

**Institution:** Aberystwyth University

**Unit of Assessment:** 19: Politics and International Studies

## 1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

### **Overview**

The Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University (AU) has continued to reimagine and redirect its research agendas during the REF assessment period, both in response to the changing nature of global challenges and to ensure a leading role in dynamic Politics and International Relations scholarship.

During this REF period the Department has celebrated its centenary and embarked on a series of new ambitious research ventures. We have established innovative Research Centres and Research Groups, and through pro-active encouragement of novel research synergies locally and globally have been awarded £4,826,000 in new research grants. We have produced in excess of 140 research items eligible for REF assessment and the Department has supervised 61 PhD students to completion. Staff and postgraduate research (PGR) students have been awarded a series of major prizes from national and international bodies for the excellence of their research.

These achievements have taken place in the context of a carefully planned consolidation of our staff base to 22.7 REF eligible FTE as part of a wider University strategy to ensure sustainability of research base. Proud of our past but actively working to take on the challenges of the future, the Department seeks to lead in generating pioneering research in Politics and International Relations (IR), innovative interdisciplinary agendas across fields, and impactful and collaborative partnerships with research users around the world.

### **Research strategy and achievements**

This REF period has seen a pro-active realigning of our research strategy. The research objectives embedded in our current research strategy build on past experiences and ambitions – at the heart of our approach is still a focus on fostering pluralism and research excellence, principles integral to our research strategy set out in our REF 2014 environment statement – but the Department has also developed new aspects to its strategic outlook, including bespoke objectives with regard to grant capture, impact, interdisciplinary working, and equality and diversity. As part of a wider process of preparing a new Departmental strategy – ‘Confronting Global Challenges and Developing Ideas for Change’ – during 2015-2016 staff and postgraduate students collectively developed ideas for a forward-looking research strategy. We adopted the strategy in 2017 and adjusted it again in 2018 and 2019 as part of a restructure of the Department and the confirmation of the University’s new Research and Innovation Strategy respectively (see REF5a).

Our research strategy is consolidated under six objectives:

1. To foster pluralism: of perspectives, voices and disciplinary orientations
2. To advance research excellence and innovation
3. To generate smart funding for creative research
4. To research across fields and disciplines
5. To make a change
6. To encourage equality and diversity

Significant achievements with regard to each objective have been realised within this REF cycle, as evidenced below.

### 1. Fostering pluralism

The Department has long been recognised as a leader in pluralist approaches to the study of Politics and IR and has historically fostered a wide range of sub-disciplines and theoretical orientations within its fold, from IR theory – classical and critical – to international history, peace and conflict studies and the study of sub-state politics. We continue to actively cultivate pluralism of interests, disciplinary orientations and perspectives in a lively, active, organically evolving research environment, as follows.

- A. *Research Groups*. The Department is host to a lively ‘ecosystem’ of diverse Research Groups run by staff and/or postgraduate students. It is fostered through the funding of ‘bottom-up’ research ventures. To this end, in August each year we announce a funding call to which any group of staff and PGR students apply for Departmental start-up funding for Research Groups exploring novel ideas and research synergies.

Reflecting the encouraged bottom-up approach, the composition and number of these Groups has shifted substantially since REF 2014. One Research Group (Security Research Group) remains from 2014, while many new ones have emerged (e.g., Religion and Politics Reading Group) and others have shifted their focus (e.g. the long-running Critical Cultural Politics Group now also tackles questions of racialisation). Some years have seen as many as 10 Groups hosted. In July 2020 we facilitated five Research Groups.

- B. *Research Centres*. Significant change and innovation have been apparent in the evolution of Research Centres. This REF cycle has seen the establishment of two new successful Research Centres: The Centre for the International Politics of Knowledge (the KNOWLEDGE Centre), and the Planetary Challenges and Politics Centre. These new Centres sit alongside the long-standing David Davies Memorial Institute (DDMI), which is active in organising talks, seminars and outreach related to international politics and the facilitation of peace, and the Centre for Intelligence and International Security Studies (CISS), a leading hub for intelligence studies. A reshaped, now explicitly interdisciplinary, Centre for Welsh Politics and Society (CWPS, previously Institute of Welsh Politics) is also active in facilitating research in the Department and in collaboration with others. It forms the AU arm of the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD), facilitating inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary collaborations.

The Department funds these Centres annually, but also expects them to obtain external grant income. Through the rich research activities, conferences and funding initiatives led by the Centres, the Department continues to provide a thriving collective environment for research staff and student agendas as well as facilitating delivery of core aspects of our research strategy, from grants to outputs and impact.

- C. *Visiting Scholars*. To enhance the dynamism of our research culture we seek to host diverse Visiting Scholars in the Department. During this REF cycle, their expertise has ranged from the study of political communication to state-building, non-violence and non-Western cosmologies. We have attracted three types of scholars:

- Externally funded researchers, such as Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action (MSCA) Fellows (5), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Postdoctoral Fellows (2) and Newton International Fellows (1);
- Other Visiting Scholars (14), including scholars funded by various national research councils from around the world to spend time at AU;
- Visiting Professor Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, from American University, Washington DC, who visits annually to engage staff and PhD researchers on latest developments in the field, for example, around posthumanism and quantum theories (2015, 2016) and methodological and philosophical advances in the field (2016, 2017, 2019).

D. *Events*. The Department thrives on active collective discussions and the close integration of PhD students with staff. To facilitate this, we continue to organise a weekly seminar series attended by the whole community, the 'International Politics Research Seminar' (IPRS), where staff, research students and external speakers present and discuss research.

We also organise the prestigious E.H. Carr and Kenneth Waltz lectures and the annual lectures of the CWPS and DDMI. The Department's centenary year (2019) saw an additional set of high impact public lectures by leading figures in the field. During this REF cycle we have facilitated over 30 major lectures featuring a diverse group of key scholars in the field (e.g. Cynthia Enloe, John Ikenberry, Margaret MacMillan, William Wohlforth, Mary King, Dvora Yanow, Raymond Geuss, Christopher Coker, Louise Richardson) and by public figures of interest (e.g. Anne Applebaum, Lady Elystan Morgan, Carwyn Jones, Mark Drakeford, Gideon Rachman).

We work closely to ensure the Departmental events foster the principle of pluralism and diversity. Thus, our public lectures and the speakers at the IPRS feature a diverse range of scholars, from leading realists such as Stephen Walt to leading decolonial thinkers such as Arlene Tickner, Robbie Shilliam and Giorgio Shani.

We also continue to organise leading conferences and workshops informed by diverse interests. During this cycle we have hosted five major conferences and ten major workshops (see section 4). The events we have organised also include a series of high-profile practitioner-academic collaborations, such as the bespoke workshop organised for the UK Government's Cabinet Office to participate in the UK's Strategic Defence and Security Review in July 2015, and the 2018 technical consultation on civil-military collaboration in health emergencies co-organised by McInnes with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and involving over 50 policy makers from multiple countries.

## 2. Research excellence and innovation

A long-standing Departmental objective, also reflected in our REF 2014 environment statement, is for our staff and students to lead in generating excellent scholarship and in enabling innovation and cutting-edge, responsive research activity. To this end, we have introduced a series of measures which seek to A) further research excellence and B) encourage innovation. This work also extends to our focused efforts to C) nurture a world-leading graduate and early career research community.

A. *Research excellence*. Research excellence is a historical strength of our research activity. We provide intensive support to all staff, regardless of career-level, role or area of specialism. This has borne fruit. More than 140 REF-eligible items have been prepared during this cycle, including 14 monographs. The volume and quality of our outputs reflects the detailed person-specific research mentoring, the carefully maintained '1 in 6' research leave programme and the funding of research travel, Groups and Centres (see section 2).

Research excellence has been fostered hand in hand with encouragement of the highest standards of research integrity and open access. Working within University guidance on research integrity, ethics approval is required for all research projects and close engagement with the University Ethics Panel is encouraged for all projects where risks are identified. We also actively discuss subject-specific ethics questions and risks in weekly Departmental seminars.

Staff training on open access publication and data management and the University's infrastructure support for open access, has ensured that we are fully compliant with the expectations of funders and REF on open access. In addition, we have taken steps

towards exploring open access book publication, with one major monograph published fully open access (Phillips).

B. *Research innovation.* This REF cycle has seen a systematic effort to renew our research agenda, foci and plans for the future. To do so we have embedded systematic review, scrutiny and re-imagining of our research activity. This process started in 2015 when we embarked on the collective mapping of the changes and shifts in Departmental research expertise and interests. A map of Departmental research synergies was produced which was used to inform the development of the research strategy and to allow new research foci and synergies in the Department to form. A proposal for a new streaming of activity was made with four areas of focus:

- International Politics and 21<sup>st</sup> century global challenges,
- Military, security and new technologies,
- Political communities and border politics,
- International politics of knowledge production and communication.

The research mapping and related brainstorming also led directly to the development of new research co-operation and new Centres of activity. Thus, the KNOWLEDGE Centre was engendered by this process, followed by the Planetary Challenges and Politics Centre. These Centres in turn have spear-headed new grant applications, new staff visits, new collaborations and public engagement activities. The KNOWLEDGE Centre, for example, has facilitated 22 new grant applications since 2016, of which 14 have been successful, generating in excess of £2.5 million in new research grant capture.

We remain committed to the four key areas of activity identified and the research strategy objectives but continue to develop new synergies and ways of connecting them. Having embedded and embraced a spirit of continuous reflection, we expect to conduct another round of research review and mapping in 2021.

C. *Facilitating cutting-edge PhD programme and early career research.* Key to the success and innovation of our staff's research continues to be a thriving postgraduate community fully integrated into the research team at AU.

In this REF cycle we have continued to develop a successful PhD programme which encourages students to take on ambitious, cutting-edge research. This is evidenced in the volume and quality of our PhD students. Evidence of volume is provided by the 61 successfully completed PhDs in this assessment period. Evidence of the quality of our PhD programme is provided by the fact that five of our PhD researchers have been awarded major prizes for their PhD theses in national or international competitions alongside other prizes recognising research excellence (see section 2).

Since the 2018 restructure we have moved towards slightly smaller cohorts of high-quality PhD researchers while looking to new ways to support a thriving graduate and early career research community. This has involved integrating MPhil and Professional Doctorate (D.Prof) researchers into the Department alongside active hosting of post-doctoral scholars. We believe we have succeeded in achieving the first steps in the strategic shift from a classical 'PhD-only' programme to a hybrid 'early career researcher hub' model without compromising innovation and quality. This is evidenced by five D.Prof researchers starting projects with us alongside 56 PhD researchers since August 2013, while over 20 research fellows and visiting researchers have chosen the Department as their research base. Evidence of the quality of our facilitation of post-PhD success is provided, for example, by early career staff member Davenport being awarded the prize for best post-PhD paper by ISA's Theory Section in 2014.

The success of our PGR students and early career staff is not only a great source of dynamism in AU but also a great source of pride. The extent and importance of the

global Aber Interpol network was felt clearly during the Department's centenary celebrations in 2019 as many alumni, past fellows and staff visited AU's centenary celebrations or supported the centenary from a distance.

### 3. Generating smart funding for creative research

We have developed a dedicated, variegated research grant strategy within this REF cycle. Led by the Director of Research and actively supported by Centres and Research Groups and University central services, we actively encourage and support staff to apply for funding and especially to approach new funding sources. We seek to ensure grant activity and ambition across subfields and career levels and pursue funding opportunities big and small from across Wales, the UK and internationally.

As a result of our dedicated work on grants we have been able to attract over £4.8 million of new awarded grants from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), EU, charity sector and corporate sector, with a marked increase in research income from 2016 onwards.

The increase in our research funding during an operationally challenging time and in the context of a reduced staff FTE has been achieved through: 1) active mentoring, sharing and learning together through Departmental brainstorming and via University grant training; 2) development of varied funder-specific grant strategies and related grant-specific support tools; 3) dedicated early career strategy, including a bespoke MSCA strategy (see section 3); 4) close co-operation with University integrity, data management and grant support teams; and 5) encouragement of seed funding for projects (see Section 3).

The effect of the grant successes on the vitality of the research culture has been significant. While the major projects have created capacity in new areas of interest, the early career fellowships have helped shape dynamic new research agendas in the Department. For example, Kazcmarska (MSCA Fellow, 2016-2019) held a leading role in directing the Knowledge Centre in 2018-2019, and Kurowska (MSCA Fellow, 2017-2019) ran a series of important PGR training events on interpretive research and field work, which in turn fed into collaborations such as the 'Fieldwork as Failure' project co-led by Kušić (ESRC Fellow, 2019-2020).

### 4. Working across fields and disciplines

The Department has been guided by an interdisciplinary mind-set from its inception in 1919. Based in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) we work across humanities and social science fields and disciplines. Not only is there a long-running set of synergies with colleagues in History and Welsh History, and Human Geography; new conversations have also been developed within the Faculty with Art, Law and Modern Languages. Thus, for example, we are actively engaged in the new FASS interdisciplinary initiative, the Centre for the Movement of People (CMOP).

We also work together with natural scientists, nurses, and robotics researchers, for example, to develop cutting-edge interdisciplinary engagements. The Planetary Challenges and Politics Centre, in particular, is dedicated to cross-disciplinary exchange.

We encourage interdisciplinary ventures through varied University funding streams for interdisciplinary research agendas (see section 3), and foster platforms within the Department to present and share interdisciplinary work, encouraging and mentoring researchers to work on ambitious new interdisciplinary ventures. In this regard Bliesemann de Guevara, for example, has led in facilitating innovative interdisciplinary exchanges within a team of PhD and postdoctoral researchers to organise arts and textile exhibitions in the UK, Sweden and Colombia in conjunction with a research project on conflict textiles. Bliesemann de Guevara's work has been recognised twice within this REF cycle: in 2015 she was awarded a prize for best collaborative interdisciplinary project in Wales, and in 2019 she was awarded the prize for best interdisciplinary piece of research by the Interdisciplinary Studies Section at the International Studies Association.

### 5. Making a Change

The Department is driven by a belief in making positive change possible in a world characterised by conflict and inequality. We seek to encourage research which mitigates conflict and gives voice to populations across the world and in our local communities. To this end we support our researchers to engage non-academic publics and to make social and political impacts. Building on the initial steps in development of impact in the Department in the previous REF period, we have fulfilled our strategic objectives for this period:

- A. We have continued financial support to staff for impact-generation via our impact fund and since 2019 have benefitted from the University impact funds and impact leave policies. Bliesemann de Guevara for example was granted University impact leave in 2019.
- B. We have included impact in research monitoring. We discuss it as part of research career planning, including with early career researchers.
- C. We have continued Departmental impact meetings and discussions in which we work on impact cases and have also included presentations of impact at research seminars. Lewis and Royles, for example, shared their experiences in 2017.
- D. We have encouraged Research Groups and Centres to be active in development of impact and in the collection of evidence of impact. For example, Taylor has worked actively with CWPS to advance the impact of her research on the Welsh in Patagonia, and CWPS has also facilitated Royles and Lewis' impact activities through subscription to the European Network on Language Diversity.
- E. We have trained staff in open access publication and also in writing for public audiences, for example via a training event in 2018 with The Conversation.
- F. In addition, we have developed an innovative practice of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) related to impact agendas, pioneered by Lewis. Bringing civil servants working on language policy to Aberystwyth for continuing professional development classes, Lewis' approach has built a successful model for further CPD activity.

The above mechanisms have enhanced best practice in dissemination, engagement and stakeholder involvement. We have also continued contributing to national initiatives and debates on impact. For example, Mathers contributed to a conference on the impact agenda at the University of Warwick in 2015 and McInnes has been leading the development of impact within the University in various capacities, most recently as PVC Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation.

Through these initiatives we have increased the number of outreach and impact projects and have had up to eight impact case studies in preparation (that is, approximately 1 per 3 FTE).

The three impact case studies submitted reflect the broad range of impacts generated and the varied modalities of engagement. Each case submitted has benefitted from impact funding and has been carefully planned as an integral part of research projects. All impact cases have benefitted from, and have contributed to, shared learning in the Department and are tied to wider research Centres and projects. The cases have also pioneered new avenues for impact generation, such as CPD engagement (Lewis, Royles and Edwards) and innovative use of artwork (Bliesemann de Guevara).

The innovations in impact generation have been recognised by the University and external bodies within the REF period. Lewis, Royles and Edwards were awarded the AU Outstanding Impact Prize in 2018 as was McInnes in 2019; and Lewis, Royles and Edwards were nominated for their impact in the Wales Social Research Awards in 2018.

**6. Encouraging Equality and Diversity**

Concerns about equality and diversity stand at the heart of our planning, discussions and actions. We regularly monitor the equality and diversity aspects of our events, leadership structures, career progression and research activities and seek to lead in developing best practice in the University and the sector more widely (see section 2).

In the Department our research excellence measures are designed to be attentive to career and social circumstances. For example, our leave policy is carefully monitored for gender equality and research mentoring actively takes account of career progression as well as any personal needs of researchers. The success of this approach is evidenced in the quantity of high-quality research outputs across career level, gender and subdisciplines.

The success of our work to address equality and diversity issues is also reflected in the high share of grant bids and awards women have had in the Department. For example, six out of the eight successful MSCA, ESRC and Newton Fellows are early career women. Of the current directors of the Research Centres associated with the Department, three out of six are female.

Careful consideration of equality and diversity as part of our postgraduate research has also been central to our approach. We have initiated important conversations with PhD researchers on questions of race, sexuality and other forms of discrimination in the field. For example, our centenary forums and conference panels on the contested legacy of Woodrow Wilson in 2019 were conducted in dialogue between PhD students, early career researchers and staff, and demonstrated our interest in considering exclusionary dynamics in IR scholarship and our responsibilities as an academic unit in addressing these questions. A great deal of activity pivots around gender, race and questions of inclusion and exclusion, for example, via the Critical Cultural Politics and Racialisation Research Group, and the KNOWLEDGE Centre.

**Future strategic priorities**

The Department is acutely aware of the need to review and renew strategies to maintain a sustainable and dynamic research environment. We remain committed to our distinct and vibrant research culture but seek to enhance our research environment in the following ways:

1. We will undertake another major review of our research direction and support structures in 2021 in conjunction with planned new senior appointments. To obtain the right balance between bottom-up innovation and Departmental steering, a major new review may reveal a need to adjust existing streams of activity and support mechanisms.
2. To assist in solidifying the new ambitious hybrid early-career community structure, we seek to continue our success in securing postdoctoral scholarships but to complement this with new funding streams for PhDs. In particular, a dedicated major PhD scholarship funding stream through Leverhulme or UKRI Centres schemes would allow us to embed distinct training agendas within the successful new Research Centres.
3. We will continue to explore new strands of impact work within Wales and internationally. In particular, developing CPD and arts-based public engagement will be a priority within the coming years.
4. We will contribute to major new infrastructure projects around social sciences in AU and beyond (see section 3). New social and digital technologies will provide considerable added value to the ambitious new projects we are planning.

**2. People****Staff base**

We have sought to ensure the continued vitality and sustainability of the research base of the Department during this REF cycle. A key aspect of this process was a carefully planned and

implemented Departmental restructure in 2018. Research strategy and planning played a key role in the restructure process as the central aim was to ensure the sustainability of our capacity to generate research excellence and innovation.

Having returned 27.2 FTE to REF 2014, we now stand at 22.7 FTE of REF eligible staff, of which 22.2 are REF-eligible Teaching and Research staff complimented by 0.5 FTE of REF eligible Research Fellows. The mix of staff in terms of career level reflects a shift towards a less senior researcher-heavy Department. At census date the composition of the Department was: 3.2 Professors; 4.0 Readers; 4.0 Senior Lecturers, 11.0 Lecturers, 0.5 Research Fellow. We also host a number of REF ineligible staff: 3.0 FTE other research-related staff, 2.0 FTE Teaching and Scholarship staff and 0.1FTE Distinguished Research Professor.

Despite the reduction of staff base, during this REF period we have nevertheless produced a high volume of high quality research outputs and have exceeded the levels of research grant capture and FTE-relative income compared to the last period. Indeed, the staff base remains highly research active, committed to research excellence and ambitious in aims. Our priority continues to be mentoring and training staff, especially early and mid-career staff, to place them in a strong position to lead key national and global research agendas.

### ***Staff development and strategy***

#### Mentoring

A core aspect of our research culture has for many years been intensive and close research mentoring. In line with the University's Research and Innovation Strategy, we seek to support our staff to develop their research capacities to the full.

The Director of Research takes a lead role in mentoring staff, meeting with all research staff twice a year. All staff on research-active contracts are requested to fill in a Personal Research Plan (PeRP) and to discuss progress towards the aims articulated in them at the scheduled research mentoring meetings or at any point during the year when guidance is required.

All newly appointed junior staff enter a probation process, as part of which they are mentored and monitored on outputs. In addition, all staff also meet with the Head of Department for Effective Contribution Scheme (ECS) meetings where the balance of their research and teaching duties is discussed.

#### Training

We provide multi-faceted training opportunities for our staff. As part of our adherence to the Concordat to Support Researchers, we are committed to providing ten training days annually to staff. Training can include attending methods workshops, leadership training, conferences, and varied forms of impact and research grant-related training (see section 3).

In collaboration with the University we also provide training for all staff on research integrity, open access and data management (see section 1).

Supporting our equality and diversity agenda we have also trained all staff in these areas and have provided specific training for those who lead in equality and diversity related roles (see below).

#### Funding

We actively fund bottom-up Research Group and Centre activities (see section 1). In addition, in collaboration with the University, we finance the research activity of individual staff through an annual allowance for research travel or fieldwork purposes. The base rate Departmental allocation of £500 is complemented by funding from the new University Conference Fund and University Research Fund.

We also provide funding for conferences, workshops and events on an ad hoc basis when they closely align with our research strategy.



### Time

Good quality research requires investment in time. This is why we allocate 550 hours within the Workload Allocation and Management Model (WAMM) to research for all research active staff.

In addition, within the parameters of University leave policy, we operate an adjusted system of flexible leave. In the early part of this REF cycle (2014-2016) we continued to provide a '1 in 4 semesters' leave but in 2016-2018 we moved to an adjusted '1 in 6' model, where we complement University research leaves with periodic Departmental leaves, by deploying staff in less teaching intensive duties in certain semesters (while expecting them to carry out basic administrative and supervision duties).

We have ensured that despite challenging operational constraints, we can continue to organise ourselves and our teaching in an efficient fashion to make concentrated time for research possible. Efficiencies can also be created during teaching semesters; we work with the timetabling team to try and obtain at least one day a week of research-intensive time.

### ***Support mechanisms for training and supervision of PGR***

We continue to run an active and successful PhD programme (see section 1). We have fostered 61 new PhD graduates in this cycle, including a number of prize-winning researchers.

Given the centrality of PGR research to our research culture, we operate a very active PGR training and supervision regime.

Every PhD student is assigned two supervisors and they meet with PhD supervisors once every three weeks. Supervisors benefit from University training on varied aspects of the supervisory role. Drawing on supervisor feedback and student reflections, we carefully monitor PGR student progress twice a year and report to Faculty on all students in May.

Our PhD students benefit from the University's research training suite of courses and procedures, including ones in ethics, open access and impact. This central training is also complemented by Department-specific events and training. Thus, we run a research training class, Research in International Politics, which also services the programme of our ESRC Wales Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) partners in Cardiff.

We have also organised bespoke doctoral training workshops for PhD students in the Department. These have covered issues such as publication processes, impact generation, open access, General Data Protection Regulation and early career planning. As part of our training, we have sought to create new synergies between academic research and policy and professional experiences. Such synergies have also been encouraged by our PhD students' partaking in practitioner internships. For example, in 2019, funded by the ESRC's Policy Internships scheme, one student (Marshall) took the opportunity to work at the UK Home Office during their PhD.

In line with the wider sector, we have moved to funding of many of our PhDs via doctoral training partnerships. We are part of the ESRC Wales DTP and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) South, West and Wales (SWW) DTP2 consortia providing sustained scholarship opportunities for our PhD researchers. Funding through these streams has resulted in the award of 21 studentships during this cycle. This includes five ESRC collaborative grants prepared in conjunction with non-academic partners. We also fund PhD research from Departmental and University sources, and such funding has been awarded to a further 14 PhD students.

Our role in the re-accredited ESRC Wales DTP and AHRC SWW DTP2 enhance the sustainability of provision of opportunities for PhD students, in terms of funding, research training and networking. The expansion of the D.Prof programme also provides an avenue for professionals to complete a research doctorate with us: five D.Prof projects have started, with the first due to complete in 2021.

PGR students have also taken the opportunity to lead or co-lead Departmental Research Groups. Some have also stepped into national and international leadership roles offered within working groups of the British International Studies Association (BISA). PGR students also benefit from travel and conference funding each year, up to £250 annually.

We also encourage them to lead in organising conferences and workshops. Examples in this cycle include the Centenary Postgraduate conference in 2019 which brought to Aberystwyth PGRs from across the UK to discuss cutting-edge challenges in ontology, field methods and also pedagogy; and the BISA Postgraduate Network Annual Conference in April 2020 (cancelled due to COVID). Departmental support is evidenced in administrative and financial assistance to such events and active contributions to discussions in them by participating staff.

Perhaps most central to our approach to PhD support is close collaboration on a continuous basis. PhD students attend all our research seminars, present their work to the whole Department every year and third year PhD students present their work at the weekly IPRS seminars. The extensive support we provide for our graduate community is evidenced quantitatively by the 61 completions in this cycle. It is also, however, reflected in qualitative terms by the prestigious national and international prizes awarded to our PhD students for their research, as follows:

- Gebel, Lord Bryce Dissertation Prize by the UK Political Studies Association, 2014
- Hashimoto, British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) Leigh Douglas Memorial Prize, 2014
- Jones, Shirin M Rai Prize for International Relations, 2018
- Jude, European International Studies Association (EISA) Best Dissertation Award, 2019
- Poonkham, Educational Award for Excellence in Humanities and Social Science, Anglo-Thai Society Awards, 2018.

In addition, two of our PhD researchers, Conway and Cloet, were awarded prestigious 'best paper' prizes from the EISA and the Arenberg Foundation respectively.

### ***Evidence of UoA support for equality and diversity***

As our research strategy objectives show, we are committed to developing a more equal and diverse body of research and researcher base. Representation of voices across gender, sexuality, nationality, race, class, religion, ability and career progression is a key commitment for the Department and an area where this REF period has seen intense collaboration between staff and the University to develop new initiatives. Our proactive approach is reflected in the following:

1. Our planning processes for leave policy are transparent and do not discriminate against staff from any background. With the help of the University's Department of Research, Business and Innovation (RB&I), we also systematically assess the equality and diversity aspects of our leave policy and actively adjust for special circumstances in how we calculate leave entitlement (e.g. maternity leave counts towards leave accrual).
2. We ensure that our research activities (including research seminars) take place within hours that suit all, including those with flexible work time arrangements. Thus, for example, we have adjusted our IPRS seminar timing during this cycle to ensure that all staff are equally able to attend.
3. Equality and diversity have been at the centre of our REF preparation and reading process. Our research planning and how it has been implemented has carefully and systematically considered career circumstances and dynamics. Our REF reading group was designed to fully represent diverse constituencies and subfields. In 2019 we were found to be representative in regard to key groups but were encouraged to seek further Welsh-medium readers. The new readers were introduced to the group, with an updated

Terms of Reference in May 2019. REF readers were unconscious bias and equality and diversity trained.

4. We actively encourage Welsh-medium research and impact activity. In this regard our researchers working on language policy have led the way (Lewis, Royles and Edwards) but engagements around Patagonia and Welsh identity (Taylor) have further enhanced new Welsh-medium research and impact activity.
5. Our Departmental leadership has reflected our equality and diversity commitments. Not only did we have a female Head of Department from 2013-2017 but since then both our Director of Research and Deputy Head have been women, and the Management Team has included a representative distribution of staff.
6. Departmental staff have also led in the University's development of diversity initiatives. For example. Taylor played a major role in the preparation of a report on 'Women in the Arts, Humanities and Social Science and Research' and on a report on race in higher education, both of which directly fed into development of the University's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024. Pasha was lead author of a report on 'Diversity in the Curriculum' which contributed to the University's strategy formulation around diversifying the curriculum. Phillips has led in developing disability-sensitive practices and initiatives.
7. Having hosted a series of academic and public events such as the 'Is Our University Too White?' workshop in 2019 and a Black History Month event with Kehinde Andrews in 2018, the Department has assumed an active role in leading diversity and equality discussions in the University, local community and in the academic field.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

#### ***Income: General***

Our income base is largely based on three main sources: student fees, research income and REF QR funding. Given reduction in income from student fees, the Department took active steps to rebalance its staff base.

Our research income over the assessment period totalled £2.78 million, and through major grant successes we have succeeded in attracting over £4.8 million in new awards. Whilst we restructured, we simultaneously worked hard to increase our external grant capture through the period. Indeed, 2019-2020 research income shows a 70% increase on the annual income in 2013-2014. Our average annual income generated from grants during this REF period is £397,100 per year.

The upward trajectory of our research grant capture and income in the latter part of the REF period reflects the success of our bespoke grant strategies and is noteworthy given that it has come in the context of a reduction in research active staff FTE from 27.2 in 2014 to 22.7 in 2020.

In this REF period our research activity has benefitted from multiple grants from key research funders: ESRC, AHRC, British Academy, Horizon 2020 (H2020), European Research Council (ERC), Welsh Government/HEFCW and many others. We have also hosted projects in collaboration with major industry partners.

Some highlights of grant funding awarded are as follows:

- 2020 Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Network Plus Grant 'Creating Safer Space' (Bliesemann de Guevara), £1,346,000
- 2016 ERC Consolidator Grant, 'The Global as Artefact' (Hamati-Ataya), £1 million

- AHRC-Newton Fund '(Un-)Stitching the Subjects of Colombia's Reconciliation Process' (Bliesemann de Guevara), £231,000
- WISERD Civil Society, ESRC Centres funding, 'Changing perspectives on Civic Stratification and Civil Repair' (Elias/Royles), £234,000
- Horizon 2020, IMAJINE 'Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice' (Elias), £299,000
- AHRC network funding 'Language Revitalization and socio-cultural transformation' (Lewis), £40,000
- Newton International Fellowship (Querejazu/Kurki), £96,000
- Five Marie Skłodowska Curie fellowships, £737,000

Success in research grant capture has been achieved through:

- Mentoring, sharing and learning together. We have actively sought to encourage all staff, across career level and gender, to explore grant opportunities, initially with smaller grants but also encouraging ambition (e.g. applications to UKRI Research Leaders scheme and ERC schemes). We have initiated Departmental brainstorming sessions on grants. We have also actively encouraged staff to participate in University RB&I training initiatives (e.g. sandpits, training workshops). We have contributed to the Welsh Crucible, a competitive scheme to identify and develop future research leaders in Wales.
- Varied grant strategies. We have sought to widen our funding sources and seek to leverage diverse public and private sources and in so doing explicitly focus on 'smart' matching of projects with specific kinds of funders. We have dedicated grant strategies on different strands of funding and actively seek to mobilise specific resources at University level to assist staff. Thus, for example, we offer mock interviews to all ERC or major GCRF grant applicants.
- Dedicated early career fellowship strategy. In line with our effort to create a new hybrid 'early career researcher hub' model within the Department, we have also sought to complement the successful PhD programme with targeted postdoctoral competitions and awards. In 2015 we initiated a new MSCA Fellowship strategy facilitating focused competition to attract the best applications from across Europe and beyond. This strategy has succeeded in bringing five MSCA fellows to the Department between 2015-2020. We have also utilised the new ESRC postdoctoral fellow funding and Newton International awards to bring world-leading postdoctoral scholars to AU and actively encourage Visiting Scholars to travel to AU.
- Close collaboration with University specialists. The University, responding to feedback from the International Politics Department alongside other Departments, has put into place a highly efficient system of assistance for grant development and management, including facilitation of individual meetings between research staff and RB&I staff, and assistance with budgeting and contracts. We make extensive use of these services in preparing our grants (see below) and have developed a close working relationship with RB&I benefitting from their targeted expertise.
- Given our commitments not only to grant capture but also to equality of opportunity for early career researchers and women applicants, it is reassuring to note that eight major early career grants have been awarded during the REF period and that over 60% of all our successful funding bids were led by female staff.

**University support for grant capture**

In development of grant capture strategy, we have benefitted from close co-operation in particular with the Europe, GCRF and social science teams within RB&I at the University. Bespoke and well-honed co-operation processes allow us to benefit from RB&I's expertise in legal and contractual, budgetary and funder-specific matters. Their expertise is a considerable factor in the success of our grant capture during this cycle. We also work closely with the University ethics, data management and open access teams ensuring highest regard is paid to research integrity in all aspects of our research.

University central structures also support our research work in other ways such as:

- Provision of considerable impact funding, both for leave periods to engage impact and for targeted impact funding. A total of £17,000 has been invested by the University impact funding streams in our impact activity since their inception in 2018.
- University Research Funding (URF) has been received by six members of staff (Edkins, Edwards, Elias, Hughes, Radchenko, Shepherd) facilitating the initiation of important pieces of work leading to research grants and REF outputs.
- Numerous Departmental staff have benefitted extensively from University Conference Fund support for conference travel activity during this REF cycle.
- The University also provides support to the Department in terms of advertising and training in grant capture, ethics, and funding processes. Staff have benefitted from visits and centrally organised brain-storming and information sessions delivered by funder organisations (British Academy, H2020) and bespoke training for staff (sandpits, 'how to write research grant'-sessions, impact training, research leadership training).
- In developing our grant activity, we also benefit from important funding schemes at the University. For example, we are part of the new Centre for International Development Research at AU (CIDRA) initiative: six projects based in the Department have received seed funding from this funding stream since it started in 2018. Further two projects have received seed funding from the ESRC Transformative Social Science stream. Bridoux, Beardsworth and Efstathopoulos, for example, were supported through this activity. The funding to work on Resilient Regions, for example, led directly to securing the major H2020 IMAJINE grant, to which two staff in Interpol have made significant contributions (Elias and Royles). Two projects (Ruzicka, Taylor) also benefitted from HEFCW funding facilitating research in and on Wales.

**Infrastructure**

The Department has benefitted from the University's infrastructural support, first, through the maintenance of the iconic History and Welsh History and International Politics Building in which the Department and its PGR students are based. In this building, constructed in 2006 to house the Department, each staff member has an office for their research work and access to a series of seminar and lecture rooms where varied types of research events can be held. The building has also been used to facilitate research-related exhibitions, for example on non-violence in 2020. Staff have also utilised the Aberystwyth Arts Centre exhibition spaces and the BBC studios to share their research.

The University provides important digital infrastructural support through open access and data management facilities as well as extensive technical support, printing and networking facilities for research staff, including visiting researchers.

The University maintains a library with an excellent set of resources for staff and PGRs. The Library resources include the impressive historic collections of the Hugh Owen library and access to key journals. An allocation of £1,500 is available for staff to order research-related materials to the library. In total, the University library spends approximately £55,000 a year on

funding materials related to the work of the Department. Further, staff benefit enormously from the National Library of Wales, a copyright library located adjacent to the University.

The Department also seeks to contribute to the development of new infrastructure at AU. For example, we are actively engaged in the development of a Dialogue Centre to be housed at the Old College, a site of major infrastructural investment by external bodies and the University. We plan to use the space to develop new collaborative research projects engaging the public and policy-makers.

#### **4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society**

A long-standing principle guiding the Department's work has been to 'tell the world about the world'. This means, for us, not only disseminating knowledge from academia but also that we must be able to facilitate new voices to express themselves and to initiate new conversations in global body politic. We then have an active role in collaborating with a wide range of academic and non-academic partners and beneficiaries in order to 'make a change' in the world at large, from academic collaborations to engagements with policy communities and local communities around the world.

##### **A. Academic Collaborations and Networks**

In conjunction with our visiting researchers programme and our varied grant programmes which require close partner engagement (CIDRA, GCRF, UKRI, WISERD), we continue to engage in a wide range of collaborations across the world and across disciplines. Examples include:

- Bliesemann de Guevara works with a global network of academic and non-academic communities with key partners in the UK, the US, Colombia, Kenya, South Sudan, Thailand, Myanmar, and the Philippines. Three major projects grants have funded these collaborations and with the receipt of GCRF network funding in 2020 these collaborations are set to expand exponentially under Bliesemann de Guevara's leadership.
- McInnes, working together with colleagues in Norway and funded by the Norwegian Research Council, has led a major project working on social media in emergencies.
- Elias, leading a work package for the H2020 project IMAJINE, and as the WISERD Co-Director 2019-2024, has led a major collaboration across Europe on territorial autonomy movements and spatial justice.
- Lewis has led in a major collaborative effort to rethink language politics and policy. Working with a group of scholars from across the UK and the world his work in leading this major project has resulted in not only major publications but also societal impact of note.
- Kurki works in collaboration with the Department of Computer Science at the University of Kerbala in Iraq. Funded by a GCRF seed-funding project managed by CIDRA, this cross-science team seeks to develop new ways to think about sustainable development via robotics clubs teaching.
- Bridoux, leading a new research initiative World Order Watch, gathered together a team of international scholars working on world order.

Our collaborations aim not only to enhance links between individuals but also between organisations. In this regard the pioneering work done by Bliesemann de Guevara in setting up multi-institution collaborative arrangements across developed and developing countries (including co-ordination of finances, ethics and integrity and methodology training) is particularly significant and likely to inspire further national and international development of collaborative practice in the years to come. Indeed, the GCRF Network Plus 'Creating Safer Space'-project

involves preparing ethics, legal and contractual frameworks within which universities and partners will work in the context of Official Development Assistance funding.

### ***B. Engagement with research users, beneficiaries and audiences***

Many and varied beneficiaries and audiences have engaged with the research work conducted at AU. These include policy networks but also civil society and public audiences nationally and internationally.

A wide range of policy networks have been impacted by work conducted at the Department, at national and international scales. For example, research on constitutional and substate diplomacy led by Lewis and Royles has been actively communicated to policy-makers and legislators in the Welsh Government and the National Assembly of Wales. McInnes' links at WHO, Welsh Government and Interaction Council have brought his research on global health security to the active attention of approximately 100 policy and government experts.

Civil society and the public have also been impacted. Bliesemann de Guevara's work for example has reached civil society and public audiences around the world. Over 11,700 persons attended the three 'Stitched Voices' exhibitions in the UK and Sweden. A further 600 have attended four exhibitions of conflict textiles '(Un-)Stitching Gazes' in Colombia. In developing her work on drawing and textiles she also works closely with local and international NGOs who engage civil society such as Nonviolent Peaceforce.

Dockter's contributions to a Channel 4 documentary on Churchill in 2018 were widely commented on in the media. Vaughan's research on anti-semitism and the Labour Party has made important contributions to public debate. Civil society groups, including refugee groups, have been engaged by staff working on immigration and sanctuary (Edwards, McFadyen). Similarly, a wide range of civil society audiences have been engaged around nuclear non-proliferation policy, including key organisations such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Booth, Ruzicka).

The local community in Aberystwyth frequently engages enthusiastically with public talks given in the Department. We have facilitated such talks and roundtables on Brexit (2016, 2017, 2019), the changing nature of world order (2019) and global health challenges (2020).

Further, Departmental staff have actively contributed to the University's civic mission in Wales, contributing to public talks at the National Eisteddfod, ESRC Festivals on Social Science, the GWLAD festival celebrating 20 years of devolution, and the 'UNESCO Our Voice in the World' festival.

We have also collaborated with industry and public bodies in developing our research. Thus, ESRC-funded collaborative PhD scholarships have built new networks between researchers and civil society, public bodies and governmental actors. Further, our staff have engaged in contributions to major cross-industry bids, such as the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition Networks-Cyber Security Lifecycles programme developed in collaboration with Welsh Government and Airbus (Stoddart).

### ***C. Services to research base, economy and society***

We continue to make important contributions in facilitating research capacity nationally and internationally.

We have maintained our long-standing commitment to organising major conferences in the field, with at least five examples from this REF cycle including the high-profile intelligence studies conference 'Intelligence, Past and Present in War and Peace' in 2018 and the 'Centenary Conference' in 2019.

Examples of the many important research workshops we have hosted include the British Academy funded 'Alliances and Trustbuilding' workshop in 2015 (Ruzicka), an ESRC

Transformative Social Science funded workshop on 'State Responsibility and Non-Territorial Security Challenges' in 2018 (Efstathopoulos, Beardsworth), multiple workshops on language revitalisation in 2018-2020 (Lewis, Royles) and a centenary workshop 'Human Interconnections and the Future of International Relations' in 2019 (Kurki, Shepherd, Efstathopoulos).

Key book series in the field are edited by Pasha, Bridoux, and Bliesemann de Guevara. Five members of staff act or have acted as editors of major journals and a further five as associate editors. We host three journals in the Department: International Relations (Kurki, Efstathopoulos, Shepherd), Intelligence and National Security (Hughes) and Rethinking History (Finney). Staff have contributed to nine peer review colleges and panels nationally and have peer-reviewed for research councils of European states or in the European Union. Bliesemann de Guevara received recognition in 2018 for exceptional service to the AHRC peer-review college.

Other key contributions to scholarly community include the role of Beardsworth in BISA Executive 2017-2019; Hamati-Ataya in BISA Executive 2013-2015 and EISA Governing Council 2014-5; Finney as Chair of British International History Group 2017-present; McInnes as REF panellist 2014 and 2021; and Vaughan as Chair of BISA's Postgraduate Section. Many staff have also actively contributed to and led professional association sections and working groups (e.g. Stullerova, Kurowska, Hamati-Ataya).

Our contributions to scholarly community are also reflected in various prizes and esteemed roles staff hold. In 2019 McInnes became the Chair of UNESCO UK and also represented the UK at UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Commission in 2017 and 2019. McInnes was also awarded the inaugural 'Special Achievement Award' in 2018 by the Wales Social Research Awards. Booth, a previous Head of Department and currently Distinguished Research Professor, was awarded the BISA Distinguished Scholar award in 2018.

Our staff have written a number of important reports used by public bodies. Kurki acted as a consultant on a major review of European democracy promotion policies in 2016. McInnes contributed to Wales' International Health Strategy. Lewis and Royles have contributed to Welsh National Language Strategy.

Staff have also given evidence in Parliament and for other public bodies. Shepherd provided written published evidence for the House of Lords enquiry into 'Europe in the World: The Strategic Review of the EU's Foreign and Security Policy' in February 2016. Royles gave evidence before National Assembly for Wales committees and panels on constitutional reform in 2017, on language policy in 2018 and on Wales' international strategy and relationship with the EU in 2018 and 2019. She also gave evidence to the UK Parliament on Devolution and Exiting the EU in 2018. Mathers fed into Whitehall deliberations on UK foreign policy in 2015.