



Centre for the Study of Democracy

CSD Research – Strategic Plan for 2006-2010

***Contributing to innovative research, teaching excellence,
policy advice and intellectual leadership in
Politics, International Relations and Asian Studies***

Introduction

Since 1989, the Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) at the University of Westminster has grown into a major, and distinctive, academic centre in the fields of Politics, International Relations and Asian Studies. CSD has a strong reputation for its high-quality, innovative research, teaching excellence, policy advice and intellectual leadership.

CSD's highly rated postgraduate Masters courses (MA International Relations, MA International Relations and Contemporary Political Theory, MA International Studies) and its dynamic MPhil/PhD research programme have attracted an increasing number of outstanding students in recent years (with currently altogether over 70 students) from a variety of European and overseas countries, and from diverse backgrounds.

CSD is the University's major hub for academic and public events in the fields of Politics, International Relations and Asian Studies. Its seminar and public events programmes, which feature leading international scholars and figures from public life, include the CSD Research Seminar, the CSD Encounter, the C R Parekh Lecture, the Westminster Forum, and regular seminars and workshops relating to individual research groups.

CSD's mission is to develop its strong position as a distinctive postgraduate teaching and research centre in Politics, International Relations, and Asian Studies; and to engender a dynamic research culture built on the innovative work carried out to date. CSD's research strategy is above all to promote research excellence by fostering high-quality disciplinary and interdisciplinary research; and to achieve further growth by securing additional staff and new research programmes.

This document, which outlines CSD's mission and strategic plan for 2006-2010, aims to contribute to the discussion, above all about strategic themes, stimulated by the University's Strategic Plan 2005—2010 (draft outline September 2005) published by the Vice-Chancellor's Office. This document builds on, and should be read in conjunction with, CSD's overall strategic plan for the next five years (published in December 2004), *CSD Futures – Strategic Plan for 2005-2010* (which, in addition to research, covers postgraduate teaching, international collaborations, and events).

CSD Research: mission

CSD is the University of Westminster's main centre for research in Asian Studies, Politics and International Relations. It hosts distinct research groups (including Contemporary Chinese Cultural Studies, Political Theory, International Relations and Security, US Government Studies, Democracy and Islam, Science and Technology Public Policy, Multi-level and Urban Governance, and European Union Studies), and provides a platform for interdisciplinary research.

CSD's research rating has significantly improved over the last ten years. In the last RAE (2001), CSD's research was rated as 'nationally and internationally significant' (Politics and International Relations were rated '4'; Asian Studies '5'). CSD staff are renowned for their research into politics, societies and cultures (and the ways in which these are interdependent): this is reflected in citations of published work, elections to professional bodies, and appointments to various advisory bodies. CSD's main sources of research income are QR funding, Quintin Hogg Trust funding, and external grants (from, among others, the Art and Humanities Research Council, the British Academy, the British Council, the European Commission, the Ford Foundation, the King Baudouin Foundation, and the *Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin*).

CSD's research mission for 2006 – 2010 is:

- I. To foster research excellence. As the core value informing CSD's activities and strategic planning, research excellence is understood as high-quality research that is rated as 'nationally and internationally excellent', and that advances the academic disciplines covered by the Centre.
- II. To promote and support strategic and applied research that advances the knowledge of the history, present and future of democracy; national and international politics; and various aspects of public policy (cultural, social, foreign, and environmental) and public life.
- III. To encourage innovative research – that uses a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches – in response to (new) challenges facing politics and societies.
- IV. To help shape the content and quality of teaching (at undergraduate and postgraduate levels), and of postgraduate research training in Asian Studies, Politics, and International Relations, at the University of Westminster.
- V. To contribute to knowledge transfer, that is, the mutual exchange of knowledge with 'users' of research both within the University of Westminster (other research and teaching staff, students) and externally (decision-makers, public sector organisations, civil society organisations, the media, private sector organisations, members of the public). Knowledge transfer takes various forms, including teaching, consultancy, policy advice, collaborative research programmes and projects, networking, research training, media work, and public events programmes.
- VI. To foster new research co-operation and networks with relevant research institutions, think tanks and public foundations, both nationally and internationally.

CSD Research: strategic objectives and key priorities

CSD has seven strategic research objectives, with corresponding key priorities (which will be further specified and operationalised in the implementation phase).

1. Strengthening research excellence by promoting a research culture that values and encourages high-quality research

Key priorities

- A. To ensure that the search for research excellence guides the individual and collective work of CSD staff, including the planning, implementation and evaluation of research (projects) – and is thus reflected in the quality of research outputs, research grants, knowledge transfer and academic events.
- B. To ensure that research excellence underpins the development of the MPhil/PhD programme, including admissions policy, research training, supervisory arrangements, and quality assurance.
- C. To create additional spaces and opportunities for more in-depth exchanges and discussion of research among CSD staff, associates and visitors. We should review the role of the CSD Seminar, and its relationship with other CSD events; consider using other fora, such as informal ‘brown-bag’ seminars; and encourage and support innovations, such as the newly established Democracy Club.

2. Maximising research capacity, and creating new research opportunities

Key priorities

- D. To increase capacity in existing areas of research, where critical mass is an issue. The Asian Studies programme – thanks to a generous Quintin Hogg Trust grant – will soon recruit an additional research and teaching staff member. Following the departure of Richard Whitman in March 2006, the International Relations and Politics research programme – if it is to meet teaching and research demands and opportunities in the discipline – urgently needs at least one new full-time teaching and research post.

Patricia Hogwood’s European Union research and Celia Szusterman’s Latin America research are important recent additions to CSD. The Science, Technology and Urban Governance programme, and the Democracy and Islam programme, each in a crucial and vulnerable phase of development, will require careful nurturing in the next 2—5 years. The long-term development of the Political Theory and US Government programmes needs to be given careful thought.

- E. To create new research opportunities by identifying new areas of research and attracting additional researchers to CSD. There is scope for additional themes/groups, including: the future of representative democracy; the rise of China; international state building; the new era of global terrorism; international relations concerning East Asia, Africa, and Latin America; British politics and constitutional reform; and science and technology policy. These should address key research challenges, and respond to the needs of the research, policy and wider communities.
- F. To put in place a proper, sustainable strategy for achieving the increase in research capacity and research diversification by seizing the opportunity created by the proposed new University research funding, and the opportunities offered by external funding schemes (research councils, public foundations etc)

3. Increasing research funding

Key Priorities

- G. To increase external research grant applications, especially now that full economic costing has been introduced by UK funding bodies. CSD's focus should be as much on large as on small grants, in order to render the grant application process more cost-effective. Our track record in this respect has been patchy.
- H. To use the proposed new University research funding strategy to maximise research capacity and excellence. This will require defining clear strategies for research development in specific areas, boosting research with future potential and supporting interdisciplinary research. It will also require applying sound performance criteria in line with both University and research council policies.

4. Strengthening research co-operation between CSD and other parts of the University

Key Priorities

- I. To support efforts by CSD staff and colleagues elsewhere in the University who want to conduct joint (disciplinary and multidisciplinary) research. This support may include: facilitating exchanges (e.g. joint workshops), providing financial support (e.g. small-grant scheme through QR 'seed' funding), and assisting with joint applications. CSD's size and research environment mean it is in a strong position to facilitate such co-operation, especially with colleagues in SPS, the Policy Studies Institute, CARTE, the Harrow Chinese Media Centre, and CURG.
- J. To invite colleagues with relevant research interests elsewhere in the University to become associated with CSD (and related research clusters). The recent successful involvement of Patricia Hogwood, Celia Szusterman, Tassilo Herrschel

and Peter Newman is an example of this. The CSD events programme is an ideal vehicle for publicising CSD's work within the University.

- K. Care needs to be taken, however, that wider, pluricentric research co-operation – as well as the 'research cluster' system, though useful for internal managerial purposes – do not dilute CSD's brand and identity.

5. Improving outreach and external networking

Key Priorities

- L. To seek increased research co-operation with relevant external bodies, including other academic centres, 'think tanks', and public foundations. CSD should make more of its prime location in central London and its association with 'Westminster'. There is scope for increased co-operation with partner organisations both in London and Britain, as well as internationally. The positive examples set by the Asian Studies programme (which has recently intensified co-operation with other London research centres/ universities, such as Goldsmiths College), the close link with the *Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin*, and the collaboration, through the Science, Technology and Urban Governance programme, with the Lemelson Center (Washington DC) and various European organisations should be emulated.
- M. To increase the number of Visiting Fellowship schemes, thus allowing researchers from other organisations and countries to spend time at CSD. These Fellowships need to be given adequate and flexible support (e.g. office facilities). The University should welcome them as an asset, not see them as an administrative burden.
- N. To strengthen CSD's engagement with other academic institutions, policy-makers and civil society organisations in order to host conferences and run joint programmes. CSD's involvement in the International Summer School for Democracy (with Belgrade University); the SAID – Sovereignty and its Discontents – workshops series (through the International Relations programme); the joint seminars with Birkbeck College; and the recent launch of the Westminster Forum – a programme run jointly with members of the Houses of Parliament – are examples of such beneficial co-operation.

6. Improving media and public relations

Key Priorities

- O. To implement a more advanced communications strategy. In particular, there is a need to improve the appearance and the public visibility of the CSD website (re-launched in 2004). CSD also needs to invest in a more advanced electronic database.

- P. To strengthen CSD's marketing strategy, especially in relation to CSD's Masters courses, PhD programme, and staff research.
- Q. To review CSD's events and activities programme with the aim of increasing media coverage and publicity. We can achieve this by making more efficient our internal co-ordination and adopting a more professional approach to media relations.

7. Promoting an organisational environment in support of strategic objectives 1 – 6

Key Priority

- R. To improve the organisational environment in support of the above strategic objectives, by promoting, at School, Campus and University levels, a full understanding and appreciation of the nature of research (excellence).
- S. To optimise the structures and means for supporting the research (excellence) of individual members of staff. A proper appreciation of the research process – including the need for stability, long-term staff development and adequate financial and infrastructure support – needs to be built more centrally into the organisational thinking and planning process across different University levels. Research development also needs to be at the centre of the annual staff appraisal process. The issue of sabbaticals needs to be given serious consideration.
- T. To improve the status of Research Fellowships (see also external RAE assessment report for Politics & IR by Professor Andrew Gamble, University of Sheffield, February 2006). The stop-go approach frequently experienced in relation to Research Fellowships impedes research excellence and is detrimental to staff morale. Research Fellows are an integral part of, and important asset to, CSD and its research strategy. This needs better recognition.

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