

Asking ‘is the discipline fit for the future?’ in an unequal UK higher education sector

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This roundtable reflects and draws on the British Academy Shape Observatory’s recent report on Politics and International Relations provisions in UK higher education sector to address the three key questions of this annual convention: Is the discipline fit for the future? What needs to change and how can that change happen? Are we ready for what comes next? Despite increasing demand for taught programmes in Politics and International Relations, the growth of PIR “has been highly uneven across institutions, and Politics and International Relations has decreased as a share of all students over the past 4-5 years.” Focusing on the latter findings, and the decisions that modern universities have had to take in suspending PIR degrees in recent years as a result of low recruitment numbers, this roundtable will discuss the imbalances of PIR’s prosperity and the implications of this unevenness for the future of International Studies. The roundtable will raise questions about access to subjects within International Studies, the reproduction of systematic inequalities in the Higher Education sector, and importantly the impact of the uneven growth of International Studies for Students entering the field, and for international relations more widely.

How will International Studies rise to the global challenges of the coming decades and what kind of new thinking, methods and approaches to research will International Studies develop given that these subjects may in the future, only be taught in Russell Group Universities? How will the barriers to engaging and participating in International Studies affect the pluralism and diversity of International Studies and in this context, how apt/equipped is PIR to address issues of systemic inequality, racism, misogyny, transphobia? This roundtable will combine diverse experiences in of researchers and teachers of international studies across institutions in the UK sector to bring to light a vital issue for the future of International Studies, yet one that remains too often silent.

Track Classification: Learning and Teaching Working Group