

Institution:

Birkbeck College, University of London

Unit of Assessment:

Politics and International Studies (#21)

a. Overview

Birkbeck's UoA 21 is located in its Department of Politics. The Department was created in 2009 when the former School of Politics and Sociology assumed its new title and was integrated during College-wide reorganisation into the newly-created School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy (SSHP). Close links between the two disciplines continue, as testified by the Department's contribution also to the Sociology UoA, by the enduring influence of political sociology and sociological approaches to our study of politics and by an especially productive relationship for research and training purposes with, *inter alia*, Birkbeck's Institute for Social Research (BISR). College reorganisation was a tremendous boost for our Department. Driven in part by Birkbeck's commitment to improving its research performance over RAE 2008, the new School has put in place new structures, funding streams and opportunities for cross-disciplinary research and financial support.

The Department is committed to facilitating inter- and multi-disciplinary collaborations that enrich the disciplines of politics and international relations, to acknowledging the merits of diverse methodologies and to providing the mentoring, assessment and information structures that will allow all colleagues to pursue their inquiries in a stimulating and supportive atmosphere that sustains enthusiasm and creativity. A guiding ethos of our research is that rigid distinctions between domestic and international politics or between more empirical and theoretical, or qualitative and quantitative, approaches are unnecessarily restrictive. This is reflected in a broad but flexible division within our internal research community between two main clusters: public policy; and international politics and theory.

An important element of our research context is the unique student body that is a product of Birkbeck's mission to provide world-class education for part-time mature students. Many of our students are by day professional practitioners in the public, private and voluntary sectors; they thus provide some distinctive conduits for learning about current practice in these sectors while also enabling us to influence them. This reinforces the benefits of our being part of the Bloomsbury Colleges campus and our links more broadly with other University of London institutions.

In summary, an overview of UoA 21 at Birkbeck needs to take into account not only the vibrant internal research culture and effective organisation of the Politics Department but also the numerous multilateral relationships that embed it within a wider interdisciplinary, geographical and organisational network. This brings vitality to the research environment while facilitating extensive contributions to the political sciences and ongoing engagement in the public sphere

b. Research strategy

The overall aim of the UoA's research strategy is to promote world-class excellence in research into the political sciences by creating a collegial academic environment that supports individuals in pursuing their research interests whilst also engaging actively with events and institutions outside the academy. This is achieved by maintaining an energetic, inclusive and participatory culture underpinned by effective administrative mechanisms. We regard this strategy as being appropriate to a medium-sized politics unit located at the intellectual heart of London. Its efficacy is demonstrated by the breadth of our interesting, high-quality submissions, the nature of our impact studies, the commitment of our postgraduate students and our high levels of staff retention.

After RAE 2008 we subjected our research arrangements to a period of critical reflection in order to build on our earlier success. As a consequence we strengthened the process of continuous monitoring and assessment of our research strategy. This is undertaken during regular staff meetings and an annual awayday. Individual mentoring, collegial presentation opportunities, effective information dissemination and a periodic output and impact evaluation process are central to this strategy, which is designed to track and facilitate the flow of research from early initiatives to final publication (see section c).

We recognise that much of our research output remains the work of independent scholars or relies on interactions outside the department. Our aim in this regard is to maintain an enabling and engaged environment in which colleagues feel free to develop innovative methodologies and to pursue topics that fascinate them while being able to draw on and test their ideas against colleagues' expertise. Our strategy for encouraging, facilitating and monitoring this is embodied in the development of a departmental seminar programme, which focuses on working papers and whose purpose is to support the development of research ideas at an early stage. This additionally provides an opportunity to familiarise ourselves and to engage productively with colleagues' research interests. This process has been integrated into our research monitoring practices as an egalitarian and constructive complement to our practice of allocating younger members of staff to more experienced mentors.

Areas in which we make distinctive contributions to the political sciences are British and European politics and policy; political demography and relationships between population and the environment; nationalism, ethnicity and religion; gender and politics; international security and international relations theory; international political economy; qualitative and quantitative methods and social/political theory. Through recent staff appointments we are currently building new capacities in Middle East politics and politics and religion. International politics has been a growth area within the department, with research focused on three inter-related areas: global political economy (Güven, Hodson), security (Colas and Bousquet) and international relations theory (Colas, Bousquet and Spieker).

In order to promote collaboration within the Department we have organised this diverse research activity into two main clusters: public policy, and international relations and political theory. In practice there has been considerable cross-fertilisation across these boundaries. We regard it as a strength of our collective culture that we tend to work across boundaries, for example by contextualising our more statistical studies or case studies within normative and critical theories that in turn benefit from empirical input. The clusters have shown their worth as a focus for organising discussions and events, for showcasing the distinctive research profile that informs our pursuit of impact, for guiding new appointments and for stimulating team research. They have also helped to engender, and now feed into, more structured research collaborations, with the international relations and theory cluster yielding the Population, Environment and Resources group (PER) and the public policy cluster acting as a seed bed for the Centre for the Study of British Politics and Public Life (BPPL).

The early success of the PER group is demonstrated by the relevant impact study and some of our submissions. This is an area where we intend to build capacity after 2014, capitalising on Leverhulme and ESRC grants during the current period, our ties with other London colleges shared related interests (such as the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and UCL) and an unusual, cutting-edge assemblage of expertise. For example, the Food Group, a BISR Working Group currently convened by Politics, organises three events each year as well as a number of larger public events such as the colloquium on 'Food in a Global City' (2011) and the recent 'Surplus, Waste and Excess' conference (June 2013). We are starting a new Masters programme in the field commencing 2014, which we believe will result in a cohort of PGRs in the area.

A major research initiative, the BPPL Centre acts as a conduit for interdisciplinary and comparative work on British politics and public policy. This, too, represents a significant contribution to, and means for bridging the relationship between, our academic research and its dissemination to wider public and policymaking communities. Board members and other active participants include staff from cognate departments at Birkbeck and across the University of London as well as politicians, journalists and other non-academics (see REF 3a). The Centre facilitates contact with politicians, civil servants, advocacy groups and other decision makers both by organising public events with their participation and by hosting experienced practitioners such as Professorial Fellows (e.g. Tony Wright since 2010). Further such access comes via the inclusion of practitioners amongst elected College Fellows (e.g. Frank Dobson MP). Such connections exemplify our ability to capitalise on the advantages of a modestly-sized unit characterised by friendly, egalitarian and inclusive relationships while at the same time enjoying the benefits of membership of a larger research unit.

A number of research grants have enriched and been energised by the Centre, which has also hosted several doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers in recent years (see section d). Recent events have included a day of discussion on 'After Leveson', a well-attended event on the 'Alternative Vote' (with UCL), 'Soft Power', the 'New Localism', a seminar on 'The New Machiavelli' (led by Jonathan Powell) and, with support from *Political Quarterly*, seminars on the Big Society, the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, the role of the UK in Europe, Women and Politics in the UK, and A Defence of Politics and Politicians.

In addition to supporting individual scholarship, clusters, groups and centres, our research strategy is to work closely with two College research institutes: the Birkbeck Institute for Social Research (BISR) and the Birkbeck Institute for Humanities (BIH). Members of the Department sit on the boards and participate actively in these organisations, which promote interdisciplinary studies and research training opportunities across faculties as well as hosting numerous events, from small cross-departmental workshops through seminar series to major conferences. BISR Working Groups provide a vector for staff to develop their research interests and collaborations through invited speakers and workshops. Members of the department have taken leading roles in a number of BISR Working Groups (see c for further details). Research development within the College is facilitated, finally, by workshops for staff with speakers advising on best practice in research skills. Six workshops were for example held in 2012-13 covering topics such as the use of social media, grant-writing, promotion and reference tools.

These wider College activities complement our own lively departmental programme of guest lectures, workshops, seminars and conferences, some funded by external sources such as the ESRC. With support from Research Councils and the two Birkbeck Institutes, we have hosted conferences and public lectures on topics such as 'Social Democracy and Europe's Crisis', 'The Southern Europe Crisis and Resistance', 'The State of the European Union', and a recent BISA workshop on 'IR, Capitalism and the Sea'. The Annual Paul Hirst lecture was delivered by Sir Lawrence Freedman in 2011, and a successful one day conference on 'Food and Public Space in a Global City' launched the Food group. Many of these are open events which are well attended by both academics, including postgraduate students, and non-academic members of the policymaking community and general public. In accordance with our broader research aim, such events support connections between research and impact by facilitating a process of engagement. They are also important for our policy of sustaining a vital research culture in which colleagues and PGRs both participate in cutting-edge knowledge and enjoy opportunities to publicise their work.

Our strategy for the forthcoming period is to strengthen our research clusters, groups and centres, particularly through the systematic pursuit of research grants, engagement with extra-HE sectors and strengthening our infrastructure in order to promote individual research projects within a context of the widest possible disciplinary and interdisciplinary connections. We will continue to welcome postdoctoral students (for example PER will host a postdoc from the University of Helsinki 2014-15, with funding from the Finnish Government) and to develop further our relationships with colleagues in other disciplines. An important goal is to strengthen recognition of Birkbeck as a leading centre for studying British politics and political life and for pursuing research in political demography, population and the environment. By recruiting new researchers into our main areas of expertise our plan is to make them sustainable over time.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

In tandem with the College's Research Strategy (2010-13 and 2014-19) the UoA's strategy is to recruit the best available research-active colleagues to all new posts, to recruit young researchers in order to build longer-term resilience into our research team, to support junior colleagues by helping them gain international recognition and promotion and to retain established experts by providing them with the support and facilities that are consonant with world-class research.

One measure of the success of this strategy has been the promotion of former early-career scholars such as Campbell, Bousquet and Hodson, all of whom have achieved international reputations as well as promotions to senior lecturer. Another has been our ability to retain leading scholars whose successes have also been rewarded through promotion, such as Kaufmann's and

Mabbett's accession to personal Chairs. Recent entry level appointments, including Ali Guven who joined us from the University of Toronto, demonstrate our capacity to recruit high calibre young academics. Meanwhile, we have been delighted to find retiring staff eager to retain their research commitments through scaled-down contracts and emeritus positions (e.g. Professor Sami Zubaida, who retired in 2003 but plays a leading role in our new research focus on Food, Politics and Society), thus harnessing a continuity of expertise to innovation in our research programmes. The UoA's current age profile demonstrates the sustainability of our research, with our submission reflecting an equitable distribution of young career staff, lecturers, senior lecturers and professors.

We follow the practice of assigning an experienced mentor to each member of staff (whether new or established) with whom they regularly discuss their research plans for coming years. This is supported by the Department's Research Committee, in which a number of senior colleagues oversee progress by reading and evaluating publications and planned publications by each individual and giving feedback on their overall progress. This procedure is linked to research support, such as advancing study leave or finding a relevant training programme (such as a methods, IT or language course). All staff are encouraged to present their work regularly to departmental research seminars and are obliged to do so at least every two years in order to gain advice and critical feedback. Sessions at the annual awayday are allotted to brief presentations of recent research in order for us to sustain an overview of the UoA's current research portfolio. The process is designed to integrate staff development into our overall research strategy; as such it simultaneously aims to support individuals' research careers while providing a key component of the ongoing review described in our research strategy above. The Head of Department and Dean of the School advise staff about preparing for promotion and support them through the process.

The College has a robust equality and diversity policy that insists on selector training in these aspects of recruitment. This College's Equality Strategy 2012 – 2016 actively audits equality performance and supports Equality Leads across all Schools within the College. Birkbeck is committed to the development of positive policies to promote equal opportunities for our research staff. We are members/ adherents of various good practice initiatives, including the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, Positive for Disability 'Two Ticks' Scheme and the Mindful-Employer initiative (regarding mental health). The College is a Bronze award holder for the Athena SWAN Charter for Women in Science. About a third of the Politics Department are women, including 3 of our 5 Professors, and there is considerable diversity in individuals' place of origin (which includes Turkey, Germany, France, New Zealand, Canada and the US as well as the UK), thus equipping us with valuable linguistic resources as well as in many cases with important overseas contacts and knowledge.

New staff members receive induction and training from the College. Teaching and administrative responsibilities are shared equitably, although new colleagues are given lighter loads while they establish themselves. There is a universal entitlement to a term's study leave after every nine terms of teaching. Participation in conferences, fieldwork and other research-related activity is supported equitably by an annual research stipend. In addition, SSHP offers up to £2000 per individual annually in a competitive round of bidding in order to supplement members' research budgets. Staff are encouraged to use these School-funded small grants both to present papers at conferences and to pilot research ideas as a prelude to applying to national and international funding bodies (for successful applications to external bodies see REF 4b).

ii. Research students

The department's PhD completion rate during 2008-13 is markedly higher than for the previous RAE period, reflecting streamlined doctoral admission and monitoring procedures (see REF 4a). Politics receives a growing number of applications to its postgraduate research programme. As part of the Bloomsbury ESRC Doctoral Training Centre, the Department of Politics and SOAS have been allocated two ESRC quota awards per annum. A further cohort of doctoral students is comprised of professional researchers in other sectors; most of these undertake part-time study over up to seven years. The first characteristic facilitates contacts with outside bodies as well as bringing experience and expectations of working at the frontiers of research into the UOA; the second lends continuity to the student body. We expect to increase doctoral intake as new career researchers become established members of staff. Our research students have shared office

space and facilities available within new SSHP premises on Russell Square.

Politics invests in a substantial period of iterative research proposal writing and preliminary interviewing before accepting MPhil/PhD candidates, to ensure that they have the prospect of a viable thesis and also in order to allocate them to an appropriate supervisor. On arrival all candidates are interviewed by the principal supervisor and by a secondary supervisor who is assigned to them, as well as by the Chair of the Research Committee. The main purpose of this meeting is to ensure that students understand their rights and responsibilities as well as to alert them to facilities and to direct them to appropriate training sessions. Thereafter, research students may be required to register for one of the four ESRC recognised post-graduate research training courses (Qualitative Social Research, Quantitative Social Research, Theorising Social Research and Research Methods Master classes). They are also required to attend and present their work to the department research students' seminar. A programme of PhD seminars on methods is also offered through the School. Personalised methods tutorials are in addition available on request for those requiring more advanced methods or IT training. All research students are automatically enrolled in the Birkbeck Graduate Research School, which exists to enhance the training of research students, providing an extensive range of workshops and courses aimed at developing generic and transferable skills, from the start of the PhD to after completion.

At the end of their first year (second for part-timers) all candidates must present a paper outlining their project and methodology, which is then subjected to discussion and receives feedback from the PhD seminar convenor as well as the supervisor who attends the session. Usually during their second year (later for part-timers), students are invited to apply for a transfer of status from M.Phil to PhD. This requires presentation of a thesis outline that includes an introduction, overview and table of chapters, a timetable for completion, and at least two substantial chapters, as well as an indicative bibliography. Both supervisors plus a third member of the School judge whether they are ready to proceed; if not there are stipulated procedures for progression at a later stage, following written feedback to the student.

The School offers training for both supervisors and students and promotes good practice in supervision across the College. It maintains links with the Bloomsbury Colleges Postgraduate Skills Network, which offers a wide range of courses to graduate students across the University of London covering such themes as research organisation, IT skills and dissemination. In addition the BISR holds a fortnightly Graduate Seminar in Social Research for students undertaking empirical projects and this is attended by many Politics PhD students. The BISR runs 25-45 events per year that research students are encouraged to attend and that include series such as the one on Developing Your Research Career. The relevant podcasts receive some 2500 hits each per month. Research students are encouraged to present papers at external academic conferences and are entitled to apply for departmental funding to do so. They are also well integrated into the life of the UOA, with many attending departmental research seminars and conferences and a significant cohort undertaking sessional teaching. The department has been quite successful in placing its PhDs in academic posts, securing postdoctoral funding for researchers who wish to stay (see 5d) and gaining recognition for the high quality of its supervision and theses. In 2012, one of our part-time students won the Sir Ernest Barker prize for the best thesis in Political Theory.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

The department continues to encourage staff to apply for national and international research grants. During the REF period the UOA won approximately £900,000 in research funding from national and international bodies (see REF 4b). This includes particular success with the Leverhulme Trust, which funded Birkbeck's share of a collaboration with the Universities of Warwick, Bristol and Sheffield on a project entitled 'Gendered Ceremony and Ritual in Parliaments' (£163,000, 2008-12); £21,000 in 2008 for 'Religion and Identity in International Politics'; a three-year major research fellowship for 'Too Many Bodies? The Politics and Ethics of the World Population Question' (£140,000, 2010-13, which included research visits to India, Australia and the US); £12,000 for 'The New Political Class? (2013-15) and £10,000 for 'Who knows what makes a good MP? An elite/mass comparison' (2012-13). In addition we won a British Academy award for 'Political Man, Political Woman' that supported a three year post-doc with £134,000 (2009-12) and three British Academy grants to support 'In Search of Ethnic Diversity' (2010), 'UK-Russian Relations in the 21st Century' (£2008-9) and 'The EU's macroeconomic dialogues with India and China,' (2009-10). The ESRC funded 'White Working Class Responses to Ethnic Change in

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Britain,' £197,000 (2012-14 - a collaboration between a professor and a newly-completed doctoral student) and 'The Implementation of EU Policy,' (2008-9). Smaller grants included NSF funding for 'Electoral Systems and Party Personnel' (2012-13). Several of these awards fed into the PER group or BPPL Centre..

These grants were supplemented by a number of prestigious individual awards including a Harvard Kennedy School Belfer Fellowship (2008-9), a Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg Fellowship (2009-10) and the TH Marshall Fellowship for research at Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (2010). In addition to the actual funding, these awards are indicative of both the UOA's successful research strategy for pursuing outside funding and of some of the diverse areas our research covers which have been accorded external recognition and support.

Staff members are all given their own offices in two adjacent, linked buildings in the College's main site in Bloomsbury. Our location provides access to a variety of world-class and specialist libraries, among them Birkbeck's own well-equipped library and Senate House. Staff have at their disposal an enormous number of research workshops, training courses, seminars and lectures that are convened within Birkbeck and the University of London as well as numerous opportunities to forge productive associations across the Bloomsbury Colleges. Birkbeck offers regular seminars on grant applications, backed up by an able Research Grants and Contracts Office that oversees the grant application and management process while hosting talks from grant-donors like the Leverhulme, ESRC and AHRC and circulating regular e-bulletins of the latest research opportunities. SSHP committees ensure best practice by bringing together grant holders from across the School to discuss common problems and solutions in areas such as mentoring, human resources and research support practices. An ethics officer who is supported by school and college committees advises at departmental level.

e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base

Birkbeck's location allows staff and students to participate in a wide range of London conferences, public lectures, seminars and workshops, thereby strengthening and disseminating our work. At School level, SSHP provides active encouragement and facilities for interdisciplinary cooperation between cognate departments. For members of the Politics team this has been especially fertile for collaborations with Economics, History, Social Policy and Geography and Environmental Sciences, supported through a programme of visiting speakers, conferences and visiting fellowships. This positive aspect of incorporation into a wider network is amplified by our close working relationship with a number of other Bloomsbury Colleges, such as our joint ESRC-funded doctoral programme with SOAS.

Other University of London colleges provide important research communities in all our specialist research areas. The following are indicative of the sort of collaboration that occurs. Bacon co-convenes conferences with UCL's School of Slavonic and East European Studies; Campbell is co-investigator on a Leverhulme grant with van Heerde-Hudson of UCL; Singh works with Tim Lynch at the Institute for the Study of the Americas; Kaufmann's work on demography and ethnicity involves links with the Centre for Population Studies at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King's and the Development Studies Institute and Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN) at LSE; Mabbett has co-authored a number of papers with Waltraud Schelkle at LSE's European Institute; Zubaida is a longstanding Research Associate in the Centre for Near and Middle East Studies at SOAS and has been a member of the Board of Directors of the London Middle East Institute at SOAS since 2003. The activities of the Birkbeck Food Group, linked to the department's provision of a course on Food, Politics and Society, has pioneered inter-disciplinary collaborations within the College and across Bloomsbury while the BPPL Centre hosts the termly London-wide Gender and British Politics Seminar. There are in addition many occasions when staff have presented papers at other University of London colleges or welcomed colleagues to Birkbeck as guest lecturers.

Examples of our contributions to the wider disciplinary field covered by UOA 21 are: the New Materialisms (Coole, in collaboration with researchers at Johns Hopkins, the University of Illinois, Rice University, Texas and the Institute of Fine Arts, Munich); the emergent area of political demography (Kaufmann, in collaboration with researchers at LSHTM and Harvard); bridging the

gaps between political science and the study of gender relations, contributions to the development of feminist institutionalism via the FIIN network and investigations of equality policy implementation (Campbell, Lovenduski, Mabbett); the roles of political anthropology, performance and ritual in understanding gendered/ethnic power within more formal structures of government (Lovenduski, Coole, in conjunction with colleagues at Bristol, Warwick and Sheffield). IR colleagues are active participants in several disciplinary networks ranging from historical sociology to the applications of complexity theory to the study of international politics (e.g.. Bousquet in association with colleagues from UEA and Lancaster).

Colleagues are involved in organising College programmes of seminars, conferences and workshops. The BIH has supported some 50 conferences, symposia and workshops since 2008 while since 2010 the BPPL Centre has organised 25 such events. Both have well developed programmes for coming years. The Department's research environment is nourished by visiting professorial fellows, with recent incumbents including BIH-sponsored Jane Bennett (Johns Hopkins) and Sonia Kruks (Oberlin) as well as department visitors Hussein Kassim (UEA) and Sarah Childs (Bristol). Associate postdoctoral fellows and postdoctoral researchers add to an energetic research climate.

In addition to normal academic activities like journal refereeing, grant assessing and PhD examining, during 2008-13 colleagues returned in UoA 21 served as editors or co-editors of six journals and sat on 13 editorial boards. These include *European Journal of Political Theory*, *Theory and Event*, *Economy and Society*, *Political Quarterly*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *European Political Science Review*, *Nations and Nationalism* and *European Journal of Social Security*. They edited 8 special issues of journals (e.g. *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, *Nations and Nationalism*, *Journal of Ethnopolitics*, *Journal of Common Market Studies*). Coole has since 2009 been an associate editor for the forthcoming (2014) 8 volume *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought*. We have participated in the governance of six national or international scholarly associations (e.g. PSAK, UACES, ASEN, ARENA, ECPR STANDING GROUP). Members of the Department delivered over 50 keynote and prestigious lectures (e.g. Bacon at the NATO Defense College, Rome; Bousquet at the US Naval War College, Campbell at the Electoral Reform Society, Coole's inaugural address to the Institute of Fine Arts, University of Munich, Dimitrakopoulos at the Foreign Office, Kaufmann at the Kennedy School of Government, Singh at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office). They presented papers to over 25 competitive conferences such as APSA and ECPR and collaborated with academics in no fewer than 15 international or national research networks. Good citizenship within the profession includes Campbell's membership of the PSA Executive Committee and as its Communications & Engagement Director since 2012; Coole's advisory role for the Commonwealth Scholarship Committee (2008-10); Hodson's role as elected committee member of the University Association for Contemporary European Studies; Kaufmann's vice presidency of the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism since 2012 and board membership of the Association for Research on Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Americas; Dimitrakopoulos since 2010 been a member of the ESRC Peer Review College.

Several colleagues received special recognition in the form of prizes and honours. Thus Lovenduski won the 2009 Gender and Politics award of the ECPR standing group on Gender and Politics. She has been a Fellow of the British Academy since 2007 and an Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS) since 2008. She won the 2013 Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize for her contribution to *Political Studies*. Coole is also an AcSS; she won the Palgrave-Macmillan prize for best article published in *Contemporary Political Theory* in 2012. Bacon is an Honorary Research Fellow at the European Institute, Birmingham University. Kaufmann won the Richard Rose Prize of the Political Studies Association for best research output in British politics in 2008. Singh was jointly awarded the Richard E. Neustadt award for the best book published by a UK author in 2008-09 by the American Politics Group of the PSA.