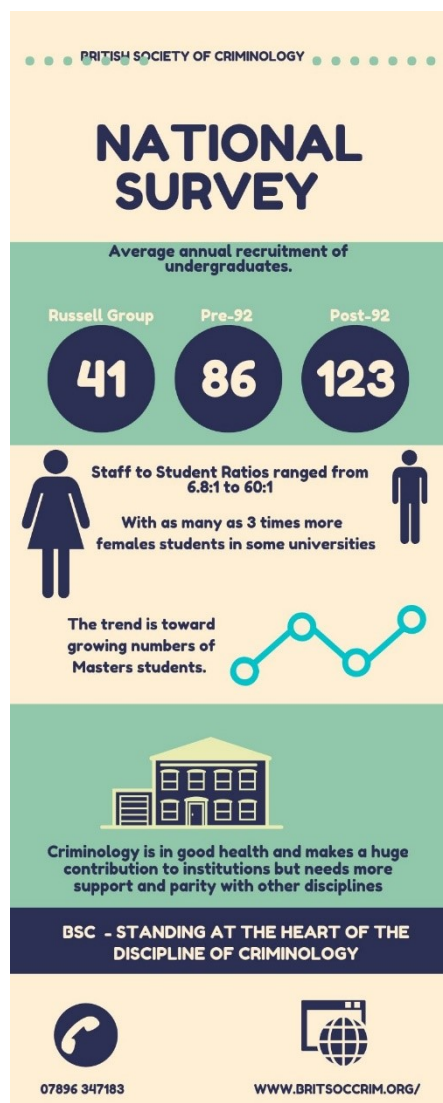# How Criminology is Taught and Researched Today

Charlotte Harris, Helen Jones and Peter Squires

This report presents the findings from a national survey on criminology teaching and research in the UK, undertaken by the British Society of Criminology (BSC) during 2018/9.

Introduction

We canvassed universities across the UK to gather information about how criminology is taught and researched today. As a discipline, we have experienced twenty-five years of rapid expansion - especially in the area of undergraduate teaching provision - and much of that growth has been in the 'post-92' universities. 108 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offered criminology courses in 2018 (The Complete University Guide, 2019) but there had been no 'census' of criminology since Paul Rock's in 1986 (reported in Rock, 1988) and the Society felt that establishing an up-to-date sense of where criminology is practised, how it is practised and the conditions under which it is delivered, and how it is changing and developing, would provide a usable evidence base to enable it to more effectively represent the discipline and its membership. We felt that the relatively fast-paced change of higher education, the increased marketisation of HE provision (Molesworth et al., 2011; McGettigan, 2013; Collini, 2017), the competition for student numbers, employability pressures, the contrasting demands of the REF, TEF (see below) and KEF and the renewed

uncertainties regarding student fees and university funding (Independent Panel, 2019) underpinned the need to better understand the context in which our subject is practised and delivered.

Disciplining the subject?

We use the term 'discipline' here deliberately, although we are aware of the debate, and the particular history, of criminology as a 'rendezvous discipline' (Downes, 1988), in which criminology, to employ Jock Young's words, sits at 'the busy crossroads of sociology, psychology, law and philosophy' *(2003: 97).* For our present purposes, an academic discipline can be simply defined as a branch of knowledge that is taught and researched as a subject within the Academy. Criminology has its own journals, textbooks, professorships, learned societies and academic courses of study (Bowling and Ross, 2006); for over a dozen years it has had its own QAA subject-discipline benchmarks (QAA, 2019); and it creates its own fields of knowledge and programmes of research. This contrasts markedly with the years before 1935, a time when, according to Garland, 'criminology as a professional academic discipline ... did not exist in Britain' (Garland, 1988: 1). He continues that although the subject 'was established only gradually and precariously thereafter', it was firmly situated 'within the institutional practices and power relations' of criminal justice and confined to an *a priori* and epistemologically-restricted conception of crime or criminality (ibid). At times, the Home Office itself invested heavily, albeit selectively, in criminology, as the record of the Home Office Research Unit during the 1960s and 70s shows. Subsequently, large scale or programme funding has been made available to a number of select university centres of criminology, although the work has tended to reflect the more policy-led or 'administrative' end of the criminological spectrum (Downes, 1988; Bowling and Ross, 2006).

Since then, of course, as studies of 'criminalisation', zemiology, 'denial' and the 'state/power nexus' might illustrate, the discipline has finally escaped the shadows of the prison (to adapt a Foucauldian metaphor). Notably, as Garland acknowledges, it was precisely the appointment of three distinguished academic émigrés - Hermann Mannheim, Max Grünhut, and Leon Radzinowicz - to posts at elite British universities that gave British criminology the academic impetus to become an independent discipline (ibid.). This is the wider story of criminology's magpie-like tendency to steal good ideas from wherever it may find them, and it is this that has given the subject its extraordinary dynamism, drawing in new practitioners, researchers, theorists and students. And, as Bowling and Ross have noted, 'the growing number of criminology professionals (working in universities, research institutes and in the criminal justice system itself), together with the increasing numbers of specialised postgraduate and undergraduate criminology courses, *entrenches the awareness of criminology as a discipline in its own right*' (2006: 2, emphasis added)

In the 21st century, no discipline (natural or social) can be independent or one-dimensional. Criminology is an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, applied, social and

behavioural science. We may not have a completely independent body of knowledge, but we are little different in this regard from many other applied social sciences. The REF may be structured in a discipline format, yet every assessment panel seems to celebrate 'interdisciplinarity'. Jock Young took this 'blurring of intellectual boundaries' to insist that criminology 'is *not* and can never be a substantive subject in its own right' (Young, 2003: 98). His stated rationale was that 'criminology exists outside of the talk of the criminologists' (ibid) and while we might concur that there is much '*crime* talk' outside criminology, we are less convinced that this is always so criminologically informed. There is undoubtedly much news media discourse about crime (fact, fiction and 'docu-drama'), there is the popular 'true crime' publishing genre and, closer to academia, there are crime science, police studies, and even security studies, all of them allied with, but not the same as, criminology. To a large extent, it was precisely such a proliferation of 'crime talk' that helped prompt (if not to settle) a debate about the potential public role of criminology (Loader and Sparks, 2011).

Such issues bear upon our survey and our discussion of its findings but they do not restrict or limit that discussion. Yet it is undeniable that in the UK universities of 2019 there are far more practitioners, researchers and students of criminology than at any previous time and, as our survey reveals, this strength has provided the foundation for the rich diversity of themes, specialisms and perspectives embraced by contemporary criminology.

The survey

The survey that was developed was sent to identified individuals (often BSC members, who we hoped might be more enthusiastic about completing the survey) with expertise in criminology at UK HEIs where criminology is taught, via an online self-completion tool using Smart Survey, in 2018. Its development was informed by a scoping phase, with key stakeholders including the BSC's Learning and Teaching Network, involving key issues and question area suggestion, individual question testing and pilots of the entire survey.

We chose to adopt a mixed method survey format. Some of the information we asked for was quantitative: how many criminology students (undergraduate, postgraduate - taught or research) are there at your institution; are these single or joint-honours; how many staff; what kind of Student Staff Ratios (SSRs) exist (especially as compared with other disciplines[1]); how are workloads (class contact hours etc.) established; how much research time is available and how is it allocated?

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[1] An important comparison was being made here with the British Psychological Society's accreditation of undergraduate psychology degrees. Accreditation brings recognition for prior learning for students who go on to take professional courses in aspects of psychology, but accreditation requires universities to maintain SSRs at or below 20:1, a rather advantageous ratio compared to that achieved by many criminology undergraduate courses, as the survey later reveals.

Some of the information we asked for was more personal, we wanted to capture colleagues' insights about teaching criminology in their particular HEI and how they felt about the broader development of the discipline: What kinds of criminology are taught; what might be the unique selling point (USP) for the criminology course(s) offered at a particular HEI; are there any distinctive aspects to particular undergraduate taught programmes (such as topics covered, placements, work experience, projects, study abroad, links with criminal justice agencies and inter-disciplinarity). Finally, because we wanted to know how criminologists related to the BSC, how the BSC might support their work, what use was made of BSC facilities and opportunities (and what more the BSC might do), we posed a series of questions about the extent to which colleagues were able to play a role in the Society and its Regional Groups and Networks. It is vital to an academic career to be able to teach, research and also join and take an active role in a professional association by participating as a member, organising events or acting as reviewers or editors for a research journal.

Some of our questions were more qualitatively conceived: these were intended to get some sense of perceptions of present and future course and research developments, curriculum changes, workloads, promotions, opportunities and so on. Furthermore, we were interested in gathering attitudes concerning the future of criminology on issues such as collaboration, engagement and impact, relationships with criminal justice agencies – including the Home Office, Police and Ministry of Justice - professional groups, campaign groups, and the range of issues pertaining to the aforementioned 'public criminology' agenda. How might the BSC assist in any of these areas of activity?

The range of questions was designed to gather information on a number of contextual features relating to both research and teaching and the links between them to establish the baseline working conditions of the community while attempting to ensure - through the different types of question - that all respondents were able to respond as they wished and address their concerns in a way relevant to them.

Ethical considerations

The research proposal and survey were scrutinised by members of the BSC ethics sub-committee, and as agreed, all information gathered has been anonymised and treated with confidentiality recognising the commercial sensitivity of some aspects. No information relating to any individual or institution, or allowing any institution or individual to be identified, has been published in this report or communicated to third parties. No raw data was shared with third parties. The purpose of the survey was to obtain a picture of criminology *as a whole* across the UK, not criminology as delivered in particular institutions.

We arranged the questions into sections in order to organise what was quite a lengthy survey into manageable chunks and create a running order that would

hopefully make sense to the user. In Section 1, we concentrated on the institutional context, asking who was responding to the survey; what diversity there was in the criminology workforce; what proportion of staff had HEA accreditation and regarding staffing levels and SSRs. We also asked about the organisation of criminology teaching and research; what levels of staff research activity there was and what contact colleagues had with criminal justice agencies, professional groups, and campaign organisations? This latter point again indicates the richness of an academic career that goes beyond teaching and research.

In Section 2, we focused on teaching: we asked about undergraduate courses and the recruitment of undergraduate students. Questions concerned the student profile, class contact hours, perceived strengths of programmes and unique selling points. We asked about types of teaching delivery, assessment and feedback employed. Echoing BSC member John Martyn Chamberlain elsewhere, we wanted to discover 'how we are going to ensure that we educate our future crime scholars and practitioners so that they possess the thinking and research skills necessary to engage in critical forms of citizenship under the complex socio-political and ideological conditions associated with 'late-modernity'' (Chamberlain, 2015), and how issues such as employability and criminology-related careers were handled. We also asked about Masters courses, postgraduate changes, and the use of QAA benchmarks in course design and levels of engagement thus far with the TEF.

Section 3 turned to research. We were interested to hear how research was organised and, especially, how it was funded; what opportunities there were for post-graduate research students, or even undergraduate involvement in local projects. We asked about specific datasets that were used, about colleagues' involvement in REF2014, and what was likely to be the degree of involvement in REF2021.

The results

Section 1 - institutional context

Who responded to the survey?

Completed surveys were received back from institutions in all four countries of the UK, from representatives in Post-92 universities, Pre-92 universities and Russell Group universities.

> Total number of surveys returned = 114[2]
> Partial = 61
> Completed = 53

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[2] This number is greater than the number of surveys sent out as some respondents submitted a partial completion before going on to submit a completed one.

Of the fully completed surveys, 42 responses were submitted by BSC members and 11 by non-BSC members.

Diversity and the criminology workforce

Diversity recognises that, though people have things in common with each other, they are also different in many ways. Across the higher education sector, inclusion sees those differences as beneficial to all (Green and Young, 2019; Hays et al., 2015), as a higher education sector without diversity might struggle to generate new ideas or perspectives. Through this survey, we tried to take a snapshot of the diversity that exists within criminology.

> **Gender**: 32 responding units indicated that they were comprised of a minimum of 50% female criminological teaching or research staff. No responding units recorded non-binary staff.

> **Ethnicity**: 17 responding units identified staff of Asian ethnicities, but only in four cases was this more than a single criminologist. Eight responding units identified black colleagues, but again, the majority referred only to a single colleague. Ten responses identified mixed race colleagues.

> **EU/Global origins**: With the exception of two departments who identified 50% or more of their colleagues as having non-British EU origins, the percentage of EU origin criminology colleagues tended to range around 15-20% of staff teams. Criminologists from the 'rest of the world' numbered only one or two in most responding units (amounting to 5-10% of the staffing team) and just as many indicated no 'rest of world' colleagues as identified more than 10%.

> **Declaring a disability**: Only seven returns referred to (usually individual) colleagues who had some disability declared. This could be an under recording as many disabilities would not necessarily be known to the person filling out the survey.

HEA accreditation

34 responses described at least 50% of their staff as having an HEA qualification, with 24 indicating that 75% of their staff team were so qualified. This is an indication, perhaps, of the relatively recent staffing growth in criminology.

Staffing levels and SSRs

Within and across sectors there was found a large variation in staffing resources.

Typical number of criminology staff

Sector	Min	Max	Mean
Post-92	1	43	12.6
Pre-92	2	21	8.67
Russell Group	4	34	16

Table 1 Institutions with undergraduate students

Across the whole survey, the Student to Staff Ratio (SSR) provides some insight into staffing resources. A department's SSR is a measure of the staffing levels in relation to how many students it has. This forms just one of the measures that HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) compiles but because HESA does not yet recognise criminology as a discipline[3], data is not available from them. When reading our survey results, where we found anomalous figures, respondents were given a further opportunity to check for any errors.

Of those institutions with undergraduate students, the SSR ranged from 6.82 to 60. This latter figure, whilst remarkable, has been double checked and is accurate.

*Chart 1: Criminology SSR. Note: outlier data has been excluded.*

The top ten institutions with the lowest SSRs (ranging from 6.82 to 19.88) included two Russell Group institutions, four Pre-92 institutions and four Post-92 institutions. The mean figure across all surveyed institutions is 34. Those institutions with a higher SSR than the mean included four Pre-92 institutions, 13 Post-92 institutions and no Russell Group institutions.

A comparison between universities in different sectors, but from the same geographical locations, is illustrative of the different demands on staff.

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[3] This, of course, forms part of our original rationale for this survey. Non-recognition of criminology as a distinct subject (despite its recent growth) in HESA, the REF or the TEF, militates against the proper assessment of teaching and research quality by rendering criminological contributions invisible, subsumed within law, sociology or social and public policy, for example. See: https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings#allSubjects

Charts 2, 3 & 4- Geographical comparison
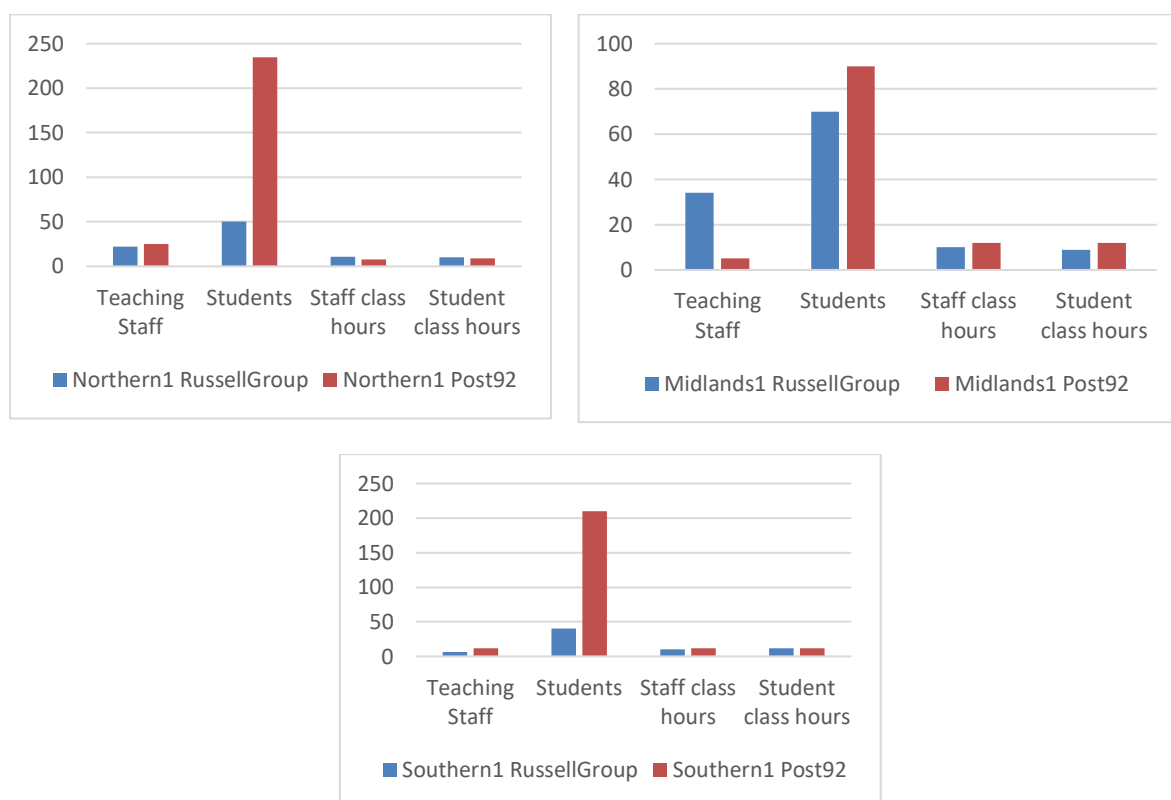
And where we see increasing numbers of students (predominantly in the Post-92 sector), this brings demands additional to teaching. As one Post-92 staff member commented:

> It is the pastoral and administrative aspects of the role that take all my time. People who study criminology are often interested in it for a reason and this tends to bring more complex needs. One day in my 'Violent Crime' module, I had 5 disclosures of significant violent victimisation. I regularly have sexual abuse or domestic violence disclosures. This is dealt with poorly by the institution and criminology students are the majority users of our counselling service (I have been informally told this). The pastoral work does not get any recognition but takes a long time, even with our very strict boundaries and attempts to limit disclosures. (Identifier: 77649654)

Organising criminology teaching and research

There are a range of organising structures within all sectors. 46% of responses referred to 'large' departments of ten or more colleagues (indeed, nine responses cited more than 15+ FTE staff) while 54% had fewer than 10 staff (12 units declared figures of less than 5 staff). Across all sectors, the average number of colleagues in a criminology teaching and research team was 12. Working in a team of peers is important to most disciplines within a university setting yet the mere existence of criminology teams can mask important aspects of the work conducted by those teams within other teams. As one respondent noted:

[My] departmental finances rely on criminology school talks, applicant days, international exchanges and summer schools. These activities do not happen in the other disciplines (either at all or to the same extent) yet those other disciplines have staff student ratios of around 15:1. One course even has a staff student ratio of 7:1. So criminology may be a victim of its own success in newer institutions. (Identifier: 77649654)

In some institutions, these criminology staff are co-located with other social science staff, some in law departments and some others in business schools.
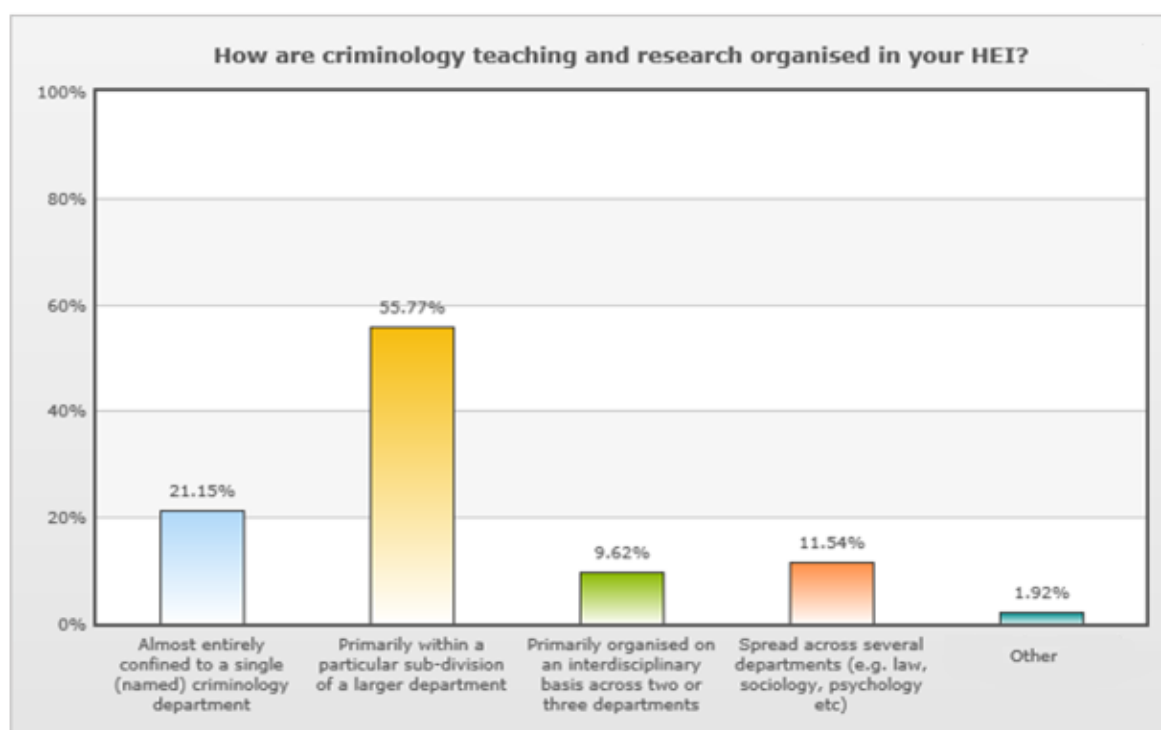
Chart 5 - All responses. Note: outlier data has been excluded.

While over three-quarters of all respondents indicated a single criminology department or a distinct sub-division, almost a quarter indicated that teaching was spread across two or more departments. Indeed, this latter arrangement is more obvious in Russell Group universities, and the following comments from two different Russell Group institutions are typical:

One department dominates, but at least three offer criminological courses. Staff from different departments also teach on each other's courses. (Identifier: 72490298)

We teach across Law, Human, Social and Political Sciences and Psychology and Behavioural Sciences at the undergraduate level. (Identifier: 83509164)

So, fragmentation remains a feature, despite criminology having its own QAA disciplinary benchmarks for teaching. Indeed, in the last REF, when there was no designated sub-panel, criminology found itself submitted to at least one sub panel in

each of the four main panels from Social Work and Social Policy via Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience and Mathematical Science to History, Communication, Cultural and Media Studies (unpublished research conducted by BSC from online REF 2014 databases, and used to inform the BSC response to the '2021 REF' consultation). This is not because criminology does not have disciplinary rigour or a clear identity (as previously highlighted, over three-quarters of all respondents indicated a single criminology department or a distinct sub-division) but rather it reflects how useful criminology has been in attracting student recruitment from a range of diverse backgrounds. Whereas some disciplines only recruit students who have A level attainment in their discipline, UCAS requirements for criminology take a more expansive approach. The same certainly applies in respect of research income: 'The total amount of external research income received by HEIs submitting to SP 20 during the REF period was £74.8 million … Criminology and Criminal justice often provided the main source of research to generate external income' (REF 2014 Main Panel C Summary Report p.75).

Staff Research Activity

Of the returns answering the question about (self-defined) 'research active' staff, over half of all responses describe 75% of their colleagues as being research active. Most respondents described at least some of their colleagues as research active. The percentage of staff that were deemed to be 'REF-able' (pre 2021) was higher in Russell Group and Pre-92 universities than in Post-92 universities (96%, 81%, 61% respectively). The finding raises important questions about the respective missions of different universities and their differing takes on the notion of 'research-led' or research-informed teaching. But it also raises issues about the resourcing of research, the time available to staff and the types of research actually undertaken. We addressed these concerns earlier, particularly regarding the policy-led funding streams of earlier years, and what Downes provocatively referred to as the 'stranglehold on the subject by the orthodox criminology of the South East' (Downes, 1988: 47). The source of funding can shape the type of research undertaken, of especial note in the past decade has been the explosion of new and critical criminologies in the newer universities, very little of it sustained by substantial funding sources (see the later discussion and charts 20 and 21).
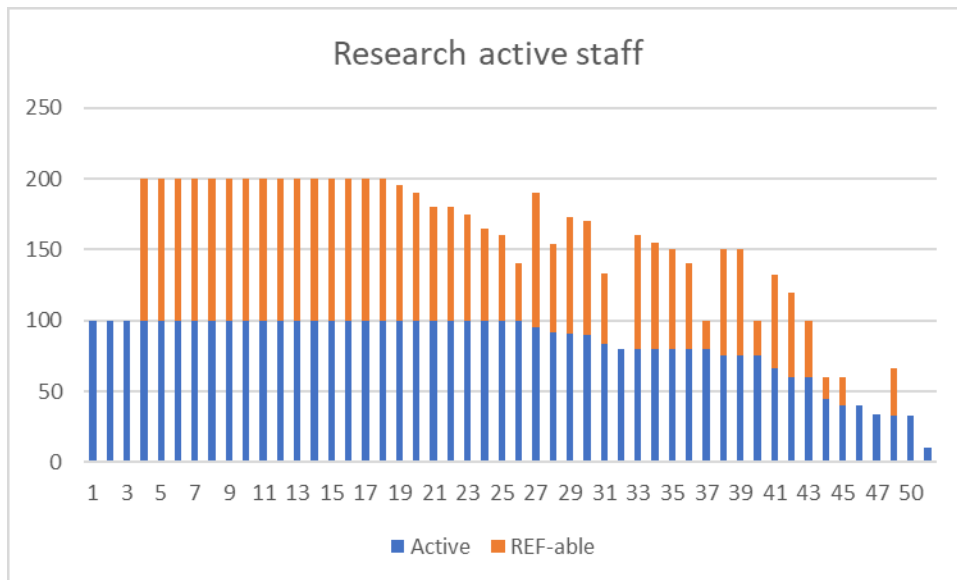
Chart 6 Research active staff and REF. Note: outlier data has been excluded.

Contact with criminal justice agencies, professional groups, and campaign groups

Criminology is a publicly-facing discipline offering insight into the social and political controversies of the day, whether as media experts, policy advisors, governmental actors, or social movement theorists. These are valuable; some might say essential, aspects of a public criminology. Nearly all responding to the survey replied that they have contact with outside agencies, from hosting visiting guest speakers, to an array of opportunities for students within both the formal agencies of the criminal justice system, across the voluntary and charitable sectors, and from the local to the global. There was a fascinating insight into the interplay between research and teaching, and how each can enhance the other.

Staff research interests feed into teaching in several ways and local community links provide a wealth of knowledge of the diversity of career opportunities that exist for our future criminal justice professionals.

> Excellent connections with [county] Constabularies and appropriate PCCs. Excellent links with local Youth Offending Service, CPS and Courts (Magistrate & Crown). Funded research and postgraduate teaching has been funded by PCCs, [county] Constabularies and [county] Youth Offending Service. (Identifier: 73155931)

> Police [national], [national] Prisons Service, Violence Reduction Unit, PIRC, Children's Panel/Hearing System, Community Safety [local], Victim Support, Rape Crisis, Local Authority (various Departments), Secure Units for Young People. (Identifier: 79980233)

When asked about international relationships and collaborations, 80% of respondents left comments about the international work of colleagues:

> Yes, several colleagues have international research collaborations that are ongoing at the moment. Others have strong links that lead to international visits etc. We also have partnerships with 3 international institutions that allow our undergrads to spend a year studying in one of these places (one EU, one Canada, and one Australia). (Identifier: 73145689)

> We are currently providing teaching and research activity across India. We are also involved in teaching collaboration within the USA, Canada and Australia, as well as areas in Europe. We conduct research across the UK, Europe, and Australia. (Identifier: 80048492)

Fifty percent of all respondents left a comment about the issue of 'Impact'. The concept of 'Impact' has an important role in the REF process, but whilst criminologists acknowledged this, and insisted that the concept is gaining in importance as we get closer to the next REF, they frequently made the point that it does not define research or teaching decisions. Another point that came across strongly through these comments (notwithstanding earlier observations about the essential synergy between research and teaching) is that institutional support is often patchy at best and in some areas, research is seen as a 'luxury extra' rather than an essential component of university activity.

> We try so far as possible to do our research for its own sake. If it has 'impact' so much the better, but rarely is it the case that we choose particular research studies because of potential impact. (Identifier: 72490298)

> There is lots of support within the School and University for planning and delivering impact activities. It is encouraged and supported - and also expected. This does not affect teaching directly - although we are encouraged to use our own research to inform teaching wherever possible. (Identifier: 73145689)

> This is beginning to assume a larger role in all teaching and research, and is now considered at the outset for every research grant. We are at a much earlier stage in shaping teaching around this. (Identifier: 80683300)

> There is an increasing steer towards the REF interpretation of impact and this is now being fed more into internal funding decisions. (Identifier: 76926377)

> Nearly all our activities are highly orientated to achieving impact. The major rationale for establishing our department was to achieve impact. Members of the department are wedded to working in ways whose impact is to reduce crime, terrorism and crime-related harms. (Identifier: 78206010)

My research has been selected as a case study, but I get no extra time or resources for this so it is all done as extra despite being under pressure to deliver. Impact is not discussed with any of my other colleagues. (Identifier: 77649654)

Teaching loads have grown, research opportunities are more limited, research time allowances (research days), even for research active staff, have been taken away, and instead staff are encouraged to bid, competitively to regain this time. While considerations of impact remain a feature of research outcomes they are less prominently profiled, less effectively pursued and less well achieved. The university has undergone a significant change of strategic direction, which has had profound consequences for research time and research outcomes like 'impact'. (Identifier: 83207367)

The comments expose a fairly mixed picture of support for research, for the fortunes of research-led teaching and for the ways in which national agendas, such as research 'impact', affect staff workloads and activities. With more qualitative comments we could, without compromising anonymity and institutional affiliation, group the comments more systematically. For the moment we can simply note that the balances struck between research and teaching seem rather uneven and the opportunities unevenly distributed.

We have already acknowledged the debate about 'criminology as a discipline – (or not)'. As the body representing criminology in the UK, we were interested to uncover how staff described their own criminology.
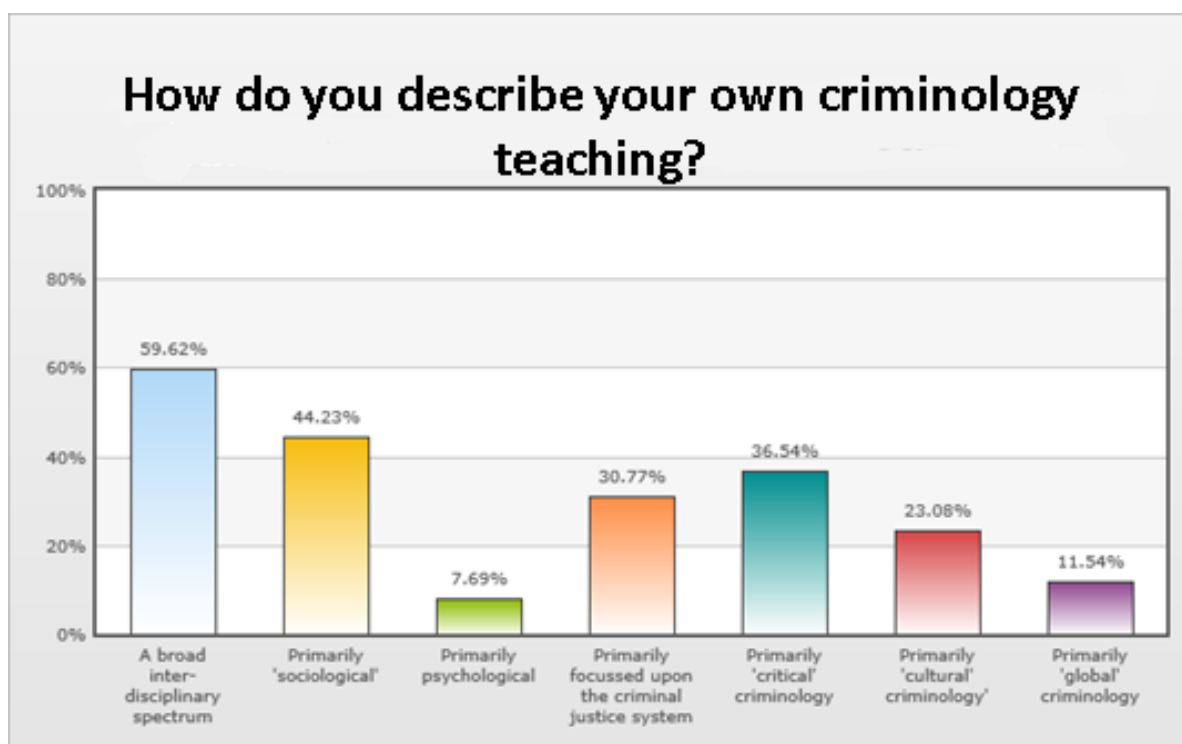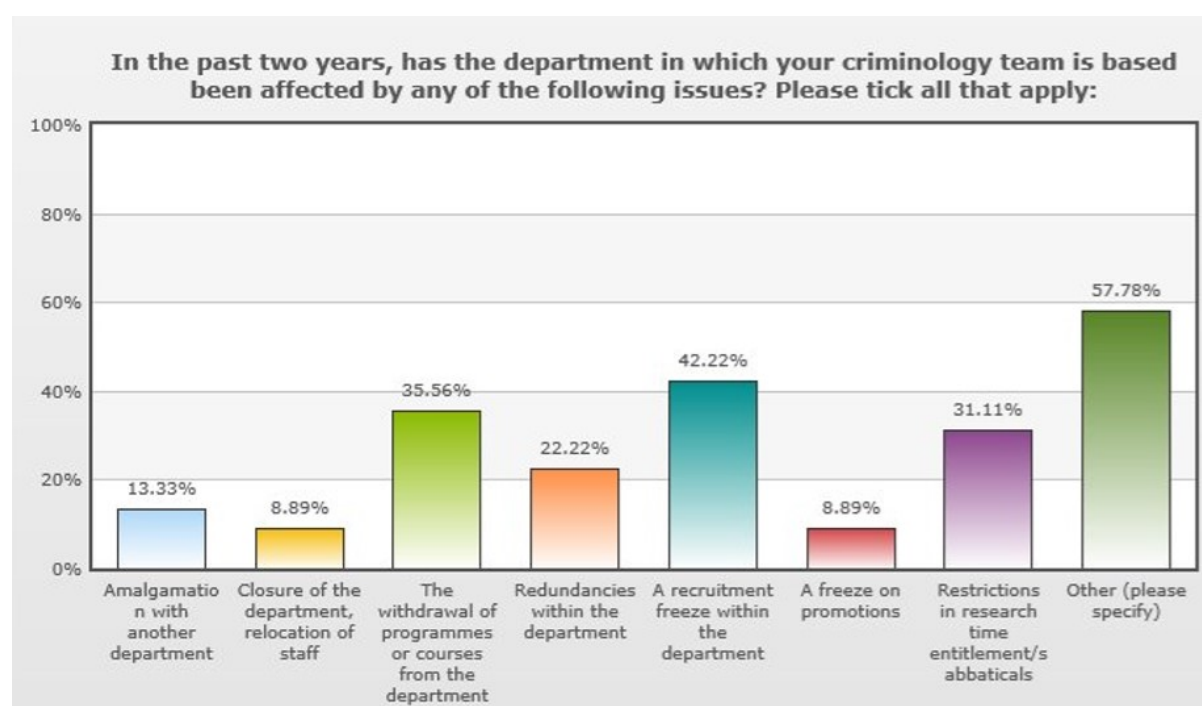

Chart 6 Descriptions of teaching.

A large number of respondents cited involvement by their team in BSC events/regional groups/networks and/or committees. However, there is a perception that the BSC is still an English association: 'I'm not aware of [many] events having been organised with the BSC badge on them' (non-English respondent Identifier: 79980233). However, a significant number of respondents cited time constraints and too many other demands on their time to allow them to get involved: 'BSC, ASC and ESC activities all demand time - and that is the one thing in short supply'. (Identifier: 83509164)

We asked if there were any knowledge or skills gaps amongst criminology staff or students and across all sectors and the key response was methods training generally and quantitative research skills specifically. Also highlighted, as a staff training need, was the development of skills around blended learning techniques and online delivery.

We also wanted to know about wider challenges, as this has impact on the time staff have available to engage in skills development.

In the past two years, has the department in which your criminology team is based been affected by any of the following issues? Please tick all that apply:

- Amalgamation with another department: 13.33%
- Closure of the department, relocation of staff: 8.89%
- The withdrawal of programmes or courses from the department: 35.56%
- Redundancies within the department: 22.22%
- A recruitment freeze within the department: 42.22%
- A freeze on promotions: 8.89%
- Restrictions in research time entitlement/s abbaticals: 31.11%
- Other (please specify): 57.78%

Chart 7 Past impacts.

Some of the comments accompanying these responses highlight the pressure some criminology staff are under:

> The recruitment freeze isn't official, but we are not allowed more staff despite having a student/staff ratio of over 50:1. (Identifier: 77649654)

> Increase in administration tasks as central resources are reduced. Increase in personal academic tutoring demands. Increase in mental health support. (Identifier: 72586160)

But it is not all bad news as other respondents report good levels of support: 'we are growing rapidly and are well supported within the university' (Identifier: 77661932). When asked to look ahead two years, most staff were optimistic, with the biggest threat being the potential for restrictions in research time entitlement/sabbaticals.
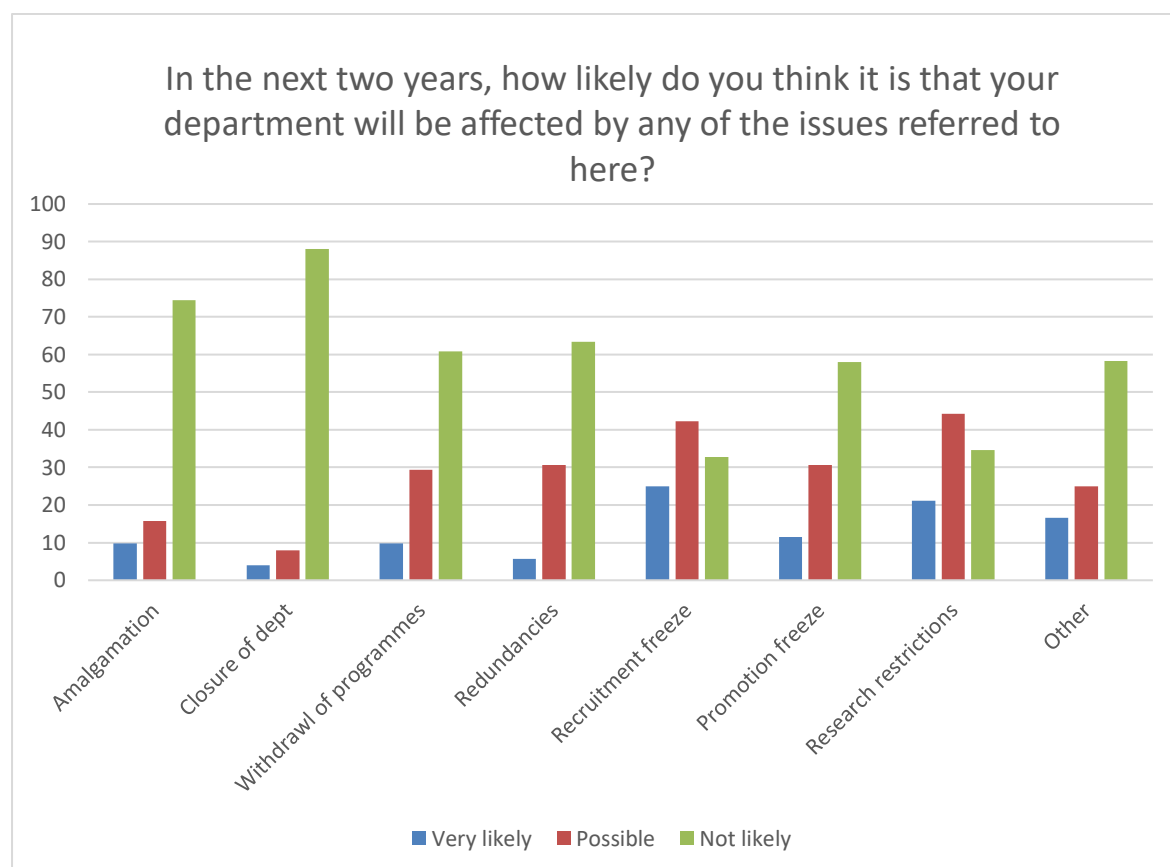

Chart 8 Future fears.

Section 2 Teaching

Undergraduate courses

124 titles of undergraduate courses/programmes were submitted in the survey. They included Foundation degrees, BA, BSc and LLB. The word cloud provides a representation of the most frequently used words to describe the courses offered under the broad umbrella of criminology and criminal justice. The larger the word, the more often it is used in a degree title. A brief glance indicates the most frequently used definers.

Word Cloud 1

120
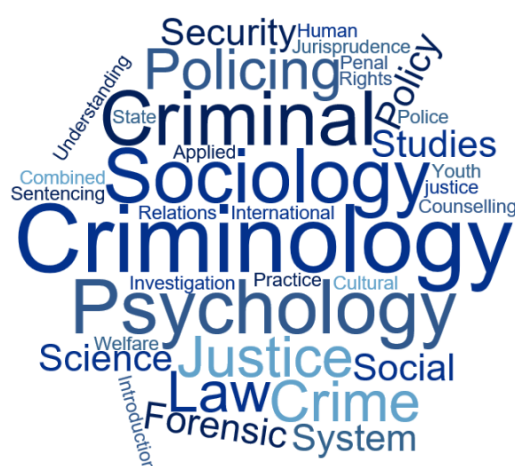
Interestingly, there are pairings of criminology with a range of diverse subjects that are not mentioned here. Combinations can be viewed via UCAS and include criminology with archaeology, and with various languages. https://www.ucas.com/

Recruitment of undergraduate students

Section one of this report did some comparison of SSRs but here we look at the range of recruitment across the sector. Across the survey, the mean annual recruitment (FTE Single Hons, Joint Hons, Maj/Min and Part-Time) was 101 FTE students recruited per year. But as Chart 9 shows, this masks a wide variation across the sector.
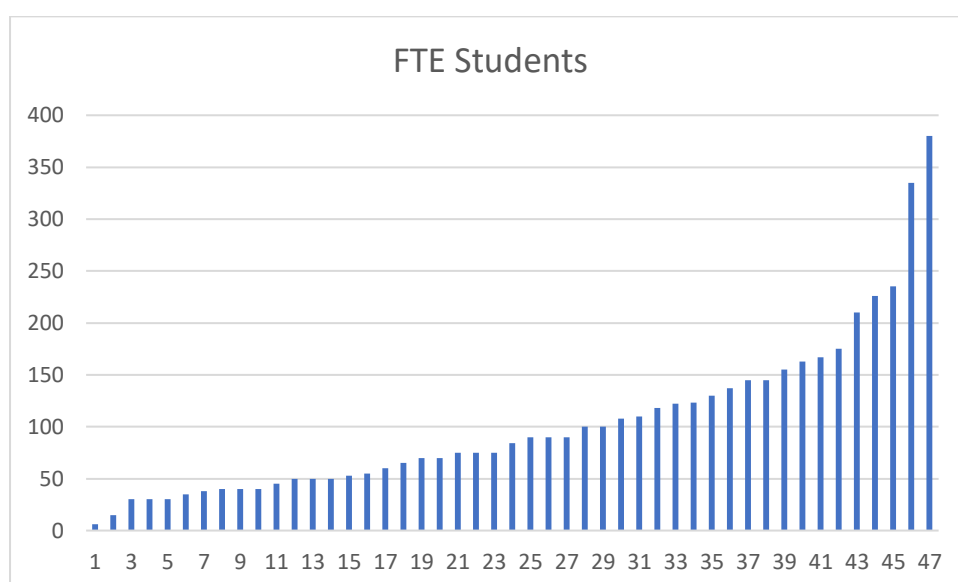
Chart 9 FTE students recruited per year

Further analysis revealed a large variation across specific sectors.

Russell Group – mean average 41

Pre-92 – mean average 86

Post-92 – mean average 123

We also asked if respondents had seen a change in the number of undergraduate students studying criminology since the increase in student fees in 2012. Chart 10 shows the largest proportion of those surveyed had seen a rise or a sustained expansion of student recruitment. Of those who reported falling numbers, they fell equally between the Pre- and Post-92 sectors: none of the Russell group sector saw falling numbers.
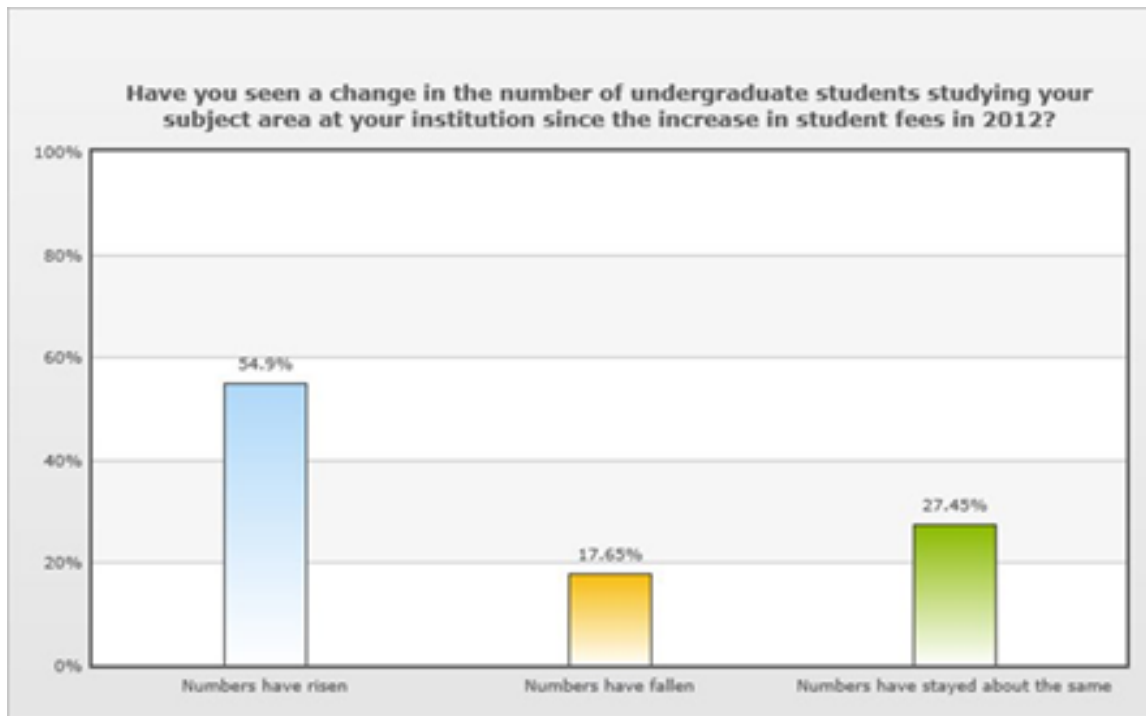
Chart 10   Changes in student numbers.

Student profile

Mature Students: With the exception of a small number of institutions with a large number of mature students, an overwhelming majority of those institutions answering the question identified 10% or fewer of their undergraduate students as 'mature' students (over 21).

Gender: Forty institutions reported on the gender composition of their undergraduate criminology student cohorts. Interestingly, all bar two responses (which claimed roughly equal numbers) described overwhelmingly female course memberships. Two thirds of the responses outlined course memberships where female students outnumbered male students by more than 3 to 1.
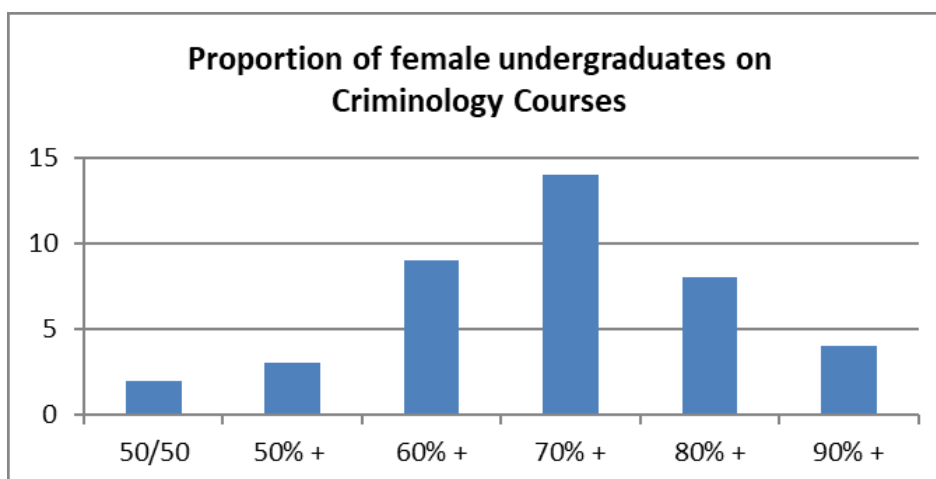

Chart 11 Female students studying Criminology

BAME Criminology Students: Figures relating to the number of criminology undergraduates with BAME origins studying at different HEIs showed wide variation. Approximately a quarter of our responses suggested fewer than 10% of their course members were from BAME backgrounds whereas a further quarter of the responses revealed BAME student course membership ratios exceeding 40%. Perhaps unsurprisingly, high rates of BAME students were found in HEIs in major cities and conurbations, London especially and the West Midlands.

Students from the EU and beyond: Figures relating to the number of criminology undergraduates from the EU were minimal, but our responses suggested no more than 10% of course members were from the EU and this number was similar for those reporting student numbers from outside the EU.

Class contact

We asked how many hours of staff 'class contact' (lectures, seminars, tutorials) is typical for full-time colleagues per week.

In the post-92 sector, there is a national workload agreement which stipulates that formal scheduled teaching responsibilities should not exceed 18 hours in any one week or a maximum of 550 hours in the teaching year. Teaching responsibilities include preparation of courses and associated materials before start of course, preparation before each class, marking, student support, administration, and teaching-related meetings. Staff cite workload as the number one concern about their job (Houston et al., 2006; UCU, 2016; UCU, 2019). In the pre-92 sector there is no such national workload agreement.

Average weekly contact hours for staff in Russell Group universities were 8.1: Pre-92 universities 10.1; Post-92 universities 15.6 hours. Only 1 Russell Group university appeared to have staff teaching contact hours close to the new university average.

We also asked how many hours of taught contact students receive per week on average. All bar 8 institutions provided students with, on average, 8-12 hours class contact time. Three institutions cited 14 hours. There did not appear to be appreciable differences across different sectors.
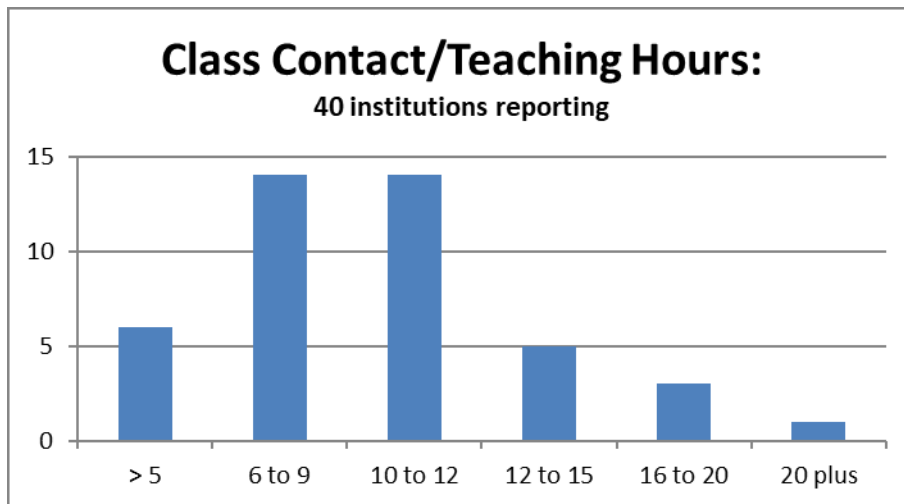
Chart 12 Class contact/teaching hours.

## Strengths and unique selling points

We asked respondents to identify all aspects of strength and the unique selling points of their Criminology programmes. Prominent amongst the 'other' category were a diverse range of areas of criminology (29 topics mentioned, in addition to those referred to in the graph) and 'applied social science'. The most frequently referred to included: Critical criminology (n5); Drugs/Substance Misuse (n5); Feminist Criminology/Gender & Crime (n5); Global/Cross cultural/Cross Border criminology (n5); Research Methods (n4); Violence and conflict (including war, domestic, genocide) (n4); Green/Environmental criminologies (n4); Harm/Zemiology (n3). Four respondents referred to the importance of their placement or Work Based Learning options as a central feature of their programme.

			Response Percent
1	Penology		53.06%
2	Victimology		32.65%
3	Policing Studies		46.94%
4	Forensics and Crime Scene Management		14.29%
5	Investigative studies		8.16%
6	Security Studies		18.37%
7	Comparative criminology		24.49%
8	Criminal psychology		22.45%
9	Historical criminology		16.33%
10	Youth and crime		40.82%
11	Race and crime		24.49%
12	Other (please specify)		61.22%

Chart 13 Strengths and unique selling points of Criminology programmes.

Word Cloud 2 – keywords from 'other' responses on strengths and unique selling points.

We have already alluded to criminology's 'marketability' and the durability of and fascination with crime and deviance as a subject. Universities have been quick to recognise this and, on the other side, entrepreneurial staff members have been quick to exploit opportunities to pursue new and exotic criminologies that will appeal to the consumer – potential students.

In relation to the forms of teaching delivery used by criminology staff, the following chart shows the range of approaches employed. Amongst the 'other' forms of teaching were included: workshops, online discussion boards, visits to CJS and 'other' agencies, role play, poster events, class tests and quizzes, reflective diaries and a summer school.

Chart 14 Teaching delivery

Equally, the range of forms of assessment used by criminology staff was diverse (see below Chart 15). This is to be encouraged as pedagogic research suggests a diversity of assessment modes can encourage active learning (Chamberlain, 2015; Hayes, et al., 2014; OU, 2015). Peer and self-assessment can encourage several skills, such as reflection, critical thinking and self-awareness. Utilising assessment that makes use of technology can also teach students new skills. Gone are the days of the simple essay/exam assessment duality, although as elements in a mixed diet of assessments these forms still exist. To operate effectively in the 21st century, our criminal justice professionals of the future need a much more varied skill set.
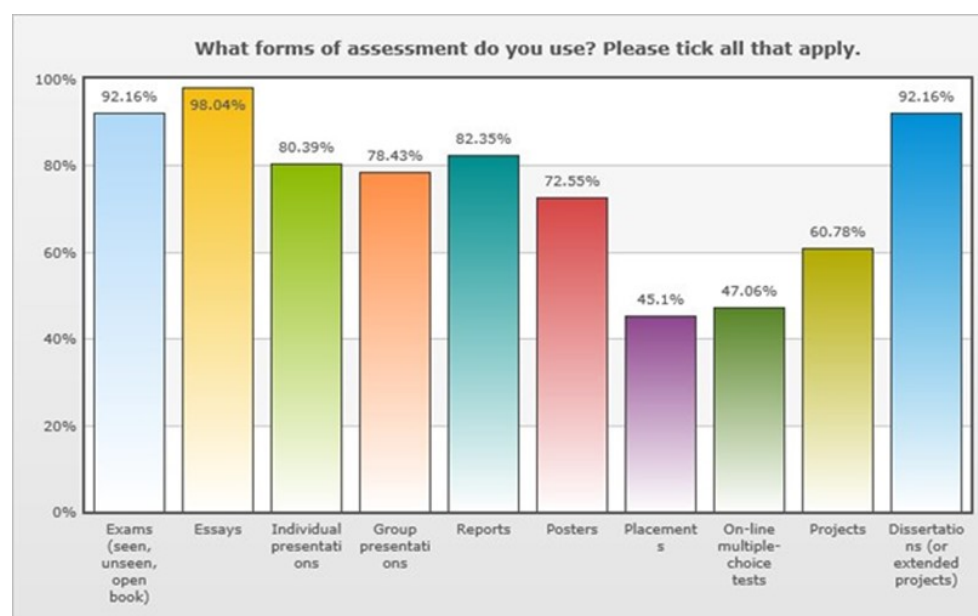
Chart 15 Forms of assessment

A wide range of alternative methods of assessment were identified. Whilst most respondents indicated the eight most common assessment methods (shown in the above table, along with 2 that scored just below 50%), there were others referred to: portfolios (eg. for collating placement activities), multi-media presentations, biographies, blogs, book reviews, class tests, reflective diaries, briefing papers and policy commentaries, debates, leaflets, and conference paper simulations.

Many of us will remember the feedback given on our own undergraduate assignments. Often handwritten – and sometimes illegible - the following responses clearly indicate the extent to which on-line marking and anonymised assessment has rapidly been established as the new norm for student feedback, alongside several more traditional methods. It may be interesting to reflect on how and why this came about, who advocated for it and what impact assessments were conducted on how long these assessments take. There is the issue of the availability of plagiarism detection software, but it seems unlikely that neither university staff (the markers) or students themselves, prompted this marking innovation which so totally now dominates assessment systems. One respondent made the point that, in the context

of mass higher education, the very last thing that universities needed was more remote feedback or anonymity.
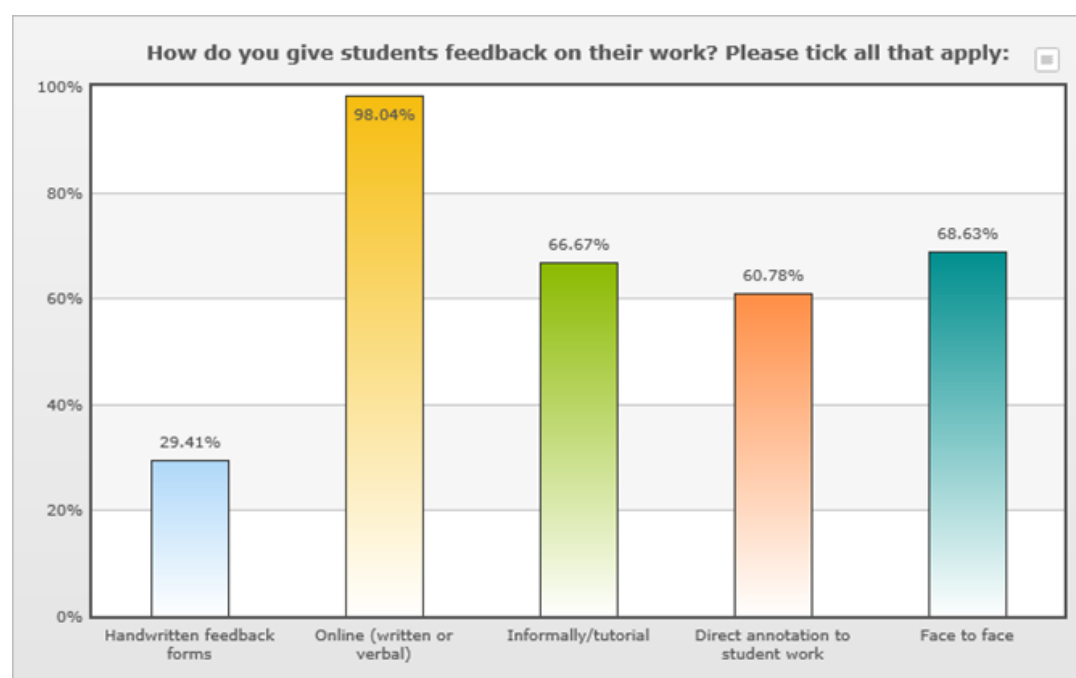

Chart 16 Delivery of feedback to students.

Employability and work-related activities

Just over a quarter of our respondents suggested that placement activities were available for all criminology students and 56% of respondents suggested that placement options were available to students *who wished to undertake them* (subject to certain selection processes). In around two-thirds of cases, the placement arrangements were formalised between academic departments/schools/divisions and criminal justice and partner agencies. Roughly a fifth of courses did not include placement activities within their undergraduate programme. Despite ongoing debates about instrumentality and the neo-liberal university, the survey did not specifically explore the education-employability link in any great detail and no substantial respondent comments addressed this so we can add little more at this stage. However, from other sources, we are aware of significant numbers of criminology students with interests in careers, for instance, in policing (and related employments) and have discussed these, such as the growth of Policing Studies and the Police Education Qualifications Framework, at the BSC Executive Committee on several occasions. It may be, if there are to be subsequent versions of this survey, that we will interrogate these issues further in the future.

Masters courses

Of the 30 HEIs in our sample which ran Masters programmes in Criminology (and criminology-related programmes) sixteen, or just over half, had targets to recruit no more than 20 students, seven institutions had Masters cohorts of between 21-50

students and seven had large programmes recruiting over 50 per year. The trend is toward growing numbers of Masters students.
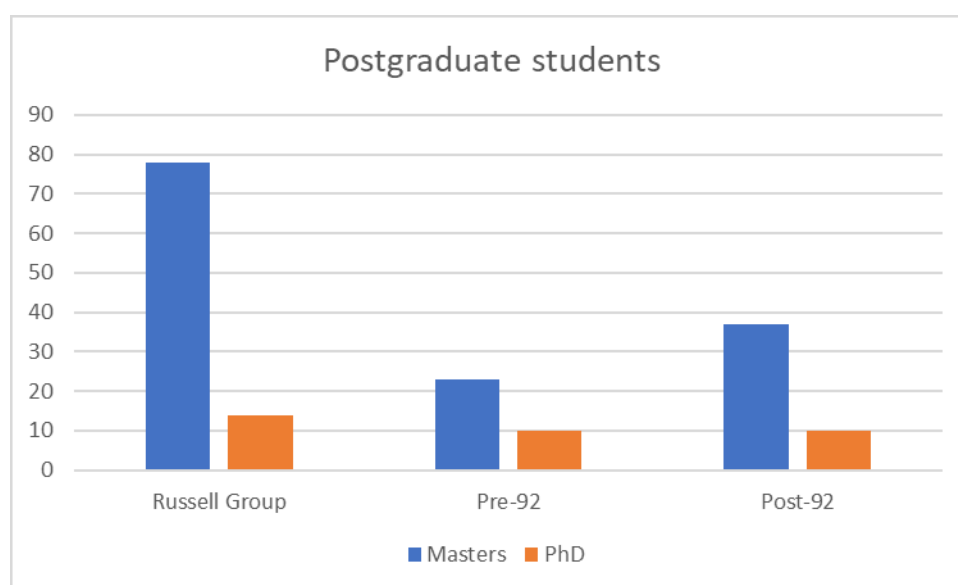

Chart 17 Mean number of postgraduate students per sector. Note: outlier data has been excluded.

Postgraduate changes

19.5% of respondents stated their department supervised Criminology PhD research students. The numbers ranged from 40 down to 2, although only 12 of the responding institutions had more than 10 current PhD students (4 Russell Group; 3 Pre-92; 5 Post-92). All sectors have seen a rise in the number of postgraduate students in the past five years.
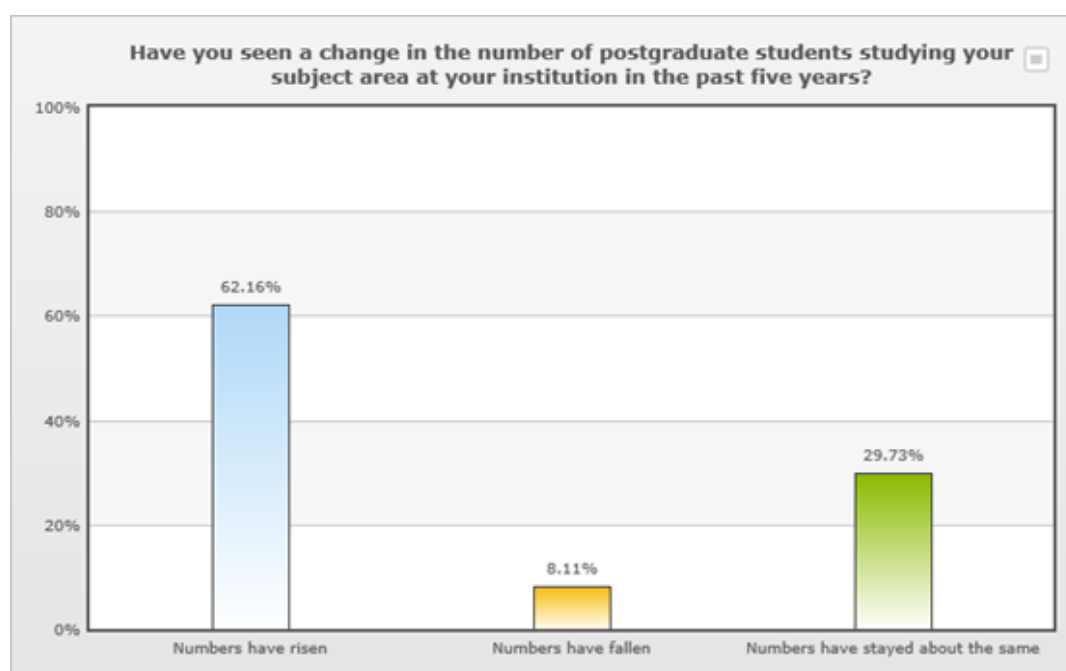
Chart 17 Number of postgraduate students in the past five years.

Post-graduate research students

The number of criminology post-grad research students supervised within criminology teams ranged from none to 30.

QAA benchmarks

The QAA subject benchmark statement establishes academic standards for criminology. The benchmarking working group for the 2014 statement included six members of the BSC Executive Committee. Benchmark statements provide general guidance for articulating learning outcomes and 'allow for flexibility and innovation in course design within a framework agreed by the subject community' (QAA, 2019). Reassuringly, 95% of Criminology course providers were aware of the current QAA Criminology benchmarks; of concern, perhaps, is the fact that 5% of respondents were not aware of them.

> Very helpful - drew on them to develop the curriculum, ensure that all issues/topics/debates were covered/considered. (Identifier: 65519512)

> These are essential for the validation and revalidation of our programmes. (Identifier: 72577572)

> Fully, especially as we went through our programme review and revalidation late last year. (Identifier: 79963139)
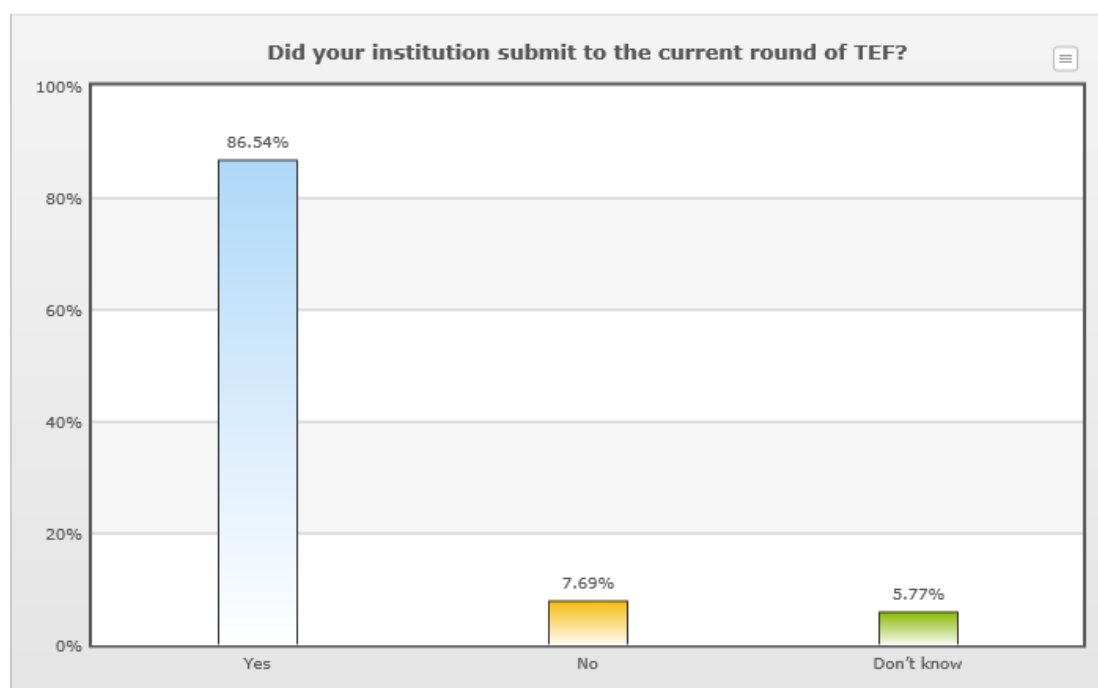
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

Chart 18 TEF submission.

The TEF (or Teaching Excellence Framework) rates universities as Gold, Silver or Bronze, in order of quality of teaching based on student outcomes, data on student satisfaction, employment destinations, and how many students continue their studies from one year to the next. The first results were published by the Office for Students in June 2017. This was considered a trial year (even though the non-provisional ratings awarded are valid for 3 years). Awards allow universities to charge slightly higher fees. Most institutions in our survey submitted to the current round of TEF. 40% of respondents would be interested in attending an event organised by the BSC exploring the implications of the TEF.

Section 3 - Research

Institutional organisation of research

We asked how research is organised. As the below chart shows, almost two-thirds of research activity is located in a research centre or less formal cluster of research active staff. The remainder is either project-based or individual. Far from being a minor subset of a department, the more typical picture of criminology that emerges is that research resides in centres with successful records of knowledge exchange, research production and engagement with non-academic research users. In these and other activities, criminology has a distinct identity working alongside criminal justice professionals, including the police, judiciary, youth justice, Crown Prosecution Service, probation and prison services, and the courts, as well as community organisations. Research by criminologists has influenced major policy debates, shaped legal reform and improved criminal justice practices, it has also challenged injustice, exposed corrupt and inefficient criminal justice institutions and, above all, sought to bring evidence to bear – light rather than heat – to all manner of controversies surrounding law and order.
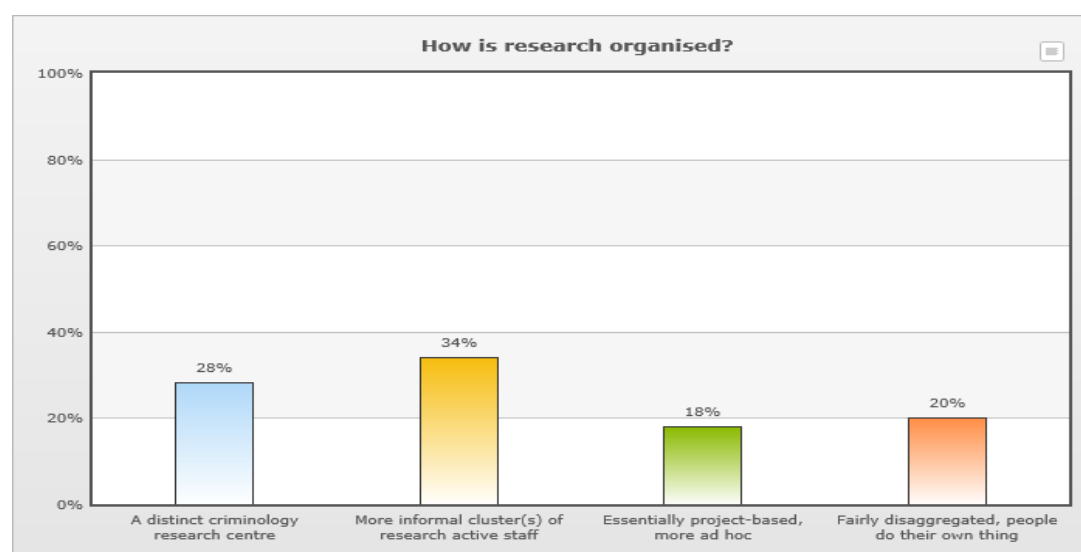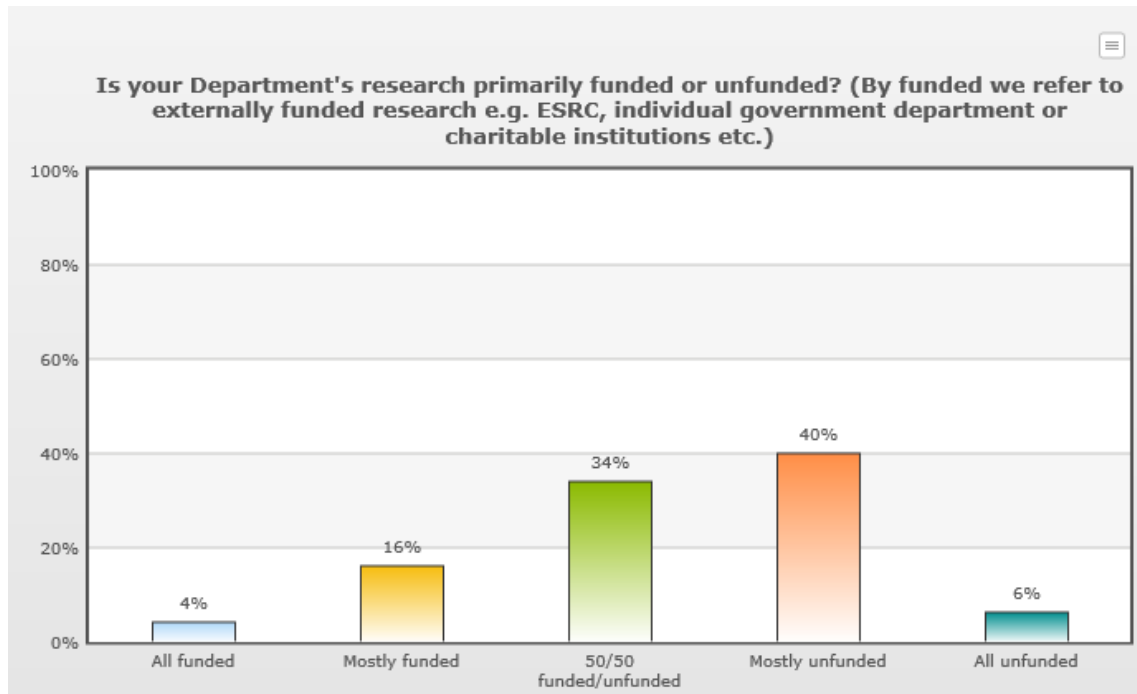

Chart 19 Organisation of research activity.

Funding

We asked about how research is primarily funded (or unfunded). We defined 'funded' as externally funded research e.g. ESRC, individual government department, local public body or charitable institutions etc … Across the whole survey, a significant amount of research is designated 'unfunded' (see Chart 20).

Chart 20 Research funding.

Distinguishing between sectors, a different picture emerges. Looking at the answers to this question by sector, it becomes clearer that while some post-92 universities receive research funding for criminology, a much larger percentage receive little or no funding. Of all responses to the survey, the most common comment is that there is not enough time for research due to pressures from increasing levels of teaching administration.
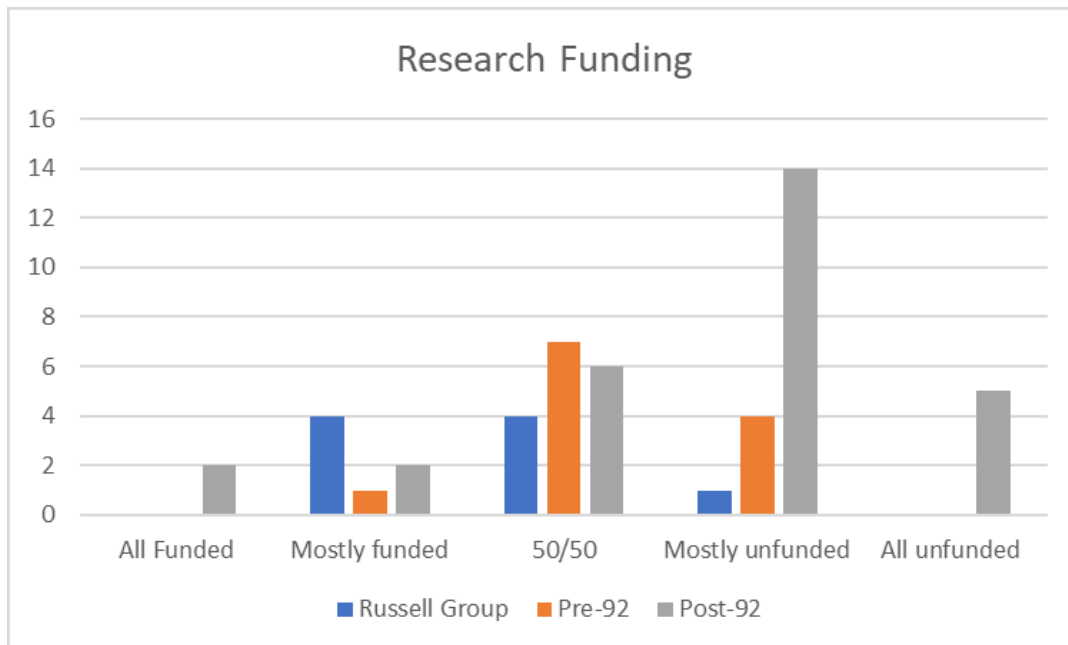
Chart 21 Research funding by institutional group.

The data in Charts 20 and 21 could certainly be taken as evidence of the Research Excellence Framework strategy having its *intended* effect of research funding concentration. In criminology, that concentration is occurring largely in Russell Group and Pre-92 institutions.

Datasets used

We asked about the datasets often used by criminology staff in their research and teaching. In the light of proposed cuts to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), formerly the British Crime Survey, it is pertinent to question the use of data.
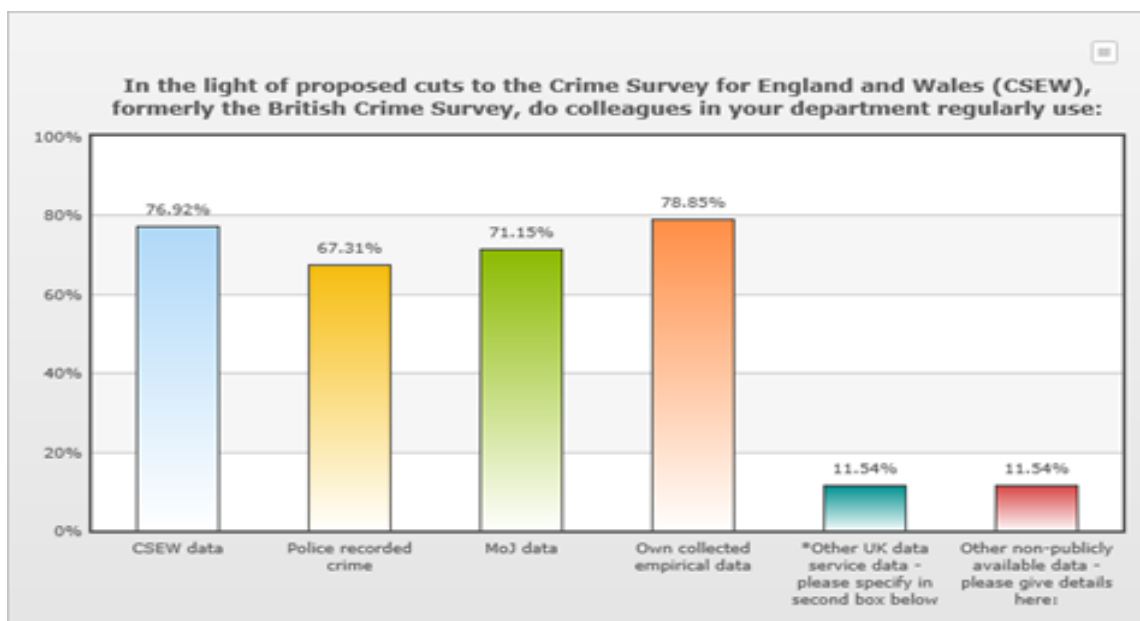

Chart 22 Use of Datasets.

REF2014 and REF2021

The REF was first carried out in 2014, replacing the previous Research Assessment Exercise. The REF is undertaken by the four UK higher education funding bodies: Research England, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), and the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE). The REF's declared aim is to:

> secure the continuation of a world-class, dynamic and responsive research base across the full academic spectrum within UK higher education … For each submission, three distinct elements are assessed: the quality of outputs (e.g. publications, performances, and exhibitions), their impact beyond academia, and the environment that supports research.
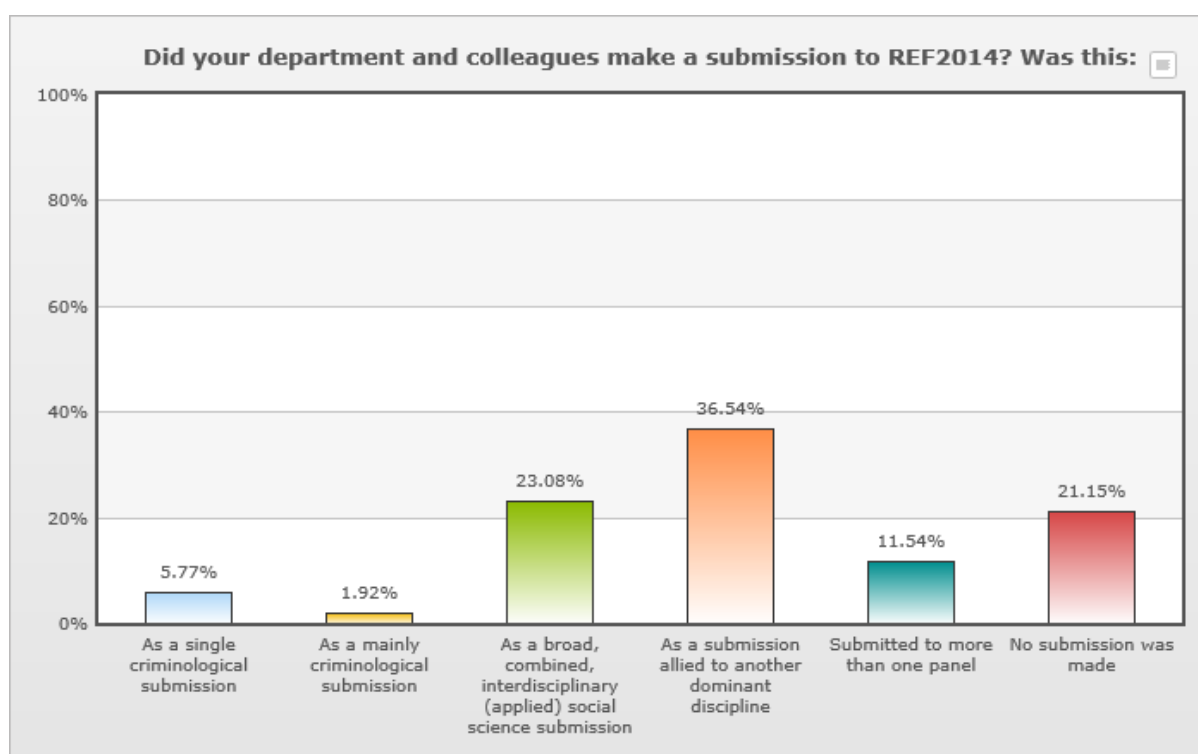> https://www.ref.ac.uk/about/whatref/

Chart 23 REF submissions.

When asked how the REF2014 submission was made, the majority of respondents indicated that theirs was made as part of a broad interdisciplinary social science submission or allied to another discipline. Criminology is not named in a Unit of Assessment (UoA) within the REF process even though it is a flourishing discipline, with a huge expansion in the post 1992s, and free text comments demonstrated that some members feel disaffected by the non-naming of criminology in an assessment panel within the REF. Being named in one UoA would not preclude submissions being made to other UoAs. It would however, help to counter the invisibility and fragmentation currently felt.

Criminology lends its methodological sophistication to other disciplines: 'Outside the sub-field of criminology, relatively little quantitative social research was submitted, and some outputs presented data in an unsophisticated way' (REF2014 Main Panel C Summary Report: p72). Criminology was therefore useful in demonstrating Impact: 'with a preponderance of examples concerning criminal law reform, criminal justice policy and practice, and aspects of equality, human rights and civil liberties' (ibid).

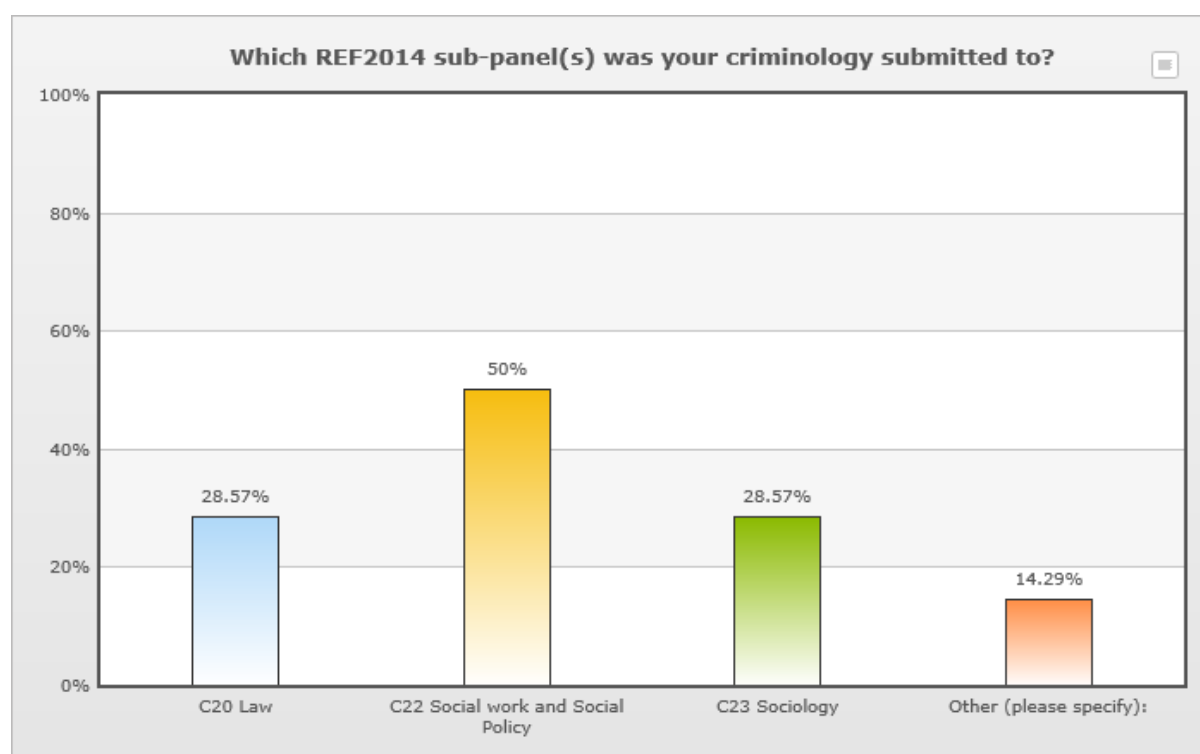With the above issues in mind, we asked respondents to state to which REF2014 sub-panel(s) they submitted.

Chart 24 REF unit of assessment submissions.

The majority submitted to Social Work and Social Policy. When asked if the same UoA would be selected for REF2021 as in the previous REF there was a more mixed response from Pre-92 institutions with a much larger percentage of institutions taking the decision under review.
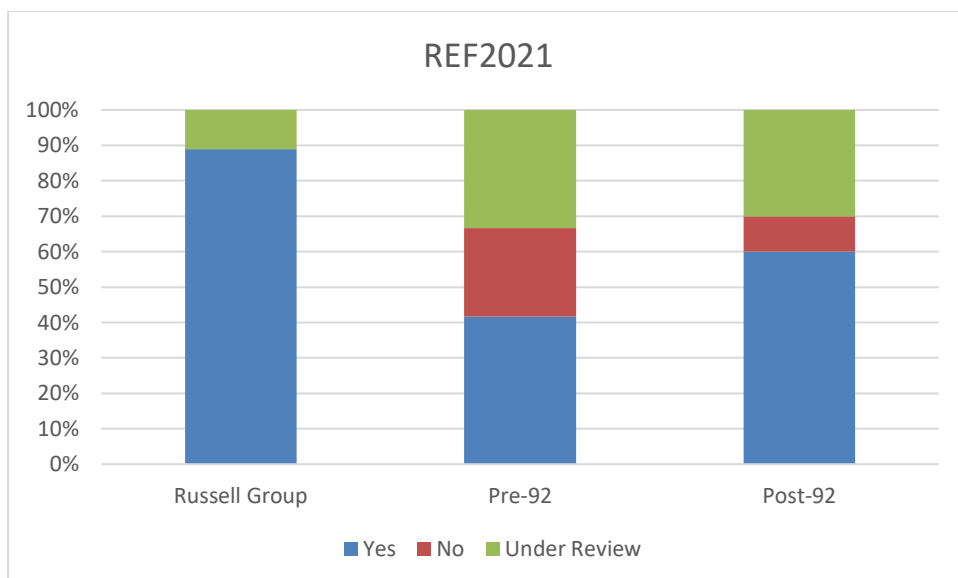
Chart 25 Possible future submissions.

When asked if individual members of staff – or teams – are given research, publication or income generation targets to meet, the majority of comments made reflected the following: 'They are not targets but more expectations. They are certainly discussed as performance review meetings' (Identifier: 79829001) and, 'except in the most general terms...with encouragement, through appraisals' (Identifier: 83509164).
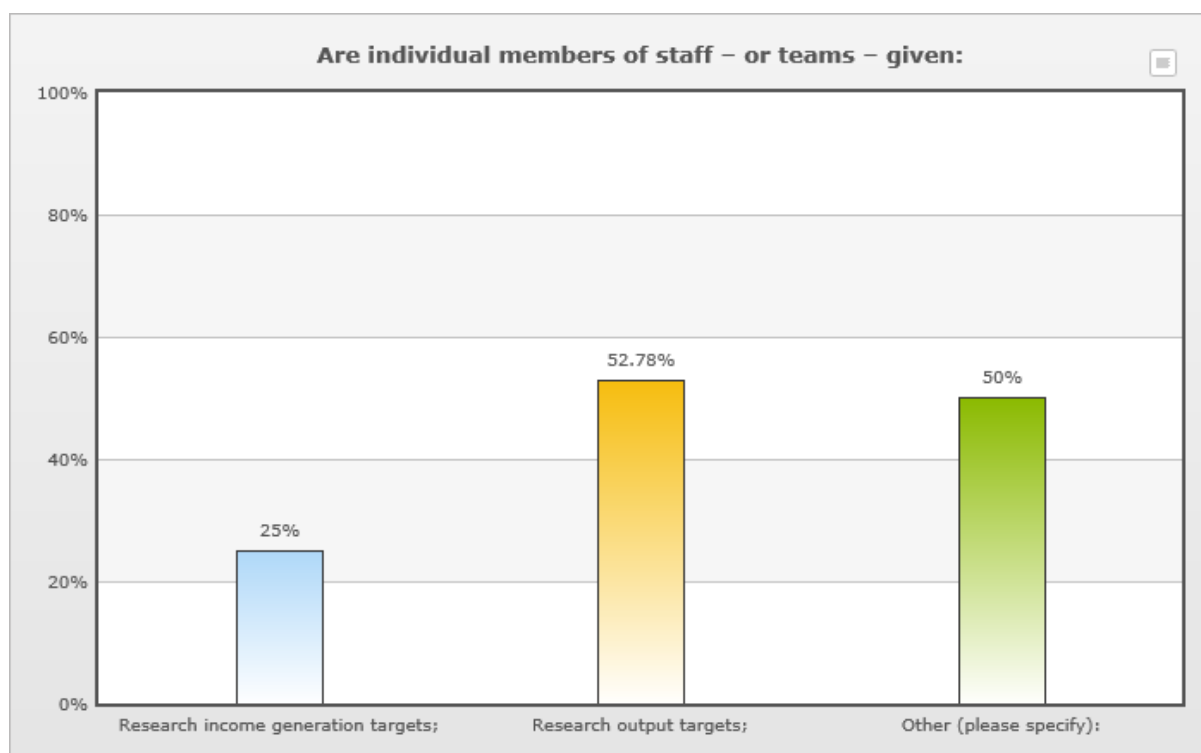
Chart 26 Research targets.

Other issues

Finally, we asked if there were any other issues connected to the teaching and/or researching of criminology not covered in the survey that were of concern to respondents. Eighteen people chose to respond, and their comments were broadly illustrative of two viewpoints, one concerned about criminology losing its interdisciplinarity, and the other which argues the time is now right for the wider academy to see criminology as a discipline in its own right. Messages from the criminology community also include a clearly-held perception that criminology should now be recognised as an established discipline (by bodies such as REF and HESA) whilst retaining its interdisciplinary flexibility.

> Generally, I think criminology is in fairly good health. Student demand seems to remain buoyant (even while other subjects have struggled). Research funding is still available (albeit very competitive). There are a host of other initiatives (conferences, networks, projects etc) that make me optimistic about the future of criminology. I do, however, remain concerned that, as criminology becomes increasingly recognised as a viable subject in its own rights, its ties to other disciplines will weaken. To me, criminology has always been a multi-disciplinary subject and much of its strength and insight comes from the sort of 'big tent' approach that has been fostered over several decades. I think care needs to be taken to ensure that the success of criminology becoming more established within the academy, does not lead us to reduce ties to other disciplines. Ultimately, this will weaken criminology significantly. (Identifier: 73145689)

> It's a real worry that there isn't a specific criminology panel for REF2020/21 - this is a huge mistake and means that our work will be dissipated across various other panels - probably law, sociology, social policy. (Identifier: 80180714)

> A growing concern lately has been the disparity between a BPS accredited Psychology programme - including the joint honours Psychology & Criminology degree course - in which psychology staff are pegged to a staff student ratio (SSR) of 1:20, whereas Criminology is working at an SSR of 1:35. No account of this is taken in research resource allocations. Our school makes the largest top-slice contribution from its student fees income to the general university budget (around 64%), this makes us a real cash cow for the university, with recruitment targets rising almost every year (around clearing time) to offset student recruitment shortfalls elsewhere. (Identifier: 83207367)

Summary and closing comments

As the results from this survey have shown, there are differences within the experiences of criminologists – SSRs and research funding are key - but crucially that there is a large degree of similarity between the three identified sectors (Russell

Group, Pre- and Post-92). Large research centres with plenty of staff and well-funded research face many of the same demands and pressures as smaller clusters and individuals, because we have more in common with each other than with other disciplines, for example, including the greater pastoral needs of criminology students. For many, the criminology career journey is characterised by such demands. Criminology does share with other social science disciplines its strengths in public engagement, commitment to impact and the transferability of skills while still struggling by being segmented within disciplines and institutional departments and, not least, in the REF.

Not all institutions gave a response despite numerous generalised and personalised reminders. Some people were overworked, others felt their criminology unit was very small – some just never replied. Only one refused directly because of the length and timing of the survey and concerns about how the survey was presented and the data might be used. The Society wants to address these concerns and to continue to seek answers to the key issues: for example, questions of career trajectory, satisfaction with place of work and degrees of professional autonomy, pastoral and other hidden demands, knowledge and attendance at BSC Regional and Network events, emerging areas of research, proportions of 'service' activity to other subjects – i.e. volunteering and providing free expertise. It is vital that we can secure buy-in from colleagues in these institutions in future years so that future surveys will allow us to build a better picture of our subject. What we can see clearly already is that some institutions receive little funding for important research while managing ever-increasing numbers of students (under- and post-graduates). And a great deal of this research goes on, largely unfunded, by virtue of the personal and political interests and commitments of staff – not to mention their good will and enthusiasm.

Criminology has (de facto) reached the status of a discipline and there is excellence in both teaching and research. Whilst earlier generations of researchers kept topics separate by erecting disciplinary walls, criminology celebrates its interdisciplinary flexibility and subverts traditional disciplinary spaces. But how long do we have to keep claiming legitimacy? If one of the defining characteristics of a discipline is the presence of a community of scholars, then the BSC stands at the heart of the discipline of criminology.

Looking at the journey travelled by criminology since 1988 when Paul Rock reported, we clearly face a different set of pressures in 2019. In 1988, reflecting upon the evolution of criminology, springing from the radicalism of 1960s-1970s social science, especially sociology, Rock rather disappointedly noted that 'criminology' had since been 'joined by a younger generation of professional criminologists with empirical leanings ... the work that is being done is marked by a decelerating rate of innovation, a drift towards normal science and a new pragmatism' (Rock, 1988: 68). Yet whatever else might be said of criminology today 'empiricism', 'decelerating innovation' and a 'drift to pragmatism' are certainly not the issues. On the contrary, in the newer, Post-92 institutions where criminology has grown fastest, this growth has

been accompanied by a flourishing array of new specialisms and perspectives (questions of culture, identity, harm and environment; post-colonial and border studies; critical race perspectives) which have enriched and broadened the criminological curriculum. Of course, this has opened up another issue - of criminology becoming a victim of its own success, a 'cash cow' for cash-strapped universities who will pile high and teach cheap thereby endangering the very inventiveness (to mix metaphors, killing the goose that laid the golden eggs) which has made criminology attractive to the newer generations of students. This is subject to actual decisions arising from the recent Post-18 Education funding review (Independent Panel, 2019) which may well undermine criminology's financial attractiveness to universities.

On the other side, the REF's prioritisation of research impact and the research resource concentration phenomenon have tied some of the most established criminology centres, often located in law schools, to a particular 'institutional' or 'administrative' conception of criminology. Rock appeared to recognise this in 1988 when he spoke of 'a new and complicated web of dependencies and connections ... the persistence of conventional sponsorship and the emergence of novel, somewhat unorthodox patrons with money and power' (Rock, 1988: 68). It is not likely that the particular dilemmas of criminology will find any solution while university funding remains so essentially uncertain, but grasping the political economy that presently divides, submerges or renders criminology simply invisible remains fundamental. If our survey can begin the process of helping us understand the context in which criminology operates, it can hopefully help us, and help the BSC, to develop a better strategic approach to our situation.

At the time this survey was completed Charlotte Harris was Executive Director, Helen Jones was Communications and Membership Coordinator, and Peter Squires President of the British Society of Criminology'.

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