

Hansard Alumni eNewsletter

April 2008



Hansard Scholars Programme News

Full Marks from the British Accreditation Council



We are delighted to report that the Hansard Society has been awarded the maximum four year term of accreditation from the British Accreditation Council (BAC)! As many of you will be aware, the past year has seen major changes by the UK Government in terms of visa requirements for overseas students in the UK. All higher education institutions need to be accredited by spring 2009 and only those institutions on the register will be able to receive international students. Needless to say, the changes were of paramount importance for the Hansard Scholars Programme. As part of this process, the British Accreditation Council, in association with the Home Office, is inspecting every institution that requested accreditation. Earlier this year, the Hansard Society hosted a two-day inspection visit by senior BAC representatives, during which the visitors met Scholars, senior administrative and academic staff from both the Hansard Society (including Professor The Lord Norton of Louth) and the London School of Economics. Feedback from the BAC was excellent. The inspectors were extremely positive and particularly impressed with the Programme's academic quality and pastoral arrangements for the Scholars. They found the organisation's management to be "impeccable".

Scholars Update

The new year brought the Spring 2008 Hansard Scholars to London. This time the group was made up of undergraduates and postgraduates from the USA, Canada, Poland, Czech Republic, New Zealand, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Australia. The Scholars found themselves at the heart of political developments through internships in the Houses of Parliament, Government departments (Dept for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Social Exclusion Unit) and NGOs such as Friends of the Earth. In February, they took advantage of Westminster's parliamentary recess to go on a political study visit to Edinburgh where they were able to enjoy the beautiful spring sunshine as well as the architectural, historical and cultural wonders of the Scottish capital before the Wednesday seminars. Michael Clancy OBE, Director of the Law Society of Scotland, kicked off the Wednesday sessions by giving a riveting talk about the implications of Scots law and devolution. He also treated the Scholars to a fascinating account of Scottish

history from marauding Vikings and William Wallace to the ever-so-slightly controversial Scottish Parliament. John Henderson, Head of Briefing at the Scotland Office, followed this with a discussion on the role of the Office in the Scottish political process. Kenny MacAskill MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, ended the day's seminars with a fascinating Q&A session on what it's like to be in government in Scotland – particularly as a member of the pro-independence Scottish National Party. A great week was had.

[“Where are they now?”](#) Megan Thomas, USA (Autumn 06)



Megan Thomas, a graduate from Marist College in New York, participated in the Hansard Scholars Programme in Autumn 2006. A great example of our globe-trotting Alumni, Megan is now living in China where she is working for Save the Children in Beijing. While participating in the Programme, Megan worked in the House of Commons with Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales) where she learnt first-hand about the fascinating politics of devolution in the UK. Having kept in contact with her former colleagues, Megan even ended up meeting again with some of them in China! On her travels, she's also bumped into lots of people who also studied at LSE - some of whom were there when Megan was in London. It's a very small world...

[Scottish Scholars!](#)

The inaugural Hansard Society/ University of Edinburgh Research Scholars Programme has recently concluded. Based on the hugely successful programme run with the London School of Economics, the Programme (run in spring and autumn) involves participants studying Scottish politics at the world-famous University of Edinburgh and undertaking a high-profile internship in the Scottish Parliament. Full details can be found on our website at: www.hansardsociety.org.uk/scotland

[Alex appointed Deputy Chief Executive](#)

Alex Boughton has been appointed as Deputy Chief Executive of the Hansard Society. In addition to maintaining responsibility for the Hansard Scholars Programmes (in London and Edinburgh), he will also be supporting the Chief Executive in strategic development and planning.

Other News from the Hansard Society

The Lords are speaking to the people of Britain



As part of an innovative project being organised by the Hansard Society, nine Peers from the House of Lords are taking part in a blog aimed at publicising the work of the House of Lords. The [Lords of the Blog](#) site, which is now live, allows members of the public to ask Peers about their lives and the fascinating workings of Parliament's upper house. The unique site has already attracted many comments from the public on issues ranging from reform of the House Lords reform to reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Hung Parliament - the Impact on British Politics



There has been increasing speculation that the next UK general election might produce a Parliament in which no single party hold a majority of seats – a 'hung parliament'. This is a phenomena that few within Westminster will have had personal experience of, or even remember, the last instance being in 1974. [No Overall Control? The impact of a 'hung parliament'](#) on British politics, is a timely new publication from the Hansard Society highlighting the challenge facing Parliament, the political parties, in the event of a hung parliament at the next election. The book provides an edited collection of essays from distinguished commentators, academics and parliamentarians from individuals with first hand experience of power sharing. It includes examples, both international and from the devolved UK institutions, of what happens when no single party has control.

Audit of Political Engagement 5

The Hansard Society's annual [Audit of Political Engagement](#) has become an important contribution to debate about the public's view of the political process since it was first published in 2004. Each Audit measures the nature and extent of political engagement and reveals where views have changed – and where they remain constant. It offers a yearly snapshot of political knowledge and engagement in Britain. Audit 5 includes a special section on constitutional issues to discover how much the public know about how our constitutional arrangements operate, which areas they are satisfied with and which they think are ripe for reform. This report is a valuable source of information and debate for all those who are concerned with the health of our democratic system.



Operation Black Vote wins Hansard Society Democracy Award



Operation Black Vote's Welsh Assembly Shadowing Scheme has won this year's prestigious Hansard Society's Democracy Award which celebrates individuals or organisations which have advanced understanding or parliamentary democracy. The Award was presented by Peter Riddell, Chair of the Hansard Society as the [Channel 4 Political Awards](#) ceremony in London on the evening of Wednesday January 23.

Referendums: What are they good for?

17 June, 6.45–7.45pm, House of Commons

Speakers: Dr David Butler (Oxford University), Chris Huhne MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Justice), Steve Richards (*The Independent*), Clare Short MP & other speakers tbc

This meeting will discuss the highly topical issue of the [role of referendums](#) in the British political system. Can they be used in a representative parliamentary democracy without usurping the power of our elected representatives? What issues are appropriate to be put to a referendum? How can we ensure that referendum outcomes are not skewed by political or financial resources?

For further details on any of the stories in this newsletter, please email: study@hansard.lse.ac.uk

It's always great to hear from our Hansard Alumni and do please keep us posted on what you're up to.