

Creative & Cultural Skills – through its Heritage Skills Panel must define its future training and educational advisory role in relation to national conservation needs and establish an Education and Training Working Group for conservation with representation from Icon, English Heritage and relevant training providers

ConstructionSkills and NHTG – liaise with Creative & Cultural Skills, Icon and English Heritage on current efforts to improve the conservation content in mainstream construction courses. Also, develop aspects of education policy and initiatives to promote conservation in schools through the OCR History & Heritage and GCSE Construction & the Built Environment syllabi

Sector Partners – work together to plan future education, training, skills and professional needs; through the Learning & Skills Council, access existing and future Government funding more effectively to support conservation education and training, especially in the case of apprenticeships

Sector Partners – with the Learning & Skills Council, assess the need to rejuvenate traditional full-time apprenticeships in those skills areas facing greatest skills shortages, such as stained glass, stone, ceramics, metals, preventative conservation and project management

Sector Partners – explore ways of maximising existing training provision, such as Centres of Excellence, and of developing training so as to sustain current courses, while ensuring such initiatives are linked to the NHTG strategy within the Skills Action Plan outlined in *Traditional Building Craft Skills: Assessing the Need, Meeting the Challenge*

Icon – seek funding for a permanent in-house education, training and skills coordinator and thereby assume a substantial role for careers liaison and profile-raising for conservation with heritage stakeholders and the general public

5.2 Recruitment and Career Development

Sector Partners – devise and develop an appropriate strategy to improve information on and support for careers within architectural conservation. Schools and the Connexions Service must become a prime liaison focus and Icon must assume a future careers support role

Creative & Cultural Skills, grant-giving and regulatory bodies, Icon and training providers – address the current lack of any coherent regional national and international marketing of conservation education

Creative & Cultural Skills and Icon – establish a Conservation Ambassadors scheme, similar to the

ConstructionSkills Construction Ambassadors scheme, so practitioners can visit colleges aiming to raise awareness of the profession

Creative & Cultural Skills, English Heritage and Icon – develop a mentoring scheme, enabling younger conservators to gain experience and knowledge from more established conservators

Sector Partners – support the need for funding to cover the costs of practitioner involvement in and contribution to CPD events, including information on access to grants and bursary schemes

English Heritage – develop a more formal approach to encouraging and funding work experience and internships throughout the sector, with a future focus on placements with accredited organisations and using HLF-funded bursaries schemes

Sector Partners – provide information and guidance to help students more readily differentiate between what different conservation courses are designed to do, and what to expect after graduation

5.3 Education, Training and Skills Development

Sector Partners – develop a new vision, which defines and integrates what is needed by examining the whole spectrum of theoretical learning, practical skills and attitudes to conservation. This could include the rejuvenation of traditional apprenticeships, with particular reference to emerging new Specialist Diplomas and the Young Apprentice scheme

Sector Partners – provide a strategic approach to conservation education and training by considering the idea of centralised 'heritage academies'

Sector Partners – develop flexible training partnerships, bringing together universities and further education colleges, professional bodies and conservation sector representatives, so as to create networks of interlinked craft, technician, degree, postgraduate and professional development courses

Icon and English Heritage – refine the professional definitions of conservators and rapidly establish appropriate training criteria so that future education and training course structures can be designed to provide the sector more precisely with what it requires

English Heritage and Icon – facilitate better sector support and guidance, building upon and extending existing connections so as to develop closer links with universities and re-establish the Conservation Teaching Forum

5.4 Accreditation and Standards

Icon – must provide strong political leadership for its members, particularly within the national training arena, and with regard to the setting and maintainance of standards

Icon – proceed with assessing current perceived concerns about the professional accreditation process and in promoting greater understanding of the scheme in the architectural conservation community

English Heritage – act with other funding bodies, Government agencies and Icon to maintain quality standards within architectural conservation

5.5 Quality Framework

The research report identified a particular area of weakness: a lack of sector guidance to colleges and universities that would assist in the structuring or design of training courses for prospective entrants to the sector. This guidance would encourage greater vocational relevance and ease the subsequent transfer of graduates into applied conservation work. Equally, there is no definition of preferred sector content. This would enable organisations such as English Heritage or Icon to review programmes and identify those which are the most effective and appropriate in meeting sector needs. Such criteria would encourage a closer relationship between sector representatives and training providers. It would more readily bridge the evident gap between practical conservation and academic course provision. A kitemark system could be developed, identifying and promoting particularly effective training courses.

It is strongly recommended that a quality framework is developed which defines the essential elements of course content as seen from the point of view of the sector. This could be undertaken by self-evaluation or assessed by external review. A quality framework model shown on the following pages could form the basis of further development by the sector partners.

Suggested quality framework model

- Using the checklist below, indicate whether the issues referred to have been addressed
- Provide reference to supporting evidence: what has been done, how and when
- Areas for future development can be easily identified and listed in the summary boxes at the end of each section

Strategic vision

A	Strategic vision	Yes	Partly	No	Details
1	The organisation has a strategy to identify and act upon sector training needs				
2	The department regularly reviews its provision to establish levels of student and sector satisfaction				
3	The course provides opportunities to ensure that students enhance their level of skills in a range of conservation specialisms				
4	The course requires students to be introduced to the full range of architectural conservation support agencies (such as English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, Council for the Care of Churches, Society for the Protection of Buildings, etc)				
5	There is a commitment to student-centred learning				
6	Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning				
7	The department has clear views on European developments in training methods				

Enter points for action in the grid below

ACTION PLAN

Further development is needed in the following areas of strategic vision:

Recruitment

B	Recruitment	Yes	Partly	No	Details
1	The college has a statement detailing the level of knowledge required on entry				
2	The college has clear criteria for selecting students				
3	The college monitors trends in applications				
4	The college reviews and evaluates its selection process to establish: • What attracts students to the course • Whether there are any barriers to entry • Whether entrants have realistic career expectations				

ACTION PLAN

Further development is needed in the following areas of recruitment:

Course content

C	Course Content	Yes	Partly	No	Details
1	The course has established a preferred ratio between: • lab/workshop • theoretical: classroom-based teaching • practical fieldwork				
2	There is an adequate balance between skills and knowledge				
3	The course is adequately resourced				
4	The course links with other conservation training institutions/courses				
5	Students are encouraged to see their primary conservation training as the first step on the route to becoming a full professional				
6	The course provides access to on-line training packages where appropriate and considers flexible modes of delivery				
7	There is sufficient provision of accommodation, space and materials to provide practical experience for students				
8	There is appropriate access to literature, including library resources and Internet access, to support teaching				
9	Students are made aware of the full range of generic non-technical skills which conservators require: • IT and computing skills • Business management • Documentation drafting • Photographic skills • On-site health and safety • Making grant applications, bidding and tendering • Presentation and communication skills • Other (to be added as appropriate)				

ACTION PLAN

Further development is needed in the following areas of course content:

Staffing and staff development

D	Staffing and Staff Development	Yes	Partly	No	Details
1	Lecturers are active in their field of conservation				
2	Lecturers are members of relevant professional bodies				
3	Lecturers ensure their students are kept in touch with the conservation profession during their training (eg by encouraging them to become members of the relevant professional bodies)				
4	Practical experience is taken into account when teaching staff are recruited (eg they are required to be accredited conservators)				
5	Networks have been established to ensure that industry and teaching staff remain in touch				
6	Networks exist between staff and other training providers				
7	Regular reviews are scheduled to allow staff to identify ways in which they can enhance their teaching				
8	There are adequate CPD opportunities for all staff				

ACTION PLAN

Further development is needed in the following areas of staffing:

Careers and employer engagement

E	Careers Education and Employer Engagement	Yes	Partly	No	Details
1	Career development options are adequately covered				
2	Employer needs are specifically addressed by the course programme				
3	Robust quality review procedures are used				
4	There is a sectoral advisory group supporting the course				
5	The department has a diverse range of company/sector links				
6	Mechanisms are in place for supporting students in their search for employment after graduation, such as internships or work placements				
7	Teaching staff systematically track graduate progression, including self-employment				

ACTION PLAN

Further development is needed in the following areas of careers and employer engagement:

Research

F	Research	Yes	Partly	No	Details
1	Staff have access to the appropriate national and international research findings				
2	Staff relate their personal research to their students' training needs				
3	There is a balance between traditional practice and innovative techniques				
4	Gaps in research are identified and addressed				
5	Staff are in touch with conservation developments, research and teaching approaches outside the UK				

ACTION PLAN

Further development is needed in the following areas of research:

Internships and placement

G	Internships and placements	Yes	Partly	No	Details
1	Internships or placements are built into the training programme				
2	A system exists for identifying placement hosts of the appropriate calibre and in enough numbers				
3	There is systematic monitoring of learning during all placements				
4	Staff monitor the proportion of their graduates who set up in business as sole traders				

ACTION PLAN

Further development is needed in the following areas of internships and placements:

The research and production of this report and the summary document were funded by English Heritage and PDF versions of both reports can be downloaded from the following websites:

www.english-heritage.org.uk

www.icon.org.uk

www.citb-constructionskills.co.uk

www.nhtg.org.uk

www.warwick.ac.uk/cei

ENGLISH HERITAGE

THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

cei centre for education & industry

English Heritage
Customer Services Department
PO Box 59
Swindon SN2 2YP
Tel: 0870 333 1181

e-mail: jeremy.luck@english-heritage.org.uk
www.english-heritage.org.uk

Icon, the Institute for Conservation
3rd Floor, Downstream Building
1 London Bridge
London SE1 9BG
Tel: 020 7785 3805

e-mail: admin@icon.org.uk
www.icon.org.uk

The Centre for Education and Industry
University of Warwick
Coventry CV7 4AL
Tel: 024 7652 3909

e-mail: p.j.huddleston@warwick.ac.uk
www.warwick.ac.uk/cei

Designed by:
Intuitive Design
Tel: 01621 868 698
www.intuitive-design.co.uk