

Clarification
of
Conservation/Restoration Education
at
University Level
or
Recognised Equivalent

Background

As the result of a meeting held between representatives of 30 European education institutions in Dresden in November 1997, a European network of institutions providing education and research in conservation of cultural heritage “ENCoRE” was founded on 23 May 1998 in Copenhagen. The founding members agreed on the statutes of the association and confirmed its legal standing.

One of the main objectives of ENCoRE is to promote research and education in the field of conservation and restoration of cultural heritage, based on the directions and recommendations given in the Professional Guidelines of the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorer’s Organisation E.C.C.O. of 1993 and the Document of Pavia of October 1997.

The need for clarification of university level and recognised equivalent conservation/ restoration education was expressed at the meeting in Vienna 1998 held between 43 representatives of European educational institutions, research institutions and organisations within conservation/restoration. In the document of this meeting it is stated that this task should be coordinated by ENCoRE, in association with the CON.B.E.FOR. project (Conservators-Restorers of Cultural Heritage in Europe: Education Centres and Institutes. A Comparative Research).

The present document is the contribution of ENCoRE to this clarification taking into consideration the Bologna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area. A provisional draft of the clarification document was presented and agreed upon at the second General Assembly of ENCoRE in November 1999 in Bern. The document has been developed by the working group representing 11 of the ENCoRE member institutions established at the second General Assembly and through discussion among all ENCoRE members. The final version was discussed, edited and agreed unanimously at the third General Assembly of ENCoRE in Munich, June 2001.

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NOTE:

In the document the conservator/restorer is defined as a master. This means a master in the science of conservation/restoration. A natural scientist working in the field of conservation/restoration may be defined as a master of science in conservation.

Clarification of Conservation/Restoration Education at University Level or Recognised Equivalent

The Pavia Document (1997) defines conservation/restoration as "a discipline covering all categories of cultural property and taught at university level or recognized equivalent, with the possibility of a doctorate".¹ The Vienna meeting (1998) expressed the need for clarification of university level and recognised equivalent conservation/restoration education (The Document of Vienna para 3).² Moreover, in the "Agenda for the Future" of the Vienna Document it is stated that this task should be coordinated by ENCoRE, in association with the CON.B.E.FOR. project (2000).³ The present paper is the contribution of ENCoRE to this clarification, taking into consideration the Bologna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area (1999).⁴

Introduction

Fundamentally, the conservation/restoration of cultural heritage artifacts is a humanistic academic discipline within the global conservation discipline of all cultural heritage. The political and philosophical basis for all its activities was defined in 1996 in the report of the UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development "Our Creative Diversity" as a right belonging to all humankind.⁵

The necessary existence, access, and protection of cultural heritage as a right to all humankind make great demands on the quality as well as democratic control of and public insight into all aspects of cultural heritage activities and management, including education. The quality, democratic control of and public insight into conservation/restoration education can only be guaranteed by governmentally validated academic education at university level leading to protected and internationally recognised academic titles.

Educational institutions which are not called universities, but which offer programmes of study which in length, content and quality are regarded by the respective governmental validating bodies (such as Ministries of Education) to be equivalent and/or compatible to university degree provision should be recognised as being the same level.

The Discipline of Conservation/Restoration

The discipline of conservation/restoration is an empirical science, devoted to the prevention and treatment of the decay of objects of cultural heritage. It is characterised by being a mixture of theoretical knowledge and practical

skills, and includes the ability to judge in a systematic way on ethical and aesthetic issues. It has its origins in arts and craftsmanship as well as in the humanistic, technical and natural sciences. Cognitive and systematic analysis, diagnosis and solution of problems as the basis for practical conservation and restoration skills is what differentiates the conservator/restorer from the artist and the craftsman. The strong basis in practical skills and knowledge of the complexity and interactivity of object material behaviour and information including environmental influences is what differentiates the conservator/restorer from professionals in other related academic fields. These definitions form the basis of, and characterise education and research in the field of conservation/restoration.

Conservation/Restoration Education: Levels and Progression

As an academic discipline conservation/restoration is per definition based on the highest level of research. The basis of conservation/restoration education consists of appropriate balance between integrated theoretical and practical teaching as defined in “The Document of Pavia”.

We should therefore aim that the conservator/restorer licensed for independent practice is per definition a graduate at Master’s level from a university or governmentally recognised equivalent or doctoral research level (PhD). A programme of study in conservation/restoration at Bachelor’s level should be regarded as an entry requirement to Master’s level, and not as a qualification for independent practice. The entrance level to the academic conservation/restoration education is as minimum Gymnasium, High School, Baccalaureat or similar at the same educational level. As defined by the CON.B.E.FOR. research³, the minimum provision should be for three years at Bachelor’s level before entering the Master’s level. The overall length of study for entry into the profession or to continue to doctorate level should be five years. Moreover, there is a need for clear agreed equivalence between countries for access, content, level and duration of study programmes at Bachelor’s and Master’s levels.

Conservation/Restoration Education: Content

The following description of the content of conservation/restoration education covers study programmes progressing from undergraduate to postgraduate level.

The CON.B.E.FOR. project identified 20 subjects as being essential to the syllabus content of a study program in conservation/restoration. The integral nature, meaning and function of cultural heritage must be central to all aspects of the curriculum.⁶

Supporting theoretical subjects should be carefully integrated into the curriculum and closely related to conservation/restoration practice which should constitute the major part of the syllabus. Studies in conservation/restoration practice should include advanced work and provide an insight into scientific theoretical and/or experimental methodologies, qualifying the student to participate in scientific development work. Furthermore, a systematic approach to the critical appraisal of ethical and aesthetic problems should form an integral part of the study program.

Masters in conservation/restoration should be able to:

- plan, coordinate and perform practical conservation/restoration work including experimental and developmental work based on scientific methodology.
- plan, coordinate and perform elementary scientific analysis and to be able to interpret and evaluate more advanced analysis performed by others.
- make clear observations and evaluations of individual objects, and of collections, including the study of materials and techniques (identification and dating) as well as ethical and aesthetical issues, in cooperation with art historians, archaeologists and other specialists. Administer and manage the storage, handling and display of artifacts.
- participate as a research assistant for conservation/restoration research projects.

Conservation/Restoration Education: Assessment

Assessments should be carefully designed and varied, including formative as well as summative assessments to allow for early clear feedback to students on their progress in both theory and practice. Continuous assessment should

be used in the teaching of practical work and final examination/assessments should be designed to allow students to demonstrate competence in all areas of the syllabus. External examiners should be used as part of the final examination board and ideally throughout the study programme as curriculum advisers and assessment moderators.

Conservation/Restoration Education: Doctoral Studies

Doctoral studies in conservation/restoration may consist of basic research, applied research, experimental development or a combination. Due to the complexity of the field it may in most cases be a combination, e.g. basic to applied research and applied to experimental development. Apart from deterioration processes and conservation/restoration development, the research subjects may also be in the fields of theory, philosophy and history of conservation.

The doctor in conservation/restoration should be able to continue research and development work within conservation/restoration. The doctorate level in conservation/restoration is the basis from which to recruit researchers and educators to develop future practice and research in conservation/restoration.

Currently there are few autonomous faculties or schools of conservation/restoration within educational institutions which are offering direct access to higher degrees in conservation/restoration. The usual route for students to progress from bachelor studies to post graduate levels (Master, MPhil, PhD, etc.) would be to gain a first degree in the same subject field as their higher degree. Although there now exist many courses in conservation/restoration at Masters s level, many students graduating in conservation/restoration studies have no established route to follow to achieve a doctorate. Even when their research subject is in the field of conservation/restoration the doctorate is often placed in the subject area of the faculty to which the student is registered which may be art history, applied science, etc. Support is needed for students graduating in conservation/restoration studies to register for higher degrees in that discipline.

Unanimously approved by the third General Assembly of ENCoRE on 22. June 2001

References

1. Document of Pavia. Preservation of Cultural Heritage: Towards a European profile of the conservator/restorer. European summit. Pavia 18-22 October 1997.
2. The Document of Vienna. European conference „A framework of competence of conservators-restorers in Europe“ 30 November-1 December 1998.
3. Conservators-Restorers of Cultural Heritage in Europe: Education Centers and Institutes. A Comparative Research. CON.BE.FOR. Associazione Giovanni Secco Suardo, Lurano (BG), Italy, 2000, ISBN 88-8420-001-6.
4. The Bologna Declaration. The European higher education area. Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education. Bologna 19 June 1999.
5. Our Creative Diversity. Report of the UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development. 1996.
6. A list of other subjects identified as being essential to any conservation syllabus can be found in the CON.BE.FOR. questionnaire page 483, Section B Question 24. CON.BE.FOR. Associazione Giovanni Secco Suardo, Lurano (BG), Italy, 2000, ISBN 88-8420-001-6.:

Chemistry

Physics

Biology

Earth sciences (geology, mineralogy, pedology)

History of art, archaeology, ethnology, history, paleography

Philosophy, esthetics

History of art technology

History of conservation/restoration

Exegesis of technical sources

Processes of degradation

Environment (climate, lighting, security, etc...)

Display, storage and handling

The science of conservation materials

Technical and scientific examination and documentation

Condition report evaluation and diagnosis

Methodology of conservation/restoration

Theoretical and ethical principles of conservation/restoration

Management and legal aspects in the field of conservation/restoration

Communication skills

Health and safety regulations

