The Education subject group has received a score of 22 out of 24 in the latest Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) review. "This is a very gratifying result, in particular given the extremely difficult year that USIE has just been through," says Dr Fions Leach (pictured below), the new director of the University of Sussex Institute of Education (USIE).

"We were under financial review, engaged in a radical re-configuration of our teaching provision, and were without a director for two terms. It is a credit to USIE staff and to the excellent support from the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU) that we achieved such a high grade in these circumstances," she adds.

The QAA review team repeatedly praised the quality of teaching and learning on the programmes under review and they awarded full marks to those categories that assess the quality of the student experience: curriculum design; learning resources; student support and guidance; and student progression and achievement. Even the recent refurbishment of the top floor of the Education Development Building, with its new concourse and tea bar, came in for praise.

The QAA was established in 1997 as an independent body designed to review the quality and standards of higher education in the UK. Education is the last subject group at Sussex to have a QAA review under the current system, which is widely seen as having placed an excessive administrative burden on universities.

In March this year the then Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett MP promised "lighter touch arrangements". Specifically, high-scoring departments from the last round of assessment may be exempt from external review in the next round.

These proposals were welcomed by UniversitiesUK, the body representing university vice-chancellors. Then in August this year the QAA's chief executive John Randall resigned, prompting further speculation about the future of university inspections.

Sam Riordan from the TLDU has been involved with no less than eight QAA reviews since October 1998. "It is a hugely time-consuming process," says Sam (pictured above). "It produces remarkable levels of effort and commitment - I've seen people work late into the night to make it work," she adds.

QAA reviews involve a panel of academics from other institutions but from within the same subject discipline who visit for four full days of meetings with staff and current and former students.

"The contribution of both current and former students to the process is often underestimated, but it can be critical to the review in altering the agenda," says Sam.

Although the future of such reviews is now under question, it seems likely that subject review will remain in some shape or form.

"Despite the disruption and the workload, many subject groups have found new approaches and solutions through being reviewed," says Sam. "External reviews can provide a very useful lever for change."

Fiona clearly seems to agree on this point. "We have emerged from the review with renewed self-confidence and with new ideas to take forward in a period of quiet consolidation," she says.

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In bed with Victoria & Albert

A Sussex art historian has been working with the world-famous Victoria and Albert Museum in London on a major new display that opened yesterday (22 November).

Maurice Howard, Professor of Art History in CCS, has acted as senior subject specialist for the V&A's new British Galleries, which feature 3,000 objects telling the story of British art and design from 1500 to 1900. The galleries are the museum's largest project for over half a century.

"This display is a very new way of looking at a selection of the best and most interesting of the museum's enormous holdings of British decorative and applied arts," says Maurice. He has consulted with the museum on the 16th- and 17th-century sections of the display, covering the Tudor and Stuart periods, as part of the ongoing exchange of expertise between the Art History subject group at Sussex and the V&A.

Textiles, tapestries, clothes, furniture, ceramics, silver, paintings, scientific instruments and personal effects trace the development of style and innovation through the centuries.

"We have been working with curators and education officers on interpretative devices for all ages," says Maurice. "This work has included the writing of labels, wall panels, audio-visual material, online catalogues and parts of the flagship book, Design and the Decorative Arts: Britain 1500–1900."

The opening of the British Galleries coincided with the re-establishment of free admission to the Victoria and Albert Museum, which is located on Cromwell Road in South Kensington.
New books by Sussex authors

Alex Colas (Lecturer in International Relations and Politics, AFRAIS) International Civil Society Polity Press, £50.00 (hardback), £14.99 (paperback) The publisher says: "This book provides a critical survey of recent approaches to the study of civil society and international relations, presenting an alternative historical and sociological account of the interaction between these two spheres."

Jon P. Mitchell (Lecturer in Social Anthropology, CCS) Ambivalent Europeans: Ritual, memory and the public sphere in Malta Routledge, £30.00 (hardback), £16.99 (paperback) The publisher says: "Ambivalent Europeans examines the implications of living on the fringes of Europe."

Richard Roberts (Reader in Business History, SOC) and David Kynaston (Visiting Professor of History, GRC-HUMS) City State: How the markets came to rule our world Profile Books, £17.99 (hardback) The Financial Times says: "Roberts and Kynaston put the city squarely at the focus of Britain’s national life for the last 20 years."

All titles are available from the University Bookshop. If you are a Sussex author and have a book coming out in December, let us know on ext. 8888 or by email at Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.

Coming soon to a body near you: Biocompatible polymers ...

A company at the forefront of medical research was named last night (22 November) as the winner of the University / Business Partnership Award in the 2001 Sussex Business Awards.

Now in its 13th year, the award is sponsored by the Universities of Sussex and Brighton and is given for the most effective partnership between a business and a higher education institution in Sussex.

This year’s winner is Biocompatibles, a Surrey-based biotechnology company which is the only European company specialising in a groundbreaking method for coating devices such as contact lenses and heart implants with chemicals similar to those found naturally in human cell membranes. The process helps to reduce adverse reactions with the body’s immune system.

“It’s been a very successful inter-university and academic-industrial collaboration,” says Steve Armes, Professor of Polymer Science in CPES. Steve has been working with both Biocompatibles and a group led by Professor Andrew Lloyd at the University of Brighton on new types of so-called ‘biocompatible polymers’ that could potentially be used to administer drugs – such as to combat cancer – more effectively.

A joint patent application was filed last month by Biocompatibles and Sussex for an improved process for making these polymers (long chain-like molecules).

Sussex student Emma Lobb, now a teacher at Lancing College, first discovered this process as part of her DPhil, which was part-funded by Biocompatibles.

Using this process, the Sussex team has discovered how to design and make biocompatible ‘block co-polymers’ (polymers with two types of chain joined together). One of the chains is biocompatible and the other can be made to be either soluble or insoluble in water.

By altering the pH of the solution, these block co-polymers can be made to cluster together in water to form tiny particles – known as micelles – that will not be attacked by the body’s defence mechanisms. These micelles are just 17 nanometres across in size (1 nanometre equals one billionth of a metre) and can be observed only using an electron microscope. The micelles can be used as microscopic capsules for drugs not normally soluble in water.

“Five to ten years, this method could be used commercially,” says Steve, whose work on polymers has many other applications from space science to improved paint and agrochemicals.

The first account of this work was published earlier this year in the Journal of the American Chemical Society. Steve will be talking about his research in his Professorial Lecture on Tuesday 4 December at 6.30pm in the Chichester Lecture Theatre.

Research funding opportunities – postdoc fellowships

More details of these and other research opportunities are available from the Research Services Division. Please contact your Research Support Officer for more information. For an extensive listing of funding opportunities, see REFUND on the RSO website, www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/research/refund.shtml

EU Quality of Life
Last call for collaborative RTD proposals & thematic networks. Research areas: food, nutrition & health; environment and health; ageing population; bioethics; sustainable agriculture; and socio-economic evaluation of life sciences & health care. Technologies. Deadline: 31 January

Royal Society USA Research Fellowships
Applications invited from US nationals living in US who have a PhD. Aim is to encourage scientists to undertake the highest quality research in UK labs for extended periods of up to 18 months. Deadline: 1 February

Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships
Four years’ funding is available for researchers in the natural sciences. Applicants should have a PhD or equivalent postdoc experience. Applications from female researchers particularly encouraged. Deadline: 8 February

EU Information Society
Last call for collaborative RTD proposals & thematic networks. Research areas: intelligent systems and services for the citizen; new methods of work; multimedia content and tools; essential technologies and infrastructures; future and emerging technologies. Deadline: 21 February

DFID ESCOR programme
Now accepting applications for small projects of less than £100,000 to address general economic and social research on development issues. Eligible costs include staff, overheads, travel, overseas subsistence, minor equipment and workshops. No deadline
VC's voice

Student funding is being reviewed by the government. There are two dimensions to the issue: maintenance costs and tuition fees. In 1998, means-tested tuition fees were introduced for full-time undergraduates and, at the same time, means-tested maintenance grants were replaced by loans. Although tuition fees have received more attention in the headlines, the ending of maintenance grants has had bigger effects. Students from less well-off backgrounds do not have to pay tuition fees, but they do have to take out loans to cover their living costs. The prospect of debt may discourage some from continuing their education. At a time that universities and government are working together to widen participation in higher education, a review of student funding is welcome and timely.

Of course, the best outcome would be substantial extra public funding for student support and for universities. But the government has indicated that additional funding for student support is not available, and it would be unacceptable to reduce the funding of universities in order to transfer money to student support. So benefits to some students have to be at the expense of others. The present student loan scheme charges a subsidised interest rate. Removing the interest rate subsidy and using the proceeds to provide maintenance grants to students from less well-off families would be a progressive change, providing help to those students who need it most, with the costs falling on graduates.

I do not believe that tuition fees are objectionable in principle. Graduates earn substantially higher incomes on average than non-graduates. It is reasonable to expect some of the cost of higher education to be borne by those who benefit personally. But payment is better deferred until after graduation, when the individual is enjoying the financial benefits of their higher education, rather than levied as an up-front tuition fee.

A 'graduate tax' is one form of deferred payment: with graduates paying a higher rate of income tax for perhaps 25 years after graduation. Such a scheme has severe disadvantages, not the least of which is that the proceeds of a graduate tax flow to the Treasury, which is under no obligation to return them to higher education. A better form of deferred payment is an income-contingent loan scheme, in which both maintenance costs and tuition contributions are paid after graduation and only when the graduate's income reaches a certain level.

So here is my blueprint for better student funding. Abolish up-front tuition fees. Restore means-tested maintenance grants. Remove the interest-rate subsidy on student loans, and roll both maintenance costs and tuition contributions into a single income-contingent loan scheme. There are no perfect or painless reforms in a resource-constrained world, but these changes would create a fairer and more effective system.

Turning Japanese

Imagine being able to design your own home, with everything from the number of bedrooms and bathrooms you desire to the type of building material you would like to be used.

In Japan this practice is commonplace, as SPRU's Dr James Barlow and Dr Ritsuko Ozaki discovered during a Department of Trade and Industry-funded mission last year.

The results of their findings currently form the basis of an exhibition, Customer Focused Housing in Japan, at the Building Centre Trust in Store Street, London, until 21 December.

James and Ritsuko, together with representatives from leading British housebuilders, found that Japanese housebuilders have adopted an approach that embraces the entire customer relationship. Not only is great attention paid to capturing customers' housing requirements before the sale is made, but firms revisit buyers in the years following the purchase to learn about their experiences of the home.

"Your existing home can be demolished and your new home can then be built around your particular requirements, using high-quality pre-fabricated materials," explains James. "Firms may offer 300 standard designs in terms of elevations and floor plans, which can then be adapted by the customer.

"Despite the lack of space in Japan, a new house in Japan is about 20 per cent larger than a new house in the UK and the building is of a much higher standard."

Developing international education

The Centre for International Education (CIE) within USIE has been playing host to three groups of Sri Lankan educationalists on different professional-development programmes.

The first course, on Curriculum Design and Development, ran during September and October for a cohort of 15 from the National Institute of Education in Colombo, sponsored by a World Bank grant.

Another group, of 22 college presidents and vice-presidents, visited for a two-week course on Teacher Education Management and Leadership; and the third group are on a split-site two-year Diploma/MA programme on Primary Mathematics Curriculum Development.

Pictured are participants in the two-month course, convened by Professor Keith Lewin and Dr Yusuf Sayed. This covered a range of issues from models of curriculum through the UK National Curriculum to case studies of curriculum change elsewhere in the world. It involved input from CIE staff, educational consultants and invited curriculum leaders from local schools. Embedded in the skills-based programme was a sustained period of local school observation and placements.

The participants developed in-depth portfolios of resources during the course and carried out research on their individual areas of expertise. This work will have a direct impact on the development of curriculum in Sri Lanka.

The common room in the School of Mathematical Sciences (SMS) in Pevensey I has been totally refurbished to make a multipurpose space for meeting, eating or working. Dean of SMS Charles Goldie is pictured left buying his tea from Chris Bartholomew.
Women humanitarians

Sybil Oldfield, Research Reader in English in CCS, is being featured in eight programmes for Radio 4's Woman's Hour during the coming weeks to discuss topics arising from her new book, Women Humanitarians, 1900–1950. She will be commenting on issues such as anti-slavery, child rescue, asylum for refugees, prison reform and anti-militarism and illustrating them with examples of some of the 155 women featured in her biographical dictionary.

Her radio slot arose after she contacted the programme following the atrocities of 11 September.

"After such acts of inhumanity, I pointed out that we need to listen to people who have alternative ideas of how we should live together," Sybil says. "I, for one, am far more frightened of losing faith in human beings than of losing faith in a deity."

A researcher from the BBC spent two and a half hours interviewing her on various subjects, with the first slot, called 'Women who made a difference', being broadcast on 13 November.

For Sybil, receiving such high-profile publicity for her book has been an honour and a thrill. She has spent much of the past 20 years passionately researching and writing it.

"Most dictionaries of 20th-century biography include the hunters of our time, but hardly ever do their opposites - the healers of society - make an appearance," she says.

"We need to remember that intelligence and energetic, even heroic, kindness does exist and that without the lifework of these women - and of all the other human beings like them - our world would have been even less easy for our children and grandchildren to inherit."

As well as famous humanitarians, such as First World War nurse Edith Cavell (memorial pictured right), pacifist Vera Brittain and suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst, Sybil discovered scores of forgotten women who put the needs of others first.

Among them were Alicia Little (pictured right), the first effective campaigner against foot-binding in China; Alice Harris, the first human-rights photographer who publicised the atrocities in the Belgian Congo; and Edith Pye, a midwife who saved the lives of a thousand mothers and babies behind the French trenches in the First World War.

Sybil's interest in the subject began 20 years ago when she was researching the life of the pacifist feminist Mary Sheepshanks for her book, Spinsters of the Parish. She came across documents from the First World War that listed women political dissidents. Impressed by their moral courage, she spent many years identifying British women on the lists and discovered they were people already involved in life-saving and life-enabling work.

"I thought I must attempt to record that work by compiling this dictionary of biography," she says. "I then felt increasingly impelled to look further and chronicle the work not merely of anti-militarists, but of hands-on nurses, relief workers and medical women."

She advertised for possible women subjects in publications such as The Nursing Times and The Friend, and on the Women's History web site. And she researched archives of the British Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Save the Children Fund, Missionary Societies and many other institutions.

The result was that she found many more examples than she could include in the dictionary. "I have only been able to offer a personal selection of those I believe to be exemplary representatives of the humanitarian effort by British women active between 1900 and 1950," she says. "And I am haunted by the ghosts of those not in it."

Women Humanitarians 1900–1950, by Sybil Oldfield, is published by Continuum, price £6.5. A copy is available in the University Library's reference section.

- Professor Fred Gray, director of the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), and Geoffrey Mead, convener for local history, are featuring in a new series of Radio 4 programmes called 'Mapping the Town'. On Monday 26 November at 11am the series will focus on Brighton, including the beach, Lanes, West Pier, North Laine and the station.
**Younge on America**

Columnist for the Guardian, Gary Younge, gave some insight to the origins of the American civil-rights movement when he gave a talk to English and American Studies students this term.

Mr Younge (pictured above) was invited by EAM tutor, Dr Annis May Timpson, to discuss his book, *No Place Like Home*, which charts his personal journey as a black Briton travelling through the southern states of North America.

He is one of several distinguished social commentators who have agreed to talk to students studying Annis May’s new course, America in the Modern World, during the next few weeks. Future guests include gay activist Peter Tatchell and Women’s Lib founder member, Sheila Rowbotham.

Annis May says: “I redesigned the course so that final-year students meet some of the authors and activists they study. In *No Place Like Home*, Younge writes of his journey through the American south, retracing the campaigns of the freedom riders.”

Mr Younge’s visit to the University was timed to come at the end of the course module on civil rights. Students collectively prepared questions about his book and then put these directly to the author.

After the seminar they were given the opportunity to write a reflection on the book and send it to Gary Younge at the Guardian. “Students clearly enjoyed meeting one of the authors they had read and questioning him about claims in his book,” adds Annis May. “It helped them think about differences between academic and journalistic approaches to the study of civil rights. Many students emphasised how the rare opportunity to talk with a black British journalist enabled them to engage with important questions about race, identity and civil rights in new ways.

“Younge was fantastic. He read from very different sections of the book, bringing out some of the paradoxes in the American civil-rights movement.”

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**Don’t forget! Traffic light trial starts next week**

A one-week trial using traffic lights at the exit from campus will take place next week (beginning on Monday 26 November). The trial, co-ordinated East Sussex County Council but wholly funded by the University, should demonstrate whether signal control can offer a permanent solution. The proposed trial will cover the north roundabout only. If successful it may be extended to the south roundabout as well (the other side of the A27 from the University), with signal controls linked to ensure optimal traffic flows. The trial will initially run during the evening peak hours only.

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**Funding for excellence**

Three Sussex students have received £400 bursaries to help them develop their sporting potential in line with their academic studies.

The University’s sports bursary programme was established earlier this year in conjunction with the Focus on Excellence programme, which is designed to increase the level of sporting performance at Sussex in hockey and basketball.

Louise Akers, a first year reading American Studies in EAM, received a hockey bursary funded by Lewes Hockey Club and the Alumni Office. Jonathon Turner (an American Studies finalist) and Ciaran Burns (in his first year studying Engineering) were awarded basketball bursaries from Brighton Bears.

Dr Lynne Mayne from the Trafford Centre is the first staff member to benefit from the Focus on Excellence programme; she received support with fitness training and use of facilities as part of her preparation for the World Tomiki Style Aikido Championships in Japan, where she was competing earlier this month.
New policy on harassment in the workplace introduced

A revised Harassment Policy to give University employees greater protection against bullying has been introduced.

The document, which will be circulated to all staff with the November pay slips and posted on the web (at www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/staffing/personnel/policies), sets out clearer guidelines to be followed if employees feel they are being harassed or bullied while working at the University.

Registrar & Secretary Neil Gershon said the new initiative came about after a serious case of bullying by a senior professor towards a member of staff in one of the Schools earlier this year.

"As a result of an investigation, I concluded that the University needed a more prominent policy to prevent a recurrence of that type of behaviour," he said. "Staff Welfare Officer Richard Price and myself have developed a new set of procedures designed to give staff confidence to speak out if they are being harassed or bullied in any way in their employment here."

He said the previous policy had been more concerned with harassment issues and was based mostly on the need to combat racial or gender-based harassment. While this course remains unacceptable, the new policy is wider in its application and includes clear expectations about personal behaviour. In essence it seeks to ensure that staff are treated with courtesy and dignity at work.

"I sincerely hope that most instances of bullying that arise can be dealt with informally," he added. "Some people may not realise their behaviour is harassing or bullying and this might be better addressed through counselling rather than by disciplinary sanctions - although no-one should be in any doubt that the University will treat persistent bullying and harassment as very serious disciplinary offences."

French university gives honorary degree to John Venables of CPS

John Venables, former Dean of MAPS and now Honorary Professor of Physics in CPS, will receive an honorary degree from the Università de la Mediterranea in Marseille on Thursday (29 November).

John has been at Sussex since 1964 and has had a long association with the French university. He spent a sabbatical period in 1973 as well as shorter periods over many years and has been a member of its laboratory advisory board for more than a decade.

He was responsible for starting the Science and European Studies courses at Sussex in the mid-1970s and Aix-Marseille II was a partner for exchanges from the start; this exchange is still going strong, with some six students from Marseille on campus this academic year.

John’s duties for the graduation ceremony include a 10-minute talk to the gathering (in French). In keeping with his interest in developing web-based courses and resources, the outline of the speech will be available, sooner or later, at http://venables.sussex.ac.uk/research/ocrme2.html.

Small ads

FOR SALE: Blue Citroen AX10, F reg., MoT end May, £750. 14,000 miles, Air Con, CD player, Roof Rack. Tel. 07973 7047.

FOR SALE: Cottage share with one other in central Lewes, £60 p/w + share bills. Tel. 564073.

WANTED: Dinner jacket (second hand) for tall & skinny adolescent! Email sfbcl@sussex.ac.uk.

WANTED: Two-bedroom flat in rural Normandy, available Christmas week. Fully heated, all mod cons. Sleeps 6. Email sfbcc@sussex.ac.uk.

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Dear Editor,

The latest issue of the Bulletin (2 November) has a photo of David Panter (new Chief Executive of Brighton & Hove City Council) with the Vice-Chancellor and states that: “David Panter, 39, studied experimental psychology in COGS”.

It is not possible to take an Experimental Psychology degree in COGS. In fact David Panter received a first class degree in Experimental Psychology in BIOLS. His third-year project (supervised by Bob Boakes – now Professor of Psychology at Sydney University) led to a published journal paper.

George Mathe
Professor of Experimental Psychology, BIOLS

Dear Readers,

Restructuring within the Library has caused much concern to library staff. The proposed restructuring of Arts and Science schools has many implications for non-academic staff, in particular the proposed new management structures.

I have set up a website at www.biols.sussex.ac.uk/home/Jeremy_Maris/council where I will publish information relating to Council meetings including papers where possible; my views on issues; and Council reports and minutes.

In order to represent staff interests on Council, I would really like to hear your views. Please email me at jeremyns@biols.sussex.ac.uk or telephone me on ext. 8060.

Jeremy Maris
Member of Council elected by non-academic staff

A walk on the wild side

David Harper and David Streeter BIOLS

Oh dear, our regular readers seem to be suffering from autumnal torpor. No one spotted last edition’s deliberate mistake (Bulletin 2 November) cunningly concealed in the first paragraph: “including one of our three native conifers, Larch”! As our contribution to brightening the shortening days we are offering a bottle of bubbly to the first person to correctly name Britain’s third native conifer (after Scots Pine and Yew). Entries to david@sussex.ac.uk.

Autumn is traditionally the season of fungi. The familiar toadstools and their relatives comprise only about a third of our 9,000-odd species. The majority are much less noticeable and many are plant parasites.

One that is conspicuous on campus at the moment is the ‘tar spot’ on Sycamore leaves. These black blotches are caused by the fungus Rhytisma acerinum. The reproductive structures develop over winter while the leaves are on the ground and the spores are released the following spring.

Evergreens are obviously more conspicuous at this time of year. The wood edge along the Eastern Ring Road contains much Wild Privet with its distinctive black berries and which is particularly characteristic of calcareous soils. The more familiar Garden Privet was introduced around 1885 from Japan. Its advantage as a hedging plant is that it is completely evergreen. Our native privet is only partially evergreen, has narrower leaves than its Japanese relative and the twigs under a lens can be seen to be distinctly downy.

Even without its pointed oval leaves, Beech – with its smooth, greyish bark – is one of the most distinctive trees on campus. A year ago, the ground under Beech on campus – and across Western Europe – was thickly carpeted with three-angled nuts held within spiny capsules. This ‘Beechmast’ attracted many birds, notably Great Tits and Chaffinches.

Two Rivers, two poems, one composer and a première

A Sussex composer’s major new choral work attempts to capture the universal qualities of the river.

Two Rivers by Martin Butler (CCS), Subject Chair of Music, will receive its première at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford on 1 December.

The 25-minute work for choir and full orchestra sets to music two poems by Timothy Mo and Walt Whitman that describe respectively the Pearl River in 19th-century Hong Kong and the East River in New York city (pictured above).

However, the piece functions at a deeper level than surface descriptions of the rivers, as Martin explains: “I was very struck by something the composer Nicholas Maw said about choral texts (as opposed to any other kind): that they should only deal with universal themes (life, death, love), the idea being that the multiplicity of voices in a choir represents a collective, universal identity.

“There is much that connects the Mo and the Whitman, most obviously their shared view of their respective rivers as symbols and agents of culture, history, social conditioning and economic circumstance. They both celebrate the river’s power and majesty, and they both connect it directly to the human condition. Whitman’s ecstatic and spiritual outpouring contrasts well with Mo’s rather more measured and brooding portrait.

“The music of Two Rivers attempts to capture these ‘universal qualities’ in its broad and episodic structure but it also tries to unify the texts by having the two parts share a common principal thematic idea.”

Below: Feather mites are tiny relatives of spiders and live only on birds.