

**Umeå university
Department of Historical Studies
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**Application for Award for Excellent
Quality in Higher Education 2007,
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Umeå University

Department of
Historical Studies

Application for the Award for Excellent Quality in Higher Education 2007

Introduction

The Department of Historical Studies is an environment where teachers possess a high level of scholarly competence, uniquely coupled with a great interest in and knowledge of pedagogical matters. Our teachers have a good reputation among students and are much sought after as lecturers by other departments and institutions. In addition, they combine teaching with active research and a majority have also secured research grants from external grant providers in strong competition with other researchers.

The department is working systematically to ensure high quality at all levels. We are also involved in a number of national and international cooperation projects, both in teaching and research, which are conducive to high quality. People who have received undergraduate and/or doctoral training at the department have proved to be competitive both in higher education and in other sectors of society.

This application for the Award for Excellent Quality in Higher Education is made chiefly with reference to the department's undergraduate courses. However, our doctoral programme is also important for the undergraduate courses, as several of the teachers on the latter courses also teach and supervise doctoral students, ensuring ongoing and up-to-date links between the research and the undergraduate level.

Organisational structure, infrastructure and quality assurance systems

General information about the department

The Department of Historical Studies comprises two subjects offering both undergraduate and doctoral courses, History and History of Science and Ideas. The department currently has a staff of 46, seven of whom are professors, 13 senior lecturers (of whom 9 are readers), 6 temporarily employed researchers, 4 administrators and 16 employed doctoral students. Two directors of studies, one for each subject, are in charge of the undergraduate courses while a co-ordinator is responsible for the doctoral courses and heads the team of doctoral supervisors. The director of studies for History has overall responsibility for the undergraduate courses and chairs the department's undergraduate studies committee. Administrative support is provided by two study administrators and one administrative co-ordinator.

We have good infrastructural facilities. The University Library offers reading rooms, computer labs and a highly qualified staff, and the library's Research Archives - where undergraduate and doctoral students and our teachers can

work with a wide range of source materials - are of particular importance for our subjects. Our students and researchers are also prolific users of the university's unique Demographical Database and HumLab – a prominent IT centre for the humanities which has received very good evaluations by international assessors.

Courses and programmes

About 600 students a year attend courses at the department. In addition, there are some 40 registered doctoral students. Both subjects offer undergraduate courses up to 80 credits, after completion of which students are eligible to apply for a place on our doctoral programmes. In addition, the department provides courses that are parts of various programmes at Umeå University, the biggest being the Teacher Education Programme. Other major programmes are the Sociology Programme and the Spa Programme. The department is also involved to a lesser extent in several other programmes, both at the Faculty of Arts and the other faculties. A number of shorter courses are also given, usually 5-credit evening or weekend courses. These courses are typically based on a particular teacher's – or a group of teachers' - special area of expertise. Examples from the past five years are courses focused on gender issues, cultural meetings, the history of sexuality, Sami history, environmental history and population history in a wide sense of the term. Since the autumn of 2006, the department has also run a programme of its own, the Arts and Social Sciences Programme, where students, in addition to their main subject (History or History of Science and Ideas), also study social sciences subjects and do a work experience or study period abroad. A master's programme in History with a similar structure will start in the autumn of 2007.

Quality assurance

Our quality assurance work is based on discussions at seminars, symposia and planning meetings among our teachers/researchers and between teachers and students.

Staff meetings led by the Head of Department are held every second week. Experts on various topical issues are often invited to these meetings which serve as a forum for information and discussion about the department's courses, research and co-operation with other institutions of higher education and the community.

Subject meetings and pedagogical meetings alternate with the staff meetings. The subject meetings are a forum for discussions about course and research-related matters. Recently, the Bologna process and its implications for our courses and forms of teaching and examination have been a frequent topic. The pedagogical meetings are more geared to professional competence development, the exchange of experiences (e.g. of pedagogical trials) and general discussions about university pedagogy. Here, too, however, the Bologna process has been a major theme in the past year. Some of the concrete results of the Bologna work are a partnership at the national level involving master's courses (see below), a programme cooperation with Åbo Akademi University and Aarhus University

and the development of a master's programme, as well as a number of courses taught in English aimed at extending our international links. For a couple of days before the start of each semester, planning meetings are held where course evaluations from the previous semester are discussed. New course books and new forms of teaching and/or examination are proposed and the teacher teams plan the courses that will be taught in the coming semester. These meetings are chaired by the directors of study, who will provide a basis for discussion in the form of summaries of course evaluations, information about changes to the university's rules and procedures etc. Students with special needs are also discussed at these meetings.

Module and course evaluations from our students are important components in our quality assurance process. The teachers usually handle evaluations of their own modules and subsequently hand them in to the director of studies concerned, while course evaluations are organised by the directors of study at the end of each term, both in writing (anonymously) and orally. By weighing together module evaluations, course evaluations and comments from the teachers, the department secures a good basis for assessments of how successful our courses have been. Evaluation results are disseminated to the students via our notice board or the department's website.

The Student Union's Humanities Section is an important link between the department and our students and provides us with additional information about how the students feel about our courses.

Various kinds of pedagogical co-operation and development projects are also important components of our quality assurance process. These projects either result from course evaluations submitted by our teachers and students on an ongoing basis, or from a desire to further improve quality in a specific area. All projects are aimed at quality assurance and knowledge development. The following projects, some of which are now completed, have been launched in the past five years:

Gender integration

Research in the department is largely gender-oriented, and in its evaluation of history departments in Sweden, the National Agency for Higher Education noted that this particular competence was reflected in our courses. Thus, this project evolved from a strong interest in gender issues in higher education and a realization that a gender perspective is important in historical social analyses.

The aim of this project, which was funded by the Faculty of Arts, was to develop new ways to integrate gender issues into our undergraduate courses. For example, we used specially developed exercises to reveal how gender issues are dealt with in textbooks and to teach the students how to analyse texts on their own. In addition, focus group discussions were held where students reflected on the exercises and the knowledge they had acquired. The experience gained in the course of this project will help to improve all our undergraduate courses. A final report on the project was presented at a conference on university pedagogy in February 2007.

Broadening enrolment

The department's subjects have a partly national focus, in so far as Swedish, or Nordic, history and culture are major topics in our courses, and our students usually come from a Swedish background. This project is funded by Umeå University and is aimed at increasing the proportion of students from ethnic backgrounds other than Swedish. Contacts have been established with immigrant organisations, whose representatives have visited the department for guided tours of the university, seminars etc. The department has also arranged specially targeted information meetings, lectures and courses, e.g. a seminar in Umeå organised together with the Ethiopian Association. The department was subsequently invited by that association to participate in the planning of an exhibition on Ethiopian-Swedish relations at the Västerbotten Museum. Seminars on broadening enrolment have also been arranged for our staff and students.

Co-operation between schools and the university

The introduction of the new teacher education programme in 2001 resulted in a partly new role for the department in this context. Among other things, we needed to extend our contacts with the local/regional schools.

This project was started in 2003 and is funded jointly by the department and a number of municipalities. It is aimed at strengthening the co-operation between the department and history teachers in the County of Västerbotten and the municipalities of Örnsköldsvik and Arvidsjaur. Some of the expected outcomes of this project are in-service training for history teachers, better compliance between our history teacher education and the needs and demands of the schools and a better knowledge of the school system among those of our teachers who are involved in the training of history teachers. Two seminar meetings on a variety of themes have been held every year, to which our history teacher students have also been invited. Examples of seminar themes are *School-based Studies in the Training of History Teachers*, *Historical Databases, Diaries and Letters in the Teaching of History*, *Historical Computer Games*, *The History Teacher in the Multi-cultural Classroom* and *History as a Core Subject*. The response from both history teachers and students has been very positive. One of the effects of this project is that our school-based periods are now working very well, which of course is very important to our teacher education students. Moreover, the project has generated a great deal of goodwill for the department in the schools and our teachers have gained valuable insights into the role of our subjects in the school system. The project has also received positive attention from the Teacher Education Faculty at Umeå University.

Maintaining quality in times of reduced resources

The resources allocated to undergraduate courses have been severely depleted in the past few years. This development requires new pedagogical approaches.

In the autumn of 2006 the department, working closely with the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Umeå University, launched a project aimed at dealing

with ever more apparent and increasing demands for savings. How can the quality of our courses be maintained in the face of shrinking resources? A seminar and two workshops, one for our teachers and one for our students, have been arranged on this theme where concrete discussions were held about how the resources placed at our disposal can be put to the most efficient, economical and effective use for our students. The project does not have a final date but is supposed to be an integral part of the pedagogical work in the department. Some of the ideas behind the project were presented at the conference on university pedagogy in Umeå in February 2007.

Student involvement

Students have a legal right, and an obligation, to exercise an influence on their studies. We believe that a well-devised, effective system for student influence and participation will have positive effects on our courses. Unfortunately, however, many students show little interest in educational issues.

This project, which was launched in the autumn of 2006, is financed by the Faculty of Arts and the Teacher Education Faculty and is run in co-operation with the Student Union's Humanities Section and Teacher Students' Section. The project period is four semesters. Two groups of students at the Department of Historical Studies will be monitored for three semesters, viz. the students on the non-programme course "History A" and those on the programme course "History 1 for Teacher Students". These groups were selected because the programme students usually have a more long-term perspective on their studies that is often lacking in the non-programme students. The purpose of the project is to increase students' involvement in the pedagogical development process. In addition, the teacher students will gain knowledge of importance for their future professional careers.

Career days

In the past few years, two Career Days have been arranged for our doctoral and undergraduate students. These days are a response to increasing demands for employability and are intended to help our students to make informed choices in their studies and to show them how to present their competences to potential employers. The concept of 'humanistic competence' is central to these efforts and includes not just the subject knowledge but also the general skills that a student will possess after completing courses in history or other subjects in the humanities.

Management, administration and teachers

The directors of studies are in charge of the pedagogical development work in the department. Examples of such work in recent years are the initiation of pedagogical development projects and applications for the funding of such projects (see above). Starting January 2007 the staffing of all undergraduate courses in the department is handled by the director of studies for History, while the co-ordinator is responsible for the staffing of the doctoral courses. As the undergraduate courses are seen as very important by the staff, the directors

of studies play a central role in the department. This in turn results in strong ties between our undergraduate courses, doctoral courses and research.

A student counsellor (20%) helps students who for various reasons have encountered problems with their studies. The student counsellor also monitors student attendance and contacts students who have been absent from compulsory lectures. The counsellor and the directors of studies also act as speaking partners or mediators in cases where a student – teacher problem has arisen that cannot be solved otherwise.

Our administrative staff is very experienced and highly qualified. Student evaluations regularly show that our students consider the study administrators to be professional, knowledgeable and able to provide good advice and support.

Teachers' competence

In its assessments, the National Agency for Higher Education noted that our teachers are a very positive force in our educational environment. Nearly all teaching in the department is done by teachers who have a doctorate, and all permanently and temporarily employed teachers have PhDs or higher degrees. In evaluations from the past five years, the teachers' knowledge, teaching ability and attitude to their students have consistently received marks ranging from 'good' to 'very good'. A recurring comment in these evaluations is that our teachers obviously like to teach and have the ability to enthuse their students. The teachers' high level of competence has also attracted attention outside Umeå University. In the past five years, several of our teachers have received various commendations and awards. In 2004, the team in charge of the History Teacher Education Programme – for which the department is responsible – received a teaching award. The motivation for the award was that the team leader, Dr Martin Hårdstedt, *“has received very good, and sometimes even effusive, praise from both students and colleagues on the team. Martin Hårdstedt played a very important role as co-ordinator during the initial period of programme development. Martin Hårdstedt combines good scholarly knowledge with a great interest in teaching and a willingness to listen to the wishes of his students. His strength lies in his keen interest in his students. He has initiated work in mentor groups, he engages in individual, personal development talks with his students and participates with great enthusiasm in social events arranged by the department for their students, e.g. historical excursions, film nights and popular evening lectures in history. His goal is to create a lasting interest in education in his students.”*

Other awards bestowed on teachers at the department are

2002

- The Royal Skyttean Society's Award to Young Researchers: Senior Lecturer Christer Nordlund.

2003

- The Royal Skyttean Society's Award to Young Researchers: Research Associate Patrik Lantto.

2005

- The Royal Skyttean Society's Award to Young Researchers: Senior Lecturer Åsa Karlsson-Sjögren.
- Pro Futura III Scholarship to particularly promising young researchers: Senior Lecturer Christer Nordlund.
- The Swedish Historical Society's Emil Hildebrand Award for the best article in the society's journal *Historisk Tidskrift* in 2002-2004: Dr Stefan Gelfgren.

2006

- The Royal Skyttean Society's Award to Young Researchers: Senior Lecturer (pro temp) Erland Mårald.
- The Uppsala University Umeå Fund for eminent research in the area of the culture and history of Upper Norrland: Research Associate Patrik Lantto.
- The Övralid Award: Professor Emeritus Ronny Ambjörnsson.

Sought-after competence and co-operation

Another measure of the teachers' competence is the extent to which they are sought after as lecturers outside the department, e.g. in in-service training courses arranged by municipalities and county councils. The department has a long-standing co-operation with the Forum for Living History and has been involved in in-service training initiatives throughout the country, e.g. in Gothenburg, Stockholm, Växjö, Västerås, Sundsvall and Umeå. In these contexts, it is the department's competence in democracy and value issues that course organisers are interested in. One of our most active lecturers is Dr Mohammad Fazlhashemi who, in addition to working closely with the Forum for Living History, is also very much in demand for his expertise in cultural meetings between the Muslim world and the Christian Western world. In the past few years he has participated in courses in university pedagogy at Uppsala University, Linköping University, Stockholm University, Södertörn University College and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Alnarp and Umeå. Senior Lecturer Lena Berggren is another teacher with peak competence in democracy issues. Among her external activities might be mentioned an invitation to lecture at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in January 2007.

Our teachers are also much sought after to give popular lectures and write articles for the general public. The department's 2006 Annual Report lists about 125 different kinds of external activities such as popular lectures, debate articles, reviews in daily papers and participation in TV and radio programmes. One interesting example is Senior Lecturer Martin Hårdstedt who is currently

involved in the production of two historical television documentaries on the Crimean War and the Finnish War for Swedish and Finnish YLE.

These efforts to bring attention to the department's activities are a part of a conscious strategy to increase knowledge about history and the history of science and ideas, and to create an interest in these disciplines.

Another example which shows that the Department of Historical Studies is a highly competent academic environment is that many of the department's teachers and professors have been recruited to other posts and functions within the university. The current Pro-Vice Chancellor of Umeå University with special responsibility for undergraduate education, Åsa Bergenheim, is a professor at our department. She was also previously Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Umeå University.

Our Head of Department, Lena Eskilsson, is also Director of the National Graduate School of Gender Studies. Her duties as director are to a large extent related to teaching. She is responsible for course development and course planning and she also teaches courses, leads seminars and handles contacts with the School's partner universities and colleges. Her duties also include supervision of doctoral students in other faculties and universities. The School currently has 45 doctoral students.

The Head of the Faculty of Arts Office, Peder Alex, and the person responsible for the Faculty's undergraduate courses, Mikael Sjögren, both have doctorates from our department and have also taught there. The newly appointed head of Umeå University Library, Kjell Jonsson, was previously a professor at the department and Professor Anders Brändström is also Director of the Centre for Population Studies.

The department gives courses in four of the faculties at Umeå University, but our teachers are involved in teaching in all five faculties, e.g. Dr Jonas Liliequist and Dr Åsa Andersson, who are temporarily working at the Centre for Women's Studies, Dr Stefan Gelfgren, who is temporarily assigned to HumLab and Maria Görandotter, MA, who is working at the Umeå Institute of Design. Several other teachers might be mentioned in this connection, but the point is to show that our teachers' competences benefit not only our own department but also other units and colleges. The fact that our teachers are so successful in these external efforts has had many positive effects. For example, they have established important external contacts and gained knowledge which the department can benefit from.

One of several reasons for this demand for our teachers' services is probably the great interest among our staff in pedagogical development. Our teachers have solid pedagogical training and a great interest in teaching. Fifty per cent of the teachers assigned to courses this academic year have teacher training and every semester many of our teachers attend pedagogical in-service training courses arranged by the Centre of Teaching and Learning. Our teachers' interest in pedagogical matters is also evidenced by the fact that no less than nine of them presented eight different pedagogical development projects at the Conference on University Pedagogy in Umeå in February 2007.

Several of our teachers have published monographs that are being used as textbooks at other universities. As a result, Professors Kjell Jonsson and Bo Sundin and Senior Lecturer Mohammad Fazlhashemi have received substantial scholarships in the past few years from the Photocopying Fund of the Swedish Union of Authors.

Pedagogical development projects undertaken in cooperation with external partners

Other examples of educational science activities are two projects financed by the Teacher Education Faculty. One of these projects is led by Professor Daniel Lindmark and is focused on the teaching and learning of history in schools. The other is a co-operation project between the Department of Historical Studies, the Centre for Population Studies and HumLab led by Dr Svante Norrhem, the purpose of which is to develop an already well-established partnership into a national centre for digital source material and learning (DIGHIS). In October 2007, an international workshop entitled *Didactic perspectives on Digitized Historical Sources* will be held in Umeå to which guests from the USA, Great Britain, Australia and Sweden have been invited. The project also comprises pilot studies carried out in co-operation with our history teacher students and with the John Bauer Upper Secondary School in Umeå. The purpose of these studies is to try out various methods for using digital source material in the schools. One of the project members also participated in the Swedish History Days in Riga, Latvia in September 2006 where a presentation was given to an audience of history teachers. The presentation resulted in an article in *Allt om Historia* 2007:1.

Another project that is likely to be of major importance to the academic environment in our department, as well as in other Swedish history departments, is a national co-operation project which the Department of Historical Studies is responsible for and the driving force behind. Sixteen universities and university colleges in the country (among others the Universities of Uppsala, Lund, Gothenburg and Linköping) have agreed to offer a joint set of net-based master's courses as of the autumn of 2008. The idea is to create courses of high quality which reflect the peak competences of the universities involved. Umeå University's contribution is a course in Sami history (7,5 university credits) and a course in population studies (7,5 university credits). Similarly, all the other universities will contribute courses based on their respective areas of expertise. In this manner, Swedish and foreign students aiming for a master's degree will be able to select courses given by leading researchers in the field.

International experiences and contacts

The department has many international contacts; a large number of staff participate in international conferences and/or are part of international networks. In the past five years, teachers at the department have participated in the organisation of several major workshops or conferences, most recently the *International Standing Conference for History of Education* (ISCHE) which was held in August 2006 with Professor Daniel Lindmark as chief organiser. This

year will see the above-mentioned conference on digital source materials and in 2008 a conference entitled *Political Women 1500-1900* will be held in Umeå (organized by Dr Åsa Karlsson et al). In addition, Dr Per Wisselgren is involved in the organisation of an international conference in 2008.

The majority of our teachers have worked at other universities. This semester, Dr Patrik Latto is working at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC and Dr Christer Nordlund, is working at SCASS (Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences) in Uppsala. In the autumn of 2007, Lena Berggren will return for two months to Oxford Brooks University where she has previously taught and conducted research. Another of our senior lecturers, Dr Svante Norrhem, has been invited to spend a month at Centre Recherche Historique (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris). His stay there is part of a long-standing partnership under which teachers from our department have given courses and lectures at the centre. In the past few years teachers from the department have also been guest lecturers/researchers at the Universities of Edinburgh, Cambridge, London South Bank, York (Toronto) and South Australia (Adelaide). There are also plans to extend our research collaboration with the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (Department of Geography, Cambridge University). The department was also engaged in a teacher exchange with Helsinki University where we participated in a NORDPLUS course attended by students from all the Nordic countries. Under a partnership agreement with the University of Oulu, teachers from the department have regularly participated in courses given at that university, most recently in 2003 and 2005. A joint master's programme in history with a focus on gender and diversity is also being developed together with gender studies environments at the University of Aarhus and the Åbo Akademi University. The programme will start in the autumn of 2008 and will be based on Nordic experiences of gender and diversity in a wide sense of the terms: class, sexuality, ethnicity, age and disabilities. We are also hoping that a visit to the International Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Amsterdam in November 2006 will result in co-operation at the master studies level.

Scholarly basis

An important aspect of the scholarly basis for the department's activities is our long-standing ambition that all courses should be taught by teachers with a PhD degree. In the past few semesters, this ambition has resulted in basically all teaching, both in History and History of Science and Ideas, having been done by such teachers. Where teachers with lower degrees have been used, they have been doctoral students nearing the end of the PhD programme. Both professors and readers teach at all levels (A to D).

Active researchers in the teaching

All teachers on the undergraduate courses and, needless to say, those on the doctoral programme, are active researchers. The teaching in both History and History of Science and Ideas is largely done by teachers who have received external research grants in competition with other researchers and who divide

their time between teaching/supervision and their own research. While the majority of our external research funds come from the Swedish Research Council, some of our teachers have also obtained grants from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS), The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (FORMAS) and/or other providers of research grants. This means that our teachers can continually bring their own research experiences into their teaching and supervision and that references can be made to current states of the art in historical research. In addition, our teachers can develop methodological exercises based on their own ongoing or recently concluded research projects. Our teachers also combine their undergraduate teaching with teaching/supervision at the doctoral level, which further accentuates the links between research and teaching.

With reference to academic training in our courses, there is a progression in the training the students receive in analytical and scholarly thinking. Semester 1 includes an introduction to source criticism and historical methodology and the following semesters also include source text exercises and/or methodological exercises. During Semester 2, students are also introduced to digital source material and library and archival searches and write a 5-credit essay in both subjects. They are also trained in the analysis of source materials and to apply their analyses to a research context. Teaching them to present their studies in an academically acceptable manner is another important aspect of their skills training. During Semester 3 students write a more comprehensive 10-credit essay which requires more extensive work with source materials. Semesters 2 and 3 also include a number of partly elective in-depth study modules focused on various historical perspectives. Course books, primarily those for Semesters 2 and 3, are chosen in order to illustrate different historical science perspectives and encourage debates among the students about the views of different schools on a historical problem or a historical epoch.

Several of the department's teachers are directly tied to two environments that have received the Swedish Research Council's Strong Research Environment Award. One of these is the Centre for Population Studies, which has largely developed around the historical demographical section of the department, and where several of the researchers teaching in our department are working (Anders Brändström, Anna Lundberg, Lotta Vikström, Stefan Warg and Sofia Kling). The main applicants were Professor Anders Brändström and Professor Tom Ericsson at the Department of Historical Studies, and Professor Peter Sköld. All three professors received their training at the department. Several of our teachers (Åsa Bergenheim, Tom Ericsson, Åsa Andersson, Jonas Liliequist and Anders Brändström) are also part of a team that - as the only humanities/social sciences environment in the country - was awarded a Linneus Grant. Historical demographics and population history have been an integral part of the department's undergraduate and doctoral courses for more than a decade. As a result, there are B-level courses in population history, students can write B, C and D-essays with a focus on population history and two new courses on the history of ageing will start in the autumn of 2007, one at the basic level and one at the advanced level. This is an example of the very clear connection between our undergraduate courses and the research done in the department.

Challenging Gender at Umeå University was appointed a strong gender studies environment in the autumn of 2006. Since gender studies have had a prominent role in the department for many years, several of our teachers have also participated in this environment. Our focus on gender studies is also reflected in the courses we offer and the supervision of essays at various levels.

Forms of teaching and examination

The forms of teaching and examination employed in the department are chosen with a view to supporting the learning of our students. Our students have a relatively large amount of study time between lectures and seminars and for the past few semesters we have been guiding them in how to manage that time effectively.

Forms of teaching

At the A-level, teaching normally consists of lectures, seminars and methodological and/or source text exercises. Students are expected to acquire a large part of the knowledge the course is intended to deliver by reading the course books. Lectures are primarily intended to broaden or deepen their insights. Where a course book provides too general explanations, it is the teacher's duty to deepen and problematise the subject matter in a lecture, and if a course book is regarded by the students as being too limited, teachers will illustrate a historical event, an epoch or a problem from various perspectives. We know that some students expect us to base lectures on the course books, but so far the department has persisted in its view that lectures should be a complement to course books. We believe that this is a very important quality issue. In this manner, we can also 'spike' our A courses with the special competences that our teachers possess.

The purpose of seminars and exercises at the A level is to make the students aware of the importance of adopting an analytical approach to source materials and course books. Students read and compare texts and place them in a historical context so as to develop an understanding of historical change and how it can be analysed in different ways. There are fewer lectures the following two semesters; instead the focus is on seminars. Our teachers strive to get the students to view history from different scientific perspectives and to acquaint them with the views of different schools of historical science. In addition to learning about the past, the students should also acquire analytical skills and a hypothesising attitude. Thus, seminars at the B or C level usually take as a starting point literature that illustrates a historical problem from various different perspectives. The students' task is to detect flaws and strengths in different lines of reasoning and, most importantly, to examine how source materials have been used in scientific studies.

Beside more traditional forms of lectures and seminars, we also use film seminars, role plays and oral presentations. The showing of a film followed by a seminar has turned out to be an effective introduction to discussions about historical perspectives and methods. We use both modern films with a historical theme and films which in themselves are historical documents.

These two types of films are of course used for different purposes. Since our students appreciate the film seminars, we have also developed a 5-credit course entitled *Film och historia (Film and History)* which is being given for the third time this semester.

Role plays are primarily used in connection with exercises bearing on value issues and/or ideologies. Some of the students will argue a point of view from a particular ideological perspective, while others are to respond with arguments deriving from another ideological position. In this way, ideologies will come alive, and our students often state that the role plays have given them a much better understanding of the content and significance of various ideologies. Different kinds of oral presentations are one component of the students' skills training and are chiefly used in the History Teacher Education Programme.

Forms of examination

For several years now, the department has been developing forms of examination that encourage the students to start reading the course books from the very beginning of a module. One method that has proved very successful and is very much appreciated by our students consists in the students being given a large number of exam essay questions on the first day of the course. Answering such a question satisfactorily requires some 4-6 pages of text. The questions are of an overall nature and cannot be answered just by mechanically looking for answers in the course books. Prior to giving the students these assignments, the teachers will explain to them the meaning of such terms as 'describe' or 'give an account of', as opposed to 'analyse', 'discuss' or 'problematise'. Thus, students are expected to be able to give an account of their knowledge of facts, and be able to discuss the significance of various factors, the perspectives of different historical schools etc. On a 5-credit module (5 weeks) students are given about 15-20 such essay questions, 3-4 of which are then selected by the teacher for the final exam.

Another model that we have tried recently and which the students have found very useful are compulsory tutorials which start in the first week of the course. Students are expected to have read a certain number of pages in the course books for each tutorial and to present assignments in small groups at regular intervals, usually once a week. Course evaluations have shown that with this approach, students will start reading the course books at an earlier stage than before. The presentations, and to some extent the ensuing responsibility for the learning of their fellow students, also result in a more reflective reading of the course books.

B, C and D level examinations usually consist of oral seminars combined with written assignments. The written word is central to both History and the History of Science and Ideas and we strive to give our students training in how to write presentations. Academic writing is also an educational exercise and the ability to disseminate findings clearly is emphasised.

Students' learning

Course evaluations from our students (which are available at the department) show an overall high level of appreciation of the teachers' commitment and knowledge. Students often comment on the teachers' positive attitude to their students, a view that was also frequently expressed in a student poll carried out by the Faculty of Arts in 2006. Our students also often state that the demands made of them are high but reasonable.

A positive attitude to our students combined with a great commitment to educational issues and solidly knowledgeable teachers evoke a willingness to learn in our students. The teachers strive to introduce the students to the study of history in many different ways, e.g. through popular seminars, biography cafés, co-operation with HumLab on historical computer games or the study of handwritten texts in the university's Research Archives.

The purpose of our pedagogical development work is to encourage the teaching staff to develop inspirational forms of teaching and examination. The types of examination described above have been quite successful, but the feedback to the students needs to be improved.

Students' study achievements

Student achievements can be measured in many different ways. In evaluations carried out by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Report series 2003:12R and Report series 2005:4R) both History and History of Science and Ideas were commended for the quality of their undergraduate courses. This should mean that students taking our courses will be successful in their studies. Another possible yardstick is the careers pursued by people who have studied at the department. The Umeå University Alumni Database only provides general information about the professional areas our former students are active in, but the fact that our students can be found both in the public and the private sector – and not just in occupations traditionally held by people with a background in history (schools, archives, museums etc.) – seems to suggest that our students are seen as employable. Students who have attended our undergraduate courses are also very competitive nationally when it comes to securing doctoral posts. We also know that at least two of our students have recently received awards for their C-essays.

The teachers who have received the Royal Skyttean Society's Award to Young Researchers are all former students of ours. We believe that this is good testimony to the teaching environment in the department. The same is true of the teacher who in 2005 received an award for the best article in *Historisk Tidskrift* in 2002-2004. In addition, Dr Elisabeth Engberg, who is now head of the research unit of the Demographical Database in Jörn, received an award for her doctoral dissertation from the Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy.

Several people who have studied at our department have received external research grants in stiff competition with others, e.g. (only people who got their PhDs in the past five years are mentioned below) Hanna Winkvist (postdoc, Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research), Lotta Vikström

(postdoc, Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research) Peter Lindström (project funding, Swedish Research Council), Per Axelsson (European Science Foundation, Eurocores BOREAS).

Several others have been employed as senior lecturers or research associates, viz. Carina Rönqvist and Anna Larsson (senior lecturers at the Department of Teacher Education in Swedish and Social Sciences, Umeå University), Lotta Vikström and Stefan Warg (research associates at the Department of Historical Studies, Umeå University), Martin Hårdstedt and Lena Berggren (senior lecturers at the Department of Historical Studies, Umeå University), Jonas Lilieqvist (senior lecturer at the Centre for Women's Studies, Umeå University) and Per Wisselgren (research associate, funded by Swedish Research Council).

Senior lecturer Christer Nordlund is one of seven 'particularly promising young researchers' in the country who have been awarded the Pro Futura Stipend by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, the Standing Conference of Arts and Social Sciences (SCASS) and the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT). He will be spending the first year of the programme at SCASS, the second year at his home university, the third year at a reputable foreign university and the fourth year he will return to his home university. Christer Nordlund received both his undergraduate and doctoral training at our department. Professor Anders Brändström, who is also a former student, has secured a total of SEK 150 million in research grants, chiefly in the past three years.

Our environment's ability to produce competitive historians and historians of science and ideas is also evidenced by the fact that people trained at our department are working at the following universities and university colleges: Luleå University of Technology, Mid-Sweden University, Gävle University College, Linköping University, Karlstad University, the Royal Institute of Technology and Gothenburg University. Others hold executive positions at museums (Östersund and Växjö), research units (Jörn) or positions in research-related organisations or bodies (Swedish National Gender Secretariat in Gothenburg).

Success factors

The strong position of undergraduate training in the department

Undergraduate training has traditionally had a very strong position in our department. The attitude that undergraduate courses are secondary in importance to research has never existed, or been allowed to exist, in the department. Good teachers have always had a high status in the department.

High pedagogical competence and great commitment to teaching

Pedagogical training has been rewarded, even in the employment of temporary substitute teachers, and we have always encouraged our teachers to take pedagogical in-service courses. Over the years, this has resulted in a team of teachers who, in addition to their high level of academic competence, possess great pedagogical skills.

Co-operation within Umeå University

The department is actively seeking co-operation with other departments and faculties. Courses are given together with the Departments of Sociology, Economic History and Teacher Education in Swedish and Social Sciences and we also co-operate with the Centre for Teaching and Learning. This co-operation has resulted in experiences that have helped us to improve our own courses. In addition, many of our teachers are in great demand from other departments and faculties.

Co-operation outside Umeå University

Our teaching-related co-operation includes some 15 schools in northern Sweden and their history teachers, 16 Swedish universities and university colleges, together with whom we will be giving advanced level courses, several Finnish universities and the University of Aarhus in Denmark. Our partnership with the Forum for Living History has resulted in our teachers being much sought after by universities, county councils, municipalities and schools all over Sweden.

Why the above factors lead to excellent results

The Department of Historical Studies is a well-functioning unit, administratively, academically as well as pedagogically, and also an integrated intellectual environment. High levels of pedagogical and academic competence and an environment where undergraduate teaching has a strong position are important success factors. Through a large number of national as well as international contacts both in the field of teaching and research, our department receives new influences and ideas on an ongoing basis. However, capturing these influences and ideas and transforming them into something that will benefit the teaching environment in the department requires a positive attitude among the staff and a teaching team with a great commitment to teaching, both at the undergraduate and the doctoral level. The Department of Historical Studies possesses these qualities.