Annual Review
2012–2013
Contents

4  A year in the life of SPEIR
6  Teaching matters
8  Student achievements and opportunities
20 Research, policy and enterprise activities
26 Conferences, seminars and public engagement
A year in the life of SPEIR

Welcome to the third edition of the School’s Annual Review in which we highlight the activities of both students and staff over the last year. The work of the School this year has been guided by three priorities: first, degree programme enhancements in order to respond to the changing needs of our students; second, research and, notably, preparation for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in which the quality of all university research is externally judged on a periodic basis; third, engagement with the University’s internationalisation agenda. Key aspects of each are discussed in the Review, but concentrating particularly on the activities of our students. As the Head of School, it has been a particular pleasure to see how the students have built on and developed, through their own initiatives, the core teaching of the School and how their careers subsequently develop.

A highlight of the year was the annual Peter Campbell Lecture, given by Lord O’Donnell, until recently the Cabinet Secretary. In the past year, SPEIR staff have visited a number of overseas institutions with the aim of developing teaching and research partnerships. These included universities in the Netherlands, India, Vietnam, Russia, Azerbaijan, China and Lithuania.

Special mention should be made of Politics Teaching Fellow, Dr Brian Feltham, who was one of six people across the University to win a University Award for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning. In addition, Dr Dominik Zaum was promoted to a Professorship and Drs Christina Hellmich, Andi Nygaard and Nigar Hashimzade for her help as Head of the Economics Department. Nigar has moved on to the University of Durham. With great regret, we also have to report the death of Professor Peter Hart who joined the Economics Department in 1967 and became Emeritus on his retirement in 1983. Peter still regularly contributed to the Department and attended seminars until very recently.

Finally, in addition to this annual publication, the School has also introduced regular newsletters for both Departments to keep students and alumni up-to-date on our activities. These can be found on the School and Department web pages and have been written jointly by staff and students.

Professor Geoffrey Meen OBE
Head, School of Politics, Economics and International Relations

‘As the Head of School, it has been a particular pleasure to see how the students have built on and developed, through their own initiatives, the core teaching of the School and how their careers subsequently develop.’

Alice Chigumira was awarded an honorary Masters degree by the Open University in February. Politics student Alice Chigumira was awarded an honorary Masters degree by the Open University and former Economics graduate, Harris Georgiadis was appointed as the new Finance Minister in Cyprus. In the Review some of our students write about their experiences on placements and internships during the year, in both the public and private sectors, ranging from periods of one week to a year. In total, over 30 students undertook placements this year. Our annual Graduation Day prize giving, held in the beautiful grounds of the Museum of English Rural Life on a glorious summer’s day, celebrated the academic successes of our students.

On the research front, the School has increasingly recognised the need to concentrate resources on areas of research strength. The School also encourages interdisciplinary research with other Schools in the University in order to establish groupings of critical mass. In Economics, for example, increasing resources are being devoted to research in international development, where a strong core can interact with researchers from Human Geography and the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development. This has led to the formation of a new Centre for Developing Economies and Emerging Markets. On-going research in Economics is also taking place into terrorism, linking up with research strengths in related areas in Politics. The Politics Department is currently setting up two new research centres, both of which are interdisciplinary in nature. The first, Reading Ethics and Political Philosophy, is co-directed by Catrinona McKinnon from Politics and David Owens from Philosophy. the second, Ways of War is directed by Patrick Porter. Much of our research (and teaching) in the School has an applied emphasis, although drawing on strong theoretical foundations. This has led to an emphasis on public policy, notably through our cross-School Masters in Public Policy, which accepted its first students in 2012/13. The degree includes a Policy in Practice seminar series, where senior civil servants and politicians address students and staff.

A highlight of the year was the annual Peter Campbell Lecture, given by Lord O’Donnell, until recently the Cabinet Secretary. In the past year, SPEIR staff have visited a number of overseas institutions with the aim of developing teaching and research partnerships. These included universities in the Netherlands, India, Vietnam, Russia, Azerbaijan, China and Lithuania. Special mention should be made of Politics Teaching Fellow, Dr Brian Feltham, who was one of six people across the University to win a University Award for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning. In addition, Dr Dominik Zaum was promoted to a Professorship and Drs Christina Hellmich, Andi Nygaard and Geoff Sloan to Associate Professorships. We welcome a number of new members of staff; Drs Jonathan Boyd, Adam Humphreys and Tim Vlandas in Politics and Aynur Alptekin, Giovanni Razzu and James Read in Economics. Jen Scheppers has been appointed as PA to the Head of School. Amy Harris and Sam Rawlings particularly receive our best wishes as they embark on maternity leave. I would like to express my thanks to Nigar Hashimzade for her help as Head of the Economics Department. Nigar has moved on to the University of Durham. With great regret, we also have to report the death of Professor Peter Hart who joined the Economics Department in 1967 and became Emeritus on his retirement in 1983. Peter still regularly contributed to the Department and attended seminars until very recently.

Finally, in addition to this annual publication, the School has also introduced regular newsletters for both Departments to keep students and alumni up-to-date on our activities. These can be found on the School and Department web pages and have been written jointly by staff and students.

Professor Geoffrey Meen OBE
Head, School of Politics, Economics and International Relations

‘As the Head of School, it has been a particular pleasure to see how the students have built on and developed, through their own initiatives, the core teaching of the School and how their careers subsequently develop.’
Teaching Internationalisation matters

In the past year, with the support of Reading International Office and the Pro-Vice Chancellor for International and External Engagement, Professor Steve Mithen, SPEIR staff visited a number of overseas institutions with the aim of developing teaching and research partnerships. These included universities in the Netherlands, India, Vietnam, Russia, Azerbaijan and Lithuania. Many key challenges facing society in general and higher education in particular are global in scale and require not only learning about such challenges from a UK perspective, but also working with and learning from academics and students (future business and national leaders) overseas. While overseas students are an important source of growth for the School and the University, it is also clear that increasingly UK students, as much as international students, stand to gain from attaining a global perspective on the tools and application of politics, economics, and international relations.

A particular example of SPEIR internationalization activity in 2013 was a visit by academics to a number of institutions in China and Taiwan with the aim of developing collaborative teaching and research. Related to this, Dr Burke and Dr Nygaard are negotiating a dual-degree BSc Business Economics programme with Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology (NUIST). This programme will enable Chinese students to commence a University of Reading degree while on campus in Nanjing, before transferring to Reading to finalise the degree. UoR Economics modules will be taught and delivered in Nanjing. Expanding the undergraduate student body will offer ample opportunity for students to interact and put their economics learning to use discussing different perspectives on economic outcomes, policies and development goals.

This will also offer the opportunity for Reading based students to travel to China to complete parts of their studies in a fascinating political and economic context and gain first hand experience of the opportunities, but also some of the social and cultural costs, that global economic integration offers.

New 2 year MA with Moscow

From autumn 2013, students can sign up for a two-year MA with the prestigious Russian diplomats’ university MGIMO. For students joining this programme in Reading, this means taking an MA International Security Studies, followed by a year in Moscow with a large choice of International Relations modules taught in English and a dissertation. This MA can also be terminated after one year which would lead simply to an MA International Security Studies.

For more information

Contact Prof Heuser at d.b.g.heuser@reading.ac.uk

Brian Feltham: outstanding contributions to teaching and learning 2012-13

In 2013, Politics Teaching Fellow Dr Brian Feltham was one of six people across the University to win an individual University Award for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching and Learning. These awards recognise individuals who have made significant, ongoing contributions to teaching and learning.

Brian reflected on his teaching in an interview for the Summer Term edition of Politics News, the Department’s student newsletter.

‘For the students, a university education is an opportunity not only to gain knowledge but also to broaden their perspectives and to deepen their understanding of their own views. In discussing ideas in class, students get a chance not only to see how other people think differently about the same issues, but also to critically reflect on their own opinions and ideas and thereby to sharpen them up.

‘Good teaching can give people a chance to develop and extend their critical faculties for their own sake; or, perhaps, for the sake of a reflective life engaged with the world, its people and their concerns.’

Typically, through study, there are subtle refinements as students get better at forming, explaining and defending their views. Often this will involve a process of re-framing and subtly revising a view to make it a better, more coherent version of itself. So, for instance, someone who believes that humanitarian intervention is sometimes justified may come to a clearer view about when and why that might be the case, and also to have a better sense of the range of possible forms of intervention. And, of course, one doesn’t have to make up one’s mind all at once. Opinions are easy to come by for some; but critically considered reflective judgements take time to arrive at.

Out of all of this students develop transferable skills that will be useful in the employment market. They may also develop specific expertise relevant to specific careers. But perhaps most strikingly, good teaching can give people a chance to develop and extend their critical faculties for their own sake; or, perhaps, for the sake of a reflective life engaged with the world, its people and their concerns. The teacher isn’t necessary to such development, but can be a catalyst and a facilitator.’

Dr Burke and Dr Nygaard are negotiating a dual-degree BSc Business Economics programme with Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology (NUIST).
Student achievements and opportunities

We enjoy celebrating the achievements of our students and over the next few pages you can read about some of the fantastic work our students are engaged in, both academically and extracurricular. Sadly it is not possible to include all of the great successes of our students but we have provided a snapshot of some of the great things our students have been up to this year.

**Awards**

Our graduation ceremony in July of this year saw our high achieving students receiving awards for their excellent performance over the years. Jack Callaghan (BSc Economics), Flora Harley (BSc Economics and Econometrics), Ian McGuiness (BA Business Economics), Adam Patrick (BA Economics) all won the ‘Prize for Academic Excellence’. Samantha Crawley (BSc Economics), Chris Daly (BSc Economics) and Will Stevens (BA Business Economics) won the ‘Prize for Outstanding Contribution to the Department’. Jamie Milton (BA Politics and International Relations), Lloyd Bartrhop (BA Politics and International Relations), Thomas Kennedy (BA Politics and International Relations), Josh Wells (BA Politics and International Relations) and Yanos Soubieski (BA Politics and International Relations) each won the ‘Peter Campbell Prize for Overall Excellence’. Liam Carter (BA War Peace and International Relations) won the ‘Peter Campbell Prize for achieving the joint highest mark for a dissertation’. Sam Flint (BA Politics and International Relations) won the Politics ‘Head of Department Top Finalist’ award and Alexandra Frostick won the Economics ‘Head of Department Prize for Top Finalist’ award. Particular mention should go to students who received more than one award. Coralie Frost (BA Politics and International Relations) won both the ‘Peter Campbell Prize for Overall Excellence’ and the ‘Prize for Outstanding Contribution to the Department’ and Conor Monk (BA War Peace and International Relations) took home no less than three prizes including the ‘Peter Campbell Prize for Overall Excellence’, the ‘Prize for Outstanding Contribution to the Department’ and the ‘Peter Campbell Prize for achieving the joint highest mark for a dissertation.’

**Model United Nations**

‘Model United Nations (also Model UN or MUN) is an academic simulation of the United Nations. In the Model UN, students take on roles as diplomats and participate in a simulated session of an intergovernmental organization (IGO). Participants research a country, take on roles as diplomats, investigate international issues, debate, deliberate, consult, and then develop solutions to world problems.’

The new MUN module has been getting students into the minds and shoes of diplomats, and encouraging them to think differently about international diplomacy as representatives of other countries. Lectures have covered the United Nations history and the challenges it faces.

In February, MUN Module students attended their first international conference at KU Leuven, Belgium. The Reading University delegation (pictured) was made up of a mixture of eighteen second and third year students, from subject majors including Law and History as well as politics. Delegates took part in different committees representing various countries.

The new MUN module has been getting students into the minds and shoes of diplomats, and encouraging them to think differently about international diplomacy as representatives of other countries.

David Callaghan
BA International Relations and Economics
To my knowledge, Reading University Economics Societys has been in place since I started University in September 2010. However, it was more a social rather than academic group and therefore was not affiliated with the university. This meant it did not really tie in with the department and missed out on having a stand at freshers week each year – the biggest opportunity to promote yourself as a society and gain new members!

As a result, when the previous committee left in June 2012, we took it upon ourselves to affiliate this society with the student union, and start to build stronger relationships with the department, similar to how other university economics societies function.

Therefore, when this project began in September 2012, we had 3 main aims: to improve the relationship between students and the department, set up current economic affairs talks in order to aid our degrees and future job interviews and finally to put on careers events which allow students to be aware of potential careers from the beginning of their Reading University experience.

Throughout this year, we have affiliated the society, allowing it to be present at the freshers fair, put on careers events with previous alumni and set up a tutoring scheme for all years so that each first year is assigned a 2nd or 3rd year student as a point of reference on the course as well as their personal tutor. From my point of view this project has been a great success.

Finally, in April this year, we passed the society onto a new committee of second year students who have already set up a series of current affairs lectures with staff discussing their research. Consequently, I’m very proud of what has been achieved this year and I’m sure (hope?) now that it has been started, it will just accumulate success over time!

Samantha Crawley
BSc Economics

Study abroad Canada

In September 2012, I started my studies as a student at the University of Ottawa in the Canadian province of Ontario. Ottawa is a very peculiar place, since it serves as Canada’s political capital without being its cultural or economic centre – one could think about it as a somehow colder and politer Washington. The city’s character was well imprinted on my University’s identity, with its Department of Economics working closely with the Bank of Canada and strongly – or sometimes even insanely – politicised student community.

Academically, my time there has been – politicised student community.

I received a letter from the Vice Chancellor that the University board and the Senate have confirmed that they would like me to accept the award in a ceremony in 2014. I am just surprised that this came from nowhere. A small little girl born in a small town of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. I feel greatly honoured and wanted to share with the Department of Politics as I am still studying my MA with the University of Reading.’

‘I could not help sharing my joy with the Department of Politics and in fact my shock about this good news. I was nominated for an Honorary Masters Degree for my community work with disenfranchised people with HIV, refugees and promoting education and culture.

I have been given a chance to use and show off the knowledge and skills my studies have taught me, as well as to develop some new ones – such as drafting briefings or eating a plate of hors d’oeuvre while balancing a glass of wine in the other hand.

Of course, I did other things, too. I watched whales in St Laurent Bay, went white-water rafting in the Laurentian Mountains, chopped wood in Northern Ontario and crossed the Juan de Fuca strait in British Columbia aboard a tiny plane. On one occasion I was invited to shadow a Canadian MP for some two weeks, where I watched pleasantly technical parliamentary committees, surprisingly relaxed parliamentary debates, met the first Head of State in my life and put my hors d’oeuvre-eating skills to even more practice.

My stay in Canada has been a deeply enriching experience. Most obviously, I’ve improved as an economist, but there is much more to it than that. Perhaps most importantly, that year has given me a chance to think of and plan for my future career, as well as explore some of the opportunities available.

I was faced with a wider variety of people, positions, events and activities than ever before, and that gave me a taste of what is there awaiting me after university. I think I will always reflect upon my Canadian experience as one of my most formative years, and I cannot even express how grateful I am to the University and the School for making this possible.

Adam Pasierbek
BA Economics (with Year Abroad)

‘...And I received a letter from the Vice Chancellor that the University board and the Senate have confirmed that they would like me to accept the award in a ceremony in 2014. I am just surprised that this came from nowhere. A small little girl born in a small town of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. I feel greatly honoured and wanted to share with the Department of Politics as I am still studying my MA with the University of Reading.’
Study abroad Turkey

I chose to partake in the Erasmus scheme studying in Bogaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey. The most important reason for choosing Turkey was the chance to live in a society dominated by another religion and experience a new culture. Organisation was tough as I had to coordinate two departments but in the end it was well worth it as I met the most incredible people, got the chance to travel extensively and study in a completely new environment. By far the most interesting aspect was to study politics from a different perspective, in a country that is a bit unstable politically but still safe enough to live in! Although studying in English I was forced to learn at least a little Turkish in order to get around. The confidence gained by setting yourself up in a new country will always be with me and I got to partake in experiences I will never forget.

I would recommend the Erasmus program to everyone. It is the only chance you could get to get paid to study in another country with the support of your home university. Studying at a new university will give you a much better perspective and it looks great on a CV. It was the most exciting time and you’ll be left with friends from all around the world.

Alice Nidd
BA History and International Relations

Study abroad Australia

Studying abroad in Australia has been one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. I’ve been able to make the most of the fantastic facilities and opportunities Monash has to offer, from enjoying the academic work and structure, to the field trips offered by certain modules. I’ve met some wonderful people and spent my free time wandering around one of the best cities in the world: Melbourne.

Josie Dix
BA Philosophy and Politics

Work placements review

Our students have continued to work hard in applying their academic knowledge, in a practical way, through placement opportunities. This year over thirty students in the school took part in work placements for which they received academic credit. These include students taking part in one year internships, work experience for our stand alone placement module, two week placements over Easter for the British Government and Politics module and placements as part of the MA in Public Policy. This year I have been particularly impressed by the excellent feedback I have received from placement hosts on the performance of our students. Our students have been praised for high levels of professionalism and dedication which has helped to develop good working relationships with hosts, particularly in the Reading area, which is great news for future placement students!

The placement learning they have gained will count towards their final degree result and certainly serve students well when it comes to making decisions about future career paths. Many students have also taken part in volunteering, summer internships and placement opportunities that will not count towards their final degree, but all contribute to their employability skill set.

Over Easter around twenty of our second year students took part in a mini placement as part of the British Government and Politics module. A wide range of really interesting placements took place, including shadowing MPs, working in local schools, work experience with pressure groups and political lobbyists. This year I was really pleased to see students taking advantage of opportunities arising from the relationships we are building with local employers here in Reading. Two of our students worked with Rob Wilson MP for Reading, taking part in campaign projects. We also had three students working on their own campaigns and attending council meetings whilst on placement with Rob White Green Party Councillor for Reading East. Particular mention is due to Jon Hulks who achieved an excellent mark in his project, in fact the highest mark ever for a British Government and Politics student, very well done Jon! His placement involved working on a report on private sector housing to be presented by Fiona MacTaggert MP in Westminster.

We wish luck to students taking part in placements over the summer and for next year, in particular to Issene Tighe who will be completing three months volunteer work in India, working on international development in education, health and sustainability for the stand alone placement module. For our Economics Placement Year we have three students taking part in one year internships, two will be working for the Department for Work and Pensions and one student will be working as an intern for the Champions Life Academy. We look forward to sharing their experiences in next year’s Annual Review.

The following testimonials document the work experience opportunities students have taken part in over the last year.

Amy Harris
Placement and Development Officer

‘I have been particularly impressed by the excellent feedback I have received from placement hosts on the performance of our students. Our students have been praised for high levels of professionalism and dedication.’
Placement year at the Department for Work and Pensions

I decided to apply for a placement year with the Government Economic Service (GES) after a talk from Andy Ross – the deputy director of the GES – that the Economics Department put on. Following my application in early September I was fortunate enough to gain a 12 month placement working in Labour Market Strategy at the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

I was pretty nervous as prior to my placement I did not have much knowledge of what DWP did and what to expect during my year in industry. However my first few weeks were spent doing a lot of reading and getting to grips with all the acronyms used in the civil service and pretty soon I felt up to speed with the area I was working in.

During the year I worked on a huge variety of projects; from providing a weekly economic update for the Secretary of State to use at Cabinet to analysis of disadvantaged groups in the labour market. I was also given the opportunity to work on less technical and more policy related roles working for a number of high level departmental and cross-departmental boards. These allowed me to gain an insight into how policy is developed and implemented in Government.

The highlight of my year was organising two cross-government conferences; one on behaviour change and one on randomised control trials. This allowed me to work with senior civil servants as well as respected academics from around the country. This really stretched both my economic knowledge – having to give senior figures a steer on what I wanted them to present on – as well as my organisational skills with over 100 people attending both events.

From a personal perspective doing a placement year has given me the opportunity to gain an insight into graduate life and how different it is from university. I feel that my placement year has given me a much better idea of what opportunities are available after graduation and what type of work I would like to do. I am planning on applying to the Government Fast Stream in September, but am also very much looking forward to returning to Reading and once again being a student for the year!

I would highly recommend both doing a placement year and also working for Government Economic Service. My placement has exceeded all my expectations and I have really enjoyed my placement.

Lawrence Key
BA Economics (with placement)

Sandwich year at HM Treasury

Following the completion of Part 2 of my undergraduate economics degree, I had the opportunity to work for 12 months within one of HM Treasury’s tax teams. The team I undertook my placement with is responsible for centrally co-ordinating the Budget and Autumn Statement processes and also works to provide support to other teams across the Treasury in a range of other areas.

'I was allowed a far greater level of responsibility than I had ever expected throughout my placement, particularly during Budget 2013.'

In the run up to Autumn Statement 2012 and Budget 2013, I was part of a four member team responsible for commissioning and collating costings for potential Budget measures and providing and refining packages of policies for the Chancellor to help him put together his final Budget scorecard. In my role I gained a huge amount of exposure to the workings of a fiscal event process and to the process of policy making. I was allowed a far greater level of responsibility than I had ever expected throughout my placement, particularly during Budget 2013. In the months leading up to Budget 2013 I managed and co-ordinated one of the main tables that went into the Budget document and gave a presentation to 200 Treasury officials.

Outside of the fiscal event process, I spent my time in the economics branch of my team. I worked on a number of projects including corporation tax, sustainability, oil and gas sustainability and the Scottish independence, as well as my own project on the links between tax progressivity and inequality.

I was fortunate to have, what I believe to have been regarded by most other students in the Treasury as, one of the most prized and coveted placements available to HMT students due to my high level of responsibility, the range of work I was exposed to and the heavy involvement with the Budget process that I had. The scope of the work conducted by my team meant that I had regular opportunities to talk to different members of my team who at any one time could be working on anything from UK export strategy or the LIBOR scandal, through to work on measuring child poverty and the ‘Help to Buy’ scheme.

Aside from the skills that I have picked up and developed during my year with HMT, I believe that the perspective I have gained on the working world will prove enormously helpful when it comes to choosing a future career path and in application processes for work in the coming year. The experience of seeing real life government policy in development really helped to bring what I had learnt during the first two years of my degree to life. This is not just a placement opportunity to shadow government economists in what they do, but an opportunity to be one of them and be involved in developing potential future government policy yourself. I would recommend this placement to anyone who thinks they might be interested in a career with the civil service.

Steven Lucas
BA Business Economics (with placement experience)
Sandwich year at the Department for Work and Pensions

I have thoroughly enjoyed working at the Department for Work and Pensions for the past 12 months and would highly recommend a placement to prospective 2nd year students. It was a very lively and exciting time to be placed within DWP with major reform underway, including: the introduction of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment.

I was placed in Forecasting Division where my team was responsible for forecasting disability benefit expenditure and also the number of people claiming each benefit. Furthermore I produced slide packs containing our assumptions that linked into the Budget and Autumn Statement.

During the year I took part in many learning and development opportunities in the form of regular seminars run by policy experts across HM Treasury and external organisations such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies. I was also fortunate to help organise and teach introductory economics classes for non-economists in DWP.

Finally, the placement year has provided an excellent insight into the work of a government economist and the variety of economist roles within the GES.

Peter Foley
BSc Economics (with placement year)

Media internships

Throughout my time studying politics at the University of Reading I sought to gain as much work experience as possible. I have a long held ambition to work in the media, and was determined to make good use of Reading’s close proximity to London.

During my first and second years, I interned at both The Daily Telegraph and The Times. Watching and learning from the fantastic journalists at both newspapers was a true privilege, and a fascinating experience. At the start of this year, I spent several weeks working for GQ magazine in London. This was another fantastic opportunity, and a completely different style of journalism to that I had previously encountered working for the newspapers.

I would encourage any Politics students to pursue work experience in whatever field interests them. In the increasingly competitive job market of today it can help make a big difference to future employment opportunities, as well as providing you with invaluable experience of working practices, which can also help inform your studies.

Tom Kennedy
BA Politics and International Relations

‘Watching and learning from the fantastic journalists at both newspapers was a true privilege, and a fascinating experience.’

Work experience with Fiona MacTaggart MP

My placement over Easter was with Fiona MacTaggart, the MP for Slough, during which I spent time in both her parliamentary and constituency offices. I was tasked with analysing the results from a housing survey her office recently published, and then compiling my findings into a report. This report would then be presented by Fiona to both the local council and the Minister for Housing. Firstly, I entered the survey results into an Excel spreadsheet, then noted and analysed the various correlations I found. Fiona had suspected that rent levels were too high in Slough for a number of months, and I confirmed this. 68% of respondents received housing benefit, and for 50% of those it covered more than half their rent. This indicated that rent levels in Slough were substantially more expensive than a large number of people could afford.

Outside of this main project, I got to see how constituency offices handle casework on a day to day basis, and how this ties in to Fiona’s larger role as an MP. Local issues, like housing and benefit problems, are dealt with by the Slough office, whereas questions and queries about national policies were answered in Westminster. In particular, I was taught how to respond to constituents in a polite and informative manner, as well as how to write press releases, organise Fiona’s diary and help her prepare for select committee meetings.

This placement was a brilliant opportunity and thoroughly enjoyable. Political Science courses tend to focus on the broad questions – for example, the powers of various institutions – and often do not explore how individual MPs fit into the political system. This placement taught me how politics works in practice, which has provided context for my academic studies. Most importantly, I think it has reminded me of the power MPs wield – even backbench ones in opposition. While she was unable to help her constituents with legislative change, Fiona and her staff still spent a substantial amount of time on constituency casework and proved that backbench MPs are still far from irrelevant.

John Hulks
BA Politics and International Relations

‘This placement taught me how politics works in practice, which has provided context for my academic studies.’
Work experience with Karen Buck MP

For the British Government and Politics module placement, I worked with my local MP for Westminster North, Karen Buck which was a very rewarding and inspiring experience. My research question for the placement was focusing on the issue of immigration, however by the end I had learnt more about the main issues of the constituency like homelessness and housing. During my two weeks, I helped create a complaint report to the Government Ombudsman on behalf of 39 constituent families who had been left homeless after the introduction of the housing benefit cut. In addition to this, I attended a Labour housing conference and also spoke to many other constituents that were currently homeless due to a shortage of council houses. By the end of the placement I felt that I had gained a great amount of experience learning about politics on a local level and hope to be returning to the office in the summer holidays.

Ermela Hoxa
BA Politics and International Relations

Digitally Ready Project

I applied to do the Summer Enterprise Experience and Discovery (SEED) internship because I was extremely interested in the Digitally Ready project brief. I wanted to gain a better understanding of what a research project entails. I have an interest in new social and digital media and the impact that this is having on our day to day lives.

‘This fulfilled my desire to gain work experience and develop my skills further to increase my employability.’

I have learnt so much from my SEED placement. The predominant skills that I have learnt are research skills. I now know how to conduct an interview, take recordings and write detailed notes with many different types of people. I have learnt how to draw out the relevant information and write-up my findings in a report format. I have also learnt how to blog, and use photos and video clips to make my presenting more interesting, but more importantly I have gained a deeper understanding of the power of a positive online presence and how it can be used strategically. I have also been given many opportunities to present, including a conference and two Teaching and Learning showcase events (one attended by the Vice Chancellor!). This has helped me improve my presentation style and delivery enormously. I also attended the international conference ALT-C, which helped me to understand the wider issues that concern technology in learning and education.

The SEED placement seemed relevant to my studies, in the way that is it looking into social issues in employability and education, but also fulfilled my desire to gain work experience and develop my skills further to increase my employability.

Rachel Glover
BA Politics and International Relations

Barnado’s internship

Having established my career goal, the next stage in my career path was to undertake the MA in Public Policy at Reading. Part of the programme is a placement and with the preparation the course gave me as well as my own experience I secured an internship at the children’s charity, Barnardo’s. Barnardo’s helps the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, a cause I wholeheartedly support. I work in the children’s services business development unit supporting some of the most senior members in Barnardo’s business development in the country. Their professionalism and dedication to their mission in delivering high-quality and accessible services is unparalleled and I feel fortunate to be able to do my placement among such people who genuinely care about my learning development. I have been given an insight into the unique position charities hold in the business world and have been conferred quite a substantial level of responsibility.

I have learnt so much, especially in terms of the business side of charity work. I have a number of key responsibilities including delivering accurate business support to the unit, identifying potential tendering opportunities, compiling research on government policies, funding opportunities as well as other service providers and have had the opportunity to witness the work of other key departments including the Strategy Unit. I am currently working on a large piece of research that will contribute to a big upcoming future project of Barnardo’s as well as working on a series of smaller strategic projects in between. The amazing experience I’ve had on my placement has definitely enhanced my skill set and I hope it will act as a stepping stone to my chosen career.

Zahra Langeroudi
MA Public Policy

‘I have been given an insight into the unique position charities hold in the business world and have been conferred quite a substantial level of responsibility.’
Engagement with policy

One of the interesting aspects of an academic job is to be engaged with policy makers at various levels. Like it or not, policy makers are very close to the levers of change in many areas of life, and are important users of research and evidence. During the last year Giovanni Razzu has been involved in various advisory groups, some specifically focussed on research aspects, such as the ESRC Large Centre Commissioning Panel and the Understanding Society Ethnicity Advisory Group, and others with a very relevant public policy focus.

Two of these are particularly interesting: the Expert Group of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), on which Giovanni is the UK representative, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and HM Treasury Fair Financial Decision Expert Advisory Group. EIGE is an agency of the EU, which supports its member states in their effort to promote gender equality in its various aspects. One of the very interesting pieces of work Giovanni has provided advice on is the development of a new gender equality index, whose objective is to measure the extent of gender inequality in EU countries. The index has been launched in June this year and is composed of several dimensions which have been considered to be important from a gender inequality perspective: economic resources, the labour market, health, education and representation in positions of power. The position of EU countries can be assessed for each of these dimensions as well as in the aggregate, where all dimensions are combined together into one index. The UK compares relatively well on most dimensions, with gender inequality being overall less than the average in EU countries and only higher than Scandinavian countries in most dimensions that compose the index.

The Fair Financial Decision Expert Group is advising the EHRC and the Treasury on the development of efficient and effective ways of assessing the impact of proposed spending measures on protected groups. Last year, the Commission assessed the extent to which the Treasury meets its legal obligations, under the Equality Duty, to consider the impact of spending decisions on protected groups of the population, defined by gender, ethnicity, disability and so on. The assessment found that there has been a genuine effort by Ministers to consider the impact of spending measures but some gaps remain. Also the way data are available, or the nature of some spending measures, make it difficult to assess the differential impact that policy measures might have on, for instance, women and men. The Group is advising on how to address some of these evidence, data and analysis challenges.

Research centres in SPEIR

New interdisciplinary research centres will be established in SPEIR for 2013–14. These bring together expertise and interests from across the University, and will serve as a hub of research activity in the post REF period, enabling us to showcase our world class work and impact.

The political theorists working in the Politics department, and the moral philosophers working in the Philosophy department, are united in their analytical methods, and share a number of key interests.

Reading Ethics and Political Philosophy: REAPP

Reading has a strong reputation for its work in political philosophy, under-taken by the four political theorists in the Politics department; they have won prestigious awards from the Leverhulme Trust and the British Academy. Reading’s Politics department is now easily in the top 5 in the UK for political theory. Similarly, Reading has for about a decade been widely known within philosophical circles to be extremely strong in Ethics. Over that period, Reading has been the second strongest moral philosophy department in the UK, behind only Oxford. Reading moral philosophers have won fellowships from the AHRC and British Academy and a major grant from the AHRC. The political theorists working in the Politics department, and the moral philosophers working in the Philosophy department, are united in their analytical methods, and share a number of key interests across the following themes: Fairness; Normative Methodology; Criminal Justice; Value and Rights. REAPP will enable sustained conversations and collaborative work in these areas, through joint seminars and workshops series, shared research student supervision, joint grant bids, and outreach to non-academic partners.

Co directors:
Catriona McKinnon Politics
David Owens Philosophy

Developing Economies and Emerging Markets: DEEM

Development is a comprehensive process that influences the economy, society, culture and politics of a country. Researching issues within development therefore requires an inherently inter-disciplinary approach. Development researchers within the University of Reading study issues relating to education and labour markets in developing countries, conflict and the role of institutions, impact of climate change on developing countries, food security, farming systems and their efficiency and dynamism, amongst other topics.

The new Research Centre for the Study of Developing Economies and Emerging Markets (DEEM) will bring together researchers working on various aspects of development from departments across the university. It includes members from Economics, Agriculture, Geography, and Real Estate and Planning. The group will be steered from within Economics.

Director:
Professor Uma Kambhampati

‘One of the interesting aspects of an academic job is to be engaged with policy makers at various levels. Like it or not, policy makers are very close to the levers of change in many areas of life, and are important users of research and evidence.’
Ways of War: WOW

Reading has an international reputation for being a strong intellectual home for the study of war. We have staff studying the phenomenon across the fields of philosophy, languages, law, economics, anthropology and psychology, history, art history, politics and international relations. Our staff have won prestigious awards from the Leverhulme Trust, the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, and the AHRC. Recent grant-funded projects such as the Languages at War and Liberal Way of War reflect and reinforce Reading’s status as an intellectual home for productive inter-disciplinary debate. Current grant bids from across the University include projects on Corruption, Violence and Conflict, the Legacies of Fascism, Politics and Strategy, and Translating Cultures. Reading is also well known for its ties to the professional armed forces, government, and non-government organisations such as the International Red Cross. This is an exciting time intellectually for the specialised study of war. Reading staff are making important contributions to emerging debates: the implications of new technologies such as drones and cyber, the study of cultures of commemoration, the place of war in the popular imagination, the rise of a military-entertainment complex, the political economy of post-conflict reconstruction, the rise of critical war studies and war’s generative power as the ‘Father of all Things’, the renaissance in the study and interpretation of classical texts such as Clausewitz, the questions of humanitarian intervention and legitimacy, and the future (or obsolescence) of major war between states. There is a critical mass of permanent staff from History, Law, Economics, Politics and International Relations and Languages. A recent meeting of interested parties identified the following five themes around which the activities of WOW would be organised: Representations, Cultures and Memory of War, Strategy and the Limitation of War, Political Economy, War and the State, and the Laws of War.

Director: Patrick Porter (2013–14: Alan Cromartie)

Centre for Institutional Performance

The Centre for Institutional Performance (CIP) is a joint venture between the School and the Henley Business School (HBS), and is financed by SPEIR. It focuses on issues at the interface of economics, politics, sociology and history. It examines the nature of the institutions used to coordinate activities in different sectors of the economy, including high-technology industries, consumer goods industries, network industries and service industries. It investigates issues relating to consumer protection, the regulation of transport and utility industries, and the role of non-profit institutions (charities, national and local government, etc) in the provision of goods and services. Adopting a comparative historical perspective, it analyses the evolution of institutional arrangements in different countries over long periods of time.

It sponsors a regular programme of conferences and workshops, some of which are held in conjunction with the Centre for Economic History. In 2013, CIP hosted workshops on ‘Well-being and Public Policy’ and the ‘Business and Economic History of Railways’.

Director: Professor Mark Casson

Conflict and climate change

In a world where key resources such as land and water are finite, climate change not only raises the risk of food and water shortages, and of greater poverty and inequality, but also fuels the risk of conflict over scarce resources, especially in fragile states where state institutions are weak. While the 2009 Copenhagen summit on climate change failed to agree binding new targets to arrest climate change, it resulted in a commitment of substantial funding from developed countries, who pledged $100 billion a year from 2020 onwards to mitigate and adapt to climate change. While it is reasonable to assume that such large financial flows into developing countries will have a substantial impact on local political and economic dynamics, we know very little about the actual impact of climate change policies and finance on communities in developing countries. Are they becoming a new ‘resource curse’ fuelling conflict or contributing to a better understanding of how different climate change policies and mechanisms influence the risk of conflict in affected communities?

Leverhulme Research Fellowship

This academic year, Dr Patrick Porter obtained a Leverhulme Research Fellowship to support his book project, ‘The Global Village Myth: War, D. and the Limits of Power’, which will be published by Georgetown University Press. The book examines the powerful myth that revolutions in information, technology, communications and weapons have shrunk the world strategically, turning the world into a single battlespace that must be tamed back into order. Dr Porter traces the prehistory of this idea, and shows that ‘Globalism’ fails several important tests when applied to the military-strategic realm. Even the most ‘global’ actors, from Al Qaeda to the United States, are still ‘shaped and shoved’ by distance. Machines or missiles might travel more quickly and at greater range than before, yet the financial, political or psychological costs of projecting power over distance are still formidable, as NATO forces realise in Afghanistan. Nuclear weapons or anti-ship missiles empower defenders to inflict unthinkable losses on would-be aggressors, as wargamers of an American-China clash now fear. Humans may communicate instantly across space, but new tools have not eliminated the strain that separation places on group cohesion and trust, as Al Qaeda has discovered. The Global Village Myth argues that we should re-imagine the world with bigger mental maps, not as a fragile village but as an unconquerable planet where we must learn again to live with insecurity.
The International Dimensions of Authoritarian Rule

As part of his research activities, Dr. Jonathan Golub is serving as the quantitative methodology expert on a King’s College London project about ‘The International Dimensions of Authoritarian Rule’. The project, headed by Dr. Oisin Tansey, was funded by a 1 million euro grant from the European Research Council. Dr. Golub’s main responsibilities in the project involve helping to devise appropriate measures of the external factors that contribute to regime change, and overseeing the application of survival analysis to model the durability of authoritarian rule.

Themes from The Ends of Harm

In May 2013, Dr. Patrick Tomlin (lecturer in political theory) was invited to join a select group of legal, moral and political philosophers for a two-day workshop (Themes from The Ends of Harm) held on Croatia’s Dalmation coastline. The workshop discussed Professor Victor Tadros’ recent book The Ends of Harm (OUP 2013), which sets out a novel theory of the justification of punishment. The theory draws on positions Tadros develops concerning the morality of self-defence and non-consequentialist ethics, and many of the papers focused on these aspects of Tadros’ book. Tomlin provided a critique of the book’s central thesis – that punishment is justified by the enforceable duties that offenders have to their victims. The group contained well-known philosophers from the UK, Israel, Denmark and the USA.

Spatial Economics Workshop in Tokyo

In March 2013, Dr. Pascal Mossay was invited to give a talk at the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (RIETI) Tokyo. (RIETI) is a policy think tank established in 2001. Its mission is to conduct theoretical and empirical research, maximize synergies with those engaged in policy-making, and to make policy proposals based on evidence derived from such research activities. The institute is highly regarded both in Japan and abroad for its activity over the past ten years.

The main objective of the Tokyo Workshop on Spatial Economics was to explore whether space matters in the real economy. Five researchers presented their latest research in spatial economics on urban and regional economies and trade. In particular, the topics included (a) social interactions and segregation in the context of an urban spatial structure and (b) spatial economic impacts of global warming, labor market integration, and city size.

Award for Real Estate Research

Dr Fang Xu received an Aareal Award in Real Estate Research from the EBS Business School in Wiesbaden, Germany in February 2013. This was awarded for her research paper ‘On housing booms and credit market conditions’ jointly with Helmut Herwartz.

In the light of the 2007/2008 subprime crisis, the paper analyses persistent changes in US house prices relative to rents. It identifies an increasing trend from the early 1990s to 2007 and shows that this increase was significantly affected by the increased securitization of residential mortgage loans and decreasing interest rates, especially since 2002: the former effect being three times larger than the latter. In the absence of securitization, negative interest rates would have been needed to reproduce an equally large housing boom since 2003.

Migration and community research

In 2013/14 data from the 2011 Census revealed parts of the South East to be amongst the most ethnically diverse areas in the United Kingdom. Opinion polls showed concerns amongst many British residents about the level of migration to the UK and the effects on local communities and public services. In addition, 2013 marks the final year of transitional arrangements for Bulgarian and Romanian EU nationals – an issue that has been on the policy agenda at national and local government levels as well as in the daily press.

Dr Andi Nygaard (Department of Economics, and International Centre for Housing and Urban Economics, ICHUE) and Dr Ellie Francis-Brophy (Institute of Education, and ICHUE) completed a 3-year study on social cohesion and policy intervention in Slough Borough Council. A follow-up audit of residents’ opinions revealed that ethnicity, social capital and employment determined differences in views about social cohesion. Full-time employees were less likely to view members of different ethnic groups as ‘getting along’.

The Economics-Education team are also involved in a £140,000 European Integration Fund project with Slough Borough Council – Migration Excel. The project aims to engage with newly arrived third country nationals and members of a host community adjusting to demographic and ethnic change. The team is evaluating the impact of a local resident mentoring scheme that also embeds social media/IT & CitizenShip. The project is also offering the opportunity for a 2nd year student to participate in the evaluation and research process.

Dr Nygaard is also a member of Kent County Council’s advisory group on impact analysis of A2 migration following the end of transitional arrangements in 2013. Building on the team’s growing expertise in migration studies the SESPM recently commissioned an analysis of the drivers and the distribution of A2 migrants in the UK and across the EU.
In May this year I had the very great pleasure of being involved in a curriculum enrichment project with year 9 students at Nova Hreod School, Swindon. A former student of ours, Melios Michael (Bsc Mathematics and Economics 2007-2010), is a teacher of mathematics at the school but has not lost his interest in the more important component of his degree. Having set mathematics based project work he noticed that many of the contributions demonstrated an interest in economics related subjects and decided he wanted to give the students the opportunity to develop this further. We have kept in contact since his graduation and so it was easy for him to ask me to be involved.

Melios designed a competition in which students prepared and presented short PowerPoint shows based on one of a range of suggested economics topics. Students could work individually or in groups. In all 27 students finally presented having spent four weeks on research and preparation undertaken in their own time. The presentations were judged by a panel consisting of myself, Melios, the Head Teacher and the Head of Mathematics at the school. Topics for presentations included: ‘Can a government spend its way out of a recession?’, ‘Why do brides spend more money on dressing for their wedding than grooms?’, ‘Should people pay more tax?’, and most popular, ‘Does wealth bring happiness?’

Amongst many very impressive talks, that judged to be the strongest was given by Emily King and Shannon Walker who discussed whether large families should receive more financial support from the government than small families. The enthusiasm demonstrated by all the participants generated strong reminders of why the subject of economics is so fascinating, being relevant and wide ranging. This was a most positive experience and I left Nova Hreod School grateful for the opportunity to have been involved with such able and well-motivated people. The picture shows me with myself, Melios, the Head Teacher and the Head of Mathematics after the presentations.

**Simon Burke**

Noordeen, a PhD student in the School of Real Estate and Planning, explored the linkages between politics, economics and planning in the provision of public housing in Sri Lanka. Following the success of these initiatives, further seminars are planned for the coming academic year, with the aim of further exploring the synergies between academics working on housing-related themes across the university.

**Vivien Burrows**

Centre for Institutional Performance

**The Business and Economic History of Railways**

In May 2013, the National Audit Office released its review of the controversial High Speed 2 (HS2) rail network. Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, raised concerns about ‘lack of clarity around the objectives’ and ‘limited evidence on forecast passenger demand and expected capacity shortages on existing lines’. In July, Lord Mandelson withdrew his support for the project, calling it ‘an expensive mistake’.

So HS2 made for a particularly topical debate at a Centre for Institutional Performance workshop on the Business and Economic History of Railways on 19 June 2013.

**Well-being and Public Policy Workshop**

To date, government policy has concentrated on the economy, provision of welfare, provision of law and order and security and some progressive governments have seen individual dignity as being an appropriate area of government concern. While many governments have accepted their role in determining the conditions for objective well-being, few (with the exception of countries like Bhutan) have considered subjective well-being to be a goal of government policy. This is despite the fact that happiness is often seen as the desired ‘end’ of all human actions.

In recent years, this has changed and the UK government along with many other governments has begun to try and measure happiness levels across the population. The Office of National Statistics in the UK began to ask four questions relating to happiness in 2011 in the Annual Integrated Household Survey that was administered to 200,000 households. The longer term aim of the exercise is to create a happiness index or a Gross Domestic Happiness Score. As the Government hopes will, together with GDP figures, provide a measure of the UK’s progress. Not surprisingly, this has thrown open the debate about i) whether this implies that the government will then try and target happiness as an objective of its policy; ii) whether happiness can actually be measured; and iii) whether happiness can or should be a government policy goal and, finally iv) whether the final goal of all human endeavour is happiness.

The Centre for Institutional Performance hosted a workshop on Well-being and Public Policy on May 22 2013. The workshop considered the way in which the UK government is measuring happiness across sub-regions and sub-populations within the UK. It also considered the role of institutions more generally in influencing well-being levels across the world. Keynote speakers included Stephen Hicks (Office for National Statistics), Andrew Clark (Paris), Alois Stutzer (Basel) and MariaLaura de Tommaso (Turin).
University hosts international workshop on inflation

Just before Christmas 2012, the University successfully hosted a one-day international workshop entitled ‘Modelling and Forecasting Inflation: Recent Approaches, involving over 80 participants. The workshop arose from a British Academy Research Grant to Dr. Alexander Mihailov and Professor Kerry Patterson of the Department of Economics and Fabio Rumler of the Austrian National Bank. The workshop was ably supported by the Head of Department, Professor Nigar Hashimzade, and student ambassadors from the current group of Economics PhD students.

The topic of the workshop is a critical one from the perspective not only of academic economists, but also from the viewpoint of public policy, where modelling and forecasting inflation is vital to the formation and implementation of sound economic policy. The topics discussed reflected the econometric modelling of inflation especially faced with either abrupt or gradual changes, and the potential of structural economic models to improve forecasting by using theoretically informed restrictions.

The workshop attracted participants from other universities, the public and private sectors, including representatives from the UK Government, specifically HM Treasury, the Departments of Defence, Education and Work and Pensions, the UK Office for National Statistics, and the central banks of Austria, Belgium, England, Germany and Sweden and the European Central Bank.

The presentations were given by a truly international list of economists and econometricians; and the responses to the workshop illustrated the quality of the presentations and the positive responses of participants to the University of Reading.

Peter Campbell memorial lecture

Professor Peter Campbell was the first Head of the Politics department. A brilliant and much-loved teacher, famous for his unworldliness and generosity, he encouraged younger staff with a wide range of moral outlooks, but he was himself a libertarian Tory; in old age, he devoted much energy and time to his role as the founder and leader of the Tory Campaign for Homosexual Equality, a movement for social reform that has since achieved all of its objectives. Peter left his estate for a range of educational purposes, but some of the funds are devoted to an annual Peter Campbell Memorial lecture.

In honour of his uncatégorisable range of personal interests and sympathies, we usually invite a public figure who is known to have some interesting thoughts on politics from a non-party-political perspective. This year’s speaker was Lord (Gus) O’Donnell, the former Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service who had also been an intimate adviser to every British Prime Minister since John Major. Lord O’Donnell spoke engagingly about ‘Changing behaviour: improving public policy without investing more’. His lecture covered a range of novel possibilities created by recent improvements in social-scientific understanding of characteristically human behaviour patterns. At its best, an approach built on ‘nudging’ could yield startling savings from relatively small changes in public policy; it seemed to hold the promise of new modes of government that were paternalist but non-intrusive. Both formal and informal post-lecture discussion focused upon those savings, but also on the likely limits of this new approach. The event was enjoyed by a large and very lively audience; it also complemented the talks given by a succession of his former colleagues in the superfluously quite different context of the School’s new Public Policy seminars.

Strategy seminar

In a one-day seminar organised especially for M.A. and PhD. students, practitioners (our visiting fellows) and research staff from our Department joined up to discuss dimensions of strategy, and the extent to which these could be extended to cover also financial and business dimensions. Ambassador (ret) Dr Valerie Caton spoke about French President Mitterrand’s strategies to gain German support for the adoption of the European Monetary Union.

Mr John Morrison, formerly the deputy head of the Ministry of Defence’s Intelligence Staff, spoke about the use of intelligence in strategy decision making. Professor Dominik Zaum explained how in the Department for International Development academic evidence is used to make ‘strategic’ spending decisions. Air Chief Marshal (ret) Sir Brian Burridge, now Vice President Defence in the UK’s aerospace, defence and security trade association, explained the great overlap in terms of analytical procedure in strategic decision-making in the Ministry of Defence and in industry, and General (ret) Tim Cross spoke of his matching experiences in negotiating joint procurement projects on behalf of the UK with other states.

On the basis of this and similar reflections, we are hoping in 2014/2015 to launch a new joint MA on Management and Strategy with the Henley Business School.

Policy in practice

An innovation for this year came with the introduction of our Policy in Practice sessions. We have hosted a distinguished group of speakers hailing from different government departments. These workshops give our students and staff the opportunity to learn about the nature of policy making directly from the policy making community. These thought-provoking and interactive sessions have inspired our students to focus on specific policy areas and issues and they are actively encouraged to relate these to their own work.

This picture shows some of our MA in Public Policy students enjoying a sneak peak at an audit review from a guest speaker who worked as an influential civil servant. The session proved to be a fascinating insight into the world of the civil service.
‘Small War’ conference 25 March 2013

A conference organised by Professor Beatrice Heuser at the National Army Museum dealt with the origins and diversity of what was understood by ‘small war’ before, during, and just after the Napoleonic Wars. The contributions from scholars from both sides of The Atlantic and Channel dealt with the classic ‘small war’ in the late 17th and 18th centuries – by which one meant special operations – in the context of the Peninsular War to encompass popular uprisings (with the Spanish Guerrilla as a turning point), and precedents for both in previous times. The proceedings of the conference are to be published as a special issue of the peer-reviewed journal Small Wars and Insurgencies in late 2013.

The Middle East and the Arab Spring: Change, (in) Stability and (dis) Order

Dr Marianna Charountaki and Dr Yunis Al Lahwej organized a one day workshop on June 6th 2013, entitled The Middle East and the Arab Spring: Change, (in) Stability and (dis) Order. The workshop gathered political figures and scholars. The Vice Chancellor, Sir David Bell, the Head of the Department of Politics and International Relations, Professor Alan Cromartie, as well as Dr. Charountaki delivered the opening remarks. The importance of this workshop lies in the three different and crucial topics it engaged with in view of current developments in the broader Middle Eastern region. Thus, the workshop focused on ‘Turkey and Iran: models in a rapidly evolving regional security environment?’, ‘The Kurdish Factor in the regional transformation after the Arab Spring’ and finally ‘The role of the Gulf States in the Middle East: economic and geostrategic influences’.

Social media

In addition to our existing social media outlets consisting of departmental Facebook sites, our blog and a school Twitter account, we have ventured further afield into the world of social media in order to engage students, staff and the public to include screen casts, a school Flickr account and plans are in place for a YouTube channel. This Summer Dr Emma Mayhew has been creating a suite of screen casts to help SPEIR students understand key issues. From August students will be able to view short screen casts made specifically for the School. They cover:

• Pre-arrival information for Part 1 students
• Information for visiting students
• ECFs explained
• Writing your dissertation in the Department of Politics
• Student wellbeing
• Sources of academic and pastoral support
• The Student Charter explained
• Advanced essay writing

These screen casts, lasting no more than 5 minutes, combine sophisticated zoom in and out graphics with focused and concise information delivered by real time audio. Students can watch these at their own pace. They can rewind, skip forward and pause to click on embedded links to other relevant University sites and further resources. This suite of screen casts will give students a better understanding of key processes, they will give students a broad overview of University services and address common questions within the School. Available on the Department websites, these screen casts will offer a useable resource exactly when students need them.

This year we have used the school twitter account to tweet live from our June Open days and several conferences in order to engage audience participation. As ever we have tried to engage our followers by using lots of pictures on our Facebook pages and we hope to make more use of competitions and advertising on Facebook over the next year. Watch this space to see more of SPEIR in the social media stratosphere!