



Department of
Gender Studies

Gender Department Education Strategy 2018-19

Gender Department Education faculty and staff set ourselves extremely high standards and we prioritise the student experience at all levels. This excellence is recognised each year with SU Teaching Excellence awards and through positive feedback from students. We are responsive to changing student needs, too, and endeavour to build each year on existing achievements to meet these challenges. Our current Gender Department Education Strategy reflects our desire to build on current excellence, respond to any problem areas, and work with students to achieve the highest standards of gender studies education. Our 4 goals reflect LSE-wide educational goals and add a 4th on 'Intersectional Inequalities' to highlight the importance of this area going forward.

Our Education Strategy is a flexible working document and we welcome faculty, staff and student input into the process of revising and strengthening it each year. Consultation on amendments will take place through Teaching and Review Meetings, Staff Student Liaison Meetings, and in discussion with the Teaching Pro-Director.

Goal 1 - Provision of Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Education

Our two main ways of meeting this strategic goal concern ongoing review of our courses and programmes in an embedded and responsive way; and innovation in design, delivery and assessment across our MSc and PhD programmes. Teaching in Gender is characterised by diversity in pedagogy (a range of teaching styles and format, related to learning outcomes) and in assessment modes.

Programme and Course Developments

1.1 New courses

We successfully ran the first MSc WPS programme last year and will be reviewing the core course provision this coming year. This year we welcome the new intake for our 'Sexuality' pathway on MSc Gender. A new PhD pathway in Gender and Social Science and a new course to expand our MSC Gender, Media and Culture provision were successfully launched last year, together with the new MSc programme in Women Peace and Security. We further reviewed and expanded provision for our dissertation module, to include support over the summer and fine-tuned our supervisory provision. We also inaugurated for the department and beyond an intensive PhD course run jointly by the head of department and our Centennial Professor on 'Intersectionality and Politics', which we will run again in 2018-19.

1.2 Assessment and Feedback

Students are assigned Academic Mentors at the start of the academic year and have timetabled meetings with them to ensure that their progress is steady and to provide academic support in conjunction with course-level support. We are committed to timetabled feedback tutorial hours for formatives resulting in improved opportunities for faculty to engage individually with students and to pick up early any issues which could impact on student performance and progress. For the take-home exam we provided explicit teaching and learning support with a session run by TLC and an extended revision and preparation lecture as part of our core provision. We are also providing additional course specific advice on all assessments in MT to help students to understand the shift to graduate level work. We have reviewed our marking processes, deciding to make sighted second marking our default for all courses across our provision.

1.3 Embedding Innovation

The successful bid to the Vision Fund (2016-17) enabled us to provide innovation in pedagogy, including café-style teaching, conference assessment, poster-sessions and peer feedback. This has been integrated into our teaching provision going forward through the development of our PhD studentship programme. LSE studentship recipients now offer TA support on existing courses. Last year we successfully piloted a summer dissertation clinic, which was well attended to provide additional support for students facing unexpected obstacles in the final

stages of their dissertation. GTA provision on our core theory includes a full mentoring programme (our results here in terms of TQAROs evidence success). In terms of curriculum development we have revised our core course to include greater transnational sources, and have extended intersectional teaching provision through our new intensive. With funds for skills development and KEI we will continue to work with students on transferable skills' development and generating knowledge for social justice.

Integrating Student Feedback and Review

1.4 External Examiners

Each year our external examiners meet with faculty to confirm degree results and to provide feedback on our courses. The feedback is shared with students in their degrees programme meetings in MT or LT each year. Our examiners consider our programmes to be of the highest quality and comment our pedagogy and assessment modes. These reports are available to students both in and out of cycle. This is another opportunity to flag student feedback and to act upon it. Our internal exam board reviews performance of students across courses and programmes and relates this to assessment modes and marking practices each year.

1.5 Staff-Student Liaison

Conveners meet student representatives on each programme every term to discuss any changes, share the external examiners' reports and TQARO/PG survey results, and address concerns as they arise. These are included in our annual teaching review, which takes place at the end of the summer term, which we use as an opportunity to reflect in depth on how all of the courses have performed and what, if anything, needs addressing for the next session, to raise and investigate any issues that have arisen over the year which may impact on other courses taught in the department, to share best practice as well as to discuss proposed changes to courses or programmes. During the year, we work with students to allay anxieties, share best practice and develop student skills. Our decision to reduce multiple assessment modes and to stagger formative and summative assessment over course provision derives from this process of review.

1.6 Responsiveness

Recent changes in response to student feedback include making better and broader use of 'office hours' to ensure students receive the highest level of input on formative work, as well as having opportunities to see all faculty during term-time. All student formative work is returned within two weeks, and students have mandatory meetings to discuss this with their course tutors. Students are also able to discuss progress with their academic mentors, a role we are enhancing this year with additional opportunities for meetings and more emphasis placed

by faculty on this part of their role. We are committed to achieving realistic turnaround times for summative work, without compromising on the quality of our processes. We are increasing time on workshops for 499 by increasing methods input this year and will continue with dissertation surgeries with PhD teaching assistance. The Head of Dept and the Deputy Head (Teaching) run 'town hall meetings' for all students to explain assessment modes and feedback and provide open Q and A.

1.7 Collegiality

Getting to know faculty and students across our degrees is a point of pride in Gender. We have weekly Events after which students and faculty as well as staff can mingle. We are working on making sure students can attend these, and extending the range of people who speak to make them open to all and we have changed our emphasis this year to allow for a better mix of student centered sessions as well as providing access to the latest in gender studies research. Our PhD workshop includes faculty input from across the department, and we have a termly faculty/PhD social that allows those with less contact to engage one another more freely. Our Open Space remains a site of regular informal contact, and MSc and PhD students as well as faculty are encouraged to make use of this for work as well as social engagement. Many of our courses now include additional sessions 'outside the classroom' (e.g. visits to relevant exhibitions, screenings or installations) to allow students to get to know both a new city and each other more quickly as well as reflecting on their learning in practical ways.

Goal 1 KPIs

- Consistently excellent reports from external examiner
- Very low failure rates and improving student performance overall
- Improving TQAROs on feedback, and excellent GTA performance
- Consistent LSE teaching prizes for permanent and temporary faculty.

Goal 2 - Gender graduates are well informed, critical, analytically sophisticated and globally employable

Interdisciplinary Gender Studies allows students to explore intellectual areas of direct relevance to the contemporary world, and provide students with a range of knowledge and skills that prepare them for careers in academia or in a range of governmental and non-governmental institutions, policy, consulting and applied research-based organisations. We are extending our methods provision for MSc and PhD students in line with this strategic goal, and widening our participation (including through alumni and careers) in a range of ways. We are committed to making sure our graduates have a broad range of transferrable skills and our consistently high post-graduation employment rate of around 90% exemplifies this.

Programme and Course Developments

2.1 Programme Focus

While we engage primarily in academic education rather than professional training, we nonetheless provide students with a range of knowledge and skills that prepare them for careers in academia or in a range of governmental and non-governmental institutions, policy, consulting and applied research-based organisations that match their career aspirations and destinations. Our MSc degrees in Gender, Development and Globalisation; Gender, Policy and Inequalities; and Gender, Media and Culture are attractive to students wanting careers as policymakers, creative artist or industry workers, and our MSc Gender programme has a research pathway that provides methodology skills for a broad range of further research development.

2.2 Careers Development

Each year Gender offers a career programme for students, and works with LSE Careers to identify and encourage students to think ahead about post-graduation lives. We run series of professionally-focused skills development workshops, seminars and events for MSc students, including inviting NGO workers, film-makers, researchers and so on to speak to students about their trajectories. We also hold events where alumni offer practical and tailored advice on post MSc opportunities. Dissertation Workshops have methods sessions useful for research application across programmes and disciplines. We use the Academic Mentoring meetings in LT and ST to discuss progression with students. We are developing opportunities for students to develop their range of transferable communication skills for example with our podcasting programme. PhD students have professional development-focused workshops in their LT student's workshops (e.g. CV building, giving conference papers, etc.) PhD students are given access to TA and GTA experience and RA experience as part of their studentships.

2.3 Widening Participation

We also want to expand the range of students that we have on our programmes and work with schools to bring 6th former students to LSE to events and workshops. We invite PhD students from other universities in gender studies to participate in our events. We explore 'real-world' topics in our 'Gender Conversations' programmes to appeal to a wider audience beyond our own students. Our courses typically have between 45% and 50% non-Gender student participation in line with our remit of teaching beyond our own programmes.

Integrating Student Feedback and Review

2.4 Applied theory

Our external examiners comment regularly on the sophistication of our MSc cohort ability to link theory and practice, and importantly they note the strong level of ability across the performance range. Students have asked for the applied significance of the theory they learn for their programmes and subsequent careers to be made more visible across their teaching. In reviewing this important aspect of our student training and experience, we have emphasised this aspect for core teaching in particular to faculty, and changed marking criteria to reflect a fuller range of expertise from students. We have also integrated a greater number of professionals into our events programmes (both degree specific and for the department) to showcase the relationship between the field and knowledge on the ground.

2.5 Assessment

Changing criteria has resulted in raising numbers of distinctions and strong merits. We think this is appropriate in recognising student destinations and will continue in this vein, which continuing to emphasise the importance of theory across courses (including applying theory in their own independent research projects). In addition, our assessment and pedagogic diversity enables students to develop life-skills such as presenting to others, working in groups, providing feedback to peers, designing research outlines, and presenting work in posters. These complement rather than replace short and long essays and our one take-home exam.

2.6 Increased methods provision

We see this as a core part of skills building for both PhD and MSc students. Theory and methods are transferrable skills that students can take up no matter what they do later in life. We include humanities methods in this vision (e.g. close reading) because of their centrality in our understanding of preparing students for a range of ways of living in the world as ethical subjects. This is being more fully integrated in GI500 PhD workshops (with additional course provision), and GI499 MSc dissertation workshops.

2.7 PhD Training

We have reviewed all aspects of the PhD training programme, fitting it more fully to skills and increasing completion rates. Upgrade now requires research outline and completion of theory and research design classes; 2nd years have a review viva that helps them develop communication skills; 3rd years have a research panel to faculty and students. In addition, LT is focused specifically on developing skills for research and applied destinations. PhD students teach as GTAs, TAs or RAs in the department. We are also supporting PhD students to publish as a matter of course while in the department, asking supervisors to ensure these opportunities are fully discussed and moved on as part of progression.

2.8 Alumni

We have a developing alumni network that feeds into current student experience. We involve past students in presenting to current students on the different paths they have taken with their degrees after graduation. We have good numbers of alumni attending Gender events, at which they mingle with current students, and we encourage networking across cohorts for jobs, further training and participation in the life of the department. Social media use is particularly high in this aspect of our education strategy (with Facebook and Twitter in particular).

Goal 2 KPIs

- External examiner feedback on sophistication of theory and ability to apply it to real world contexts
- Improved provision of applied research opportunities (careers, professional development; showcasing of applied research)
- High employment rate at 6 months after graduation – currently about 90%
- Development of alumni networks through enhanced use of Facebook and twitter platforms resulting in high integration of cohorts.

Goal 3 - Gender students and staff interact to build a dynamic learning community that reflects the School's distinctive identity

LSE Gender provides a diverse range of extracurricular activities including public lectures, research seminars, workshops, sometimes with practitioners and occasional fieldtrips. We endeavor to keep our courses open to students from across the LSE in keeping both with this strategic goal and as befits the interdisciplinary and emerging character of our field. This focus on broad-based provision is an important part of meeting this goal.

3.1 Space

We value the Open Space in the department and are happy when this is used by both students and faculty for impromptu meetings, lunch, and research or teaching collaborations. It is a pleasant environment for students waiting to see faculty, and for faculty and administrators who spend the majority of their lives there. The space is also where we have receptions after our events on Wednesday evenings, enabling full participation in post-event socializing.

3.2 LSE Gender Events and Conversations

We have revised our events programme to include a broader variety of formats and participants. We now include more panels on key issues that include a range of actors (e.g. sexual rights, with an academic, activist and union member), as well as high profile public lectures (see our events pages). Attendance is compulsory for PhD students (a proportion), and strongly encouraged as a site of learning for MSc students. Several of the events are targeted specifically to the MSc cohort, particularly in the MT to enhance cohort cohesion and to create new opportunities to engage with one another both socially and intellectually.

3.3 Internal and External

We are committed to providing teaching for students outside of the Department on our courses, as part of our goal to disseminate gender education beyond the specific enclave of gender programmes. This is a central part of the original missions of the Gender Department and one that we take very seriously. A high percentage of students on our courses now come from a range of programmes and disciplines, and we see this as an appropriate feature of our expansion. Our interdisciplinary and real-world character makes this back and forth inevitable if we are to be successful.

Goal 4 - Intersectional Inequalities: Steps to Improving Representation, Participation and Attainment

As a department we are committed to inclusion and diversity, and in particular to identifying and ameliorating intersectional inequalities. This is reflected in our pedagogic diversity and our assessment modes, as well as in our curriculum and liaison with students (within and outside the department). We are actively researching the educational experience of all our students in relation to attainment, with a view to addressing any inequalities of outcome for different student groups which have been identified. . We also plan to look further at a range of ways in which we might improve our intersectional representation, particularly with respect to race and ethnicity. We would like to emphasise the following measures going forward, and would also advocate that the School adopt a 4th goal along these lines as part of its Education Strategy.

4.1 BME Attainment

Overall the department is committed to thinking of our education provision in the context of social justice. This includes an explicit commitment to countering racism and bias at all levels and supporting BAME faculty and students who encounter 'everyday racism' whilst at the white majority department and school. This year the HoD will frame our Masters programmes in the induction week with a session for the students on gender education as a social justice project and highlighting the responsibilities this brings.

4.2 Language and participation

We are looking closely at our seminar/workshop/lecturing styles to ensure issues of language are taken account of, and checking that inclusion and participation are shared goals. Some of our GTAs and Teaching Fellows have collaborated on a piece of research on inclusion, and a journal publication is in process. We have also started the process of conducting a transnational and racial/ethnic diversity audit of our courses. We have implemented on the core theory course some of the initial work in identifying relevant broader sources that befit our commitment to a global and diverse education, with the lead taken by two faculty members and a PhD student to help individual lecturers to identify relevant texts which complement and complicate our existing theoretical framings and scholarship. We are responsive to the broader principle of 'decolonising the curriculum' that has been student-led in a variety of universities globally, and want to respond positively to the insistence on greater diversity across education provision. As part of this demand, we would also like to commission translation of some texts into English.

This year we will be extending discussion of power and inequality in the Department and the School through Town Hall meetings on this issue, and through increasing MSc student participation in 'Gender Studies as a Social Justice Project'.