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Another eventful year in the School is coming to an end. The big political events of the year, in particular the general election have left their mark on life in the School as well: with students campaigning and working for MPs, over 30 students helping with the general election count in neighbouring constituencies, and academics in the School regularly commenting on the campaign and the outcome, we were ‘in the thick of it’ for much of the year. A highly successful ‘Democracy Day’ deliberating the issues at stake in the election with leading politicians and the local community was the culmination of our engagement with the general election. On that day, the three key elements of the School’s raison d’être came together: excellent research, critically engaging with challenges modern societies face; educating and engaging our students; and engaging with policy and public debate at all levels: the local, national, and international.

In all elements, the School has seen significant developments. With regard to our research, both Economics and Politics and International Relations had strong performances in the Research Excellence framework, the six-yearly assessment of the quality of research across the UK. The School is now hosting a £1 Million Leverhulme Interdisciplinary Doctoral Training Centre on Climate Justice. New modules and programmes mean that our teaching is constantly developing. Growing numbers of students are taking up placement opportunities in government, industry, and national and international NGOs. The first cohort of students to a joint degree with NUIST University in China has started, and will join students in Reading for their final year in 2017.

Changes in the university, most notably the changes to academic structures with the appointment of Research Deans and Teaching and Learning Deans, and to academic support structures; and changes in the wider Higher Education Sector, in particular with regard to funding and the possible introduction of a ‘Teaching Excellence Framework’ will mean that the environment within which we teach and research will change. Thanks to the efforts of all the colleagues in the School, both academic colleagues and our fantastic administrative team, SPEIR is in a strong position to navigate these changes and challenges.

Several members of staff have left SPEIR this year, and I would like to thank them for all their contributions to the School, and wish them all the best for their future endeavours: Melva Jeffries, Barbara Sofocli, Caroline Walter, Matthew Yeo, Alan Renwick, Patrick Porter, Antonia Fernandez and Jonathan Boyd. In addition to new members of staff, many of whom are introduced in this review, Politics and International Relations will have a new Head of Department, Jonathan Golub; and Emma Mayhew will be the new School Director for Teaching and Learning. I would like to thank their predecessors, Alan Cromartie and Andi Nygaard, for all their support.

I’d also like to thank our students for all their hard work, not just in their examinations but also for their dedication at Open Days and for successfully completing placements, which will help them find success in the future. Congratulations also to our new graduates, who we’re now pleased to welcome as new members of our alumni!

My term as Head of School has come to an end, and I wish my successor, Professor Uma Kambhampati, all the best for her term. I would like to thank all the staff and students for their contributions and support, and in particular our fantastic administrative staff, who have worked extremely hard to ensure that everything runs so smoothly most of the time!

Professor Dominik Zaum
Head of the School of Politics, Economics, and International Relations

Staff with expertise on topics ranging from welfare and immigration to international development and counter-terrorism gave brief presentations on key issues and the ways in which the party manifestos respond – or fail to respond – to them. These presentations led on to thought-provoking questions from and lively discussions with our audience.

The session closed with a ‘Question Time’, in which we invited representatives from the Green Party, UKIP, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats and Labour to participate in a panel, taking turns to answer our audience’s questions.

We were delighted to see audience members from far and wide, from amongst our own students, to local residents and our alumni. One guest commented, ‘it’s been interesting to hear both local and national perspectives’.

We’d like to thank both our participants and our audience, without whom the day would not have been such a lively and engaging occasion. Much of our School’s research directly reflects issues surrounding the election, and it was great to provide a platform for discussing this topic.
STUDENTS HELP IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

Following a successful student placement, Bracknell Forest Borough Council asked if our students would return to help during the busy election period. More than 40 of our students worked in the run up to the general election and during the vote counting from 7th-8th May. Spanning from across both Politics and Economics, our students worked through the evenings to deliver the results!

Students were able to gain an insight ‘behind the scenes’ of a general election at local level, including seeing how votes are counted, and why it takes so long. They also were able to see the various speeches from the winner and losing candidates (at the Parliamentary Count which ended at around 5.45am!)

We hope to continue this new relationship with BFBC and hopefully will be able to ask students to help again for future elections, such as the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in 2016 and also when there is a Referendum on UK membership of the EU.

We are also proud of the successes our students made in gaining political placements this year.

See our placements pages (13-17) under ‘Student Achievements’ for more details.

WHY DON’T YOUNG PEOPLE VOTE?

When Stella met Reading...

‘When you take a phone call asking if a member of Labour’s front bench can come and talk to your students you don’t say no,’ recalled Dr Mark Shanahan who received just such a call in the middle of March. The result was an early-evening meeting for more than 30 politics students with Stella Creasy, MP for Walthamstow and Labour’s Shadow Minister for Competition and Consumer Affairs.

‘I’d been working to set up more engagement opportunities between students and current politicians and this one fell in my lap. Stella was campaigning with the candidate in Reading West, so was heading our way anyway.’

By Dr Mark Shanahan

‘It was incredibly refreshing to witness a young female MP talking about feminism, social justice and such love for her constituency!’

The event was a great success with Stella and local parliamentary candidate Vicky Groulef staying on well past their allotted hour. Third year politics student Hannah Birt said: ‘It was incredibly refreshing to witness a young female MP talking about feminism, social justice and such love for her constituency!’ Her colleague Saranya Kogulathas added: ‘I really enjoyed the event and it was a great chance for us to question what MPs do and the impact they can have within their constituencies. Stella and Vicky had an extremely refreshing approach – they seemed like real people, and talked so openly and honestly. I especially loved hearing them discuss female roles in Parliament, and how Parliament needs to change. I loved how Stella has a campaign to get more women involved in politics.’

But Stella and Vicky didn’t just have an impact on female students. Third year Zander Rawlins added ‘What a fantastic experience. They were inspiring.’

Dr. Stella Creasy MP is currently favourite to succeed Harriet Harman as Labour’s next Deputy Leader.
Our impact during election year

**GENERAL ELECTION PLACEMENTS**

**British Government and Politics Module**

The General Election on 7th May 2015 made this academic year a particularly interesting time for Politics students. Many students from the British Government and Politics module chose to deepen and extend their academic knowledge by doing a two week Easter placement within numerous MP candidate campaign teams across the country. Other students’ chose to do placements within Elections Offices to understand more about Democratic Services of Local Government. Here are some details of the student’s experiences:

**Roxana Lupascu,**
BA Politics and International Relations, Placement with Bracknell Forest Electoral Office

My special thanks are extended to the staff of Bracknell Forest’s Electoral Office, who helped me throughout the placement and provided me with useful data and advice for the report. I had the chance to experience a professional environment – every person had particular tasks, but still they were helping each other, which made me realise how important and efficient it is to work in a team.

It was interesting to see that I actually wanted to do even more work outside my research, which made me realise that I would consider this type of workplace when I will apply for a job after graduation.

Overall, it was a great experience. I discovered things about my personality and determination and it made me realise that working in an office is not as boring as it may sound because actually, people are very active, trying to accomplish all the tasks they are required to.

**Karmpreet Heran,**
BA Politics and Economics, Placement with the campaign team for Seema Malhotra, Labour MP candidate for Feltham and Heston

For the British Government and Politics module I chose to do a placement with my local MP candidate back home in the Feltham and Heston constituency. It was a hectic time as I joined the campaign team during the 2015 general election campaign and there was a lot of competition from other parties. Working with Seema Malhotra was an inspiration as she is an Asian woman fighting hard to raise the status of women and ethnic minorities in politics. I learnt a great deal from watching her campaign as well as actively getting involved in canvassing and answering calls from councillors. I had a number of roles including going door-to-door to promote the party, organising high-profile events for Seema and even advising her on questions she had to answer for a radio interview. One of the best parts of the work experience was going to other constituencies and helping them with their campaign as I had the opportunity to meet loads of influential people. I also had the chance to campaign alongside Eddie Izzard when he helped MP candidate Ruth Cadbury in the neighbouring Brentford and Isleworth constituency. This placement was a great chance to see the day-to-day roles of an MP candidate’s office, especially with someone who is extremely powerful in politics today.
GREECE’S YEAR IN POLITICS

2015 has been a critical year for Greek politics. Following the elections of January 25th, the radical left – radical right, SYRIZA (Coalition for the Radical Left) – ANEL (Independent Greeks) coalition government embarked on its anti-austerity platform, bringing the country in direct confrontation with its EU lenders. Following a series of difficult negotiations between January and June, the country defaulted after missing its debt repayment due on June 30th, resulting in bank closures and the imposition of capital controls. The PM announced a referendum, held on July 5th, leaving the Greek people to decide whether they accept the terms and conditions proposed by the lenders. In a climate of economic and political instability, the Greek people voted overwhelmingly ‘No’, while the referendum itself was criticized for posing a complicated question, which for many was perceived as a decision on Greece’s continued membership in the eurozone, and for further polarizing an already deeply divided society. While further negotiations led to Greece’s acceptance of a third bailout, with terms and conditions far harsher than those previously signed, capital controls remain in place and the political scene remains unstable. SYRIZA is divided between MPs who support the PM’s decisions to keep Greece in the Eurozone by signing a harsh agreement, and the ‘left platform’ who are openly in opposition to the PM, many even supporting a return to the drachma. Amidst this climate of instability, with SYRIZA now divided and increasing popular discontent, the questions that remain are how the Greek government will proceed to manage the crisis and what opportunities this may pose to extreme parties such as the Golden Dawn.

Dr Halikiopoulou has been actively involved with these events. Working with other academics she participated in the ‘Yes’ campaign in Athens. In terms of public outreach she has carried out over 30 TV and Radio interviews in the past few months, including BBC News Channel, France 24, BBC World Service, BBC Radio 4 Today Programme, BBC Radio Berkshire, BBC London and BBC Radio Scotland. She has also written op-eds and briefs, published in various newspapers and newsites, including The Independent, Newsweek, the Scotsman and the Huffington Post as well as leading Greek outlets including Lifo and To Vima. Many of her interviews were syndicated to outlets beyond Europe, including BBC Radio Asia and US NPR, while she was also interviewed on the longer term origins and consequences of Greek nationalism by the US Point of inquiry.

Abigail Ho,
BA Politics and International Relations,
Placement with the campaign team Rob Wilson, Conservative MP for Reading East

My placement was with Rob Wilson, the Conservative MP for Reading East. For me, the most exciting part of my placement was the fact that it took place during the run up to quite an unpredictable election. The majority of what I did during my placement was canvassing, which meant I was able to hear what influenced the voting intentions of a wide range of constituents, and also Rob’s involvement in individual cases, which was really interesting. I was also able to go to the count on polling day. There I saw the results of what my placement had been working towards and also learned a bit about what actually is involved in counting the votes. It was great to see the hard work of Rob and his campaign team pay off.
NEW STAFF INTRODUCTIONS

As we step into the next academic year, we are happy to have several new members of staff join the school. We look forward to welcoming the following members of staff to our team:

- Ferdinand Vieider (Professor in Economics)
- Sophie Clot (Lecturer in Economics)
- Tom Long (Lecturer in IR)
- Sarah von Billerbeck (Lecturer in International Relations)
- Robert Jubb (Lecturer in Political Theory)
- Damian Raess (Lecturer in Global Political Economy)
- Martin Binder (Lecturer in International Institutions)

Below are profiles for a couple of these new members of staff, who we have been lucky enough to catch up with prior to their start date!
Sarah von Billerbeck

Dr Sarah von Billerbeck holds a DPhil in International Relations from the University of Oxford, an MS in Foreign Service from Georgetown University, and a BA from the University of California, Berkeley. Before joining Reading, she was a Lecturer in International Relations in the Department of War Studies at King’s College London. Her research focuses on conflict, peacekeeping/peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, the United Nations, and legitimacy and legitimation. Her area focus is D.R. Congo and Sub-Saharan Africa more generally. She has a book forthcoming on local ownership and UN peace operations (with Oxford University Press), and she has also conducted research on post-conflict aid and corruption and on peacekeeping, aid, and development. She has worked for the American Refugee Committee in Guinea, the UN peacekeeping mission in D.R. Congo (MONUC), and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in Lebanon. She serves as a consultant for various think tanks, international organizations, and private risk consultancies.

At Reading, she will be starting a new research project on institutional self-legitimation, examining how international organizations seek to legitimize themselves not for external audiences, but internally, as a way of developing and affirming their identities. She is also interested in exploring methodological issues related to the study of international organizations and multilateralism and post-conflict peace building.

Robert Jubb

Robert Jubb comes to Reading from the Department of Politics and International Relations at Leicester, where he has been since 2013. Before that, he worked at UCL and Oxford, where he did his doctorate. He has taught both undergraduates and graduates, and is looking forward to helping Reading’s students get to grips with the normative and evaluative dimensions of our political world.

His research focuses on two main topics, our individual and collective responsibility for injustices and methodological questions in political theory and philosophy. He hopes to be able to contribute to Professor McKinnon’s work on climate justice through his own research on responsibility for wrongdoing – as well as developing methodologically sophisticated work on appropriate responses to various forms of social exclusion and marginalization. His work has been published in Journal of Politics, Political Studies and Journal of Moral Philosophy, and he is the Reviews Editor for European Journal of Political Theory.
The global reach of our teaching is a notable area for our School, and one development over the past year is our partnership with the Nanjing University of Information Science & Technology (NUIST). This partnership enables students studying at NUIST to join us here at Reading for their final year of undergraduate study. Dr Simon Burke tells us more...

By Dr Simon Burke

The Department of Economics and the School of Economics and Management of Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology (NUIST) have established a jointly taught undergraduate degree, the BSc Business Economics and Trade. Under this programme students study the first three years in Nanjing before moving to Reading for their final year. The degree has recruited its first 41 students and teaching began in September 2014. The structure of the programme involves staff from Reading participating in the delivery of lectures and working with the students in Nanjing.

In December 2014, Dr Andi Nygaard, who has designed and led the project, and Dr Simon Burke, travelled to China for two weeks to meet colleagues and students and to teach. Concentrated versions of two first year modules were delivered. The students were extremely hard working and patient with us, adding our lectures to an already crowded schedule so that on some days they saw us first at 8.00am in the morning and then again later in the day, finishing after 8.00pm! Although only in their first year the students are focused on coming to Reading and very much looking forward to doing so.

The NUIST campus is about an hour’s drive from the centre of Nanjing. In case you don’t know Nanjing it is BIG, a city of about 8 million people. The industrial development is breath-taking to those of us used to the post-industrial UK. Travelling to the city centre it is necessary to cross the Yangtze River. This is lined with heavy industrial factories and the river itself is busy with commercial traffic. More centrally and in the surrounding area there are some beautiful parks, buildings and ancient monuments.

A strong link has been established with NUIST colleagues Dr Hui Zhou (Vice Dean NUIST-Reading College) and Dr Xianhua Wu (Dean of School of Economics and Management) whose hard work and commitment has been crucial to the success of the venture. The Department of Economics has also welcomed two long-term visitors from NUIST, Drs Yuanyuan He and Ling Fang. In a wider development, a NUIST-Reading College is in the process of being established under the auspices of which a number of similar programmes in other subjects will operate replicating the leading examples of the Departments of Economics and Chemistry.

Finally, the Department of Economics will be offering up to two Reading based students the opportunity to travel to Nanjing to experience this very energetic and ambitious society. They will meet fellow students, participate in lectures and help make Reading seem all the more real to those studying on the BSc Business Economics and Trade programme.
POLITICS AND EDUCATION CREATE BESPOKE ARMY TRAINING

The School of Politics, Economics and International Relations will soon deliver a short non-examined programme on International Relations to army professionals. This will provide an introduction to the subject for ETS (Education and Training Services) officers enrolled on the part-time PGCE course run by the Institute of Education at the University of Reading. The course will consist of ten lectures and three additional seminar based events. It will culminate in a two hour witness seminar using Visiting Professors from the Department of Politics and International Relations. The programme is based on a second year undergraduate course, Modern International Relations. It will expose ETS officers to the subject matter through experts within the Department. The programme will benefit the ETS branch given this professionally relevant intellectual supplement that enhances the PGCE qualification. ETS officers will also have full access to SPEIR’s Ways of War Centre and the ongoing, vibrant programme of events which this group organises on a regular basis as well as full day conferences.

TEACHING EXCELLENCE FOR SPEIR

Dr Emma Mayhew receives teaching awards

This March, Dr Emma Mayhew was awarded the prestigious Sir Bernard Crick Award for Outstanding Teaching by John Bercow, Speaker of the House of Commons, at a ceremony in Sheffield’s historic Cutlers’ Hall. The judging panel awarded the prize on the basis of Emma’s outstanding teaching and learning excellence, student support provision as well as successful innovation and leadership recognised by colleagues across the HE community. This ceremony came just two weeks after she was awarded the RUSU Technological Innovation in Teaching Excellence Award for her use of screen capture and video feedback. Emma said ‘I am absolutely thrilled to win these awards, both of which are important in terms of increasing the profile of teaching and learning at Reading and supporting innovation across the HE sector’.

Emma joined the Department of Politics and International Relations in 2007. She is currently School Director of Teaching and Learning for the School of Politics, Economics and International Relations. She has recently become a University Teaching Fellow and Senior Fellow of the HEA.
WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT ECONOMICS...

By Dr Simon Burke

There has been some criticism, much of it poorly focussed, that economics as taught in universities fails to stimulate and fails to address important issues by adopting an overly-technical approach. Whether you tend to this view or not, the weekly ‘Conversations’ sessions, organised jointly by staff and students of the Department of Economics provide a good dose of reality and stimulate much interest. These lunchtime sessions came out of discussions with the flourishing student-led Economics Society. They provide a forum for students and staff to meet and discuss topical issues from an economics point of view.

One of the features of these events is that they attract a wide range of students. This year there has been a good mix of post-graduate and undergraduate students (including an especially active group of first years), and staff. Students from outside economics also attended, having heard about the sessions and being interested in what we were talking about. One especially enjoyable event, requested by students, dealt with freedom of speech and was aimed at members of both departments of the school, Politics & International Relations and Economics.

Recent events tend to determine what is discussed, and anyone can make a suggestion a couple of days in advance. We start with a brief introduction from someone, either staff or students. These have been provided by all levels of students (undergraduate, masters and PhD) as well as staff. The problem is usually trying to keep people to the point and rigorous in their argument – but perhaps this isn’t a problem at all since it means people have the chance to express a view, perhaps drift, and then be challenged by others. One way or another, we frequently run out of time.

To give a flavour of the sorts of things covered, this year we discussed party political promises, inequality, Scottish independence, feminist economics, globalisation and Africa, and the Chinese economy. The last of these was illuminated by contributions from Chinese students present. Other sessions included the economics of Christmas (with pizzas), bribery and corruption, the Ebola outbreak and the European debt crisis.

The conversations also provide part of the background for the Department of Economics Peter Hart Prize. This has been essay based in the past, but most recently was awarded to Matt Twells, president of the Economics Society. Amongst a number of other things, he continued the work of his predecessors in the society and helped to make the conversations sessions a lively and sociable forum for debate.
This year, many students of the School have chosen to take part in a diverse range of work placements as part of their degree studies, for which they receive academic credit. These placements have helped the students to extend their academic knowledge, by applying it in a practical way in a varied range of placement settings.

Forty students in the School have taken part in placements this year, including a variety of one year internships, work experience for our stand alone placement module and two week placements for the British Government and Politics module. Also an increasing number of students have completed placements as part of their MA in Public Policy. The feedback from the organisations has been excellent; the placement hosts have praised the student’s energy, eagerness to learn and contribution.

The placement learning they have gained will count towards their final degree result and will certainly help students when it comes to making decisions about future career paths. Many students have or are taking part in volunteering and summer internships that do not count towards their final degree, but will certainly enhance their employability skills.

In the Easter holidays, many students took part in the mini placement option within the British Government and Politics Module. The vast majority of students decided to get directly involved in the 2015 General Election, joining Conservative, Labour and Green Party MP candidate’s
campaign teams and also Local Government electoral offices. Other students enjoyed placements at newspapers and in communication consultancies. Several students took advantage of the existing local links that The Politics and International Relations Department has with local MPs and councillors in the Reading area.

A number of students took part in a placement as part of the standalone placement module. These students included Melissa Powley who spent three weeks within the External Relations Department at Parkinson’s UK in London and also Rachelle Tchiprout who travelled to Tel Aviv in Israel to do an internship at The Peres Centre for Peace.

A number of students this summer are taking the placement option as part of the MA in Public Policy, spending time in Policy teams within Local Government, NGOs, charities and Aid agencies.

We look forward to welcoming 13 year out placement students back to the School for their final year of study in 2015–16. They have completed placements in a diverse range of sectors including Banking, Consultancy, Entertainment, Government and Technology. They are returning from Bottomline Technologies, Disney, Fujitsu, Grant Thornton, IBM Lloyds Bank, Majestic Wines, PwC, The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, The Home Office, The Office for National Statistics and UBS. We are delighted with the diversity of placements and sectors that these students have achieved and look forward to hearing all about their experiences.

We wish luck to all those students taking part in summer internships and beginning their year long placements this summer. In particular, we have students starting their year out placements at Baker Tilly, HM Treasury, IBM, Intel, Reading University Students Union, The Home Office, The Department of Work and Pensions and SyQic. We look forward to sharing details of their placements in next year’s Annual Review.

The following testimonials included in this year’s review document a few of the work experience opportunities students have taken part in over the last year.

**Poppy Small: Grant Thornton**

For the last 13 months I have been undertaking a placement role in the Wealth Advisory team with Grant Thornton UK LLP. Effectively, I have been working alongside qualified Financial Advisors to review clients’ long-term investment and pension portfolios and provide recommendations to ensure their investments remain suitable whilst utilising the tax exemptions and allowances available to them. Among other things, my responsibilities have included report writing, spreadsheet building and analysis and answering client queries. I have also had the opportunity to work toward the Certificate in Financial Planning, a level 3 qualification with the Chartered Insurance Institute.

Throughout the last year I have not only learnt masses about Wealth Advisory and financial services, but I have also learnt a huge amount about myself. I have realised that I learn the best in a hands-on environment where I can see and fully understand how and why things are as they are. More than anything however I have noticed my drive and need to work in a fast paced environment; the days I enjoy most are those that are jam packed with things to do!

Whilst I am still unsure as to the career I wish to pursue, this last year has helped me to really hone in on my personal strengths and the type of work I enjoy the most and narrow down what I am looking for in a graduate role. Even though there may not be the right opportunity available for me at Grant Thornton, I feel the past year has given me a lot more direction and set me in good stead for any future in the business world.
Philip Callen: Bottomline Technologies

After two years of undergraduate study I was given the opportunity to take a year in industry before returning to university. I had heard how rewarding this experience could be and was keen to try something outside the realms of economics.

I started at Bottomline Technologies in July 2014 and was overwhelmed by the welcome that I received. The company had just begun its intern and graduate programmes and I was one of four placement students starting at this time. Working for a fast growing medium sized company meant there was tremendous opportunity and the ability to interact with all parts of the business.

Bottomline Technologies is a NASDAQ listed company. In the UK Bottomline provides payment, document processing and financial messaging solutions both in the cloud and as deployed software.

My job was within the payments team in the product department. I was involved with both product management and product marketing. Within software companies the product teams have a central business function looking after the roadmap and future developments of the business’s products. This involves looking outwards into the marketplace to see what businesses want to buy and managing development teams.

I undertook a plethora of different tasks over my year. This included examination and reporting on sales data, providing competitive analysis and implementing a cost reduction strategy. I really enjoyed the variety that came with my job; the highlight for me was co-managing a support initiative that had company wide impact.

I was extremely lucky to work with some talented and experienced people. While working at the company I started running with my colleagues, eventually training and completing the Reading half marathon together.

I found that my previous studies helped me enormously in understanding business incentives; the analytical skills that I have acquired while at university were priceless. I look forward to finishing my degree, I am certain that my final year will be enhanced for undertaking a placement.

Louise-Jayne Watts: Sandwich Year at the Home Office (HO)

The GES is the UK’s largest recruiter of economists, with over 1400 professionals in more than 30 Departments and Agencies. This large economist community makes the GES a great place to launch your career as an economist and is what attracted me to do my year’s placement with them. I chose the Home Office (HO) because it is the leading government department for immigration and passports, drugs policy, crime, counter-terrorism and police.

The main project I worked on was the HO Benefits Framework. This involved working with a variety of teams to improve the realisation of benefits resulting from investments made by the Home Office. To improve the realisation of benefits, I reviewed previous delivered benefits and split them into categories that align with the HO key investment objectives. I then created a tool which details how benefits should be recorded and tracked to increase the chances of them being realised. The end result was a Benefits Realisation tool with guidance which business cases are now using when writing investment proposals.

This placement has taught me a huge range of skills, to name a few; how to effectively communicate with a range of audiences, receive and give feedback, confidently chair meetings and efficiently prioritise workload. It showed me what is involved in being a government economist, how policy decisions are made and what it is like commuting to London! My placement has also given me an insight into the work I would like to do after I graduate and I will definitely be applying to the Government Economic Service Fast Stream.
Harry Martin: Placement Year at The Walt Disney Company

For the past year I have been working at The Walt Disney Company at their European head office in London in the role of Sales Planning and Retail Insights intern. Disney is a vast company best known for its studios department releasing films like Frozen, The Lion King and Avengers: Age of Ultron. However creating films is just one segment of a company that is complex and constantly evolving. I worked in Disney Consumer Products which looks after the retail and merchandising aspect of the business.

I was in the Retail Finance section of the department, specifically the Retail Insights team. My role was to maintain our EPOS data warehouse, and using data from this to provide analysis to support the UK Retail Team with insights to drive informed decision making. A typical week would involve visiting stores to collect product information to ensure our data was accurate, inputting this data into the Disney language to ensure consistency and finally providing analysis on an ad hoc basis to inform the teams on how we were performing commercially.

Taking part in my placement has developed my skills in a way that I could not have hoped to achieve without it. Firstly my excel skills improved significantly as straight away I was in a role that relied on the use of advanced formulas and commercial use of the program. This will stand me in great stead heading into the workplace. My communication skills have also developed as I had to work with a variety of both internal and external stakeholders on a daily basis. I also learnt how to apply my analytical skills to a business context and be commercially aware which will stand me in great stead not only for future employment but in the final year of my degree.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the job was being able to see tangible outcomes for your work. On one project for example the analysis I provided decided the outcome of a multi-million pound retailer deal. Another aspect I found really made my year a positive experience was the culture of Disney. Unlike many other workplaces it had a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere, characterised by the character themed meeting rooms, product filled office space and a very relaxed dress code. One of the worries that I had when deciding whether to take a placement year was the worry of not having much of a social life due to the job. However at Disney there are about 150 Interns and the social side is really promoted with events and drinks happening almost every week.

I would thoroughly recommend students to undertake a work placement for three main reasons. Firstly having a year at a reputable company on your CV increases your employability immensely and will put you ahead of other applicants who have limited or no work experience. Secondly it is a fantastic stepping stone between University and employment which will mean the jump from studying to work will be much easier. Finally the skills learnt during the year are also transferable to the final year at university as well as your future career.
Rachelle Tchiprout (War, Peace and International Relations BA)

During the summer of 2014, I had the amazing opportunity to intern at the Peres Center for Peace – a non-profit, non-political NGO based in Tel Aviv, Israel. The ethos of the Peres Center is one that promotes lasting peace and advancement in the Middle East by fostering tolerance, economic and technological development, cooperation and well-being – all in the spirit of Shimon Peres’ vision.

When I stumbled across the website for the Peres Center and read that they take and encourage summer interns – I immediately jumped on the case. I knew that this would be perfect for me in considering how relevant the internship was to my degree course. After studying for two years I had become somewhat of an NGO sceptic – therefore I wanted to embed myself in an NGO whose values I believed in to see if I could change my opinions.

My internship role was in the Peres Center’s external relations division. Their job is to manage the donations, social media, events and general organisation of the NGO’s work. As an intern, I was given responsibility over a range of things – from updating the website to dealing with donations. I was always busy with a task. The location of the Peres Center and the building itself were fascinating to me – as they had both been consciously chosen to promote the neutrality and openness of the Center and its mission. Based on the sea in a predominantly Arab area, the building itself is designed to be large and open and a beacon of light at night.

I learned so much in my summer in Israel. I am fortunate enough to speak Hebrew and to have family there so that allowed me to integrate myself well into the culture and to work at the Peres Center as if I was a permanent employee! I had a deep insight into the type of charity work that the Center does – trying to bridge the gap between the Israelis and Arabs in the region to show them that they are all people with the same needs and goals and that the best way to move forward is to move forward together. Although my NGO scepticism perhaps didn’t change, I have learned to differentiate between the difficulty of achieving an overall political goal and simply effecting the lives of individuals – as the Peres Center does in many of its projects.
GRADUATION CELEBRATIONS!

We’d like to welcome and congratulate the newest members of our alumni, our 2015 graduates! We are proud of your achievements and wish you the best of luck for the future. Keep in touch!
ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

Here are two of our alumni who have recently been in touch to let us know how they’ve been getting on. From volunteering overseas to a career in the BBC, we’re eager to hear how their time here helped them to get where they are now!

Lee Dobinson, MSc Business Economics (2006)
I completed the MSc Business Economics and Policy programme at University of Reading in 2006. In 2007, I joined the Government Economic Service as an assistant economist. Since 2007, I have had posts in a number of central government departments, including Communities and Local Government, Department for Transport, Department of Food and Rural Affairs and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. In doing so, I have applied economics in a number of different policy areas, including housing markets, shipping and industrial support. My current post is in the Shareholder Executive, and I provide economic analysis and advice on a number of government-owned assets, including Green Investment Bank and Land Registry.

Navshika Beeharry, BA Politics and Economics (2010)
Despite graduating in 2010 amidst a recession where all government jobs were frozen, my degree compensated for my lack of experience by demonstrating my commitment and understanding of a career in this field. This helped me obtain voluntary work at my local council which served as an opportunity to demonstrate my potential and build a career in local government, followed by my accomplishment of an MSc and overseas international development work, most recently.

When presented with the prospect of working overseas it was my familiarity with African development issues which I obtained through my degree, that helped me mentally prepare for the work I would become involved with. In addition, my practical skills – e.g. public speaking when delivering seminar presentations and learning how to apply research methods for my dissertation – gave me the tools I required for my 3 month Sexual & Reproductive Health youth project in Tanzania where I had to facilitate cross-cultural learning to large audiences of students, as well as implementing Monitoring & Evaluation through conducting and analysing surveys to measure the overall project impact.

I enjoyed the variety of skills I gained during my time at Reading, and it provided me with the opportunity to work with students from all backgrounds, to challenge theoretical knowledge with practical experience. My favourite memory from Reading was Graduation Day. It was the ultimate recognition of all my hard work throughout my degree and the moment where I realised that I had transitioned from a timid 18 year-old girl who was new to Reading, to an ambitious young lady ready to take on the world!
RESEARCH
AND POLICY
ACTIVITIES

OUR YEAR IN RESEARCH

By Professor Catriona McKinnon

Politics and International Relations
Politics staff submitted as a Politics and International Studies Unit of Assessment. They were ranked 20th out of 56 returns, with an overall GPA of 2.91. The ranking for outputs placed Politics 10th in the country with a GPA of 2.91: 66% of Politics’ research outputs were ranked world-leading or internationally excellent. 80% of our research was judged to have outstanding or very considerable impacts (GPA 2.93). And 50% of our research environment was judged as conducive to producing research of world leading or internationally excellent quality (GPA 2.88).

Economics
Economics staff was submitted to three Units of Assessment – Business and Management, Geography, and Classics. The Reading Business and Management entry was ranked 16th nationally by GPA (out of 101), with a GPA of 3.11 with 72% of research output being rated world leading or internationally excellent. It was ranked 10th in the country for impact with 100% of its impact being rated 3* or 4*. The Geography entry was ranked 53rd nationally by GPA (which was 2.51), but it was ranked 38th by research power. 57% of the research output of this entry was rated internationally excellent or world leading and 50% of its impact was considered considerable. Finally, one member of staff was entered into the Classics UoA which was ranked 6th in the country with a GPA of 3.16. It was ranked 3rd in terms of quality of research outputs in the country with 82% of its research outputs being rated world leading or internationally excellent and 100% of its impact being rated outstanding or very considerable.
Climate change is one of the most urgent issues facing humanity. Climate scientists have made significant progress in understanding the causes and likely environmental impacts of climate change, while social scientists and philosophers are addressing the political, ethical and legal challenges presented by climate change. What all parties recognise is missing, however, is a body of academics and advisers with sufficient understanding of both the scientific and justice aspects of climate change to enable key research issues to be addressed and appropriate policy to be developed.

To help fill this gap, the Leverhulme Trust have awarded Professor Catriona McKinnon a Doctoral Scholarships grant worth £1 million over five years. As Director of the Programme, Professor McKinnon is joined by Dr Chuks Okereke from the Department of Geography and Environmental Science as the Associate Director. The Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships Programme in Climate Justice will produce a cohort of post-doctoral experts with the required breadth of knowledge and understanding to enable the development and implementation of just climate policies. The five year programme will provide funding to up to 15 doctoral students to undertake research across a range of areas related to Climate Justice. A pool of academics drawn from the Departments of Economics, Geography, Law, Meteorology, Philosophy and Politics & International Relations will provide supervision, teaching and support to the Leverhulme Trust Doctoral Scholars. The ground-breaking interdisciplinary research that will be undertaken by these students will open intellectual and policy frontiers and will pave the way for future generations of scholars and practitioners. In 2017–18 a Centre for Climate and Justice will be established at the university as a legacy of the Leverhulme Programme.

Five students will join the programme in each of the next three years, with the first cohort of Leverhulme Trust Doctoral Scholars joining the university in September 2015.
Student Wellbeing project

By Dr Antonia Fernandez and Mr Max James

Wellbeing affects an individual’s experience while at university and at work, having important implications for students’ productivity while in tertiary education and on their future employability after university. Students in higher education are in transition – from childhood to adulthood, from dependence on parents to independence – and they are at the point of making decisions which will affect their futures. The scope for intervention is thus both wider and more likely to lead to long lasting changes translating into better life attainments across a range of domains that extend beyond university and the workplace.

The Student Wellbeing Project was set up in 2011 to study how student wellbeing, performance, productivity and satisfaction with university provision are related. Our project aims not just to better understand these links, but also to help both students and university services better tackle problems as they arise. The project has an interdisciplinary project team led by wellbeing researchers from the Department of Economics. The team consists of Associate Professor Marina Della Giusta, Dr Antonia Fernandez, Associate Professor Simon Burke, Dr Sarah Jewell, Dr James Reade and Mr Max James from the Department of Economics, Professor Patricia Riddell who is Head of the Psychology Department and Associate Professor Giuseppe Di Fatta from the School of Systems Engineering.

To date over 2,500 students at Reading have been surveyed to discover what determines their wellbeing while at university and how wellbeing is linked to academic performance. The team uses a combination of student surveys, focus groups and are in the process of developing an App that will be used to measure wellbeing.

The Student Wellbeing Project team have held several events this year including the Policy in Practice workshop on 15 June 2015 on ‘Student Wellbeing in Tertiary Education’ as well as an Economics Society Lecture, a research in progress seminar within the Department and a presentation which is being planned for the Oxford Education Research Symposium in August 2015. The early findings from this research project make fascinating reading. We find that students’ overall satisfaction with life mirrors the UK population more generally and that the overall determinants of wellbeing are health, finances and accommodation. In addition, students who expect to do well in their final degree class are more likely to be satisfied with life, suggesting a link between expectations, academic performance and wellbeing that merits further investigation.
HOUSING RESEARCH IN ECONOMICS

The Economics Department has a long history of research in housing, based in the International Centre for Housing and Urban Economics. Most of its research has been applied in nature, focussing on the key policy issues of the day and interacting closely with government departments. Over the last ten years, analysis has been based around a Reading-developed econometric model of housing markets, which has been extensively used within the Department of Communities and Local Government (the government department responsible for housing). This year a team consisting of Geoff Meen, Vivien Burrows and Andi Nygaard were commissioned to undertake a major revision exercise to reflect new policy concerns.

Housing reform remains high on the government’s agenda reflecting the concerns of the population as a whole. These include falling home-ownership rates for young households, related affordability problems and the lack of an adequate housing supply. The basic problem is that everyone accepts more housing is required, but no-one wants building close to them or on green field sites. But these competing objectives are inconsistent.

The election of a new Conservative Government in May has brought a new housing agenda, a new Housing Bill, reflecting the Government’s manifesto and a series of housing-related measures in the July Budget. These have included plans to sell off Housing Association homes to their tenants, ambitious plans to expand the number of first-time buyers under the age of 40, the relaxation of planning laws, and the removal of tax relief for Buy-to-Let landlords, a market that has expanded rapidly in recent years. The Reading team has been involved in the evaluation of all these measures, through its modelling work. Our research is also examining the extent to which increases in social housing ‘crowds out’ private housing and the differential effects on affordability of constructing different types of homes in different locations. Overall, it has been a busy summer.

The members of the Centre are also interested in housing in a long-run context. Our view is that too much of housing policy is geared towards the short term, although, by its nature, housing has long-term consequences. Our research is to be published in a book early in 2016. Amongst the more unusual aspects is an analysis of the extent to which modern distributions of house prices still partly reflect geological patterns, which were important when cities were originally established, but have little economic significance today. More broadly, the book promises to be highly controversial.
CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENTS

THE WAYS OF WAR CENTRE

By Professor Alan Cromartie

The Ways of War Centre, based in SPEIR, brings together Reading scholars with an interest in war from right across the university. It was founded to continue the work of our Leverhulme Major Programme, The Liberal Way of War, and it builds upon the great tradition of Strategic Studies established by Professor Colin Gray. Under its Co-Directors Beatrice Heuser and Geoff Sloan, it is becoming an important resource both for those who wish to investigate the way that wars are fought and also for professionals who would like to fight them better. But the Centre is not just a silo for the military-minded – it includes historians, modern linguists, specialists on the Middle East, and experts on Film Studies – and its members believe that the study of war should be fully integrated into other forms of academic study.

This year has seen two notable publications arising from work done within the Centre: the collection of essays edited by Alan Cromartie, Liberal Wars: Anglo-American strategy, ideology and practice (Routledge, 2015); and Major-General Christopher Elliott’s devastating analysis of recent British military failures, High Command: British military leadership in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars (Oxford, 2015). The Centre’s events have ranged from the successful workshop ‘An eye and ear for conflict’ (12th November 2014), which examined war’s relationship with the visual arts, through conferences for defence professionals on British Defence after Afghanistan (27th February 2015) and Strategy and Higher Education (10th June 2015), to a seminar about the place of battles in national memory (22nd May 2015). We also played host to study days for groups within the Army and the Navy intended to help both services to broaden the horizons of future military leadership. No similar Centre has such broad ambitions; while the world remains a violent place, few can hope to be so useful.
THE CENTRE FOR INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

The Centre for Institutional Performance (CIP) has organized three events this year, all of which were well attended, with a strong representation of external associates and visitors from the public, private and non-profit sectors.

CIP joined forces with the Centre for Economic History to organise a one-day workshop on ‘From carrying to logistics: distributing goods in Britain, 1680–2045’ on 22 April. The keynote speaker was Roy Edwards of the University of Southampton who examined the legacy of Government intervention in the freight transport sector. He argued that government policy usually struggled to keep up with technological changes in the sector, and often retarded progress by supported vested interests opposed to new developments. He cited the case of the movement from rail to road in the 1920s and the move back to rail in the early 2000s as examples of this.

The morning session focused on the early history of freight transport, with a discussion of waggons and pack-horses, and moved on to railways and ports in the afternoon. The event concluded with a general discussion of current trends and future policy issues.

We also joined forces with the Economic Analysis Research Group to organise a one-day international conference on Pension Policy. This conference was related to the university’s research theme of ‘Prosperity and Resilience’, headed by the Research Dean designate, Prof. Dominik Zaum, who gave the opening address. The conference reflects the University’s commitment to undertaking research that reaches out to the concerns of the public and private sectors in key policy areas.

The topic of the conference is a critical one from the perspective not only of academic economists, but also from the viewpoint of public policy where a discussion of pensions is rarely out of the news, and is vital to the prosperity of the increasing number of the population who are aged 65 or over.

The multi-disciplinary nature of the topic was reflected in speakers and participants from: economics, econometrics, finance, gerontology, history, labour studies and social policy. Dr Vivian (Loughborough University) commented: the conference ‘gave me a strong insight into many of the issues and different perspectives there are relating to Pension policy.’

The conference attracted participants from as far afield as Poland and Mongolia. It was also attended by representatives from the UK’s Department of Work and Pensions, Pensions Policy Institute and the Bank of England.

Finally CIP collaborated with the Archives to Artefacts Network to present a two-day conference to explore opportunities for collaboration between academia, heritage (galleries museums and archives), and agencies responsible for local economic development. The first day of the conference was hosted by the Museum of English Rural Life and the second day by CIP. A fascinating range of topics was covered, including the London gold-refining industry, the US postal service, and nineteenth-century shipping technology.
POLICY IN PRACTICE SEMINARS

By Giovanni Razzu

The School organises a Policy in Practice Seminar Series, which runs during the two teaching terms of Autumn and Spring. This aims to offer students and staff the opportunity to learn about the nature of policy making directly from the policy-making community. Various distinguished speakers share their experience in policy making, whether as senior civil servants, politicians or in other policy making or advisory roles.

This last year, we have had the honour of hosting Margaret Hodge, the chair of the influential Public Accounts Committee in the House of Commons, Tim Yeo (chair of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee), Dame Helen Gosh, former Permanent Secretary in various Government Departments before taking up the role of Director of the National Trust and Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West. They all offered invaluable insights into policy making, discussing the challenges and constraints that they faced in the different roles during their important experiences. We look forward to welcoming a new cohort of interesting speakers to our seminars, over the coming year.

READING ETHICS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

By Patrick Tomlin, Associate Professor in Political Philosophy, Co-Director, REAPP

After a successful launch in 2013–14, REAPP continued to put on exciting events and attracted major funding this year.

In terms of events, the centre hosted a joint seminar with Oxford which played host to China and UK-based theorists to discuss ethical issues around climate change. In November, Patrick Tomlin and Brad Hooker hosted a public event and discussion as part of the national ‘Being Human’ festival. In December, Patrick Tomlin organised a workshop to discuss a book manuscript by Kit Wellman (Washington University). The workshop attracted world-famous philosophers of punishment and self-defence, and further raised the profile of the centre.

In addition, this year our PhD students began to get involved. They set up a reading group: every two weeks up to a dozen PhDs gather and discuss articles in moral and political philosophy under the REAPP banner, and compose blog posts about their reading and discussion. We are also increasingly cross-supervising PhD students between philosophy and politics.

REAPP member and founding Director Catriona McKinnon secured a £1m grant for a doctoral training centre on climate justice. Several REAPP members played a role in the bid, and in choosing the first intake of students.

Looking forward, we are excited about 2015–16. New addition Robert Jubb (politics) will be organising an event on political violence. Our climate ethics series will continue with a conference on ‘Climate Justice after Paris’ (organised by Catriona McKinnon, politics), and new Co-Director Luke Elson (philosophy) will organise an event on Climate Ethics and Decision Theory. In addition, we will be organising internal seminars as we seek to continue to bring normative theorists from across the campus together.
WELL-BEING RESEARCH AT READING

By Dr Antonia Fernandez and Professor Uma Kambhampati

Are happy youth also happy as adults? Does having more power make you more or less happy? These are some of the questions that research within the Department of Economics has tackled over the past year. Research on ‘Happiness economics’ is thriving within the Department of Economics where an active collective of well-being researchers has published two peer-reviewed articles and hosted two workshops this year.

Sarah Jewell and Uma Kambhampati published an article in Social Indicators Research on the link between happiness as youths and as adults. Antonia Fernandez, Marina Della Giusta and Uma Kambhampati published an article in World Development studying how agency is linked to happiness.

On 27 March 2015, the Centre for the study of Developing Economies and Emerging Markets (DEEM) hosted a workshop on ‘Well-being in Developing Countries’ jointly with the DSA study group, Wellbeing and Psycho-social Perspectives in Development. The workshop explored various aspects of well-being including its philosophical dimensions and the centrality of Economics to the identity of individuals and their perception of their well-being. Allister McGregor (Institute of Development Studies, Sussex) asked whether Economics is a good measure of well-being while Sarah White (Bath) found in field research in Zambia that despite trying to shift the discussion of well-being away from the Economic dimension, interviewees consistently saw their overall well-being as tied to their economic wellbeing.

Sridhar Venkatapuram (Kings College, London) took us through a quick history of the study of happiness and well-being and Antonia Fernandez (Reading) discussed work she had done on the impact that agency had on women’s subjective well-being in Indonesia. Laura Camfield (East Anglia) talked about taking a mixed methods approach to research on wellbeing.

This was followed by a Policy in Practice workshop on 15 June 2015 on ‘Student Wellbeing in Tertiary Education’ which was hosted by Associate Professor Marina Della Giusta (Reading), Dr Sarah Morgan (Cabinet Office) and Dr Glen Crust (University of Plymouth). Results from the Student Wellbeing Project were also presented to the student body at the Economics Society Lecture Series hosted by Ernst & Young and at an internal University of Reading research in progress seminar. In addition, Dr Antonia Fernandez will be presenting the findings from the Student Wellbeing Project in August 2015 at the Oxford Education Research Symposium.
THE YEAR AHEAD ...

CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF SPEIR

In the 2014/15 academic year, we marked the 50th anniversaries of both the Economics and Politics Departments. Both were created out of the Department of Political Economy in 1964 and, since 2011, are united again under the roof of the vibrant School of Politics, Economics and International Relations.

As well as celebrating the past 50 years of world-leading research and teaching in both departments, we are also looking forward, and want to build on our undisputed record and strengths in research, teaching, and engagement with the wider world.

A LOOK AT OUR EVENTS CALENDAR

As well as celebrating fifty years for both departments, we will have a comprehensive and varied programme of events to look forward to over the next year.

Keep up with what is new and exciting in SPEIR with our news and events pages.

CLICK HERE TO VIEW UPCOMING EVENTS

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KEEPING IN TOUCH ...

Whether you’re a prospective student, currently studying with us, one of our alumni or from an external organisation, we’d love to hear from you! See below our social media links and contact information.

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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For more information, please contact:

Aly Chesswas
School of Politics, Economics and International Relations
Room 408, HumSS Tower
University of Reading, Whiteknights
Reading, RG6 6AA
a.m.chesswas@reading.ac.uk

www.reading.ac.uk/speir