

## Report on Disciplines

### Panel 39: Politics and International Studies

1. The most important evaluation of the Panel was that the results of the 2001 exercise represent a significant and general improvement over those of 1996. This was reflected in a number of ways:
  - A general increase in scores across departments. Of the 61 departments who submitted in 2001 and also had submitted in 1996, 9 scored an increase of two grades, 32 secured an increase in one grade and 16 remained at the same grade (three of these being 5\* units). Only 3 departments dropped a grade.
  - In 1996 the median grade was 3a and in 2001 a 4.
  - There was an emphasis upon monographs and articles published in peer-reviewed journals.
2. The way in which the Panel applied its criteria meant that the national standard of research was demanding, the international particularly so. The judgements of the Panel were confirmed in this regard by the international assessors. The improvement in quality is genuine and is not a consequence of lower standards.
3. The Panel was particularly pleased to note the work of international quality that was being done by scholars in the early stages of their careers. It recognises that the RAE sets demanding standards for new entrants, and it was impressed by the way in which many of those new entrants had risen to the challenge.
4. Work of high quality was undertaken in units of all sizes. The Panel was pleased to note that work of high quality was being undertaken across the full range of sub-fields in Politics and International Studies. It was not part of the Panel's task to judge the relative strength of sub-disciplines. It welcomes the public availability of the RA2 information so that a debate can take place in the relevant professional communities about the quality of work across sub-disciplines.
5. The Panel noted that the User Panel confirmed independently the Panel's own view that there is no trade-off between academic quality and utility. Although not all work in Politics and International Studies is of direct utility (and is not intended to be so), work cannot be useful if it is not based upon sound research design and execution.
6. Submissions did not always do justice to the quality of the work that was being done. In particular, the Panel would have welcomed more emphasis upon what departments took to be their research achievements rather than the mechanics of their research management.
7. The Panel noted a good ratio of completed PhDs per member of staff in some departments, and the importance attached in their research culture to the creation of the next generation of scholars.
8. The Panel acknowledges the commitment made by many individuals to research-related public goods (including PhD examining, editorial work and posts in professional organisations) and notes that this commitment will involve a sacrifice on the part of the individuals concerned.

