# The Current and Future State of Social Policy Teaching in UK Higher Education Institutions: 2016
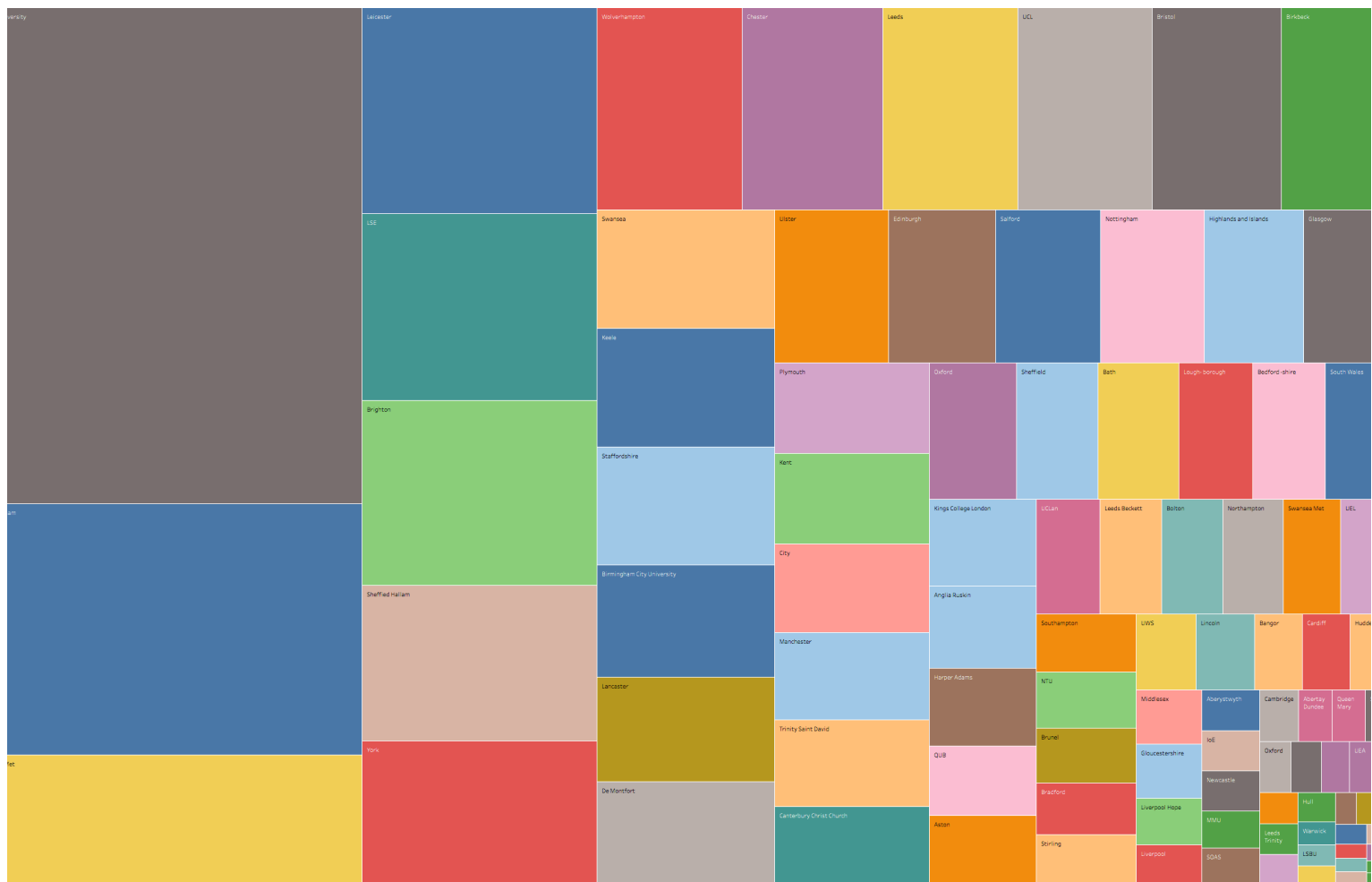


Sophie Mackinder with John Hudson

# Acknowledgments

*Cover image: tile chart based on HESA JACS data for all Social Policy related degree programmes 2011–12 to 2013–14.*

# Table of Contents

# Foreword

The Social Policy Association attaches great importance to teaching and learning, and supporting these activities is a core element of our mission. Through our teaching – to students studying social policy alone and with other subjects – we help to create policy-literate members of society. This is an important goal at all times, and perhaps especially now, when rigorous analytical thinking is essential to understanding and evaluating the direction and impact of policy developments. I am therefore very pleased to introduce this second report into the teaching of Social Policy in the UK.

This survey builds on the previous report which, in 2011, provided a snapshot of the subject at that time. Respondents to the first report were somewhat anxious about the future of the disciplines. But the 2016 results suggest cautious optimism. The subject continues to be taught in many Higher Education Institutions. Provision at postgraduate level remains strong. But UK higher education is still undergoing many changes and challenges. So it is essential that the SPA continues to play a central role in the support and development of the subject.

The report makes a number of recommendations, which will be discussed further by the SPA membership and Executive, so that we can take identify how best to take these forward over the next few years. For those readers who are not already members of the SPA, please do join and make your contribution to these discussions.

I would like to thank Sophie Mackinder and John Hudson for their work carrying out and analysis the survey and Clare Williams for her oversight of the project. And, of course, I would like to thank all those colleagues who completed the survey. This report will be invaluable in shaping the priorities and activities of the SPA over the next few years.


Jane Millar

Chair UK Social Policy Association

# Executive summary

This report was commissioned and undertaken as a follow-up to the 2011 report *The current and future state of Social Policy teaching in UK HEIs,* which explored the teaching of Social Policy in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) ahead of the implementation of wide-ranging Higher Education reforms, including major reforms to student finance for 2012 entrants. This report revisits the same issues five years on, assessing the impact of the 2012 reforms on Social Policy teaching in the UK, providing vital insights about the trajectory of the discipline over the previous five years.

The study sought to mirror the research design of the 2011 report, in order to generate comparable data. As such this report details findings from a small-scale study exploring the nature and extent of Social Policy teaching in the UK. Attitudinal data regarding the future was also included, as in the 2011 report; this report also revisits the attitudinal data of the 2011 report in order to assess whether fears expressed in the 2011 report materialised.

The survey had two central components; an audit of undergraduate and postgraduate Social Policy degrees in UK HEIs and an internet survey exploring experiences of teaching Social Policy and attitudes to the future of the subject. These two components were based closely on the 2011 research design. 167 individuals responded to the survey, close to the 174 individuals that responded to the 2011 survey.

The 2011 report detected considerable fear about the future of the disciplines, fears often echoed in conversations at SPA events. But our survey suggests Social Policy has weathered recent storms well:

- ❖ *More* HEIs offer single subject/single honours Social Policy undergraduate degrees in 2016 than in 2011, 17 compared to 16 in 2011. Standard entry requirements have also risen in many cases.
- ❖ *More* HEIs offer 'Social Policy and/with…' type undergraduate degrees in 2016 than there were in 2011, 35 compared to 32 in 2011.
- ❖ Provision at taught Masters level has remained broadly stable; just two HEIs that offered programmes in 2011 no longer do so in 2016, but in each case these programmes were broad social research methods degrees with a Social Policy component.
- ❖ Two HEIs offer a named Social Policy route at postgraduate level only. In total 37 HEIs offer a named Social Policy degree at undergraduate and/or taught postgraduate level in 2016.
- ❖ The vast majority of HEIs offer degrees with a Social Policy component offered as part of a differently named subject. We identify more instances than 2011, probably due in part to differences in approach, finding such offerings at undergraduate level in 94 HEIs and postgraduate level in 73.

The 2011 report demonstrated concern among Social Policy academics that the discipline was struggling in maintaining a position among the other social science subjects, and that the Social Policy community expected tangible impacts after student finance changes were introduced in 2012. The 2016 survey data suggests that there has been significant change, with staffing freezes and withdrawal of courses being widespread. However, detailed analysis by institution suggests that it is likely that course closures reflect a repackaging of course offerings rather than institutional crises, and the responses to questions regarding student numbers paint a more positive picture than was often predicted. This highlights a limitation of the questionnaire component of the survey, in that it dealt with perceptions of change rather than hard data. The discrepancies in the perceptions versus the hard data provided by the two audits, and conflicting responses between respondents in the same institution suggests that academics whom are not involved directly with the management of

departments may be wrong or unaware of changes or developments in their departments. It could be that the survey in its current format does more to capture the fears of respondents for their own careers, consequently painting a gloomier picture than is warranted.

The final section of the report offers recommendations as to how the SPA can better support the discipline and its members in the future. These include seeking professional marketing advice in order to support student recruitment; using the TEF as an opportunity to organise the discipline and advocate for it; and target recruitment to the SPA to certain institutions and early career researchers.

In summary, the report provides positive news regarding the state of the discipline, however during uncertain political times and with higher education likely to be facing changes as a consequence in the future, it is imperative that the SPA and the wider Social Policy community continue to monitor changes and maintain solidarity in order to safeguard the subject and its members.

# 1: Introduction and context

In 2011, the *Social Policy Association* (SPA), along with the *Higher Education Academy Social Policy and Social Work Subject Centre* (SWAP), commissioned and published a detailed survey of *The Current and Future State of Social Policy Teaching in UK HEIs* (Patrick et al., 2011). This study, also commissioned by the SPA, is a successor to the 2011 report, revisiting the same terrain some five years later.

The 2011 study aimed to 'provide the SPA with information about how it can best support and serve members, and represent Social Policy as a subject in a time of rapid and unprecedented change' (Patrick et al., 2011: 8). The changes alluded to were major reforms to the higher education (HE) sector about to be implemented by the Coalition Conservative/Liberal Democrat government at Westminster. The most dramatic changes were in England where the funding landscape was about to change radically with the withdrawal of *Higher Education Funding Council for England* (HEFCE) funding for teaching and the introduction of variable fees for home undergraduates pegged as a high as £9,000. These changes were accompanied by attempts to foster greater competition amongst HE providers, including removal of student number controls and a range of mechanisms incentivising universities to focus on particular market 'segments'. Some commentators (e.g. McGettigan, 2013) suggest these reforms amount to a privatisation of HE in England, representing one of the most radical planks of the Cameron government's austerity agenda.

But, reflecting the complex governance of HE across the UK, the reform package varied across different parts of the UK. Reforms in Northern Ireland and Scotland were less dramatic insofar as tuition fees remained capped at much lower levels and for many students in Scotland no tuition fees would be charged at all. In Wales, fees were allowed to rise to £9,000 also, but with a broader set of grant-based financial supports on offer than in England. But even in parts of the UK where cuts to HE were less severe, expectations of tightening budgets, unpredictable interactions between reforms agendas in different parts of the UK, and unease about how the first Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise would play out, meant the view of the 2011 report was that 'These are difficult times for higher education in the UK [... with] growing concern amongst many who teach and research the subject that radical changes to student finance are likely to alter the teaching of Social Policy in unprecedented ways' (Patrick et al., 2011: 8).

Some five years on the landscape looks more hostile still. REF will soon be accompanied by the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in some parts of the UK, bringing the prospect of fee levels being in part determined by external gradings of teaching quality and, for some providers, the risk of a comparatively low TEF grading undermining recruitment activity. The research funding environment remains very tight and likely to be tightened further should Brexit remove access to EU-level research funding. Brexit also threatens to undermine the flow of EU students to the UK, while increasingly restrictive immigration policies have made the UK a less attractive option for international students than was once the case. During the period covered by this report funding for postgraduate study has also been very constrained, though the introduction of new loan schemes for postgraduate students in some parts of the UK at the time of writing may ease some of the pressures here in the coming years.

The SPA's rationale in commissioning a follow-up study was merely to continue their monitoring of Social Policy teaching in this period of significant policy change. We were asked to closely follow the research design of the 2011 study in order to allow for some comparisons over time. We detail our approach in the next chapter, but should note at the outset that the diverging approaches to HE policy pursued in the different parts of the UK prevented us from using the same questionnaire and mean we

cannot always present similar information tables. The changing environment also means that the Higher Education Academy Social Policy and Social Work Subject Centre (SWAP), which co-funded the 2011 study, no longer exists. However, the reforms implemented by the Coalition government do mean we have more publicly available information than ever before about teaching in HEIs, including provision of a standard Key Information Set (KIS) for each degree course; this allows us to draw on data not available to Patrick et al. in 2011.

The 2011 report identified some considerable degree of concern over the future of Social Policy in UK HEIs, with around one in five survey respondents stating that amalgamation of their department with another was quite or very likely, around one-third believing redundancies in their department over the next two years quite or very likely, and over 40% feeling it was quite or very likely that programmes or courses would be withdrawn from their department over the next two years (Patrick et al., 2011: 6). Citing estimations from Kelley and Burrows (2011) that student demand for Sociology degrees could drop 10–15%, the 2011 report wondered if this would be 'a trend which we may see mirrored in Social Policy degree admissions' (Patrick et al., 2011: 8).

The 2011 report noted that the Coalition reforms were taking place 'following a decade of other substantive shifts in Social Policy learning and teaching', where 'we have seen a transition from the teaching of Social Policy as a relatively 'boundaried' discipline into it being taught as more of a 'subject area [... with it] now taught on many broad-based Social Science degrees, as well as within more vocational courses such as Health and Social Care and Social Work'.  In Chapter 3 we report findings from a detailed audit of Social Policy and related courses at UK HEIs; in so doing we underline the wide array of courses in which some social policy related teaching can be found in 2016.

The report is structured as follows. The next section outlines the research design of the study. The third section analyses the findings from the survey of Social Policy academics, examining the perceptions surrounding departmental changes and student numbers, both in retrospect and thoughts on the future. The fourth section analyses the audit findings in detail to build a picture of the landscape of social policy provision in the UK in 2016, and how it has changed since 2011. The fifth section looks at teaching experiences in Social Policy, to identify changes in teaching method since 2011. The final section draws on the survey responses regarding the safeguarding of Social Policy, and opinions on the SPA's role in maintaining the health of the discipline.

# 2: Research design

This section outlines the methodological approach taken in generating data on the teaching of Social Policy in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK. The research closely echoed the design of the 2011 report, as requested in the Research Brief provided by the SPA. As such, the research had two overall objectives. The first echoed the research objective of the 2011 report; namely, to 'develop a firm understanding of the teaching of social policy in UK HEIs ... gathering information on experiences of teaching Social Policy, examples of good practice and the training / support needs of teachers themselves' (Patrick et al., 2011: 10). The second was to add longitudinal depth to the findings of the 2011 report, to revisit the 'current and future state' of Social Policy teaching and reassess the development of the discipline five years on, given the changed nature of the HEI landscape outlined in the Introduction.

The project was small in scale, and its final design consisted of two central components:

❖ A desk-based audit of the teaching of Social Policy in the UK. This reviewed and updated the baseline data for every course in the UK that contains Social Policy within its substantive content.
❖ An online survey. This aimed to capture the experiences and attitudes of teachers of Social Policy, and expectations for the future of the subject.

These components purposely followed the logic of original research design of the 2011 report, with the intention of achieving comparative data. The initial research design of this follow-up project included a focus group of social policy HEI teachers, that sought to achieve a representative sample by including participants at different career stages, and represented both pre- and post-92 universities and geographical variety. The focus group sought to replicate the qualitative dimension achieved in the 2011 report, which undertook three semi-structured interviews with Social Policy lecturers to 'explore their experiences of teaching Social Policy and expectations of how the subject will fare during times of change' (Patrick et al., 2011: 10). A focus group was chosen over semi-structured interviews for two reasons: a) to obtain a broader range of insights in a shorter time period, and b) to generate discussion and debate that could provide a more comprehensive picture of the challenges facing the discipline. However, due to delays in the ethical process (see Section 2.3) causing the data collection period to fall over the summer vacation period, and a change of circumstances in researcher resource, the focus group component of the research had to be abandoned.

## 2.1 Desk-based audit

### 2.1.1 Definition of Social Policy

The first phase of the research consisted of the desk-based audit, in order to explore where and in what contexts Social Policy was being taught in the academic year 2016–17. Similar to the 2011 report, a difficulty arose in establishing a clear definition of 'Social Policy' due to the porous nature of the subject, as demonstrated with the ongoing debates of whether Social Policy is a subject or a discipline, and its relationship with other social sciences. Similar to the 2011 report, this study took a pragmatic approach, and includes in the audit all courses that appeared to have an element (of any size) of social policy in them. Subjects that explicitly mentioned Social Policy in the title, course outline or associated detail, were automatically included. Subjects that addressed criminology and criminal justice were also automatically included, due to the strong overlap between the two disciplines. Subjects that fit comfortably into the remit of Social Policy, such as poverty or benefits provision, were also included. In addition to these 'core' discipline areas, the following subject areas were examined on a case-by-case basis, to establish whether or not they included a policy-focused

element. If the course provided any policy content (as opposed to practitioner guidance, for example), they were included in the audit.

- ❖ Childhood, family and youth
- ❖ Social science
- ❖ Education
- ❖ Health
- ❖ Citizenship
- ❖ Gender studies
- ❖ Race studies

By adopting this very broad framework to define Social Policy, and scrutinising less definitively Social Policy courses on a case-by-case basis to establish a policy element, generated a larger volume of data for analysis, and provided a robust basis for analysis to establish in what form Social Policy is explicitly or laterally taught. To establish clarity for analysis, the audit broadened the categorisation of degrees from 'undergraduate' and 'postgraduate' in the 2011 report, to a five-category system:

| Table 2.1: Categorisation of degree programmes in 2016 Audit | |
|---|---|
| Single honours | Where Social Policy is taught solely, or is in the title with another discipline but in single honours format |
| Joint honours | Where Social Policy is taught as a joint honours degree with another subject |
| Broader degrees | Where there is a component of Social Policy within the course outline, or is a social subject the includes a policy focus |
| Postgraduate degrees – pure | Where Social Policy is the only component |
| Postgraduate degrees – broader | Where there is a component of Social Policy within the course outline, or is a social subject that includes a policy focus |

However, one of the challenges we faced here is that the repackaging and more nuanced marketing of programmes, plus the amalgamation of departments at some institutions, means labels such as single honours and joint honours have arguably lost a good deal of their former meaning. For instance, a search for 'single subject' degrees with 'Social Policy' on the UCAS website lists courses such as the BA (Hons) Policy, Politics and Economics with Year Abroad at the University of Birmingham, a programme taught across three different departments, while the same search with the 'joint subjects' option instead lists the BSc (Hons) Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Bath, a programme taught in a single department. Undergraduate degrees in Social Policy and/with Criminology/Crime taught wholly or largely in a single department are listed as single subject in Bristol and York but as a joint subject in Birmingham, Brighton, Kent and Lincoln. This complexity in terms of how programmes are presented may also reflect the outcome of modularisation processes that have allowed more flexible packaging of degrees across traditional disciplines and/or the scaling up of departments in order to allow for more interdisciplinary work.

### 2.1.2 Data collection
The first data collection stage involved cross-referencing findings from the 2011 audit with the latest available course information, examining whether the institutions listed in 2011 continued to offer the courses they did then, and exploring their course menus to establish whether new courses that

included a Social Policy component had been developed since 2011. This was achieved by visiting the websites of the listed institutions. Once this phase was complete, the audit drew on existing databases, in particular resources provided by UCAS such as the KIS database. Courses found in these databases were confirmed by visiting the website of the institution to cross-check the information gathered, and to obtain further detail of the degree courses. Finally, a very quick sweep of the websites all UK HEI institutions (as listed on the UCAS website) that had not thus far been included was undertaken, to ensure that no institutions had been missed. However, due to resource and time restrictions, this final check was rudimentary, and it cannot be guaranteed that this list is exhaustive within the parameters detailed above.

An additional note with regard to the integrity of the audit is that the need to rely on institutional websites brought some limitations. While some HEI websites offered comprehensive and detailed information on their courses, others were less 'user-friendly'. For example, it was sometimes difficult to establish whether Social Policy offered with another closely related subject was a joint or single honours degree (this could be down to the varying nature of the honours system, as described above). Other course web profiles were incomplete, or outdated – a problem exacerbated further by the research taking place over the summer period, at a time when previous course details may have been taken down, but new course details for the 2017–18 period not yet been published. The data provided in the audit, therefore, is true as expressed on institutional websites during the summer months of 2016, and may no longer be up-to-date.

The information collected within the audit followed the 2011 report, including the name of the course, faculty (though we note this item makes sense only for some institutions), qualification award, course cost, entry requirements, foundation degree option (for undergraduate courses), intermediate qualification (e.g. PGDip, for postgraduate courses) and sandwich year option (for undergraduate courses). Course cost was split into four columns for this audit to represent England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, in order to detail more accurately the cost differentials across different parts of the UK.

Another issue faced in the data collection phase arose from the introduction of the new UCAS points system for the academic year commencing 2017–18. Following the method of the 2011 system, the audit shows the entry requirements as the grades achieved, or the UCAS points system if the institution does not use grades. The majority of institutions had not yet transitioned to the new UCAS points system during the period of data collection, or if they had, they provided both the old and the new points requirements. For this reason, the old UCAS points system was used in the audit for comparative purposes. However, since the beginning of the 2016/17 academic year, most institutions have now transferred to the new system.


## 2.2 Online survey

### 2.2.1 Survey design

Unlike the audit, the online survey was non-prescriptive and, following the logic of the 2011 report, looked to recruit participants who self-identified as teaching Social Policy in an HEI. This allowed the participants to decide themselves as to where the boundaries between Social Policy and other social sciences begin and end. As with the audit, we were asked to base the 2016 survey on the 2011 survey, in order to generate comparative data. The 2011 survey was based on findings from the qualitative component of the report, together with consultation and input from members of the SPA, to 'ensure that it covered areas considered of most import to those with a direct stake in the subject's future' (Patrick et al., 2011: 12).

While the majority of the survey was identical to the 2011 survey, a few changes were made to bring it up to date with recent developments in further education policy more broadly, and the Social Policy community specifically. For example, the question on the Social Work and Policy Subject Centre (SWAP) was deleted, as this is no longer in existence. However, a question was added about the Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF), to explore the level of knowledge surrounding TEF in the Social Policy arena. A reflexive dimension to the questions surrounding the recruitment was also added ('Have you seen a change in the number of undergraduate / postgraduate students studying Social Policy in the last five years?'), to complement the prospective line of questioning that was used in the 2011 survey ('Over the next five years, do you expect that the number of undergraduate Social Policy students at your institution will rise / fall / stay the same?'). A question that asked whether recruitment had been easier or more difficult since the last report, and if so why, was also added. The full questions to the survey can be found in Appendix One.

### 2.2.2 Survey dissemination

Dissemination again followed the model set by the 2011 report. The survey was distributed widely to relevant JISCMail lists, the SPA membership list and the SPA Heads of Department list, once a month from July–September in order to maximise potential response rate in the 'down' period of the summer months. Individually tailored emails were also sent to all the institutions listed in the audit as offering Social Policy as a single or joint honours course. This recruitment was broadly successful, with 166 people completing the survey. This is slightly down on the 2011 response rate (174 responses), but this could be explained by the research taking place over the summer months.

### 2.2.3 Survey respondents: descriptive statistics

It should be noted at the outset that the design of the 2011 survey – which we were asked to follow – was limited insofar as it could not claim to offer a truly representative picture of Social Policy teaching in UK HEIs. This needs to be borne in mind when reading the survey findings; but, added to this, when comparing findings from the 2011 and 2016 surveys, so too do differences in the characteristics of those who responded to the two surveys. It is important, therefore, that we detail some of the key characteristics of the survey respondents here.

In total, 167 individuals completed the survey. This is slightly down on the 2011 report (which had 174 respondents), but still is a healthy response rate for an internet survey.  The sample had a slightly skewed gender split; 57% of respondents were female, 42% were male (1% preferred not to say). Respondents were drawn from at least 44 institutions (down from at least 63 in 2011), though it should be noted that around one in four respondents preferred not to identify their institution compared with only around one in six for the 2011 survey, so the difference may not be as great as first appears. Ethical issues (see Section 2.3) prevent us from listing response rates by named HEI. Analysis of survey responses by sub-group shows no clear differences between those who did and did not prefer to identify their institution bar the notable fact that those in the 'prefer not to say' group were more likely to be early career staff (less than five years of teaching experience) and less likely to be SPA members, perhaps reflecting the greater likelihood of these respondents having precarious employment in their HEI.

The 2011 report did not provide the details of which 63 institutions had provided respondents, so it is therefore not possible to establish which 19 institutions were represented in the 2011 data are not included in this report. The 2011 report does indicate the region/country where respondents were based however, which when compared with the 2016 data, shows that there is a clear difference in

the geographical demographics of the two surveys, indicating caution is required when comparing findings from them. (Fig. 2.1). Specifically, it appears there was an increase in the proportion of respondents in London, the South East and the South West, but a (sometimes dramatic) decrease in respondents everywhere else.

**Figure 2.1: Region/country where respondents are based, 2011 and 2016**



*Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al. (2011)*
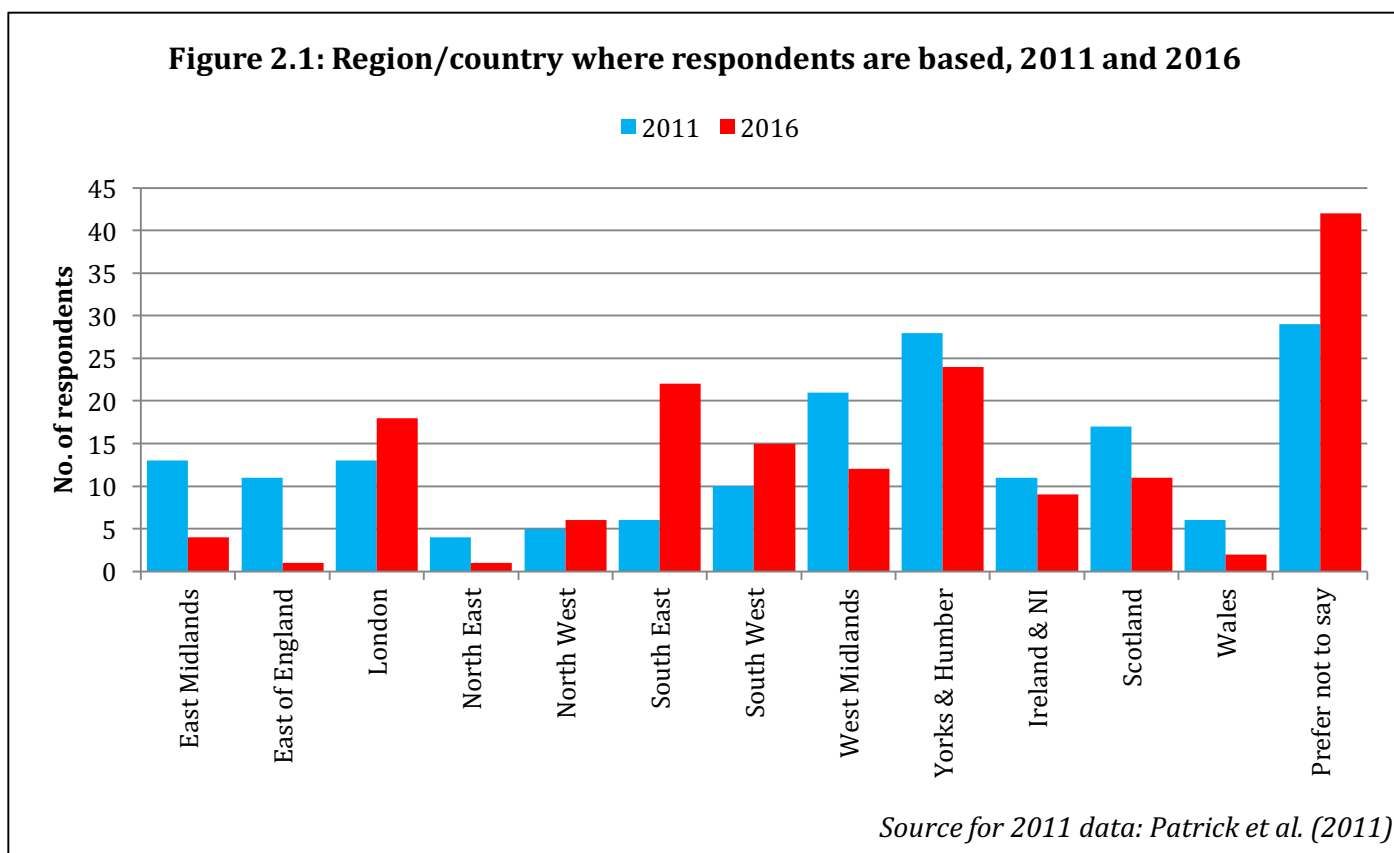
Whether these shifts represent changes in the base of Social Policy related HEI staff or just differential responses to the two surveys is a moot point, but the latter seems more likely. In the absence of a 'census' of Social Policy HEI staff we cannot be sure; submissions to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) can provide some clues here, though a direct comparison with REF statistics is not possible or advisable, not least because the relevant REF category includes Social Work, there was clear blurring of boundaries with other disciplines in some institutions and, of course, the REF submissions excluded many staff whose roles were not research related and/or were excluded for reasons related to institutional strategies and policies. These issues aside, Fig 2.2 compares the 'Headcount of Category A and C staff submitted' in Social Work and Social Policy in 2014 (which stood at 1,408 individuals) and the respondent rate by institution for the 2016 survey. As can be seen, there were only one or two known responses for many institutions in our 2016 survey, but, for the most part, those with larger numbers of respondents to the survey were also those with larger numbers of staff submitted to REF. This provides some reassurance that variations in the institutional level response rates reflect genuine differences in the size of Social Policy staff groupings. We should note that eight institutions that provided respondents to our survey did not submit a return to the Social Work and Social Policy panel for the 2014 REF. Ethical issues (see Section 2.3) prevent us from commenting in more detail here or listing HEIs on the relevant plots of Fig. 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: Comparison of no. of respondents per university vs number of staff submitted to REF 2014.**
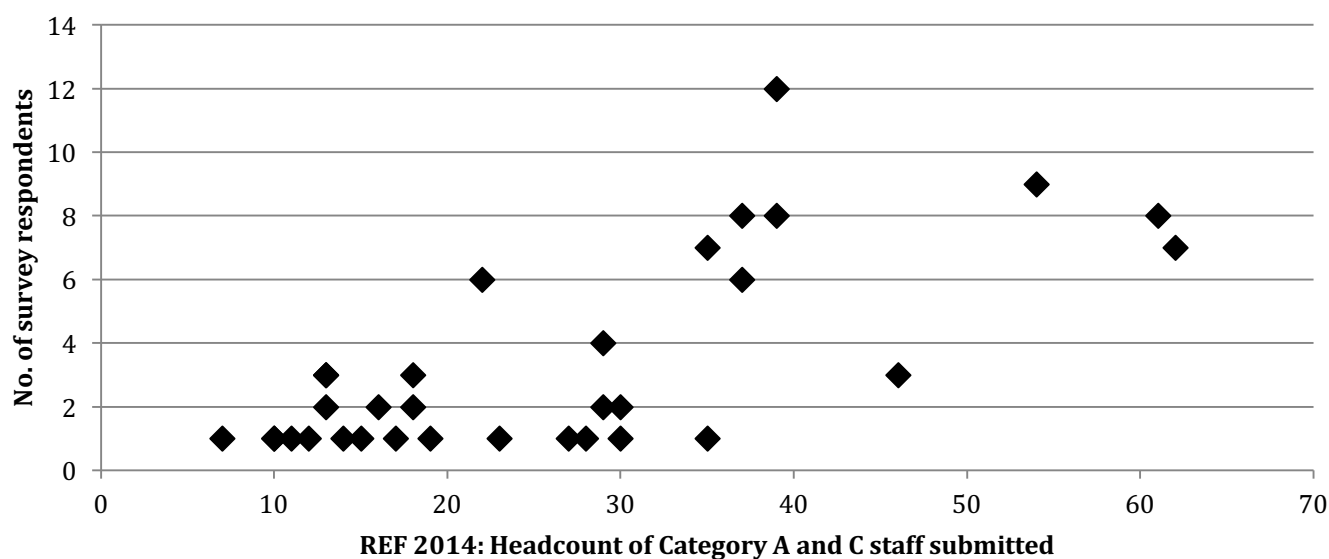
Table 2.2 shows the current job title of survey respondents. The 2011 report provided a 5-category system of teaching positions: Postgraduate; Lecturer; Senior Lecturer; Professor; and Other. This did not fully capture varying institutional conventions around job titles and grading, nor moves towards US-style titles (e.g. Assistant/Associate Professor) in some institutions. This presented some challenges for our survey in terms of balancing the need to compare with 2011 alongside the desire to capture respondent characteristics accurately. As a compromise, in 2016 report we left the question regarding job title as an 'open' response, but have tried to map responses to the 2011 categorisation as far as possible. The main point to note is that the proportion of postgraduate students responding to the 2016 survey was much lower, 4% compared to 17% in 2011.

| Table 2.2: Roles of Respondents, 2011 v 2016 | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Job title* | *2011* | *2016* |
| Postgraduate student | 17 | 4 |
| Lecturer | 45 | 49 |
| Senior Lecturer | 37 | 32 |
| Professor | 31 | 28 |
| Reader | | 10 |
| Assistant / Associate Professor | | 15 |
| Senior Research Fellow | | 3 |
| Senior Research Associate | | 1 |
| Teaching Associate | 44 | 1 |
| Senior Teaching Associate | | 1 |
| Teaching Fellow | | 4 |
| Senior Teaching Fellow | | 1 |
| Other | | 20 |
| *Total* | *174* | *167* |
| | | *Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al. (2011)* |

Perhaps reflecting this (Table 2.3), when compared with the 2011 survey, a smaller proportion (8.6% compared with 12.1%) had been teaching for less than two years. At the same time, a slightly smaller proportion also had more than 10 years of teaching experience (42.3% compared with 46%).

| Table 2.3: Length of time teaching | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *2011* | | *2016* | |
| | No. | % | No. | % |
| Less than 2 years | 21 | 12.1 | 14 | 8.6 |
| More than 2 years, less than 5 years | 34 | 19.5 | 41 | 25.2 |
| More than 5 years, less than 10 years | 39 | 22.4 | 39 | 23.9 |
| More than 10 years | 80 | 46.0 | 69 | 42.3 |
| *Total* | *174* | *100* | *163* | *100* |
| | | | Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al. (2011) | |

As with the 2011 survey, respondents were asked to name their home department to get a sense of departmental locations from which Social Policy is currently taught in the UK. The 2011 report grouped these departments into five categories: Social Policy / Sociology (24.8%); Broader Social Science (35.2%); Social Work (17.9%); Health and Social Care (9.7%); Other (12.4%). For this report, however, we decided to outline all the department titles that were provided, in order to provide a more thorough overview as to where Social Policy courses and modules are currently situated. This, perhaps, exposes one of the assumptions of the 2011 report authors – that Social Policy/Sociology is a common grouping  for the 2016 survey highlighted much diversity (Table 2.4).

| Table 2.4: Respondent profile – Name of Departments | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Department name* | *No of respondents* | *Percentage* |
| Social Policy | 21 | 18.1 |
| Social Policy and Social Work | 20 | 17.2 |
| Social Sciences | 15 | 12.9 |
| Social and Policy Sciences | 8 | 6.9 |
| Social Work | 8 | 6.9 |
| Criminology, Politics and Social Policy | 6 | 5.2 |
| Social and Political Sciences | 5 | 4.3 |
| Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research | 5 | 4.3 |
| Sociology and Social Policy | 4 | 3.4 |
| Sociological Studies / Sociology | 4 | 3.4 |
| Health and Social Care | 3 | 2.6 |
| Law | 2 | 1.7 |
| Media, Culture and Society | 2 | 1.7 |
| Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology | 2 | 1.7 |
| Other | 11 | 10 |
| (Did not answer) | (51) | - |
| *Total* | *116* | |

## 2.3 Research ethics

While the 2011 report followed good ethical practice throughout the research (Patrick et al., 2011: 12), approval was not sought from any kind of ethical committee and no formal ethical approval process was followed. Both the SPA and the researchers felt that for the 2016 report the research ethics process should be followed in full, as outlined by the SPA's own Guidelines on Research Ethics (http://www.social-policy.org.uk/downloads/SPA_code_ethics_jan09.pdf).

The ethical approval process, however, was problematic. Due to the nature of the research contract, advertised as a postgraduate research project to be undertaken for the SPA, the research was not institutionally affiliated nor was the contract awarded to/via an HEI, not least because the original research team constituted researchers from two different institutions. This created a problem in terms of where ethical approval should be sought; for example, postgraduates in many institutions require supervisory sign-off in order to obtain ethical approval for their institutional projects. While Professor John Hudson of the University of York agreed to act as advisor to the project, this advisory role did not hold the level of supervisory responsibilities that many institutions require for sign-off. The SPA itself felt that it was not in a position to grant ethical approval due to its role as funder of the research. Conseqeuntly, the University of York's Department of Social Policy and Social Work, the department of the lead researcher (Sophie Mackinder), agreed to consider the ethics application without supervisory sign-off and despite the research not being affiliated with the institution.

Aside from these institutional issues, the application for ethical approval itself created challenges for the project. The first application was then rejected on various grounds, including concerns around researcher safety (prior to the focus group component of the research design being dropped), data storage concerns surrounding the bi-institutional make-up of the research team, and the guarantee of anonymity of survey respondents and the right to refuse to answer any questions. A long period of negotiation ensued, in which compromises had to be made, including the agreement not to analyse the data at a micro-level (for example, not analysing the data at institutional level), which in turn compromised the level of analysis and detail that this report can provide.

One of the biggest impacts was on the scheduling of the report. The six weeks it took to negotiate and obtain ethical consent resulted in, among other things, the survey not being launched before the SPA Conference in July (the original timeline had sought to close the survey after Conference, so the Conference could be used as a 'final push'). It also pushed the survey live period into the summer vacation period, compromising the response rate.

The delay in gaining ethical approval also contributed to the abandonment of the third component of the research design, the focus group. The lost six weeks, together with an unforeseen reduction of the research team from two postgraduate students to one, meant that there was neither the time nor the resources to arrange a focus group. This did not greatly compromise its comparative usefulness as the 2011 report only contained a small number of interviews that were not heavily drawn on in the report. However, a more thorough qualitative element would add value to the report, and a recommendation of this report is to ensure the collection of qualitative insights in future reports.

# 3: Survey findings: Social Policy in times of change

Following the approach adopted in the 2011 report, survey respondents were asked to consider how the changing HE environment might affect their department, its staffing and its student recruitment. Though results between the 2011 and 2016 surveys are not directly comparable (see Section 2), we consider the two side-by-side in a broad-brush manner here in order to gain a general, albeit somewhat crude, insight into how expectations have altered over the past five years.

## 3.1 Departmental changes

Of the 2011 survey respondents, a very significant minority – always in excess of one in five – had seen over the previous two years, or expected in the coming two years, significant changes such as amalgamation with another department, redundancies or withdrawal of programmes, as shown in Table 3.1. Only a very small minority (3–4%) had seen, or expected, redundancies. In our survey we asked similar questions to respondents, inviting them to look forward two years but also to look back over the past five years. We also asked whether a staff recruitment freeze had affected their department. Table 3.1 summarises key findings here.

| Table 3.1: Survey responses: departmental changes | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *2011 Survey responses* | | *2016 Survey responses:* | |
| | *Had occurred in previous two years (% respondents)* | *Quite or very likely in next two years (% respondents)* | *Had occurred in previous five years (% respondents)* | *Quite or very likely in next two years (% respondents)* |
| Amalgamation with another department | 21 | 27 | 26 | 18 |
| Closure of department | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Redundancies | 21 | 32 | 26 | 19 |
| Withdrawal of programmes | 27 | 29 | 47 | 53 |
| | | | | *Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al. (2011)* |

There are striking similarities across the surveys, especially in terms of the number predicting amalgamation or closure of their department in 2011 and those reporting to have witnessed this in the previous five years, but so too for redundancies:

❖ 27% of 2011 respondents expected an amalgamation with another department, 26% of 2016 respondents reported this had occurred

❖ 4% of 2011 respondents expected closure of their department, 4% of 2016 respondents reported this had occurred

❖ 32% of 2011 respondents expected there to be redundancies in their department, 26% of 2016 respondents reported this had occurred

However, there is a marked difference in responses to the question about withdrawal of programmes, just over one in four of the 2011 respondents having seen or expecting this to occur, but one in two of the 2016 survey respondents having witnessed this and four in ten expecting it to occur over the next two years.

Our respondents also commonly reported, and expected, recruitment freezes to be a feature. If there is good news here, it might be that predictions for the future around department amalgamations and staff redundancies seem more positive than either predictions in 2011 or the experiences reported in the period leading up to both surveys.


## 3.2 Undergraduate student numbers

The 2011 report asked respondents to predict what would happen with Social Policy undergraduate numbers following the 2012 tuition fee reforms and over the next five years more generally. While around one in three were unsure, amongst those offering a view the picture was somewhat gloomy (Table 3.2), around four in ten expecting a fall and only a small minority expecting an increase (2% in 2012, 6% over next five years). In the 2016 survey we asked respondents what had happened over the past five years but also to look forward five years; the results are also presented in Table 3.2.

| Table 3.2: Undergraduate Social Policy student numbers, predictions and experiences, 2011 and 2016 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *2011 survey respondents (%)* | | *2016 survey respondents (%)* | |
| | *Expectations for 2012 entry* | *Expectations next five years* | *Experienced in past five years* | *Expectations next five years* |
| Rise in numbers | 2 | 6 | 20 | 18 |
| Fall in numbers | 41 | 38 | 28 | 19 |
| Numbers same | 28 | 26 | 29 | 34 |
| Don't know | 29 | 30 | 27 | 30 |
| | | | | *Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al. (2011)* |

Based on the survey responses above, the 2011 report authors concluded that 'At undergraduate level, it seems that there is a widespread expectation that student numbers will decline and this will inevitably impact on other aspects of the teaching and learning experience' (Patrick et al., 2011: 20). Given that more respondents expected numbers to fall (41%) than stay the same or rise in 2012 (30%) and, similarly, over the next five years more expected numbers to fall (38%) than stay the same or rise (32%), they could hardly draw any other conclusion.

Though, once again, caution needs to be placed against comparing the two surveys, it is striking that the 2016 survey reports a comparatively more positive outlook both in terms of what happened *and* what is expected to happen in the next five years:

❖ While few expected numbers to rise in the 2011 survey (2% in 2012 and 6% over five years), one in five reported in 2016 this had occurred and similar proportion expected rises in the next five years.

❖ By contrast, while around four in ten expected a fall in numbers in the 2011 survey, just over one in four of the 2016 respondents *experienced* a fall in numbers and only around one in five *expected* falls over the next five years.

This perhaps chimes with HESA data which suggest, nationally, that student numbers on Social Policy programmes remained broadly static when the years either sides of the 2012 reforms are compared. Interestingly, in 2016 those reporting a fall in numbers are now a minority when compared against those expecting numbers to stay the same or rise, both in terms of what *has* happened (28% v 49%) and what is *expected* to happen (19% v 52%).

## 3.3 Postgraduate student numbers

Both surveys asked respondents the same questions about postgraduate level study (Table 3.3). In contrast to the picture at undergraduate level, respondents to the 2011 survey were more positive about the outlook for postgraduate student numbers, with only around one in five expecting a fall in numbers from 2012 onwards; this broadly matched the proportion of 2016 survey respondents who reported a decline in numbers in their department over the previous five years, though it is interesting to note that only around one in ten of the 2016 respondents predicted there would be a fall in the next five years. Indeed, the outlook in 2016 seems more positive than negative, with almost a quarter predicting a growth in postgraduate numbers over the next five years.

| Table 3.3: Postgraduate Social Policy student numbers, predictions and experiences, 2011 and 2016 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *2011 survey respondents (%)* | | *2016 survey respondents (%)* | |
| | *Expectations for 2012 entry* | *Expectations next five years* | *Experienced in past five years* | *Expectations next five years* |
| Rise in numbers | 6 | 14 | 15 | 23 |
| Fall in numbers | 21 | 21 | 18 | 12 |
| Numbers same | 37 | 31 | 23 | 28 |
| Don't know | 25 | 33 | 31 | 38 |
| *Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al. (2011)* | | | | |

## 3.4 Summary

The 2011 report noted that 'survey respondents are expecting tangible impacts as the changes to student finance are introduced in 2012' (Patrick et al., 2011: 30). The 2016 survey data suggest that there has been significant change, with around one in five reporting a department amalgamation and/or redundancies occurred, around one in 20 a department closure. Staffing freezes and the withdrawal of courses appear to have been widespread, each affecting around half our survey sample.

At face value the widespread experience of course withdrawals seems a worrying finding but more detailed analysis by HEI shows that the withdrawal of programmes should not be automatically equated with a reduction in the number of Social Policy students. 55 respondents reported programmes having been withdrawn, 10 of whom did not identify their HEI. Though we are unable to

name institutions because of ethical issues, of the remaining 45 respondents, 25 (56%) came from just five HEIs and, significantly, the picture differs in each:

❖ In Institution A: 66% of respondents said undergraduate numbers had stayed the same (the remainder reporting a drop), while respondents were split in their view on postgraduate numbers, 50% reporting a fall, the remainder dividing between those reporting a rise and those believing numbers had remained the same.

❖ In Institution B: 40% of respondents thought undergraduate numbers had fallen, but 40% felt they had stayed the same and 20% that they had risen; the respondents were clear that postgraduate numbers had *not* fallen but more saying they had stayed the same than had risen.

❖ In Institution C: all respondents reported that undergraduate numbers had risen and 75% reported the same at postgraduate level.

❖ In Institution D: respondents were fairly evenly split across the view that undergraduate numbers had fallen or stayed the same; all felt numbers had remained the same at postgraduate level.

❖ In Institution E: respondents were fairly evenly split across the view that undergraduate numbers had fallen or stayed the same; all felt numbers had risen at postgraduate level.

As this brief analysis shows, Social Policy does appear to be struggling in some of these institutions but in others it seems likely that course closures reflect a repackaging of course offerings rather than an institutional crisis. Moreover, our responses to questions about changes to student numbers – both in the past and predictions for the future – paint a relatively positive picture.

Our survey findings suggest the impact of the HE reforms on student numbers, especially at BA level, was less dramatic than feared in 2011, though for our survey it could be that this merely reflects that the 2016 sample has lost a proportion of 2011 respondents who were employed in the most affected institutions. This issue aside, 2016 survey respondents do appear to view the future more positively than they view the recent past, perhaps suggesting that the landscape of Social Policy teaching in UK HEIs is starting to stabilise – or at least come closer to the kind of stability that can be expected in the current climate – following a period of heavier change. That said, even if the outlook is more positive than in the recent past, we should be clear that austerity still lingers, with the majority expecting to see staff recruitment freezes in the coming years and around four out of ten predicting course withdrawals.

## 3.5 The problem with perceptions

One of the limitations of a survey of this kind is, of course, that it deals with perceptions of change and detailed analysis of the data by institution level highlights limitations in such an approach. The pen pictures of five institutions in the previous section show that respondents often disagreed for example over whether student numbers had increased, decreased or stayed the same, but it was also the case for three of the five institutions that respondents disagreed over whether courses had been withdrawn or not.

Indeed, when respondents were asked about changes in their institution over the past five years, conflicting responses from those at the same HEI were not uncommon, even over major staffing issues such as redundancies or staff recruitment freezes. In some cases this may be because respondents were based in different departments/schools, but this was not always the case. For instance, respondents from one institution with a large number of respondents were divided almost 50:50 on the question of whether there had been a recruitment freeze in the past five years in their institution; an informal conversation with senior staff in that HEI confirms that there has been such a freeze on

more than one occasion, meaning that a good number of responses here were simply wrong. A survey of heads of department/subject might be better placed to capture the detail on departmental level changes in future.

It might also be argued that the survey responses looking to the future – for both the 2011 and 2016 surveys – capture the fears of respondents for their own careers and so end up painting a gloomier picture of the subject's future than is warranted. The comparison of predictions about student numbers against experiences (Table 3.3) provides some hints that this may be so, but limitations in the survey's sample mean we cannot be sure this is the case. Instead, we need to turn to our audit of Social Policy programmes in order to ascertain how far Social Policy's institutional presence has altered since the 2012 reforms. It is to this that we now turn.

# 4: The landscape of Social Policy teaching: audit findings

Following the approach of the 2011 report, in taking stock of Social Policy teaching in UK HEIs we completed on audit of Social Policy teaching in the academic year 2015/16. This chapter presents headline findings from the audit, which recorded details of course fees, entry requirements and course titles.

The 2011 report described the objective of the audit as 'gather[ing] some baseline data on where Social Policy is taught, at what level and in what contexts to enable future tracking of how the teaching of Social Policy fares as the changes in student finances take effect' (Patrick et al., 2011: 16). We draw comparisons between the 2011 and 2016 audits here in key places, though the changing landscape of UK HE makes some comparisons complex. For instance, the 2011 report presented information on entry requirements and home student fee levels for single honours Social Policy degrees, but it is no longer possible to talk of fee levels for 'home students' when the fee charged depends in part on which part of the UK a home student resides and whether they chose to study in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

On-going changes to the institutional environment also mean that the information gathered over the summer of 2016 is already out of date, UCAS having changed its points tariffs for 2017 entry; we present our data using the 2016 points system, reflecting the situation at the moment the audit was conducted.

## 4.1 The extent of Social Policy teaching across the UK

Following the logic of the 2011 report, we were asked to identify where Social Policy is taught in UK HEIs at undergraduate and postgraduate level, highlighting differences between single honours and joint honours programmes in the former, and identifying degrees where Social Policy formed part of a broader degree.

The 2011 report noted 'Social Policy teaching in UK HEIs appears to remain comparatively widespread, with 69 UK institutions offering some Social Policy teaching at undergraduate level' but that 'this figure is probably an underestimate, given that is was simply not possible to track all instances of Social Policy teaching in HEIs, particularly where this may be simply one small part of a module or of a degree course, for example in Health Sciences or Social Work' (Patrick et al., 2011: 16).

We identified a broader number of institutions offering some form of Social Policy teaching at this level in 2016; 94 in total, though this may reflect the greater provision of information about course detail allowing us to find examples of Social Policy forming part of a small part of degree rather than an expansion of provision per se. Nonetheless, the audit suggests Social Policy has an undergraduate presence of some form at the overwhelming majority of UK HEIs.

At postgraduate level, the 2011 report found taught Masters programmes which include an element of Social Policy are available at 59 institutions across the UK. Our audit identified 73, though in most cases this was as part of a wider programme of study.

## 4.2 Single honours Social Policy undergraduate programmes

Taking simply those courses solely focused on 'Social Policy' in terms of the title of the award, the 2011 audit identified 16 programmes across the UK, though it noted several were due to close. In the 2016 audit we again find 16 such programmes, though with some movement in terms of providers.

### Table 4.1: Single honours Social Policy degrees, 2016

| Institution | Degree | Entry | Fees (English students) £ | Fees (Scottish students) £ | Fees (Welsh students) £ | Fees (NI students) £ | Fees (non-EU intnl students), £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anglia Ruskin University | BA Social Policy | 200 | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 10,300 |
| Bangor University | BA Social Policy | 240-280 | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 11,750 |
| Liverpool Hope University | BA Social Policy | BBB-BCC | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 10,800 |
| LSE | BSc Social Policy | AAB | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 17,712 |
| Swansea University | BSc Social Policy | BBB | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 13,800 |
| Ulster University | BSc Social Policy | 260 | 6,000 | 6,000 | 6,000 | 3,925* | 12,890 |
| University of Bath | BSc Social Policy | AAB | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 14,700 |
| University of Birmingham | BA Social Policy | BBB | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 13,860 |
| University of Bristol | BSc Social Policy | ABB | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 15,600 |
| University of Edinburgh | MA Social Policy with Quantitative Methods | AAB | 9,000 | 1,820* | 9,000 | 9,000 | 16,700 |
| University of Kent | BA Social Policy | BBB | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 13,340 |
| University of Kent | BA Social Policy with Quantitative Research | BBB | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 13,340 |
| University of Leeds | BA Social Policy | ABB | TBC | TBC | TBC | TBC | TBC |
| University of Lincoln | BA Social Policy | CCC | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 12,800 |
| University of Salford | BSc Social Policy | 240 | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 13,300 |
| University of Wolverhampton | BA Social Policy | 240-280 | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 11,250 |
| University of York | BA Social Policy | BBB | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 9,000* | 15,680 |
| University of Glasgow | MA (SocSci) in Social and Public Policy | AAB-BBB | 6,750 | 1,820* | 6,750 | 6,750 | 12,250 |

*Asterix denotes fee level for EU students*

While the courses at London South Bank University, Nottingham and Stirling have closed, Bangor, Edinburgh, Liverpool Hope and Wolverhampton have established new programmes since 2011, though we should note the Edinburgh course is offered through its Q-Step centre and only available therefore as Social Policy with Quantitative Methods. Kent also offer a Social Policy with Quantitative Methods degree as part of their Q-Step centre, but do so alongside a BA Social Policy. In addition, the 2011 study included the University of Glasgow on the basis of their 'MA in Public Policy' being a broadly Social Policy course. Our 2016 audit finds Glasgow offering an MA (SocSci) in Social and Public Policy; addition of this programme takes us to a total of 17 'single honours' programmes, one

higher than in 2011. (We should note that Coleg Llandrillo Cymru offer a similarly titled BA Public and Social Policy that the 2011 study did not classify as single honours; we follow their approach here for consistency but would be minded to categorise in the same way as the Glasgow programme otherwise.)

Table 4.1 summarises the single subject provision across the UK, including details about entry requirements and standard fees. Looking back to concerns prevalent in 2011, arguments that variable fees across HEIs might lead to competition on price proved – for now at least – to be unfounded, with institutions almost uniformly charging the maximum allowed.

Figure 4.1 compares the entry tariffs for single honours programmes across the two audits; for this exercise we convert grades into UCAS points and where a range is stated take the midpoint; thought this is an admittedly crude simplification, it suggests that there has been an increase in entry requirements for most single honours programmes since 2011. The vast majority of programmes that were offered in 2011 now require applicants to meet an offer equivalent to BBB at A-level.



Fig 4.1: Single honours entry requirements
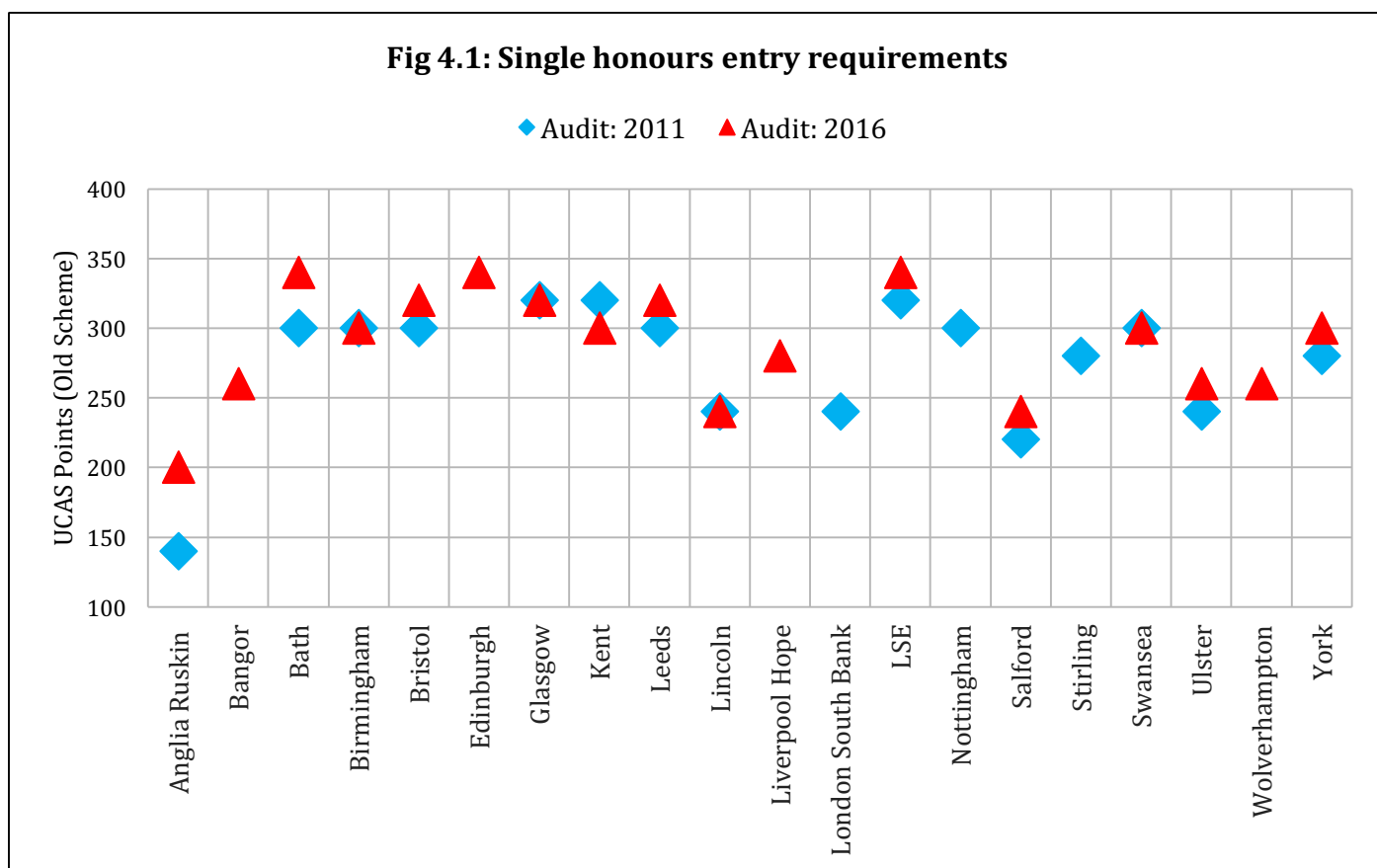
## 4.3 Joint honours Social Policy undergraduate programmes

The 2011 audit identified 32 institutions offering a Social Policy Joint Honours degree; taking programmes with a title that includes Social Policy along with another subject, the 2016 audit found 35 institutions offering a 'Social Policy and/with…' or 'X and/with Social Policy' degree.

The 2011 audit did not offer a detailed breakdown by degree label at this level, so we cannot be certain here, but our best estimate is that there have been losses of provision at some institutions but gains elsewhere:

**Table 4.2: Changing provision of single and joint honours degrees**

| Institution | 2011 Single Honours | 2016 Single Honours | 2011 Joint Honours | 2016 Joint Honours |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anglia Ruskin | ▪ | ▪ | | |
| Aston | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Bangor | | ▪ + | ▪ | ▪ |
| Bath | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Birkbeck | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Birmingham | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Bolton | | | | ▪ + |
| Bournemouth | | | ▪ | X |
| Brighton | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Bristol | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Cardiff | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Central Lancashire | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Coleg Llandrillo Cymru | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Durham | | | ▪ | X |
| Edinburgh | | ▪ + | ▪ | ▪ |
| Glasgow | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Hull | | | ▪ | X |
| Kent | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Leeds | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Lincoln | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Liverpool | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Liverpool Hope | | ▪ + | ▪ | ▪ |
| London Metropolitan | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| London South Bank | ▪ | X | ▪ | X |
| Loughborough | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| LSE | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Manchester Met | | | | ▪ + |
| Middlesex | | | | ▪ + |
| Nottingham | ▪ | X | ▪ | ▪ |
| Open University | | | ▪ | X |
| Queen's University Belfast | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Salford | ▪ | ▪ | | |
| Sheffield | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Southampton | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Stirling | ▪ | X | ▪ | ▪ |
| Strathclyde | | | | ▪ + |
| St Mark and St John Plymouth | | | ▪ | ▪ |
| Swansea | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Ulster | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ | ▪ |
| Warwick | | | | ▪ + |
| West of Scotland | | | ▪ | X |
| Wolverhampton | | ▪ + | ▪ | ▪ |
| York | ▪ | ▪ | | ▪ + |

Key: shaded = programme offered; unshaded = not offered; X = lost provision; + = new provision

19

❖ in six cases (Bournemouth, Durham, Hull, London South Bank, Open and West of Scotland) it seems that joint honours programmes have closed, resulting in the end of dedicated named Social Policy routes at undergraduate level, though in most cases Social Policy remains a part of other available routes with a broader focus.

❖ in six cases (Bolton, Manchester Met, Middlesex, Strathclyde, Warwick and York) 'Social Policy and/with' programmes appear to be offered in 2016 that were not offered in 2011. In some cases this appears to be a move away from more general social science labels (back?) to 'Social Policy and/with...' (Manchester, Middlesex and York seem to fit here). In others it seems to be new provision or provision that was not captured by the 2011 audit; Warwick's offering fits here, being a 2+2 programme in 'Health and Social Policy' with the first two years taught at a range of partner FE colleges.

❖ in some other cases provision has been constant but there is some ambiguity/differences in the classification of programmes over the two surveys; the 'Public and Social Policy' programme at Coleg Llandrillo Cymru (as noted above) fits here.

Beyond these institutional level changes, it also seems likely there have been some changes in terms of specific programme offerings that cannot be easily tracked using the 2011 database; Brighton, for example, offered joint programmes at both time points, but the labels may well be different in 2011 and 2016.

It is interesting to note that Anglia Ruskin and Salford offer single honours degrees but do not offer joint honours programmes.  Taken together, this means 37 institutions have an explicitly Social Policy badged offering at undergraduate level. Table 4.2 provides details of the institutions offering Social Policy named programmes in 2011 and 2016.

However, beyond this narrow analysis of Social Policy provision in the form of named degrees, we found 91 institutions offering Social Policy as part of a broader social science programme, perhaps hinting – particularly when read alongside our survey responses – that Social Policy has been repackaged rather than removed in some of the institutions once offering 'Social Policy with...' type degrees that no longer do. Some of these offerings, such as Edinburgh's 'Government, Policy and Society' degree are Social Policy degrees in all but name – others, however, contain only a small Social Policy offering within a broader degree focus. Due to these discrepancies, which cannot easily be understood through a desk-based audit, the analysis here has focused principally on degrees with Social Policy explicitly mentioned in the course title; however, the large number of broader degrees found supports the finding that cautious optimism regarding the state of the discipline may be justified. Unpicking these broader degree offerings, and examining to what extent the myriad different degree titles under which elements of Social Policy can be found impacts the understanding of the discipline, may be a useful avenue for future research.

## 4.4 Taught postgraduate programmes in Social Policy

The 2011 audit collected data on taught postgraduate programmes but focused primarily on reporting contextual information about the broad focus of programmes at this level rather than offering a detailed census of all programmes. The added complexity of identifying provision at this level was noted in the 2011 report, which observed 'the most common taught Masters programme across UK HEIs was in Social Research Methods [...] these are frequently generic Masters in Social Research designed to equip students with the necessary skills to become competent social researchers' (Patrick et al., 2011: 19).

We cannot provide a fully systematic tracking of movements in taught postgraduate programmes because of this, though the database compiled for 2011 audit allows us to come close, particularly when supplemented with retrospective checks for cases that appear to have added or removed courses. Making best use of the data we have, we examine the changing taught postgraduate environment using the same principles as above.

One important reason for adding taught postgraduate programmes to our audit is that some institutions only offer Social Policy related provision at this level. Most notably, Durham and Oxford offer no single or joint honours provision at undergraduate level but do have a named route at Masters level. Nottingham, Sheffield and Strathclyde also only offer joint honours route at undergraduate, but offer a dedicated route at taught postgraduate level. Taking provision at both levels into account, this means that 39 institutions were offering a dedicated programme in 2016.

Table 4.3 provides an overview of the 'single subject' Social Policy taught postgraduate programmes identified by our audit. In total, 20 institutions offer a taught Masters level programme specialising in Social Policy according to our audit, though we can add a number of qualifications to this number. Firstly, it includes two integrated Masters degree routes (MSocSci at Bangor and MSci in Social Policy with Quantitative Methods at Bristol) that are not available as standalone one-year programmes. Secondly, it includes three broad social research routes with bracketed named pathways in Social Policy – the MSc in Social Science Research Methods (Social Policy) at Cardiff, MA Social Research Methods (Social Policy) at Durham, and the MA Research Methods (Social Policy) at Nottingham – which might be deemed marginal cases. Thirdly, it excludes Masters by Research programmes that sit at MA level but do not feature a taught component; adding these programmes would both expand the number of programmes (e.g. York offers such a route) *and* add another institution to the list (Edinburgh offer a named MSc by Research in Social Policy but no other named Social Policy route). Finally, it should be acknowledged that Sheffield's M-level programme is perhaps a marginal case here (titled 'MSc International Social Change and Policy') and that a number of other institutions offer only a specialised take on Social Policy at postgraduate level such as 'International Social Policy' (e.g. Nottingham and Southampton).

| Table 4.3: Named Social Policy routes at taught postgraduate level, 2016 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Institution* | *Award* | *Name of degree* | *Home/EU course cost (FT) £* | *International course cost (FT), outside EU, £* | *Entry requirements* |
| Anglia Ruskin | MSc | International Social Welfare and Social Policy | 6,900 | 11,000 | 2:2 |
| Bangor University | MSocSci | Social Policy | 9,000 | 11,750 | Integrated MA |
| | MA | Social Policy | 5,000 | 12,250 | 2:1 in Social Policy or related discipline |
| University of Bath | MRes | European Social Policy | 4,400 | 14,700 | 2:1 |
| | MRes | Social Policy | 4,400 | 14,700 | 2:1 |
| University of Birmingham | MA | Social Policy | 6,570 | 14,850 | Good undergraduate degree |
| University of Bristol | MSci | Social Policy with Quantitative Research Methods | 9,000 | 15,600 | Integrated MA |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| University of Cardiff | MSc | Social and Public Policy | 6,000 | 14,500 | 2:1 in Social Policy or related discipline |
| | MSc | Social Science Research Methods (Social Policy) | 6,000 | 14,500 | 2:1 |
| University of Central Lancashire | MA | Social Policy | 6,000 | 12,450 | 2:2 |
| University of Durham | MA | Social Research Methods (Social Policy) | 6,500 | 14,500 | 2:1 |
| University of Kent | MA | International Social Policy | 5,430 | 13,340 | 2:1 |
| University of Leeds | MA | Social and Public Policy | 6,000 | 15,000 | 2:1 |
| Liverpool Hope University | MA | Social Policy | 4,500 | 10,800 | 1 or 2:1 |
| LSE | MSc | Social Policy (Social Policy and Planning) | 9,936 | 19,344 | 2:1 |
| | MSc | Social Policy (European and Comparative Social Policy) | 9,936 | 19,344 | 2:1 |
| | MSc | Social Policy (Research) | 9,936 | 19,344 | 2:1 |
| | MSc | Social Policy and Development | 12,704 | 19,544 | 2:1 |
| | MSc | Social Policy and Development (Non-Governmental Organisations) | 12,704 | 19,544 | 2:1 |
| | MPA | Public and Social Policy | 47,832 (for 2 years) | | 2:1 and professional experience |
| University of Nottingham | MA | International Social Policy | 6,630 | 15,140 | 2:2 |
| | MA | Research Methods (Social Policy) | 6,630 | 15,140 | 2:1 |
| University of Oxford | MPhil | Comparative Social Policy | 14,873 | 21,703 | 1st or high 2:1 |
| | MSc | Comparative Social Policy | 14,873 | 21,703 | 1st or high 2:1 |
| University of St Mark and St John | MA | Social Policy | 5,500 | 11,500 | Degree |
| University of Salford | MSc | Social Policy | 5,300 | 13,300 | 2:2 |
| University of Sheffield | MSc | International Social Change and Policy | 6,000 | 15,250 | 2:1 |
| University of Southampton | MSc | International Social Policy | 7,500 | 15,920 | ? |
| | MSc | Sociology and Social Policy | 7,500 | 15,920 | ? |
| University of Strathclyde | MSc | Social Policy | 4,600 | 13,000 | 2:2 |
| | MSc | Social Policy (Research Methods) | 4,600 | 13,000 | 2:2 |
| University of York | MA | Social Policy | 6,650 | 15,680 | 2:1 |
| | MRes | Social Policy | 6,650 | 15,680 | 2:1 |
| | MA | Global Social Policy | 6,650 | 15,680 | 2:1 |
| | MA | Comparative and International Social Policy | 6,650 | 15,680 | 2:1 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MA | Social and Public Policy (part-time online distance learning only) | 9,310-11,310 (for 2 years, fees vary according to GDP of country) | | 2:1 |
| | MPA | Comparative Applied Social and Public Policy, Evaluation and Research | 26,650 (for 21 months) | 26,650 (for 21 months) | 2:1 and professional experience |

The list of programmes in Table 4.3 also excludes the vast array of Social Policy related courses, many of which are taught in schools or departments entered into the REF 2014 'Social Work and Social Policy' Unit of Assessment and/or with Social Policy in their department/school name. These include offerings that stretch beyond Social Policy but with a strong Social Policy focus – such as the well-established MSc Public Policy at Bristol and MSc Comparative Public Policy at Edinburgh – and programmes that address one aspect of Social Policy in more depth such as the MSc Housing Studies at Glasgow.

The often very specialised nature of provision at this level means that assembling a list of broader programmes that include a Social Policy is very challenging indeed. On the one hand, there are dozens of professionally focused programmes addressing key sectors of the welfare state that have a policy component but are largely rooted in other disciplines; e.g. programmes aimed at education or health specialists. On the other hand, there are a large number of cross-disciplinary programmes focused on specialised themes which address Social Policy themes but are not always taught by Social Policy schools or departments; e.g. programmes such as the MA Childhood Studies at Leeds or MSc Vulnerability at West of Scotland. Our search for broader (or more focused) programmes including an element of Social Policy teaching identified provision at 68 institutions, but this is likely an underestimate given many programmes that could have been included in a wider reading.

While fee levels at undergraduate level show little variance within different parts of the UK, at postgraduate level there is a clear and significant variation in fee levels across institutions and programmes. The 2011 audit did not offer a programme-by-programme breakdown of fee levels at postgraduate level, but the information gathered suggests considerable variation across institutions was also evident in 2011.
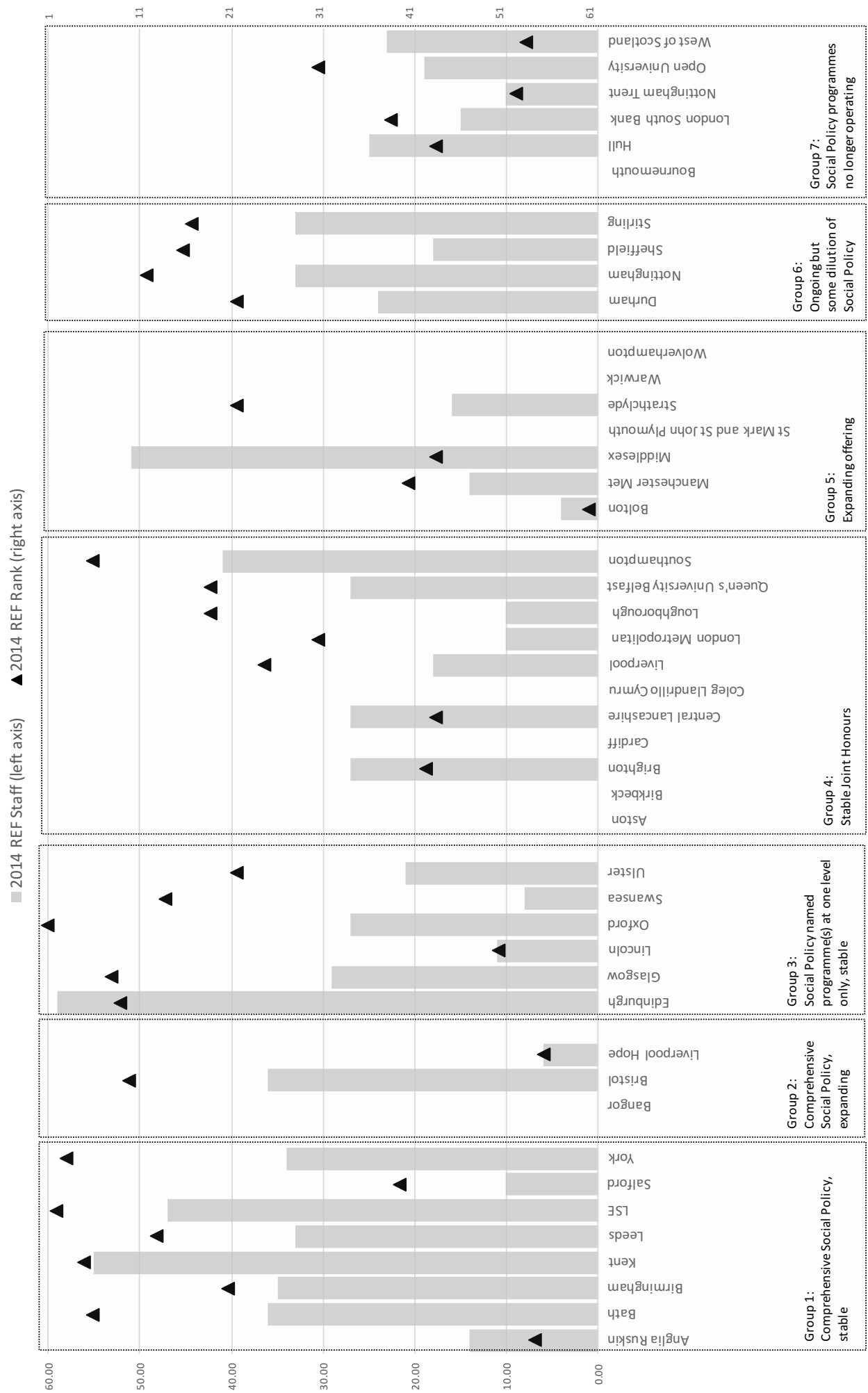
In terms of programme losses, comparison of the two audits suggests two programmes have closed – at Hull and Nottingham Trent – but that in each case these were primarily research methods focused programmes with a Social Policy route.

## 4.5 The changing landscape of Social Policy teaching

Looking across undergraduate and postgraduate level, and comparing the 2011 and 2016 audits, what can we say about the changing landscape of Social Policy teaching in the round? Fig. 4.2 attempts to classify changes and adds some contextual information about each HEI's research profile as measured by REF 2014.

As Fig. 4.2 shows, programmes explicitly badged as 'Social Policy' appear to have disappeared from six institutions: Bournemouth; Hull; London South Bank; Nottingham Trent; Open University; and, West of Scotland. In most of these cases, however, there remained a significant Social Policy/Social Work research base as judged against REF 2014 submissions. In some, the Social Policy presence identified by the 2011 audit was perhaps marginal; Bournemouth's offering was a joint honours BA programme in Social Studies with a Social Policy element and Nottingham Trent's was a research methods based

# Fig 4.2 Extent of Social Policy Teaching Provision and REF 2014

Legend:
- 2014 REF Staff (left axis)
- ▲ 2014 REF Rank (right axis)



Group 1: Comprehensive Social Policy, stable — Anglia Ruskin, Bath, Birmingham, Kent, Leeds, LSE, Salford, York

Group 2: Comprehensive Social Policy, expanding — Bangor, Bristol, Liverpool Hope

Group 3: Social Policy named programme(s) at one level only, stable — Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lincoln, Oxford, Swansea, Ulster

Group 4: Stable Joint Honours — Aston, Birkbeck, Brighton, Cardiff, Central Lancashire, Coleg Llandrillo Cymru, Liverpool, London Metropolitan, Loughborough, Queen's University Belfast, Southampton

Group 5: Expanding offering — Bolton, Manchester Met, Middlesex, St Mark and St John Plymouth, Strathclyde, Warwick, Wolverhampton

Group 6: Ongoing but some dilution of Social Policy — Durham, Nottingham, Sheffield, Stirling

Group 7: Social Policy programmes no longer operating — Bournemouth, Hull, London South Bank, Nottingham Trent, Open University, West of Scotland

masters with a Social Policy route. But in other cases the changes appear to have resulted in the loss significant provision. The 2011 audit suggested the Open University offered a Social Policy route through its Combined Social Science BA degree, but this no longer seems to be available, a worrying development given JACS data list the Open University as the largest provider of Social Policy courses nationally. Hull offered both BA and MA provision in 2011, but offered neither in 2016.

In addition, the audit also identifies four institutions where Social Policy provision has been maintained but appears to have been diluted insofar as some key programmes have been withdrawn. Some cases, again, may be marginal and even after 'dilution' their provision remains comparatively strong. Sheffield, as noted above, is a marginal case, its MA in Global Social Policy being replaced by a MSc International Social Change and Policy', but we classify it in this group to capture the loss of a clear Social Policy route. Nottingham and Stirling both maintain a clear Social Policy presence at BA and MA levels, but the loss of the single honours BA leads us to place them in this group. In Durham, however, there has been a much clearer loss of Social Policy provision, with a named joint honours programme withdrawn, leaving a research methods based MA route only.

The audit identifies 25 institutions where provision has remained broadly stable: Anglia Ruskin; Aston; Bath; Birkbeck; Birmingham; Brighton; Cardiff; Central Lancashire; Coleg Llandrillo Cymru; Edinburgh; Glasgow; Kent; Leeds; Lincoln; Liverpool; London Metropolitan; Loughborough; LSE; Oxford; Queen's University Belfast; Salford; Southampton; Swansea; Ulster; and York. Varying patterns are at play here, some offering BA and MA programmes in both audits, others offering only joint honours BA or MA level programmes. In addition, a further ten institutions – Bangor, Bolton, Bristol, Liverpool Hope, Manchester Met, Middlesex, St Mark and St John Plymouth, Strathclyde, Warwick and Wolverhampton – we have categorised as an 'expanded' offering, having added programmes at an additional level (e.g. the addition of an MA programme alongside a pre-existing BA level programme) or created a single honours BA programme alongside pre-existing joint provision.
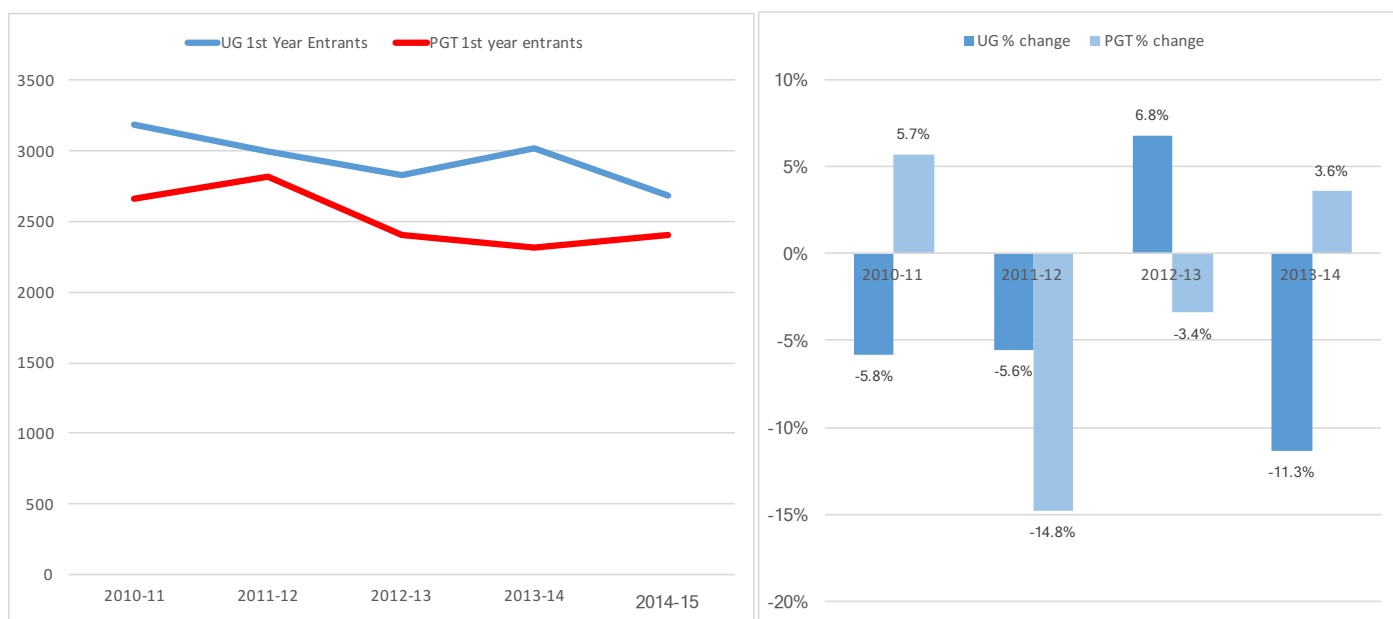
## 4.6 HESA Data

Though the audit allows us to track the presence of Social Policy programmes at UK HEIs, it cannot tell us how popular these courses are. Moreover, as we noted in Section 3.5, our survey respondents often disagreed over whether student numbers had increased, decreased or stayed the same in their HEI. This leaves an important piece of the jigsaw missing in any analysis of the state of the discipline.

Analysis of HESA data based on JACS codes provides us with an official set of statistics against which to compare perceptions, allowing us to explore trends in terms of numbers of students entering and studying Social Policy programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. We cannot offer a detailed institution-by-institution analysis of this data here but can offer some useful observations based on a rudimentary analysis of the data from the academic years 2010/11 to 2014/15; it may be useful reports commission in the future to include a detailed analysis of this data as part of their research design. In terms of *overall* trends, the data appears to suggest that recruitment has become more difficult at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Fig 4.3 details the number of students that registered for the first time on programmes that were coded as 'Social Policy' by their HEI.

The data suggests numbers have fluctuated a good deal year-on-year, but both undergraduate and taught postgraduate first year registrations in 2014–15 were some way down on the corresponding figures for 2010–11: undergraduate around 15% below and postgraduate around 10% below. This fits with the overall view of respondents to our own survey where 50% of those offering a view said they had found recruiting Social Policy students more difficult over the past five years, against 39% saying it was about the same and 11% saying it had become easier. But a few qualifications need to be added to the HESA JACS data.

In terms of undergraduate numbers, the first qualification is that most other social science subject saw a strong drop in applications in 2012–13 followed by a rise in 2013–14, partly reflecting fewer deferred applications in the year before the tuition fee reforms were introduced. Indeed, in 2012–13 Business Studies, Economics, Politics and Sociology all saw larger percentage reductions in first year undergraduate registrations than Social Policy. Similarly, the near 7% increase in 2013–14 for Social Policy was not dissimilar to that found in these subjects. Where Social Policy stands out, however, is that it also saw a reduction in 2011–12 (when others saw an increase) and the very steep fall it experienced in 2014–15.



**Figure 4.3: Social Policy student programme entry trends, HESA JACS data**

However, here the second qualification needs to be made, which is that these overall trends are often heavily driven by changes taking place in a small number of institutions with large numbers of Social Policy coded students. The scale of the Open University is a particular issue to note; in 2011–12 it accounted for over 30% of new Social Policy registrations, with some 966 in total. Registrations at the Open University declined sharply in 2014–15, its fall of 343 heavily responsible for the 11.3% drop in new registrations across the subject as a whole in that year (which, at 343, was smaller than the drop at the Open University). Two other large single institution changes can be detected over this period: at Birmingham City University a drop from a high of 228 in 2011–12 to 24 by 2014–15 and, at Sheffield Hallam University, from 272 in 2010–11 to 81 by 2014–15. These reductions themselves equate to around 10% of registrations in 2010–11.

A third qualification is that, when probed in detail, it is clear that institutions differ in how they interpret and utilise the Social Policy JACS code. For example, some of the largest programmes over this period could feasibly be classified under another JACS code, including the Health and Social Care programme at London Metropolitan University and the Criminology and Psychological Studies programmes at Open University (a total of 404 and 3,086 new registrations between 2010–11 and 2014–15 respectively, the largest Social Policy coded programmes in each institution). To illustrate the point, in contrast to the approach at London Metropolitan University, the Open University's Health and Social Care programme is classed under the Social Work JACS code and, with some 6,970 new registrations between 2010–11 and 2014–15 it accounts for over 10% of all Social Work coded registrations. Southampton's (much smaller) BSc Health and Social Care is, meanwhile, classified

under 'Other subjects allied to medicine'. This makes interpreting the data trickier, but also underscores that Social Policy is a much broader church than the clearly named routes our audit has primarily focused on, with programmes specialising in Childhood Studies/Children and Young People/Youth, Criminology/Criminal Justice, Health and Social Care/Social Policy and Public Services/Public Services Management regularly forming a key part of Social Policy coded provision in this data.

Finally, it perhaps should be noted that the broad base of Social Policy programmes means that Social Policy provision is spread across a number of programmes at most HEIs where it is present. When the relatively modest scale of Social Policy numbers compared against other Social Science subjects is accounted for (around one-quarter of the size of Politics, Social Work or Sociology), this means the intakes of many of the Social Policy labelled programmes documented in our audit are likely to be modest. Indeed, the HESA data suggest that, with the exception of the very large programme at Salford, single honours Social Policy undergraduate degrees typically recruit between 10 and 30 students a year.

A very similar story exists for taught postgraduate courses, though it should be noted that Social Policy records more registrations than Sociology and is only around 50% the size of Economics or Politics at this level. The reduction in numbers from 2010–11 compared against 2014–15 is more modest than at undergraduate level; 264 in total. Changes at the largest provider, the University of Birmingham, have heavily driven the overall trend here, with a reduction of 149 over this period; but around one-third of the change at Birmingham seems to merely reflect correction of a classification error, with around 50 new MA Social Work students a year having been classed as Social Policy rather Social Work until 2014–15. Some large Public Policy courses at UCL account for the loss of over 100 places according the HESA data and around 150 places that have gone look likely to be associated with large but short term funded continuing professional development related programmes. In short, many of the largest reductions at this level do not appear to have come from Social Policy badged programmes.


## 4.7 Summary

The 2011 report noted that the 'audit of the teaching of Social Policy in the UK has demonstrated the breadth and diversity of Social Policy teaching that is conducted across British universities today' (Patrick et al., 2011: 16). When examined in broad terms, it is evident that there is a Social Policy presence of some sort in the vast majority of institutions: some 94 in total at undergraduate level and 73 at postgraduate level. But even taking a narrower definition, focusing only on routes explicitly labelled as Social Policy, we find offerings at 39 institutions in 2016.

While there are undoubtedly some worrying changes in some HEIs, the 2016 audit does not support a common narrative of Social Policy withering since the 2012 reforms. Most significantly, while some single honours degrees have been lost, new single honours programmes have also been established, leaving the total number of single honours programmes higher in 2016 than in 2011. Some important joint honours provision has been lost, and some dilution of offerings is evident in some departments, but there is a good degree of stability overall and we identify more joint honours programmes in 2016 than in 2011. At postgraduate level we cannot track changes so easily, but it seems likely that programmes that have been lost have primarily been research methods based programmes with a Social Policy pathway rather than more focused programmes.

In short, it seems that audit of provision provides a good deal of support for the conclusions we offered in the previous section; that while there has been dramatic change in some institutions, broad

stability or changes at the margins have been more common and, moreover, in some HEIs the picture has been one of growing provision rather than retraction. While student numbers remain relatively modest when compared to most other Social Science programmes, our audit suggests core Social Policy provision has a broader institutional base in 2016 than it did in 2011. As the 2011 report noted, fears around recruitment to what is a relatively unknown and modestly scaled subject area have been perennial and 'Social Policy has faced difficulties before (JUC for Social and Public Administration, 1979), and has survived' (Patrick et al., 2011: 8).

# 5: Survey findings: Teaching experiences and practice in Social Policy teaching and learning

As discussed in the 2011 report, the experiences of HEI teachers of Social Policy are invaluable in understanding how the subject is learnt and taught in the UK. This section examines the main methods used to teach Social Policy in 2016, how it is assessed, and what is perceived to be good practice. Comparisons are drawn between 2011 and 2016, though, as with previous chapters, the changing environment of higher education can make direct comparisons difficult.

## 5.1 Overview of methods of teaching and learning in Social Policy

The 2011 survey found that a wide range of methods are used in Social Policy teaching, but with a strong bias towards 'traditional' teaching formats such as lectures and seminars. The 2016 survey found very little change in favoured teaching methods, with the 'hierarchy' of such methods remaining nearly identical; lectures are the most popular teaching method, followed by seminars / tutorials, one-to-one tutorials, online lectures and online tutorials (Fig. 5.1)



Fig 5.1: Teaching methods used by survey respondents

*Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al. (2011)*
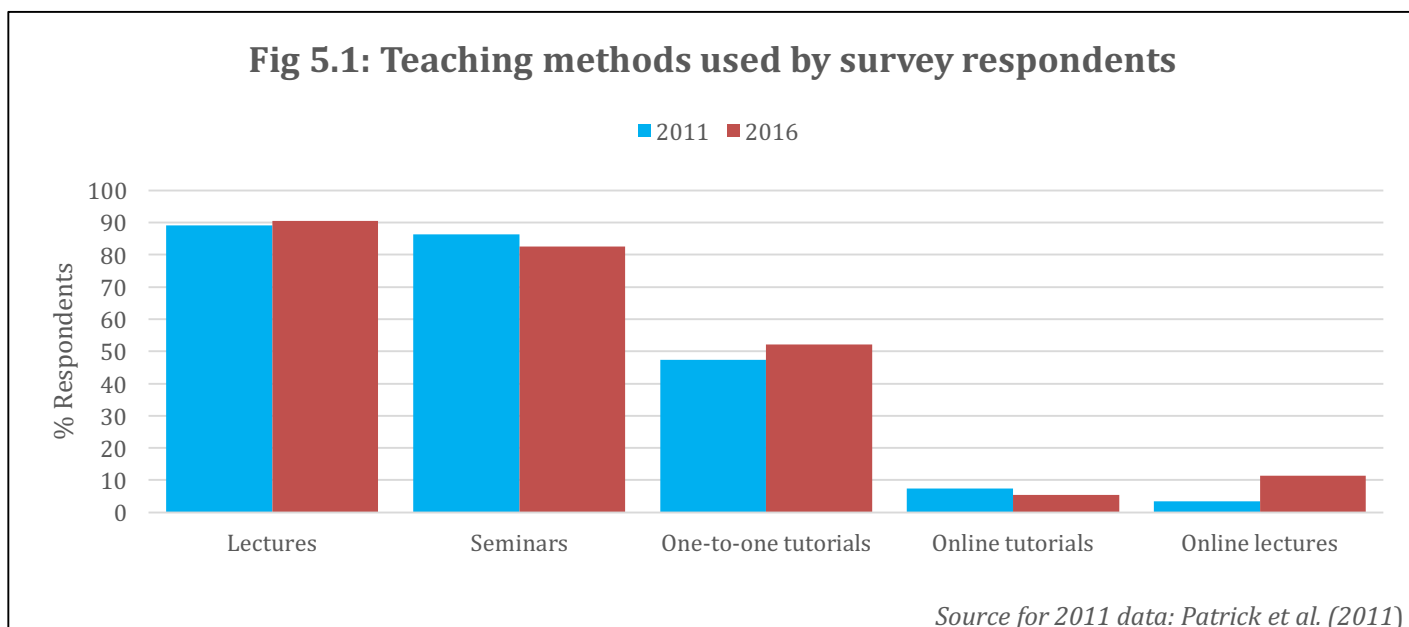
Though the rank ordering of activities remains broadly the same, changes in absolute levels could be explained in part by the decrease in postgraduate respondents (from 9.8% in 2011 to 2.4% in 2016). The lack of direct comparability of the surveys aside, a potentially interesting finding is the use of the internet as a teaching tool. The 2011 report detailed how 7% of respondents made use of online tutorials and 3% used online lectures, and reported that the comments that accompanied that survey question suggested that this may be an area of growth in learning resources (Patrick et al., 2011: 21). Five years on, the expected growth in online tutorials and seminars does not appear to have materialised; the number of respondents using them has dropped from 7% in 2011 to 5% in 2016. Online lectures, however, have seen a sharp increase from 3% in 2011 to 11% in 2016. What this means, however, is open to interpretation and could simply capture that more people are placing slides from face-to-face lectures online.

Open comments surrounding this question for the 2016 survey highlight two other common methods of teaching, namely software or method workshops (4.2%) and dissertation supervision at undergraduate and postgraduate level (3.6%). These are not mentioned in the 2011 report, but would

be useful to include these in any further research surrounding this subject in order to obtain a more comprehensive view of teaching methods.

Response to questions about whether courses offer compulsory or optional placements have changed little since 2011 too; the main difference between the two surveys is the number saying their courses provide placements for *all* students dropped from 25% in 2011 to 15% in 2016 – while the number saying their courses offer placements for 'most' students has increased.

## 5.2 Assessment

The debates surrounding the best method of assessment, both in terms of efficacy and in academic standards and learning styles, have continued in the past five years (e.g. HEA, 2013). Various studies have emerged on the subject that show, for example, that academic attainment of disadvantaged students can be improved if they can decide on their method of assessment (Grove 2016), and that institutional approaches to assessment and feedback are 'lagging behind the curve', and a source of dissatisfaction with many students (Sambell, 2016).

The 2011 report indicated that such debates had permeated into Social Policy teaching, with the qualitative interviews emphatically highlighting the importance of assessment via verbal communication and more group-based tasks:

> 'We have really piloted a lot more of these presentations, the use of newspapers as a way of engaging students in really up-to-date activities. Making them find a topic then doing research around it.' (Senior Lecturer, 2011)

This concern surrounding methods of assessment, however, did not seem to have made an impact on the type of methods used in 2011. The survey data for the 2011 report showed that traditional methods of assessment, such as essays and exams, continued to dominate as the preferred methods of assessment. The same trends are identified in 2016, with essays and exams continuing to be the preferred method of assessment, even showing a very slight increase in uptake (Table 5.1).

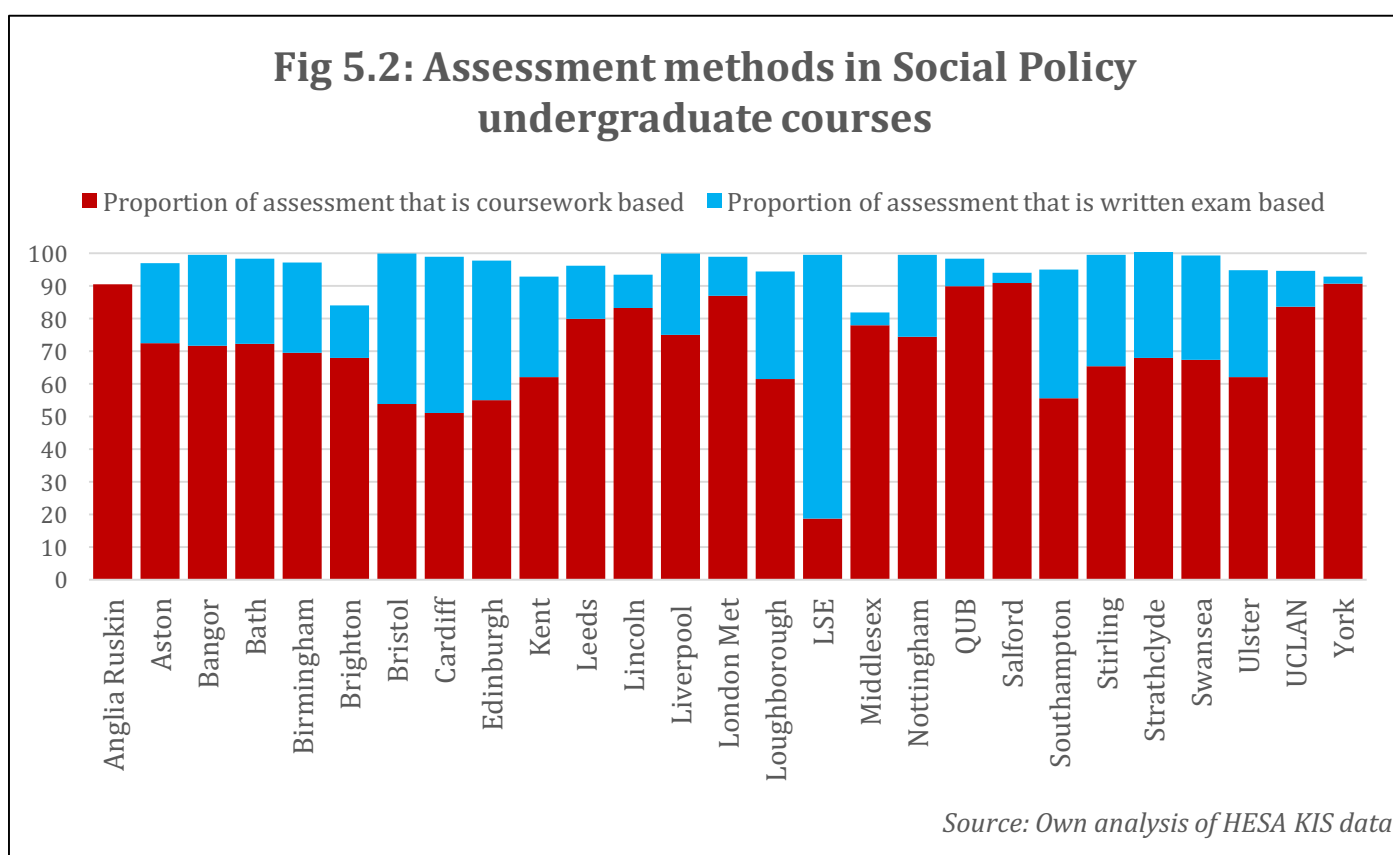| Table 5.1: Assessment methods, 2011 and 2016 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *2011* | | *2016* | |
| *Assessment method* | *Number* | *Percent* | *Number* | *Percent* |
| Essays | 168 | 96.0 | 154 | 98.7 |
| Exams | 110 | 63.2 | 107 | 68.6 |
| Individual presentations | 59 | 33.7 | 75 | 48.0 |
| Group presentations | 69 | 39.4 | 76 | 48.7 |
| Other | 55 | 31.4 | 75 | 48.0 |
| | | | | *Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al., 2011* |

Since publication of the 2011 report, new data sources capturing course information have come on stream, most notably the Unistats Key Information Set (KIS). Rudimentary analysis of this dataset[1]

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[1] KIS data was downloaded from the HESA website – data for 2016/17 entry was the only data available, meaning a slight mismatch with our audit and survey data – and analysis performed using all courses with Social Policy in their title that could be identified.

suggests there is considerable variation across HEIs with respect to the proportion of assessment that is coursework based and exam based in Social Policy single and dual honours programmes (Fig. 5.2). At Anglia Ruskin, Queen's University Belfast, Salford and York coursework accounts for 90% or more of assessment, while at the LSE it forms only 19% of the total. At the LSE written examinations dominate (comprising 81% of assessment) but at Bristol, Cardiff and Edinburgh there is a fairly even split between written exams and coursework.

The pockets of innovation in assessment evident in the 2011 report continue in 2016. More of our respondents said their institution used of placements as assessment in than in 2011, 20% in 2016 compared to 10% in 2011. Other methods mentioned in the 2011 report but not quantified continue to show a small level of popularity in 2016:

- ❖ Posters were mentioned by 26 respondents (16.7%)
- ❖ Policy reports/briefing papers were mentioned by 12 respondents (7.7%)
- ❖ Reflexive diaries/learning logs were mentioned by 3 respondents (1.9%)
- ❖ Portfolios were mentioned by 7 respondents (4.5 %)
- ❖ Blogs were mentioned by 3 respondents (1.9%)



Fig 5.2: Assessment methods in Social Policy undergraduate courses

Source: Own analysis of HESA KIS data

## 5.3 Feedback

The inclusion of feedback methods in the National Students Survey (NSS) has led institutions to give increased attention to the issue (HEA 2013), with the 2011 report noting it as a 'significant' issue due possibly to the increase competition for graduate jobs (p. 24). Responses to the 2011 and 2016 surveys show some differences with respect to feedback methods (Fig 5.3).

More of our respondents highlighted written feedback forms than in 2011, while fewer highlighted informal feedback. Annotation of essays remains constant, between 60-65% highlighting this, despite the 2011 highlighting that this is a resource-heavy method of feedback. More respondents highlighted non-traditional feedback methods, from 1.7% in 2011 to 8.3% in 2016; the new

approaches detailed in the comments surrounding the question suggest that these non-traditional methods are in peer-review, or audio and video feedback. Interestingly, there again seems to be no institutional correlation with the use of alternative methods of feedback, suggesting that innovation within feedback approaches are at an individual rather than institutional level; however, though the small number of respondents reporting alternative methods mean we should be cautious when interpreting this data



**Fig 5.3: Feedback methods used by survey respondents**

*Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al., 2011*
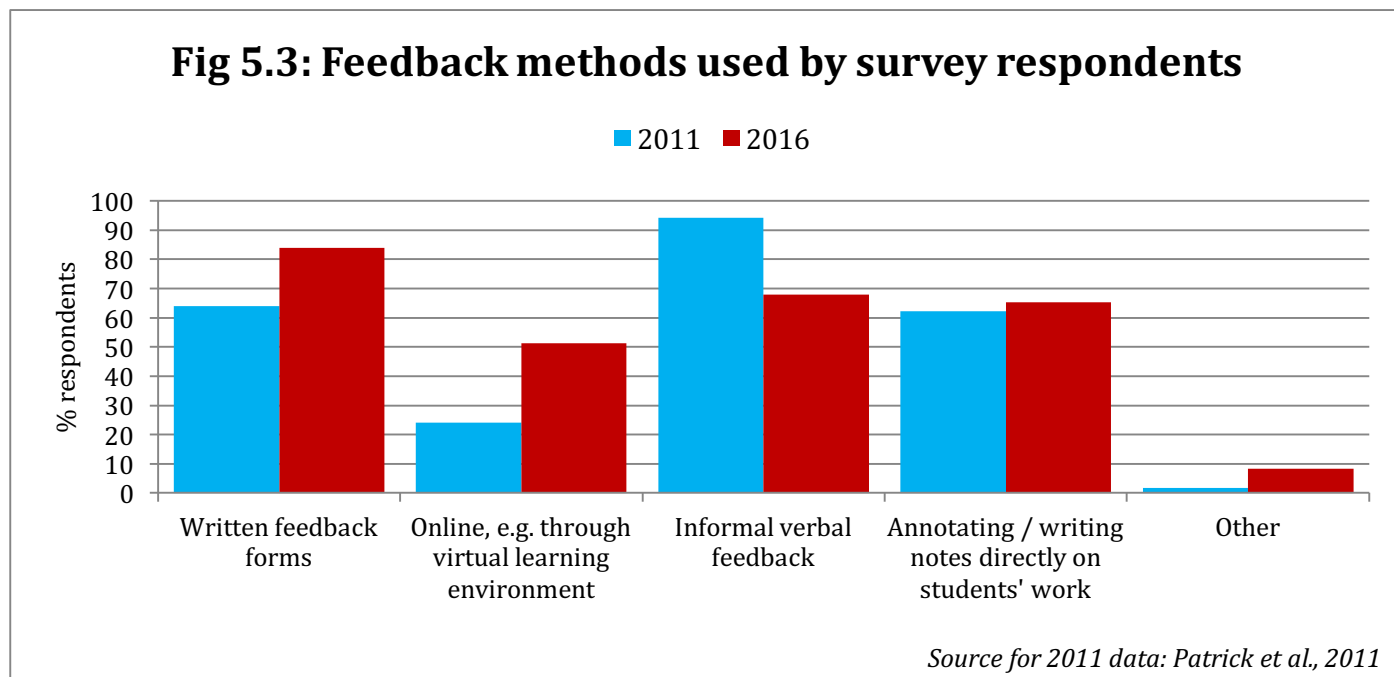
## 5.4 Contact hours

The 2011 survey and report had a section on contact time; in order to maintain comparability between surveys we followed the approach here, including the same questions as in the 2011 survey (Fig. 5.4). Responses across the two surveys are strikingly similar, perhaps suggesting there has been little change in contact hours following the 2012 reforms, most respondents reporting contact hours of 8-10 hours or 10+. Our survey also offered respondents the option of 10-12 or 12+ (rather than simply 10+ as in 2011); more (27.4% to 11.5%) indicated the former than the latter, suggesting typical contact hours tend to be between 8 and 12 hours per week.
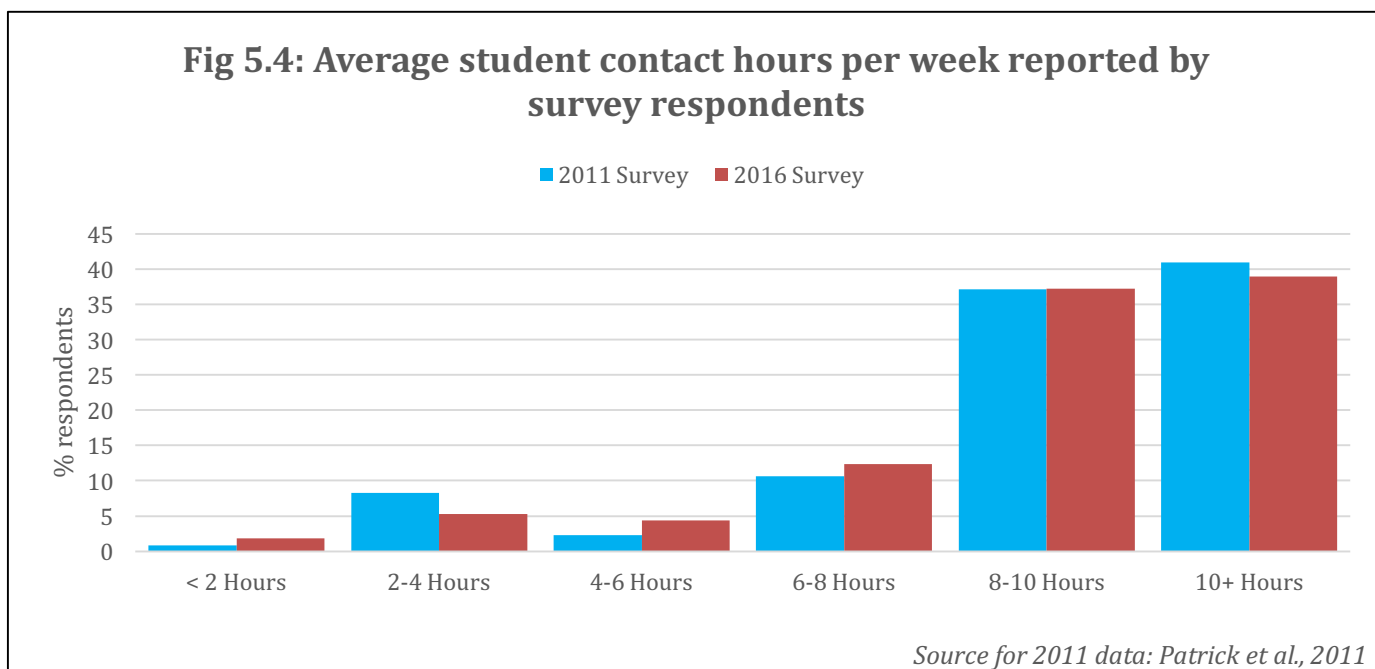
It should be acknowledged that the question posed to respondents 'Roughly how many contact hours have your students receive in an average week this past academic year (2015–16)?' (with the options: Less than 2 hours; Between 2 and 4 hour; Between 4 and 6 hours; Between 6 and 8 hours; Between 8 and 10 hours; Between 10 and 12 hours; Over 12 hours; Don't know; Prefer not to say) is too general to capture variations across programmes and levels. However, detailed analysis of responses by institution, and the availability of KIS data, raises some questions about the veracity of the data. We are unable to name institutions for ethical reasons, but the responses by staff identifying as members of one institution illustrate the issues well:

❖ Just over 40% said they didn't know or didn't respond

Of those who did respond with a figure:

❖ Around 15% placed contact hours at between 2 and 4 hours
❖ Around 15% placed contact hours at 4 and 6 hours
❖ Around 40% placed contact hours at between 6 and 8 hours
❖ Around 30% placed contact hours at between 8 and 10 hours

It might be argued that the ambiguity of how weekly contact hours might be defined means all of the above could be correct, but it seems more likely to us that the variation reflects that knowledge about actual programme design varies somewhat across respondents.



Fig 5.4: Average student contact hours per week reported by survey respondents

Source for 2011 data: Patrick et al., 2011

The Unistats Key Information Set (KIS) provides information on contact hours that might be informative here (Fig. 5.6). It suggests there is considerable variation in the percentage of time Social Policy students spend in lectures, seminars and similar, from 12% at York to 30% at Cardiff and Middlesex. There are, of course, question marks over the KIS data here too – particularly what counts as a contact hour – and it is interesting to note that (i) respondents to our survey working at one of the HEIs with a seemingly very high level of contact hours do not report high contact hours and (ii) a comparison of the average responses in our survey by HEI and the KIS data show no clear or significant correlation in terms of their rank ordering.



Fig 5.6: Percentage of time in lectures, seminars and similar

Source: Own analysis of HESA KIS data
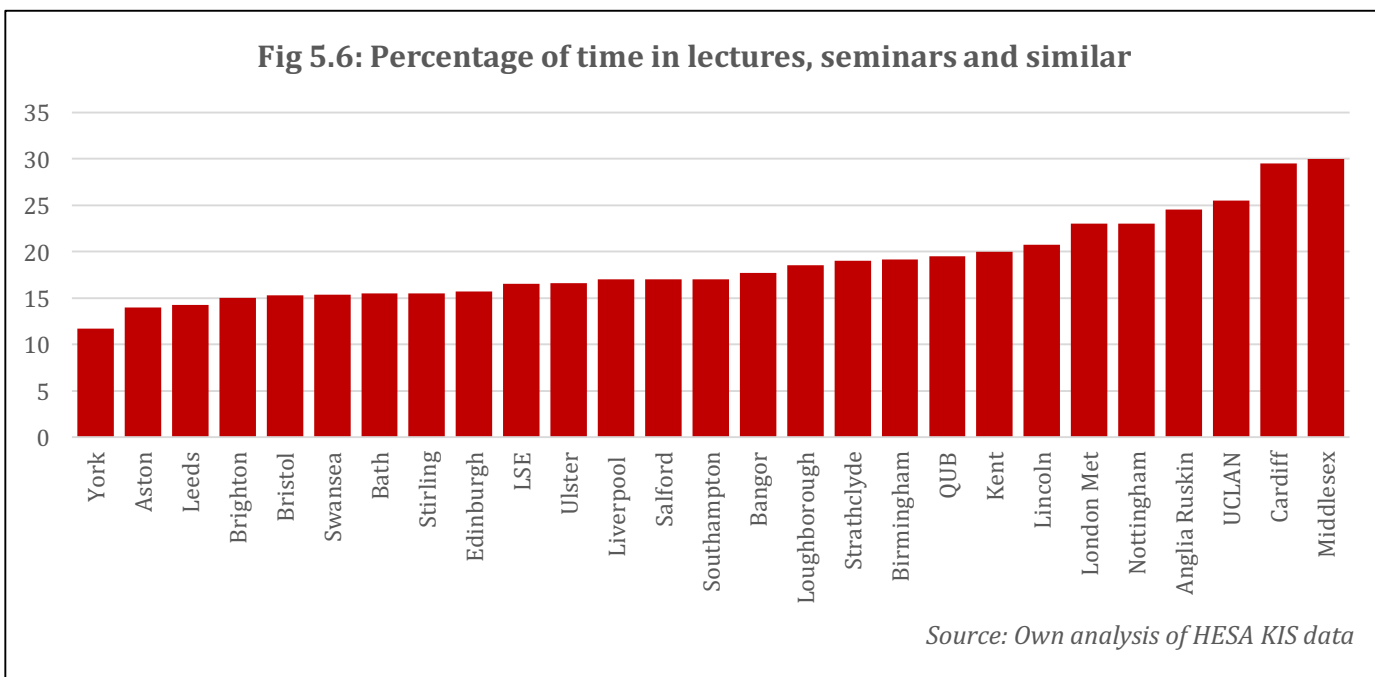
## 5.5 Summary

The dominant theme emerging from the survey on teaching methods is that there has been little change from 2011 in teaching methods, placements, assessment or contact hours. Feedback methods may have shifted slightly away from 'informal' methods, but the resource-heavy annotation of essays remains the favoured method of feedback. Data from the KIS dataset provide new interesting insights that there is considerable variation across institutions with regards to the proportion of assessment that is coursework- or exam-based. The KIS data also challenges the survey data with regard to contact hours, as while it similarly shows a wide variation in the number of contact hours across institutions, there is no significant correlation with the hours reported in this study.

# 6: Survey findings: Safeguarding Social Policy and the SPA's role

In light of concerns about the potentially negative impact of tuition fee reforms on Social Policy as a discipline, the 2011 survey asked respondents how they thought the subject and the SPA should respond. The 2016 survey followed this approach too; this section highlights key findings from the survey

## 6.1 Social policy – what is it?

The biggest concern highlighted by respondents related to the conceptualisation of Social Policy – the fact that potential students have not heard of it, and do not know what it entails. This was the dominant theme in the 2011 report, and it continues to be a significant concern – in fact, in qualitative terms, respondents appeared to suggest it has become a bigger issue since 2011. Frequently, respondents reported how a significant number of students have transferred to Social Policy from subjects such as Social and Political Science (SPS) or Politics, as 'Social Policy is what I thought politics would be', suggesting that it is a lack of understanding, rather than a lack of interest, that thwarts the recruitment appeal of Social Policy degrees. Other respondents report the success of foundation degrees for Social Policy recruitment, arguing that when students are exposed to Social Policy in their foundation year, they are more likely to choose it over other social science subjects when it comes to their undergraduate degree. The problem is encapsulated by the following survey response:

> 'I have students taking Social Policy modules as outside options who tell me they would have chosen a degree in social policy had they only known it was an option when they were applying for university.'

The lack of clarity between Social Policy and other social sciences is a strong theme throughout the survey responses. There is an overwhelming sense that Social Policy is 'losing the battle' to sociology, not only in terms of undergraduate recruitment, but also at an institutional level; with some respondents reporting that Social Policy academics are increasingly replaced by sociologists when they retire. There is little consensus, however, in how Social Policy can counteract this slippage, or 'blurring', between Social Policy and Sociology; some argue that it should be embraced, in that Social Policy should work with Sociology to create joint honours degrees, or should push to have specific Social Policy within Sociology degrees in order to differentiate between the two subjects, and capture interest perhaps for postgraduate level. Others argue that Social Policy should acknowledge the competition with Sociology, and fight back against being subsumed into sociology degrees by emphasising the *practical* nature of Social Policy, rather than the 'generic' nature of Sociology and social science degrees, which they argue makes Social Policy a more favourable degree in terms of employability. These respondents argue that linking in to A level subjects such as Politics, Sociology and perhaps Psychology, or other sixth form qualifications such as health and social care, that are familiar to sixth form students, may be beneficial. Once these students grasp an understanding of the nature of Social Policy, it is believed that they will be more aware of Social Policy as an undergraduate discipline, and more likely to sign up.

The data suggests that the blame does not lie entirely with the lack of awareness at sixth form level, however; the lack of continuity across institutions in framing their Social Policy options further compromises the understanding of sixth form students of the discipline. There is a sense that arises from the survey data that, in trying to overcome the problem of lack of awareness at sixth form level,

Social Policy has been repackaged in myriad different ways to try and negate the lack of understanding surrounding the nature of the subject. This in itself could exacerbate the problem further; as one respondent put it:

> 'I think there are probably far more students studying social policy than there are social policy students.'

## 6.2 So what can be done?

As seen in the previous section, the survey data suggests that the practical nature of Social Policy needs to be strongly emphasised to sixth form students. Respondents suggest that there is an opportunity in the possible decrease of Social Work students (due to the withdrawal of social work bursaries) to recruit this group to Social Policy (although the lack of bursary for Social Policy, and the increase in tuition fees, has practical complications). Other suggestions to dispel the idea of Social Policy as an 'abstract' discipline suggests linking into subjects such as the environment, Brexit or crime in order to emphasise the *impactful* nature of Social Policy. The potential career paths that Social Policy can provide, plus its transferability of the discipline, occur frequently in the survey data as a USP that should be strongly promoted in the marketing of Social Policy.

There is a strong sense in the data that placements are a good way of emphasising the practical nature of Social Policy. Several respondents argue that including placements within Social Policy degrees make them attractive to prospective students, not least as practical work-based opportunities highlight that employment prospects available with a Social Policy degree. One suggestion, for example, is to provide a direct link via placements to a career in the police.

A common theme that runs parallel to the idea that Social Policy should be marketed as practical and / or transferable is the idea of its 'relevance'. There is an overwhelming sense that arises from the data that applying Social Policy to the modern day, both locally and nationally, is a key selling point of Social Policy as a discipline. However, one respondent counteracts this opinion, arguing that the increased popularity of crime and criminology demonstrates that 'relevance' is not the best selling factor, arguing crime and criminology studies have benefited in recent years not through its relevance to everyday life, but through the 'CSI factor'. The respondent argues that the 'sexy' factor has more weight than the 'relevance' factor, and that Social Policy needs to somehow market itself in a manner that draws on this appeal.

There is a regular, repeated call for Social Policy to be an A Level subject, though we perhaps should mindful of the limited success of previous attempts to create such a qualification; the introduction of the subject as an A Level does not necessarily solve the problem as its success is conditional on take-up by schools, which relies on the willingness of schools to include it in their curriculum, and recruit Social Policy teachers to offer the course. Other suggestions include campaigning for a Social Policy module within the current Sociology and/or Politics A Level, which would counteract the problem of generating enthusiasm at secondary level.

Other suggestions include a marketing push to raise awareness among secondary school teachers of the subject. It is clear that respondents believe that it is not just the prospective students that are confused and ignorant of the potential of Social Policy, but that teachers are no more aware or inclined to encourage applications to Social Policy courses. Practical suggestions include an SPA stall at teacher conferences, a stronger relationship between the SPA and schools, and a concerted effort to target teachers of subjects such as Modern Studies in Scotland. With regard to direct targeting of

students, respondents suggest such a podcast from a celebrity who has a Social Policy degree, or getting students into universities to sit in on lectures.

The final dominant theme throughout the survey qualitative data is 'international'. This arises on two levels; the first looks to making the discipline itself more internationally focused, tapping into the popularity of international development and situating social policy within a more global perspective (linking back to the need to make Social Policy more 'relevant', and more 'sexy'). The second idea relating to the international is that Social Policy should look to international recruitment to increase its prominence as a discipline. Respondents argue that focusing on recruitment in developing countries in particular, or in countries where Social Policy is more well known as a discipline, could be a way of halting a drop in recruitment levels.

## 6.3 What can the SPA do?

There is a feeling that arises from the qualitative survey data that the SPA can do more to raise the profile of Social Policy. There is no overwhelmingly favoured method of doing so – more, the data suggests that the SPA should take a coordinated approach that includes a marketing campaign to both teachers and students; coordinating and assisting Social Policy departments to raise the profile in schools in their geographic area; producing marketing materials that can be distributed nationally and taking a more active fight in the blurring/slippage of Social Policy into Sociology. One respondent describes this as 'the need to fight on all fronts'. There is a criticism in the data that the SPA does not provide enough support for departments in either recruitment or in terms of the profile of the subject.

### 6.3.1. The problem at university level

As previously discussed, there is a strong theme in the data that suggests that Social Policy is struggling at university level, and that SPA should be doing more in the fight to keep social policy as a discipline. While the audit suggests there has perhaps been less change than people often imagine (see Chapter 4), the qualitative data suggest there is a sense of trepidation within the Social Policy community, the subject often viewed as not being a secure, institutionalised discipline within the higher education domain in the UK, and that this insecurity impacts on undergraduate recruitment. There are calls for the SPA to be more proactive in maintaining Social Policy as a subject, including; supporting those programmes that exist more actively; providing a platform whereby Social Policy departments and universities are not 'working in isolation' to maintain status and encourage recruitment, but are part of a wider, mutually supportive national campaign; providing more networking and training opportunities to share ideas and work more collaboratively together; putting together a campaign to 'get Social Policy' in to universities where there is currently no profile. In addition, there is a call for more training and networking between Social Policy academics (including a suggestion for the equivalent of a 'Bernard Crick' award for Social Policy). The word 'rebrand' occurs frequently, with little discussion as to what a 'rebrand' would look like, but is deemed to be necessary in the fight against the more well-known social science disciplines.

### 6.3.2 Getting in the policy field

There are several suggestions that the SPA should be getting more involved in the policy dialogue at the national level, to show the relevance and the importance of the discipline, and to raise its profile. Ideas include forging closer links with government departments (e.g. through seminars with DWP), and working closely with advocacy NGOs in order to become a bigger player in the policy-making

process. Regular blogs about policy developments are suggested, away from 'academic speak' and aimed at a wider audience. One respondent tells of how policy lobbying *en masse* occurs in the policy community in the US, with conference delegates meeting with the staff of congressman to influence a particular issue. There is debate surrounding the welfare state – some arguing that using the welfare state as a concept to relate Social Policy as the 'lived experience' is a key recruitment angle, whereas others describe a narrow focus on the welfare state is 'parochial', and 'UK-biased'.

### 6.3.3 Reaching the teachers

There is considered to be a need to raise the profile of Social Policy among teachers at secondary level, and calls for the SPA to do more in this regard. Supporting teachers to provide 'exciting', non-classroom based opportunities that introduce Social Policy as a discipline is one suggestion, and a national awareness drive towards careers advisors and Modern Studies teachers is often mentioned.

### 6.3.4 Reaching the students

There is a strong call for the SPA to support student recruitment. A frequent call is to create a resource repository to equip Social Policy promotion. This includes a multi-media element, with 'catchy, engaging' films, or podcasts; as one respondent put it, 'something to appeal to the smartphone generation'. There are a couple of calls for celebrity involvement; however, there are as many calls that celebrities are not used; there is a particularly vociferous argument that any such resources do not resort to 'professors just talking'. Other suggests to get to students include holding conferences, events or summer schools for secondary students, and offering automatic SPA student membership to undergraduates. As seen above, the most common suggestion to raise awareness among secondary students is to campaign for the reinstatement of the Social Policy A Level.

## 6.4 Summary

The perceived state of Social Policy, as demonstrated by the qualitative survey elements, tell a different story to the audit data as to the strength and profile of the Social Policy discipline at the HEI level. The perceived state suggests there is on-going fear and trepidation regarding the future of Social Policy, with strong calls for the SPA to do more. The suggestions are wide-ranging, and call for a broad-brush approach. There is a striking resemblance to the perceptions and demands of the SPA in 2011 and to the perceptions in 2016, with stronger calls in 2016 to do more. There is occasional explicit mentions of disappointment in the SPA in not taking a strong stance in both the status of Social Policy as a discipline in the higher education landscape, and in terms of coordinating and assisting recruitment at sixth form level; this disappointment is also implicit throughout the responses, suggesting that there is a perception that the SPA has done little to address the concerns raised in the 2011 report.

# 7: Conclusion and recommendations

Our analysis suggests Social Policy as a discipline in the UK has undergone some changes since the 2011 report. However, the common narrative that Social Policy has suffered badly since the 2012 HEI reforms appears to be misleading. While there has been some loss of both single and joint honours social policy courses, others have sprung up in different institutions to replace them, meaning that the total number of single honours and joint honours courses is actually greater than in 2011. There are worrying trends, with some institutions that have a strong Social Policy research presence struggling to maintain a Social Policy teaching presence as courses are withdrawn and, in some places, departments amalgamated. However, the national perspective of the overall discipline shows signs of stability, with even a tentative suggestion that it is in a stronger position than in 2011, with some sort of social policy presence in the vast majority of UK higher education institutions.

With reference to teaching and best practice, the data suggests that there is little change in UK Social Policy from 2011. Alternative data sources such as the KIS data set show a few interesting insights, such as the ratio of coursework versus exam-based assessment; with a few exceptions, coursework is favoured. Other parameters such as methods of teaching, contact hours and feedback show little change from 2011, despite some academic literature suggesting that innovation could be beneficial, though it is likely that the survey itself is simply unable to detect changes that have taken place at programme level.

In terms of safeguarding social policy, the narrative that Social Policy is suffering, and losing the fight to other social science disciplines, is strong. As demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, this negative narrative is flawed, or at the least somewhat exaggerated. It is important therefore to view the opinions and suggestions regarding the betterment of the discipline against this finding; there is a mismatch between the *perceptions* surrounding social policy and the reality of its development. This leads us to make several recommendations on what the SPA can do to support the discipline.

### 1. Seek professional marketing advice, professionalise SPA resources

The final question of our survey asked 'Against the context of the changing environment within higher education, do you have any suggestions as to what the Social Policy Association (SPA) could do to support social policy teaching, research and recruitment?' Only a minority (42/167) responded, but 64% of those who did suggested an SPA campaign to recruit students and promote Social Policy. Views differed on the form this should take and whom messages should be targeted at, though the suggestion by one respondent that 'Anything to promote the discipline to 15–17 year olds would be beneficial' reflected the views of a number of respondents. On a similar theme another wondered:

> 'whether a conference/training/summer school for A-Level/Highers students to encourage them to study SP [Social Policy] might help to increase understanding of what SP is'

The need for *professional* materials that could reach a wide audience were stressed by many. One respondent suggested:

> 'Catchy/engaging multi-media explainers about 'what is social policy' which can be shared on social media would be able to be utilised by lots of departments and might work well at open days'

Another, perhaps reflecting some frustration with the quality of the SPA's existing materials, asked:

'Please do not make more podcasts of academics talking about our subject. Think about targeted messages for people from different subject/interest backgrounds. This might be different short films making different kinds of connections.'

The same respondent suggested the SPA:

'Put a list of universities on the SPA website offering qualifications in social policy (as broadly defined) plus find a high profile 'sponsor' of the subject (different from the SPA President role). More needs to be done for prospective and current students at school, college level, u/g and p/grad on SPA website. […] SPA needs to be more outward looking.'

This suggests that a coordinated professional marketing campaign may be a benefit in order to promote Social Policy to teachers and students.


### 2. Organise the discipline

The survey data suggests that there is an appetite for the SPA to play a more prominent role for the SPA to organise the discipline in a way that facilitates knowledge sharing and more coherence of the subject. When asked what the SPA could do to support the subject, one respondent simply said:

'More active drive to support remaining programmes'

A number highlighted the potential for the SPA to play a stronger role in co-coordinating or leading the subject:

'I think it would be good to have a more systematic approach to supporting the teaching and recruitment of social policy students as at the moment universities work in isolation and in competition for the very small pool of students that exist. '

'Create a platform through which all members can engage in discussions around teaching and recruitment. The [SPA] Exec[utive] could also arrange at least one event around social policy and TEF and the changing HE landscape - there are significant changes coming and the association could get out in front of this a bit more.'

We believe that stronger tracking of developments in Social Policy teaching should be part of the SPA's role here and, as we have flagged at various points in the report, stronger connections between the SPA and HEIs would be beneficial. Further assisting development of the Heads and Convenors of Social Policy group and making greater use of it in the conduct of future audits would allow the SPA to keep a closer track on the evolution of the discipline, and to work more closely with members that require support in making the case for the subject at their HEI .


### 3. Be prepared for the Teaching Excellence Framework

As one of the respondents quoted above notes, the TEF is likely to lead to significant changes in the HE landscape in the near future. Respondents to our survey were asked if they would like to receive training from the SPA; while there was little interest in support from the SPA regarding teaching, workloads, sharing experiences and other topics, there was an enthusiastic response to an event that looked at the implications of the TEF (60% 'yes', 27% 'maybe').

The TEF is likely to have a disciplinary focus at some point in the future. This may be an opportunity for the SPA to connect more effectively with Social Policy academics in their HEIS and to 'bed down' the discipline in TEF in the way that has occurred with the REF and its predecessors. It seems likely that metrics will play a significant role in TEF, meaning there will be advantages to the SPA and its

members in conducting more detailed audits in the future and ensuing official data sources accurately reflect the full scale and extent of the discipline. We have noted some of the problems found within HESA's JACS data; a new coding system is currently being developed (the Higher Education Classification of Subjects – HECoS) and this may present both threats and opportunities for Social Policy that the SPA should keep on top of, lobbying for change where necessary.

### 4. Use future teaching audits to help recruitment of SPA members

Ethical constraints prevent us from detailing variations in SPA membership by institutional affiliation, though we might usefully note that among the HEIs with large Social Policy related groupings (cf. Fig. 2.2) there is a good deal of variation in the extent to which survey respondents indicate they are members of the SPA, ranging from 92% (11/12) in one institution through to just 38% (3/8) in another. Future audits of Social Policy in HEIs could be designed to help target those institutions where membership rates are lower. The survey data also suggest early career researchers are much less likely to be members of the SPA, suggesting that it may be useful for the SPA to consider new ways to boost membership amongst this group.

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# Appendix One: Paper copy of online survey questions

**SECTION A: ABOUT YOU**

1: What is your gender?

> Male

> Female

> Prefer not to say

2: At which university / college do you teach social policy?

3: What is the name of the department in which you teach social policy?

4: How long have you been teaching social policy? (Please include any years teaching as a postgraduate)

> Less than 2 years

> Between 2 and 5 years

> Between 5 and 10 years

> Over 10 years

5: Are you a member of the Social Policy Association (SPA)?

> Yes

> No

> Prefer not to say

**SECTION B: YOUR EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING**

6: Which forms of teaching are you involved in? Please tick all that apply

> Lectures

> Seminars

> One-to-one tutorials

> Online lectures

> Online seminars / tutorials

> Other (please specify)

7: Which of the following methods do you use to assess students? Please tick all that apply

> Exams

> Essays

> Individual presentations

> Group presentations

> Placements

> Posters

> None of these

> Other (please specify)


8: How do you give students feedback on their work? Please tick all that apply

> Written feedback forms

> Online, e.g. through Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)

> Informal verbal feedback

> Annotating / writing notes directly on students' work

> Other (please specify)


9: On average, how many contact hours per week would you say you have had with students this academic year? (By contact hours we mean face-to-face contact, including formal teaching hours and informal office hours.)

> Less than 2 hours

> Between 2 and 4 hours

> Between 4 and 6 hours

> Between 6 and 8 hours

> Between 8 and 10 hours

> More than 10 hours


10: How often do you update the content of the modules you teach?

> More than once a year

> Less than once a year, but at least once every three years

> More than every three years


11: Over the last three years, have you been involved in developing new courses?

> Yes

> No

> This does not apply to me (e.g. if a postgraduate student)


12: What is your job title?



## SECTION C: THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

13: Does your department provide work placements or volunteering for undergraduate students as part of their university course?

> YES – for all students

> YES – for most students

> YES – for some students

> No

> Don't know

> Prefer not to say


14: Roughly how many contact hours have your students receive in an average week this past academic year (2015-16)?

> Less than 2 hours

> Between 2 and 4 hours

> Between 4 and 6 hours

> Between 6 and 8 hours

> Between 8 and 10 hours

> Between 10 and 12 hours

> Over 12 hours

> Don't know

> Prefer not to say


## SECTION D: TRAINING NEEDS AND EXPERIENCES

15: Do you feel you would benefit from training in any of the following areas? Please tick all that apply

> Marking

> Lecturing

> Giving seminars or tutorials

> Presenting

> Managing your workload

> Delivering lectures online

> Sharing experiences with other social policy teachers

> Training in social policy subject areas

> Other (please specify)


16: How would you like to receive training?

> Online

> In paper form

> In person (through courses or seminars)

> Other (please specify)


17: How aware are you of the UK government's proposals for a Teaching Excellence Framework?

> Very aware

> Somewhat aware

> Not at all aware


18: Would you be interested in an event organized by the SPA exploring the implications of the Teaching Excellence Framework for teaching and learning in Social Policy?

> Yes

> No

> Maybe


**SECTION E: SOCIAL POLICY IN THE FUTURE**

19: How effective do you think the following activities might be in increasing the number of students applying to social policy courses in the future?

|  | Very effective | Quite effective | Not very effective | Not at all effective | Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Running a marketing campaign about social policy for school students |  |  |  |  |  |
| Offering more sandwich placements to students |  |  |  |  |  |

| Highlighting the jobs that social policy graduates can go into e.g. in course brochures and websites | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

20: Do you have any thoughts or ideas about how to increase the number of social policy students?

21: In the past five years, has your department been affected by any of the following issues? Please tick all that apply

> Amalgamation with another department

> Closure of the department

> The withdrawal of programmes or courses from the department

> Redundances within the department

> A recruitment freeze within the department

> Don't know

> Prefer not to say

22: In the next two years, how likely do you think it is that your department will be affected by any of the following issues? Please tick all that apply

> Amalgamation with another department

> Closure of the department

> The withdrawal of programmes or courses from the department

> Redundances within the department

> A recruitment freeze within the department

23: Have you seen a change in the number of undergraduate students studying social policy at your institution in the last five years?

> Numbers have risen

> Numbers have fallen

> Numbers have stayed the same

> Don't know

> Prefer not to say

24: Over the next 5 years, do you expect the number of undergraduate students studying social policy at your institution to:

> Rise

> Fall

> Stay the same

> Don't know


25: Have you seen a change in the number of postgraduate students studying social policy at your institution since the change in tuition fees in the past five years?

> Numbers have risen

> Numbers have fallen

> Numbers have stayed the same

> Don't know

> Prefer not to say


26: Over the next 5 years, do you expect the number of postgraduate students studying social policy at your institution to:

> Rise

> Fall

> Stay the same

> Don't know


27: Have you found recruitment for social policy students to be easier or more difficult over the last 5 years? If you have any ideas as to why this might be, please write them in the comment box

> Easier

> More difficult

> About the same

> Don't know


28: Against the context of the changing environment within higher education, do you have any suggestions as to what the Social Policy Association (SPA) could do to support social policy teaching, research and recruitment?