

Teaching European Studies: Student Forum Seminar Report

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*This year's Student Forum professional development seminar focused on teaching approaches to European Studies, write **Quincy Cloet** and **Pawel Pustelnik**. Reporting on the event, they outline the progression of the day and some of the main points from the discussions.*

The aim of the recent UACES Student Forum [January 2016 Seminar](#) in Edinburgh was to explore the different teaching methods available to PhD students, early career researchers and postgraduate higher education teachers. Picking up on discussions on the challenges of teaching European Studies from the [2014 Seminar](#), this year's event gave special attention to the effect of the current crises on teaching approaches.

In the morning, the first panel started off with a debate about the variety which exists in teaching environments across Europe. With speakers coming from Rome, Glasgow and Budapest, the audience was struck by the notable differences in systems. Those with experience teaching at multiple universities testified to the remarkable variety with regard to the freedom to develop your own seminars and introduce original approaches to teaching the EU.

From the round table, it emerged that the department and course convenor have a large influence on the options and approaches available to a teacher. One question which arose was whether more could be done to bring in similar training methods. Alternatively, should we embrace the difference which comes with various teaching traditions in all European countries?

The second panel focused on the extent to which Europe's crises should be subjects of the European Studies curriculum. Is 'crisis' in itself a useful analytical tool to comprehend the European integration process? Speakers expressed strongly contrasting views. On the one hand, Tim Oliver (London School of Economics) challenged the audience to figure [dissident theory](#) and disintegration more prominently in the field of European Studies.

On the other hand, Carmen Gebhard (University of Edinburgh) observed that the term 'crisis' has been used so frequently to describe the EU, it no longer holds any analytical value as a tool for teaching European Studies. The range of views revealed the difficulty of balancing the long-term process of European integration against the short-term focus and eventful nature of European politics in our teaching.

In the afternoon, the panels began with smaller group discussions addressing presentation and delivery skills, designing modules and assessments, as well as teaching innovations and publications. The speakers offered insights into the purpose of module

design, tips for presenting with confidence, and gave the participants tangible tools to implement in their teaching assignments.

The break between the two afternoon panels was occupied with the Student Forum Committee election. The candidates present gave a brief presentation, while those not in attendance had prepared short videos, all setting out their case for standing to be a Committee Member. The voting followed.

The final panel of the conference focused on career opportunities after the PhD, featuring Ben Leruth (University of Kent), Nick Wright (University College London), Steven Robinson (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Feng Cunwan (Wuhan University). Focusing on their careers within academia, Ben explained his experience in writing project proposals, as well as securing a postdoc and lectureship/tenure-track position afterwards, while Nick explained the intricacies of attaining a teaching fellowship.

Feng, who is a visiting fellow at the University of Edinburgh, spoke to careers outside Europe, giving his insights on the Chinese job market for PhD graduates. He underlined that non-Chinese applicants have a competitive advantage in applying to the leading research institutions in the country, given recent internationalisation efforts. Steven spoke about his decision to become a civil servant after the completion of his PhD, assuring participants that there are plenty of opportunities beyond academic career paths.

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