Lord Kerslake visits SPEIR
The Policy in Practice seminars are presented by distinguished speakers, providing students and staff with the opportunity to learn about the nature of policy making directly from the policy making community. This term the Policy in Practice seminar hosted special guest The Rt. Hon. Lord Kerslake on Monday, 16 November.

Lord Kerslake was Head of the Civil Service from January 2012 to September 2014. He was also Permanent Secretary for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 1 November 2010. In 2015, he was made a life peer taking the title Baron Kerslake, of Endcliffe in the City of Sheffield. His extraordinary experience covered the full range of policy making and includes Local Government, Central Government, agencies and non-departmental organisations and now as member of the House of Lords.

Lord Kerslake’s talk touched on the main challenges of effective policy-making. He focused on the tension between policy design, done by a very small and decreasing number of people, and implementation. He used a range of practical examples from his own experiences in local Government and Central Government but he also drew on knowledge from his more recent involvements in the House of Lords. Lord Kerslake highlighted how the key traditional policy tools of legislation, targets and resources are becoming less available to policy makers in the UK. A key challenge would be how to ensure effective implementation in a different way.

Lord Kerslake also emphasised the need to move quickly towards policy making across departments: the centralised and departmental-led policy approach works ineffectively when policies would need to deal with the complexity of the social policy issues we face today: a move towards policies that works for social groups rather than for areas would be beneficial in this respect.

Housing seminar series
The Department runs a termly housing seminar series, which brings together researchers from across the university with a shared interest in housing and urban development. This term, presenters included Dr Flora Samuel from the School of Architecture who gave a talk on The value of architects in housing; Chris Foye, from the School of Real Estate and Planning, who presented research on The status and stigma of housing tenure, and Dr Andi Nygaard, from the Department of Economics, with a talk on Geology, history and urban development.

If you are interested in presenting your work as part of this series, or would like to be added to the mailing list, please contact Dr Vivien Burrows.
Study China Programme
By Megan Sullivan

On the 1st August 2015, I got on a plane to go to Shanghai, China. This was to participate in the ‘Study China Programme’. For 3 weeks I attended Fudan University where I was taught Mandarin. It is an absolutely fantastic language and one I hope to keep up. There were about 50 students in total and they are some of the most amazing people I have ever met. Once there, we quickly got to know each other before heading out to see what sites Shanghai had to offer. Countless hand gestures later, we managed to get to the metro where our escapades could begin. In addition to our Mandarin lectures, we had other classes such as calligraphy and Kung Fu. A highlight of the trip was getting to experience the intense atmosphere of the ‘fake goods’ market. Being a massive shopaholic, I was in heaven. So, there I stood, shouting the limited haggling phrases I knew in Chinese, and buying more stuff than could realistically fit in my suitcase to go back home. To the rest of the group’s amusement, one sales woman decided to chase me when I refused to buy her stuff. Good times! All in all, a well worthwhile trip. Even better, it is government funded, so I would definitely recommend others applying!

For more about what I did, feel free to check out my blog that I wrote whilst out there: http://megmeetschina.wordpress.com

School Trip to the Bank of England
Posted on Introductory Macroeconomics Blog on November 3, 2015
By James Reade

Yesterday a group of us from the economics department went to the Bank of England in London. We spent time in the Bank of England Museum before having a talk about the history of the museum, bank notes and gold. The museum is a number of things, but perhaps most obviously it’s a museum of economics; in the main hall there’s a number of displays talking about the monetary system; definitions of inflation, for example: It’s hugely important to have quick and easy definitions for terms like inflation, money, and quantitative easing. If nothing else, you can at least prove your friends wrong when they make grand assertions about economic matters.

What is an economic shock? One exhibit had genuine BBC news footage from throughout recent decades from events such as the oil crises in the 1970s, the stock market crash of 1987 and the UK’s exit from ERM in 1992 – all huge events that had considerable impacts on wider economic activity.

Perhaps the most exciting exhibit is a bar of gold – value close on £300,000! As you can see, high security; gold-selfie

The talk we had talked through the history of a state bank and central bank and how it developed, along with the development of bank notes from bits of paper to the soon-to-be plastic £5, £10, £20 and £50 notes we now use. All in all, a fascinating museum, educational and good fun at the same time. If you are in London and within easy reach of the Bank, I’d highly recommend getting along – it’s free!

Keep in touch...
Facebook: Department of Economics at University of Reading
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Website: www.reading.ac.uk/economics

Conversations Sessions
The Economics Conversations sessions are open opportunities for students and staff to discuss economic matters of current interest. They are introduced by someone, staff or students, who set an initial agenda. Then the discussion wonders where it might. In the first few weeks of the Autumn term 2015 the topics have been Corbynomics – the economic policies of the new labour party leadership – The Brazilian Economy (in a student led session), the 2015 UK Government Spending Review, Chinese FDI into the UK, the Greek Economic Crisis, and the European Migration Crisis. Throughout we try to focus discussion on the economic aspects of these matters, but people often have a wider set of perspectives they would like considered, and then the question becomes, ‘But is it Economics?’

Returning Placement Students
A number of students were out on placements last year and have now returned for their final year of academic study. Quite a contrast! We are happy to welcome back all those students returning from their one year placements, including Robert Benson and Abigail Bryce from UBS, Karolina Berezovskaja from Fujitsu, Philip Callen from Bottomline Technologies, Jack Evans from IBM, James Harris from the ONS, Jayson Kelly from The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Harry Martin from Disney, Saad Mohammad Monaf from PwC, Poppy Small from Grant Thornton and Louise-Jayne Watts from the Home Office. This group has been especially helpful in advising placement applicants for 2016-2015, with their experience of the application, interview, and working process invaluable. This has been especially useful for those interested in the Government Economic Service, where we have a high number of applicants this year. Students continue to apply across a wide range of opportunities and we look forward to hearing of their success in due course.

Have your say:
Looking for writing experience? Want to share something you’ve achieved? Write for us!
Contact: k.j.foley@reading.ac.uk

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