

Evaluation Summary Report 2019

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 2019) supported by interns from The Richardson Institute. PPR designed the residential to revitalise Politics/International Relations by bringing together at Lancaster outstanding new political minds (16 -17 year olds) to build towards the future of UK Politics. This year's event was focused on Widening Participation students.

100%

The PPR residential met or exceeded expectations

The 2019 summer residential was attended by 18 students from 15 schools and colleges. Excluding staff time, it cost £442 per student (up from £287 in 2018 due to drop outs and Conferences cancellations policy) funded by personal donation from the Chancellor, Rt Hon Alan Milburn, and the WPAG fund. 2 students did not arrive due to illness, while the failure to fill all 32 places was due to the exclusive focus on WP students, which restricted the ability of traditional partner schools to encourage participation, and difficulties in publicising the event through email lists.

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 10 respondents who completed an evaluation questionnaire (55.56% 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. The lower response rate (100% in 2018) was due to instruction from GRO to restrict surveys to online Qualtrics forms, which meant that students could not complete on the day. It draws on previous summary reports as a point of comparison.

Findings:

- **100%** identified that the summer school met or exceed expectations. This is higher than 96% in 2017/18.
- School remains a key source of information about the residential with **40%** of students **finding out from their teachers**. This is lower than the 70% who found out from teachers in 2017, suggesting a broader marketing strategy and more diverse cohort, with 50% students finding out from regional political youth groups.
- **88.88% of comments** cited the academic experiences, including the workshops and seminars to be the most useful part of the summer school.

"[I]t was a confidence booster, knowing I can go somewhere and make friends with people I have never met before"

"[I]t's also good to spend time every now and then with others who you vibe well with and can discuss topics which you all understand"

Influence of activity on students

- Achievements were diverse, ranging from further understanding of political theories and ideologies, as well as their relation to current and past states of affairs; practical skills related to academia, like debating and communicating ideas; and more personal and social skills, especially in relation to developing friendships with other participants .
- When asked for “One thing you have learnt during the event” students demonstrated engagement with the academic political content, *“I learnt about modern economics and the difference between Neoliberal and Keynesian models”, “the depth of the Middle East situation” “the definitions of different ideologies” “different perspectives surrounding how we define sovereignty”* (participant responses), whereas others underlined the improvement of general study skills *“how express my ideas clearly”*, and a higher awareness of Higher Education in Lancaster University *“I found out information about Richardson institute and how it is unique of Lancaster”*
- **100%** of students identified that the summer school **improved their understanding of political concepts and theories** (Figure 2).
- **66.66%** felt that the residential had made them **more likely to study politics**
- **55.55%** identified that they were more likely to study at Lancaster University



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

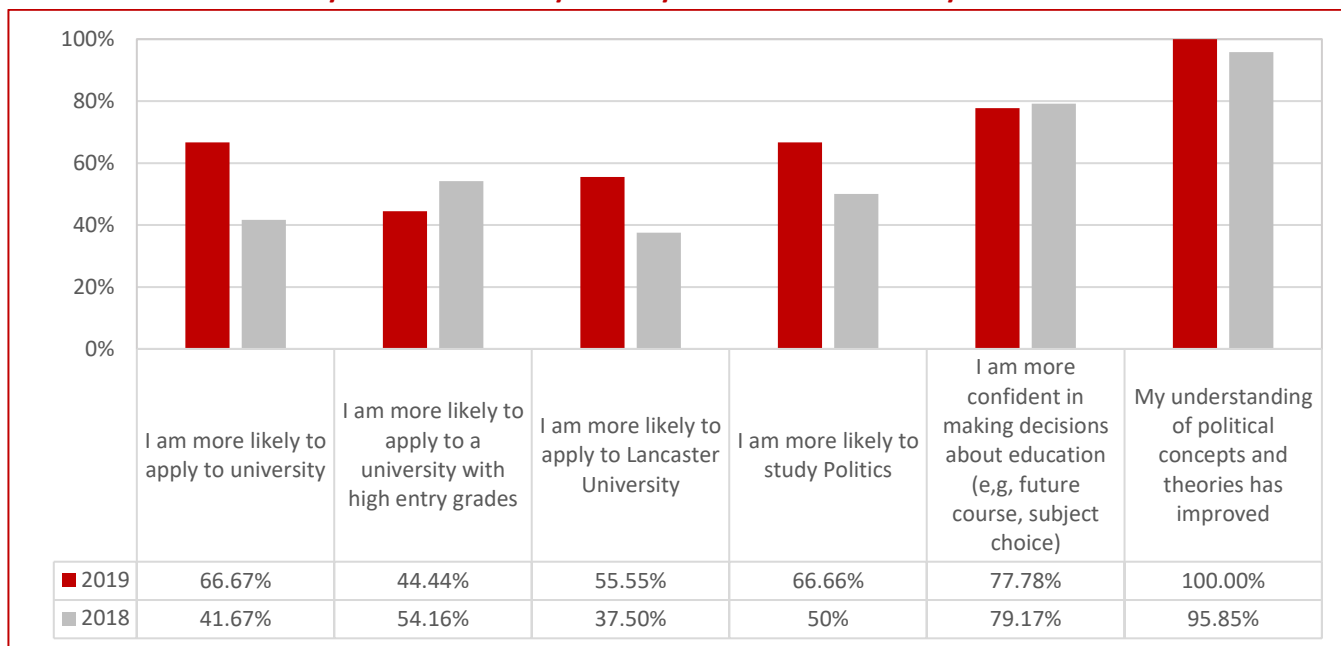


Figure 2: Percentage change in perceptions of university.

Conclusions

- Attendees were, in general, predicted higher grades than previous cohorts, meaning that they attended with an existing intention to progress to HE
- Qualitative data suggests that decrease in apparent impact on likelihood of applying to a good university 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
- Drop outs affected economies of scale and, perhaps, 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 and, this year, from Youth Organisations and institutions with no previous link to the department

Further information

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 Prepared by Alonso, G. and Young, K. (2018) Report: 2018-19 Politics Summer School, PPR, Lancaster University.