

Studying Parliaments: Research, Teaching & Knowledge Exchange

Overview

Summary



The School, after winning the UK Parliament's Outreach Competition, designed a class that is taught by both academics and practitioners (parliamentarians, clerks and parliamentary outreach employees).

Context

School of Government & Public Policy

Faculty of Humanities and Social Science

Contact Details

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Themes

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Rationale

The class is designed to give student real world 'hands on' experience and engagement with how parliaments operate. It combines both academic theorising with practitioner insights from key political actors including the House of Commons Speaker, the Chief Executive of the Scottish Parliament, parliamentarians and parliamentary clerks.

Successes

The class allows staff to engage with key political actors in parliaments allowing for the sharing and dissemination of knowledge as well as the instigation of research opportunities. Visits to the Scottish Parliament bring the teaching alive with day long interaction with key staff members, parliamentarians and the outreach team there.

Lessons Learnt

The key to engaging practitioners in academic teaching is preparation and hands-on oversight management of projects and examination to ensure the academic integrity of the course is retained. Like research, a lot of the most substantive work was done preparing the bid where a clear rationale for teaching the class at Strathclyde was outlined.

Challenges

One of the key challenges has been managing demand from students. The class is very popular but one of the conditions from the UK Parliament was that class sizes be kept small and manageable in order to facilitate interaction in seminar type format. This has meant the tools for managing class size have had to be put in place, which is contrary to established School practice.

Scalability

As indicated above one of the conditions of teaching the class in partnership with Parliament has been a restriction on class size. There have, therefore, been no scalability issues.

Suggestions for Transferability

Parliaments, like many other external institutions – public, commercial or voluntary – are open and learning institutions. They are likely to see benefits in engagement with the University of Strathclyde. Collaborative arrangements are usually fruitful for both sides. This should be borne in mind when the initiation of contact and engagement with external bodies is being considered.

Attachments

N/A

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