

Championing Pedagogical Scholarship: The ASPIRE Network for Politics and International Relations

Wednesday, 18 June 2025 16:45 (1h 30m)

Teaching tracks have become increasingly common across UK institutions as demand grows for high-quality education. With a focus on pedagogical research and innovation, these career paths actively further the quality, accessibility and experience of student education in higher education. However, career progression and job descriptions can vary widely across institutions, with some academics reporting lower job satisfaction, lower morale, and the potential for perceptions of inferiority when compared to colleagues in more traditional combined posts (Bennett et al. 2018).

In 2024, nine Politics, International Relations and Development colleagues from four UK institutions came together to found the Academic Scholarship in Politics and International Relations Education (ASPIRE) Network for academics on teaching-track career paths in our discipline. ASPIRE seeks to represent and advocate for staff on this career trajectory, influencing academic institutions and policy makers to help shape how the teaching-track path functions, how staff can progress within these roles, and how these positions can be used to innovate in high-quality research and teaching in politics and international relations. Launching formally in June 2025 the network aims to empower members to navigate their career paths more effectively, while also fostering the development of research in teaching and learning. In solidarity with members at different career stages across multiple UK institutions, the network will provide guidance to academic leaders seeking to support and champion the Teaching and Scholarship trajectory in their institutions.

In a period of perpetual political uncertainty and as calls grow to reshape the study of politics, ASPIRE therefore takes up the charge to equip the next generation of educators with the tools and vision to meet future challenges head-on. We believe that by prioritising pedagogical scholarship and diverse perspectives, ASPIRE can contribute to a more adaptable and inclusive future for Politics and International Studies, one that engages critically with the changing political landscape, and which prepares students to do the same. This roundtable will present ASPIRE's mission to BISA members, sharing how the network fosters a platform for mentorship, best practice sharing, and policy advocacy that connects theory to urgent, real-world applications.

Attendees will gain insights into ASPIRE's strategic initiatives, including its upcoming launch, resources for SoTL research, and avenues for cross-institutional collaboration. By convening this roundtable, ASPIRE seeks to connect with BISA's engaged community to reinforce teaching and scholarship as essential pillars of academic practice in Politics and International Studies. Together, we aim to nurture a community ready to support and drive an evolving discipline, grounded in pedagogical excellence and responsive to the complex demands of the next fifty years.

Track Classification: Learning and Teaching Working Group