

UEvaluation Summary Report 2018

Political Minds Summer Residential

Summary

Building on previous experience and evaluations, the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion (PPR) developed and delivered a 3-day residential (August 2018) supported by interns from The Richardson Institute. PPR designed the residential to provide an insight into the academic and social aspects of university life and to encourage applications to study Politics/IR. 3 2017 attendees are to start in PPR in 2018, down from the 5 in 2017 (Johnson, Mutton and REAP, 2016).

96%

The PPR residential met or exceeded expectations

The 2018 summer residential was attended by 24 students from 15 schools and colleges. It cost £287 per student (up from £270 in 2017) funded by the department, not including staff time. The decision by PPR to assume responsibility enabled them to retain their traditional August timing and not restrict participation to students from a widening participation background. Both these factors would need reviewing for inclusion within the UK Student Recruitment and Outreach (UKSRO) programme of widening participation summer schools. 7 Students dropped out close to the event and another 2 did not arrive. The reasons included alternative commitments that were arranged following application.

Summer residential activities included:

- Informal introductory talks about Politics, the Richardson Institute and Lancaster University to provide a context for the residential;
- Four subject seminars led by PPR PhD students to provide an experience of common university learning formats and methods and an introduction to key subject areas within Politics/IR, these included neoliberalism, sovereignty and extremism;
- Skills workshops to support participants' school and future university studies, including presentation and writing up sessions;
- Social evening activities held on-campus in a student social space, the evenings were facilitated by centrally trained UKSRO Student Ambassadors and offered more informal opportunities for discussion with current students about the university student experience.

Methods of evaluation:

This summary report is based on feedback from 24 respondents who completed an evaluation questionnaire (100% of participants); the respondents are from 15 different schools and colleges across England including Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Manchester, Devon, Torquay, Kent and the local area. It draws on previous summary reports as a point of comparison.

Findings:

- **96%** identified that the summer school met or exceeded expectations, this is higher than 93% in 2016/17.
- School remains a key source of information about the residential with **58.3%** of students **finding out from their teachers**, and 62.5% when including school posters. This is lower than the 70% who found out from teachers in 2017 and the 90% who found out from teachers in 2015/16, suggesting a broader marketing strategy and more diverse cohort.
- **75% of comments** cited the academic experiences, including the workshops and seminars to be the most useful part of the summer school.

"Great stuff, loved it, could have done another day"

"Could have been a 4 day event – we all agreed we wanted to learn more!"

"All the student teachers were amazing"

Influence of activity on students

- Achievements were diverse, ranging from attending the summer school (Figure 1), gaining an understanding of new political concepts and of politics in general, including increased awareness of contemporary issues such as Brexit or the Great Recession; improving their skills related to debating, researching and public speaking; and feeling more confident as well as gaining more friends.
- When asked for “One thing you have learnt during the event” students demonstrated engagement with the academic political content, **“a more relevant definition of sovereignty”, “about the concept of neoliberalism” “about new ideologies” (participant responses)**, whereas others underlined the improvement of general study skills **“how to structure my time”**, increased confidence in their social skills **“I can make new friends quickly”**, and a higher awareness of Higher Education in Lancaster University
- **95.85%** of students identified that the summer school **improved their understanding of political concepts and theories** (Figure 2).
- **50%** felt that the residential had made them **more likely to study politics**
- **37.5%** identified that they were more likely to study at Lancaster University

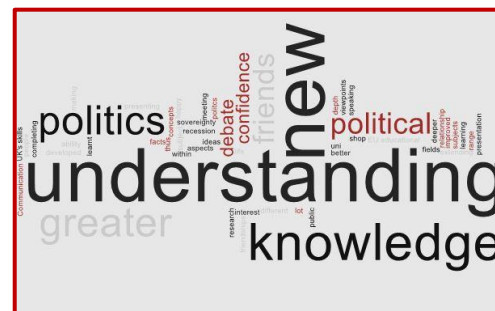


Figure 1: Word cloud responses to the question: During the residential, I achieved

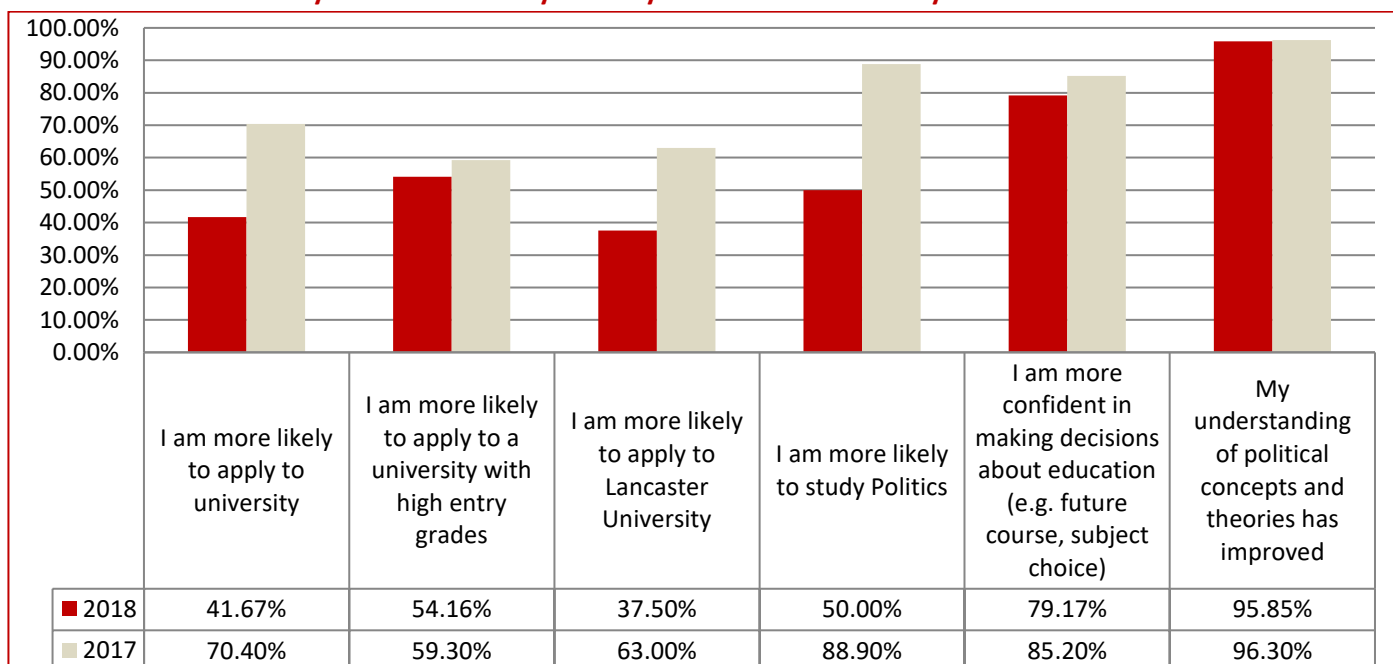


Figure 2: Percentage change in perceptions of university.

Conclusions

- Qualitative data suggests that decreases in apparent impact stem, not from decline in quality of teaching, but an increase in targeting and allocation of places to those with an existing interest in studying Politics/IR at degree level at Lancaster University
- Attendees were, in general, predicted higher grades than previous cohorts, meaning that they attended with an existing intention to progress to HE
- Drop outs affected economies of scale and social dynamics, perhaps inhibiting some social dynamics
- Greater co-ordination with parents is needed to ensure that drop outs and no shows are minimised
- This is a flagship recruitment and WP Politics event that continues to attract outstanding students from partner schools as well as those with no previous link to the department

Further information

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prepared by Alonso, G. and Young, K. (2018) *2017-18 Politics Summer School*, PPR, Lancaster University