

Periodic Review Report Template

Department and Faculty	Social Sciences Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences
Date of Review	30-31 October 2018
Review Panel (approved by Academic Registry)	Guy Brown (Chair) , London Campus Director Ryan Bush , Vice President Welfare, Students' Union Paul Jones , Senior Lecturer in Sociology, University of Liverpool Sue Mathieson , Quality and Teaching Excellence Academic, Academic Registry Richard Stockwell , Department of Arts, Director of Learning and Teaching Jimmy Milligan (Facilitator), Approvals and Review Manager, Quality and Teaching Excellence, Academic Registry
Method of Review	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined by Northumbria University Review Framework
Notes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review reports are expected to be short and succinct, typically 3 to 4 sides of A4 Sections highlighted in blue below, together with the header above, make up the published summary of this review. This will be published on the University's Quality and Teaching Excellence web pages (Periodic Review Reports) 	

Section 1	Department Context
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of review: programme areas, staff and students <p>The Department of Social Sciences is one of four academic departments within the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences and consisting of the following subject groups: Criminology; International Relations (IR) & Politics, International Development and Sociology; and Media (since a restructuring of provision in 2015).</p> <p>The provision includes a Social Sciences Foundation Year that feeds into undergraduate programmes within the department, with 175 enrolled students at time of review. There are single honours undergraduate programmes in Criminology, Sociology, International Relations and Politics, and Media and Journalism, as well as several joint programmes, and a Mass Communication framework and completion/top up awards. The Mass Communication framework is also delivered at Kaplan, Singapore as a franchise collaborative venture with just over 200 students. The total undergraduate population at Northumbria campus is 1029 at point of review. The department also has Master's programmes in Criminology and Criminal Justice, International Development, Mass Communication Management, and a newly validated MA in International Relations, Conflict and Security to start in 2019. The postgraduate provision also includes a PG Certificate developed in partnership with Newcastle City Council, with a pathway into the MRes. There are approximately 160 full time and 30 part-time students on taught PG, with about 60 PGR students. At time of writing the self-evaluation document the Department had 53 staff (49 FTE) across the subjects, 90% holding PhDs, and there are now plans to recruit a further 3 FTE. The inter-disciplinary mix of staff allows the department to enhance the learning for students across subjects, and with almost all staff being research active, a high level of research rich learning is embedded within programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main aims of the department <p>Social Sciences aims to deliver programmes within a world-leading and internationally excellent research rich environment, at the 'cutting edge' of contemporary Social Science, characterised by a commitment to 'real world' learning and teaching. The aim is to produce graduates which fully embrace the Northumbria</p>

graduate attributes within their specific Social Science subject discipline, with the confidence and independent skills required of the reflective practitioner and creative, critical thinker. The department prides itself on research excellence, the diverse assessment methods and excellent developmental feedback to students. The department is involved in a range of activities which enhance experiential learning for its students (and by extension their employability) and demonstrates the applied and practical value of the disciplines: collaborative activity with external partners; work placements; and enterprise, knowledge exchange and research activities.

- Further contextual information: physical and organisational location

The Department is based with Lipman building, and much of the teaching is delivered within Lipman and Squires, but does involve other parts of the campus, e.g. Nixon Hall, to accommodate larger lectures and associated activity.

There is a small 'hub' for students on the 2nd floor of Lipman which is totally inadequate for student numbers or group work outside of scheduled classes, and the department has made great efforts to provide open access to students (Squires first floor) and to permit students to use Lipman café area after café closure at 3 pm. The student's (and staff delivering teaching) are highly critical of the estate within Lipman, the building lacks the aesthetic appeal of other areas of the campus which have received more recent developments, and which students see within the open day activity as applicants. There were issues raised with heating/cooling and the early closure of Lipman café for students that study after 3 pm. Students compare the estate with elsewhere and feel undervalued with the differences experienced in the learning environment. A designated student space can only help but build programme and departmental identity.

Section 2	Judgement Criteria	
Focus of judgements	Judgements	Outcome
The setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards	• meets UK and NU expectations,	✓
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations,	
	• does not meet UK and NU expectations.	
The quality of students' learning opportunities	• commended,	
	• meets UK and NU expectations,	✓
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or, • does not meet UK and NU expectations.	
Information about higher education provision	• commended,	
	• meets UK and NU expectations,	✓
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or, • does not meet UK and NU expectations.	
The enhancement of students' learning opportunities	• commended,	✓
	• meets UK and NU expectations,	
	• requires improvement to meet UK and NU expectations or, • does not meet UK and NU expectations.	

Section 3	The setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proactive approach in updating programmes with consideration to programme design • The embedding of research into taught programmes, with students as co-producers of research <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No recommendations made</i> 	

The Panel made the following observations:

- The Panel recognise the effort and planning implemented to improve the academic standards at Kaplan
- The Panel recognise the continued dialogue within, and between, programme teams to further develop enhancements to programmes
- The Policing developments have been well embraced and brings great opportunities to the wider department, but the Panel recognise the challenges that this involves

Section 4**The quality of students' learning opportunities****The Panel identified the following strengths:**

- Embedding 'real-world' learning and the integration of theory and practice into the curriculum as a pedagogic principle, as recognised by students, placement providers and employers.
- The interdisciplinary nature of the department, the integration of pedagogy, and creative transfer of ideas and innovations across the disciplines
- Integration of Media into department has positively enhanced the provision.
- Genuine evidence of Research Rich Learning, which is highly valued by the student body
- Embedding of placement and other learning opportunities with external partners across curricula
- The collective effort and positivity of academic staff in making the Foundation Year a success, given its rapid growth in numbers
- Students value the inclusive culture of the department and appreciate the individual encouragement and support staff offer with the opportunity to become part of the research community of the disciplines

The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:

- Revisit the Foundation Year Study Skills module with the aim to improve the student learning experience and engagement (contextualise against subject area)
- Re-examine Research Methods through large lectures with focus on the student learning experience and engagement
- The Faculty and Department works with the Intelligent and Inclusive Learning Spaces Task Group (BO23) to develop a Plan for Lipman through a partnership between staff and students drawing on the 'sociological imagination'.

The Panel made the following observations:

- The students valued options as a part of their programme, and would appreciate the opportunity to select more options from a greater range. In particular International Relations and Politics and media-based programmes could consideration be made to include options from across, within the allowances of Programme Framework for Northumbria Awards?
- There is limited social learning and appropriate teaching space within the department which is negatively impacting upon the student learning experience and staff ability to deliver
- The Panel recognise the efforts made to make timetables work for both staff and students, but the lack of sufficiently sized rooms does cause issues in both staff and students traversing across the campus

Section 5**Information about higher education provision****The Panel identified the following strengths:**

- The action planning within the NSS action plans as a strength in engaging students as partners in learning

The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:

- *No recommendations made*

The Panel made the following observations:
No observations made

Section 6	The enhancement of students' learning opportunities
<p>The Panel identified the following strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opportunity for students to use placement experience within their dissertation project • The extensive range of pedagogic approaches to enhance the student experience • The use of innovative approaches to assessment feedback in some areas • The strong relationships with employers and partners in supporting learning, teaching and research developments across the Department <p>The Panel made the following recommendations and timescales for further development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are lots of evidence of learning enhancement within the department, and more effort should be made to share and showcase across these across the department, faculty and wider university • The department should better communicate the space made available that could be used for students to use for independent study • Plans for increasing the number of Fellows of the HEA are integrated into an overall plan for staff development that includes training the mentors and reviewers that will be needed to support applications 	
<p>The Panel made the following observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good practise within induction and late induction were recognised, but there is a need to be more consistent across all provision 	

Section 7	Further Quality Assurance Monitoring <i>This section is copied from the self-evaluation document to acknowledge actions which the Department/Faculty has already identified and is already actioning.</i>	
Affirmations ¹	Please list any affirmations identified and accompanying actions (<i>add extra rows as needed</i>)	
	Issue	Action
	NSS Results (Criminology)	Criminology: enhanced action plan to complement Department-wide actions to address immediate, medium and longer term issues confirmed as requiring attention via the recent NSS
	Ensuring consistently high quality assessment and feedback across the Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on maintaining consistent, high quality assessment and feedback practices across the Department and across the full timeline of assessment and feedback. • T & L induction with all new staff by T&L lead, and re-affirmation of existing good practice and expected standards with all staff. • Refresher training on internal moderation process for all staff
	DHLE	Review Dept performance against sector wide performance
	Quality of Student Intake	Specific focus on Sociology: raise AEP in-line with sector average through programme re-write and re-launch.
Audit Trails	<p>1. Development of groupwork principles Panel received above audit trail, Panel asks department to ensure that issues raised through SSPC are closed through SSPC and that this is made clear within the minutes.</p>	

¹ examples of developments, planned or in train which seek to address issues previously identified

	2. Validation of BA (Hons) International Relations and Politics Panel received above audit trail and confirms completeness.
Compliance Checks	Compliance report received and considered. No issues raised.

Section 8	Department Response to Report
Short summary response by Department on follow up action for inclusion in published report:	