



*Promoting higher quality*

**The Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education**

## Subject Review Report

October 2000 Q22/2001

University of Bristol

Politics

## Reviewing the Quality of Education

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established in 1997. It has responsibility for assessing the quality of higher education (HE) in England and Northern Ireland from 1 October 1997 under the terms of a contract with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The purposes of subject review are: to ensure that the public funding provided is supporting education of an acceptable quality, to provide public information on that education through the publication of reports such as this one, and to provide information and insights to encourage improvements in education.

The main features of the subject review method are:

### Review against Aims and Objectives

The HE sector in England and Northern Ireland is diverse. The HEFCE funds education in over 140 institutions of HE and 75 further education (FE) colleges. These institutions vary greatly in size, subject provision, history and statement of purpose. Each has autonomy to determine its institutional mission, and its specific aims and objectives at subject level.

Subject review is carried out in relation to the subject aims and objectives set by each provider. It measures the extent to which each subject provider is successful in achieving its aims and objectives.

Readers should be cautious in making comparisons of subject providers solely on the basis of subject review outcomes. Comparisons between providers with substantively different aims and objectives would have little validity.

### Review of the Student Learning Experience and Student Achievement

Subject review examines the wide range of influences that shape the learning experiences and achievements of students. It covers the full breadth of teaching and learning activities, including: direct observation of classroom/seminar/workshop/ laboratory situations, the methods of reviewing students' work, students' work and achievements, the curriculum, staff and staff development, the application of resources (library, information technology, equipment), and student support and guidance. This range of activities is captured within a core set of six aspects of provision, each of which is graded on a four-point scale (1 to 4), in ascending order of merit.

The aspects of provision are:

- Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Student Progression and Achievement
- Student Support and Guidance
- Learning Resources
- Quality Management and Enhancement.

### Peer Review

Reviewers are academic and professional peers in the subject. Most are members of the academic staff of UK HE institutions. Others are drawn from industry, commerce, private practice and the professions.

### Combination of Internal and External Processes

The review method has two main processes:

- Preparation by the subject provider of a self-assessment in the subject, based on the provider's own aims and objectives, and set out in the structure provided by the core set of aspects of provision.
- A three-day review visit carried out by a team of reviewers. The review team grades each of the aspects of provision to make a graded profile of the provision, and derives from that profile an overall judgement. Provided that each aspect is graded 2 or better, the quality of the education is approved.

### Published Reports

In addition to individual review reports, the QAA will publish subject overview reports at the conclusion of reviews in a subject. The subject overview reports are distributed widely to schools and FE colleges, public libraries and careers services. Both the review reports and the subject overview reports are available in hard copy and are also on the world-wide web (see back cover for details).

## Introduction

1. This Report presents the findings of a review in October 2000 of the quality of education in politics provided by the University of Bristol.

2. University College Bristol was founded in 1876. The Bristol Medical School was founded in 1833 and became part of the college in 1893. In 1909, the College combined with the Merchant Venturers' Technical College to form the University of Bristol and receive its Royal Charter. The main university buildings are situated on the Clifton side of the city. The University is divided into six faculties. It currently has some 13,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, 11,600 studying on a full-time (FT) basis and 6,000 part-time.

3. The Department of Politics is within the Faculty of Social Sciences. It has some 400 FTE students on undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. All undergraduates and all but four of the postgraduate students are FT. There are 14 academic staff in the Department, of whom 12 are FT and two divide their time between the Department and other University roles.

4. The following provision forms the basis of the review:

- BSc Politics
- BSc Economics and Politics
- BSc Philosophy and Politics
- BSc Politics and Sociology
- BSc Social Policy and Politics
- BA Politics and French
- BA Politics and German
- BA Politics and Russian
- BA Politics and Italian
- BA Politics and Spanish
- BA Politics and Portuguese
- BA Theology and Politics
- MSc/Diploma Development, Administration and Planning
- MSc/Diploma International Relations
- MSc/Diploma Gender and International Relations.

5. The statistical data in this Introduction are provided by the institution itself. The aims and objectives are presented overleaf. These also are provided by the institution.

## The Aims and Objectives for Politics

### Aims

We aim to:

- pursue teaching and learning programmes which provide high-quality learning experiences in politics in a research-enriched environment;
- provide students with cognitive and research skills in politics;
- assist students in attaining communication, interpersonal and information technology (IT) skills that will prepare them for a variety of careers;
- provide a personally supportive approach to teaching and learning in order to encourage high levels of performance.

### Objectives

Students completing any of the undergraduate programmes in politics will have acquired:

- a foundation for the study of politics. This includes methods of critical analysis, basic concepts in political theory, and case-studies of political systems.

Students completing the single honours Politics programme will also have acquired:

- detailed knowledge of up to 12 selected subjects of study in politics. Students may concentrate or complement their studies in political theory, international relations, and political systems, equipping them for postgraduate training in politics, cognate disciplines, or for further professional or vocational training.

Students completing the joint honours Politics programme will also have acquired:

- knowledge of the core areas of economics with micro and macroeconomics, and detailed knowledge of up to six further selected subjects of study in politics, and a similar number in economics (Economics and Politics);
- knowledge of the core areas of philosophy, with detailed knowledge of up to six further selected subjects of study in politics and a similar number in philosophy (Philosophy and Politics);
- knowledge of the core areas of sociology, with detailed knowledge of up to six further selected subjects of study in politics, and a similar number in sociology (Politics and Sociology);
- knowledge of the core areas of social policy, with the study of international welfare and of welfare theorising, with detailed knowledge of up to six

further selected subjects of study in politics, and a similar number in social policy (Social Policy and Politics);

- knowledge of the core areas of a modern language and its literature and culture, with a foundation in European politics, with detailed knowledge of up to six further selected subjects of study in politics, and a similar number in the relevant language and literature, together with a year abroad in a setting where the relevant language is spoken (Politics and French, Politics and German, Politics and Russian, Politics and Italian, Politics and Spanish, Politics and Portuguese);
- knowledge of the core areas of theology and religious studies, with detailed knowledge of up to six further selected subjects of study in politics, and a similar number in theology (Theology and Politics).

Students may concentrate or complement their studies in political theory, international relations, and political systems, equipping them for postgraduate training in politics or in cognate disciplines, or for further professional or vocational training.

Students completing any of the undergraduate programmes in politics will also have acquired:

- cognitive skills and research skills with which to undertake empirical and theoretical work. These include the ability to reach evaluative conclusions, and to make critical, coherent and incisive judgements; attention to 'learning how to learn', library and data-collection skills, problem identification and time management;
- skills in written communication. These include the ability to produce concise and literate summaries of relevant data with proper referencing;
- skills in oral communication and interpersonal skills. These include the ability to participate effectively in seminars and to give informative and effective presentations;
- IT skills. These comprise word-processing, electronic mail and obtaining information from the internet and other electronic sources.

Students completing the MSc/Diploma programme in Development, Administration and Planning will have acquired:

- knowledge of theoretical approaches and methods appropriate to the study of development, and detailed knowledge of selected policy-orientated studies of development.

Students completing the MSc/Diploma programme in International Relations will have acquired:

- knowledge of major theoretical approaches within international relations, and detailed knowledge of selected issues in contemporary international politics.

Students completing the MSc/Diploma programme in Gender and International Relations will have acquired:

- knowledge of major theoretical approaches within international relations, including knowledge of feminist and gender theory applicable internationally, and knowledge of selected issues in contemporary international politics using a gendered perspective.

Students completing any of the MSc programmes will also have acquired:

- knowledge of the research methods appropriate to a dissertation (of 10-15,000 words) and detailed knowledge of their chosen subject of study.

Students completing any of the MSc/Diploma programmes will also have acquired:

- cognitive skills and research skills with which to undertake empirical and theoretical work. These include the ability to reach evaluative conclusions, and to make critical, coherent and incisive judgements; attention to 'learning how to learn', library and data-collection skills, problem identification and time management;
- skills in written communication. These include the ability to produce concise and literate summaries of relevant data with proper referencing;
- skills in oral communication and interpersonal skills. These include the ability to participate effectively in seminars and to give informative and effective presentations;
- IT skills. These comprise word-processing, electronic mail and obtaining information from the internet and other electronic sources.

## Summary of the Review

6. The graded profile in paragraph 7 indicates the extent to which the student learning experience and achievement demonstrate that the aims and objectives set by the subject provider are being met. The tests and the criteria applied by the reviewers are these:

### Aspects of provision

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
3. Student Progression and Achievement
4. Student Support and Guidance
5. Learning Resources
6. Quality Management and Enhancement.

### Tests to be applied

To what extent do the student learning experience and student achievement, within this aspect of provision, contribute to meeting the objectives set by the subject provider?

Do the objectives set, and the level of attainment of those objectives, allow the aims set by the subject provider to be met?

### Scale points

**1**  
The aims and/or objectives set by the subject provider are not met; there are major shortcomings that must be rectified.

**2**  
This aspect makes an acceptable contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives, but significant improvement could be made.

The aims set by the subject provider are broadly met.

**3**  
This aspect makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives; however, there is scope for improvement.

The aims set by the subject provider are substantially met.

**4**  
This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives.

The aims set by the subject provider are met.

7. The grades awarded as a result of the review are:

Aspects of provision	Grade
Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation	4
Teaching, Learning and Assessment	4
Student Progression and Achievement	4
Student Support and Guidance	4
Learning Resources	3
Quality Management and Enhancement	4

8. The quality of education in politics at the University of Bristol is **approved**.

## The Quality of Education

### Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation

9. The Department of Politics offers single and joint honours undergraduate programmes within the University's modular system. MSc/Diplomas in Development, Administration and Planning; International Relations and Gender; and International Relations may be studied in full or part-time mode.

10. The curriculum is structured to facilitate the study of politics in increasing depth, and to encourage the progressive development of subject-specific, cognitive and research skills. Level 1 provides a general introduction. Level 2 introduces students to a wider variety of material including discrete area studies, and provides students with the knowledge on which to base their choice of final-year units. In response to concerns raised over the level of challenge at Level 2, which appears to some students to be less demanding than other years, the second-year curriculum is the subject of an ongoing review within the Department to ensure its appropriateness. The final-year units deliver detailed knowledge of specialist areas which is informed by theory and based on current research.

11. Masters programmes are innovative, have a strong interdisciplinary element and are highly valued by students. For a postgraduate diploma, students take four units in each of the two teaching blocks, some of which are core, others optional. For the award of masters, students must, in addition, complete a dissertation.

12. Flexibility and student choice are important features of the undergraduate programmes. The broadly-based first year of the undergraduate programmes requires single honours students to study two additional subjects, constituting two-thirds of their programme. This gives students the flexibility to transfer between single and joint honours programmes at the end of the year. Students attest that this flexibility is appreciated. Key first-year units are compulsory for both joint and single honours students and provide a firm foundation for study in subsequent years, where students select from a range of optional units. A student-centred approach, determined by interests and career aspirations, is the basis for the construction of individual programmes. Coherence is ensured by guidance in the selection of units by personal tutors. Comprehensive information is also available to inform student choice. Through this system, the Department ensures that student choice is based on informed decisions and the personally

supportive approach to teaching and learning, articulated in their aims, is delivered. Students value this aspect of their experience at the University.

13. Development of transferable skills is integrated into undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This is particularly explicit at Level 1 where students are expected to reach threshold levels of competence, but progressive development is also encouraged throughout the programmes. Students are issued with clear guidance on the opportunities afforded for skills development within the curriculum.

14. The currency of the curricula is sustained and developed through the contribution of practitioners and guest speakers. The Level 3 undergraduate and masters curricula, in particular, are directly informed by staff research interests.

15. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation: Grade 4.

### Teaching, Learning and Assessment

16. The Department's strategy for undergraduate teaching, learning and assessment is designed to promote an independent and critical approach to learning. This is achieved through a carefully-planned series of learning activities, progressing from a concentration on lectures in the first year to seminar-based delivery of the third-year and masters programmes. The programme of teaching, learning and assessment articulates clearly with the aims of providing students with cognitive and research skills, and encouraging the development of communication and interpersonal skills.

17. Successful implementation of the teaching and learning strategy is endorsed by student opinion and by teaching observation. Eighteen teaching sessions were observed. All met both their subject and key skills-related objectives, with no significant weaknesses noted. The overwhelming majority were of very high quality. Student opinion and external examiners' reports support this judgement. The Department is clearly committed to good, innovative teaching. This is characterised by group work, case studies, a simulation exercise called 'the crisis game' and the imaginative use of video material. Clear learning objectives are identified. Seminars are well conducted and generally very participative, particularly in years two and three and at masters level. Lectures are stimulating and delivered at a high level.

18. The Department has carefully structured its teaching to advance independent student learning. At Level 1 an appropriate skills base is developed through a variety of

learning experiences. Lectures play an important role at this level to impart an essential core body of knowledge. This approach is further developed in year two, where students' independent work is encouraged by the key role of assessed essays. In year three the programme is delivered exclusively through seminars, which require considerable student participation, encourage students to work independently and develop a high level of presentation skills. Students generally find the workload manageable, although the bunching of assessment deadlines causes some problems.

19. The Department has a carefully considered and varied approach to assessment. The assessment strategy promotes the high quality of student learning outcomes at all levels. Both subject-related and key skills are assessed, and there is a good match between assessment design and intended learning outcomes. Clear assessment criteria are employed, which are well understood by students at all levels. In the first year, there is a balanced mix of assessment, including essays, presentations, a learning how to learn exercise, skills exercises and unseen examinations. In year two, an essay-based system of continuous assessment is used, while unseen examinations and dissertations are the key elements of assessment in the final year. The absence of examinations from the second-year assessment gives rise to some concern among students who think they will lack practice when faced with final examinations. The Department has organised mock examinations for third-year students to address this concern.

20. At masters level, assessment is through an appropriate combination of essays and dissertation. Feedback to students is quick and effective at undergraduate level. The demands of external moderation place some constraints on the speed at which essay feedback can be supplied to masters students. This problem is being answered by enhancing feedback on seminar presentations as a way of informing students about their progress.

21. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment:  
Grade 4

### **Student Progression and Achievement**

22. The Department recruits well-qualified students to its courses. The ratio of applications to places is high at 12:1 for undergraduate and 6:1 for postgraduate courses. In 2000, 86 per cent of undergraduate entrants had GCE A-Levels with high average scores of 28 points. Undergraduates under the age of 21 account for 95 per cent of entrants, and 86 per cent of entrants are home students. Postgraduate courses attract a

considerable number (41 per cent) of overseas students, with a further 18 per cent from other European Union countries, and 41 per cent from the UK. There is an equal gender balance at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The entry profile for programmes at both levels provides an appropriate foundation for the Department to realise its aspiration to challenge high-quality entrants attracted by its national and international reputation.

23. Undergraduate progression rates are high at all stages. Progression from year one to year two of study has averaged 88 per cent over the past three years. Between years two and three this figure rises to 94 per cent. Final-year failures are rare. The classification of degrees awarded are high, over 80 per cent of final-year students achieving First or Upper Second class degrees. Over the period 1996 to 1999, 10 per cent received First class awards. External examiners have expressed the opinion that the number of Firsts is low, given the highly-qualified intake. The Department has given due consideration to this view and the number of First class degrees awarded rose to 18.9 per cent in 2000. Completion rates at postgraduate level are also very commendable. Of the 47 entrants from the most recently-graduating cohort, 46 were awarded a masters and the remaining student achieved a Diploma. There were five commendations. In the opinion of an external examiner this number was low, given the quality of student work. The Department supports this view and has been instrumental in a revision of faculty rules on the award of commendation, which should result in an increased number of students qualifying.

24. The reviewers scrutinised student work from all levels and programmes and a wide range of exercises, including examination scripts, dissertations, assessed essays and presentations. This sample provided evidence of high levels of achievement in respect of subject knowledge and analytical skills and of transferable skills. The high level of student attainment is also commended in external examiner reports.

25. Employers speak highly of the quality of Bristol politics graduates, praising their high academic quality and wide range of transferable skills. Former students describe a very positive learning experience, which prepared them for a variety of careers. Undergraduate final-destinations data demonstrate very high levels of employability. Between 1997 to 1999, 60 per cent took up employment, 26 per cent went into further study, and 7.7 per cent were unavailable for employment. Only 6.3 per cent were still unemployed at the time of the survey.

26. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Student Progression and Achievement:  
Grade 4.



## Student Support and Guidance

27. Departmental strategy to fulfil students' pastoral needs emphasises the role of close informal relations through which students feel able to approach members of staff. This informality is supported by a range of more formal procedures. These include the operation of a personal tutorial system, provision of regular office hours during which staff are required to be available to students and a comprehensive, annually-distributed student handbook. Students speak positively of all these items and praise the supportive atmosphere in the Department. Students also receive wider support from a range of University services such as the counselling service and student health centre.

28. The Department organises open days and preview days to promote the opportunities available to students. The Department is also responding to the University's objective of widening participation, for example, by involvement in Sutton Trust Summer Schools. Once enrolled, students are introduced to the University through a comprehensive departmental, institutional and hall of residence-based induction programme. Students praise the clear and comprehensive nature of the written information supplied by the Department, both in the form of departmental handbooks and information on individual units.

29. All single and joint honours students are allocated a personal tutor within the Department. Programme directors act as personal tutors to masters students. Scheduled meetings are held in which the personal tutor offers a range of pastoral and academic guidance. The Department is continually refining the system in order to ensure that it provides effective support for all students. It has experimented with a range of strategies to ensure that the maximum benefit is derived by students from tutorial sessions. These include the use of questionnaires completed in advance by students and the drawing up of agendas. Students are very positive about the support received from tutors.

30. Personal tutors play an important role in academic guidance, particularly in counselling students over their choice of second and third-year options. Students also receive academic guidance from seminar tutors on how to improve their learning and advice on revision and examination techniques. The Department offers valuable further study support in the form of a study skills doctor and an IT doctor, who operate a drop-in service.

31. In addition to the personal tutor system, the Department has a tutor for special needs who liaises with central student services. When problems are outside their scope, personal tutors play an important role in identifying university services which can extend appropriate help to students. Students who have used

the counselling service find it generally satisfactory. In turn, the counselling service considers that students of politics are well-supported by their Department.

32. Tutorial advice on careers from departmental staff is complemented by a wide range of support provided by the careers service. Final-year and former students appreciate the range of support and advice offered.

33. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Student Support and Guidance:  
Grade 4.

## Learning Resources

34. The Department recognises the need to develop a strategy for learning resources to overcome the impact of resource constraint on student learning. The main objective of the evolving strategy is to make the best possible use of available resources including staff, information provision, teaching accommodation, library and IT facilities in order to deliver the high-quality learning experience which is the Department's aim.

35. The principal library for politics students is the University's Arts and Social Science Library. Providing over 700 study places, its politics collection includes around 22,000 volumes and 67 current periodical and specialist collections such as the Gladstone Library of the National Liberal Club, the Election Address Collection and the European Documentation Centre. The average figure for politics book purchases over the last five years is approximately £6,300 per year. Other learning resources include the Open Learning Centre. Students value the efforts of helpful library staff, including their contribution to useful induction programmes. However, successive student feedback questionnaires, other review mechanisms and student meetings showed low levels of satisfaction with the book stock and its availability. Only 59 per cent of students ranked the library as either good or acceptable in the most recent degree evaluation questionnaire; none judged it to be excellent and the remainder considered it poor or appalling. Student complaints were strongly endorsed in meetings between students and the reviewers. The problem is particularly acute, for example, at peak times when a large number of assignments are due for submission. The University library has recently instituted surveys of academic staff and student satisfaction with the service. Including the use of focus groups, these surveys provide a valuable source of data for better understanding of the issues involved. Politics and library staff have recognised the problem and are working together. The Department has introduced a range of strategies to improve the supply

of books and to inform students in their use of library facilities. Initiatives include greater use of directed readings in the short loan collection, increased availability of electronic journals and other electronic materials. Staff are confident that their strategy will ultimately ensure that the library provides satisfactory support to student learning.

36. IT provision has recently been reorganised within an integrated information services unit embracing the library, computing service and learning technology support service. Personal computers and printing services are available in the library, computer service terminal room, social science computing laboratories and the Students' Union as well as halls of residence through the University's RESNET network. Additional facilities for politics postgraduates are provided in the Department. Generally, students find that these facilities answer their needs. For undergraduates, the Department's web site is a significant resource. Electronic communication between staff and students is standard. Diagnostic testing, followed by tailor-made support, ensures students have the necessary computing skills to support their learning. Help desks are available adjacent to computer clusters.

37. The Department is located in a former residential building in Priory Road. Much seminar teaching takes place there. Lectures are held in other university buildings, including the nearby Social Sciences building. Priory Road provides a pleasant teaching and learning environment. However, only the basement is accessible to wheelchair users. Lecture theatres are of variable quality. During some teaching observations the reviewers noted accommodation deficiencies including poor acoustics, cramped space or lack of equipment such as permanent projection screen, white board or induction loop.

38. The Department is well supported by four administrative and secretarial staff. Departmental administrative support is warmly appreciated by students.

39. Postgraduates have a common room at Priory Road and a nearby building houses undergraduate common room and café. The Department also has an active student-run politics society.

40. This aspect makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives; however, there is scope for improvement. The aims set by the subject provider are substantially met.

Learning Resources:  
Grade 3.

## Quality Management and Enhancement

41. The Department actively participates in the institutional quality management processes. There is a record of positive response to the recommendations of the Faculty Quality Assurance Team which undertakes an annual review of the Department. A wide range of monitoring mechanisms are employed to ensure the quality of provision. Within the Department, the annual review meeting and the Academic Committee are the principal forums for review and quality management. There is evidence that their remit is discharged conscientiously, problems are thoroughly discussed and action taken. All syllabi are subject to rigorous regular review by the Academic Committee. This is an essential element of the Department's quality assurance and enhancement strategy.

42. Students are involved in the critical evaluation of politics provision by a range of methods. Consultation takes place through postgraduate and undergraduate staff-student committees, which have regular minuted meetings. Students confirm that this method of consultation works effectively. Students are also consulted through detailed questionnaires on each unit. These are analysed by the unit owner who is required to synthesise student views and produce a staff self-assessment, which is made available to students. This is a good example of the willingness of the Department to engage in critical self-reflection.

43. There is evidence that external examiners' reports are thoroughly discussed and action taken where appropriate. Examiners expressed satisfaction with the response to their comments. The new University policy of requiring prompt written response to examiners' reports is a welcome development which should formalise procedures.

44. Peer review plays an important role in quality enhancement and is intended as a professional development strategy to empower teaching. All staff are trained as reviewers and compulsory annual review is departmental policy. A failure to implement this fully during the past year is being addressed by the Chair of Academic Committee, who monitors the system. Teaching excellence is a criterion for promotion and is considered a priority by the Department. Staff are required to detail their teaching approach in their curricula vitae. Peer review is used as a method of dissemination of good practice in teaching through a system of post-observation discussions. Good practice is also disseminated, to some extent, amongst staff through a range of formal activities, such as away days and items on the agenda of the Academic Committee. Further development of this approach is to be

encouraged to ensure wide publicity for innovative practices. The process of dissemination is facilitated by the culture of a small department where strategies for teaching and learning are shared informally.

45. There are appropriate induction arrangements for new staff who are mentored and attend compulsory training courses. Other staff have participated in a range of training sessions, such as on mentoring and recruitment, and all staff have individual meetings with the Head of Department four times a year to review their work.

46. The self-assessment document provides a useful introduction to the provision but understates the comprehensive strengths of this Department and its self-evaluative ethos.

47. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Quality Management and Enhancement:  
Grade 4.

## Conclusions

48. The quality of education in politics at the University of Bristol is approved. All aspects make at least a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives and the aims are at least substantially met. The reviewers come to this conclusion, based upon the review visit together with an analysis of the self-assessment and additional data provided.

49. The positive features of the education in politics in relation to the aspects of provision include the following:

- a. Flexible curricula which are student-choice centred (paragraph 12).
- b. The integration of transferable skills into curricula (paragraph 13).
- c. Current curricula informed by staff research (paragraph 14).
- d. Teaching of a very high quality (paragraph 17).
- e. A teaching and learning strategy which promotes independent learning (paragraphs 16; 18).
- f. A well-qualified student intake (paragraph 22).
- g. High retention and completion rates on all programmes (paragraph 23).
- h. A high level of student achievement in subject-specific and transferable skills (paragraphs 24; 25).
- i. The supportive atmosphere of the Department and

approachability of staff (paragraphs 27; 28).

- j. Comprehensive documentation provided for students (paragraphs 27; 28).
  - k. Effective induction to learning resources (paragraphs 28; 36).
  - l. The study skills and information technology doctor system (paragraph 30).
  - m. Effective use of a wide range of monitoring mechanisms (paragraph 41).
  - n. Willingness to engage in critical self-reflection (paragraph 42).
  - o. Responsiveness to comment by external examiners and students (paragraphs 42; 43).
50. The quality of education in politics could be improved by addressing the following issue:
- a. The learning and teaching strategy of the Department, which aims to provide a high-quality learning experience, is not adequately supported by the library stock, particularly at times of peak demand (paragraph 35).