

AGM Chairs Report – Reflecting on 2017-2020

In June 2017, the Executive Committee (EC) met for our annual two-day planning session. During the session, trustees discussed the newly launched Ten Year Strategic Plan and set goals for the coming three years. As the new Chair, I was keen that we agreed clear goals that were challenging but within reach. Examining each area of PSA activity, trustees worked in small groups to determine these objectives, the sum of which then became a working business plan for next three years. As my term comes to an end, I want share with the membership those goals and review our accomplishments. Below I note successes in each area, as well as ground not yet fully covered and ‘bonus’ achievements not in the original plan.

Perhaps the most important financial decision taken by this EC was the purchase of a property for PSA Headquarters. Located in Camden, it is named after the first woman PSA Chair Elizabeth Meehan. The modern office design includes plenty of space for our staff, a kitchen, and two meeting rooms which, when rented out four times a month to the private sector, will pay for the mortgage (a mortgage which is less than our previous rent). This bricks and mortar investment, alongside the new contract with SAGE, places the PSA in a very strong financial position for the future.

Other achievements include: the launch of a new website and membership data system, increased outreach to A-level teachers and students, raising the profile of teaching and learning in the HE political studies profession (including a joint international conference with BISA, APSA and ECPR), various successful high-profile events to raise the profile of the expert research of members (including two large and fantastic Annual Conferences and new Specialist Group public events), as well as the establishment of the PSA/British Library Lecture Series. Of particular significance to the profession has been the embracing of equality and diversity initiatives across the PSA, including the appointment of Omar Khan as a non-voting trustee, and the launch of the Diverse Voices Doctoral Scholarship Fund aimed at facilitating more BAME doctoral students in political studies.

In the last AGM in 2019, I remarked that the EC was truly working as a collaborative, supportive team and any accomplishments were indeed products of an enthusiastic team effort. While no AGM was held this year, my comments would have reflected a similar truth. We have accomplished a great deal in three years. There are jobs that still need attention, but it is important to have a moment of reflection on the journey travelled before handing over to a new, refreshed leadership to take the organization through the next stage of the journey and forward to the many exciting goals ahead.

The outline below notes the original goals for the three years are in black and an update on each in blue.

1. Membership

a. Membership survey

The Hon. Sect., Paul Tobin, working with other trustees, conducted a survey of membership regarding member benefits. From this, it was clear that, among other key findings, the website was not serving members well.

b. Strategic review of membership packages and benefits offered

Following the survey, the EC agreed a new set of membership packages, including a revised membership fee structure as well as establishing a range of new membership options. This enabled us to reach out to more teachers, students and the general public to share the importance of studying politics.

c. Increase individual membership

In some areas, membership has grown but more work needs to be done to increase the range of membership types and, particularly, to increase core academic membership. CEO, Michelle Doyle Wildman, and the new Hon Sect., Fiona MacKay, have some great ideas and goals for membership promotion and growth going forward.

There are two membership groups worth noting here. The Early Career Network has grown and established regular events both at the Annual Conference and year-round training events. We are grateful to the ECN leadership for their hard work and to trustee Stuart Wilks-Heeg who serves as a liaison with the ECN. The former Teachers' Network was not quite reaching a broad range of teachers so it was dissolved and individual teacher memberships (£40) replaced by Schools memberships where, for £25, up to ten teachers per school can be PSA members. The schools membership is now growing steadily and the teaching and learning team have a new range of services planned for this group of members (see point 3 below).

2. Publications

a. Closer collaborations between journal editorial teams and PSA staff

Journal editors/journal staff, the Political Insight editor and PSA Communications Officer now work together more closely. This collaboration has led to a better working relationship and joined-up communications including blogs, social media, prizes and the annual conference. During this period, collaboration also included working closely with EPOP as they renegotiated their journal contract with Taylor & Francis.

b. Increase journal impact factors

On the whole, journal impact factors have increased and all new editorial teams have clear, feasible targets for growth. Journal editors have worked closely with SAGE to produce some outstanding publications. The journals remain the PSA flagship for core member outreach and service.

c. Re-evaluate Political Insight

In an effort to grow PSA outreach and promote expert research of members, Political Insight increased from 3 to 4 issues/per year. In 2017 there was a

review of feasibility of PSA producing Political Insight, and the decision was taken to wait until the new SAGE contract was negotiated in 2019. With that now in place, a second review is in process to consider moving PI to PSA production by 2023. If that proves feasible, PSA will receive £70k from SAGE to support the Diverse Voices Scholarship.

d. Feasibility of new PSA OA journal

Whilst the SAGE contract included the possibility of a PSA Open Access journal, after much discussion and expert advice, it was decided that a new OA journal was not the best option. Instead, if the need arises, the PSA may transfer some of the journals to OA. This will maintain the excellent reputation and good standing of current PSA journals.

The publishing landscape changed significantly with Plan S and will continue to do so. Nevertheless, in 2019 the PSA signed a similar five year contract with SAGE (2021-2026) which secures a solid baseline income, plus additional royalties, contributions to the Annual Awards, to academic prizes, the Annual Conference and, importantly, £30k for the Diverse Voices Scholarship (with the potential for a further £70k for Diverse Voices, as noted above). In recognition of our social and environmental responsibility, the PSA has also agreed to move the majority of subscriptions to online only as soon as possible. Claire Dunlop has served as Chair of the Publications Sub-committee for two years and the contract negotiations, alongside all other successes in publications remit, has benefitted tremendously from her leadership.

3. Teaching & Learning

a. Strategic review of membership offer for teachers

Rose Gann and Kate Mattocks and relevant PSA staff review the T&L offer regularly and propose developments to ensure a relevant offer for teacher members. This past year a Q-Step student assisted with the most recent review, and the April EC heard the findings of the most recent teacher survey. More teacher- and student-friendly benefits have increased, including a blog-writing competition sponsored by the Financial Times, training with Parliamentary Education Team, and a regional teachers event held in the Midlands on Brexit.

b. Engage with policy changes and new curriculum of post-16 and HE

Trustee Rose Gann and the T&L team were key in engaging with the A-Level review, particularly regarding the case for inclusion of feminism in the ideologies curriculum. Rose continues to take the lead on this and, with her term ending in June 2020, the PSA must take care not to lose the institutional knowledge she holds as the founder and champion of PSA engagement with post-16 education.

c. Feasibility of PSA accreditation of UG teaching

A proposal was presented about the possibility of developing a professional accreditation scheme but the EC decided it was not feasible and could

overlap too much with current QAA. However, it did launch a discussion about the potential for coordinating and enhancing our current training in various areas into the possibility of a Continuing Professional Development programme (see 3.i below).

d. Raising the profile of T&L within the PSA/HE profession

Much has been accomplished towards this goal: the establishment of the T&L Network; the regular inclusion of T&L panels at the PSA Annual Conference and the incredibly successful T&L conference organized in conjunction with APSA, ECPR and BISA. John Craig, Donna Smith and Jamie Roberts deserve PSA appreciation for that conference and the work they continue to do to integrate T&L as a core element across the PSA membership. When trustee Donna Smith rotated off the EC, it was agreed that a trustee would serve as a T&L liaison and Peter Allen did a great job serving in this capacity. This arrangement is similar to the trustee liaison with the ECN and ensures integration and support for the T&L Network.

e. Produce data of benefits of studying politics (e.g. skills development)

This report and other resources are now available online for teachers, with plans in works for more once the latest teachers' survey is reviewed.

Research & Impact

f. Engage with development and implementation of REF 2021

The PSA/BISA REF Working Group, chaired by Prof. Martin Lodge, successfully fed into the REF process with many of those nominated by the group successfully appointed to the sub-panel. The PSA supported the appointment of former PSA Chair Prof. Charlie Jeffrey as sub-panel Chair and, subsequently, similarly supportive of the promotion of Prof. Vivien Lowndes as the new sub-panel Chair. The working group has now completed the second round of nominations. Martin Lodge should be commended by the PSA and BISA for such a fine job. He had the perfect qualities of diplomacy, confidentiality, resilience and good humour throughout the process and was immensely respected by the whole of the joint working group.

g. PSA to take the lead in working with other Learned Societies strategically to benefit social sciences

The PSA has actively engaged with the Academy of Social Sciences and others Learned Societies during this period. The PSA took the lead in supporting the strikes held by UCU members with two public statements, which prompted other Learned Societies to follow our lead. The PSA has been fully engaged with the Plan S discussions regarding open access including joining a delegation from AcSS to various meetings with UKRI and with leading publishers. Claire Dunlop has spent great deal of her time working on issues around OA and should be highly commended for this.

AcSS holds regular meetings for CEOs of Learned Societies to share news and good practice. The PSA takes a lead in these and the new CEO, Michelle Doyle Wildman, has taken an active interest in ensuring the PSA has a strong voice amongst Learned Societies. In 2017/18 the PSA supported the COST Action survey of the profession with a financial contribution. The PSA has worked with UK in a Changing Europe to produce two studies of Brexit and with Democratic Audit endorsing its latest publication. The PSA worked with the British Academy on a quantitative skills training project. The PSA regularly co-hosts outreach events with the British Academy and the Institute for Government which highlight members research expertise.

h. Increasing international visibility of PSA

The PSA continues to work closely with APSA and now has a formal memo of understanding in place regarding guaranteed conference panels. The CEO of APSA and President of PSAI regularly attend the PSA Annual Conference and were due to participate a discussion of “The State of the Profession” at the HoDs breakfast event at this year’s conference. The PSA regularly supports the APSA affiliated British Politics Group with their annual mini-conference. The PSA and PSAI produced some exceptional work around Brexit in the form of publications, blogs and conference panels. Feargal Cochrane took the lead in liaising with PSAI and working on Brexit as well as “blogs and vlogs” marking the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. The PSA Chair was invited to participate in a panel of six national PSA groups from Europe at the Italian Political Studies Association in 2018, and is due to participate in a similar panel around E&D issues at IPSA in Lisbon 2020 (now 2021). Finally, the PSA IPSA delegation, expertly led by Yvonne Galligan, facilitated the election of Prof. Umut Korkut to the IPSA Executive Council – the first immigrant to the UK, and the first openly gay man, elected to the Council.

i. Feasibility of accredited training or CPD

The ECN holds regular training events on topics such as the REF and TEF. The HoDs conference has been transformed into a wider Department Leadership Conference focused on training and sharing of good practice. The Total Exposure event ran for three years (2016-2019) and last year included media training. There remains scope for developing more training events and possibly for a broad ranging CPD programme, which could be a small source of income for the PSA.

j. Research links for political scientist in residence/research internship

The EC agreed that a political scientist in residence, as noted in the Strategic Plan, was limited in that it only provided place for one member at a time. However, another opportunity did arise. The Annual Lecture took place in 2017 but was then replaced by a collaborative effort with The British Library resulting in the establishment of a “PSA/BL Lecture Series” with up to four lectures per year. These have featured Prof. Francis Fukuyama; Jess Phillips

MP; Glenda Jackson MP; Irish civil rights leader Bernadette McAliskey; BBC journalist Bridget Kendall; Prof. Danny Dorling; and NATO Comms Director Mark Laity. A particularly excellent session brought together a range of young people to talk about the election, with trustee Andrew Mycock playing a key role in making this event a success. All of these lectures are available online as a resource for the public and professionals.

The British Library collaboration opened up the possibility of PSA Research Internships (of a few weeks), as BL are keen to have more research engagement with their various politics-related archives. This opportunity did suffer from operational changes at the PSA and the BL, but there is now opportunity for this to be explored in more detail.

4. Communications

a. Increase media opportunities and visibility of PSA and members

PSA continues to provide well-respected media briefings around elections and, the last couple of years, around Brexit. Outreach to the public and media has been extended through the annual Specialist Groups *What's Happening* event, which attracts high-profile speakers and substantial public audiences. Trustees Arianna Giovannini and Peter Allen along with former trustee Joanie Willett deserve a huge thank you for their work with almost 60 PSA Specialist Groups.

b. New metrics for measuring outcomes of media work

CEO Michelle Doyle Wildman has championed metrics to measure outcomes for media engagement and has evidenced an impressive upswing of engagement, particularly on social media.

c. More media training for all members

The PSA offered some media training for Total Exposure participants and ECRs and it has the scope to offer more in future, particularly for those groups who do not normally put themselves forward for media engagement.

d. Website review and update

Beginning in 2018, the PSA engaged website developers and, as a result of the membership survey, and various discovery sessions, the EC agreed to a four-phase plan with phases 1 and 2 to be implemented by the Annual Conference in 2019. Much of the new website has now been launched and is a vast improvement. The EC, due to various staffing changes, decided to pause the development for a few months, take stock and then plan the remaining phases 3&4. The EC agreed that following this brief pause, the aim is to complete the website development by the end of 2020.

e. Review PSA events to consider reach/impact

Over the last couple of years the PSA has extended the reach of its Annual Conference to include more practitioners and the local public. The British Library Lecture Series was successful in raising our public profile and an interest in general membership of the PSA. In 2017 the PSA held its first

undergraduate conference. Since then it has grown significantly and the increased outreach to UGs has been welcomed by academics and UG alike. Trustees Matt Wood and Kate Mattocks have been key in promoting and developing the PSA outreach to undergraduates.

Following each major event, the PSA staff team hold a 'wash-up' review to consider the impact and operational success of the event. For example, the PSA has regularly reviewed the planning, reach and impact of the Annual Awards. In addition, the PSA has discussed the possibility of fringe events at Party Conferences in collaboration with local universities, as a way to connect the expert research of members to party political members and policy makers.

5. Equality & Diversity

a. New E&D strategy –

The Strategic Plan included an across the board E&D Strategy. This has been operationalized throughout various PSA activities including travel grants (recently renamed in honour of Vicky Randall); production of a new prize handbook with regulations regarding gender balance of judges; Anti-harassment statement for the Annual Conference and all other events; as well as the promotion of E&D as a priority for Specialist Groups. In the autumn of 2017, the PSA hired a new Development Officer with responsibility for E&D. The Annual Conference now offers a range of E&D provision including childcare and well-being and mental health spaces. Both the Departmental Leadership Conference and the Specialist Group Chairs meeting incorporated training on gender inclusivity and mental health well-being for staff. Former trustee Meryl Kenny deserves a special thank you for championing the E&D agenda throughout her tenure as trustee.

b. Athena Swan for Learned Societies

Athena Swan has yet to approve guidance for Learned Societies and the PSA remains dedicated to this process once in place.

c. Measurable diversity data targets

The PSA membership data system in place in 2017 made it impossible to have a clear understanding of the diversity of membership. However, alongside the new website, we now have a new data CRM system which should enable the PSA to have a better tool for data analysis. A promotional campaign has encouraged members to complete appropriate E&D data, and this will facilitate a better understanding of PSA membership demographics. It is worth noting that the June EC 2017 was the first ever to have a majority of women trustees. Since that time there has been more representation of ECRs as trustees, but more work needs to be done on BAME inclusivity across the profession. In recognition of the latter, the Diverse Voices Chair's Commission met to highlight potential areas for growth including the doctoral scholarship and the need for a broader range of schools outreach.

d. Equality impact Assessment for new initiatives

All new initiatives, as well as current activities, must demonstrate inclusivity such as a diversity of representation on panels, range of membership involvement and audience outreach. The new Diverse Voices Doctoral Scholarship Fund and the changes in teacher membership are two new initiatives that have made, and will make, a long-term impact on representation in the profession.

e. Increase inclusion of under-represented groups by 5% based on diversity audit

Given the lack of baseline data, no formal audit was possible however there are indications that the PSA is reaching a more diverse audience. The two Annual Conferences (2018 and 2019) had a significantly higher number of women and BAME participants, keynote speakers and panels on diversity issues in the profession. A Specialist Group on Race, Migration and Intersectionality was established in 2019. The Diverse Voices Scholarship, in conjunction with attention to a broader educational pipeline, should help to increase BAME representation in the profession. The first Diverse Voices Scholarship is planned for a student beginning study in 2021/2022. With some indications that more than 90% of the UK political studies profession is white, change may be slow but the PSA remains determined to quicken and facilitate that change.

6. Finance, Governance, Staffing

a. Appoint and induct a new CEO

In 2017, the PSA saw the appointment of a new CEO. Unfortunately this was not the right fit and operational efficiency did suffer somewhat. In 2019 the PSA appointed Michelle Doyle Wildman as CEO. She has already had a positive impact in professionalising PSA operations and taking the PSA strategy into the future.

b. Review of staff resourcing

The 2017 staffing review led to the appointment of two Development Officers: one working primarily on T&L and one working primarily with Specialist Groups and E&D projects. In addition, the PSA appointed a full-time administrator. Recently, with the launch of the new CRM system, the PSA appointed a membership administrator. There have been staff changes in finance, communications and events. During this time, the Chair and Vice-Chair provided supervision for the CEO, with the trustees informed about that process and all decisions agreed by the EC.

c. Review and update policies for internal corporate governance

The June 2017 EC meeting included trustee induction, and each June meeting trustees revisited this material. In 2018 and 2019, new trustees had individual inductions with the Chair between elections and the June meeting.

In 2017 the new CEO was tasked with reviewing the following policies: risk register, recruitment, grievance and HR; expenses; DBS checks; pay & remuneration. In 2019, the new CEO began a process of policy review and is working through these efficiently with the goal to identify a range of policy structures needed and approved by the EC.

In June 2017, the PSA EC agreed to re-appoint Claire Ainsley, now Director of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, as a trustee. Originally appointed as a full trustee for a one-year term in 2016 by Matt Flinders, Claire was not elected in the formal trustee elections but the EC saw the benefit of having a voice from another NGO in all organizational considerations. At the same meeting, the EC voted to take to the AGM an addition to the bylaws to appoint a non-voting trustee from the NGO sector for a three-year term to act in this advisory capacity. This was approved by the AGM in 2018. Claire's term ended in late 2018 and recently Omar Khan, former Director of the Runnymede Trust and now Director of the Centre for Transforming Student Outcomes, was appointed as a non-voting trustee for a three-year term.

In June 2017, the "mid-Exec", which normally included the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasure and Hon. Sect was renamed the Senior Leadership Team and met between EC meetings. The SLT includes the named officers, the E&D lead and similar to the "mid-Exec" is open for any trustee to attend. In January 2020, I circulated a paper on the organisational practices developed over time and relationship between trustees and the staff team. The new leadership team of Roger Awan-Scully and Claire Dunlop will take forward their vision for the PSA and organisational good practice.

A note of thanks should be expressed to Prof. Matt Flinders who served as PSA President for the last three years and represented the PSA in admirable style.

d. Review location of PSA office/purchase office

In the autumn of 2017, the PSA began the process of locating and purchasing a property as our headquarters. This goal was achieved and the relocation to Camden happened in the summer of 2018. This was a solid investment for the association, securing a good rate for the mortgage where the monthly payment is less than the PSA paid previously in rent. The location is fantastic and therefore any resale of the property will easily make a good return on the investment. The design of the new office is such that the two meeting rooms can be rented out to members, other NGOs and to the private sector. If rented to the private sector four times a month, it would cover the mortgage repayment. The new PSA office was named for the first women PSA Chair, Prof. Elizabeth Meehan, and christened with her two sisters cutting the ribbon.

e. Review reserves policy



The Reserves Policy was reviewed before the building purchase and should be reviewed regularly to ensure a stable financial future. Overall the PSA remains in good financial position. Yvonne Galligan, PSA Treasurer, offered the PSA much needed financial oversight and attention to detail as the PSA embarked on significant capital spending projects such as the website and new offices. She has been a steady, calming voice as the EC took risks and met financial goals – thank you.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve the profession.

Very best wishes,

Angelia Wilson, Chair

April 2020