

RUSKIN SCHOOL OF DRAWING AND FINE ART

INTRODUCTION

The Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art was founded in 1871 by John Ruskin who was, at that time, the first Slade Professor of Fine Art. The original title of the school was 'The Ruskin School of Drawing'; the words 'and Fine Art' were added to the title in 1945.

Before Ruskin founded the Ruskin School of Drawing, there was already an Oxford School of Art in residence in the former Cast Gallery of the University Galleries (subsequently, the Ashmolean Museum) in Beaumont Street. This School was run according to the 'South Kensington' method of teaching. This was a system intended to encourage British artisanship and design by means of a painstaking attention to technical detail and the study of work by selected masters of the field. The system was staged in levels of difficulty and 'appropriateness', life drawing not beginning until stage 11 and use of any artistic medium other than pencil until stage 13. This school was founded in 1865 and membership was a mixture of artisans wishing to improve their technical skills, ladies (chiefly daughters of dons) and a few undergraduates. The head of the School was Alexander Macdonald.

Ruskin disliked the 'South Kensington' system believing that it crushed the imagination. When he accepted the Slade Professorship in 1870 he gradually took over the rooms occupied by the Oxford School of Art and also its pupils. The former Cast Gallery was converted into two rooms for the Ruskin School by the construction of partition walls. These rooms were named the Turner Room (later renamed the Eldon Room) and the Raffaele (*sic*) Room. The students were divided into two Schools: the 'Upper School' or 'Professor's class' included undergraduates and ladies; the 'Lower School' was made up of the working class artisans for whom the 'South Kensington' system had originally been designed. The terms 'Upper' and 'Lower' reflected not only the social position of the pupils but also their location: the 'Upper School' remained in the former Cast Gallery while the 'Lower School' was relocated to the basement of the Ashmolean. Ruskin appointed Alexander Macdonald as the first Ruskin Master of Drawing.

Ruskin also began to replace the 'South Kensington' system with methods of his own. To this end, he gathered together a collection of casts, sketches and paintings which he placed in a series of numbered cabinets in the Turner Room (later renamed the Eldon Room). The intention was that his pupils should study and copy these articles and thus learn the finer technical points of artistic creation. There were three series: the *Educational* and *Reference Series*, which were for the use of the 'Upper School' or 'Professor's class'; and the *Rudimentary Series* devised for the use of the 'Lower School'. Each series was accompanied by a printed catalogue. The *Catalogue of the Educational Series* was first published in 1871, followed in 1872 by the *Catalogue of the Rudimentary Series*, originally entitled *Instructions in the Preliminary Exercises arranged for the Lower Drawing School, Oxford*. The *Catalogue of the Reference Series* followed in 1874. These catalogues were in a constant state of revision until Ruskin resigned from the Slade Professorship for the second time in 1885.

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The Deed of Declaration of Trust of 31 May 1875 (RS 1) describes "a collection of drawings and a sum of £5000 ...given to the University by Mr Ruskin for the endowment of a Master of Drawing" who was to be responsible for the teaching of Fine Art in the University. The Trust Fund was to be placed in the care of the Ruskin Trustees who should comprise "the Vice-Chancellor of the university for the time-being and the Slade Professor of Art for the time-being... by virtue of their offices; and ...four non-official trustees ...the said John Ruskin is Trustee for life". The first four non-official Trustees were HRH Prince Leopold; the Very Reverend HG Liddell, DD, Dean of Christ Church; HW Acland, DM, Regius Professor of Medicine; and the Reverend HO Coxe, MA, Bodley's Librarian. New Trustees were to be chosen by Ruskin during his lifetime and by surviving Trustees after his death, "nomination to be approved by the University in Convocation". The Ruskin Trustees were to furnish annual accounts of the expenditure and income of the Ruskin Fund; have the management, superintendence and control of the Ruskin Collection; appoint the Master of Drawing; and make rules concerning the duties of the Master of Drawing.

When Ruskin died in 1900, the composition of the Board of Ruskin Trustees was extended to encompass membership from a wider range of University bodies. The composition was changed twice more, in 1961 and 1977.

In 1918, the General Board of the Faculties created a Committee for the Fine Arts to oversee the teaching and examination of Fine Art and the History of Art throughout the University. In 1945, this Committee took on some of the responsibilities of the Ruskin Trustees. In 1961 responsibility for the Ruskin School and the Certificate in Fine Art was transferred from the Committee to the reconstituted Ruskin Trustees. This transfer left the Committee for the Fine Arts responsible only for the Diploma in the History of Art and the Laurence Binyon Prize; it was accordingly reconstituted and renamed the Committee for the History of Art (*Oxford University Gazette*, 27 April 1961, pp1067-9). In 1977 a new Committee for the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art was established as the supervisory body for the School and the new degree course of Bachelor of Fine Art which replaced the previous Certificate course.

The Ruskin School remained in the Ashmolean Museum until 1974 when it moved to 74 High Street. The Print-making Workshop was relocated to Bullingdon Road.

The first transfer of material from the School to the Archives took place in 1992 and comprised RS 1 to RS 43. There were subsequent small transfers in 1994 (RS 44 and RS 45), 1995 (RS 46 and RS 47) and 1997 (RS 48 to RS 51 and RS 53 to RS 63). RS 52 was received from an outside source in 1997.

A series of second World War fire watch wages and attendance books relating to the Slade and Ruskin Schools is preserved in the records of the Ashmolean Museum (see AM 28).

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Bibliography

The Ruskin Art Collection, Catalogue of the Rudimentary Series by John Ruskin, edited by Robert Hewison (Lion and Unicorn Press, 1984).

The Ruskin Masters of Drawing

1871-1922	Alexander Macdonald
1922-9	Sidney W Carline
1929-49	Albert D Rutherford
1949-64	Percy F Horton
1964-71	Richard Naish
1971-84	Phillip Morsberger
1985-7	David Tindle
1990-	Stephen Farthing

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- RS 1 Volume labelled ‘The Very Reverend HG Liddell, DD’, containing copies of the following:
 ‘Declaration of Trust of a Collection of drawings and a sum of £5000...given to the University by Mr Ruskin for the endowment of a Master of Drawing’, 31 May 1875; *Catalogue of the Educational Series*, 1874; *Catalogue of the Reference Series*, c1874; and *Instructions in the Preliminary Exercises arranged for the Lower Drawing School, Oxford*, 1873 (in later editions, this pamphlet is re-titled *Catalogue of the Rudimentary Series*).
- RS 2/1-2 Minute books of the Ruskin Trustees. 1875-1977
1. 1875-1975
 2. 1975-1977
- After Ruskin’s death in 1900, the Ruskin Trustees took a larger part in the internal administration and financial management of the Ruskin School. In 1945 a certain amount of responsibility regarding the academic arrangements for the School was transferred to the Committee for Fine Arts.
- RS 3 Bank pass book of the account of the Ruskin Trustees. 1904-1927. The account was closed in 1927 and all monies transferred to the University Chest.
- RS 4 Cash book for the Ruskin School of Drawing. 1929-39
- RS 5 Combined balance sheet and accounts of the Ruskin School, 1930-40, and of the Ruskin School and the Slade School of Fine Art 1940-44.
- Between 1940 and 1944 the Slade School of Drawing and Fine Art was evacuated from London to Oxford and combined its finances with the Ruskin School.
- RS 6 Cash book of the No 1 Account for the Ruskin School of Drawing and the Slade School of Fine Art. 1942-45

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RS 7 Minutes of the Sub-Committee of the Committee for Fine Arts.
1946-60

RS 8 Minutes of the Ruskin Liaison Committee. 1974-77

The Ruskin Liaison Committee was formed to create a link between staff, students and Ruskin Trustees in order to 'discuss the policy of the School concerning such matters as academic requirements, student welfare, examination and course structure'.

RS 9/1-5 Files relating to meetings of the Ruskin Trustees and matters considered by them. 1958-77 *See also RS 52*

1. Correspondence, minutes, reports and memoranda, chiefly concerning the financial and academic future of the Ruskin School; and loan of Ruskin watercolours to an exhibition at Burlington House, London. 1958-59

2. Correspondence, minutes and memoranda, chiefly concerning the financial future of the Ruskin School; campaign against closure of the School; recommendations of Sub-Committee of Fine Arts re new examination in History of Art; and selection of new Trustees. 1958-62

3. Correspondence, reports and memoranda, chiefly concerning job description and election of new Master of Drawing; and financial future or possible closure of the Ruskin School. 1961-63

4. Correspondence, reports and minutes, chiefly concerning the future academic development of and financial arrangements for the Ruskin School; the need for expansion of the Ruskin School; handover of Mastership from Naish to Morsberger, 1971; Committee of Enquiry into the Ashmolean Museum; examiners' reports; and loans by, or exhibition and deposit of articles in, the Ruskin School. 1964-71

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- RS 9/1-5 Files relating to meetings of the Ruskin Trustees and matters considered by them. 1958-77 *contd.*
5. Correspondence, reports, memoranda and minutes, chiefly concerning the Committee to Review the Future of the Ruskin School; draft decrees for the degree of Bachelor of Fine Art, 1977; staff salaries; and establishment of the Liaison Committee. 1971-77
- RS 10/1-3 Files chiefly relating to meetings of the Committee for Fine Arts and matters considered by it. 1941-48, 1951-61
1. Correspondence minutes and memoranda, chiefly concerning drafts of a syllabus for the Certificate in Fine Art; draft decree recognising the Ruskin School as an Institution approved for the purpose of higher study; Hope Collection; and election of Percy Horton as Ruskin Master of Drawing. 1941-48
2. Correspondence, minutes, memoranda and reports, chiefly concerning Report for Congregation on the revival of the Diploma in History of Art; matters raised by staff and students; the future academic development of the Ruskin School and possibility of removing it from the Ashmolean Museum; and the Dr Vaughan Cornish Bequest. 1951-58
3. Minutes and memoranda, chiefly concerning the future responsibilities of the Ruskin School; the possible re-establishment of the Committee for Fine Arts; and the teaching and examination of History of Art. 1959-61
- RS 11/1-2 Files relating to financial matters. 1954-69
1. Accounts sheets and projected expenditure sheets; and circulars giving information concerning financial status of the Ruskin School. 1951-64
2. Circulars and correspondence, chiefly concerning accounting procedures; expenditure estimates; and accounts sheets submitted to the University Chest. 1964-69

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- RS 12 File relating to the United States Forces Veterans Scheme containing correspondence concerning general course administration and individual students; two sets of application forms, one arranged chronologically according to year of study, the other arranged in alphabetical order according to student name; and vouchers for each year of study. 1952-63
- Between 1952 and 1963 the Ruskin School participated in a scheme devised by the United States Government after the Korean War to allow veterans of the United States Forces an opportunity to go on to higher education in Britain. Courses were paid for with vouchers from the United States Government.
- RS 12A Application documents in the holograph of RB Kitaj. 1956.
- Kitaj applied to study at the Ruskin School in 1956 under the United States Forces Veterans Scheme. These documents were extracted from RS 12 (before transfer to University Archives).
- RS 13/1-3 *Catalogues of the Educational and Rudimentary Series.* 1874, 1878
1. Printed copy of the *Catalogue of the Educational Series.* 1874 (duplicate of the copy included in RS 1)
 2. A version of the revised *Catalogue of the Educational Series* in the holograph of Dr DP Chase, Principal of St Mary Hall. 1878
 3. A version of the revised *Catalogue of the Rudimentary Series* in the holograph of Dr DP Chase, Principal of St Mary Hall. 1878
- Dr Chase was an amanuensis of Ruskin.
- RS 14 Documents relating to a petition made by the Ruskin Trustees to the Chancery Division of the High Court to ascertain ownership of certain of the casts, drawings and paintings placed in the School by Ruskin during his tenure of the Slade Professorship and included by him in either the *Educational*, *Reference* or *Rudimentary Series.* 1900-1903 and 1913, comprising the statement made by Alexander Macdonald concerning his working relationship with Ruskin and his part in the early development of the Ruskin School, 1900, with covering letter addressed to Professor Thompson, 1913;

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- RS 14 Documents relating to a petition made by the Ruskin School to the Chancery Division of the High Court. 1900-3, 1913 *contd*
- three exercise books* containing an inventory of the objets d'art included by Ruskin in the three teaching series and a statement of Ruskin's behaviour toward the Ruskin School after his resignation of the Slade Professorship, compiled by TW Jackson, one of the Ruskin Trustees; three letters by TW Jackson, referring to the contents of these books and the statement made by Macdonald; letters from the solicitors Morrell, Son and Peel; and copy of the Order made by the Chancery Division of the High Court on 17 March 1903.
- * There were originally four exercise books, each labelled with a letter. The book labelled 'A' lists the contents of the Ruskin Art Collection, held in the Ashmolean Museum; 'B' contains Jackson's statement; 'G' contains an inventory and statement regarding the Guild of St George, founded by Ruskin in Sheffield; and 'L' (which is now missing) contained extracts from correspondence with Ruskin, referred to in the previous statements.
- RS 15 Miscellaneous documents relating to the early years of the Ruskin School, 1873-1928, comprising manuscript copy of extract of the Deed of Trust and of the decrees relating to the foundation of the School, 1873; Hebdomadal Council notices concerning the Report of the Keeper of the University Galleries, 1907; letter from Macdonald concerning student numbers, 1907; memoranda and related correspondence concerning rooms allocated to the Hope Collection in the Ashmolean Museum, 1921; printed appeal by Carline for more accommodation for the Ruskin School, 1923; and correspondence with Carline concerning the holdings of the Ruskin School, 1928.
- RS 16 Correspondence between Carline and Rutherstone chiefly concerning the purchase of the goodwill and equipment of the Oxford School of Drawing, Painting and Design, 49 Cornmarket, Oxford, by Carline from Rutherstone, 1922; correspondence concerning exhibition of prints from Turner's *Liber Studiorum*; and correspondence between the Keeper of the Department of Fine Art, Ashmolean Museum and Rutherstone. 1929-30

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- RS 17 General correspondence file of Albert Rutherstone, Ruskin Master (1929-49), chiefly concerning the Ruskin Trustees; receipt of gifts and bequests to Ruskin School (including Sir HW Acland Bequest, 1938); status of Charles Bell as a Ruskin Trustee; emergency war-time storage of valuables at Northwick Park; and loans and exhibitions. 1929-46
- RS 18 Typescript draft and proof copies of the new prospectus for the course leading to the Certificate in Fine Art, with draft contracts of employment for life models for the Ruskin School. 1945
- RS 19/1-9 General correspondence files of Percy Horton, Ruskin Master (1949-64). 1949-64
1. Correspondence with the Delegacy for Extra-Mural Studies concerning the possibility of Horton giving a series of extension lectures in Art Appreciation. 1952-53
 2. Letter from Maurice de Sausmarez encouraging students of the Ruskin School to participate in the Leeds University Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture. 29 October 1952 (with a print, c19th century, entitled 'Grammar School at New College, Oxford')
 3. Correspondence with Keeper of Western Art and the Director of the Ashmolean Museum chiefly concerning the Art Society Annual Exhibition; and action taken following the publication of libellous articles in *Isis* about Horton. 1951-55
 4. Draft, proof and final copy of memorandum 'authorised by the Ruskin Trustees to be circulated to members of Congregation for consideration with Council's decision in the matter of the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art' concerning the future of the Ruskin School. 1958
 5. Correspondence with University Chest concerning School finances, annual accounts and re-decoration charges and estimates; with Proctors concerning student discipline and action against libellous article in *Isis*; with University Registry concerning staff employment regulations and National Insurance payments. 1948-59

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- RS 19/1-9 General correspondence files of Percy Horton, Ruskin Master (1949-64). 1949-64 *contd*
6. Proof and final copy of 'Observations by the Ruskin Master on Council's Letter of 9 June 1959'; and open letter to the Registrar from the Secretary of the Ruskin Trustees in answer to Hebdomadal Council's decision to advise against the closure of the Ruskin School, 1960.
7. Correspondence chiefly concerning the campaign on behalf of the Ruskin School to prevent Professor Wind's plans for the future of the School from taking effect, including letters of support from artists and art historians offering to join the campaign (signatories to the series of open letters written to *The Times* include Edward Bawden, Sir Kenneth Clark, Jacob Epstein, Henry Moore, John Piper, John Rothenstein, Carel Weight and Carl Winter); election of new Ruskin Trustee after the death of AH Smith; and enquiries to and answers from other universities and art schools concerning History of Art and Architecture courses. 1959-60
8. Review of teaching of Art History in the Ruskin School together with a collection of syllabuses from other universities and art schools; and review of size and efficiency of the Committee for Fine Arts. 1960
9. Catalogue of *Retrospective exhibition of Paintings and Drawings by Percy Horton on his retirement*, 1964; with typescript draft of undated obituary and curriculum vitae of Horton.
- RS 20 Correspondence between the University Registry and the Ruskin Master, chiefly concerning the status of the Ruskin School Certificate in Fine Art as a recognised teaching qualification; staff salaries and medical checks for TB; and student fees. 1963-68
- RS 21 Correspondence between Naish and Morsberger chiefly concerning plans for a sabbatical year to be spent at the Ruskin School by Morsberger, 1967-68, and domestic and employment details arising during the period before Morsberger took up the post of Ruskin Master, 1970; and applications, references and shortlist of candidates for the post of Ruskin Master, 1970.

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- RS 22 *Future of the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art.* Supplement to the *Oxford University Gazette* volume civ. August 1974
- RS 23 Replies to invitations to the private view of Phillip Morsberger's one-man show at the Ruskin School on 23 February 1974.
- RS 24 Letters and memoranda concerning the course structure and objectives at the Ruskin School submitted to Phillip Morsberger by members of the School staff; with list of collections of Americana in Oxford Libraries. c1976
- RS 25 *Report of the Committee to Review the Future of the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art.* Supplement to the *Oxford University Gazette* volume cvii. December 1976
- RS 26/1-3 General correspondence of Phillip Morsberger, Ruskin Master (1971-1984). 1976-80
1. Correspondence chiefly concerning support for and details of the new degree of Bachelor of Fine Art; the Ruskin Trustees; the Ruskin Liaison Committee; the Committee of the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art; and staff salary scales. 1976-77
 2. Staff file, chiefly containing minutes of staff meetings; staff rota lists; and staff proposals concerning the future academic direction of the Ruskin School. 1976-77
 3. Draft decrees and letters of support from Heads of Houses (*ie* Oxford Colleges) concerning the new degree of Bachelor of Fine Art. 1980
- RS 27 *Notes on the Technique of Painting* by Allan Gwynne-Jones (a pamphlet written by a member of the Ruskin staff). c1959
- RS 28 Fragments of inventory of objets d'art with instructions concerning the manufacture and purchase of furniture to house the three teaching series for the Ruskin School. In holograph of John Ruskin. c1869-72

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- RS 29 Holograph letter from John Ruskin to his assistant, Crawley, from Brantwood, giving instructions for the transportation of some Turner drawings from Oxford to Huish Fine Art Galleries, London for an exhibition. 12 February 1878
- RS 30 Fragment in holograph of John Ruskin, of passage entitled 'The Scheme of University Education for a Noble Florentine Youth'. c1870-80
- RS 31 Letter from John Ruskin to Alexander Macdonald, sent from Brantwood, giving details of lessons to be given on geometric constructs and perspective, 1884; with contemporary description of the construction of geometric proportions of a pillar at St Aubin de Guérande and list of Ruskin's three objectives for the art student (all in the holograph of Ruskin).
- RS 32 Ephemera relating to John Ruskin comprising Japanese postcard, c1900-1920; cigar packet for 'John Ruskin' cigars; and printed notice offering an 81st birthday greeting to John Ruskin on behalf of Oxford University, 1899.
- RS 33 Prospectuses for the Ruskin School. 1920-29, 1942-45, 1949-55, 1960-61, 1968-69, 1972-73, 1975-81, 1992-93.
- RS 34 Christmas and greetings cards designed by Albert Rutherford. c1912-1940
- RS 35/1-3 Prints and engravings by Ruskin School students. 1930-39
1. 1930-32
 2. 1932-36
 3. 1937-39
- RS 36 Press cuttings relating to the Ruskin School . 1954-83
- RS 37 Ruskin School Dance: correspondence with University Proctors; invoices and receipts; and invitation lists for the Dance at the Randolph Hotel. 1934-38, 1946, 1948, 1952.

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- RS 38 List of candidates for the Ruskin School Anatomy examinations giving results and some comments by examiners. 1947-48
- RS 39 Photograph of Percy Horton with Henry Moore. c1964-69
- RS 40 Account book of the Ruskin School Sketch Club. 1965-69
- RS 41 *The Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art under Sidney Carline (Master 1922-29) and his staff.* Catalogue of the exhibition held from 9 July to 28 August 1977.
- RS 42 Posters advertising the services of the Ruskin School. 1951-52, 1963, 1972-73 (summer Print Workshop 1973), 1975, 1978-79.
- RS 43 Completed certificates for the Certificate in Fine Art and the National Diploma in Design. 1959-66
- RS 44 Correspondence concerning the Centenary Appeal of the Ruskin School (1971). 1970-71
- RS 45 Correspondence and other papers concerning the establishment of and appeals for donations toward the Geoffrey Rhoades Commemoration Fund. 1980-86
- RS 46 *The Laboratory at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art: A Feasibility Report.* 1995
- RS 47 Letter from the Ruskin Master (Sydney Carline) and his assistants (Gilbert Spencer, Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash, Richard Carline and Albert Rutherstone) to the Secretary of the Oxford Arts Club relating to their withdrawal from a proposed exhibition, 1925; with related undated (?1970s) note from Richard Carline to Philip Morsberger.
- RS 48 Correspondence with and concerning the Ashmolean Museum and the use of the Ruskin Master's room there. 1968-74.

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- RS 49 Correspondence relating to the disposal of the cabinets provided by John Ruskin for the housing of his art collection at the School. 1970-1
- RS 50 Plans of the Ashmolean Museum, showing areas used by the Ruskin School, 1968 and 1970; with letter from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation referring to a plan (not present) of a mezzanine proposal for the School, 1973. 1968-73
- RS 51 Papers relating to the School's use of the Sunken Court at the Ashmolean Museum. 1974
- RS 52 Papers of Sir William Hayter, Warden of New College, as Chairman of the Ruskin Trustees. 1959-72
- RS 53/1-3 Minutes of the Departmental Committee (to 1977, 'staff meetings'). 1976-84.
1. 1976-80
 2. 1980-2
 3. 1982-4
- RS 54 Minutes of the School Consultative Committee (to 1977, the 'School Committee'). 1976-84
- RS 55 Agenda papers, with related correspondence, of the Standing Committee of the Committee for the Ruskin School. 1978-85
- RS 56 Lists of students with summaries of fees paid. 1949-72
- RS 57 Pass lists for the Certificate in Fine Art. 1947-79
- RS 58 Pass lists, examiners' reports, correspondence and other papers relating to examinations for the Diploma in Design and Certificate in Fine Art, and in the History of Art and History of European Painting. 1952-67 and 1970-9

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- RS 59 Class and tutorial lists. 1962-79
- RS 60 Proposed design for a Ruskin School of Drawing scarf. nd (c1975)
- RS 61 Correspondence relating to Percy Horton, especially to Philip Morsberger's notice of him for the *Dictionary of National Biography*. 1978
- RS 62 Photograph of a portrait of John Ruskin with related correspondence. 1982
- RS 63 Memorandum, with related correspondence, on the procedure for the maintenance of academic standards at the School, prepared for the Departmental Committee. 1988