

The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review 2017/18

Teaching Programme Review of Sociology and Sustainable Development

12th and 13th February 2018

Section A- INTRODUCTION

1. Scope of the review

The Teaching Programme Review (TPR) considered the following undergraduate provision.

Undergraduate Provision

- Sociology MA (Hons)
- Global and International Sociology MA (Hons)
- Sociology and Politics MA (Hons)
- Sociology and Psychology MA (Hons)
- Sociology and Social & Economic History MA (Hons)
- Sociology and Social Anthropology MA (Hons)
- Sociology with Quantitative Methods MA (Hons)
- Sociology with South Asian Studies MA (Hons)
- Sustainable Development MA (Hons)

The TPR consisted of:

- the standard University Remit for Internal Review (Appendix 1);
- the Subject-Specific Remit for the Review, consisting of the following items:
 1. To discuss the variety, and originality, of teaching in Sociology and Sustainable Development, and whether there is an appropriate balance between new and more conventional forms of teaching and assessment, and whether the impact of increasing numbers of students on programmes and courses means that class sizes, pedagogical design and teaching require attention as a result;
 2. How to best facilitate and support the crucial contribution of Postgraduate Tutors, including their preparation and training, and general professional development.
 3. A Student Remit Item – How to encourage and support more of a sense of a cohesive cohort.
- the Reflective Report, and additional material provided in advance of the Review (Appendix 2);
- the visit by the Review Team, including consideration of further material (Appendix 2);
- the final report produced by the Review Team;
- action by the Subject Area and others to whom recommendations were remitted following the Review.

2. Membership of Review Team

Role	Member
Convener	Professor Mary Brennan, Business School
Internal	Dr Stuart King, School of Mathematics
External	Professor Karen O'Reilly, Professor Emeritus, University of Loughborough
External	Dr Lucie Middlemiss, University of Leeds
Student	Ms Louise Oelofse, School of Economics
Administrator	Mr Stuart Fitzpatrick, Academic Services

3. Situation of the Subject Area

Sociology is one of six Subject Areas within the School of Social and Political Science (SPS). Sustainable Development is owned by Sociology, but is an interdisciplinary degree taught by staff from several different subject areas. SPS sits within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS).

4. Physical Location

For the most part, Sociology and Sustainable Development are housed in the Chrystal Macmillan Building in George Square, with some buildings on Buccleuch Place, and some buildings adjacent to the Chrystal Macmillan Building in George Square.

5. Date of Previous Review

The previous TPR of Sociology took place on 24th and 25th January 2012. This is the first time Sustainable Development provision has been reviewed.

6. Reflective Report

The Reflective Report was prepared by Dr Rachel Howell (TPR Liaison) and Dr Jonathan Hearn (Head of Sociology). Student representatives were consulted at a meeting prior to the preparation of the report, and the TPR process was discussed in a meeting open to all students in December 2017. The Report was signed off by Head of School, Professor Linda McKie.

Section B- MAIN REPORT

1. Strategic Overview

- 1.1 The Review Team found Sociology and Sustainable Development to be positive academic environments, with constituents working together towards common aims. Staff members at all levels demonstrate a deep commitment to listening and responding to the student voice, and to assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. Students are engaged, and achievement levels are high.
- 1.2 The period since the last TPR in January 2012 has been one of significant growth for the Subject Area: average annual intake to undergraduate programmes has increased from around 80 to around 100 students, with a 25% increase in Undergraduate student admissions experienced between 2015 and 2016. Whilst the subject area has both responded, and coped to date, with this growth, the Review Team noted that resources are now very stretched: many staff members are working at capacity; class sizes have grown, especially at non-honours level, to numbers that exceed the capacity of the George Square Lecture Theatre; there are acute pressures on suitable teaching, office and student study space, and there is a fear for the sustainability of private areas for conducting confidential student conversations. The Review Team recognised that individuals in key Personal Tutor (PT) and Student Support Officer (SSO) roles require unrestricted access to private and confidential spaces, and **recommended** that these spaces are ensured and made readily available. The Review Team **suggested** that a transparent, frank and robust discussion take place with respect to office allocation, especially in relation to single occupancy offices in regards to individual academic leadership and management roles rather than grade. Many courses, especially in earlier years, are large, making it challenging to deliver effective and high quality teaching, and creating a high demand for, and use of guaranteed hrs (PhD) tutors and a very high marking burden on staff. The Review Team **commended** the subject group for how they have effectively coped with increasing student numbers since the last review though believe that further growth, given current space and human resources, is unsustainable.
- 1.3 During its visit, the Team identified a number of features of both Sociology and Sustainable Development's learning and teaching that are innovative and distinctive: it notes and **commends** in particular the pioneering nature of the Sustainable Development degree programme, and the level and quality of teaching provision and student support. However, there was a sense that the Subject Area may not be maximising these and other strengths whilst meeting the demands placed on it by an increasing student population. The subject area are understandably concerned that their pedagogical design and teaching remains effective and sufficient in meeting the needs of the students undertaking both pre-honours and honours level courses.

2. Enhancing the Student Experience

2.1 Supporting Students in their Learning

Personal Tutor System

- 2.1.1 The Review Team found both Sociology and Sustainable Development provided holistic pastoral and academic support for students enrolled on their degree

programmes, and students were very well supported in their learning. Personal Tutors within the Subject Area span all grades, and aim to provide academic, and pastoral, support where possible, whilst the majority of pastoral and administrative support is provided by the respective Sociology or Sustainable Development year heads or programme directors (Sustainable Development only), Student Support Officers, and the Undergraduate Teaching Office Team. The Review Team **commended** the support and professionalism of the UG Teaching Office to staff and students alike. Interviews with students demonstrated that they are very satisfied with the support they receive, and know where to go in the event that they require advice and guidance. Students also appeared to be satisfied with the systems that were in place to support them. The Review Team also **commended** Personal Tutors and Student Support Officers for ably fulfilling their commitments and duties to an extremely high standard despite the increasing pressures caused by rising student numbers.

2.1.2 Sociology and Sustainable Development aim to offer students the same Personal Tutor for the duration of their studies. It is recognised that in practice this is not always achievable due to research sabbaticals or staff assuming other responsibilities, or students changing degree programmes. The Review Team noted that the Personal Tutors within Sociology and Sustainable Development were well supported by the Senior Tutor, and the relationship between the Student Support Officers and Personal Tutors played an important role in providing appropriate and effective support. The Review Team were impressed by the support available, and **commended** the quality of support available to all students.

Community Building

2.1.3 Whilst being consulted in preparation for the Review, students in Sociology expressed a desire to encourage and support more the creation, and development, of a cohesive cohort identity and community. The Review Team met with students from all levels and both subjects during the review, and listened to concerns from students that the current models of delivery (especially with regard to Sociology 1A and 1B) meant that class sizes and, in turn, tutorial allocation and sizes made it difficult to begin to form relationships with other students, as Sociology 1A and 1B attracted a large number of outside students. The Review Team identified this as a wider issue, and agreed that a number of recommendations around the wider delivery of learning and teaching across the subject area would enable the address of this. The Review Team noted that the Subject Area hosted welcome events for students at the start of each year, and that students were supported by peer support schemes such as SDPALS, SocPALS, and Sustainable Development Families, the latter of which was intended to provide an environment which would help to develop friendships and support networks for those students across different years on Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development degree also run a weekly newsletter called 'SD Briefs' which consisted of information about events and information which would be of use to Sustainable Development Students, and students are encouraged to submit material for inclusion into SD Briefs. Sociology have also begun issuing a similar, monthly, newsletter. The Review Team **commended** the use of newsletters, SocPALS, SDPals, and SD Families in encouraging and growing a cohesive cohort Identity and community.

2.1.4 The introduction of Tutorial allocation at a pre-honours level in Academic Year 16/17 meant that students no longer had the option to choose to attend tutorials with classmates taking the same degree. Sociology had introduced a 'Fundamentals'

course to aid in building a sense of cohort, along with teaching core skills. These courses were not for credit, and students were of the view that these courses could be adapted to better serve their needs.

2.2 Listening to and Responding to the Student Voice

2.2.1 Students are given the opportunity to provide feedback on their courses on at least two occasions in each course. In 16/17, the Subject Area introduced the use of postcards for mid-course feedback and constructive criticisms. Course Organisers respond to this feedback either in class and/or via Learn. Students are also given end of semester feedback opportunities online.

2.2.2 The Sociology Student Forum (which was previously known as the Sociology Student Staff Liaison Committee) was created in Academic Year 2015/16 as a way of holding more productive discussions surrounding student experience. This is done by providing an opportunity for all Sociology students to participate. Class representatives act as facilitators for discussions with their classmates about their degrees. Minutes of these meetings are hosted online on the Sociology website and are accessible to students and staff alike.

2.2.3 Sustainable Development hold a Sustainable Development Student Staff Liaison Committee towards the end of each semester. Student representatives attend with feedback from the student body. The minutes of these meetings are also, made available to all staff and students online. The Review Team **recommended** that minutes of Student Staff Liaison Committee's be discussed by the relevant team at a suitable meeting, with these discussions being fed back via a written response to the students in order to help to 'close the loop'.

2.3 Learning and Teaching

2.3.1 Both Sociology and Sustainable Development benefit from the Scottish four-year undergraduate degree structure, which facilitates flexibility and breadth in the first two years of study, provides sufficient time for students to produce a dissertation based on original research in their fourth year, and allows students to graduate with a Master of Arts degree.

2.3.2 Sociology and Sustainable Development are committed to the provision of high quality learning experiences for students across pre-honours and honours provision. The Review Team **commended** the quality of teaching and provision that students received from Sociology and Sustainable Development.

2.3.3 Sociology 1A and Sociology 1B are two of the largest courses in both the College and wider University, and as such provide two of the more extreme examples of the impact on increasing student numbers. These courses regularly exceed 500 students, which makes effective provision of all aspects of them challenging. Both are in effect capped by the room size restrictions of the George Square Lecture Theatre and these courses usually reach capacity very early in welcome week. The Review Team noted that outside students from within, and outwith, Social and Political Science are very often turned away, which leads to significant student dissatisfaction. Students who were fortunate enough to be admitted onto these courses then strongly expressed dissatisfaction relating to the class sizes. The Review Team heard that, even when placed in the largest available lecturing facilities, such large numbers in attendance

often led to students being left without seats (first few weeks of term) and having to sit on stairs within lecture theatres. The large volume of students on these courses meant that organising and staffing tutorial groups appropriately has become extremely complex and challenging, which in turn has led to increased tutorial sizes when the appropriate resource could not be allocated to the tutorials, which then caused workload issues for staff (especially tutors) through additional marking. Students expressed strong dissatisfaction with the class sizes in some non-honours provision, and commented that it caused issues in developing an effective sense of cohort. Students are also allocated to tutorials, meaning that they were often in tutorials with students who were not undertaking Sociology as part of their degree (first or 2nd subject), and who are choosing sociology as an outside option. From a pedagogical and teaching perspective, the ability to find appropriate resources to deliver effective learning and teaching to these large classes from within current resource is presenting a considerable challenge for Sociology. The Review Team agreed that this was an issue of concern and importance, and **recommend** the implementation of a School wide strategy for managing non-honours courses with a view to coping with increasing numbers of students, and reflecting on the relative value of pre-honours courses and the balance of distribution of core School staff resource between non-honours and honours courses. The Review Team **recommend** a review of the provision of first year Sociology in particular, and that the School consider the provision of alternatives for those who are on programme (where sociology is named first or second, approximately 165 students across first and second year) and off programme. The review team also **recommend** that the Fundamentals course is incorporated into the new on programme Sociology courses. The Review Team also felt it important to **recommend** that the Subject Area engage further with their designated Admissions representative(s) in order to establish clearer and more regular communication channels between the School and Central Admissions to ensure that information is disseminated through the subject groups for transparency, awareness and agreement of student numbers so that the School and Subject Area are better able to effectively plan resourcing.

2.3.4 Dealing with increasing numbers has also presented issues with time allocation for marking, especially in relation to the variety of assessment techniques employed across both Sociology and Sustainable Development. The Board of Studies in Sociology in particular encouraged diversification of assessment, and discouraged over-reliance on examinations. This approach is **commended**, but the Review Team agreed assessments loads were placing significantly strain on staff. The large numbers of students mean that staff (and in particular PG Tutors) are struggling to effectively carry out their marking loads in the recommended feedback turnaround time. In particular, they reported that this is impacting the provision of quality feedback alongside fulfilling their other academic obligations. As a result, the Review Team **recommends** a mapping of assessments across core curricula, to highlight and improve, where necessary, the diversity of forms of assessment and types of writing. As part of this mapping, the subject area should consider forms of assessment which facilitate marking to fit within workload allowances. Additionally, the Review Team **suggests** that the involvement and engagement with UG teaching activities of Grade 10 staff is reviewed as students reported that they do not feel that they have sufficient exposure or access to the world leading staff (grade 10 in particular) from the subject area and that as a result they feel that they are not directly benefiting as much as they expected from being a student in a world leading sociology department.

2.3.5 Given the nature of the Sustainable Development degree, its pathways (Geography pathway, Politics pathway, International Relations pathway, Social Anthropology

pathway, and Sociology pathway) and links with other subject areas out with Sociology, the Review Team recognises that a lot of staff time is given to ensure arrangements for appropriate provision of Sustainable Development each year. Maintenance of these arrangements by the course organisers and Programme Director(s) is seen as invisible effort. It is equally problematic that staff from other subject areas can occasionally forget to factor in their teaching commitment to Sustainable Development, which creates problems for teaching provision, dissertation supervision and marking. Sustainable Development is primarily run by three members of staff, with input from staff from the above noted subject areas. In each semester of their degree, students undertake one Sustainable Development course, one pathway course, and one other course which might also be in their pathway subject, while at Honours level this other course must be related to Sustainable Development, (which includes courses from a number of different School and subject areas). The Review Team **recommend** that Sustainable Development review the resources required to maintain, and the sustainability of, the current format and number of pathways provided on the Sustainable Development Degree.

2.3.6 Within the Teaching Administration, the Review Team noted that there is no joint degree representative, and **suggested** that it would be beneficial to ensure that there is representation for different sub-cohorts of students and in particular those undertaking joint degrees with Sociology where Sociology is the 2nd named subject.

2.4 Development of Employability and Graduates Attributes

2.4.1 Both Sociology and Sustainable Development held career events whereby external speakers delivered talks to the student body. In Sociology, there are two talks per year for students' in third and fourth years from the School of Social and Political Sciences liaison in the Careers Service. There is also an in-depth career session hosted for Honours students in Sociology which provides students with the opportunity to become familiar with sources of support and advice within the University. Students from Sociology had expressed that whilst these were enjoyable, they were not always held at the most suitable of times, and the direct relevance to students was not always clear. The Review Team **suggested** that Sociology should consider investing some further effort into suitably timed career related events which involve alumni of the subject area, or those companies or individuals who have knowledge, and experience, of employing Sociology graduates.

2.4.2 Within Sustainable Development, students of every year group receive a talk from the Careers Service at some point in each academic year. These sessions are tailored to the specific needs of students undertaking the Sustainable Development degree. Students are also reminded of the Careers Service and the services offered at the Welcome and Transition events hosted by Sustainable Development programme team each year.

2.4.3 All course organisers in Sociology and Sustainable Development are encouraged to consider the Graduate Attributes and transferable skills that their course will bring to students. The Review team noted that all students within the School of Social and Political Science have access to the Student Development Office, which offers a range of workshops and seminars, and the chance to enrol on the Edinburgh Award through the Development Office. The Edinburgh Award includes 20 hours of skills training, and working on a project throughout the Academic Year. It is designed to develop transferable skills and increase employability, with student participation being included on academic transcripts.

2.5 Accessibility, Inclusivity and Widening Participation

2.5.1 Sociology and Sustainable Development seek to ensure that the curricula are accessible to all students, and are in compliance with the University's Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy. The review panel would like to **commend** Sociology and Sustainable Development for their active involvement in People+, which is a School of Social and Political Sciences initiative which aims to improve equality, diversity, wellbeing and a healthy work life balance across the School.

2.5.2 The School of Social and Political Science are **commended** for recently achieving an Athena Swan Bronze award for gender equality.

2.5.3 Students, in aiding the subject area in preparation for the review, raised the issues relating to diversification of the Sociology reading lists and attempts to move away from primarily white European or North American authors. Diversity in the curriculum was an important issue for Sociology. Sociology 1A contained a unit on race and citizenship, and Sociology 2B had a global and transnational focus. Staff in Sociology are working towards enriching and expanding reading lists, rather than simply replacing texts and the review team would like to **commend** the efforts to date and **suggest** that these efforts continue going forward and are considered as part of the recommendations associated with the review and transformation of pre-honours courses.

2.5.4 Sociology had a long standing relationship with the Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS), and works with the programme to deliver summer schools. Sociology were also involved with the University's Kickstart programme, which is designed as outreach to School pupils who are on track for University, with academics and PhD students giving taster sessions to pupils. Sociology also works with the Sutton Trust, which offers summer schools on Sociology for School leavers. These summer Schools are aimed at pupils who attend schools of low progression to Higher education, and are designed to give such pupils an insight into University life. The review team **commended** the subject area for their significant efforts in Widening Participation.

2.6 Learning Environment

2.6.1 Sociology and Sustainable Development are, as with the other Subject Areas within the School of Social and Political Science, housed across 3 core buildings including the Chrystal Macmillan Building. Since the previous TPR, a café and seating areas have been introduced on the ground floor of the building, providing high quality social-learning space. However, as previously noted, increases in student numbers have placed significant pressures on the estate overall, and staff and students report shortages of suitable teaching, office and study space, and areas in which to hold confidential conversations.

2.7 Assessment and Feedback

2.7.1 Assessment at undergraduate level is primarily through essays, with a few courses (mainly on sustainable development) also making use of final exams. Some courses

also included tutorial participations marks as a small portion of assessment, normally between 5 and 10%. All courses except the SD Dissertation/Sociology Project involved a mid-semester assignment. Some courses have reviewed their assessment methods in recent years, using alternative forms of assessment like fieldwork journals, video essays, annotated bibliographies, book reviews, policy briefs, essay outlines, group literature reviews, presentations, blogs, and reflective writing. The review team would like to **commend** the progress made over the last number of years to diversify the style, and types, of assessments and **suggest** that the subject group continues to work on this as student feedback was strongly in favour of further diversification of assignments types in order to support students developing their skills and competencies in different styles, and types, of writing.

2.7.2 As described in 2.3.4 above, the utilisation of such diverse forms of assessment has resulted in an increased marking burden and workload due to marking and feedback turnaround times and expectations, especially on larger courses. In 2.3.4 and 2.7.1, the Review Team **recommended** a mapping of assessments across core curricula, and highlighting and improving where necessary the diversity of forms of assessment and types of writing. As part of this mapping, the review team **suggest** the subject area should consider forms of assessment which facilitate marking to fit within workload allowances.

2.7.3 There is strong feeling amongst all staff involved in marking that the 15 day turnaround time for the provision of feedback on formative and summative in course assessed work to students is extremely demanding, especially in relation to very large courses and the complex moderation processes required due to the use of significant numbers of PG tutors. Staff accepted that this was a requirement, but felt that it was too restrictive in the context of large marking loads.

2.7.4 The external examiner comments for both Sociology and Sustainable Development regularly highlighted their strong satisfaction with the feedback the subject area provided to students on assessed work.

2.7.5 In meeting with the Review Team, students of all levels explained that they felt that the quality of feedback they receive is variable, with some being extensive, in depth, and helpful, whilst other feedback was felt to be too brief to be effective in helping students improve, or could benefit from further explanation in the form of face to face explanatory meetings. The Review Team met with Postgraduate Tutors, who had explained that they felt it important to give effective feedback but to do this they often had to spend double the allocated time marking each assignment. The Review Team felt that this was understandable, however noted that this kind of detailed and extensive feedback was ultimately unsustainable and, although well intentioned, was in some cases creating a disparity in feedback provision across specific courses and levels. The Review Team **suggest** a review of the consistency of marking protocols across all staff responsible for marking of work in both Sociology and Sustainable Development to help manage expectations from both students and staff regarding what effective feedback should look like in terms of content and quantity and the time required to produce such feedback given the workload guidance that determines the time allocated to the marking of different types, and lengths, of assignments.

2.8 Supporting and Developing Staff

- 2.8.1 Within Sociology and Sustainable Development, new staff involved in teaching are encouraged to complete either the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP) or the Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA) Level 2. The Edinburgh Teaching Award, from 17/18, is offered in house within the School of Social and Political Science. It is therefore now possible to tailor and focus on issues relevant to teaching in SSPS and the school hope in the near future to offer all four levels of the Edinburgh Teaching Award. The Review Team would like to **commend** the school for offering an in house Edinburgh Teaching Award, and the planned expansion of this programme to 1) support and facilitate PG tutors in acquiring associate fellowship status from the HEA and 2) encourage new and existing staff to engage with, and submit applications for, the upper HEA fellowship levels.
- 2.8.2 All early career staff in the subject area are assigned a mentor to aid them in both professional and academic development. These mentors are often more experienced colleagues whose expertise corresponds closely with that of the mentee. The same is true of the approach to new lecturers. In recent years the subject area has established mid-career mentors, with all staff at Grade 9 having a Grade 10 member of staff as a source of advice in relation to career development, research, funding and publications.
- 2.8.3 The Review Team did identify some lack of clarity around the responsibilities and time-commitment associated with some academic administrative roles. These roles were 'Leadership and Management' roles, but this was not always reflected in attitudes towards them. The Review Team **suggests** consideration be given to rebranding large administrative roles (for example, Course Organiser in pre-Honours courses) as Leadership and Management roles so their relevance to promotion criteria is clearer.
- 2.8.4 The Team **commends** the work of Postgraduate Tutors in the Subject Area. There is clearly a lot of good work going on in tutoring. Postgraduate Tutors are working well, and the student body connects very well with them. The Review Team did note the high volume of turnover of Postgraduate Tutors year on year, with the course organiser for Sociology 1A reporting that it is not uncommon to take on approximately ten new tutors each year on this course, around seven of which might be first time tutors. This creates a significant amount of work around recruitment, contract management, training and payment, and academic staff felt they were very limited in the amount of time that they were allocated to train new tutors (paid training). The Subject Area staff raised concerns during the Review in regard to the 'Policy for the Recruitment, Support and Development of Tutors and Demonstrators', and a lack of clarity around the implementation of the mandatory cap on PG tutor hours, and the issue of tutor pay, in particular payment for training, attendance at lectures and for the "real time" taken to mark assignments. The School of Social and Political Science reported that they were spending approximately £500,000 per year on PG Tutors. PG Tutors had also voiced concerns that this policy was restrictive as it limited the amount of time that they could spend teaching, providing feedback to students, marking and office hours, alongside being able to undertake the associated training and preparation required of them. Additionally, Tutors had also stated that they would benefit from attending lectures for the course on which they were tutoring, but did not feel able to do this due to attendance at these lectures being unpaid. Staff strongly supported this view and would like PG tutors to be paid to attend lectures/or for the time required to view recorded lectures. The Review Team **recommend** that consideration be given to the different ways in which funds allocated to tutoring could be spent by considering different tutor models, taking into account risk to the

institution of over relying on guaranteed hrs tutors for significant amounts of pre-honours teaching and assessment, the administrative burden associated with the annual turnover of tutors (both to academic and professional services staff) and the repeated new workload associated with re-recruiting existing tutors and recruiting new tutors. The School Management Team, in consultation with the subject groups, should consider alternative ways of optimal allocation. Consideration should be given to alternative ways in which this resource could be better used, such as studentships with attached teaching requirements, or fractional fixed/open teaching fellows contracts, for example.

2.8.5 Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the Sustainable Development degree programme, the programme team have experienced problems in recruiting suitably qualified Tutors. There are no Sustainable Development PhD students and this puts them at a disadvantage as the current practice is that Tutors are recruited from within the School of Social and Political Science. The Review Team **recommend** that a review of current restrictions on who can be tutors takes place, with consideration of the option of opening up recruitment to applicants from outside the School of Social and Political Science and if necessary external to the University.

2.8.6 The Review Team **commended** the use of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Survey, and felt that this was an example of good practice within the wider University.

3. Assurance and Enhancement of Provision

3.1 Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards

- 3.1.1 The School and Subject Area did not feel that they were able to engage with Admissions standards in an effective way, as Admissions were felt to be a central administrative task over which they believe they have no influence or input. The Review Team have already provided a specific recommendation in relation to greater engagement with Admissions in terms of Learning and Teaching impact in Section 2.3.3 above, but further **recommended** that the Head of School liaise with the appropriate contact in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences so that they might be provided with transparent data on how target contribution figures have been, and are being, arrived at, and the relationship between those and income generation schemes with particular focus on Undergraduate student intake for all programmes involving sociology (1st or 2nd) and sustainable development.
- 3.1.2 Marking by Postgraduate Tutors on pre-Honours level courses was moderated by Course Organisers or the lecturing team. At Honours level, marking by staff (including PhD tutors) was moderated by another member of staff. Records of moderation were maintained by the Undergraduate Teaching Organisation, and a selection of moderated work was sent to the External Examiners for both Sociology and Sustainable Development. Course Organisers also complete Course Monitoring forms which cover grade profiles, student feedback, successes and areas for improvement, and comments from External Examiners. These forms are also stored by the Undergraduate Teaching Organisation and are used in the formulation and creation of annual Quality and Enhancement reports.
- 3.1.3 As discussed under 2.3.4 and 2.7.2, the Review Team suggests that the Subject Area may find it informative to map assessments across its programmes. It would be beneficial during this process to ensure that course and programme learning outcomes remain aligned with the Quality Assurance Agency Subject Benchmark Statements.

3.2 Key Themes and Actions Taken

- 3.2.1 The reports considered by the Review Team demonstrated that both Sociology and Sustainable Development's External Examiners are extremely positive about the Subject Area's provision, and consider the feedback provided to students to be of a high standard (2.7.4).
- 3.2.2 It is suggested that the Subject Area continues to ensure that External Examiners are supplied with consistent instruction and information about their roles throughout their tenures.
- 3.2.3 The Subject Area does not have any accredited provision at this time.

Section C – REVIEW CONCLUSIONS

1. Confidence Statement

The Review Team found that Sociology and Sustainable Development have effective management of the quality of the student learning experience, academic standards, and enhancement and good practice.

2. Prioritised List of Commendations and Recommendations

2.1 Key Strengths and Areas of Positive Practice for Sharing More Widely Across the Institution

No	Commendation	Section in report
1.	The pioneering nature of the Sustainable Development Degree	1.3
2.	Personal Tutor System, Teaching Organisation Staff and Student Support Officers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support and professionalism of Teaching Office staff to staff and students alike. • The Personal Tutors and Student Support Officers for ably fulfilling their commitments and duties to an extremely high standard. • The quality and standards of support available to all students 	2.1.1 2.1.2 2.1.2
3.	The subject group for how they have effectively coped with a significant increase in student numbers since the last review.	1.2
4.	The quality of teaching and provision that students received from Sociology and Sustainable Development.	2.3.2
5.	The work of Postgraduate Tutors in the Subject Area.	2.8.4
6.	The significant efforts and engagement with Widening Participation.	2.5.4
7.	The use of weekly newsletters, SocPALS, SDPals, and SD Families in encouraging and growing a sense of a cohesive cohort.	2.1.3
8.	The offering of the Edinburgh Teaching Award in house, and the planned expansion of this programme to support and facilitate PG tutors in acquiring associate fellowships and encourage new and existing staff to engage with the upper fellowship levels	2.8.1
9.	The use of Staff Health and Wellbeing Surveys, and example of good practice.	2.8.6

2.2 Recommendations for Enhancement and Areas for Further Development

Priority	Recommendation	Section in report	Responsibility of
1.	That Sustainable Development review the resources required to maintain, and the sustainability of, the current provisions of the Sustainable Development Degree.	2.3.5	Subject Area
2.	That consideration be given to the way in which funds allocated to tutoring could be spent in the diversity of differing tutor models, taking into account risk to the institution, the administrative burden and the repeated new workload associated with new tutors. The School Executive, in consultation with the subject groups, should consider alternative ways of optimal allocation. Consideration should be given to alternative ways in which this resource could be better used, such as studentships with attached teaching requirements, or teaching fellows, for example.	2.8.4	School Management Team and Subject Area
3.	That individuals in key Personal Tutor (PT) and Student Support Officer (SSO) roles require access to private and confidential spaces, and that these spaces need to be readily available.	1.2	Subject Area, School Management Team
4.	The implementation of a School wide strategy for management of non-honours programmes with a view to coping with increasing numbers of students, and reflecting on the relative value of pre-honours courses and the distribution of core School staff, and a review of the provision of first year Sociology in particular. The School should consider the provision of alternatives for those who are on programme and off programme, where the Fundamentals course is incorporated into on programme Sociology.	2.3.3	School Management Team
5.	That the Subject Area engage further with their designated Admissions representative in order to establish clearer and more regular communication channels between the School and Central Admissions to ensure that information is disseminated through the subject groups for transparency, awareness and agreement of student numbers so that the School and Subject Area might be better able to effectively plan resourcing.	2.3.3	Subject Area

6.	That a review of current restrictions on who can be tutors be undertaken, with consideration of the option of opening up recruitment to applicants from outside the School of Social and Political Science	2.8.5	Subject Area in conjunction with School Management
7.	That the Head of School liaise with the appropriate contact in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences so that they might be provided with transparent data on how target contribution figures have been, and are being, arrived at, and the relationship between those and income generation schemes with particular focus on Undergraduate student intake.	3.1.1	Head of School and Director of Professional Services
8.	That a mapping of assessments across core curricula take place, including highlighting and improving where necessary the diversity of forms of assessment and types of writing. As part of this mapping, the subject area should consider forms of assessment which facilitate marking to fit within workload allowances	2.3.4	Subject Area
9.	That minutes of Student Staff Liaison Committees be discussed by the relevant team at a suitable meeting, with these discussions being fed back via a written response to the students in order to help to 'close the loop'	2.2.3	Subject Area

Appendices

Appendix 1 – University remit

The University remit provides consistent coverage of key elements across all of the University's internal reviews (undergraduate and postgraduate). It covers all credit bearing provision within the scope of the review.

1. Strategic overview

The strategic approach to the management and resourcing of learning and teaching experience, the forward direction and the structures in place to support this.

2. Enhancing the Student Experience

The approach to and effectiveness of:

- Supporting students in their learning
- Listening to and responding to the Student Voice
- Learning and Teaching
- Development of Employability and Graduate Attributes
- Accessibility, Inclusivity and Widening Participation
- Learning environment (physical and virtual)
- Assessment and Feedback
- Supporting and developing staff

3. Assurance and Enhancement of provision

The approach to and effectiveness of maintaining and enhancing academic standards and quality of provision in alignment with the University Quality Framework:

- Admissions and Recruitment
- Assessment, Progression and Achievement
- Programme and Course approval
- Annual Monitoring, Review and reporting
- Operation of Boards of Studies, Exam Boards, Special Circumstances
- External Examining, themes and actions taken
- Alignment with SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) level, relevant benchmark statements, UK Quality Code
- Accreditation and Collaborative activity and relationship with Professional/Accrediting bodies (if applicable)

Appendix 2 Additional information considered by review team

Prior to the review visit

- School Quality Assurance reports
- Reflective Report
- External Examiners' summary reports
- School and Subject Area organisation chart
- Current Subject Area staff information
- Programme handbooks
- Programme specification information
- Statistical information
- National Student Survey (NSS) results and reflection
- University Standard Remit
- Subject Specific Remit Items
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results and reflection
- Previous TPR report and response
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statement
- Background data for first destination information
- Undergraduate degree classification report
- School Personal Tutor statements
- Academic standards comments
- Glossary of Terms
- Teaching Excellence Framework University Statement
- Slides from Informal Information Gathering Meeting

During the Review Visit:

- Number of students on Joint Degree Programmes where Sociology was the second named subject.

Appendix 3 Number of students:

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
Sociology							
Global and International Sociology	0	2	2	0	0	0	4
Sociology	29	27	22	26	45	39	188
Sociology and Politics	13	8	8	15	14	19	77
Sociology and Psychology	17	9	11	8	13	8	66
Sociology and Social & Economic History	0	0	1	3	2	0	6
Sociology and Social Anthropology	5	3	3	11	10	11	43
Sociology with Quantitative Methods	0	0	0	1	1	3	5
Sociology with South Asian Studies	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ALL SOCIOLOGY PROGRAMMES	64	49	47	64	85	80	389
Sustainable Development							
Sustainable Development	20	21	21	23	24	27	136
SUBJECT AREA TOTALS	84	70	68	87	109	107	525