

# Periodic Review of Politics and International Relations

## Introduction

- 1 An internal review of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in the Department of Politics and International Relations was held on 16 and 17 July 2014. The members of the Panel were:
  - Professor Jane Setter, Head of Department, English Language and Applied Linguistics (Chair)
  - Miss Clarissa Davies-Minta, student member
  - Dr Nicholas Owen, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford
  - Dr Edward Morgan-Jones, School of Politics and International Relations, University of Kent
  - Professor Amy Smith, School of Humanities
  - Dr Samantha Weston, Head of Pharmacy, University of Reading Malaysia
  - Mr Keith Swanson, Head of Quality Support and Development (Secretary)
- 2 The Panel met the following members of staff:
  - Professor Alan Cromartie, Head of Department, Politics and International Relations
  - Dr Emma Mayhew, Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning
  - Dr Andi Nygaard, School Director of Teaching and Learning , Politics, Economics and International Relations
  - Mrs Mary Boitz, School Manager, Politics, Economics and International Relations
  - Dr Jonathan Boyd, Lecturer
  - Dr Dawn Clarke, Sessional Lecturer
  - Dr Brian Feltham, Lecturer
  - Dr Patrick Porter, Associate Professor
  - Dr Alan Renwick, Associate Professor
  - Mrs Melanie Richardson, Departmental Secretary
  - Dr Patrick Tomlin, Lecturer in Political Theory
  - Mrs Caroline Walter, Postgraduate Secretary
- 3 The Panel met students who represented the following degree programmes:
  - BA in Politics and International Relations
  - BA in War, Peace and International Relations
  - MA in Public PolicyThe Panel also met the following former students:
  - Miss Coralie Frost (BA in Politics and International Relations)
  - Mr Yanos Soubieski (BA in Politics and International Relations)

## General observations

- 4 The panel met with a range of staff, students and alumni during the Review process and wishes to thank all who participated for their contribution. The panel was impressed by the Department's recent development of imaginative and creative approaches to teaching and learning and the student experience in its undergraduate programmes, and, in particular, its initiatives to engage students more fully in their academic work and strengthen the sense of an academic community in the Department.

## Academic standards of the programmes

### Educational aims of the provision and the learning outcomes

- 5 In reviewing the educational aims and learning outcomes of programmes, the panel considered a range of evidence, including programme specifications, module descriptions, student handbooks, external examiners' reports, and annual programme reports. It also held a number of meetings with staff and students, and read a sample of undergraduate and postgraduate student work, including dissertations.
- 6 The panel found that the educational aims and learning outcomes were set at the appropriate level and align with the subject benchmark statement. However, the panel considered that skills-related outcomes, though evidently delivered in the programme, were not always explicitly stated in the module descriptions and programme specifications. It was therefore not always clear which skills were delivered through which modules, nor in which assessment they were tested. A more explicit statement at both module and programme level would allow a comprehensive mapping of skills development across the programme and would raise students' awareness of their acquired skills, which could have a positive impact on students' satisfaction and employability. The mapping could usefully indicate how the intended learning outcomes are assessed which would safeguard against their under- and over-assessment. While recognising the excellent range of skills which the Department is developing in its students, the panel recommends that the Department undertake across each programme a mapping of skills to modules and, within modules, to assessment tasks, and that the Department make this mapping information available to students (**Recommendation (a)**).

### Curricula and assessment

#### Curricula

- 7 The panel commended the richness of the curricula across the undergraduate programmes offered by the Department. The range and variety of specialist options was impressive, and was considered by the external panellists to be exceptional for a Department of its relatively small size. The extent of student choice, the broad range of optional modules available, and the commitment to small group teaching fostered enthusiasm and academic engagement among students. The panel identified as a feature of good practice the richness and variety of optional modules offered, which is exceptional given the size of the Department (**Good practice (a)**).
- 8 The panel noted that the Department has recently refreshed the undergraduate curriculum with a wide range of revisions, including: replacing a long-standing, highly traditional Part 1 module with one which has a more contemporary focus; creating a

multi-disciplinary module on Freedom, a Model United Nations module (which was the first such module in the UK when introduced in 2012), and a module on The Media and Politics (which *inter alia* involves participation in a radio show); and substantially revising the Part 2 module (PO2SOP) which now focusses on developing students' research skills and preparing them for working on their dissertation in the final year. While commending the innovative revision of the curriculum more generally, the panel particularly identifies as good practice the attention given to research design and methods in the undergraduate programme, which enables students to be well-prepared for researching and writing their dissertations (**Good practice (b)**).

- 9 The panel welcomes the Department's decision to incorporate into the compulsory module PO2SOP, an introduction to, and practice using, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). However, the panel considers that, notwithstanding this decision, the Department's programmes are at risk of falling significantly short of the normal practice across Politics undergraduate programmes in respect of statistical understanding and experience, especially in analysing big data. Employers now expect political science graduates to have well-developed skills in quantitative data analysis. The panel recommends that the Department further develop applied quantitative data analysis as compulsory components of the programme to maintain employability of graduates in the context of the changing expectations of politics degrees (**Recommendation (b)**). The Department may wish to benefit from the experience of institutions which are engaged in the Q-Step initiative (see <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/q-step>).

#### Assessment

- 10 External Examiners confirm that the standards achieved by students are appropriate to the award and align to external reference points.
- 11 The panel was pleased to note that the School is currently reviewing assessment methods in undergraduate modules with a view to increasing their diversity, promoting student learning, and reducing the assessment load on students. The panel supports the changes which have already been introduced, including the use of assessments which involve applied skills (for example, simulations and radio broadcasts). The panel shares the Department's view that the current assessment load is disproportionate relative to the credit-value of modules, and encourages the Department to reduce the assessment load substantially. The panel recommends that the Department continue its current review of assessment methods across all modules and ensure that the assessment load is proportionate and manageable (**Recommendation (c)**).
- 12 As specified in Recommendation (a) (see paragraph 6, above), the panel believes that, as part of the process of mapping skills for each programme to its constituent modules, the skills identified in each module should also be mapped to the corresponding method of assessment.

#### **Use of student management information**

- 13 The panel was pleased to note that the Department makes extensive use of data from a range of sources, including the NSS, module and programme evaluations, classification data, External Examiners' Reports, and admissions data. It was clear that the Boards of Studies and the Student-Staff Liaison Committees give appropriate consideration to relevant datasets, and that the Annual Programme Report addresses key issues.

- 14 The panel noted that the Department analyses closely both the quantitative and qualitative data in the NSS, and uses the data as a basis for reflection and action. For example, there were relatively poor scores in the responses to the questions whether feedback had clarified areas students had not understood and on the clarity of the marking criteria; this has led to the production of screencasts, available to all students, on 'Looking Deeply at Essay-Marking Criteria' and on 'Advanced Essay-Writing', in addition to other actions. The qualitative data in the NSS, together with competitor analysis based on KIS data, has prompted reflection on the Department's relatively low number of contact hours, and will be discussed further at a forthcoming Board of Studies.

## Quality of learning opportunities offered by the programmes

### Teaching and learning

- 15 The Department has recently undertaken a wide range of initiatives in relation to the undergraduate programme, which have sought to develop more innovative teaching and learning, engage students more fully in the programme, and to build a stronger sense of community within the Department. The panel commends as good practice the recent innovations in teaching and learning, in particular the development of technology-enhanced learning (including a series of screencasts on essay-writing, plagiarism, extenuating circumstances, etc.); the introduction of cake breaks to seminars to encourage social interaction among students and the lecturer; breakfast clubs, funded through the University's Partnerships in Learning and Teaching (PLanT) scheme and attended by staff and students, which worked on redesigning the curriculum; the employment of Academic Skills and Knowhow (ASK) advisors (**Good practice (c)**).
- 16 The Department has a strong commitment to small group teaching, which it believes is particularly important in a subject which has, at its root, argument and debate about highly contested issues and ideas. Seminar groups tend to comprise 10-15 students. Students indicated their appreciation of the small group teaching, and reported that, in groups of this size, all students were able to contribute readily and develop arguments in a challenging, but supportive, context. Students felt that their views were valued. The panel commends as good practice the Department's commitment to, and excellence in, small group teaching (**Good practice (d)**). The panel was concerned, however, that, given the constraints on resource, there might be risks to the sustainability of small group teaching. The panel therefore recommends that the Department consider how best to ensure that the small group teaching remains sustainable and, in particular, consider making increased use of the Department's postgraduate research students as teaching assistants, which would also enhance the employment prospects of research students (**Recommendation (d)**). The panel believes that small group teaching is attractive to prospective students, and could be a factor which differentiates the Department's programmes from its competitors. The panel therefore recommends that the Department promote small group teaching to prospective students as a distinctive and valuable feature of the Department's programmes, possibly through offering a 'taster' seminar at Open Days or a screencast of an excerpt from a seminar on the web (**Recommendation (e)**).
- 17 The panel noted that, within the Department, there was a rich plurality of approaches to teaching which, however, might appear to prospective and current students as a lack of consistency in the student experience. The panel recommends that the Department develop, articulate and publicise to prospective and current students a

clear rationale for the diversity of teaching and learning practice and styles across the School (**Recommendation (f)**).

- 18 The panel noted that the majority of undergraduate modules extend over two terms, and is concerned that this structure may constrain the growth of international study abroad arrangements (for both incoming and outgoing students), the development of joint programmes, and other initiatives. The panel therefore recommends that the Department reflect on the sustainability of the currently predominant pattern of teaching modules over two terms and consider whether there might be advantage, both in terms of pedagogy and sustainability, in containing delivery of a module within a single term, particularly given the factors of internationalisation, interdisciplinarity, closer working with Economics, maintaining range of sub-topics within Politics, and more diverse assessment patterns (**Recommendation (q)**).
- 19 The panel noted that the Department is conducting a review of its postgraduate taught provision in response to a range of concerns, including issues in relation to the curriculum and, in 2012-13, a relatively high failure rate. The Department provides a generally good level of support for international students (including the opportunity to submit additional formative work and language support from the International Study and Language Institute (ISLI)); however, there is some evidence that international students may need further support to derive full benefit from the programme. The panel also has some concern, albeit on the basis of limited evidence, that taught postgraduate students may not all be aware of the academic and pastoral support available, and that the sense of academic community among postgraduate students may be relatively weak. The panel has noted that the Department's innovative approaches to teaching and learning have hitherto been largely confined to undergraduate provision and believes that taught postgraduate provision could benefit from similar initiatives. The panel welcomes the Department's review of its taught postgraduate provision and recommends that the Department include in its review the quality of all aspects of the taught postgraduate academic experience (**Recommendation (g)**). The panel further recommends that it incorporate into its taught postgraduate provision innovative approaches similar to those introduced in undergraduate provision and that it work with ISLI more closely to support international taught postgraduate students (**Recommendation (h)**). The panel supports the School's plan to institute a graduate centre within the School to provide an organisational focus for taught postgraduate provision.

### Feedback to Students

- 20 The panel was informed that the School had introduced the maximum 15-day turnaround time for feedback at the beginning of this session, and that it had worked effectively. The Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning monitors feedback response times and contacts relevant staff where problems arose. All feedback on submitted coursework is made available via Grade Center on Blackboard, which has greatly assisted in monitoring feedback response times.
- 21 The panel reviewed feedback on coursework and dissertations and, on the basis of the sample, believes that feedback is generally of high quality. The panel identifies as good practice the clear and helpful, criteria-based feedback form for undergraduate coursework (**Good Practice (e)**). However, a different, less structured form is used for feedback on undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations and, in consequence, in some instances feedback is generalised and does not provide specific comment which would provide the basis for improving future work. The panel recognises that the dissertation is the final piece of work for a programme and that many students may

not make use of more detailed feedback; however, a significant number of students progress to further study and constructive, detailed feedback would therefore have value. The panel recommends that the Department revise the feedback form for undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations and for postgraduate coursework on the model of the excellent criteria-based undergraduate coursework feedback form (**Recommendation (i)**).

### Support for teaching and learning

- 22 The panel considers that the Department has made impressive progress within a short space of time in developing innovative and engaging approaches to teaching and learning, and applauds those who have taken forward these initiatives. The contribution of the Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning/School Senior Tutor, in particular, has been outstanding.
- 23 The panel has some concern about the sustainability of the current model for supporting teaching and learning and the student experience. The Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning/School Senior Tutor has a very broad remit which ranges from strategic planning to a series of onerous administrative tasks, which might better be assigned to support staff, including monitoring of compliance with feedback deadlines and processing extenuating circumstances. The panel recommends that the Department review administrative support for the Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning and Senior Tutor roles with a view to making more efficient use of resource and enabling a more strategic focus on the development of teaching and learning (**Recommendation (j)**). It is important that this issue is addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure the sustainability of student support and programme management in the longer term.
- 24 The panel was also concerned that the combination of the Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning and Senior Tutor roles imposed an inordinate workload on the individual and also created a potential conflict of interest. The panel did not find evidence of an actual conflict of interest. However, in principle, it would seem preferable to ensure that primary responsibility for pastoral issues and for academic standards should be separated. The panel therefore recommends that the Department review the combination of the Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning and Senior Tutor roles in a single person, with a view to ensuring a reasonable workload and avoidance of potential conflict of interest (**Recommendation (k)**).
- 25 The panel noted that undergraduate students felt that they were well-supported by the personal tutorial system and spoke warmly of the approachability and helpfulness of personal tutors. The panel commends the quality of the pastoral care provided to students (**Good Practice (f)**). However, the panel was concerned that some of the responsibilities which currently fell to the Senior Tutor might more reasonably be assigned to Personal Tutors. The panel also considered that locally-based, professional, non-academic support for the Personal Tutor and Senior Tutor roles might help to ensure the sustainable and efficient provision of high quality support for students. The panel recommends that the Department review the balance of responsibility between Personal Tutors and the Senior Tutor and to consider whether local, professional, non-academic support for these roles would be appropriate (**Recommendation (l)**).
- 26 The panel has noted the important role which the School and Departmental support staff play as the first line of support and advice for students, and it is clear that, in fulfilling this role, they demonstrate sensitivity, good judgement, and a high degree of

professionalism. However, it would be helpful if their practice was underpinned by some formal training. The panel therefore recommends that the Department arrange pastoral training for Departmental support staff (**Recommendation (r)**).

- 27 The panel, in reviewing the departmental website, found it difficult to identify which staff had particular administrative roles in relation to teaching and learning. The panel recommends that the Department identify more clearly on the website which staff hold responsibilities for teaching and learning and the student experience within the School/Department (**Recommendation (m)**).
- 28 The panel noted that the Department's physical space was not immediately welcoming and did not project a strong sense of community. There was no prominent information, close to the main entrance to the Department, about current staff and their responsibilities, and the Departmental Office, unobtrusive and distant from the main entrance, did not appear to offer an immediate point of contact for students or visitors. The panel recommends that the Department create a focussed reception area, including an identification board with staff photographs and indication of roles, and, if feasible, establish a more visible and unified administrative hub within the Department (**Recommendation (s)**). Such improvements might help to foster a stronger sense of identity and community among students and make the Department more attractive to applicants.

### **Student admission and progression**

- 29 The Panel noted that, following a five-year period of significant over-recruitment for undergraduate programmes relative to targets, in 2013/14 the Department under-recruited, which may be attributable to an increase in the Department's tariff in combination with over-recruitment at some Russell Group universities. The Department has identified that its league table position is heavily influenced by the proportion of Firsts and 2:1s (which historically has been low relative to the sector, but is now improving) and the number of contact hours (which is a consequence on the commitment to small group teaching rather than large numbers of large lectures). The panel recognises the Department's dilemma: on the one hand, provision of many large lectures would lead to a high number of contact hours and would improve the Department's position in the league table; while, on the other hand, the Department has a strong belief in the pedagogical benefits of high-quality, small group teaching. As indicated previously in the report, the panel endorses the Department's continuing, principled commitment to highly interactive, small group teaching, but believes that the Department could promote to prospective students the value of small group teaching and its contribution to the quality of the students' learning experience (see para16 and Recommendation (e)).
- 30 More generally, the Department has many distinctive qualities in its undergraduate teaching and learning which could be used to differentiate its programmes from those of competitors, for example, the richness of the curriculum, the level of engagement between staff and students, the innovative modes of teaching and learning, and the practical application of skills. The Department's website and publicity significantly understates these important 'selling points'. The panel recommends that the Department publicise more effectively the impressive, distinctive qualities of the Department and its programmes (**Recommendation (n)**).
- 31 The panel considers that the Department's physical environment is not immediately attractive and might well discourage prospective applicants from applying. The panel recommends that the University invest in refurbishment of the Department's space in

order to enhance its competitiveness with other HEIs (**Recommendation (u)**); see also Recommendation (s)).

- 32 The panel noted that undergraduate progression rates from Part 1 to Part 2, and from Part 2 to Part 3, were within the normal range, and that a number of students transferred, following Part 1, to a joint or single programme in the Department.
- 33 The panel noted that, earlier in 2013/14, the Department had conducted a review of its recruitment to taught postgraduate programmes. In consequence, the Department has taken a range of actions, including improving information on the website, the introduction of online office hours for programme directors when they can be contacted by prospective applicants by Skype, and the introduction of studentships which entail some responsibility for the recipient to serve as an ambassador for the Department.

### Learning resources

- 34 The panel noted that undergraduate and postgraduate students were concerned that there were insufficient copies of key texts for their programmes, and taught postgraduate students were often advised to use other institutions' libraries for recommended texts. While it may be valuable for taught postgraduate students to access additional materials from other libraries, it is a reasonable expectation that materials are generally available in the University Library to support specialist programmes offered by the University. The panel recommends that the Department review library resources to ensure the availability of key texts for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes and of specialist texts for taught postgraduate programmes (**Recommendation (o)**).
- 35 The panel noted the Department's very effective use of a range of electronic resources to support students in their learning, including screencasts and video feedback. Blackboard is generally well-used, with expected variations depending on the teaching style of the module convenor.

### Employer engagement

- 36 The panel is pleased to note that the Department has undertaken a series of initiatives since 2010 to enhance student employability.
- 37 The Department has strongly promoted placements within the undergraduate programme, including a placement-based sandwich year, has integrated an optional placement module in the MA in Public Policy, which is highly valued by students, and is considering extending this model to other MAs. There has been an increasing uptake of placement opportunities. The Department has planned a range of employability-related activities for the Autumn and Spring Term Enhancement Weeks. Career learning sessions, developed with CPEC, are incorporated into the module PO2SOP.
- 38 The panel noted that among students there was relatively poor awareness of the skills which they were acquiring through their programme and their relevance to employment. The panel recommends that, both specifically in the context of careers education and more broadly across the programme, the Department support students to articulate more effectively the skills which they have developed in the course of their programme (**Recommendation (p)**).
- 39 Students from the Department establish careers in a wide range of sectors and professions, and there is therefore no single focus for employer engagement. The



Department has established strong links with the armed forces, which place their staff on taught postgraduate programmes within the Department, and also commission short programmes and workshops from the Department. The relationship also yields benefit to the undergraduate community: for example, a senior army officer is delivering a development session for students as part of the Enhancement Week activities.

## Enhancement of quality and academic provision

- 40 The panel is clear that the Department has a strong commitment to the continual enhancement of its academic provision. This commitment is informed both by a principled sense of the intrinsic value of a rich and intellectually challenging curriculum and by a determination to improve the Department's position in a competitive market. The Department has ensured that, in its range of initiatives, these imperatives are consistent with each other and mutually reinforcing. The curriculum is kept under review and is progressively being revised. As highlighted elsewhere in this Report, the Department makes widespread and appropriate use of a range of external inputs to its programmes, including External Examiners' Reports and NSS data, to improve the quality of its provision.
- 41 The panel considers that the Department has developed an effective partnership with students in relation to the enhancement of its programmes. The Student-Staff Liaison Committee gives constructive consideration to issues in relation to the programme. The Department and students successfully applied for funding, under the University's PLanT scheme, to hold a breakfast club to discuss and develop the curriculum. The breakfast club has been successful, now attracts around 30 or 40 students, and will continue after the funding has ended. The panel has some concern, however, that these processes engage students who are already highly committed and that, as is common, the perspective of students who are less content and less engaged is not captured. The panel therefore recommends that the Department consider processes for extending the range of students who participate in the development of the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum and student experience to include students who are more liable to be disaffected and are less engaged  
**(Recommendation (t)).**

## Main characteristics of the programmes under review

- 42 The Panel considers that the programmes under review offer a rich and intellectually challenging curriculum, which engages students and enables them to develop both their understanding of the discipline and a range of high-level skills useful in employment. The Department is developing innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, and is successfully building a strong sense of an academic community.

## Conclusions on innovation and good practice

- 43 The panel identifies the following as representing particularly good practice:
- (a) The richness and variety of optional modules offered, which is exceptional given the size of the Department;

- (b) The attention given to research design and methods in the undergraduate programme, which enables students to be well-prepared for researching and writing their dissertations;
- (c) Recent innovations in teaching and learning, in particular the development of technology-enhanced learning (including a series of screencasts on essay-writing, plagiarism, extenuating circumstances, etc); the introduction of cake breaks to seminars to encourage social interaction among students and the lecturer; breakfast clubs, funded through the University's PLanT scheme and including staff and students, which worked on redesigning the curriculum; the employment of Academic Skills and Knowhow (ASK) advisors;
- (d) The Department's commitment to, and excellence in, small group teaching;
- (e) The clear and helpful, criteria-based feedback form for undergraduate coursework;
- (f) The quality of pastoral care offered to students.

## Conclusions on quality and standards

- 44 The panel has concluded that the quality and standards of the programmes reviewed are appropriate.

## Procedures for Periodic Review

- 45 The panel noted that the University's procedures for periodic review assigned to the School/Department responsibility for selecting students to meet the panel and did not offer guidance on criteria for selection. Naturally, students who volunteered or made themselves available to appear before a periodic review panel were likely to be the more engaged, committed students and were probably more inclined to have a positive view of the Department and its provision. The panel had certainly been very impressed by the students whom it met or consulted by Skype and phone, and the students, while not uncritical, spoke with great enthusiasm about the Department. However, the panel considered that the periodic review process would benefit from receiving the views of a broader cross-section of students, including students from across the performance range as well as from a range of ethnicities and backgrounds. This would allow the panel to develop a richer understanding of the Department and its programmes. The panel recommends that the University review the periodic review processes to ensure that the views of a more diverse range of students are captured and thereby improve the usefulness of the periodic review (**Recommendation (v)**).

## Recommendations

- 46 The Panel **recommends** to the Faculty Board for Teaching and Learning of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science that the following degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years or, in the case of joint programmes, until the Periodic Review of the other discipline:
- BA Politics and International Relations

- BA Politics and Economics
- BA War, Peace and International Relations
- BA International Relations and Economics
- BA Philosophy, Politics and Economics
- BA English Literature and International Relations
- BA English Literature and Politics
- BA French and International Relations
- BA French and Politics
- BA German and International Relations
- BA German and Politics
- BA History and International Relations
- BA History and Politics
- BA Italian and International Relations
- BA Italian and Politics
- BA Philosophy and International Relations
- BA Philosophy and Politics
- MA Diplomacy
- MA International Relations
- MA International Security Studies
- MA Military History and Strategic Studies
- MA Public Policy (joint with Economics)
- MA Strategic Studies
- MA Security Studies (with MGIMO, Moscow)
- MRes Politics and International Relations

The Panel does not consider that any recommendations must be addressed as a condition of re-approval.

The Panel recommends that the following actions be taken by the School:

**Advisable actions:**

- (a) Undertake across each programme a mapping of skills to modules and, within modules, to assessment tasks, and that the Department make this mapping information available to students;
- (b) Further develop applied quantitative data analysis as compulsory components of the programme to maintain employability of graduates in the context of the changing expectations of politics degrees;
- (c) Continue its current review of assessment methods across all modules and ensure that the assessment load is proportionate and manageable;

- (d) Consider how best to ensure that the small group teaching remains sustainable and, in particular, consider making increased use of the Department's postgraduate research students as teaching assistants, which would also enhance the employment prospects of research students;
- (e) Promote small group teaching to prospective students as a distinctive and valuable feature of the Department's programmes, possibly through offering a 'taster' seminar at Open Days or a screencast of an excerpt from a seminar on the web;
- (f) Develop, articulate, and publicise to prospective and current students a clear rationale for the diversity of teaching and learning practice and styles across the School;
- (g) Include in its review of taught postgraduate programmes the quality of all aspects of the taught postgraduate academic experience;
- (h) Incorporate into its taught postgraduate provision innovative approaches similar to those introduced in undergraduate provision and work with ISLI more closely to support international taught postgraduate students;
- (i) Revise the feedback form for undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations and for postgraduate coursework on the model of the excellent criteria-based undergraduate coursework feedback form;
- (j) Review administrative support for the Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning and Senior Tutor roles with a view to making more efficient use of resource and enabling a more strategic focus on the development of teaching and learning. It is important that this issue is addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure the sustainability of student support and programme management in the longer term.;
- (k) Review the combination of the Departmental Director of Teaching and Learning and Senior Tutor roles in a single person, with a view to ensuring a reasonable workload and avoidance of potential conflict of interest;
- (l) Review the balance of responsibility between Personal Tutors and the Senior Tutor and consider whether local, professional, non-academic support for these roles would be appropriate;
- (m) Identify more clearly on the website which staff hold responsibilities for teaching and learning and the student experience within the School/Department;
- (n) Publicise more effectively the impressive, distinctive qualities of the Department and its programmes
- (o) Review library resources to ensure the availability of key texts for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes and of specialist texts for taught postgraduate programmes
- (p) Support students, both specifically in the context of careers education and more broadly across the programme, to articulate more effectively the skills which they have developed in the course of their programme;

**Desirable:**

- (q) Reflect on the sustainability of the currently predominant pattern of teaching modules over two terms and consider whether there might be advantage, both in terms of pedagogy and sustainability, in containing delivery of a module within a single term, particularly given the factors of internationalisation, interdisciplinarity, closer working with Economics, maintaining range of sub-topics within Politics, and more diverse assessment patterns;
- (r) Arrange pastoral training for Departmental support staff;
- (s) Create a focussed reception area, including an identification board with staff photographs and indication of roles, and, if feasible, establish a more visible and unified administrative hub within the Department;
- (t) Consider processes for extending the range of students who participate in development of the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum and student experience to include students who are less engaged and possibly liable to be more disaffected.

The Panel recommends that the following actions be taken by the University:

**Desirable [University]:**

- (u) Invest in refurbishment of the Department's space in order to enhance its competitiveness with other HEIs;
- (v) Review the periodic review processes to ensure that the views of a more diverse range of students are captured and thereby improve the usefulness of the periodic review.