Disciplinary Barriers between the Social Sciences and Humanities

National Report on the UK

Gabriele Griffin, with Pam Medhurst and Trish Green

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Glossary of terms

Acronym	Full Title	Explanation
AHRB	Arts and Humanities Research Board	primary source of Humanities research funding
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council	primary source of Social Sciences research funding
BA	British Academy	Funds both Humanities and Social Sciences research but with lower funding ceilings than the research boards/councils
'A' level	Advanced level	Final school-leaving examination, usually in 3-4 subjects, aged 17, equivalent to *Abitur* or *Baccalaureate*
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education	Intermediate school exam, usually in 5-6 subjects, taken aged 14-16, replaced 'O' levels in the 1990s
'O' level	Ordinary level	Intermediate school exam, usually in 5-6 subjects, taken aged 14-16, equivalent to *mittlere Reife*, now replaced by GCSEs
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification	Offers vocational qualifications in various vocations, often delivered in colleges of further education
BA	Bachelor of Arts	First degree (undergraduate), awarded in Humanities and some Social Sciences subjects
BSc	Bachelor of Science	First degree (undergraduate) awarded in some Social Sciences (quantitatively oriented) and Science subjects
MA	Master of Arts	Postgraduate degree awarded in Humanities and some Social Sciences subjects
MSc	Master of Science	Postgraduate degree awarded in some Social Sciences (quantitatively oriented) and Science subjects
PhD	Doctorate in Philosophy	Highest postgraduate degree in the UK (there is no *Habilitation*)
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council of England	Regulates higher education and provides higher education funding in England
SHEFC	Scottish Higher Education Funding Council	Regulates higher education and provides higher education funding in Scotland
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council of Wales	Regulates higher education and provides higher education funding in Wales
HEI	higher education institution	Refers to all higher education providers including universities and colleges of higher education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate	Quality assurance body which pre-dated the QAA and was responsible for non-university higher-education provision before 1992 (e.g. for polytechnics and colleges of further/higher education)

QAA	Quality Assurance Agency	Provides quality assurance services to higher education including training and delivery for the TQA
TQA	Teaching Quality Assessment	Recurrent cycle of discipline-based quality assessment of the teaching provision in a given discipline across all HEIs
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise	Recurrent cycle of discipline- and individual-researcher based assessment of research outputs across all HEIs
UoA	Unit of Assessment	Discipline-based unit in the RAE to which academics are returned for assessment
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service	National centralized system through which school leavers apply for admission to HEIs
Mature student		Student over the age of 21 (21 is considered the 'normal' university leaving age after the first degree BA/BSc)
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency	Government-funded statistics agency for higher education (www.hesa.ac.uk), set up in 1993, succeeding the UGC = University Grants Committee
DfES	Department for Education and Skills	National ministry charged with implementing governmental education policy
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationary Office	Publisher of governmental reports.

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Appendix 1

References

Introduction

University education in the UK was, until the early 1980s, an elite education system into which only a small fraction of the eligible population entered. The percentage of the age-group eligible to enter university that did go to university rose throughout the twentieth century, from 0.8% in 1900 to 4.0 in 1962, and then to approximately 30% by the late 1990s (Halsey 2000: 226-7). 'In 1996/97 there were 177 higher education institutions (of which 115 are universities) in the United Kingdom. On 1 December 1996 almost 1.8 million students [out of a total population of about 59.6 million[1]] attended these universities and colleges' (Halsey, 2000: 222). Halsey therefore argues that

> the twentieth century has been the first in which further and higher education have become recognized as a democratic right of citizenship. Expansion has accordingly been the reformist watchword, and tertiary [education] systems have gradually moved from a highly restricted binary organization along mainly class and sex lines (the university versus the technical college and 'night school') towards the American conception of a universal and co-educational system covering both universities and community colleges. (2000: 222)

Halsey characterizes the British higher education system as one of restricted growth between 1900-1963, the binary phase between 1964 and 1992, and mass tertiary education from 1992 until the present. The latter was inaugurated by the Higher Education Act of 1992 which granted university status to all polytechnics (equivalent to *Fachhochschulen* in Germany) and some colleges of higher education. The institutions that were made into universities in 1992 became known as the 'new' universities.

Table 1. The expansion of universities* in Britain, 1962-1997

1962	31 universities
1964	44 universities
1997	115 universities

* excludes all institutions delivering higher education other than universities
Source: based on Halsey 2000.

This expansion in university numbers was matched by a rise in higher education full-time student numbers as Tables 2 and 3, disaggregated by gender, show:

Table 2. Higher education – full-time UK male students (000s)

	1970-1	1980-1	1990-1	1995-6	1997-8
Total ft UK male students*	254.2	277.7	336.6	464.9	457.9
By age:					
18 or under	28.7	50.3	198.7	69.1	77.8
19-20	99.0	117.8		180.9	186.2
21-24	104.6	95.6	115.5	173.0	166.9
25 and over	42.0	54.5	71.0	119.6	114.7

* Figures do not add up as totals include overseas students as well.
Source: adapted from Halsey 2000.

[1] Population figure for 2003, www.statistics.gov.uk, accessed 3/1/2005.

Table 3. Higher education – full-time UK female students (000s)

	1970-1	1980-1	1990-1	1995-6	1997-8
Total ft UK female students	178.2	203.9	303.5	475.3	509.2
By age:					
18 or under	30.4	41.6	186.2	74.1	88.3
19-20	82.3	89.7		189.3	206.2
21-24	44.5	53.5	90.7	158.5	165.0
25 and over	25.3	31.5	64.3	114.8	125.9

* Figures do not add up as totals include overseas students as well.
Source: adapted from Halsey 2000.

Tables 1 and 2 show that full-time student numbers rose dramatically between 1970-1 and 1997-8, doubling in the decade between 1980-1 and 1990-1, and rising again dramatically during the 1990s in which decade female full-time higher education participation – which had started from a lower base than that of men in the 1970s – outstripped that of men.

Those who progressed from school into university have been and to this day are virtually guaranteed to gain their first degree, with failure rates in exams in all subjects normally lower than 5%.[2] There is thus no tradition in the UK - as is more common in other European countries such as France, Italy and Germany - of mass higher education allowing universal university entry but then 'gate-keeping' through high failure or drop-out rates once university courses has been entered; 'gate-keeping' occurs at school in the transition from GCSEs to 'A' levels.

The secondary school system in the UK (age 11 and beyond; see Appendix 1 for details) has two major centralized and compulsory examination points: GCSEs,[3] and 'A' levels. The GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) corresponds to the German *mittlere Reife* but unlike in Germany, exams are set centrally by region of the UK (Scotland, Wales, England, Northern Ireland) by so-called exam boards of which there are several, and individual schools choose which one to submit their pupils to. Schools work towards curricula that reflect these exam boards' examination papers. Specialization in the British education system starts early; there is no requirement for pupils to take a language, a social science, a natural science etc. and to acquire a broad-based education. Since the 1980s there has been a strong emphasis on pupils' need to master English and maths but beyond that there is little sense of the need for an all-round education. Instead, there is a strong and varied history in the UK of 'streaming' pupils according to assumed ability, with pervasive myths such as only the very best pupils being able to do languages etc. The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced the National Curriculum (NC) for schools in an effort to standardize school provision across the UK. The NC applies to all children aged 5 – 16 in state-maintained schools. It has four so-called 'key stages': key stages 1 and 2 in primary school, and key stages 3 and 4 in secondary school. The core subjects are English, maths and science

[2] Failure rates (failing courses through not passing the assessment) need to be distinguished from drop-out rates (leaving courses without completing). Drop-out rates in the UK have risen over the past fifteen years or so as a function of multiple factors including increasing financial pressures on students, more admittance of non-standard entrants who find the academic environment alien, less conviction among students that the acquisition of a degree will lead to better employment opportunities etc. In general, drop-out rates vary from course to course and institution to institution; they are roughly in the range 5-20%, and anything above 20% is considered highly alarming and requiring remedial action (see www.thes.co.uk/statistics).

[3] School pupils take the GCSE in individual subjects so they receive a GCSE in English, or in Sociology etc.

(http://www.teachernet.gov.uk accessed 11/1/2005). The NC 'sets out a clear, full and statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils. It determines the content of what will be taught, and sets attainment targets for learning'. The attainment targets (AT) detail the 'knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different abilities and levels of maturity are expected to have by the end of each key stage' (http://www.nc.uk.net/nc_resources/html/about_NC.shtml accessed 11/1/2005).
From age 16 (the point of the *mittlere Reife* in Germany) those who stay on in school to take 'A' (= Advanced) Levels – the equivalent of the German *Abitur* or the French *baccalaureate* - frequently study no more than three subjects of their choice (although that is beginning to change and increasing numbers of pupils take 4 or 5 subjects). It is in these three, or in exceptional though increasing numbers of cases four, subjects that they take 'A' levels, and provided their grades are satisfactory they can progress to university.

Entrance requirements into university are set by the individual universities, and typically combine a numerical dimension (the entrant's school or other educational grades) and a subjective impressionistic dimension (references by the headmaster of the school; the pupil's account of his or her interests or hobbies, future plans, and why they want to attend the particular university they have applied to, and, traditionally, an interview). In the year before they enter university, school leavers apply to up to six universities of their choice via UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service), entering their predicted exam grades on a form. Traditionally, school leavers would then be called for interview (adding to the subjective dimension of the admissions process) and attend an 'open day' at the universities of their choice[4] where they would be shown around the institution, meet staff, be told about the courses etc. Universities would then offer pupils places of study conditional upon their achieving a particular set of grades in their 'A' Levels, and if these grades were actually achieved, the pupil would be able to go to the university in question. Since many, however, either do better or worse than predicted, in late August every year, once exam results are published (which happens on the same day across the whole country), the system of Clearing (in the 1980s and early 1990s usually staffed by academics, since then increasingly staffed by administrators) begins whereby pupils negotiate with universities on the basis of the results they actually achieved which one they will go to. This process is mostly done by telephone and universities establish whole telephone banks for the period (usually lasting about 7-10 days during late August/early September) of Clearing. Since the mid-1980s, when the government sought to widen participation in higher education and encouraged universities to admit so-called non-standard entrants (for example 'mature' students with no or low school qualifications, but with professional backgrounds, work or other experiences that might have prepared them to take a degree), a dual[5] system of admissions into higher education has emerged, whereby standard undergraduate entrants (18-year olds coming straight from school) are increasingly admitted to university on the basis of their paperwork only, whilst interviewing on an individual basis is still common for mature students, non-standard entrants of all kinds to undergraduate degrees, and postgraduate students.

Higher education in the UK is streamlined so that undergraduate students are examined compulsorily every year (this can be done through coursework and/or exams; at undergraduate level it is mostly a mixture of the two; at postgraduate level it tends to be by

[4] Both interviews and open days for standard entrants have been held less frequently since the early 1990s since rising numbers of applicants make this a labour-intensive task.
[5] Strictly speaking, there are more than two ways of entering university. Oxford and Cambridge universities, for example, have their own entrance examination systems that function as an additional mode of entry. We only discuss the most common forms of entry here.

coursework only). In consequence, all degrees have a regulated length of study, and exceeding that period (normally 3 years full-time at undergraduate level) is very unusual. Students may study full- or part-time at both under- and postgraduate level. However, the vast majority of students at undergraduate level study full-time whereas the majority of students at postgraduate level study part-time. This is a function of cost; at undergraduate level until 2002 home students (as opposed to overseas students) were not normally charged fees, and usually had some form of maintenance grant, making full-time study the preferred - as financially feasible - option. In addition, the elite education system which enabled such local-government-provided grants[6] went hand in hand with a culture of studying away from one's home town. Entry into university for many thus became the first and final break away from the family home as Table 4 dramatically indicates:

Table 4. Term-time residence of full-time university students, 1920-80, Great Britain (%)

Year	In colleges or halls of residence			In lodgings			At home		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
1920-1	27.9	4.2	10.2	22.4	43.0	37.5	49.7	52.8	52.0
1929-30	35.9	20.6	24.9	16.5	39.4	32.9	47.6	40.0	42.1
1938-9	37.3	21.4	25.1	19.2	37.5	33.2	43.5	41.1	41.7
1950-1	38.9	20.0	24.3	28.4	42.3	39.1	32.7	37.7	36.6
1960-1	39.3	23.5	27.4	39.7	54.3	50.7	21.0	22.2	21.9
1971-2	41.4	37.9	39.7	40.2	43.1	41.7	15.9	16.7	16.3
1979-80	46.4	46.4	46.4	34.1	35.8	35.0	15.0	14.1	14.6

Source: Halsey 2000: 239.

The increasing tendency, particularly after the Second World War, of undergraduates to study away from home, generated, *inter alia*, mobility among the professional classes, and moving jobs in order to gain promotion, for example, has been a common pattern among professionals who may move institutions and/or geographic region every three years in the first 10 years or so of their career. The practice of studying away from home continues as the dominant model of higher education for full-time young undergraduates. In contrast, both part-time and mature students tend to come from within the vicinity of the university they attend. The pattern of studying away from home may be set to change under the new fee regime coming into force in 2006 when universities will be allowed to charge up to £3000 per year tuition fees, thus increasing the financial burden of studying both on those who study and on their parents, and making the expense of studying away from home potentially less feasible.

As Tables 5 and 6 below indicate throughout the 20th century arts or humanities disciplines have been popular subjects as have been the social sciences (once the latter began to make an appearance).[7]

[6] Grants were usually paid by the local education authority of the town where the student had gone to school.
[7] Data for student numbers in the social sciences began to appear from the 1950s (Halsey 2000: 237). Economics was included in arts until 1960 and after that in social studies (Halsey 2000: 236).

Table 5. Full-time students by type of faculty 1960-82, Great Britain (%)

	1960-1		1971-2		1981-2	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Arts (incl. theology, fine art, music, education)	52.7	25.4	40.8	15.3	37.3	14.6
Social Studies (incl. social, administrative and business studies)	9.4	11.5	22.6	21.0	25.1	22.5
Pure science	21.7	25.5	22.1	28.5	19.4	26.0
Medicine (incl. health and dentistry)	13.6	14.5	10.8	9.7	12.0	10.5
Technology (incl. engineering, applied chemistry, etc)	1.3	19.5	2.6	23.9	4.3	24.2
Agriculture (incl. forestry, horticulture, veterinary sciences)	1.3	3.6	1.1	1.5	1.9	2.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
	26369	81330	21903	45438	100874	152497

Source: based on Halsey 2000: 238.

Table 6. Full-time students by type of faculty 1981/82 and 1990/91

1981-2	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Admin., business, social studies	41309	22.3	28770	24.9
Language, literature, area studies	11855	6.4	23722	20.6
Arts, other than language	12089	6.5	13354	11.6
1990-1	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Social studies	27128	13.6	24147	15.8
Languages, related studies	11093	5.6	24593	16.1
Humanities	11106	5.6	9784	6.4
Creative arts	1987	1.0	2935	1.9
Multi-disciplinary studies	20114	10.1	20100	13.1

Source: based on Halsey 2000: 238.

Tables 5 and 6 highlight the gendered nature of discipline choices but they also, and importantly, in the non-comparability of their subject divisions, indicate changes in disciplinary bases in universities during the course of the 20th century. As Halsey states:

> In 1928, 123 subjects were distinguished; a quarter of a century later there were 382. . . In the second half of the century and especially with the sudden expansion of the term 'university' in 1992, the spread of vocationally oriented studies has proceeded apace. Business, computing, accounting and media studies now loom large; nursing and studies allied to medicine have been added. (Halsey 2000: 237)

Such expansion of subjects went together with an increasing sub-division of disciplines: 'the number of branches of engineering[, for example, rose] from 7 to 22' (Halsey 2000: 236).

This suggests the mobility and malleability of disciplines, a key factor in considering the possibilities for interdisciplinarity and disciplinary shifts.

Although the expansion of higher education and the rise in student numbers has also resulted in greater investment in higher education, overall funding per student has declined since the mid-1970s (Halsey 2000: 249). Universities have two main sources of income: teaching and research. Of these teaching income which comes in the form of a funding council (government) grant is by far the most important and research income comes second. All other sources of income are minor (see Table 10 in section 2.1). Thus, 'Of the major sources of income received by institutions [in 2002-3], 6.1 billion came from funding council grants, 3.7 billion from tuition fees and education grants and contracts and 2.6 billion from research grants and contracts.' (www.thes.co.uk, accessed 8/1/2005; figures published in *The Times Higher*, 11 June 2004.) In Table 7 we provide income figures for the universities whose infrastructural definition of Social Sciences and Humanities we consider in section 2. These figures show the huge discrepancy in sources of income between so-called 'old' and 'new' universities, with old universities earning significantly more income from research than new universities. This difference is important because it indicates that research as an income source has different meanings in different universities. Old universities such as Cambridge, London, or Manchester rely much more heavily on research income than 'new' universities such as Portsmouth or Westminster. Correspondingly, the need to do well in the Research Assessment Exercise – itself a discipline-driven assessment (see section 4.1) – is much greater in 'old' higher education institutions than in 'new' ones. Thus staff in 'old' universities are required to, and indeed do (Table 8), generate much more research income than staff in 'new' universities.

Table 8. Research income as a ratio of academic staff costs in selected UK universities
Bang for buck

How much research income universities generate per academic costs

Institution	Ratio
University of London (Institutes and activities)	2.35
Cardiff University	1.83
The University of Cambridge	1.81
The University of Edinburgh	1.60
The University of Glasgow	1.44
University of Manchester	1.42
Sheffield Hallam University	0.82
The University of Hull	0.59
The University of Westminster	0.49
The University of Portsmouth	0.43

Original data source: HESA performance indicators 2002-03. Published in *The Times Higher*, October 1 2004.
Source: adapted from www.thes.co.uk, accessed 8/1/2005.

Table 8. Funding Allocations 1997-8 in selected English HEIs (excludes Scottish and Welsh HEIs)

Institution	1 MASN	2 Total T funding	3 Total R funding	4 Moderation of teaching & research	5 Non formula funding	6 Total grant 97/98	7 % change against 96/97	8 Ranking by % change
Universities								
University of Cambridge	9,858	39,608,478	89,779,230	0	8,301,203	81,663,497	3.28%	21
University of Hull	5,886	17,720,562	5,556,202	290,300	451,628	24,276,835	-2.23%	82
University of London	2,976	24,890,041	11,733,019	9,250,749	13,832,424	62,068,812	2.12%	32
University of Manchester	12,902	46,155,066	67,441,414	4,724,336	2,415,076	78,408,254	-1.93%	80
University of Portsmouth	9,245	28,432,280	2,767,015	0	429,110	32,042,590	1.53%	42
Sheffield Hallam University	13,151	40,489,635	2,322,649	0	895,542	44,297,657	1.64%	40
University of Westminster	7,011	32,670,912	1,350,925	0	4,602,633	39,100,402	1.18%	49

Key

1. Maximum Aggregate Student Number

2. Total Teaching Funding

3. Total Research Funding

4. Transitional adjustment to teaching and research funding

5. London weighting, museums, libraries and minority subjects, special funding for collaborative research projects

6. Total Grant for 1997-98. This includes non-formula funding and non-consolidated core funds in addition to the Formula Recurrent Grant

7. Percentage change in Total Grant by comparison with 1996-97

8. Rank order (highest first) within category (University/College of Higher Education/College of Further Education) by percentage change in Total Grant

Source: adapted from www.thes.co.uk, accessed 7/1/2005.

1. The relationship between state and education

Unlike universities in France and in Germany, the day-to-day business of universities in the UK is not under the direct control of the state (cf Musselin 1997). By this we mean that although British universities are broadly regulated by governmental education acts in terms of the student numbers they admit and the funding they receive, and although they are publicly funded by the HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council of England), SHEFC (Scottish Higher Education Funding council) and the HEFCW (Higher Education Funding Council for Wales) respectively, and private universities are the rare exception (Buckingham University is the only private university), the state does not intervene directly in the day-to-day business of the university through, for instance, approving professorships as happens in Germany, or through approving the curriculum as occurs in France. Rather, universities in the UK are highly autonomous and can, for example, move to change the curricula of their courses, and indeed abolish or establish degree courses at under- and at postgraduate level as they see fit, and to a timescale determined, in the case of closing courses, only by their legal obligations to deliver to students the programme the students enrolled for. Since full-time undergraduate degrees normally last three years (in exceptional cases such as language courses which might include a year abroad this can be four years), an undergraduate degree course can be closed within three years from first deciding that this should be done. Similarly, the state does not except in very rare and highly prestigious cases (Regius professorships, appointed by the Queen, of which there are very few) intervene in the appointment processes of universities so that such processes are basically internal to universities and in part for that reason are quite attenuated, once a university has decided to make an appointment (which can occur at any time of the year; jobs are conventionally advertised in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* which is published every Friday, and in *The Guardian* on Tuesdays). The average time from point of advertising a post to someone being in place is between 6 months and 1 year, with part of that time being determined by the fact that academics who are already in a post and want to move to another one usually have to give at least three months' notice.

Although there is no direct interference by the state in the day-to-day running of the universities, higher education is broadly regulated by the state through higher education acts which are then implemented by the governmental Department for Education and Skills (DfES). That Department's name – which has changed under successive governments – is itself indicative of the Department's current focus on both education in general, and on vocationally-oriented training. Many significant changes to higher education in the UK have been instituted following reports from committees set up by the government for a limited period of time to investigate particular issues, then report back on these and make recommendations for change. Of these the most important ones have been for the current situation in British higher education are the so-called Robbins Report of 1963, the Dearing Report of 1997, and the Roberts Report of 2001 (published 2002).[8] Whereas the Robbins and the Dearing Report were concerned with reviewing higher education in general in the light of demographic and economic changes, and suggesting the parameters for higher education over the coming decades, the Roberts Report[9] was concerned with the supply of science and engineering skills in the UK. It is expressive of the explicit links between economic drivers (growth, productivity) and education that govern UK higher education policy. The Robbins

[8] These reports are named after the men who chaired the committees responsible for the reports.
[9] The Roberts Report can be downloaded from www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/Documents.

Report was concerned with the expansion of higher education but, as Halsey (2000) indicates that expansion was significantly under-estimated by Robbins. Halsey also shows that that expansion was importantly related to a diversification of 'the traditional pattern of higher education – the full-time male undergraduate in a university' (2000: 235) to include rapidly rising numbers of women and of part-time students. Dearing reported on the growing financial strains universities were facing given the increase in student numbers, the increasing demands for research, and the impact of decades of under-funding in higher education at all levels including research resources. This report in part set in train a governmental review into the funding of universities which has resulted in far-reaching changes in both the funding of teaching and the funding of research in UK higher education, including, most controversially, the introduction of tuition fees (up to £3000 per annum) from 2006. These changes are still being implemented and their long-term effects cannot be predicted. They confirm, however, the British focus on market orientation, value for money, and public accountability.

One aspect of these changes is the partly EU-driven governmental target of 50% higher education participation among relevant age cohorts by the year 2010. At present that figure stands at around 30%, and there is doubt that the government's target will be reached. The underlying reason for this target is the notion that the UK, like so many north-western countries, cannot compete with the rest of the world regarding labour costs ('someone else can always produce it more cheaply') and must therefore create a knowledge and skills base (the 'knowledge-based society') that will be competitive in terms of its special/ist expertise. It is the government's current intention to achieve this target predominantly through encouraging ore people to go onto so-called Foundation Degrees, two-year pre-undergraduate degrees that can be 'topped up' to a full first degree. The problem is that such degrees do not exist within the Bologna model, and put the UK out of step with the rest of Europe. The establishment of Foundation degrees which began at the turn of the century has been slow and not much taken up, especially in the 'old' universities which are less ready in creating vocational and/or applied degrees. To encourage compliance the government, through the higher education funding councils, creates financial incentives (additional funding or financial penalties). In so far as universities respond to these by altering their menu of courses, by encouraging diverse types of students (through changing admissions criteria etc), by creating new areas of expertise or closing down existent areas, they are, of course, subject to government intervention, and thus not independent of their funders.

In December 2003 the government established the Research Forum, a body set up to investigate the relationship between teaching and research, on the one hand, and collaboration among researchers across institutions on the other. This Forum met monthly between January and July 2004, and then offered advice to ministers on teaching and research. One of the chief preoccupations of governmental policy for higher education has been the question of how to deal with the chronic under-funding from which higher education has suffered in the last thirty years or so. As indicated in section 2.1, the Research Assessment Exercise was set up to find a way of distributing scarce resource (= limited research funding) to support the best research in the UK. Until the RAE 2001, this exercise operated a funding model in which the best research (that ranked highest) got the most funding and the least prestigious research (that ranked low – the lowest ranked research never received funding) least. Until 2001 funding had become increasingly concentrated at the top end of the grades (3-5) but in 2001 it became clear that the government – given the limited amount of resource and the simultaneous rise in research performance across the HE sector – would be unable to fund anything but top-ranking research. At present, discussions about

how to distribute research funding in the RAE2008 are still ongoing. It is clear that only those judged to produce the very best research will gain any funding. The long-term implications of this for research in the UK are yet to be seen.

2. Infrastructural definitions of social sciences and humanities

2.1 Higher education

In order to understand how universities in the UK define Humanities and Social Sciences we considered 10 universities (out of 115 – see the introduction of this report). They were the universities of Edinburgh; Glasgow; Cardiff; Hull; Manchester; Sheffield Hallam; Westminster (in London); Portsmouth; Cambridge; and London. These universities have very varied histories and structures. They share the provision of a large range of subjects across the humanities, social sciences, and science and technology, although not all universities cover all disciplines. Edinburgh and Glasgow are so-called 'old' universities in Scotland (that is they were universities before the 1992 incorporation of polytechnics into the university sector through the 1992 Higher Education Act). Cardiff, too, located in Wales, is an 'old' university. Manchester and Sheffield universities are large, well-endowed 'old' civic universities. In contrast, Sheffield Hallam, Westminster, and Portsmouth on the south coast of England, are 'new' (= post-1992) universities, former polytechnics that became universities in 1992. Finally, Cambridge and London are two of the oldest universities in England and share a structure unlike any of the other universities above in that they are divided into colleges which in turn operate like universities but under a centralized examination system. Thus the University of London consists of 'colleges' such as King's College, London, Imperial College, London, University College, London etc., all of which are large institutions covering a vast range of subject areas. The same is true for Cambridge, and, indeed, for Oxford.

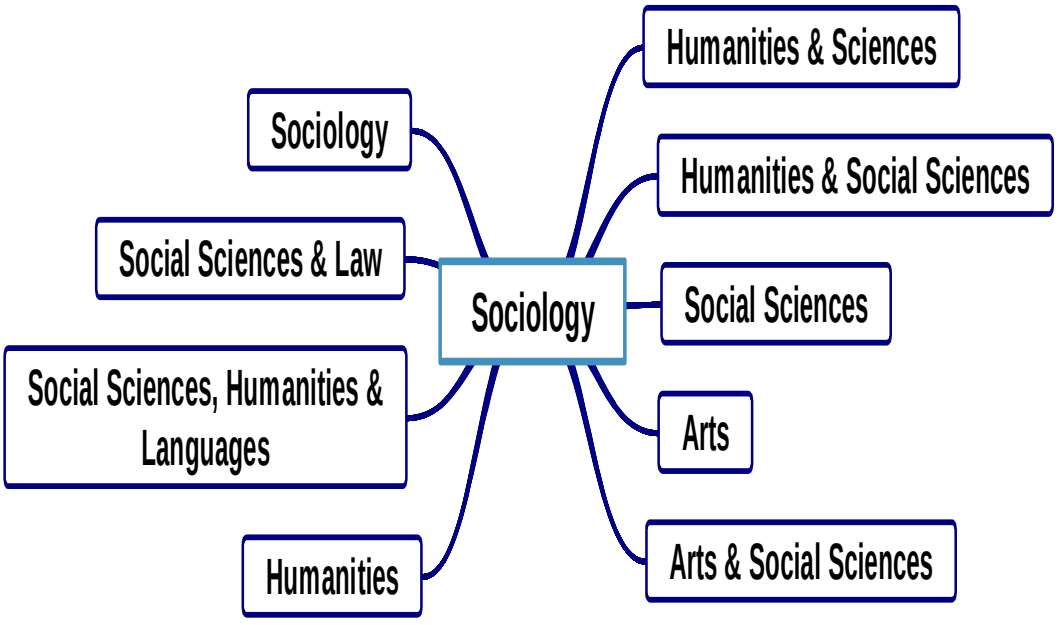
To understand the infrastructural definitions of the Humanities and Social Sciences in these institutions, we decided to look at how three subjects were placed within these universities' structures, two core subjects within the Humanities and Social Sciences, and one subject that straddles the Humanities and the Social Sciences. As core disciplines we chose 'English', the most widely taught subject in the Humanities, and 'Sociology' for the Social Sciences. 'History' which as we shall indicate in section 3.2 below may be funded for research purposes both by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) and by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) since it covers both Humanities and the socio-economic fields, was the subject we chose that could be placed either in the Social Sciences or the Humanities. We did not consider Women's or Gender Studies since it does not exist as separate departments in the UK although there are quite a large number of separate (research) centres in Women's/Gender Studies. For the most part these produce interdisciplinary courses but for accounting purposes they are most frequently embedded in the Social Sciences. This is the case at the universities of York, Leeds, Manchester, Lancaster and Kent, for example. Exceptions exist at the University of Hull where interdisciplinary Gender

Studies with both Humanities and Social Sciences components is housed in Humanities, and at Swansea University in Wales where new courses in Cultural Gender Studies have been established in 2003-4.

Part of the key to where subjects are positioned within university structures is the age of the university itself. Since Humanities disciplines were taught before Social Sciences subjects – the latter only surfaced in the 1960s as discrete formations in British universities – Sociology and History are more likely to be found under 'Humanities' than Humanities subjects under the Social Sciences. Universities that were built as part of the expansion of higher education in the 1960s and 1970s (such as Warwick University which we do not consider here) were more likely to start life with Humanities and Social Science faculties in place than older universities such as London, Cambridge or Edinburgh that started life with the equivalent of Humanities subjects only.

The following three figures (1-3) show the placement of the subjects Sociology, English and History in the faculties or schools[10].

Fig. 1 The placing of 'Sociology' within university academic structures



[10] Traditionally universities were divided into faculties and departments. In the last two decades of the 20th century the use of the term 'schools' to refer to entities larger than a department but smaller than a faculty came into use, and structurally universities may now have (in descending order of size) faculties, schools, and departments. However, many universities operate a two-structure system, with either faculties and schools, or faculties and departments, or schools and departments only. Some have all three. Schools may be single-subject (as is the case at the Universities of East Anglia and Sussex), or multi-subject (as is the case at Leeds Metropolitan University and Kingston University). Departments are most commonly single-discipline-based. Faculties house multiple subjects. They can still be of varying size from one university to the next.

Fig. 2 The placing of ‘English’ within university academic structures

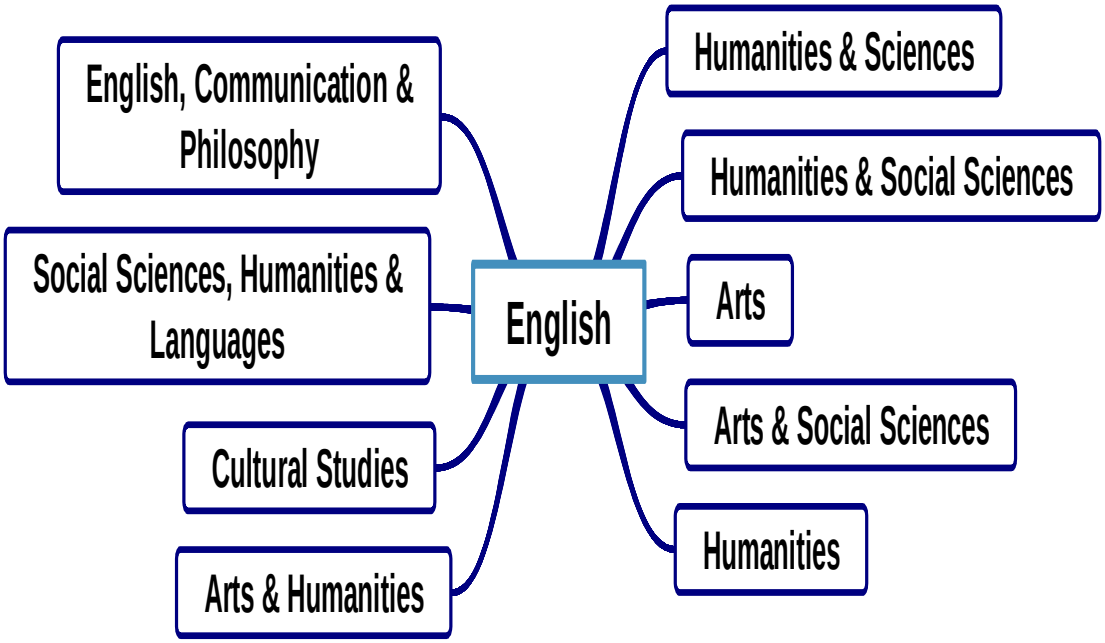
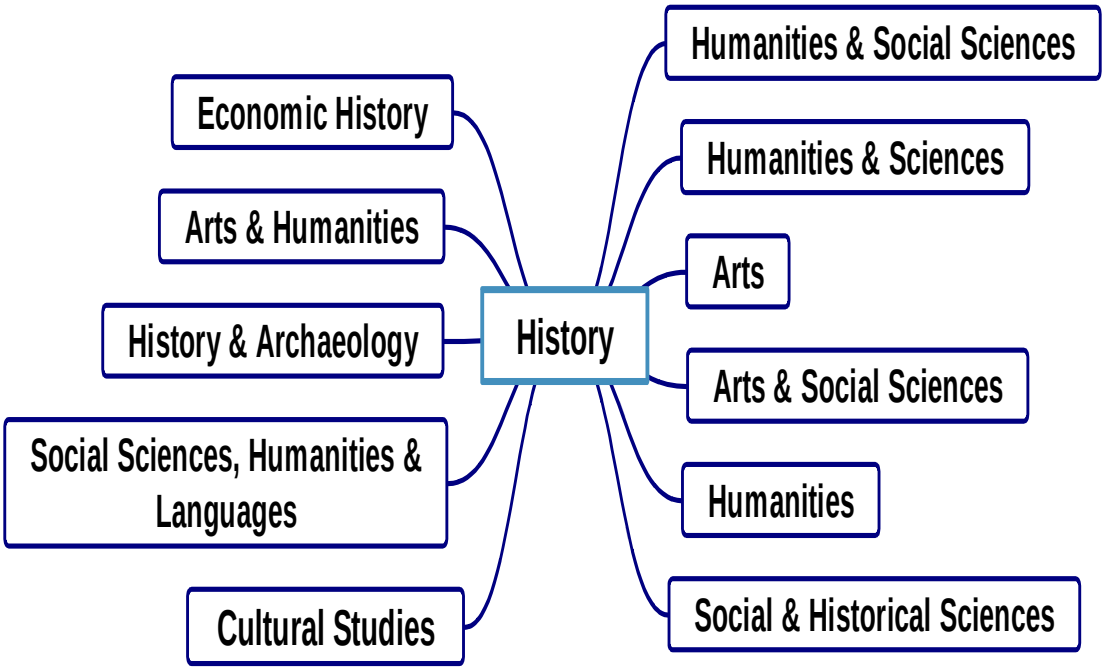


Fig. 3 The placing of ‘History’ within university academic structures



Figures 1-3 show that each of the ten universities we looked at has its own ways of structuring its disciplines, with no overlap in nine out of ten cases regarding the placement of English and Sociology, and no overlap at all as regards the ten universities where History is concerned. This means that universities name faculties/schools and place disciplines according to internal principles rather than in line with some nationally validated structure. English may thus be part of a Faculty of Arts; or of Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages; or of Cultural Studies. Sociology might also find itself part of the Arts; or of Humanities; or of Social Sciences and Law. It is likely that if one included a wider spread of institutions, greater convergence of placement of disciplines would be achieved. However, the key finding to highlight is that the structuring of disciplines into faculties and schools at British universities does not follow a narrow national pattern but is instead determined by the histories of the institutions concerned, the ways in which they configure funding arrangements, the number of core staff in a given discipline and other such matters which are internal and specific to the institution.

Such possibilities for diversity allow potentially for interdisciplinarity and cross-disciplinary collaboration. However, in practice universities are constrained in these matters by the ways in which research funding as well as teaching quality and research assessments exercises (see section 4.1 of this report) are carried out since these proceed on a discipline basis. As we shall see in section 2.2 below, universities that rely on research funding as a significant proportion of their core funding may find themselves more constrained in how they structure their academic provision since they need to map their research closely onto the disciplines in which they submit their staff.

2.2 Research Funding

Social Sciences and Humanities research funding is undertaken in the first instance by three bodies: one research board, one research council, and the British Academy. The ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) caters for the social sciences;[11] the AHRB (Arts and Humanities Research Board, destined to become a research council in May 2005 on a par with the other research councils in Britain) funds arts and humanities research.[12] There is thus, on the surface, a clear division between the two domains.[13] However, as Table 9 shows, both councils recognize that there are disciplines for which they have shared responsibility.

[11] www.esrc.ac.uk
[12] www.ahrb.ac.uk
[13] This is augmented by the fact that there are a number of foundations and trusts that provide significant funding for research carried out in universities, notably the Nuffield Foundation, the Rowntree Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, and the Wellcome Trust. These have their own agendas, not strictly driven by disciplinary concerns. Some such as the Leverhulme Trust provide funding for humanities research in the area of Chinese Studies and Ancient History, for example. Others such as Nuffield and Rowntree have policy-related agendas, and support research designed to improve the welfare of disadvantaged groups.

Table 9. AHRB and ESRC subject panels and disciplines shared between the two

AHRB	SHARED DISCIPLINES	ESRC
Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology	Anthropology	Area Studies and Development
Visual Arts and Media: Practice, History and Theory	Area Studies	Economics
English Language and Literature	Communications, Cultural and Media Studies	Economic and Social History
Medieval and Modern History	Geography	Education
Modern languages and Linguistics	History	Human Geography
Librarianship, Information and Museum Studies	International Relations	Linguistics
Music and Performing Arts	Librarianship and Information Science	Management and Business Studies
Philosophy, Law and Religious Studies	Linguistics	Planning, Environmental Studies and Housing Studies
	Law	Politics Science, International Studies and International Relations
		Psychology and Cognitive Science
		Interdisciplinary Studies in Science, Technology and Innovation
		Social Anthropology
		Social Policy, Social Work and Health Studies
		Socio-legal Studies and Criminology
		Sociology
		Statistics, Research Methods and Computing as applied to the Social Sciences

Sources: Joint AHRB ESRC Statement on Subject Coverage www.ahrb.ac.uk; www.esrc.ac.uk.

The AHRB supports work that 'seeks to improve or enhance or develop creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding in the artistic and creative activities, history, languages, literatures and systems of thought and belief of human beings, both past and present' but also highlights that 'no precise definition of the subject domain of the arts and humanities is possible. There are inevitable overlaps and border territories that are shared with other award-making bodies, especially the Research Councils' (www.ahrb.ac.uk, accessed 6/7/2004). The ESRC on the other hand state that their mission is to 'promote and support. . . high quality basic, strategic and applied research and related postgraduate training in the social sciences. . . thereby contributing to the economic competitiveness of the United Kingdom, the effectiveness of public services and policy, and the quality of life; to provide advice on, and disseminate knowledge and promote public understanding of, the social sciences.' (www.esrc.ac.uk, accessed 29/11/2004).

To address the issue of disciplines that come under the joint responsibility of the two research councils they have issued a joint statement[14] in which they declare that they 'wish to ensure that no application falls into the gap between the two bodies' and both support work which includes elements 'that might plausibly have been supported by the other body'.

[14] www.ahrb.ac.uk, accessed 6/7/2004. All subsequent references to the joint statement refer to the same source.

They argue that funding research in areas of overlap alleviates the 'need for applicants to artificially seek to focus their proposals in one area or the other', and think that they 'may develop jointly-funded schemes or programmes for the support of research' to foster and support work which 'transcends and brings together the interests' of researchers in the Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities.[15]

In order to clarify under what circumstances researchers in disciplines shared by the AHRB and the ESRC apply to one rather than the other, they offer the following guidance on their websites:

- **Anthropology.** ESRC is the primary funding body for Anthropology. There are overlaps with the AHRB in areas relating, for example, to creative and performing arts; history; languages; law; literature; religious studies.
- **Area Studies.** The AHRB and the ESRC share responsibilities for work that may come under the designation of area studies. Which of the two bodies is the more appropriate depends on whether the research questions or problems to be addressed, the wider context in which those questions or problems are located, as well as the methodologies to be adopted, can most plausibly be located in the arts and humanities on the one hand, or the social sciences on the other.
- **Communications, Cultural and Media Studies.** As Area Studies.
- **Geography.** ESRC is the primary funding body for human geography; but the AHRB has interests in cultural geography, including interpretation of the cultural landscape; cultural constructions of nature and environment; creative and imaginative aspects of geographical thought and practice; and relationships between space, place and cultural identity.
- **History.** The AHRB shares with the ESRC responsibility for the support of research in history. The AHRB supports work in all periods of history from ancient times to the recent past and in all parts of the world. Similarly, the ESRC has interest in the social and economic history of all periods and in all parts of the world.
- **International Relations.** The ESRC has an interest in both the historical and contemporary dimensions of international relations. There are overlaps with Area Studies. The AHRB supports work in diplomatic history.
- **Librarianship and Information Science**. The AHRB shares with the ESRC responsibility for research in information studies. The AHRB supports studies concerned with the practice and techniques of information and knowledge management as they relate to librarianship, archives and records management, information science and information systems, storage and retrieval as well as research information use and users in specific organisational environments. The ESRC has an interest in the broader socio-economic context of information use and policy, information flows within and between organisation, and the shaping, use and potential of information and communication technologies. The ESRC also supports research on knowledge management and on forms and structures of knowledge.
- **Linguistics**. The AHRB shares with the ESRC responsibility for the support of research in linguistics. The AHRB focuses support where research questions bear on the structure, history, theory, description and application of language and languages. The ESRC focuses on support for areas of applied linguistics, computational

[15] One such programme is 'Cultures of Consumption', first established in the autumn of 2001 and jointly funded by the AHRB and the ESRC. The project aims to analyse this research programme in terms of its interdisciplinarity between May 2005 and May 2006.

linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and interdisciplinary social science research involving linguistics.

- **Law**. The AHRB shares with the ESRC responsibility for studies in law. The AHRB focuses on studies where the focus is on the content or procedures of law. The ESRC has an interest in funding socio-legal studies, which reflect a focus on the socio-economic impact of the laws and the legal system.

Broadly speaking, one might thus argue that the ESRC has a particular interest in research with social and/or economic dimensions, and in research that involves quantitative methods. Two experiences regarding submissions to the AHRB are relevant here, and highlight one of the issues researchers face: when a researcher made an application to the AHRB's Music and Performing Arts panel which includes drama in its remit,[16] the application was, *inter alia*, rejected because it aimed to analyse play texts, as opposed to performances, and the applicant was advised to seek funding from the English Language and Literature panel (who in turn might very well decide to say that the application is a matter for Music and Performing Arts panel). In another instance, an application to the AHRB was prepared which addressed issues relevant to the disciplines English, History, Women's Studies and Sociology comparatively, and involved qualitative research in the form of interviewing. Applying to the AHRB for funding proved difficult since one has to address a subject panel, and of the four disciplines identified in the research, one (English) falls within the AHRB's remit, one (Sociology) falls within the ESRC remit, one (History) straddles both, and one (Women's Studies) is not acknowledged explicitly as a discipline by either.

Under such circumstances, a researcher has the possibility of applying to the British Academy, a body which funds 'primary research in the humanities and social sciences for which support is not normally available from other funding agencies' (*Notes for Applicants for Larger Research Grants*, www.britac.ac.uk, 2004). However, the maximum grant is £20,000 over a period of up to three years, a sum that within the research councils would be considered a small grant. £20,000 severely limits the kinds of research one can conduct under this scheme. The implication of this is that it is very difficult to obtain funding for interdisciplinary research.

This fact is reinforced by the sense of disciplinary territory which is evident in the AHRB and ESRC's Joint Statement assertion that 'both bodies wish to be as open and inclusive as possible in defining and interpreting their respective subject domains, *so far as is consistent with protecting the interests of their core subject areas*' (emphasis added). There is thus an unresolved contradiction between their notion that 'There is no clear-cut boundary between the arts and humanities and many other subject areas – notably the social sciences – but a series of interfaces, and many areas of overlap' and the protection of core subject areas which, we would argue, militates against the conduct of interdisciplinary research of a certain kind.

[16] The actual panel description reads: ' *Drama, dance and performing arts* may include drama, theatre, dance and performance analysis; drama, theatre, dance and performance history; drama, theatre, dance and performance practice; film, TV and video analysis; film, TV and video practice; dramaturgy and theatre translation; gender and performance; scenography; new technologies and performance; theatre performance; performance documentation and reconstruction; live art; choreography; performance and health; community performance; performance anthropology; drama and dance/movement therapies; and related specialist areas. Responsibility for *ethnochoreology and theatre anthropology* is shared with the ESRC.' (www.ahrb.ac.uk, Research programmes, panel 7 website).

This is heightened for subjects which are not recognized by the AHRB or ESRC, of which Women's or Gender Studies is one example. Unlike the USA which, as surveys of subject domains covered in colleges and universities show, operates a high degree of tolerance towards disciplinary diversity and boundaries (where else, after all, could one appoint Professors of the History of Consciousness[17]?), the UK has very limited tolerance for such divergence, especially at undergraduate level, and in terms of the parameters set by the various assessment exercises. We would argue that competitiveness in the advancement of knowledge societies depends, not least, on such openness which permits innovative and cross-disciplinary research without the requirement of special research programmes designed to facilitate this. The very fact that special programmes need to be put in place in the UK (ie the fact that specific interdisciplinary research programmes need to be set up to encourage interdisciplinary research) indicates the restrictions which we face in research innovation in the UK.

Apart from research funding provided by the research boards and councils, as well as by a whole range of trusts, foundations, and other grant-awarding bodies to which individual researchers, or research teams may apply, universities receive research funding through the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). That income is critical to the survival of some universities since they employ large numbers of staff on research-only, often fixed-term contracts which become difficult or impossible to sustain if that funding falls. This is most prominently the case for many 'old' universities where the requirement to conduct research has been more explicitly built into academic job requirements and teaching hours have correspondingly been lower. Table 10 indicates the difference in terms of sources of income for the 'old' and the 'new' universities:

Table 10. Sources of university income, 1996-7, Great Britain

Sources of income	**'new' universities**	**'old' universities**
Total in £ million	3051	6953
Funding council grants (%)	45.3	34.0
Academic fees/support grants (%)	29.8	20.7
Research grants (%)	3.7	21.5
Other services rendered (%)	9.3	5.6
Other general income (%)	10.7	15.1
Endowment/interest (%)	1.2	3.1

Source: Halsey 2000: 246-7.

Table 10 clearly illustrates that universities in the UK rely heavily on state funding and have no significant history of endowments and other sources of private income to speak of. Importantly, there is a huge funding gap between the 'old' and the 'new' universities regarding research income, with 'old' universities earning significantly more income through research than the 'new' universities. One implication of this is that 'new' universities are less driven by the research imperative and by the funding derived from it which, in turn, means that they can 'afford' to be sites of disciplinary innovation, provided that innovation can be covered within the state funding received. For new universities, then, disciplinary innovation is more a matter of the (student) markets they can appeal to than of the research conducted.

[17] This is the title of Teresea de Lauretis, Professor of the History of Consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

The RAE itself is effectively an accounting exercise, designed to concentrate scarce resources in those departments and research centres delivering the best research. As indicated elsewhere in this report, the RAE is conducted by discipline. Its assessment methodology has changed over time from the purely quantitative to a mixture of quantity and quality (see section 3 in this report).

3. Disciplinization: process and problematics

Disciplinization, here understood as the establishment of a discipline within the academy, that is within universities, is simultaneously an easy and a complex process in Britain. Universities in the UK operate – relative to the rest of Europe – at the extreme end of market-driven economies. This means that it is easy to set up courses and degrees in disciplines (new or old) that can demonstrate market demand, and difficult to establish new degrees and subjects or sustain old ones in disciplines that cannot demonstrate such market demand. A key criterion for setting up courses and degrees, and establishing new curricula, then, is whether or not there is a market 'out there' of potential students. The majority of students in the UK arrive at university straight from school,[18] after a school curriculum of increasingly few subjects (with frequently only three or four being taken in the last two years at school). The subjects pupils can take at school follow conventional disciplines – Women's or Gender Studies, for example, cannot be taken at school, with the implication that most potential students only encounter it as a possible choice for study once they are at university (Griffin 2003). The difficulties of marketing a subject effectively - and the easiest way of marketing a subject is to have this subject available for study at school, is thus denied new and innovative disciplinary areas – can mean that such subjects have recruitment problems and are therefore viewed as not viable. This is exacerbated by the financial impact of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) which, as detailed in the Introduction to this report, accounts for one important income stream in higher education, especially of pre-1992 universities. Where disciplines face recruitment problems and do not get the highest research rating they effectively become financially untenable for contemporary UK universities which regard education provision as a matter of the market rather than of non-economic concerns such as 'knowledge for knowledge's sake', a Humboldtian ideal of education, or other similar notions underlying what kinds of education one might or might not seek to preserve. In 2004 the UK thus once more[19] faced extensive attenuation in a whole range of disciplines in which it has difficulties recruiting students including Modern Languages, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Music. Thus *The Times Higher Education Supplement* reported on 26 November 2004 that Exeter University, for example, 'announced that it would shut its chemistry, mining engineering, Italian and music departments' (Fazackerley 2004a, 1). The same article also reported that 'In the past twelve months, chemistry department closures [had] been announced at Queen Mary, University of London; King's College London and Swansea University.' (1) Several well established Women's Studies centres in pre-1992 universities such as Warwick, Lancaster, Kent and Manchester have seen incorporation into Sociology departments as part of universities' market-driven restructuring exercises. The upshot of all

[18] According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), in 2002-03 there were 239,180 full-time young entrants into higher education compared to 69,970 mature full-time entrants (www.hesa.ac.uk, accessed 4/1/2005).

[19] During the early 1980s many university departments in disciplines such as languages, philosophy, music etc were closed or significantly re-structured as part of a drive to make universities economically more viable.

of this in terms of questions of disciplinization is that it is easy to establish new curricula and courses in areas only where market demand can be demonstrated. One related change in the UK during the 1990s was that when academic staff wanted to establish new courses and/or new curricula, they were increasingly and explicitly asked to demonstrate market demand for the provision they were proposing.

Disciplinization in the UK of the 21st century is in many respects a bottom-up approach. Since universities control their curricula and courses, and these do not have to be approved by ministries of education or any similar body, new courses and curricula are commonly developed as a result of the enthusiasm of individual academics and/or researchers for a particular subject or domain. During the period since the end of World War II this has been the case for subjects such as Cultural Studies, Media and Communication Studies, Film Studies, and Women's Studies but also Nursing Studies and other social science and professional training-oriented degrees. In each case the subjects have been introduced initially through individual, optional courses being inserted into more traditional disciplines such as sociology or English. Once they were taken up by a sufficient number of students, and a small group of staff had coalesced around these areas, these staff would make application to the university where they were working to establish a degree, either at postgraduate or at undergraduate level, in the newly emerging discipline.[20] Such an application involves several university-internal stages at faculty and university level by means of which the appropriateness of the proposed programme and its viability are tested. In the final stages, of the approvals process course proposals are presented to external scrutiny in the form of having an external peer academic (someone in the same or a related discipline) on a relevant committee or board who judges the appropriateness of the proposal, and recommends acceptance or rejection. If the university decides to go ahead with a new degree/discipline, it advertises this through the prospectuses it publishes, on the web, and in information on university courses provided by UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) so that prospective applicants can see its availability. Simultaneously, the academic staff involved will publicize the new course through relevant subject associations, their departmental and university website, and other such means which may include talks at schools from which they commonly have applicants. No ministry is involved in this approval process, and universities can set up whatever courses they wish, provided they have appropriate resources to do so and the target students numbers can be accommodated within the overall student numbers agreed between the higher education funding council and the university in question.[21] The process of establishing a new degree can take between one and three years, depending on the committee cycles in a given university, the university's commitment to establishing the course (which is partly a matter of the effective lobbying of key senior university staff by the academics in question who want to set up the course, and partly a matter of the university's sense of urgency which itself is driven by financial considerations).

Creating degrees and new curricula within a given university then is relatively easy provided one can demonstrate market demand, and appropriate resources in terms of library provision and staff, for instance, are in place. The next step, however, of moving from a university-based course to the national infrastructure necessary to lobby for the acceptance of the new discipline by the funding councils is a much more difficult one if crucial for the long-term

[20] See Griffin and Hanmer (2002: 16-44) for a description of this process in relation to Women's Studies.
[21] This means that the numbers of undergraduate students a university may recruit in any one year is finite and predetermined so the establishment of new courses usually depends on other courses being cut so that those student numbers can be given to the new course.

survival of a discipline. It requires in the first instance a critical mass of universities with degrees in that discipline. Again, it is often in the first instance a bottom-up approach in that it is mostly driven by interested academics who come together and form a new subject association. This was the case with Women's Studies, for example, where concerned academics came together in the late 1980s when many universities had established degrees in the discipline. These academics decided to form a subject association, the Women's Studies Network (UK) which would run annual conferences in the discipline, publish a newsletter, and act as the public spokesbody for the discipline. Membership to the subject association was open to all those interested in Women's Studies, irrespective of rank (this is the case for the vast majority of subject associations in the UK), i.e. whether or not they were students, lecturers or professors, and could be individual or institutional. Once a national infrastructure for a discipline in the form of a subject association is established – and notice that this, too, operates fundamentally through a bottom-up approach in the UK, involving key interested academics willing to put in the work to make such an association happen – that subject association can begin to lobby for subject recognition at governmental level, in particular addressing the funding councils and the quality assurance agencies. Since 1993 the UK has had the so-called 'Teaching Quality Assessment' exercise,[22] the purpose of which is 'a) to meet a statutory requirement,[23] b) to provide public information, and c) to help institutions enhance the quality of their provision' (www.qaa.ac.uk/about qaa/evidence/evidence2/htm, accessed 4/1/2005). This assessment is carried out by discipline, with a certain number of disciplines being scrutinized per cycle. In any one cycle of assessments a number of disciplines such as History, English, Sociology are selected and all departments in those subjects in all higher education institutions are examined for the quality of their courses. That examination focuses on six aspects:

- Curriculum design, content and organisation.
- Teaching, learning and assessment.
- Student progression and achievement.
- Student support and guidance.
- Learning resources.
- Quality assurance and enhancement.

The outcome is a published report (all reports can be viewed at www.qaa.ac.uk), detailing what is good and what needs improving, or expressing lack of confidence in the provision of a department. Departments are awarded grades to indicate how well they have done[24]. These grades are used by the universities in their publicity to advertise how excellent they are. Doing well in a TQA is therefore very important to subjects, departments, and universities. Whilst doing well has no direct financial merits in that funding to the university is not enhanced as a function of how well it does in the TQA, doing badly can become a measure for withdrawing funding through forcing a university to close the courses where standards are found wanting. This, however, is a rare case.

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[22] The organization tasked with defining the parameters of the exercise (how it will be carried out), carrying out the exercise, and reporting on it has gone through several permutations and much controversy since its establishment**.** At present it is known as the Quality Assurance Agency.

[23] According to the QAA's website, 'The Funding Council is obliged, by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, to secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities they provide financial support. This enables the Funding Council to ensure that public money is not wasted on unsatisfactory provision.' (www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutqaa/evidence/evidence2/htm).

[24] The grading system has changed over time. At present it comprises of four possible outcomes in ascending order: failing; approved; commended; exemplary. (www.qaa.ac.uk, accessed 4/1/2005).

It is obvious that problems arise where you have courses in a discipline which is not recognized by the funding councils such as Women's Studies[25] because such disciplines are not required to participate in TQA exercises directly, and therefore cannot 'prove' their worth publicly. Without funding council recognition and participation in exercises such as the TQA, a discipline lacks visibility, and is vulnerable to closure through lack of recognition. Some universities have included courses in disciplines not recognized by the funding councils as part of assessments in other disciplines. Women's Studies, for instance, has been included in assessments of Sociology departments. This has drawbacks for the discipline because, as indicated before, it cannot profile itself in its own right, and in a market-driven context the ability to 'sell' yourself on your merits (such as being able to advertise that you are offering excellent courses) is key to the success of those courses. Additionally, although the team of assessors sent to a given department (again, a peer review process) is meant to reflect the specialisms taught in that department, the majority of assessors will be sociologists rather than Women's Studies experts, and this can impact on the results.

The same problem adheres to the so-called Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in which universities are required to submit all their research-active staff by discipline every four to six years[26]. The list of disciplines used in this exercise[27] mirrors that of the TQA and, again, there are issues regarding inclusion of research in disciplines such as Women's Studies[28] that are not recognized. The RAE like the TQA involves a grading process by peers, and doing well adds to the prestige of universities which also, and again, exploit good results for promotional purposes. Equally, or possibly even more importantly, research funding is attached to the RAE – subject groups submitted are awarded funding reflecting the grades they receive, with funding increasingly only being given to those departments that get the top grades. The consequence is that departments which do not achieve top grades have to re-think how they conduct and finance research, and research-related activities such as research leave or sabbaticals, conference attendance, work required towards research such as archival visits. Where staff do not make the top grades, they may ultimately be classed as 'not research active' and required to do more (and more) teaching as a means of ensuring that they generate income. In a context where conducting research carries the highest prestige, being classed as research inactive is a difficult thing for academics to accept and significantly reduces their professional mobility – the main concern of universities in the UK when appointing new academic staff at any level is whether or not and to what level of excellence they are research active. Unlike countries such as Spain, for instance, it is quite common in British universities for staff to work in several universities in the course of their career – if it is not done for personal reasons (such as the location of a partner) staff move usually because they can get promotion and/or better working conditions elsewhere, or because the institution

[25] In section 3 of this report we detail issues regarding the disciplinization of Women's Studies as an example of the difficulties staff may encounter in trying to establish a new discipline.
[26] The frequency of this exercise has varied over time; at present it operates on a 6-year cycle, and the next RAE is in 2008.
[27] For details see www.rae.ac.uk.
[28] It would be inaccurate to say that Women's Studies has not been recognized at all but in recent RAEs it has only been present in the form of a sub-panel to the discipline panel Sociology (for some of that debate see Newsletter 45 of the Feminist and Women's Studies Association) which contradicts its multi- and inter-disciplinary status, and – since the sub-panel had to work to the criteria established by the Sociology main panel – deterred Women's Studies scholars and centres with significant numbers of staff who are not in Sociology from being submitted under that category. It is as yet not at all included in RAE2008. This meant that there were few submissions, suggesting erroneously that there are few scholars working on Women's Studies topics. It is, of course, the case that one can work on women's and gender issues from within traditional disciplines but such work has to fit within the disciplinary parameters of the particular discipline in question.

they hope to move to is more prestigious in some way. Professional mobility is therefore important and, as indicated, these days depends heavily on staff's research activity as evidenced through publications in prestigious, peer-reviewed journals and/or with prestigious publishing houses such as Cambridge University Press or Oxford University Press, through research income generated (a difficulty in many Humanities subjects that have no history of significant research funding), and ability to attract PhD students.

If a discipline is not recognized for RAE purposes staff teaching it must be 'returnable' (the phrase used in the UK to indicate that they can be submitted) in one of the recognized disciplines. Each of those operates through a panel of judges, drawn from among the most senior academics in the discipline. It therefore involves so-called peer review. Each panel articulates the disciplinary parameters within which it judges the submissions. These parameters are determined by discipline. In the 2001 RAE, English Language and Literature for instance defined its Unit of Assessment (UoA) as encompassing 'Old and Middle English Language and Literature; English Linguistic Studies, including Applied Linguistics; Old Norse/Icelandic; Renaissance Literature; 17th and 18th Century Literature; Romantic Literature; Victorian Literature; 20th Century Literature; American Literature; Colonial and Postcolonial Literature; Comparative Literature; Women's Writing; Creative Writing; Children's Literature; Critical and Cultural Theory and History; *Gender and Gay Studies*; Bibliography, Textual Criticism and History of the Book; Irish Literature in English; Scottish Literature in English and Scots; and Welsh Literature in English.'[29] (emphasis added) They also stated under the heading 'UoA Boundaries': 'The Panel is aware that in some departments significant work will be done in areas such as the following: Theatre Studies; Film Studies; Translation Studies; Popular Culture; and Celtic. The Panel may refer work in these areas to a relevant Panel or specialist adviser. . . The Panel recognises that English includes a very broad range of approaches and is by its nature frequently interdisciplinary, and it will take a broad view of what constitutes English. Where appropriate to the assessment process it will consult with other relevant Panels when submissions span the boundary between two or more Units of Assessment.' The Panel also argued that 'The constitution of the Panel is such that there may be no need for specialist advice but the Panel will be vigilant in identifying and seeking such advice if required.'[30] and that 'The Panel will consult with other Panels as appropriate to ensure an inclusive and equitable assessment of any interdisciplinary research submissions.' The English Panel's description of its domain thus includes both the specific and the general, an assertion of boundaries and a willingness to consult with others, coupled contradictorily with an assertion of the panel's competence obviating any need for specialist advice.

This compares interestingly with the Sociology Panel's description of its Unit of Assessment which included Women's Studies as a sub-panel: 'The Sociology Unit of Assessment covers quantitative and qualitative, empirical and theoretical study of the social structures, cultures and everyday practices of advanced and developing societies, covering styles and material standards of living, opinions, values and institutions, and includes social theory and social research methodology. Fields of enquiry that could appear in submissions include sociological research on culture, economics and politics; class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and age; religion, education, health, and welfare institutions; the body; urban and rural areas; pedagogy; development and globalisation; demography; criminology; socio-legal studies;

[29] All quotations from the English Language and Literature 2001 panel are taken from www.hero.ac.uk/rae/Pubs/5_99/ByUoA/crit50.htm, accessed 4/1/2005.

[30] The membership of every panel is published in advance of the commencement of the assessment exercise, and for the 2001 RAE it can be accessed on the website cited under footnote 24.

social studies of science and technology, and the philosophy of social science. The discipline overlaps with anthropology, business and management studies, medicine, health studies, social statistics, history, geography, social psychology, social policy and administration, communication, media and cultural studies, English language and literature.'[31] In 2001 this panel also explicitly stated: 'The unit of assessment includes women's studies. For the purposes of the RAE, work in women's studies may be submitted to the Sociology UoA for consideration by a multi-disciplinary sub-panel.'

Sociology defined its UoA boundaries quite differently from English: 'The Panel is aware that sociology is heterogeneous at the levels both of the discipline and of its specialisms. The Panel commits itself to taking appropriate account of this diversity and its effect upon research practice when reviewing submissions and reaching decisions. The Panel will exercise its professional judgement in reaching final decisions on the rating of individual submissions against the levels of quality represented by the rating scale used in the RAE. . . Although evidence of an active research culture and commitment to research activity will be important in assessing all submissions, the Panel's assessments will not penalise departments for being small or for having new entrants to the academic profession. Where staff have been recently recruited to the academic profession the Panel's primary interest will be in the quality of outputs produced even if these are limited in number.' The Panel noted that 'Because of the high level of interdisciplinary work undertaken in Sociology there will be many cases of overlap with the work of other panels. Since the Panel includes experts with interdisciplinary interests and expertise, it will normally be able to assess the contribution of individual researchers whose work spans the boundary between Sociology and other disciplines. Submissions will be referred to other panels where specifically requested and where the work of a substantial group of researchers within a submission, or the entire submission, appears to justify such advice. In exceptional circumstances, expert advice will also be sought from specialist advisers.' Regarding the sub-panel Women's Studies it stated: 'A multi-disciplinary Sub-Panel has been established to consider submissions in women's studies. Work in women's studies may be presented to the Sociology unit of assessment for consideration by the Sub-Panel. Additionally, the Sub-Panel will evaluate research outputs or parts of submissions in the fields of women's studies or gender studies if requested to do so by submitting institutions, the Sociology Panel or other Panels. In all cases the Panel to which the relevant submission was made will determine the final assessment, taking account of the recommendations made by the Women's Studies Sub-Panel.'

Whilst RAE subject panels thus profess openness to interdisciplinary work, it is *de facto* very difficult to submit work that covers a range of disciplines, especially methodologically, and every discipline, furthermore, has its canons of prestigious, and less prestigious areas to work in. For academics working in interdisciplinary areas that cannot readily be subsumed under a traditional discipline, real problems therefore arise since opting out of the RAE process is not an option, and not a choice an academic can make unless they want to endanger their livelihood. This means that academics working outside traditional disciplines have to keep up a research record that runs parallel to the work they do in the not-recognized discipline in order to be or remain submissible in one traditional discipline. To submit work that spans Sociology and Literature (for instance a sociological book on *Elder Abuse* and one on women playwrights) is not an option. The process of the RAE thus undermines multi- and interdisciplinary work, and forces staff to either make choices not commensurate with their

[31] All quotations from the Sociology Panel are taken from www.hero.ac.uk/rae/Pubs/5_99/ByUoA/crit42.htm, accessed 4/1/2005.

research preoccupations or to work double shifts, producing sufficient work to form a coherent submission within a traditional discipline whilst at the same time continuing to work on other research areas that do not 'fit' into that traditional discipline. It is much easier to be a 'Shakespeare specialist' doing nothing but work on Shakespeare, than to be a gender expert working across a range of disciplines.

To conclude: provided a market for a given course/discipline can be identified, it is relatively easy to introduce new courses/curricula/degrees at the level of the university in the UK. It is much harder to make the move from that base to gaining recognition for a discipline at national level, and most particularly by the funding councils, and in relation to the RAE and TQA. Without the latter, any new discipline is vulnerable. National bodies are by definition more conservative, and few new disciplines[32] have managed to make the transition from establishment in higher education institutions to inclusion in discipline categorizations used by the funding councils.

4. Change in disciplinization: two case studies

4.1 Women's Studies[33]

If one considers the establishment of Women's Studies in higher education in the UK in terms of its mainstreaming, that is in terms of

- the numbers of staff in Social Sciences and Humanities who teach and research on Women's Studies topics,
- the numbers of staff appointed to posts requiring gender specialisms,
- the numbers of modules within traditional disciplines that focus on Women's Studies issues,
- the range of publications[34] in Women's/Gender Studies,
- the research funding available for Women's Studies topics,
- the ability of institutions to award BAs, MAs, and PhDs in the discipline,
- the number of PhD students in the discipline

then the institutionalization of Women's Studies has to be considered a success story. However, if one considers

- the actual number of posts that are named Women's or Gender Studies posts (as opposed to posts in another discipline requiring a gender specialism) – in 2004 there were only 6 professorships in Women's/Gender Studies in the whole of the UK –
- the absence of any actual Women's Studies department (as opposed to a (research) centre of which there are quite a few);

[32] Cultural Studies is one exception here: although not taught in schools, and having fewer universities courses than Women's Studies, for example, it has managed to gain recognition by the funding councils and in the TQA/RAE.

[33] This section is based on the background data report on Women's Studies in the UK written for the EU-funded research project on 'Women's Studies Training and Women's Employment' (www.hull.ac.uk/ewsi), published in Griffin, ed. (2002: 16-44).

[34] Large commercial publishers such as Routledge and Sage produce catalogues devoted solely to publications in the field of Women's/Gender Studies, and others have significant sections on Women's/Gender Studies in their general catalogues.

- the (lack of) recognition of the discipline as a subject in its own right for RAE and TQA purposes (this remains unachieved);
- and the trend since the late 1990s of closure of undergraduate courses in Women's Studies and of merger of formerly independent Women's Studies centres at universities such as Kent and Warwick with Sociology departments

then one has to say that the disciplinization of Women's Studies in the UK has not been a success story.

The history of the disciplinization of Women's Studies across the UK is typical for how such disciplinization usually functions, i.e. it relied on a bottom-up approach where interested individuals promoted Women's Studies course content at a time, the 1970s and early 1980s, when the great canon debates were in full flow and opportunities for introducing new subject matters and new pedagogic forms were being created by innovative academics. Women's Studies, and this is critical to the development of the discipline, is the only subject in higher and other forms of UK education that was instituted solely by women, meaning that women fought to develop the subject, women set up the first courses in the discipline, women battled to have the discipline established and, in the UK to this day, at least around 95% of all staff and students in the subject are women. In most universities on most courses to this day the staff in the subject are 100% female and so are the students. There is no male director of Women's Studies anywhere in the UK, and the vast majority of teaching teams will have no male member of staff at all. In a country in which most subjects are dominated by men, and in which the ratio of men to women, irrespective of the sex ratio of female and male students at undergraduate level, rise exponentially and in inverse proportion the higher up the educational ladder one gets, this constitutes quite an achievement. It constitutes one difference from the Scandinavian countries, for example, where equality agendas have prompted the entry of men into Women's Studies as staff and students, albeit to a limited degree. As discussed below, the ownership of Women's Studies by women in the UK is highly significant for explaining the disciplinary history of Women's Studies.

There were three key disciplines within which Women's Studies in UK higher education emerged during the 1970s and 1980s: Social Sciences, English, and History. The two main reasons why these subjects were so significantly involved in the establishment of the discipline were:

- These were subjects with significant numbers of female staff,[35] thus more likely to have female staff with equal opportunities agendas wanting to improve women's access to higher education and women's situation in society at large (see Taylorson; Rendel; and Scott and Porter in Acker and Warren Piper, 1983).
- The subject areas in question were the sites of radical and progressive thinking, not least because from the late 1970s the then conservative government's increasing insistence on issues of employability, 'fitness for industry', and marketability of skills regarding higher education students constituted an attack on the Social Sciences and the Humanities which were constructed as failing to contribute to the wealth creation of the nation.

The most left-leaning of the social sciences, Sociology, was the first discipline to engage with the new knowledge being developed within the Women's Liberation Movement. In 1974, the British Sociological Association held its annual conference on Sexual Divisions.

[35] See Sutherland (1985, pp. 16-17) for the preponderance of women academics in the arts and in the social sciences.

Academic women at the meeting organized a separate women's caucus where how to proceed was intensely discussed in that and subsequent years.

In parallel the subject of English, initially through Marxist critics,[36] underwent significant changes from the late 1970s onwards when these critics began to question what became known as 'the canon of English literature', expressive of white bourgeois male values. This querying which led to the introduction of critical theory into English from the late 1970s onwards provided the context in which the recognition of the absence of women from the canon and their introduction into literature curricula offered a starting point for the radical disruption of that subject[37] within which the aspirations of feminist staff could be accommodated, both through the emphasis on the inclusion of women writers and through the incorporation of feminist theory. Today 'Women's Writing' courses are routinely part of English Literature degrees.

During the 1970s and 1980s, individual female academic staff with interests in women's issues began to introduce short courses, usually in the second or third year of an undergraduate degree course where staff in 'old' universities tended to teach 'options' (courses that students could choose and that were not compulsory) reflecting staff's research interests. Such short optional courses gradually became known as 'modules'[38] as the higher education reforms in the UK during the late 1980s and early 1990s encouraged the disaggregation of degree courses into modules to facilitate harmonization with other European and American university systems, to reduce the ownership of courses by departments and enable greater student choice, all thought necessary as part of the drive to increase participation by the general public in higher education, to have more students on each module so as to increase the efficiency of the university system, and to rationalize teaching provision in the face of the systematic cuts in university funding under Margaret Thatcher's prime ministership during the 1980s (Halsey 2000: 245-9).

Regarding undergraduate provision in Women's Studies, the coincidence of the presence of Women's Studies modules within traditional disciplines and the introduction of modularization during the 1980s quickly facilitated the emergence of full Women's Studies degree courses. Then as now, marketability was a key concern, and staff wanting to establish Women's Studies degree courses needed to fight the chauvinism of male (and some female) colleagues, and demonstrate student demand. The modular system in universities, introduced in the 'new' universities in the early 1980s and gradually spreading to the 'old' universities during the 1980s and early 1990s[39], enabled the construction of named degree routes in

[36] Significantly, the critics in question such as Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams were frequently men from working-class backgrounds, the first of their families to go to university and experience both their alienation from their own class background and the exclusiveness of the predominantly middle-class education that universities offered.

[37] A study by the CCUE (Council of College and University English) completed in 2000 shows that all degree-level English courses in the UK now routinely teach Women's Writing, and expertise in women's writing is one of the key requirements of most English literature jobs advertised in the UK (see the job section of *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* and *The Guardian* on Tuesdays when education jobs are advertised).

[38] A module is a self-contained unit taught over a short period ranging from a week to a semester. In the 1970s the word module was not used. It entered higher education during the 1980s, and by the 1990s effectively all higher education degree courses were made up of a number of modules, each worth a certain number of credits. Modules are thus all the courses that make up a degree course. Note that the word 'course' can refer both to a module within a degree course and to a degree course itself.

[39] This spread was partly a result of pressure to enable European students on ERASMUS/SOCRATES exchange schemes and overseas students to participate in the British higher education system, and partly a result of the notion that modularity would enable greater choice for students which students would find attractive, and which

Women's Studies even where there were no Women's Studies departments[40] as such. This was because modules from diverse disciplines with a Women's Studies content could be put together to make up a new degree course. This kind of course construction could be done seemingly without cost to the university since the modules were already in place. Many undergraduate Women's Studies courses in the UK were initially set up through such a process of conjoining a number of already existent modules with the effect that they tended, in the first instance, to be multi-disciplinary rather than inter-disciplinary. However, since the ethos of Women's Studies pedagogy favoured co-teaching (see Bowles and Klein 1983), and this was practised on many courses where staff shared modules and attended each other's classes regularly, inter-disciplinarity gradually took hold as part of the learning effect of co-teaching on staff, and today it is the norm. One might argue that whilst modular structures facilitated the establishment of Women's Studies courses as such they actively undermined the establishment of Women's Studies departments.[41] In consequence, the number of staff designated as Women's Studies lecturers or Professors remained small and, from the mid-1990s, decreased (see Griffin 1998).[42]

In the 1980s Women's Studies proved to be a popular subject, especially with 'mature'[43] women students who in the wake of the Women's Liberation Movement were seeking to systematize, certificate, and expand their knowledge of women's issues. Additionally, the women who came onto Women's Studies courses were frequently 'mature' students whose

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would lead to more people entering higher education. Modularity was thus a function of the policy of 'widening participation' in higher education.

[40] Roehampton Institute as it was called until its incorporation into the University of Surrey in 2000 was the only institution in the UK to set up a Women's Studies Department. All other institutions tended to draw Women's Studies staff from other academic disciplines to which they remained attached, often giving the women teaching Women's Studies no recognition for the work they did on Women's Studies courses. In 2001 a number of Women's or Gender Studies Centres exist in universities such as Lancaster, Manchester, Warwick, York and Hull, for example. These are distinct from departments in that they often have only one or two members of staff whose post is designated 'Women's Studies'; the rest of the staff involved in these centres remains attached to a more traditional discipline such as English or Sociology, and their teaching on the Women's Studies courses often remains the object of complex and difficult intra-institutional negotiations with departments unwilling to release their staff to do teaching on these courses. In contrast, feminist research is flourishing and constitutes a significant percentage of the research output of many disciplines within the Social Sciences and the Humanities, hence the reluctance to release staff from these disciplines. The latter subjects' research records would be seriously weakened by treating Women's Studies/feminist research separately.

[41] The desirability of 'departments' within universities was first questioned in the early 1980s when it was felt that departments had too much autonomy and power, and constituted structures resistant to change. Since then the UK higher education system has seen a variety of attempts to vary the traditional university structure of Faculties and Departments through the introduction of structural concepts such as 'Schools' and 'Fields', both designed to introduce economies of scale and thus reduce university costs, and to create greater movement among staff through prising them apart from an identification with a traditional discipline located in a conventional university department. Paradoxically, the funding and assessment bodies of the UK - key drivers in maintaining tradition and/or activating change - have retained traditional disciplinary categories for their purposes, thus counteracting any drive within universities to allow for greater interdisciplinarity and curricular innovation.

[42] For a recent discussion of staff numbers in Women's Studies see the WSN (UK) Assoc. Newsletter, no. 36, August 2000.

[43] In the UK any student over the age of 21 is classed as 'mature' (based on the notion that pupils usually leave school to go to university between the ages of 17 and 19). Such 'maturity' confers the right to be viewed as a 'non-standard entrant' which means that access to university education may be assessed by criteria other than simply 'A' Level results. In practice, many mature students are in their thirties and forties. Since relevant work and life experiences can substitute for good 'A' level results at the point of entry into university, the 'mature student' category became important in the widening participation efforts of universities. Additionally, this enabled many women in the age group 30-45 who might have left school early but were at a point where they wanted to re-enter education, to attend Women's Studies courses.

life experiences by the time they had reached 30+ of marriage, children, divorce, discrimination at work and in the family, left them predisposed to engaging with Women's Studies since the subject dealt directly with issues related to their life experiences. The government's drive towards 'widening access' especially to so-called under-represented groups (and women aged 21 or over belonged into this group) greatly facilitated the establishment of Women's Studies courses since ability to attract students which Women's Studies did in the 1980s and early 1990s was – and continues to be – a key criterion in having courses approved.

The GRACE student guide of 'Women's Studies in the European Union' (GRIF 1991) - which was commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Unit of DG5 (Directorate General 5 of the European Commission) - reflects all this very clearly. Its information about courses in the UK reveals that Women's Studies at that time was taught both as full degree courses (postgraduate as well as undergraduate) and as modules on other courses, with varying ranges of multi- and inter-disciplinarity. The data also indicate the persistence of the social sciences and the humanities as the key disciplines from which Women's Studies emerged. 34 courses in the UK were listed in this data bank. Eight of these were named, full Women's Studies degrees, about the same number were modules within degree courses located broadly in a social sciences or a humanities frame, and the rest were in other, mainly 'soft sciences'-based subject areas. The authors know from their professional experience that this database did not contain anything like the actual number of modules on women's/feminist issues offered as part of other degree courses; for instance, it would be safe to say that by 1991 at least two thirds of all English degree courses in the UK had Women's Studies components in the form of Women's Writing or Feminist Theory courses. The database therefore is useful mainly to reflect broadly the subject distribution within which such courses were taught. No equivalent database for the present exists but the authors, through their professional roles, know that that distribution is still broadly correct, although the number of full Women's Studies degrees rose dramatically in the early to mid-1990s before declining slowly in the second half of the 1990s. Thus in 1993, only two years after the GRACE databank was published, *The International Handbook of Women's Studies* edited by Brown *et al* listed 74 Women's Studies courses for Great Britain and Northern Ireland, more than double the number of courses detailed in the 1991 GRACE database. Of these 74 courses, 47 were full Women's Studies degrees, either at Diploma, undergraduate or postgraduate level. This indicates the rapid development from modules within other courses to independent Women's Studies courses during the first half of the 1990s, the heyday of Women's Studies in the UK.

It also shows something else of equal importance, namely the effect of the setting up in 1988 of the Women's Studies Network UK Association (known as WSN), the national subject association for Women's Studies in the UK. From the late 1980s Women's Studies staff organized themselves, partly to create a forum for spreading information about their research, more importantly, initially, to exchange information and experiences about issues around institutionalizing the subject. The WSN held its first annual conference at Coventry Polytechnic in 1989, and has run annual conferences ever since. During the late 1980s and early 1990s selected conference papers were commercially published on an annual basis.[44] The expanded number of Women's Studies courses represented in *The International Handbook of Women's Studies* is thus not only a function of the rapid rise of numbers of degree courses in Women's Studies during the early 1990s but also reflects the greater degree

[44] The WSN had a contract for the annual publication of its conference proceedings with Falmer Press, later Taylor and Francis, an indication of the commercial viability of the subject as perceived by publishers.

of networking by Women's Studies staff in the UK. Thus all the editors of *The International Handbook of Women's Studies* were involved in the WSN, with Maggie Humm serving as Chair of that association at the time that the handbook was compiled. The information in the handbook still only reflects a proportion of the actual modules with a Women's Studies content that were being taught in the UK at the time but it is very accurate regarding the number of actual Women's Studies degree courses offered in the UK.

For several years during the 1990s the WSN compiled an annual list of members and Women's Studies degree courses. These were distributed free of charge to WSN members at the annual conference. However, as the subject began to experience recruitment difficulties during the second half of the 1990s, and Women's Studies curricula came under review, these compilations ceased and in 2004 it is therefore not possible to say how many independent full Women's Studies degree courses at undergraduate or at postgraduate level are in operation. Without question the numbers of modules with a Women's Studies content run into the hundreds – all English degree courses tend to have at least one Women's Writing course; all Sociology degree courses and related fields have got modules on 'Gender and. . . '; the same is true for subjects such as History, Film Studies, Literature, Cultural Studies, American Studies, Health Studies, and increasingly, in areas such as Geography, Anthropology, Law, Development Studies, Archaeology, Computer Studies, and Politics. One might thus argue that the permeation of Women's Studies through the Social Sciences and the Humanities has been very thorough and sustained.

The development of Women's Studies courses by level might be described as detailed in Table 11 below:

Table 11. Historical overview of Women's Studies by level in the UK 1970-2004

Dates	**Rise**	**Decline**
Early 1970s	• Courses (often informal) on women's issues emerge in extra-mural and adult education contexts (source: *Spare Rib*, radical feminist magazine)	
From 1974	• Modules within traditional disciplines, first in Sociology, then in the Humanities (English/History) appear; • FEMINIST RESEARCH EMERGES.	
1980	first Masters course in Women's Studies at the University of Kent	
During 1980s	• Rapid rise of numbers of modules on women's issues in traditional social sciences and humanities disciplines; • Rise in number of Access courses into higher education	Decline in numbers of extra-mural, informal courses on women's issues
From late 1980s	• Rapid rise in number of Masters in Women's Studies; • Beginnings of undergraduate degree courses in Women's Studies	
1990-1995	• Rapid rise of modules in Women's Studies across social sciences and humanities undergraduate courses; • Rise in both Masters and undergraduate Women's Studies courses;	Decline in Access courses into higher education

	• Rise of PhDs in Women's Studies	
1995-2004	• Rise of specialist Masters courses; • Rise in mainstreaming of Women's Studies modules and undergraduate degrees into traditional disciplines; • Continuing extensive feminist research activity	• Decline in number of Masters and undergraduate Women's Studies courses; • Merger of various Women's Studies centres with Sociology departments • Decline in generic Masters courses

The first Masters in Women's Studies was set up in 1980 at the University of Kent by Mary Evans who also eventually, after much public debate, became the first Professor of Women's Studies in the country. In the UK full Women's Studies courses first emerged as Masters degrees for the following reasons:

- During the early 1990s it was recognized that the numbers of postgraduate students in the UK was very small and that PhD students often did not complete their PhDs, partly because they lacked research training. An expansion of postgraduate provision was therefore called for, intended to improve the overall knowledge and skills base of the educated population and to enhance research ability amongst doctoral students.
- In addition the government, concerned about the financing of higher education and the quality of university education in an expanding education sector, began to 'cap', that is to limit, student numbers so that universities could only recruit a specific number of undergraduates per course. Postgraduate courses, however, remained uncapped, so that these provided opportunities for universities to gain additional income. The expansion of postgraduate provision thus became financially attractive to universities, and the numbers of such courses increased rapidly during the 1990s.
- Students responded to these opportunities partly because it could be demonstrated that those with certain levels of educational qualifications would earn significantly more money in the labour market than those without, and, increasingly, companies in the private sector but also the civil service and other public sector employers began to offer 'fast track' or 'accelerated' training schemes for graduates and, importantly, for postgraduates, holders of Masters degrees.
- From a disciplinary viewpoint it was thought that Women's Studies as a multi- or inter-disciplinary subject made such demands on the students that it made more sense to introduce it as a degree course at postgraduate rather than at undergraduate level. That debate continues, to some extent, to this day, and there are proponents of both sides, some arguing that students need a thorough grounding in a traditional discipline before they can grapple with Women's Studies and others considering this an old-fashioned model of disciplinarity.

It was also the case that the establishment of MA courses was much less bureaucratically cumbersome than the establishment of undergraduate courses; institutions were frequently less heavy-handed about setting up postgraduate than undergraduate courses. This was partly because institutions during the late 1980s and early 1990s were less experienced in MA courses since many universities did not run many such courses and therefore had not established templates of how to deal with them in terms of process. Simultaneously, the fact that they were by and large only one-year courses if taken full-time (compared with the three years spent on a full-time undergraduate course) with small numbers of students (between 8 and 12 students per intake was, and continues to be, the 'normal' model of such courses) made them seem 'small fry' compared to the undergraduate provision which provided a very

large, in most cases the largest, income stream to universities then (very few universities make more money through research than through teaching undergraduates, and this was particularly so 10-15 years ago – the picture has shifted now but it is still true to say that for about two thirds of British universities teaching is the major source of income – see Table 10 in section 2.1 of this report).

In addition, and finally, the establishment of Masters courses in Women's Studies was considered to be relatively un-resource intensive since only a small number of modules needed to be provided and about 3 teaching staff, giving a relatively small proportion of their overall working time (often completely unaccounted for by the institution who saw Masters courses as 'extras' taught in staff leisure time), could run such a course. In terms of co-ordinating and managing such a course, doing a Masters was an inexpensive option for many universities and this facilitated the setting up of Masters in Women's Studies to the extent that in 1994 there were more Masters degree courses in Women's Studies than undergraduate degree courses.

These developments were aided by successful applications for MA and PhD recognition by the Economic and Social Science Research Council for grants for Masters and PhD students in Women's Studies. The subject also benefited from a glowing HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate)[45] Report concerning Women's Studies teaching in colleges of higher education and polytechnics in 1991, a time when the universities' accountability[46] regarding their teaching and research practices was increasingly under scrutiny and became the object of formalized processes. Women's Studies' student-centred and interactive approach to teaching was regarded as innovative in academe (see Aaron and Walby 1991 for an account of the debates and celebrations of Women's Studies in the UK during that period).

The Masters degrees were initially all generic since it was assumed that students coming from traditional undergraduate degree courses had had very limited exposure to Women's Studies, especially in its multi- or inter-disciplinary dimensions. Additionally, the preponderance of non-standard entrants, and, increasingly, of overseas students with no prior knowledge of Women's Studies, generated a sense that the Masters students in Women's Studies between the 1980s until the mid-1990s needed generic introductions to the subject.

The success of the Masters in Women's Studies degree courses in terms of attracting student numbers and successful completion rates, was a key basis on which many universities, looking to diversify their undergraduate provision and attract new students, began to consider and implement the establishment of independent full undergraduate degree courses in Women's Studies, especially during the first half of the 1990s. By the mid-1990s Masters courses in Women's Studies increasingly began to see students who had already taken undergraduate degrees in Women's Studies and were thus no longer interested in generic courses. Simultaneously, the backlash against feminism of the same period in the Anglo-

[45] HMI regularly inspected the teaching in polytechnics prior to 1992. HMI was supplanted by the TQA carried out by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) after 1992 and embracing the whole university sector rather than the former polytechnics alone.

[46] The question of 'value for money' in higher education in the UK began to be raised by the government in the early to mid-1980s when it was found that many postgraduate students failed to complete their doctorates within a reasonable time span or, indeed, at all. This in turn led to the demand for greater accountability on the part of universities both regarding their teaching and their research practices. The late 1980s in consequence saw the introduction of the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) and of the TQA (Teaching Quality Assessment), both in effect cyclical reviews of universities' activities. Both assessments have significant implications for universities, not only in terms of costs, but also in terms of prestige, funding, and student numbers.

American world, articulated through Susan Faludi's and Marilyn French's books on the subject in 1992, drove Women's Studies staff in the UK increasingly to ask questions about how they could maintain the attractiveness of Women's Studies to prospective students who no longer directly identified with feminism. These two issues became key factors in the review of the until then largely generic Masters curricula that had dominated Women's Studies at postgraduate level. Answering further to questions of the employment contexts in which Women's studies degrees might be useful, many universities including, for example, Lancaster and York, reviewed the contents of their Masters degrees and began to establish more specialized courses that were directly linked either into employment niches under titles such as 'Women and Health', 'Women and Employment', 'Women and the Law', 'Gender and Development Studies', or catered more overtly for interests such as 'Women and Film', 'Women in Literature', etc. Specialization at Masters level thus became increasingly common in the second half of the 1990s at the same time that a number of courses, both undergraduate and postgraduate, were forced to close due to lack of recruitment.

Simultaneously, the introduction of Women's Studies modules through second- and third-year undergraduate options that were meant to reflect the lecturer's research interests meant that from early on Women's Studies as a subject was strongly linked to research, not least and in addition because the knowledges and methodologies which constitute the discipline had to be brought into existence through research at the same time that the subject was institutionalized. Women thus researched what they taught and taught what they researched. Feminist research in the UK flourished, especially from the 1980s onwards, both inside and outside of the academy. Inside the academy it was fuelled in part by the establishment of the so-called Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the first of which was held in 1986. Measuring the research activity of academic staff quantitatively in terms of numbers of items published and increasingly qualitatively through where research was published and how it was funded, the exercise continued, on the whole, to protect researchers' rights to research what they were interested in, and increasing numbers of women in academe worked on feminist issues across a whole range of disciplines. The first RAE was not taken very seriously by universities and many did not participate, or participated only in a limited way. As more funding and status became attached to success in the RAE, pressure on researchers to produce appropriate research increased. For Women's Studies staff conducting feminist research per se was not a problem, but the subject remained unrecognized as a separate discipline by the higher education funding councils. Though some thought was given during the early 1990s to a more strategic approach towards establishing Women's Studies as a discipline by encouraging the recognition of its subject status on the part of higher education funding bodies, the limited number of staff dedicated to the subject and their sheer exhaustion from continuing battles with institutions over the recognition, staffing, and resourcing of Women's Studies,[47] the burgeoning of the degree courses which suggested that force of numbers might sway funding bodies in due course but also memories of the 'autonomy versus integration' debates (see Bowles and Duelli Klein 1983) prevented Women's Studies staff in the UK from taking decisive action at a time that, in retrospect, was critical for Women's Studies. The Executive Committee of the WSN (UK) Association tried hard during the 1990s to get Women's Studies accepted as a discipline for RAE purposes but it failed: in 1992, during the second RAE, Women's Studies was established as a sub-panel of the 'traditional' disciplines of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work - a move that set up Women's Studies as a particular sub-field of a specific discipline. This ignored Women's

[47] See Hanmer (1991) for an account of the difficulties Women's Studies and its staff faced in UK higher education as it set out to establish itself.

Studies' inter- and multi-disciplinary nature, and whilst the panel members themselves were selected to cover the Social Sciences and the Humanities, and they did everything to reinforce the inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of Women's Studies, many institutions shied away from submitting their Women's Studies staff to that sub-panel, either needing those staff to bolster submissions in other, more traditional disciplines, or fearing that being submitted under 'Sociology', albeit to the Women's Studies sub-panel, might disadvantage Women's Studies staff who were not from the Social Sciences. In 1996, after extensive lobbying, Women's Studies was again a sub-panel, this time of Sociology. In 1996, the sub-panel had no decision-making powers and could only act in advisory capacity.[48] This rendered the sub-panel in some respects toothless. In the Research Assessment Exercise of 2001 no sub-panel for Women's Studies was set up at all at the start of the process. It took the sustained lobbying of a panel member of Sociology, herself Professor of Women's Studies at the University of York, and various other pressure groups to gain an agreement that, belatedly, a sub-panel for Women's Studies was again set up, but this happened late in the preparation process for the assessment, with little publicity given to the fact, and in the face of the sub-panel still having only advisory and not decision-making powers (see section 3 above). The impact was that few universities submitted to the Women's Studies sub-panel despite the fact that feminist research is widespread throughout British universities.

Institutionally, individual staff have no power to determine to which disciplinary RAE panel their research will be submitted. Since feminist research has flourished in the UK it forms a key part of many traditional disciplines' work, and subjects such as English, History and Sociology, for example, will frequently not permit their feminist work to be submitted under Women's Studies as this will weaken the submission by the traditional discipline. In conclusion one might say that whilst feminist research is widespread and extensive it is not predominantly associated with Women's Studies but located in the traditional disciplines.

In 2005 Women's Studies is still not recognized as an independent discipline for Teaching Quality Assessment or Research Assessment Exercise purposes. Having lost out on both counts (RAE and TQA), Women's Studies in the UK, as Griffin (1998) has argued elsewhere, has failed to become embedded as an independent discipline within UK higher education despite the fact that to date there are still a large number of named undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the subject (see Jackson 2000) and that postgraduate students can complete doctorates in Women's Studies. There are several factors that contribute to this situation:

- the failure of Women's Studies to become recognized as an independent discipline by the higher education funding and assessment bodies;
- a decline in student numbers (see Jackson 2000), a consequence of the depoliticization of students during the 1990s, and the consequent closure of a number of Women's Studies courses;
- a proclamation, particularly in the early to mid-1990s that feminism was a thing of the past and that women had achieved everything they wanted;
- the introduction in the late 1990s of student fees, to deal with the chronic funding shortage in higher education, which hit one group of students that was significantly present in Women's Studies particularly hard, namely mature women students who now can no longer afford to study.

[48] See the WSN Newsletter, no. 23, March 1996, p. 9, for a brief report from the chair of the then RAE sub-panel for Women's Studies, Celia Davies. See also Miriam E. David's report in the WSN Newsletter, no. 36, August 2000, pp. 5-6.

At the same time it has to be said that more students than ever are now taking modules with a feminist content. Modularity has meant the permeation of many traditional subjects with Women's Studies-related modules which continue to prove very popular and are chosen in significant numbers by students. Gender issues are thus part of many students' education, especially in the Social Sciences and in the Humanities. Additionally, feminist research in the UK is flourishing, and, to the extent that it can be accommodated within a traditional discipline, such research continues to be actively encouraged since some of the core concerns of Women's Studies such as sexuality, representation (both political and cultural), health and welfare, work, social exclusion, the function of the family in society, violence, gender issues and the new technologies/media, etc. remain high on the government's agenda and can therefore attract significant research funding.

4.2 Continuing Education

We have chosen to focus on 'continuing education' as our second case study regarding disciplinization because

- it shares certain features with Women's/Gender Studies such as its specific appeal to adult learners and those previously excluded from higher education
- it answers to current UK and EU preoccupations regarding 'lifelong learning'
- it has a long and troubled history
- it has been both more and less successful than Women's/Gender Studies in anchoring itself within higher education.

'Continuing education' (CE), also and variously referred to as 'adult education', 'lifelong learning', or 'part-time education', references education provision for adults (defined in Britain as those over the age of 21 but in reality frequently meaning people in their thirties, forties and beyond). Such education may be located in universities,[49] many of which have, or had until the mid-1990s, so-called 'extramural', 'extension', or 'continuing education' departments for this purpose. Continuing education may also be delivered in (further) education colleges where sub-degree (i.e. below Bachelor level) as well as degree-level work is undertaken. This diversity of terminology and of location – no less than the term 'extramural', denoting 'outside the walls of. . .' the university proper – indicates the marginalized status of continuing education within (higher) education as such. It is a marginalization increased by the fact that continuing education is not a discipline but instead what might be described as an 'operational division' of universities, a structure separate from other university departments, within which predominantly social sciences and humanities subjects are taught. Thus it represents an oddity among the conventional discipline-bound structures of British universities where departments of single subjects or schools of cognate subject areas are the norm, since it is multi- if not interdisciplinary, and its focus is a specific group of learners, adults intent upon expanding their educational horizons, rather than a discipline.[50] The opportunities that a non-discipline based department such as Continuing Education offers in terms of setting up innovative courses that transcend disciplinary boundaries resulted in many pioneering courses, not least in pedagogical terms, emanating

[49] Continuing education departments were a feature of the so-called 'old' civic universities such as London, Manchester, Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, Hull but not part of the polytechnics or new universities built in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain. The first professor of adult education at the University of Hull was appointed in 1928 (Bamford 1978).

[50] It is, of course, the case that conventional degrees and subjects, too, assume specific learner groups, usually young, post-school adults at the beginning of their working lives, but that assumption remains largely unacknowledged and unarticulated in debates about conventional disciplines.

from within continuing education (Williamson 2004). Cultural Studies, for example, has its roots there. However, it also made continuing education vulnerable as the teaching and research assessment exercises within higher education began to bite from the 1980s onwards since continuing education lacked the disciplinary base necessary to qualify for assessment, and thus the income streams associated with successful assessments in traditional disciplines.

Continuing education in the UK has its roots in 18th-century notions of 'rational recreation' for adults, especially of the lower classes, designed to instil in them middle-class values and virtues by offering structured activities in the spare time of working people. As such it emphasized initially the study of the humanities (reading, writing, the study of the Bible and of 'morally uplifting' literature) and later of the social sciences (Baldick 1987, Simon 1990). This training was not vocationally oriented but intended to socialize the working classes into social mores of frugality, restraint, compliance with middle-class values, the management of households, emotions, families. In that respect it mirrored much higher education for the middle classes which was also understood as a form of socialization, a kind of finishing school for 'gentlemen of leisure', rather than a form of vocational training. Since it had to take place outside working hours, it came in the form of Sunday schools and evening classes, and was thus from the beginning marginal to the main activities of the day and of education. As Ryley (2002) somewhat quaintly describes it: 'Outside the walls [of the university] lies a world of pure education to be enjoyed by all but which bestows only intellectual satisfaction. Inside the walls is the exclusive world which awards degrees, social status, and access to careers, wealth and the elite.' (64) This geo-temporal marginalization continues into the present, not least because most of the learners in continuing education are adults with work and/or family commitment whose only time to participate in educational activities is either outside working hours (evenings, weekends) or at times that do not clash with family demands such as ferrying children to and from school. This also means that the vast majority of continuing education students are part-time rather than full-time students, and that they tend to take individual courses that may or may not lead to a qualification, including but not necessarily degree-level work. This further marginalizes continuing education within higher education. The gradual withdrawal of government funding for non-award bearing courses during the 1990s – and many continuing education classes were of necessity such – meant that either such courses had to be changed into award-bearing courses or they had to be cut (Williamson 2004: 211). This resulted – from the mid-1990s onwards – in closures of continuing and adult education departments in universities such as Durham and Leicester, and in the mainstreaming of 'continuing education departments' into other departments or schools within the university. This also meant mainstreaming the part-time adult students that had been in continuing education departments.

Continuing education has thus a much longer history in higher education than Women's Studies but like that discipline it benefited from the expansion of higher education between the 1950s and the 1980s. Unlike Women's Studies continuing education was managed through the establishment of continuing education departments (already recommended in the Final Report of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1919) whilst in the whole of the UK there was only ever one Women's Studies department (at Roehampton Institute) and that closed in the late 1990s. However, as Williamson (2004) notes, continuing education departments existed as parallel universes to the main business of the university rather than as an integral part, and were thus easily removed when changes and reductions in university funding necessitated cuts. Like Women's Studies, continuing education was underpinned by an ideological agenda for change. As such it was the home of much educational radicalism, imbued with emancipatory ideals for those it served. It was

intended toserve disadvantaged communities and offer opportunities for mobility to workers (Ryley 2002: 63). In reality, throughout the 20th century working-class people represented only ever a fraction of continuing education participants, with most students coming from white-collar backgrounds (Williamson 2004: 214-20),[51] typically working as teachers and clerks at the point of entry into continuing education. Continuing education tutors were subject specialists from the Humanities and Social Sciences who had a specific, often left-wing commitment to adult education, and embraced a radical politics. Literary and cultural studies scholars such as Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, as well as socialist historians such as E.P. Thompson – all known for their socialist and Marxist critiques of education as an instrument for fostering elites – taught adult education classes. Academics who work in continuing education departments were thus frequently subject specialists whose ideological commitment to a particular kind of learner, working-class adults, went hand in hand with a socialist commitment to equality, including equal access to education, the view that education should be the right of all, not the privilege of a few, and the notion that education should realize its transformative potential through empowering those materially, socially and culturally disadvantaged to gain knowledges that help them to understand and thus improve their life conditions (Williamson 2004). Such people included traditionally both the working classes in general and women in particular. It is the latter group in particular whose participation in higher education has risen dramatically over the past ten years as Table 12 demonstrates:

Table 12. Participation in higher education: UK, 1994-2000

	1994-5				**1999-2000**			
	Women		**Men**		**Women**		**Men**	
	no	**%**	**no**	**%**	**no**	**%**	**no**	**%**
Ft ug	474,692	50	472,227	50	553,260	54	474,140	46
Pt ug	154,061	54	131,008	46	256,960	61	163,360	39
All ug	628,753	51	603,235	49	810,220	56	636,500	44
Ft pg	55,848	43	73,863	57	74,030	49	77,300	51
Pt pg	94,508	46	111,106	54	128,580	50	128,710	50
All pg	150,356	45	184,969	55	202,610	50	206,010	50
total	779,109	50	788,204	50	1,012,830	55	842,510	45

Note: ft = full-time; pt = part-time; ug = undergraduate; pg = postgraduate
Source: HESA, 2001a in Dench et al, 2002: 82.

Table 12 shows that whilst men's educational participation in all categories declined between 1994-5 and 1999-2000, that of women rose in all categories, in particular the figure for part-time undergraduates which is where continuing education in universities is found. This is mirrored in women's greater likelihood in participating in job-related training compared to men. Thus '18 per cent of female managers and administrators received training in Spring 2001 compared with 13 per cent of male managers and administrators, and 32 per cent of female professional workers received training compared to 22 per cent of male professionals.' (Dench et al 2002: 84).

Between 1950 and 1980 continuing education was swept along as part of the general expansion of higher education (see Tables 1 and 2 in this report). Whilst no separate figures

[51] Williamson notes a difference between the north and south of the UK, with a stronger working-class presence among northern Continuing Education students than among southern ones. This is partly a function of the greater degree of industrialization of the north of England.

are available for continuing education students, the figures for part-time mature students (which is what continuing education students were, although part-time student figures also include students not in continuing education) are indicative of the general trend:

Table 13. Higher education – part-time UK male students (000s)

	1970-1	1980-1	1990-1	1997-8
Total pt male UK students	142.0	205.8	237.5	256.8
By age:				
18 or under	n/a	11.8	34.7	1.4
19-20	n/a	33.9		5.6
21-24	n/a	48.3	44.5	24.3
25 and over	n/a	111.7	158.4	225.4

Source: Halsey 2000

Table 14. Higher education – part-time UK female students (000s)

	1970-1	1980-1	1990-1	1997-8
Total pt female UK students	22.7	86.8	180.0	312.6
By age:				
18 or under	n/a	3.2	13.9	1.1
19-20	n/a	7.5		4.4
21-24	n/a	16.0	28.2	26.5
25 and over	n/a	60.1	137.9	280.7

Source: Halsey 2000.

Tables 13 and 14 show that whilst the figure for part-time male students aged 25 and over more than doubled between 1980-1 and 1997-8, it more than quadrupled for part-time female students aged 25 and over, with women in this category significantly outstripping men by 1997-8. That expansion has to be seen in the light of a history of higher education operating as an elite rather than a mass higher education system,[52] a fact dramatically indicated by the low percentages of women and men in Britain with 'A' levels (the equivalent of the *Baccalaureate* or the *Abitur*) or higher qualifications compared to France, for example[53]:

Table 15. Highest qualification 2002 among people of working age in Great Britain

	Women		**Men**	
	thousands	**%**	**thousands**	**%**
Degree or equivalent	2,475	14	3,216	17
Higher education below degree	1,563	9	1,373	7
GCE A level or equivalent	3,080	18	5,663	30
GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent	4,583	27	3.330	18

[52] This is reinforced by the fact that in 2000 36% of women in the age range 55-64 and 25% of men in the same age range had no qualifications at all, and only 7% of women and 13% of men in the same age range had a degree or equivalent compared with 20% of women in the age range 25-34 and 22% of men in the age range 25-34 (Dench et al, 2002: 87).

[53] See the French national report for comparative details.

Other qualifications	2,371	14	2,506	13
No qualification	2,912	17	2,640	14
All of working age	17,086	100	18,876	100

Source: *Facts about Women and Men in Great Britain, 2003*. Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission, 2003: 6.

However, when that expansion came under scrutiny under Margaret Thatcher's government and public accountability, value for money, and market demands became the drivers in higher education, continuing education, newly lacking in funding because funding was now tied to award-bearing courses which continuing education did not tend to deliver, came under pressure. This was augmented by the fact that most continuing education is part-time so universities receive less money per participant. Once the funding regime moved, in the mid-1990s, from a fixed sum per learner, irrespective of how much time they spent in education or how many courses they took, to a regime which meant that universities were funded in terms of the actual amount of courses taken, part-time students taking one module such as continuing education students often did, became not viable since the labour involved in administering their presence in the university alone was not worth the money the university received per part-time student. Indeed, Alan Johnson, former minister for lifelong learning, acknowledges that 'no government has seriously considered support for part-timers' (UACE 2004). This was exacerbated by the very fact of the liberal education agenda which had underpinned continuing education; its lack of vocationalism now made it a luxury rather than a necessity. Although continuing education had pioneered many innovative courses, including some vocational ones and the Universities Association for Continuing Education (UACE) report of 1980-81 – in the wake of the economic recession that plagued Britain from the 1970s onwards - noted that 'Most departments see extra-mural work in relation to the unemployed as a crucial new development and in a number of cases special courses or other initiatives are now on record.' (in Williamson 2004: 220) this was not enough to save continuing education from closure. Too little, too late was the motto. Full-time staff from such departments (and many staff were on part-time or fixed-term contracts and thus easily not re-engaged) were increasingly absorbed into the main subject departments of the universities and continuing education departments were closed down.

The marginalization of continuing education is in some respects surprising since 'lifelong learning' has become increasingly important on public agendas as the 'old' manufacturing industries such as coal, steel, shipbuilding have died away, and the need for continuous professional updating and, indeed, for retraining and multiple careers within one working life have become correspondingly more prominent. However, as indicated above the vocational orientation of continuing education was limited, and in many respects it did not reach the social groups it was intended for. In the market-oriented education age, however, vocational orientation has become increasingly important, as have awards. Education is not longer a leisure activity with radical potential but intended to meet the economic and wealth creation needs of the country. These needs tend to be ambiguously and contradictorily identified both in terms of transferable skills such as communication, team working, independent working, presentation skills etc. which may be acquired through any range of subjects, and in terms of very specific knowledge-based criteria. Whilst continuing education excelled at transmitting the former, it was less effective in teaching the latter. More to the point, perhaps, universities themselves have changed little during the past thirty years whilst the labour market and certain political agendas associated with economically driven needs have changed significantly. Funding to universities and university structures still assume as their standard

student the 18-year old fresh from school at the beginning of her career and embarking on three years of full-time education to gain a BA or BSc. However, lifelong learning as a concept envisages an intermittent older learner who may be part- or full-time, who already has a variety of work and life experiences, and whose education has to fit into life structures such as family and work commitments that cannot be accommodated in the conventional teaching structures of universities. Such a learner is not acknowledged within current university funding systems which privilege the 3-year full-time degree-awarded learner. And this is what has made 'continuing education' in universities no longer financially viable since the mid-1990s.

5. The establishment and legitimation of professional identities in academe

The establishment of professional identities in the UK follows slightly different paths, depending on the discipline in question.[54] However, for the Humanities and the Social Sciences the following process can be identified: academics in the disciplines subsumed under the headings 'Humanities' and 'Social Sciences' usually though not inevitably (as will be explained below) have a first degree (BA/BSc) in the subject they want to pursue. They then typically go on either to do a Masters degree in the discipline followed by a doctoral degree (PhD), or, as was frequently the case until the 1990s, they progress straight from their first degree to a PhD. In order to be accepted to do a PhD, they normally have to have a good grade in their first degree, either a first or a 2:i.[55] In the 1970s it was possible to get jobs in academe without a PhD and with only a first degree – Masters degrees were highly uncommon then. The present author, for example, got her first full-time, permanent job in academe as a lecturer whilst still writing her PhD, and quite a high proportion of older senior academics, especially those now in their 60s, do not hold PhDs. There is no *Habilitation* or equivalent in the UK. Career progression after the PhD and entry into university posts is therefore a function of the research one has conducted and the administrative tasks one has undertaken. Career progression in academe on the basis of teaching only is uncommon, and mainly exercised in the so-called 'new' universities, the former colleges and polytechnics (that were the equivalent of the German *Fachhochschulen*) which had no research brief until their 'incorporation' as it is known in 1992 when all polytechnics were made universities through a change in law.

The academic climate in 2004, driven powerfully by the RAE, means that appointments are made on the basis of candidates' qualifications and research record. The professional university structure in the UK has the following hierarchy:

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[54] In particular, there are differences in the kinds of training and accreditation required for academics working in the 'hard sciences' and in vocationally oriented disciplines such as law and medicine, relative to those working in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

[55] As with many other things such as postage stamps, degrees come in 'classes' in Britain. Thus you talk of a first class degree, a second class degree, a third class degree, and unclassified degree. The grade range for BA/BSc degrees in the UK is as follows (order: highest to lowest): first; upper second or 2:i; lower second or 2:ii; third; pass; fail.

Graduate Teaching Assistant/Tutorial Assistant or equivalent[56]: usually temporary and conducted by PhD students (there are not many posts of this kind in any university, although some disciplines and institutions make more use of them than others).
Lecturer/Junior Lecturer/Lecturer A[57]: can be either temporary or permanent, often the first job a PhD student gets on or near completion of her thesis.
Lecturer B/Senior Lecturer: usually permanent, achieved after several years in the profession; usually requires both a good research record (at least one or two RAE-able monographs published) and a contribution to the administrative tasks of the department (e.g. doing the timetable, being examinations officer, being senior tutor for students, or course leader/director). A good research record is the only way to become a Senior Lecturer in an 'old' (= pre-1992) university; in the 'new' universities you may advance on administrative and teaching contributions only. Many academic staff do not move beyond this category.
Reader: This is a post awarded for an excellent research record only; it is permanent; it is a mid-career post which may be personal (i.e. not re-advertised when the incumbent moves or retires) and it is not a position one tends to find very much in 'new' universities. In old universities, too, only few members of staff are readers, and many departments do not have any readers at all.
Professor: Unlike in many other European countries only those who have a Chair, and are full professors (the equivalent of the *C4 Professur* in Germany, for instance) are called professors. There are very few of these (9.7% of all academic staff in the UK)[58] and they are unevenly distributed across British universities – a sign of the relative autonomy of universities to appoint as they see fit provided they can meet the staffing bill. Until the 1990s many universities exercised quota systems to balance their accounts: a given university department could only have so many staff of any particular grade, and often only one or two professors. This meant that a large department might have several members of staff at senior lecturer level who had done all the research/admin/teaching and more of what was required to become a professor but were not awarded a Chair because the department already had its professor. This changed during the 1990s in the wake of the RAE when it became clear that staff needed to be appropriately rewarded for their RAE efforts or else they would go to another institution. As Fazackerley (2004b) writes: 'Many in the sector believe that professorships have become a vital tool in the drive to secure the best staff, and in particular to woo so-called research stars. . .' (8) Significantly and typically, given their history of not having a research brief, so-called 'new' universities have on the whole far lower percentages of professors (25 such universities have fewer than 5% professors). However, some of the old and very prestigious universities also have low numbers of professors: Oxford has only 5.4% ('Who has the most chairs?' 8), Cambridge 9.9%. Essex University by comparison has 21.7% professors. This professional structure means that anybody who is a lecturer may carry out all the duties associated with an academic job, including supervising PhD students and being Head of Department.

It is worth noting that the British system has no history of having an *Ausstattung* or similar configuration to go with professorships, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In other words, there is no history of having large numbers of paid PhD students, assistants of various kinds and/or researchers attached to a Chair, and professors do not normally negotiate for that kind of entourage on taking up a chair. The result is that the *Mittelbau* commonly associated with German universities does not exist in British universities and,

[56] Some institutions will use a slightly different title to refer to a teaching assistant.
[57] The terminology used depends on the institution you work in.
[58] The source for this information is 'Want to be a prof? It's a one in ten shot' by Anna Fazackerley and Phil Baty (2004).

much to the amazement of some European and overseas colleagues, university professors in the UK typically and for the most part do not have their own secretaries or any other form of special help – they are expected to do their own photocopying etc just like any more junior colleague. This is to some extent indicative of the prestige, or lack thereof, attached to being an academic, indeed a senior academic. The image of the 'mad professor' is the dominant one in Britain. The concept of the intellectual has no valence, and, unlike in Hungary for instance, where it is possible for someone to declare themselves to be an intellectual by profession – no matter how they earn their money – the same does not hold true in Britain, where being an academic is frequently viewed as 'living in an ivory tower', 'being removed from the real world' and being cranky.

Since an academic's research record has become the overweening criterion by which she is judged, students who want to gain a foothold in academe and academics who want to be promoted, spend significant amounts of time consolidating their research. In many Humanities subjects this means producing publications, and for the most part in Anglophone journals issuing from North America or the UK, or with major Anglophone publishing houses. In the Social Sciences (and increasingly in the Humanities) the ability to attract research funding is also important. However, since publications remain the prime criterion in the RAE, publications are the key criterion against which academic proficiency is judged. In this context, membership of professional associations for example plays no role[59] – it may be an added bonus but will make no difference to whether or not you are employed. Equally, staff do not have to register, as is the case in Spain, with a professional body or ministerial agency in order to gain a post. Furthermore, and this is a distinct advantage in terms of the promotion of interdisciplinarity, pedigree within a particular discipline (i.e. whether or not you gained your degree/s in that discipline etc) is of much less importance than demonstrating that your research profile and record fits the requirements a department is looking for. Thus a woman who did her PhD on women's films may be employed in Women's Studies, or in Media Studies, or in Film Studies, or in a Cultural Studies department, or in a Literature department – if they happen to need someone who is an expert on women's films. This, of course, multiplies students' and academics' opportunities for employment in academe. It highlights the fact that British culture is in certain areas much less concerned with all-round knowledge within a discipline and much more with expertise and specialism. It also has to be said that this degree of movement is more possible in certain subjects than in others – it is less easy to move in/to or from History than it is to move between Women's Studies, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, and Literature, for example. The important point, however, is that a person's first degree or Masters or PhD does not necessarily determine her academic destiny in terms of the discipline in which she will be located as a professional academic. It also means that one does not have to 'follow' a discipline right through one's educational and professional trajectory.[60] Such flexibility has made the establishment of new disciplines and of interdisciplinarity at least theoretically possible.

[59] This is different for subjects that have a vocational orientation such as psychology, medicine, law, accountancy etc. But for the vast majority of Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines this remains the case.

[60] The present author, for example, completed a BA in English, Psychology and German; then did an MA in 20th-Century German Literature, and a PhD in English Literature and Philosophy. Her first jobs in higher education were in German departments, then in English departments, and from the early 1990s onwards she was Professor of Women's Studies in two institutions, then Professor of English, and is now Professor of Gender Studies.

'Externality', the individual's degree of engagement with the wider academic community, is one, albeit limited, criterion for academic advancement. It includes aspects such as editing journals, taking on jobs in subject associations, doing assessments for research funding bodies, and external examining. However, the RAE has led to more and more academics refusing to undertake such duties since they are not recognized in any significant way in the RAE but eat up time and energy. Professional advancement thus depends largely on one's research output and, to a much lesser extent, and only in a few cases, on connections in the wider academic community. In general, advertisements for academic posts are genuinely open – they are not 'fixed' and except for a very small number of cases, there is no such thing as a '*Ruf*' as it is called in German, or call or request to take up professorships or other posts through some form of pre-selection. On the whole the best candidate on the day wins. This may not be the one with the most publications, or the best qualifications on paper; when departments interview prospective colleagues they look for other factors such as collegiality, willingness to take on administrative chores, personability, etc. They may also look for connections in the discipline, judged by who acts as a referee (normally the applicant has to provide the names of two or three academics who can act as referees for her). Where there are many applicants for a post, such connections can become quite important. However, internal candidates, for instance staff on temporary contracts seeking a permanent one, are not necessarily preferred, for example, and in most instances the process is genuinely open-ended. Once applications have been received, departments usually select 5 or 6 of the applicants whom they short-list for interview. Candidates normally have to give an account of their research and publications – usually only to the department and/or the faculty – followed by a formal interview that will involve selected department members as well as someone from outside the department, someone from Human Resources, and, in case of more senior posts, a dean, pro-vice chancellor or vice chancellor. This interviewing committee then decides whom to appoint; nobody else is involved in agreeing that decision; and the decision is communicated to the applicants and the university community. The decision is normally made on the day of the interview and communicated on that day or within a very short period of time, not more than days.

Overall then, the professionalization of academics is independent of ministries and subject associations, is largely based on the individual's research record and to a small extent on the networks they are part of in academe. Professional standing is assessed in terms of one's research record (what, where, how much one has published) and income generation, and on one's participation in the infrastructure of the wider academic community. By far the most prestigious and most important aspect of all of this, however, remains one's research profile.

6. Current debates about the construction of knowledge in the Social Sciences and Humanities and the impact of these on disciplinization.

In 2004 there are no major current public debates about the construction of knowledge in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Most of the most important debates of this kind were had in Britain during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was during that period that the so-called

'canon wars' waged in which academic staff in many Humanities and Social Sciences subjects hotly and intensely debated what constitutes knowledge and the curriculum. It was during that period that major theoretical, methodological, and thematic innovations occurred, opening the terrain for new disciplines, new (inter)disciplinarities, and the overhaul of the curricula of subjects such as Sociology and English Literature. Significantly for Britain, but not specific to it, those wars were partly fought on class terms, on the basis of who/what had been excluded from a canon designed to promote certain forms of assumed scientific objectivity on the one hand (leading to the pre-eminence of quantitative methods in the Social Sciences) and 'high culture by men' on the other (leading to curricula in the Humanities that excluded popular culture, work by women, by diverse ethnic groups, by working-class writers, etc). The contestation of the traditions that had privileged 'objective, neutral' science and 'high culture' led to significant curricular changes both through the introduction and rise of qualitative methods on the one hand, and through the increasing inclusion of a greater range of cultural forms and practices as well as theoretical frameworks in the Humanities. The effect was a significant revision of the curriculum the impact of which has lasted until the present.

However, the key driver in 2004-5 promoting debates about the construction of knowledge in the Social Sciences and Humanities in most European countries, the Bologna process, has played no role in Britain. As an average academic you may never hear Bologna mentioned and there are certainly no nationwide or very public or very extensive public debates about Bologna and its implications. This, as will be explained below, is associated with the fact that in Britain it is assumed that the degree structure about to be put in place through the Bologna process (3-year BA, 2-year MA, 3-year PhD)[61] is in place already, and that we therefore do not need to restructure our education system. In other European countries, in contrast, the re-fitting of 'old' knowledge into new structures that are – usually –shorter than the previous ones, has meant an interrogation of what knowledges are necessary and desirable at what point in the degree cycle, as well as what can/should be left out, and how the various degrees relate to each other. Similar debates such as these were had in Britain during the late 1980s and early 1990s, not because degree length was being restructured, but because universities went from a largely compulsory curriculum (with compulsory core courses and a small number of options) designed at department level to modularization. This involved anatomizing degree courses into smaller units (modules), and deciding whether or not each module was compulsory or optional. The idea was to enable greater flexibility across courses and within courses, thus reducing departmental 'ownership' of degrees. Whilst the vast majority of universities restyled their degree contents into modules, they allowed varying degrees of flexibility within degrees regarding, for instance, the number of modules that are compulsory or that can be taken only if certain prerequisites in the form of other modules previously taken have been fulfilled. The greater the flexibility in terms of student choice, the less emphasis on a progressive, successive curriculum. This meant that learning was no longer conceived of as progressive with building blocks along the way (for instance by following a chronology) but rather, students were increasingly free at all levels to choose what modules they liked with no requirements of previous knowledge or other constraints on choice. The effect of modularization (which universities across Britain, in typical fashion,

[61] The UK has always contested this reading of the Bologna process, stating that the relevant documents only refer to the 'Adoption of a system based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting *a minimum of three years*.' (The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999, at http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no, accessed 10/12/2004.) It is indeed the case that the Declaration itself only stipulates the minimum number of years to be studied during the first cycle but sets no upper limit for that cycle and no time frame for the second cycle.

implemented to varying degrees, from complete freedom of choice to very little) was a sustained debate in higher education over 'dumbing down', the simplification of education through less demanding, less scientifically rigorous, and less intellectually challenging degrees both regarding subjects (a classic example in Britain are degree courses in 'Golf Management') and density of content. A similar discussion can be observed in many other European countries as a consequence of the Bologna process.[62]

The only other debate about constructions of knowledge in the Social Sciences and Humanities that has come to the fore in the last twenty years and has lasted until the present, has centred on the new scientization of the Social Sciences and Humanities by which I mean a rising interest, beginning in the late 1980s, in the notion of science – that is 'hard' or 'natural' sciences – as an object of interest and study in the Social Sciences and Humanities. Increasingly we find science, for instance medicine and biology, recognized and treated not as purveyors of objective knowledge but as constructors of partial, situated knowledges. Feminist critics such as Donna Haraway and Sandra Harding, many of whom are located in the United States, have been pre-eminent in producing critiques of ('hard') science as objective, universally applicable, 'true' knowledge. This development, and its embrace within the UK, has to be understood in the context of the legacy of the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher which heralded the gradual demise of the welfare state, increasing marketization of all aspects of public provision including health care, and the rise of the notion of consumer choice and individual responsibility. From the early 1990s the notion of 'the public understanding of science' was increasingly promoted as 'the public' was 'made' to take more responsibility for its own health and consumer choices in the health care market.[63] Together with the food scares of the 1990s (in particular salmonella and BSE) and the burgeoning number of viral and bacterial infections emerging in public contexts such as hospitals, hotels and schools, these developments promoted a sense of the need for the public to understand the scientific issues underlying medical and health decisions so that 'informed consent' could be given and litigation avoided. It led to numerous publicly-funded research projects on the promotion of 'the public understanding of science' by organizations such as the Wellcome Trust (see www.wellcome.ac.uk/fundedactivities/index.htm), and resulted in a number of interdisciplinary initiatives within universities, often in the form of research centres, designed to loosen the boundaries between the sciences and the social sciences/humanities such as the AHRB Centre for Logic, Language, Mathematics and the Mind at the University of St Andrews in Scotland.

A similar development can be observed in relation to the advances in information technology of the last 15 years. Here a division exists between the 'techies' working on communication technology, and researchers in the Social Sciences and Humanities who have increasingly produced critiques and interventions on the social and cultural meanings of technological changes such as the use of mobile phones and email, of the use of internet facilities etc. Here, as in relation to the 'hard' sciences, we are beginning to see new forms of interdisciplinarity which are pushing the epistemological boundaries of the social sciences and the humanities. However, whilst these disciplines have opened to the interrogations of scientific and technological advances, it is less clear that the reverse has happened, i.e. that social and cultural commentary on the 'hard' sciences and on technology has filtered through into those subject domains and impacted on how knowledge is constructed there. Much research that

[62] The journal *Kvinder, Kon and Forskning*, for example, devoted an entire issue (2/2003) to the topic of 'Universiteter fra Humboldt til Micky Mouse' ('Universities from Humboldt to Micky Mouse').
[63] This includes advances in infertility treatment and genetic engineering, as much as laser surgery for eyes, all forms of cosmetic surgery, smoking and dietary decision-making.

has been conducted on the comparison between the 'hard' sciences and the humanities and social sciences indicates that those socialized into these subject domains inhabit very different frames of mind, with different views of what constitutes knowledge, evidence, scientific enquiry (e.g. Knorr-Cetina, K., 1999; Mallard, Grégoire, *et al* 2002a; Mallard, Grégoire, *et al* 2002b). The debates related to those differences and how one might tackle such differences effectively remain to be had.

7. Interdisciplinarity

In the UK as in many other European countries disciplinarity is understood in a variety of ways (see the German National Report in this series for a discussion of the history of disciplinarity) to refer to coherent bodies of knowledge, methods, methodologies, communities of scholars with attendant infrastructures, and differentiation from other coherent bodies of knowledge regarded as dissimilar. In addition to the term 'disciplinarity', the terms 'multi-', 'inter-,' and 'trans-'disciplinarity are in use. Multidisciplinarity refers to the parallel existence of discrete bodies of knowledge in proximity to each other. Interdisciplinarity refers to the integration of discrete bodies of knowledge with each other to create new knowledge syntheses, and transdisciplinarity refers to knowledge (production) beyond the confines of individual disciplines or groups of disciplines.

7.1 Interdisciplinarity at undergraduate level

Given university autonomy in determining degrees and degree structures, the UK has never had a single system of higher education in which all the degrees were uniform in structure and or/content. What follows is therefore based on what is typical for the Humanities and Social Sciences, with some reference to the more exceptional versions.

Traditionally the most common form of BA/BSc degree taken by students was the so-called *single honours degree*, the word 'single' here referring to a single discipline such as Sociology or English. Most commonly this meant that students took a single discipline for three years, though there was variation in this, with some universities requiring the taking of an additional subsidiary subject for the first, or the first and the second year. Single honours degrees are thus discipline-bound.

In addition to single honours degree, the 1980s saw the rise of so-called *joint honours degrees* and *combined studies degrees*. Joint honours degrees enabled students to study two disciplines, often not to the same depth (e.g. a split 60%/40% between the two disciplines was most common; a split 50%/50% was relatively uncommon). These degrees were usually taught in a multi-disciplinary manner, that is as parallel universes with no attempt to match module contents or create any form of connection between the two disciplines. There are very few examples of truly interdisciplinary undergraduate degrees in Britain in which the curriculum is jointly developed by the disciplines involved to deliver a coherent programme across the two disciplines. Combined studies degrees mostly operated like joint honours degrees but involved usually three or even more subjects. The most common structure within combined studies degrees was one of increasing specialization whereby in Year 1 of the

degree one might take three disciplines, in Year 2, two, and in Year 3 (the final year) either one or two disciplines. Again, on the whole no or very little attempt was made to bring the curricula of the various disciplines together in any way, and students studied disciplines in parallel universes.

One area of major difference in this context were the combined studies degrees offered by adult education/continuing education/extramural/extension departments (see section 4.2 in this report). Here multidisciplinarity often led to interdisciplinarity as continuing education departments themselves contained staff from a range of Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines, and their ideological commitment to the education of disadvantaged groups led them to major curriculum innovation (Williamson 2004), with modules and courses that tried to offer interdisciplinary content. As previously indicated, it was in this context that Cultural Studies in the UK was born.

Transdisciplinarity is not a word frequently used in the UK, and certainly not in the undergraduate context. Whilst there may be pockets of innovation and un-disciplined knowledge and learning in some higher education institutions at undergraduate level, this is the exception rather than the norm.

7.2 Disciplinarity at postgraduate level

Before the 1980s there were relatively few Masters degrees in the UK, and the norm was that those who wanted to become academics and wanted to do a PhD (not an absolute requirement for getting an academic job until well into the 1980s – see section 5 in this report) went straight from their first degree (BA/BSc) to doing a PhD. The 1990s saw an explosion of taught Masters across the higher education sector:

> In England, postgraduate student numbers have risen fastest in new universities and colleges. Between 1995-96 and 2002-03, postgraduate numbers in these institutions climbed by 65 per cent, from 103,701 to 170,855. This represents a substantial increase in the share of the postgraduate population compared with old universities. For overseas postgraduate numbers, the figures are startling. Overseas student numbers at new universities jumped from 10,048 in 1995-96 to 34,700 in 2002-03. Consequently, the new university share of overseas postgraduates almost doubled. Postgraduate taught students are widely dispersed across all universities. (www.thes.ac.uk, accessed 9/1/2005, figures published in the *THES* on 12/11/2004)

This explosion of taught Masters courses was due to a number of factors including

- the rise of labour market entrants with degrees in the wake of higher education expansion which meant that higher qualifications – in the form of Masters degrees – could now be demanded by prospective employers to distinguish the best from the average (indeed, many major employers from the Civil Service to private companies began to offer accelerated career paths to those with Masters degrees);
- the increasing drive to professionalization – here understood as the acquisition of (post)graduate degrees – by certain key public-sector professions such as teachers, nurses, the police force etc as a consequence of the notion that the British workforce was under-educated;
- an increasing sense that in a more and more precarious labour market only qualifications and more qualifications could ensure lifelong employment;
- increasing labour market competition as jobs got scarcer and more precarious;

- universities' need to diversify their markets and income streams as student numbers at undergraduate level were 'capped' (ie every university was set a limit of the number of undergraduate students it could recruit thus limiting each university's income opportunities from undergraduates to a certain figure), leaving only the postgraduate market open.

The effect was that numbers of Masters degrees rose dramatically (though it has to be said that to this day their number is very small compared to undergraduate degrees, with a ratio of perhaps 1:10, i.e. one Masters degree for every ten undergraduate degrees – and student numbers are even smaller – typically in 2004-5 a university will have between 4-8 students on a Masters programme; if they have more they are exceptional and in the Humanities and the Social Sciences there are very few Masters courses where student numbers reach double figures). In 2002, for instance, the Arts and Humanities Research Board's (AHRB) Postgraduate Review highlighted that more than 2000 Masters courses fell within its subject domains.[64]

Since Masters courses typically take 1 year to complete full-time, they of necessity have to be specialized and can not cover the entirety of a discipline. Masters courses thus on the one hand are sites of greater specialization, often focusing on a sub-area of a discipline such as 'Sociology of the Family' or '20th-Century Literature'. However, the understanding that disciplinary coverage cannot be the aim of a Masters degree also led to a certain freedom from disciplinary constraints; many Masters courses were initially set up through bottom-up initiatives by academic staff who wanted to teach their research specialisms at advanced level. Since Masters courses were often not well supported in resource terms (in part a function of their low student numbers), such courses are also usually team-taught, and the accommodation of various research specialisms by staff within one Masters programme led to innovative, interdisciplinary co-taught programmes, often not recognized on staff workloads or timetables but highly appreciated by the staff and students who enjoyed the intense engagement with particular topics outside narrow disciplinary frames. Thus, paradoxically, Masters programmes became and remain a site for realizing the potential of interdisciplinary and innovative work in academe, their time-constraint-induced specialised nature leading to freedom from disciplinary boundaries and enabling work at once more specialized and more inter- or transdisciplinary. Masters courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences thus do not tend to have uniform titles or content; rather, they reflect the specialist knowledge dealt with within a given course. This is, of course, not the case for degrees in social work or other vocationally oriented Masters programmes where courses have to comply with the requirements of professional bodies. But for the vast majority of Masters courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences this continues to hold true. Students who take Masters courses that are not vocationally oriented (as is the case with most Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines) tend to do so both because they are interested in the specific content of their chosen Masters programme and because they hope to get a better job as a function of having a higher qualification, a hope born out by the correlation between level of qualification and labour market participation rates across the European Union (Table 16):

Table 16. Male and female employment rates (25 to 59 years), by education, 2000

	Finland	France	Germany	Italy	NL	Spain	UK	EU-15
Primary								
Men	72.2	75.3	73.0	76.9	82.7	80.4	74.8	77.7

[64] See http://www.ahrb.ac.uk/strategy/pgreview.htm, p. 4 (accessed 05/11/02).

Women	64.9	53.7	51.7	32.8	49.5	35.1	60.0	47.1
Secondary								
Men	82.0	87.3	84.1	84.4	92.4	86.7	88.6	86.2
Women	74.3	71.0	69.7	61.7	74.2	57.8	77.3	69.4
Higher								
Men	87.3	85.9	87.9	83.5	90.0	81.1	89.2	86.9
Women	84.3	81.8	82.0	77.0	84.9	73.6	84.8	81.8
Source: Eurostat (2002) *La vie des femmes et des hommes en Europe. Un portrait statistique, Données 1980 – 2000*: 181.								

In 2004-5 the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), which provides funding for a select number of the best Humanities students in the UK at postgraduate level, introduced a distinction between a professional (vocational) Masters and a research Masters programme. Given the ever-increasing demand on its finite resources and its focus on the 'renewal of the academic profession' it sought to distinguish between Masters degrees that train for research, and Masters degrees that train for a profession, particularly in Art and Design and the Creative Industries. Students applying for AHRB funding must now apply either to the research Masters or to the professional Masters scheme, with the knock-on effect that universities have to decide whether to designate their Masters degrees as professional or research-oriented, an orientation that has to be expressed either through explicit links to industry and work placements or through explicit research training. Although this new distinction has no explicit disciplinary specificity, here as in its other award schemes the AHRB utilizes discipline-based panels, and fit between staff and student research interest is one important criterion in selecting students for funding. This means that opportunities for interdisciplinarity have become somewhat more reduced.

Overall, however, the greatest opportunities for inter- and/or transdisciplinarity in the UK occur at postgraduate level; as indicated above (see section 5) there is no expectation that a student not intent on a specific vocational training will complete a postgraduate degree – either Masters or PhD – in the discipline in which s/he may eventually get an academic (or other) job. This is particularly true of the Humanities and Social Sciences, and has greatly contributed to the curricular mobility of those disciplines over the last twenty-five years which, since the great canon debates of the 1980s, have undergone enormous curricular changes. PhD students unlike in other European countries do not have to 'register' in any way in a given discipline; membership of subject associations is usually open and for the most part does not involve discipline-specific selection criteria; gaining academic employment is more a function of fit between the specialisms a department is looking for and the knowledges a prospective member of staff has (as evidenced in his/her publications, teaching and learning experiences) as well as their willingness to extend their professional horizons – often someone will be taken on because they have a particular specialism *and* they profess to be willing to teach something not immediately part of their specialism. However, it has to be said that the degree to which one is expected to teach outside one's area of specialism varies by discipline, institution and size of department; the rule is that the larger the department, the less likely you are to have to teach outside your specialist area, and 'old' (= pre-1992) universities are less likely to require teaching outside one's area of specialism than the 'new' (= post-1992) universities. Clearly, teaching beyond a single specialist area offers one means of achieving greater disciplinary range (whether within a discipline or multi-, inter- or trans-disciplinarity). However, few feel confident to venture beyond the confines of their specialism or discipline, not least because early educational specialization in the UK means a lack of even basic knowledge across a range of science areas. Additionally,

the professional incentives to venture beyond disciplinary boundaries have considerably reduced in the wake of the discipline-bound Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) and the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).

7.3 Disciplinarity and research

UK higher education policy has served both to fuel and to delimit disciplinary range within research. For most universities, for whom the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) represents a significant income stream, the dictates of the RAE have become paramount in determining their institutional research policies and, in consequence, what they will and will not allow their academic and research staff to do in the area of research. The RAE is fundamentally an exercise focused on the output of the individual researcher within a given disciplinary unit. In their discipline-based returns (the forms the universities submit) universities have to account for individual members of staff by individual output along a hierarchy of outputs. This hierarchy, though to some extent subject-specific,[65] centres fundamentally on publications in high-ranking international peer-reviewed academic journals and with highly reputable publishing houses. The way in which successive RAEs have been conducted has varied over time but has increasingly sought to combine quantity (a certain amount of outputs – currently 4 publications over a period of 7 years) with quality (determined to a considerable extent by where something is published). Whilst quantity is predetermined for all disciplines equally in terms of the number of desirable outputs per member of staff, quality is decided upon on a discipline-by-discipline basis, with each discipline having a non-published hierarchy of what constitutes the best journals in that discipline (see section 4.1 of this report). Publishing as a historian in a renowned geography journal is thus problematic because geography journals are less well known amongst historians and therefore do not count as much as the best history journals. In terms of individual researcher returns the RAE has thus led to increased and fairly rigid disciplinization since those most highly esteemed in a discipline are also those most deeply embedded within it in terms of where they publish. That disciplinization is reinforced by the difficulty of submitting collaborative work or inter- and transdisciplinary work; the former complicated by the focus on the individual researcher, the latter by the absence of panels with relevant expertise.

Between individual RAEs, HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council of England) has refined its RAE methodology. Those refinements have taken place in parallel with universities seeking to gear up to the next RAE by trying to develop institutional research policies that would facilitate compliance with RAE assessment criteria. Final assessment methodologies have repeatedly not been published until one or two years before the actual RAE, at which point – given publication timetables etc – it is virtually too late to do anything to improve institutional and individual RAE performance rates. Universities have therefore tried to make intelligent guesses regarding upcoming RAEs, partly by assuming that they will not be very different from the previous one, and partly by seeking to interpret HEFC pronouncements on subsequent RAEs as HEFC has worked up its methodology for the next exercise. Thus following the 2001 RAE, there was some indication that interdisciplinary and

[65] In some disciplines, particularly in the 'hard' sciences, journal articles are considered more important than monographs, though in others the reverse is the case. Monographs by and large count more than edited books, and chapters in books count virtually nothing compared to articles in journals. The preferred return for a given member of staff is therefore a combination of monographs and journal articles, with all other forms of publication being of minor or no interest. There has also been much discussion about practice-based research in subjects such as Music, Theatre Studies, and Art and Design where definitions of what constitutes practice-based research are still under discussion.

collaborative research centres might gain extra *kudos* in the next RAE, and many universities started to encourage staff to coalesce into such research centres. At the University of Hull, for example, this led to a process of groups of staff competitively tendering for university funding to set up university-wide, interdisciplinary research institutes, with three groups (the Institute of Applied Ethics, the Wilberforce Institute, and Hull Environment Research Institute) eventually emerging as centres where the university would concentrate its research funding. The University of Manchester similarly encouraged the setting up of interdisciplinary research centres and a number of such centres were founded in 2003 and 2004. Selectivity both within and between universities regarding support for research has thus become the norm, with both discipline-centred research and interdisciplinary research being pushed through two different and to some extent contradictory RAE-driven mechanisms: individual researcher profiles on the one hand, and the establishment of interdisciplinary research centres on the other. This has to be viewed in a context where at the beginning of 2005 all that has been published regarding the assessment criteria for the next RAE (the cut-off date of publications for which is 2007 – the RAE itself will take place in 2008) is the focus on individual researcher profile and four publications. The potential significance attached to research context – which includes interdisciplinary research centres – remains unclear and unspecified, and the sustainability of these centres is therefore in question unless they can raise sufficient money to become self-sufficient, a position that is extremely rare in British academe (see section 2.1 of this report).

In sum, the work of researchers in British academe is significantly determined by the RAE and its foci. These have shifted slightly over time but on the whole focused on the individual researcher within a given discipline. This discipline focus and the concentration on the discipline-based output of the individual has had a conservative impact on possibilities for interdisciplinary research. Simultaneously, and contradictorily, the notion that research environment and interdisciplinary research centres might become one (more significant) assessment criterion for the next RAE have led to the concentration of researchers in some (particularly the ‘old’ universities and those universities where research income constitutes a significant part of the total income) interdisciplinary research centres. However, their viability and/or sustainability is not guaranteed since it is determined by funding. Whilst research provides the academic level at which interdisciplinarity is most likely to occur the funding mechanisms attached to research and in particular the RAE have rendered interdisciplinary research problematic.

7.4 Interdisciplinarity as an effect of bridging figures

As in many other European countries, in the UK too there are a number of theoreticians whose work is widely used across the Humanities and Social Sciences. For the most part this takes the form of farming those theoreticians’ work for particular concepts such as Judith Butler’s work for the notion of ‘performativity’ which has now gained wide currency across a range of disciplines. Similarly, Michel Foucault’s description of disciplinization as a discursive effect has become a much used concept across a range of disciplines. The work of these theoreticians is interestingly often not in itself interdisciplinary but Humanities or Social Sciences based. It is, however, more commonly theoretically than empirically based, thus suggesting that its transportability is a function of its abstraction. Typically, the conceptualization of particular issues strikes a cord in a range of disciplines. This has without doubt promoted the use of certain theoretical terms as common currency across a number of Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines but it is not clear to what extent these figures

have resulted in interdisciplinary approaches within or to disciplines. Rather and more commonly, a parallel use of certain concepts in a range of disciplines has occurred.

A more promising opening up of disciplines within the Social Sciences and Humanities has occurred as a function of the appropriation of research methods across disciplines. That flow, however, has – as is usually the case – not been even[66] but rather has entailed the appropriation of Humanities methods by the Social Sciences (witness the rise of visual methodologies, narrative methods, auto/biographical methods etc within the Social Sciences as evidenced in the increasing number of texts on this topic published by Social Sciences publishers such as Sage) whilst the reverse has not occurred. This is partly a function of the longer tradition in the Social Sciences of explicitly addressing issues of method as an integral part of one's research – an articulation that is still uncommon in many Humanities disciplines (literature PhDs, for example, rarely if ever include a methodological section as part of the thesis). The effect of this appropriation of qualitative methods from the Humanities in the Social Sciences, together with the shared use of theoreticians' work that bridges disciplinary boundaries, has led to a convergence of views of how the world is constructed across the Social Sciences and Humanities, a move away from the notion of objective knowledge to one of partial, situated knowledges. This might be considered an interdisciplinization effect.

8. The impact of the Bologna process on disciplinization

In 2004, the Bologna process showed little impact on disciplinization in UK higher education. This is related to a number of factors including:

- universities' autonomy in creating courses, degrees and departmental structures;
- the specificities of the issues addressed by the Bologna process which call for comparability and transparency of processes and procedures rather than course content
- the mechanisms and bodies through which the UK government has engaged with the Bologna process which, by and large, do not deal directly with matters of disciplinization
- the higher education reforms that have dominated the UK since the 1980s and which have already effected a number of the outcomes envisaged in the Bologna Agreement.

In the following paragraphs, each of these points will be addressed in turn.

8.1 University autonomy

As previously indicated universities in Britain are autonomous organizations responsible for their courses and curricula without direct interference from any ministry regarding content of degrees. The government exercises indirect control over the disciplines through the Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) and Research Assessment Exercises (RAE)[67] which have been undertaken at regular intervals since the second half of the 1980s, and which are conducted by discipline, thus creating problems for disciplines not listed as part of these assessments

[66] See Harding (1993) for the uneven flow of knowledge production/development.
[67] For a list of the subjects included in the RAE see the Higher Education Funding Council of England website www.hefce.ac.uk.

(see the introduction and section 4 of this report for further details). The government also exercises indirect control over the disciplines through the units of funding it allocates to universities for the number of students it teaches in a given discipline. These units of funding are banded (or graded)[68] to account for the amount of resource needed to teach them, with (laboratory-based) subjects such as medicine and chemistry attracting higher funding per full-time equivalent student (fte) than so-called classroom-based subjects such as the Humanities and the Social Sciences are. These financial drivers can – as is currently the case – lead universities to close subject areas and departments that are unable to attract sufficient students to meet the costs of maintaining those subjects and departments and, as indicated elsewhere, subjects such as chemistry have suffered greatly from this situation in 2004 with multiple departments around the country closing as a consequence of low student recruitment and funding problems. The overall effect of the TQA and the RAE has been a conservative one of greater concentration within traditional disciplines and subjects such as Women's and Gender Studies, and indeed Cultural Studies, increasingly being (re)absorbed into Sociology departments (see section 4 of this report).

8.2 Focus of the Bologna process

The original Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999[69] focused on six objectives:

- The adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
- The adoption of a system of two main cycles of study (under-/postgraduate);
- The establishment of a European-wide system of credits (European Credit and Transfer System – ECTS);
- The promotion of mobility for students and staff within Europe;
- The promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance;
- The promotion of the European dimension in higher education.

With the exception of the last objective which might be viewed as addressing the content of degree programmes directly (depending on how one understands the phrase 'the European dimension'[70]), these objectives do not address issues of disciplinization directly, and to the extent that that issue is addressed by national governments as part of the Bologna process, this is a matter of national interpretation rather than explicit EU decree.[71] Unsurprisingly, the *UK National Report on the Implementation of the Bologna Process* (2004) stated: 'As all higher education institutions in the UK are autonomous bodies, the extent to which higher

[68] The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) identifies 4 broad groups of subjects for funding purposes (www.hefce.ac.uk, accessed 5/12/2004):

Price Group	Description	Weight
A	Clinical stages of medicine, dentistry courses, veterinary science	4
B	Laboratory-based subjects (science, pre-clinical stages of medicine and dentistry, engineering and technology)	1.7
C	Subjects with a studio, laboratory or fieldwork element	1.3
D	All other subjects	1

[69] See http:/www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/nqf/bmb/bologna.html for the text of the Bologna Declaration.

[70] See Griffin 2004: 250-1 for a brief discussion of the problematic of the phrase 'the European dimension'.

[71] England's Quality Assurance Agency has produced a commentary entitled 'Bachelors, Masters and Bologna: The Bologna Declaration – November 2000' on the Bologna Declaration which engages interestingly with the status of that Declaration, highlighting under the subheading 'issues' the unmanaged status of that Declaration and process and stating that 'the Bologna Declaration is similar to a European Union directive, but lacking both the force of law to ensure implementation and any judicial machinery for resolving disputes.' (View at http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/nqf/bmv/bologna.htm.). This makes interesting reading in view of the alacrity with which many European countries, whether or not they belong to the European Union, have thrown their weight behind its implementation.

education institutions engage with the European dimension through curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes, integrated programmes of study, training and research is essentially a matter for individual universities and colleges to decide for themselves.' (8) It simultaneously and contradictorily interpreted 'the European dimension' as referring predominantly to partnerships such as student and staff exchanges rather than course content as evident in the next sentence: 'The Bologna process gives impetus to encouraging the European dimension in all aspects of higher education. The UK Socrates-Erasmus Council works tirelessly to encourage partnerships and mobility through promotion of the EC Socrates-Erasmus inter-university programme within higher education institutions and more widely in the UK.' (8) This is an interesting interpretation, especially in light of the fact that whilst the UK has had no problems attracting students from diverse European countries, it has had great trouble in getting English students to go abroad with the result that some universities in Britain now exercise embargos on Erasmus-Socrates links because they attract far more students than they themselves send out, leading to a resource imbalance. Little has been done in the UK, a country with an extremely poor and declining track record in foreign language teaching, to incentivise home students to go abroad (Juhasz 2005).

8.3 The mechanisms and bodies through which the UK government has engaged with the Bologna process

There has been a relatively low-key engagement with the Bologna process in the UK at the level of day-to-day academia, a level determined by the sense that one of the aspects of the Bologna process that exercises other European countries the most, namely the restructuring of degree cycles into 3 years for a BA/BSc degree, 2 years for a Masters degree and a further 3 years for a PhD, are according to the UK National Report 'a traditional and integral part of the UK higher education system' and 'The UK has not therefore had any need to alter current structural arrangements as these are broadly in line with Bologna recommendations.' (http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no; UK National Report Document, p. 3) In fact, closer examination of the diversity of the British higher education system including, for example, the fact that full-time Masters degrees in Britain normally take 1 year, not 2; the so-called Foundation degrees which are 2-year, vocationally oriented sub-degree awards; and Bachelor degrees that take four or five rather than three years because they include a year's work experience or a year abroad, all suggest that Britain needs to undertake some considerable work to bring the British education system in line with the Bologna process. However, as is typical for Britain's sceptical and half-hearted engagement with the EU, these realities are met, within the UK National Report, both with acknowledgment and with an insistence that 'The role of Bologna should be to provide a framework which allows support for European universities and colleges *to play to their individual strengths*' (p. 1; emphasis added) and that the Bologna process '*allows for diversity*' (p. 2; emphasis added), thus exonerating the UK from the need to undertake the more strenuous and potentially far-reaching changes in higher education that Bologna arguably demands from the UK system.

In response to the Bologna process, the UK government has set up a working and reporting structure designed to facilitate the implementation of Bologna. *The UK National Report on the Implementation of the Bologna Process*, on which this section draws, details the UK line of command in relation to that implementation. It indicates that the governmental Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has overall responsibility for higher education policy and that 'DfES officials work closely with Government officials . . . on matters related to the Bologna process and also with sector bodies and other stakeholders across the UK.' (p. 1) Among these other bodies it mentions the Universities UK forum (UUK; a body of university vice chancellors), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

which has the function of assuring the quality of higher education programmes, the UK Socrates-Erasmus Council, the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre, the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP; a forum of college heads); and the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN). These bodies are all significantly removed from the gross of the academic community that would need to execute and live changes in higher education consequent upon the Bologna process, and the major academic newspaper published in the UK, the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, has not reported in any significant way about Bologna. Of 45 articles[72] on the matter which have appeared since the Bologna process was set in train in 1999 (that is in a period of five years in which this weekly newspaper has had hundreds of editions), 18 were devoted to other EU countries' reactions to the Bologna process, with titles such as 'EU is urged to adopt Blair way on access' (4/7/2003); 'French students revolt' (13/13/2002); 'Swiss overhaul sets pace for neighbours' (18/10/2002); 'Italy backs off from reforms' (12/4/2002); 'Spain adopts Bologna model' (2/11/2001) etc. Given this limited engagement with the Bologna process, it is easy for the average academic in the UK to be partly or wholly unaware of the Bologna process, and not to have any sense of its potential or actual impact. An article written by Graham Caie, Head of English and Scottish Language and Literature at the University of Glasgow on 'The Bologna Declaration – Does it concern UK universities?' is in its title alone symptomatic of the generally distanced attitude from the process that is manifest in Britain. With only a very small amount of irony the opening sentences declare: '[The Bologna Declaration] . . . is the implementation of a BA/MA system akin to that in the UK and USA. About time, some might say, that foreigners appreciated "our" sensible system!' (1)[73] Small wonder then, that there is such limited engagement with the Bologna process. Such impact is, in fact, mostly felt when one goes abroad within Europe, and encounters both bewildered and frustrated academics from other European countries who find themselves the objects of educational reforms that they regard as significantly influenced by Anglophone education realities when, in actuality, those realities themselves are somewhat removed from the frameworks envisaged by the Bologna process.

The most nuanced response to the Bologna process in Britain to date that I have come across is the report by the Quality Assurance Agency, prepared for its November 2000 conference on 'Bachelors, Masters and Bologna' (see footnote 50 for details). It argues forcefully that the view of some that 'the Bologna Declaration as a process that will have little impact on the UK' is 'both naïve and complacent'; that '[t]here can be no automatic presumption that UK standards will be adopted as a European benchmark', and that 'the UK must seek to influence [the Bologna process] *to protect and advance its own interests*.' Among these interests and therefore concerns the QAA lists the fact that British MAs take only 1 year full-time, and that failure to impress upon European partners that 'length of programme of study' is not a sufficient indicator of level of attainment - the implication being that learning-outcomes driven indicators as opposed to time taken to achieve these outcomes are, from the British perspective, the most desirable – may result in a devaluing of UK Masters programmes in Europe and elsewhere abroad.

8.4 Education reforms already in place in the UK prior to the Bologna Declaration which relate to the Bologna process

During the 1980s and 1990s UK higher education underwent a number of reforms that inaugurated changes that have stood the UK in good stead when the Bologna process got

[72] This information is based on a web search of the THES website (www.thes.co.uk), accessed on 5/12/2004.
[73] View at http://www.english.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/general/publications/newsletters/newsissue3/caie.htm.

under way. These reforms were driven by Conservative agendas of declining public funding, greater accountability of public institutions, value for money, and responsiveness to market needs. They included most prominently

- Modularization
- Semesterization
- The Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA), and the production of national subject benchmark statements
- The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)

Of these modularization was the most important in promoting interdisciplinarity. Modularization, undertaken in Britain from the late 1980s, occurred (in line with universities' autonomy) at a diverse pace and to different degrees in the various universities in the UK. It meant the division of degree courses - the content of which had mostly been compulsory – into sub-units of varying lengths (typically one semester long) with varying credit ratings (not compatible with the ECTS). Modularization had two dimensions: sub-dividing courses into credit-rated units so that those credits could be transferred, and allowing greater freedom of choice for students beyond departments, disciplines and specific courses. The underlying idea was to allow greater mobility across disciplines, within universities and across universities. This led to extensive debates about whether or not learning should be progressive – extreme forms of modularization which required no prior knowledge at any stage of a degree suggested that no deepening of knowledge and accumulation of knowledge beyond the additive ever took place. It also in part and for the same reasons inaugurated the 'dumbing-down' debate. Overall, modularization was meant to prise courses loose from departments, reducing the power of departments in 'owning' degrees but at the same time allowing movement of students that was intended to save small departments with few students from going under by enabling them to offer modules to students from outside the department. It was in part this context which enabled the establishment of Women's/ Gender Studies because always having been at least a multi-disciplinary if not interdisciplinary subject, it could draw on modules with a gender content from across a range of departments which is how in many cases Women's Studies courses were first set up in the UK (see section 4.1 in this report).

However, modularization did not turn out to be exactly as expected since students ultimately tended to choose modules within a discipline or closely related rather than taking two modules in engineering together with modules in literature, for example. Modularity did not lead to significantly more innovative module combinations by students, and in 2004-5 the UK operates a modified modularized system whereby virtually all higher education institutions offers their courses in the form of modules but some modules are compulsory and require certain kinds of prior knowledge and others are optional. There is little encouragement for students to select modules from across a range of disciplines. Instead, departments actively encourage students to stay within the department's subject area as 'money follows students'. In effect, disciplines have re-coalesced into degree courses that are modularized. The moment for re-thinking degree course content and for encouragement of interdisciplinarity thus effectively passed and was not seized upon.

Two key developments of the 1990s cut straight across the intentions of modularization: the Teaching Quality Assessment and the Research Assessment Exercise. These have already been discussed elsewhere (see section 4.1) so suffice it to say here that the effect of their operation *by discipline* severely undercut any opportunities for interdisciplinarity. Both forms of assessment involve peer review, with peers being defined as senior academics in a given

discipline. When a team of TQA assessors is selected to assess the provision in English or Sociology in a university, for example, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) which undertakes both the training and the selection of such assessors attempts to match assessor specialisms with the programme delivered in a given institution so that if you have an English Department that focuses on literature from the 18th century onwards, the QAA will select a team with specialisms matching that period and not send a medievalist. Institutions also have the right to refuse assessors and whilst this is rarely exercised. A mismatch between assessor expertise and course content delivered in a given institution can be a reason for such a refusal. In the RAE every assessing panel is made up of discipline specialists and whilst the panels in their definition of their disciplinary competence and circumference tend to pay lip-service to interdisciplinarity and a general openness to divergent research (see section 4.1), universities and departments operate with the assumption that unless there is a close fit between the conventional canon of a given discipline and staff research within it, they will not receive a good rating and therefore lose out financially. Staff in some universities in the UK are now told on an individual basis by their 'line managers' (heads of department; directors of research; deans) what to research and what not to research in order to achieve the best possible match between a discipline and the staff researching within it. This has made interdisciplinary research extremely difficult and many staff working in divergent areas effectively work 'double shifts', trying to produce publications that are RAE-able within the discipline in which they will be submitted as well as continue work in areas which do not fit. There are also now increasing numbers of scholars who refuse to do anything but the narrowest form of disciplinary research since it is clear that anything else is not rewarded. The RAE has thus had a severely distorting and limiting effect on possibilities of interdisciplinarity.

Overall, both the TQA and the RAE have served to consolidate the discipline-based structure of British higher education. Both exercises were set in motion well before Bologna, and have had effects similar to those described by countries currently engaging in the Bologna process.

In terms of the Bologna process the UK has in place a number of very advanced forms of the structures that Bologna envisages. This pertains in particular to the basic degree structures and to quality assurance systems. ECTS are not well understood or embedded, and the so-called diploma supplements, which detail what modules a student has taken and what credits s/he has received, are in the making. In the UK the Bologna process has not served to promote interdisciplinarity or new forms of knowledge exploration. It has also not had the impact observed elsewhere of raising debates about the nature and substance of disciplines.

Conclusions: Disciplinary barriers between the social sciences and humanities

1. In the UK universities are autonomous institutions which determine their admissions criteria, course contents, and staff appointments without direct interference from the state.

2. The state broadly regulates higher education institutions through legally binding acts of state that determine student numbers, funding allocated to universities, how universities account for their activities, and similar matters.
3. Universities are free to determine their internal disciplinary and other structures such as the grouping together of disciplines.
4. Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences is funded through discipline-based research bodies, mainly the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). These profess to be open to interdisciplinary approaches but their peer-assessment-based, discipline-based assessment panels raise questions concerning the plausibility of the claims made. Additionally, universities receive research funding from the funding councils based on the cyclical Research Assessment Exercises (RAE). These are conducted by discipline, and thus do not foster interdisciplinarity. They are also problematic for new subjects not recognized by the funding councils.
5. Higher education is quality-assured through cyclical Teaching Quality Assessment (TQA) exercises which, like the Research Assessment Exercises (RAE), are discipline-based. This hampers the establishment of new disciplines and undercuts opportunities for interdisciplinarity.
6. The introduction of modularity in higher education from the late 1980s onwards was designed to enable greater mobility across disciplines, departments, and institutions. This anticipated mobility did not occur at any of the levels envisaged. It did however enable the establishment of certain interdisciplinary courses such as Women's Studies. As a tool, it was the most effective at enabling interdisciplinarity.
7. The establishment of new disciplines is *au font* a bottom-up exercise driven by academics committed to a new area of enquiry. Establishing new courses and curricula is relatively easy at British universities since it is mainly a matter of demonstrating market demand and ensuring that sufficient student numbers are available. Market demand is the over-riding criterion for establishing new courses.
8. The establishment of new courses is entirely a matter for individual universities themselves - normally, no ministerial involvement occurs in the establishment of new courses within universities.
9. It is, by comparison, much more difficult to have disciplines recognized by the funding councils and the Quality Assurance Agency, the key bodies in this process since they control the TQA and the RAE, and without subject recognition, disciplines cannot participate in these exercises and thus have difficulties establishing a public profile for themselves. No new discipline has managed, via their subject associations and their affiliated academics and institutions, to lobby effectively for their inclusion in the TQA and RAE. This is the case for Women's/Gender Studies, a new discipline which awards degrees at all levels (Bachelor, Masters, PhD) in British universities, has very large numbers of researchers, and modules and courses in most UK universities.
10. Fitting into higher education funding structures is as key to the sustainability of disciplines as is the ability to attract students and research funding. Domains such as 'Continuing Education' with multi-disciplinary departments, predominantly part-time students who do not necessarily want to take award-bearing courses, and courses that do not obviously relate to the labour market make such domains vulnerable to cuts and closures.
11. The establishment of professional academic identities is primarily a matter of the research profile an academic develops and do not entail ministerial intervention. Academics are not required to register within a given discipline and do not have to pursue a single discipline from their first degree to their last academic job. This flexibility makes

academics in the Humanities and Social Sciences relatively mobile, and allows for shifts that promote interdisciplinarity. University appointment procedures focus on the fit between an individual's research and teaching profile and the demands a given department has at the point of appointment. No university-external intervention occurs.

12. The Bologna process has had little resonance in the wider UK academic community, not least because it is assumed that the restructuring of higher education degrees envisaged by that process does not need to occur in the UK as the UK already has that structure. In consequence the main driver of debates about knowledge construction and production in the Humanities and Social Sciences across Europe, the Bologna Agreement, has had no similar effect in the UK and there have been no significant debates on this topic in the UK. Similar debates were however had during the 1980s and 1990s when modularization was introduced.
13. Bologna has had no impact on disciplinization in the UK. This is a function of its lack of overall impact, driven by a sense that the UK does not need to adjust its higher education system to achieve a closer fit with the rest of Europe.
14. Interdisciplinarity is both promoted and constrained within UK higher education. Early educational specialization, beginning in secondary school, and leading from the point of 'A' levels (the equivalent of the *Abitur* or *baccalaureate*) through the higher education system onwards to fewer and fewer subjects being taken, means that an early focus on a single discipline is the norm. Such specialization is reinforced by the TQA and the RAE which are conducted along discipline lines and require staff to be identified with one particular discipline. Interdisciplinarity is most evident at Masters level and in the context of research, at Masters level because the specialization required of a 1-year full-time course is such as to enable an un-disciplined approach to the content of the Masters, and in the context of research because since 2002 in particular there has been an RAE-related drive to establish interdisciplinary research centres. The viability of the latter must be in question since the role that research environment will play in the RAE 2008 is still unclear.
15. Overall, the incentives for interdisciplinarity in UK higher education and research are very limited indeed. The system operates on the basis of increasing specialization, and all higher education reforms from the 1980s onwards, with the exception of modularization, have increased the pressure to identify with a discipline.

Appendix 1. Educational qualifications structures in the UK, 2005.

Educational Environment		Age	Level	Academic Qualification	Vocational Qualification
Key stages 1 + 2	Primary School (or infant, then junior school)	4/5 – 11*		Standard Attainment Tasks (SATs) at age 7 and 11	
Key stages 3 + 4	Secondary School	11 – 16	Level 1 GCSE Grade D – G Level 2 GCSE Grade A* - C	SATs at age 14 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) at age 16	NVQ/GNVQ These are vocational qualifications ranging from levels 1 - 8
Secondary School or Sixth Form College or Further Education College		16 – 18	Level 3	AS at 17 A2 at 18 (Combined called A level) Advanced level	
University or other institution delivering higher education such as some Further Education Colleges		18 – 21	Level 4 or Certificate (C) Level 5 or Intermediate (I) Level 6 or Honours (H)	Undergraduate Bachelor Degree – usually 3 years	
University		21+	Level 7 Masters (M) Level 8 Doctoral (D)	Postgraduate Masters – usually 1 year full-time PhD usually 3 years full-time	

- In some authorities the move up to secondary is at age 13 with 'middle school' from age 9 – 13.

- Information from http://www.qca.org.uk/493.html National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

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