

Strategic Plan 2012-2015

School of Law, Politics & Sociology

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Final Version

PART I

1. Overview

- The mission of the School of Law, Politics and Sociology is to generate and disseminate new knowledge and critical understanding about the societies in which we live, including explaining how these societies are and should be constructed, ordered, and regulated. In so doing, it seeks to have a positive impact on society regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- The School's firm intention is to integrate the work of its constituent parts into a coherent whole and interweave the teaching and research of its three Departments. As can be seen from what is said in the Operating Statement, the School has set in train a series of initiatives to bring this about. In a short time much progress has been made, although effective integration is something that requires the constant attention of the Head of School and the members of the School's Executive Board.
- The School of Law, Politics and Sociology is committed to:
 - excellence in everything it does, especially teaching and research
 - respect for academic freedom and integrity
 - innovation
 - critical thinking

1.1 Aims

The School of Law, Politics and Sociology has 16 specific aims. It aims to be:

1. A School which actively capitalises on the synergies that arise from bringing three closely-related disciplines - Law, Politics, and Sociology - into a single management unit.
2. A School which, through its constituent departments, is distinctive and promotes those things that make it stand out from the crowd.
3. A School which is committed to developing excellence in all of its staff and which fosters a supportive and stimulating working environment for them.
4. A School which ensures that everyone is treated fairly and equally, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political belief or affiliation, trade union membership, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, socio- economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction.
5. A School which is strongly research-led and focuses on 3 and 4 star work and the impact that this work has.
6. A School which enhances its success in research grant capture.
7. A School which provides a teaching and learning offer that is attractive and innovative and able to compete effectively for the highest quality students.
8. A School which delivers a top quality student experience and is able to demonstrate that it offers students good value for money.
9. A School which is financially sustainable and which successfully grows its income streams from teaching and learning by expanding and enhancing its portfolio of undergraduate and PGT programmes, with particular emphasis on recruiting extra overseas students.

10. A School which increases the number of PGRs per staff FTE in the School and supports its PGR students appropriately and helps them towards timely completion of their theses.

11. A School which further strengthens its teaching and research links with other disciplines in the University and ensures that these links add value both to its activities and to those of the other discipline areas.

12. A School which plays an active part in the cultural, social and economic life of the region, builds on its links with the local community, and engages with business.

13. A School which continues to develop and strengthen its international connections (including providing opportunities for student exchanges and facilitating international research collaborations) and has real worldwide presence.

14. A School which engages actively and effectively with its alumni and other key stakeholders.

15. A School which encourages its members to participate in discussion and decisions about the direction of the School and matters of concern to the University community.

16. A School which listens to its students and its staff and is responsive to the feedback it receives.

Objectives

The School has three immediate objectives:

- To grow significantly its student numbers, both with new overseas students AND new Home/EU students.
- To internationalise further its activities by, inter alia, creating new deep and strong international partnerships.
- To enhance further its research presence through its four multi-disciplinary centres of research excellence: the new Sussex Centre for the Study of Corruption and the three longer standing research centres - the Sussex European Institute, the Centre for Responsibilities, Rights and the Law, and the Centre for Gender Studies.

2. Analysis of current position

2.1 Strengths

- Strong demand from quality students
- Diversity and size of the international student intake
- Attractive portfolio of programmes
- Quality of research
- Strong national and international reputation
- Highly committed staff
- School's financial position and its control of its cost base
- ESRC doctoral training centre

2.2 Weaknesses

- Unsustainably high SSRs
- Lack of space in the New Academic Building to accommodate growth plans

2.3 Opportunities

- New fee structures for university degrees
- Partial lifting of cap on HEU UGs
- New international partnerships
- New Academic Building in summer 2012
- New ESRC Doctoral training centre
- AHRC Block Grant Partnership II
- Expanded WP agenda
- The structure of the new academic year

2.4 Threats

- New fee structures for university degrees and possible uncertainty over recruitment of AAB+ students
- Unpaid fees from the increasing number of overseas students in the School
- Changes to immigration regulation for staff and overseas students on sub-degree level programmes
- Lack of progress in making changes to University-level IT systems and web support
- Insufficient high quality residential accommodation available for overseas and home students on campus
- Cuts in research council (AHRC and ESRC) budgets
- Uncertainty over some aspects of the changes to the new academic year

3. Risk

The key risks for the School in this planning period are uncertainty over student income due to new HEU UG fees regime and immigration regulation changes for overseas students, and the result of the REF in 2014.

The School has a risk register which is regularly reviewed by the School's Executive Board (attached). The School also has a Health and Safety Strategy and Action Plan which it reviews regularly.

PART II

4. Research

4.1 Research strategy

The School is strongly research-led and focuses on 3 and 4 star work and the impact that this work has. The School supports the development of research at the four following levels:

- **Individual academics**

The School has taken steps to ensure that all its academic staff understand the need for a strong REF submission and has emphasised the importance of bringing research grants into the School. It has underscored the need for staff to have a strong external profile and has introduced a range of measures to raise the profile the School generally.

- **The research cluster**

The School recognizes that one of the surest means of encouraging and fostering individual faculty research is by means of organising faculty into research clusters. Such clusters, sometimes synonymous with research centres that enjoy an international standing, help academic staff to reach their individual targets through collective

endeavour, and raise the profile of specific research areas both domestically and internationally.

- **The Departments**

Each Department in the school oversees the work of individual members of faculty, and of the research clusters to which faculty members contribute. Departments ensure that support is provided for individuals and clusters in an appropriate fashion, identify strengths and weaknesses and address the latter, and take advantage of new research developments and new intradepartmental synergies. They also seek to ensure faculty teaching dovetails with research expertise where possible, so as to guarantee expertise dissemination to students and consistent focus of faculty energies.

- **The School**

In turn the School supports Departments in their scaffolding of individual research activity, including individual REF submissions, encourages the undertaking of interdisciplinary research wherever possible, and encourages cross-departmental initiatives, in addition to coordinating shared research endeavours with other Schools. In conjunction with the Research and Enterprise Services, it provides services to those applying for external funding – ethical clearance; internal peer review; funding advice; funding expertise dissemination etc. It also encourages the increase and improvement of funding applications. With Departments, it develops policy to support and manage research activity, including funded activity. Along with other academic budget centres, the School supports and contributes to the Seed Corn Funding Scheme for interdisciplinary research that has been developed by the Heads of School Group.

4.2 PGR strategy

The School plans to increase the number of PGRs per staff FTE in the School and support its PGR students appropriately and help them towards timely completion of their theses. The ESRC Doctoral Training Centre will play a key role in this, as will development of the School Scholarship scheme and the bid that will be made to the AHRC under its BGP2 Scheme.

Provision for PGR research is based on world-class academic expertise, active and responsive supervision and a positive research culture that spans students and academic faculty. The School is also committed to maintaining high quality doctoral supervision and research, as well as promoting advanced research that cross disciplines and stretch boundaries.

4.3 Grant capture

The School is determined to enhance its success in research grant capture and is working hard to embed that culture within the School.

5. Teaching, learning & student experience

5.1 The School's aims to:

- provide a teaching and learning offer that is attractive and innovative and able to compete effectively for the highest quality students;
- deliver a top quality student experience and be able to demonstrate that it offers students good value for money;
- successfully grow its income streams from teaching and learning by expanding and enhancing its portfolio of undergraduate and PGT programmes, with particular emphasis on recruiting extra overseas students;

- strengthen its teaching and research links with other disciplines in the University and ensure that these links add value both to its activities and to those of the other discipline areas.

5.2 Growing income from teaching

One of LPS's immediate priorities is to grow its income streams from teaching and learning. This is in line with the University's strategy to increase its teaching and learning activity, as set out in its Strategic Plan, *Making the Future*. LPS intends to achieve this growth by expanding its UG and PG student numbers, with particular emphasis on recruiting extra overseas students, and by enhancing its portfolio of programmes. It aims to have a demand-led learning and teaching offer rather than, as has been so often the case in the sector, a supply-led approach which offers students what a university feels they should have rather than what is attractive to students. This new mind-set will be particularly important in the changed HE landscape that exists post-Browne.

Work placements are being introduced, and professional marketing advice has been taken on portfolio development in all three Departments.

5.3 Student experience

Inspirational teaching and learning must be matched by an excellent overall student experience. The depth and breadth of this experience needs constantly to be refined to match the diverse backgrounds and aspirations of students. The School aims to deliver a vibrant and well-rounded student experience and maintain a social and caring academic community with high levels of professional and mutual support. In order to achieve this, the School has adopted a range of policies to ensure that all students benefit from appropriate and easily-available academic advice, based on an effective monitoring of achievement and performance. The School also works closely with the University Student Life Centre and other University support and counselling services to ensure that students have ready access to high quality advice and counselling on personal matters, including financial and practical issues.

The School ensures that student representatives are able to participate in all appropriate School committees so that the views of the student body can be taken into account in decision-making.

NSS: the School is also determined to keep on improving its NSS scores and has an action plan in place to improve the School's NSS scores in relation to assessment and feedback.

Student Compact: the School wishes to promote the highest levels of openness and transparency in relation to its academic provision, and to its enrichment of the student experience. It will produce, in consultation with its students, a 'Student Compact'.

6. Internationalisation

The School aims to develop and strengthen its international connections (including providing opportunities for student exchanges and facilitating international research collaborations) and has real worldwide presence.

The School has been working to develop significant strategic partnerships with a number of HEIs overseas. The goal is to enhance the recruitment of top-quality international students to the School's programmes, to open up new opportunities for student exchanges (both for Sussex students going out and for students at overseas institutions coming in) and to develop opportunities for international research collaborations. The School has developed a strong relationship with Maastricht University, is about to launch a major new initiative in Canada, and is in serious discussion with a major HEI in Rome. Other developments include relationships with HEIs in Korea and in South Africa.

7. Human resources

The School is committed to developing excellence in all its staff and fosters a supportive and stimulating working environment for them. It encourages its members to participate in discussion and decisions about the direction of the School and matters of concern to the University community. It listens to its staff and is responsive to the feedback it receives.

Staffing levels are kept under review, particularly in light of growth plans for the School. All staff are appraised and performance management is carried out where appropriate.

8. Finance & sustainability

The School carefully monitors its income and expenditure to ensure financial sustainability. It plans to grow its income streams from teaching and learning by expanding and enhancing its portfolio of undergraduate and PGT programmes, with particular emphasis on recruiting extra overseas students, and to enhance its success in research grant capture.

9. Business & community

The School will continue to play an active part in the cultural, social and economic life of the region, build on its links with the local community, and engage with business. It will also continue to engage actively and effectively with its alumni and other key stakeholders.