Institution: University of Aberdeen
Unit of Assessment: 19 (Politics and International Studies)

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

The Politics and International Relations (PIR) Department at Aberdeen celebrated its 50th birthday in 2014, the beginning of the REF cycle. Since then, we have increased our capacity with investment from the University to become a medium-sized, ambitious and thriving Department with 19.8 full time equivalent (FTE) members of teaching and research staff and three teaching and scholarship staff, combining excellence in research and teaching across the discipline. As the Department has grown in staff numbers and expertise, we have further developed our reputation for research excellence around four key themes: Comparative Politics and Public Policy; Conflict and Security Studies; Democracy and Representation; and Political and International Relations Theory. Our overall vision is to be an internationally regarded PIR department that embraces pluralism, building on our traditional strengths (on democracy, representation, public policy and security) and being inclusive of new approaches and specialisms as our discipline evolves in response to emerging research priorities. This commitment chimes with the University's Strategic Plan, *Aberdeen 2040* (see ***REF5a***), on inclusion and interdisciplinarity. PIR research also has an important comparative dimension with expertise across Africa, Asia, the Americas, the EU and the rest of Europe, the former Soviet Union, the Middle East and the UK. PIR is the largest unit in the School of Social Science, alongside Anthropology and Sociology. This interdisciplinary intellectual environment further enhances our research culture. Collaboration, inclusivity and interdisciplinarity inform our four research themes and, with colleagues across the social sciences and beyond, are integral to our research and impact strategy.

Research Strategy
The central aim of our research strategy has been to build our capacity to lead scholarship and policy thinking on the world's most pressing political problems, regionally, nationally and internationally. Reflecting our four research themes, our work excels in diverse research areas including comparative constitutional politics, political party membership and political activism, democratic representation in established democracies, energy and environmental politics, digital democracy, the extreme right in Europe, gender, regional and international security, terrorism and counter-terrorism, civil-military relations, memory politics/apologies, protest and transition, post-conflict peacebuilding and critical political theory.

The Department's research and impact strategy is developed with staff and led by the PIR Research Officer, Head of Department, School Director of Research and the Head of Social Science. Throughout the assessment period, we have progressed several strategic priorities: 1) refining our research identity/key research themes; 2) promoting intra- and inter-disciplinary collaboration; and 3) driving ambitious research goals, principally via external grant applications. We approach these priorities with our commitment to transcend any rigid disciplinary boundaries between Politics and International Relations in the development of research projects and collaborations.

(i) Refining our research identity
To hone our research identity, we have refined our research themes to develop and sustain our activities and expertise. Reflecting the breadth of our expertise across Politics and International Relations, we have cemented these research themes as Comparative Politics and Public Policy; Conflict and Security; Democracy and Representation; and Political and IR Theory. As with our research strategy for REF2014, our specific research projects, academic networks and publications overlap across these themes, creating additional synergies.

(i) Building academic and non-academic collaborations
We have enhanced our collaborations with scholars in the discipline, across the social sciences and beyond. Staff have participated in interdisciplinary opportunities within the School and with colleagues outside the University. Our collaborative work is also underpinned by a commitment

to research user engagement (with policymakers across the UK, Europe and in international organisations, NGOs and community organisations) and wider public engagement. Research users have been involved in the design, execution and dissemination phases of our projects. **Keating**'s ESRC-funded work as Director of the Centre on Constitutional Change has involved considerable liaison and consultation with government officials and politicians across the UK. **Smith**'s work arising from the Horizon 2020 project EU-CIVCAP (Developing EU Civilian Capabilities for a Sustainable Peace) has featured extensive engagement with EU officials working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. **Toke** has liaised with policymakers and industry on shifting energy politics in Scotland, the UK and internationally. **Bain** has regularly liaised with the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) on Cuban politics and held a workshop with FDCO officials at the University in 2019. Drawing on the EU-funded FP7 Arab Transformations project, **Teti** has engaged with national, EU and international policymakers, NGOs and advocacy groups on Middle East policy. **Bennie'**s ESRC-funded work on political party membership has involved liaison with political parties and government officials in Scotland in the wake of the 2014 independence referendum.

(ii)   Supporting ambitious research agendas
The Department has focused on helping staff achieve ambitious research objectives. Our initiatives have included enhanced mentoring across the Department; regular research development reviews/annual reviews (providing feedback on research and impact plans); grant-writing workshops; and a more streamlined process of internal peer review of grant applications and working papers. Facilitating the Department's collective research ambition has also involved participating in School and University-wide initiatives including visits from external funders, presentations on funders' priorities (Carnegie, AHRC, ESRC, GCRF) and interdisciplinary sandpit events on a range of topics, bringing together colleagues to pursue potential collaboration. The success of our efforts to drive ambitious research agendas has been demonstrated by important recognition and awards during the assessment period (see Section 4). Our four-stranded research strategy has also enabled staff to deliver policy-relevant, research-led teaching, enhancing the experience of our large cohort of PIR undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Comparative Politics and Public Policy
Public policy has long been a particular area of expertise in PIR at Aberdeen. Building on the celebrated work of several predecessors, colleagues have further developed this specialism over the REF cycle. Some of this expertise focuses on public policy at the state level. For example, **Keating**'s work as Senior ESRC Fellowship on the *Future of the UK and Scotland* has explored the options for Scottish constitutional change and the implications for the future of the UK. This body of research, a collaboration between PIR and the Centre for Constitutional Change (led by Keating) investigates the public policy implications of Brexit and multi-level governance across the UK and is enhanced by **Harvey**'s work on UK devolution. **Toke**'s work on energy politics cements PIR's reputation for expertise on a policy issue of particular significance for North-East Scotland. Our expertise on public policy extends to policymaking at the regional and international levels: **Smith**'s work on the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy; **Teti'**s work on EU democracy promotion; **Anagnostakis** on EU-US cooperation on counter-terrorism and EU-NATO security cooperation; **McEvoy** on UN and EU peace mediation; **Tabur** (Scholarship staff) on EU policy-making on migration and development all bear testament to this specialist input.

Conflict and Security Studies
Over the assessment period, PIR has developed its research expertise in the areas of peace, conflict and security studies, thanks to ongoing work by senior staff (**McEvoy**, **Smith** and **Wyllie**) and the recruitment of several new colleagues (**Aboultaif**, **Anagnostakis** and Lekunze). Our research on this broad theme includes political violence within and between states, post-conflict peacebuilding and institutional design, terrorism and counter-terrorism as well as more theoretical explorations of peace and conflict in contemporary IR. Our funding strategy has been to pursue international collaborative projects and to support early career researchers in their research funding plans. For example, **Smith** was Co-Investigator on the EU Horizon 2020 EU-

CIVCAP international consortium project, *Developing EU Civilian Capacities for a Sustainable Peace*, which provided a multidisciplinary analysis of the EU's capabilities in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. **McEvoy**'s work on power-sharing democracy in post-conflict states has been funded by the Canadian Social Science and Humanities Research Council on the role of external actors (UN and EU) in promoting and maintaining power-sharing. **Anagnostakis**, **Bentley** and **Danilova** secured funding from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland for their respective projects on EU-NATO cooperation, state political apology and war commemoration. **Wyllie**'s work on regional nuclearization and training of PGT and PGR students in Strategic Studies has long been an important element of our research culture. Lekunze (Scholarship staff) is developing our expertise in African security with Scottish Funding Council support for a series of workshops entitled "Conversations on African Security".

Democracy and Representation
This research theme is a longstanding focus for the Department and brings together staff with expertise on political behaviour, parties/elections, public policy, civil society and democratisation. We have recently recruited two staff members at Lecturer level (**Paget**, **Thomas**) to expand our expertise in this theme. Extending previous research on political parties and party membership, **Bennie** was PI on the ESRC-funded project, *Recruited by Referendum: Party Membership Energised* that explored the extraordinary surge in party membership for the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Green Party following the 2014 independence referendum. Several colleagues have established reputations for their expertise on Scottish politics, evidenced by the contributions by **Bennie**, **Harvey** and **Keating** to the *Oxford Handbook on Scottish Politics* (2020). Our comparative focus on democracy and democratisation has been developed by **Bain'**s work on Latin America (principally democracy promotion in Cuba) and by **Teti'**s Arab Transformations Project, an international research consortium funded by the European Commission to evaluate the political, social and economic transformations before and after the Arab Uprisings of 2010-2011. Our comparative strengths are also evidenced by **Widfeldt**'s expertise on the extreme right in Europe and **Xypolia**'s work on democracy, nationalism and imperialism pertaining to the Eastern Mediterranean. **Thomas**' work on comparative public opinion research and political psychology brings additional expertise on democracy, participation and survey data collection to the Department. Our traditional strengths in democracy and representation are enhanced by **Paget**'s work on political communication, particularly the importance of mass rallies, with empirical application in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Political and International Relations Theory
Though all our research is theoretically informed, our fourth research theme brings together colleagues with strengths in critical international and social theory. Collectively, these colleagues bring their engagement with cutting edge theoretical work in IR to research, the classroom and PhD supervision, while also leading initiatives to build networks in new areas of research nationally and internationally. This theme has a strong critical perspective, including **Vij**'s expertise on international political economy and precarity in a global context; **Teti'**s Foucauldian analysis of confessional forms of power; **Bentley**'s Carnegie Trust-funded work on memory, apology and post-colonial theory; and **Danilova**'s work on military culture in Scotland funded by the Carnegie Trust and AHRC. Colleagues' work in this theme has included the organisation of workshops, invited talks and keynote speeches, for example: **Vij**'s British International Studies Association (BISA) workshop on "Sovereignty and Precarity" (2018), panels at European International Studies Association (EISA) and International Studies Association (ISA) conferences; and a keynote speech on "Precarity and IR" at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, India; **Teti**'s funded competitive Visiting Fellowships (Amsterdam 2015-16, Ghent 2018, Cagliari 2019); and a series of invited talks at international institutions. Our other empirically focused work also has a strong theoretical component, for example: **Anagnostakis** on international regime theory relating to security cooperation; **Bain**'s work on bilateral relations and foreign policy analysis (Russia-Cuba); **Bennie**'s contributions on political parties and social movement theory; **Smith**'s institutional analysis of EU policy-making; **Widfeldt** on populism and the European extreme right; and **Aboultaif** and **McEvoy**'s research on consociationalism/power-sharing theory with empirical application across Europe and the Middle East.

Strategic objectives for the next five years

Over the course of the assessment period, and building on our achievements, our research and impact strategy has been evaluated in line with the institutional strategic plan, *Aberdeen 2040* (See *REF5a*) and with a view to developing and enhancing our strategic priorities for our future research and impact agenda.

1. As an integral part of our research strategy, we will further develop and strengthen collaborations with research users (policymakers and stakeholders) that we have fostered over the assessment period. This will require departmental focus on how we can best connect our policy-relevant research with active policy engagement at regional, national and international levels. Many of our projects underway have important research user engagement strategies, supported by University structures such as the Public Engagement with Research team.

2. We will drive the Department's research ambitions by developing our research expertise and external grant applications in areas identified by the UK government and international funders as priority areas (e.g., the Global Challenges Research Fund), drawing on research capacity across our four research themes. Pursuit of this objective will be supported by the University's Grants Academy within Research and Innovation, the University's directorate dedicated to maximizing research income and supporting staff developing and delivering innovative research (see REF5a).

3. As the Department has grown, with the majority of staff at Lecturer and Senior Lecturer levels, we will further develop tailored research support for both early career researchers and for mid-career academics seeking to win large grants and lead international collaborative projects. Delivering on this objective will require building on existing research support structures in the Department in collaboration with Research and Innovation, the School Director of Research, the PIR Research Officer and the School of Social Science Research Committee.

Funding Strategy

A central element of our overall research and impact strategy is to ensure that all staff receive excellent support in developing their research from application to publication. A new administrative role created over the REF period, the PIR Research Officer, works with the Grants Academy, the School Research Committee and the School Director of Research to help staff respond to relevant calls and develop research applications. This support is achieved by sharing opportunities for research funding (notification of new/urgent national and international funding calls) and robust internal review procedures of all grant applications. These procedures have served to enhance the success rate of the Department's funding applications over the REF period. Staff have been supported by the University's Internal Pump Priming Fund (IPPF), offered as a means to leverage funding in the context of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). **Bain** secured GCRF-IPPF funding to hold a workshop at Aberdeen involving academics, international policymakers and practitioners interested in lessons learned from the Cuban development model for sustainability. **McEvoy**, with a colleague in Sociology, secured GCRF-IPPF funding for academic and policymaker workshops in Sarajevo and Beirut on the challenges of good governance in conflict-affected states. These projects, and other GCRF-IPPF projects underway (e.g., Lekunze's seminar series on African security), are being developed with a view to targeting future GCRF calls. PIR has provided ECRs with small grants in addition to the School annual travel budget to help build their research experience before applying for larger awards.

Impact Strategy

An integral part of our research strategy is the careful planning and execution of how the Department's research excellence can contribute to the myriad social, economic and political challenges facing contemporary society. Our research is utilised by several key audiences: policymakers at local, regional, national and international levels; political parties; non-governmental organisations; industry; and civil society. We have sought to facilitate research impact in the Department's projects in several ways. Much of this effort involves staff liaison with the Research and Innovation Office that shares good practice from across the University and offers guidance to help ensure that research impact is embedded within grant applications from

the early design stage to submission, execution and dissemination. Staff also attend workshops and grant-writing sessions that focus on enhancing impact standards run by the Grants Academy (Staff liaise with the University's Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU)), which offers training and support in organising public engagement activities. In keeping with our commitment to share our research findings with the wider public, staff also participate in the University's annual ESRC Festival of Social Science (e.g., **Keating**'s work on Brexit, **Harvey** on the Scottish independence referendum). Going forward, we will share good practice from this assessment period as models for research grant applications and projects in the years ahead. For REF 2021 we have selected two impact case studies: **Keating**'s work on constitutional politics in the UK; and **Teti**'s Arab Transformations project on political attitudes to the Arab Uprisings. These were chosen as representations of excellent, impact-informed research that takes place in PIR. Developed over several years, they are showcases of our wider impact strategy, prioritising research user engagement and informing policy and public debate.

Other colleagues have progressed ongoing impact involving engagement with research users, policymakers and the wider public in Scotland and with UK government officials and parliamentary committees at Westminster. **Bennie**'s work on party membership involved delivering a high-profile dissemination event for policymakers, politicians and the media in Edinburgh. The event was featured in *Holyrood* magazine (reaching parliamentarians and public officials), and the project findings were widely debated on social media. **Bain**'s work on Cuba has involved regular liaison with the FCDO and dissemination at the Scottish Parliament. **Toke**'s ESRC-funded research on renewable energy policy has involved extensive collaboration with Scottish government officials in Edinburgh. **May** delivered a talk at the Scottish Parliament (with a colleague in Anthropology) in association with the Cross-Party Group for Tibet. **Paget** has liaised with FCDO officials and with US officials in USAID and the Department of State on Tanzanian politics. **Danilova**, with support from the Carnegie Trust and the University's Public Engagement Enabling Fund, presented a public talk on the importance of the Scottish Warrior for Scotland's history, culture and identity politics at the Gordon Highlanders Museum in Aberdeen.

Other impact work takes place with research users at the international level. **Smith**'s EU-CIVCAP project, involving 12 international partners, held a series of "Research Meets Policy" seminars in Brussels, bringing together EU policymakers, practitioners and researchers. **Smith** and the wider consortium disseminated a series of documents on lessons for EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding relating to EU strategies, staff recruitment, training, resources and mission support. **McEvoy** disseminated policy briefs on post-conflict power-sharing to officials at the UN Department of Political Affairs and the EU External Action Service and shared research findings with policymakers (EU, FCDO, UN) at academic/practitioner workshops in Sarajevo and Beirut. As part of our overarching research strategy, the Department is committed to open access as a means to ensure effective dissemination of our research and to enhance the impact of our work for non-academic audiences.

Interdisciplinarity Strategy
PIR enjoys the position of being the largest department within the School of Social Science, a structure that facilitates easy dialogue and collaboration with colleagues in Anthropology and Sociology. Our commitment to pursuing the potential for interdisciplinary conversations on topics of shared concern have included informal get-togethers, such as monthly coffee mornings and the respective departments' seminar series, which encourage attendance and participation across the School. Staff also engage in interdisciplinary collaboration and events with research centres across the University; in particular, the Centre for Citizenship, Civil Society and Rule of Law (CISRUL), an interdisciplinary centre across the Arts and Social Sciences with an interest in the study of political concepts including democracy, human rights and pluralism.

Some of our interdisciplinary work takes place within the School, for example, **May**'s work with colleagues in Anthropology on Tibet and Islam and **McEvoy**'s work with colleagues in Sociology on post-conflict peacebuilding. At the University level, **Toke** was Co-Investigator in the Centre for Doctoral Training in Sustainable Production of Chemicals, led by Chemical Engineering at

Aberdeen and funded by the Leverhulme Trust. PIR staff have also been involved in interdisciplinary research with colleagues at other institutions. **Smith**'s EU-CIVCAP project on EU conflict prevention hosted an international Expert's Network of academics and practitioners from a range of disciplinary and professional backgrounds. **Danilova**'s AHRC-funded work "The Hero Project" (with colleagues in Cultural History and English Language and Literature at Birmingham and Durham) was an interdisciplinary project that explored the role of a hero in modern Britain (and with two partner organisations, the Royal Geographical Society in London and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh). **Teti** was Project Leader of the EU-funded Arab Transformations Project, with partners from several Middle Eastern and European countries.

The Department's research and impact strategy is designed to cohere with the University's Strategic Plan, which has prioritised interdisciplinarity as a key theme for the years ahead. PIR will support and develop the University's interdisciplinary commitments, pursuing collaboration across subject areas to develop creative solutions to pressing local, national and international political problems. Some of our staff have been involved in developing the interdisciplinary commitments prioritised in the Plan, particularly with reference to Energy Transition (**Toke**) and Social Inclusion and Cultural Diversity (**Bain**).

Research Ethics
The Department's research and impact strategy acknowledges the importance of research integrity and ethics in all our activities. The Department follows the University's ethics and research governance arrangements that support projects from design to execution, dissemination and user engagement. The University's Research Governance Handbook includes information for staff on ethical review and opportunities for training in research ethics and governance, and in research integrity and is enhanced by the work of the Committee for Research Ethics and Governance in Arts, Social Sciences and Busines providing relevant policy and procedures guidance. Where required, our research projects undergo a review process for ethical approval and we follow the Political Studies Association Guidelines for Good Professional Conduct as the professional standard for research integrity and ethics. The School of Social Science has a dedicated Ethics Officer who provides regular updates on ethics governance and answers any queries staff and students may have. Information about research matters such as data management and GDPR is disseminated to staff via monthly School Forum meetings, and where required, training is provided by the University staff responsible for these matters.

2. People

Staffing Strategy and Staff Development
Throughout the assessment period, we have made the retention and recruitment of high quality staff central to our research strategy. Though several staff submitted in REF 2014 moved to other institutions or retired during the assessment period, we have focused our staffing strategy on 1) securing university investment in the Department for new recruits and 2) retaining quality staff who have made important contributions to the Department, University and discipline. Compared to a small department of 12 eligible staff for REF2014, we are now a medium-sized, thriving department of 20 teaching and research staff (19.8 FTE) and three research-active teaching and scholarship staff. Our staffing strategy has been about facilitating and enhancing our overall research strategy and key research themes. In the Conflict and Security theme, we recruited a lecturer with expertise in terrorism and counter-terrorism (**Anagnostakis**); a lecturer in deeply divided societies and the Middle East (**Aboultaif**); and a teaching fellow with expertise on security in Sub-Saharan Africa (Lekunze). In the Democracy and Representation theme, **May** was appointed as lecturer with expertise in Political Islam and Islamic movements; **Thomas**, as lecturer with expertise in political attitudes and quantitative methods; and **Paget**, as lecturer in Digital Democracy, was hired as one of 50 new colleagues across the University as part of the ambitious Principal's Strategic Investment Posts scheme.

PIR has developed a research staffing strategy with a central aim to promote research excellence:

(i)   Growing the Department via investment in and support for Early Career Researchers

Our staffing strategy has sought to secure an important balance between various levels of seniority with an enlarged team to include early career, mid-career and senior academics. With staff across these various levels we have enhanced our research culture to ensure all staff can progress their academic careers. To achieve this balance, our hiring strategy has prioritised investment in and support for early career researchers as an important means of ensuring sustainability. During the assessment period, we have enhanced the structure of this support with robust probation procedures and a mentoring scheme where each ECR is matched with a senior colleague who provides regular feedback on research plans, grant applications and publications. There is a clear probation process, involving the ECR staff's Academic Line Manager and mentor, who support junior colleagues in achieving the criteria required for tenure/confirmation of an open ended contract. These procedures have been developed over the assessment period, providing additional support for ECRs. New colleagues participate in an induction programme including one-to-one meetings with the School Directors of Research and Teaching and Learning. ECR staff can apply for financial support from a departmental fund intended to help build research expertise and experience or apply for other seed funds within the University such as the GCRF Internal Pump Priming Fund (e.g., Lekunze's Conversations on African Security seminar series). ECRs are also encouraged to develop their research plans by participating in the PIR seminar series and in research management training and grant-writing sessions organised by the Grants Academy; such as the UKRI "bootcamp" workshops for staff working on ESRC or AHRC applications. Support for ECR staff is also prioritised in the supervision of PhD candidates whereby more senior staff take the lead and work to develop staff experience in guiding students to completion.

(ii)   Enhanced support for developing research careers

In addition to the focus on ECRs, we have developed support structures to enable all staff to build successful research careers. We have formalised our professional development procedures over the assessment period. For example, we hold annual reviews whereby Academic Line Managers meet with staff to review their achievements and plans for the following 12 months with particular focus on research as well as teaching and administrative responsibilities. Academic Line Managers (**Bain**, **Bennie**, **McEvoy**, and **Smith**) also help support staff as they develop their career plans in line with the criteria set out in promotion processes. To help further support our staff's research plans and career development, PIR has developed a form of research leave, introduced as a light sabbatical "Temporary Course Reduction" whereby three staff per year have a reduced teaching semester (in compliance with the institutional research leave policy). As PIR has grown in recent years with several new staff, we plan to increase the number of staff who benefit each year from the reduced teaching load. We are assisted by the Grants Academy team, which supports researchers with all stages of the grant cycle, from conception of ideas to development of high-quality applications to project delivery, dissemination and impact. Business Development Officers help staff prepare for funding calls and build our external grant portfolios, and colleagues in the Researcher Development Unit provide professional development opportunities, grant-writing support and training in project management, strategic career planning, academic leadership, public engagement and communication of our research. Staff in the Scholarly Communications Service (see *REF5a*) advise on Open Access and support the effective dissemination of our research. Supporting the University's commitment as a signatory to the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*, the Department will continue to build its career development policy in line with the Concordat principles relating to research environment and culture, employment and career development. Aberdeen's strength in this area is reflected in its HR Excellence in Research Award (see *REF5a*).

Training and Supervision of Research Students

Over the REF period we have guided 31.81 PhD degrees (by supervisor share) to completion, double the figure for the previous REF cycle. PIR's PGR community is international in nature, making for a thriving, lively research environment. The key strategic objective for our graduate community is research excellence: inviting applications of quality, providing a high quality

training, supervision and research environment and preparing our students for ambitious career paths in academia and policy roles. All applications are reviewed by several members of staff, and candidates can be invited to submit a revised application based on staff feedback to ensure the very best proposals are considered and approved. In an increasingly competitive funding environment, many of our PhD candidates benefit from various sources of international support. For example, we have two PhD students registered in the interdisciplinary "Political Concepts in the World" (POLITICO) programme (with **Teti** on the Board), a Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie doctoral training programme situated in CISRUL.

PIR works closely with the Head of School (**Bain**), Postgraduate Research School, School Director of Postgraduate Studies (**Toke**) and the Dean for Postgraduate Research. The PIR PhD Coordinator has monthly meetings with the Dean to discuss aspects of PGR support structures, training opportunities and monitoring/progression procedures. Much of the PGR training is multidisciplinary, bringing together PGRs from across the University to learn from each other's expertise and experience. Elements of this training are mandatory for all first year PGRs including training on Research Governance and Ethics, Research Integrity, Equality and Diversity and Information Security and Data Management. PIR supports all our PGRs in accessing the training opportunities offered by the University's Postgraduate Research School and embedding these new skills and knowledge into their respective research projects.

PIR has a long history of successful PhD supervision. Each PhD candidate has at least two supervisors and the supervisory team may comprise of colleagues from across the School of Social Science and from other Schools (e.g., Law, History, Geography, Education). New colleagues undertake training in supervision provided by the Postgraduate Research School, and more experienced colleagues undertake refresher training every five years. Supervisors are invited to participate in events organised by the Postgraduate Research School, including the regular supervisor breakfast sessions, providing an informal platform for supervisors to share experiences, seek guidance and learn from peers. Supervisor Masterclasses focus on topics including Improving Communication with your PGR student; Examining Research Doctorates; and Supporting Distance/Online Doctorates. Over the assessment period, we have refined our supervision procedures to include robust departmental monitoring for postgraduate research. At the end of Year 1, a formal End of Year 1 PhD Review meeting takes place with the candidate, supervisor(s), another member of staff outside the supervisory team and the PIR PhD Coordinator as Chair, and six-monthly reports are submitted to the Postgraduate Research School.

Our training and supervision are embedded in principles of research excellence and have helped enhance a research culture in which PGRs are fully integrated. Our PhD students engage with our seminar series and are invited to attend job applicants' presentations. Our PGRs regularly participate in panels and training sessions at national and international academic conferences (e.g., European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), Political Studies Association (PSA), ISA, BISA). They benefit from the University's Development Trust funds and the School's budget for travel to conferences and for fieldwork. PIR provides teaching opportunities at the undergraduate level as a core element of academic training. Students awarded PhDs within the REF period have gone on to successful careers including post-doctoral research fellowships and academic posts at the Universities of Aberdeen, Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arabia, Durham, Karlsruhe University of Education, Germany, the Marten Center in Brussels, NDU Lebanon, Munich, Northumbria, Oxford, Richmond, Stirling, Tallinn; and policy jobs in the UK government and Scottish government/Parliament.

Promotion of Equality and Diversity
PIR views equality and diversity as integral to our staffing strategy of recruiting and retaining high quality researchers. Complementing a research strategy committed to disciplinary pluralism and inclusion, we seek to create a fully inclusive research culture that celebrates the diversity of our staff and students. The Department works with the Head of School (**Bain**), University Senior Management and the University's Equality and Diversity Officer to engage staff and students in equality and diversity matters. We adopt a proactive approach to equality and diversity, providing

support to all staff or PGR students with a protected characteristic. Our commitment to equality and diversity requires balance in PIR recruitment panels in terms of gender, race and age as per the University's policy on selection and recruitment committees. All members of staff involved in recruitment panels must undertake the University's Equality and Diversity training and Unconscious Bias training. PIR's research support mechanisms (e.g., probation procedures, annual reviews and mentoring processes) pay particular attention to equality and diversity concerns. This support ties in with the School's commitments under the Athena SWAN initiative on gender equality. The School successfully applied for the Athena SWAN Bronze Award in 2017, with an Action Plan to be rolled out between 2017 and submission for the Silver Award in November 2021. Several PIR staff (**McAngus**, **McEvoy**, **Thomas**, **Xypolia**) have been members of the Athena SWAN Self-Assessment Team. In PIR, female staff have played prominent roles in management and key administrative roles (Head of Department, REF Lead, Research Officer, PhD Coordinator), providing evidence of good career prospects for female staff. Female colleagues can also benefit from opportunities for career development in academic leadership via the School's support of the Aurora network (e.g., **McEvoy**). PIR feeds directly into University initiatives on Race; **Vij** is Co-Chair of the University-wide Staff Race Equality Network, liaising with colleagues on our collective commitments to diversity.

Our commitment to equality and diversity has been embedded in the Department's preparations for REF2021. We have developed our REF preparations in a transparent and fair manner, particularly with regard to the communication of internal and external reviews of staff's proposed outputs and in the output selection process. We have been guided by the University's long-standing commitments to equality and diversity and the institutional Code of Practice for REF2021 which sets out the ways in which our output selection should take into account staff's individual circumstances. Overall, output selection has been guided by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the University's Code of Practice, particularly with regard to assessing research on its own merits rather than on the basis of the journal or publication outlet. In cooperation with the University's central REF team, we have been careful to enable staff to voluntarily declare their individual circumstances where this may have impacted upon their ability to contribute to our output portfolio. Colleagues' administrative responsibilities are continually reviewed as a means to allocate roles fairly, thereby providing everyone with research time. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, PIR has been mindful of the different circumstances and challenges experienced by colleagues working from home. Some colleagues have caring responsibilities and/or live with family members who are shielding. Senior colleagues and Academic Line Managers have liaised with colleagues undertaking research projects, providing advice on how to continue their research given the associated public health restrictions. PIR has offered support for extensions to projects, particularly when research projects include an extensive data collection element.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

As outlined in Section 1, our research strategy for the next five years includes building and strengthening collaborations with research users; driving our external grant funding, including a focus on areas identified by the UK government and international funders as priority areas; and developing tailored research support for ECRs and mid-career academics seeking to win large grants or to lead international collaborative projects. Since 2014, this strategy has been designed to maximise our efforts to grow research income, especially in the challenging context of staff changes. Average annual income per REF eligible FTE has more than doubled compared to income reported to REF2014, growing from £7,624 per eligible FTE per year for REF2014 to £19,651 per FTE per year for REF2021. We have managed the transition well by recruiting several ECRs with ambitious research agendas who have begun to win small-medium sized grants. Our strategy in the years ahead is to enhance our grant-raising culture, support staff across the various levels and build our external grant portfolio.

Infrastructure and Facilities
PIR is located on the University's Old Aberdeen campus, sharing a building with our Social Science colleagues in Anthropology and Sociology. Each staff member has their own office and

we benefit from communal space including the coffee/lunch lounge which we also use for seasonal get-togethers and the annual drinks receptions on Graduation days. Our PGRs also have office space in our building, facilitating a lively research environment with daily opportunities for intellectual interaction. Our PIR seminar series takes place in the largest room on the PIR corridor which can accommodate up to fifty people. The Department benefits from an extensive research collection via the Sir Duncan Rice Library (see *REF5a*), a state-of-the-art, award-winning library that opened in 2012. We enjoy access to thousands of books and millions of journal articles in electronic format, a vast collection that can be accessed on and off campus. We have access to excellent facilities for workshops, training events, and departmental meetings (e.g., research away days) in the Library and colleagues (e.g., **Bain**, **Bennie**, **Toke**) have utilised these spaces for externally-funded events. PIR also benefits from access to the collections in the Taylor Library, the University's specialist law library, which also houses the Official Publications Collections and the European Documentation Centre, thereby supporting some of our interdisciplinary work. As mentioned earlier, our research (from sharing project ideas to preparing and submitting grant applications) is supported by colleagues in IT and Research and Innovation including the Grants Academy and a dedicated Business Development Officer (See *REF5a*).

Open Access of Research Outputs and Data
PIR is committed to facilitating open access in line with the REF2021 Open Access Policy whereby journal articles are made publicly available within three months of acceptance. In 2020, 83 per cent of our journal articles and 65 per cent of book chapters were open access compliant. PIR has demonstrated a commitment to an open research environment by depositing publications in the University repository. Over the assessment period eleven datasets have been deposited in the UK Data Archive, Zenodo, online websites and the University's repository. All project outputs from the EU-funded Arab Transformations project are available via free online open access. Data and deliverables are available on the University repository, on ResearchGate and academia.edu. Data is also stored on the ESRC repository and JStor, and the Arab Council for Social Sciences is to host the data on its own "dataverse". PIR staff link their ORCID number to PURE, supporting the University and REF position that ORCID provides a helpful, persistent identifier for research staff throughout their career. As ORCID is increasingly required in external funding applications, we have ensured that all Category A staff have an ORCID identifier linked to PURE. Also of relevance are the international Leiden rankings on university research, which places Aberdeen 8th in the UK for social science and humanities when ranked by percentage of female authorship.

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

Over the REF period, PIR has encouraged collaboration with academic and non-academic partners, and with wider audiences, as priorities for our overall research strategy. This collaboration is central to our overall aim of contributing to scholarship and policy thinking on the world's most pressing political problems. As confirmed in Section 1, we will build on our achievements during the assessment period to develop and strengthen our collaborations with research users (policymakers and stakeholders). Our work has also made important contributions to the research base and the disciplines of Politics and International Relations.

(i)   National and International Academic Collaborations
In tune with the University's commitments to collaborative scholarship, much of our research involves cooperation and partnerships with academics in other institutions. This academic collaboration enhances our expertise, reach and internationalisation, an important priority for the University's strategic plan, *Aberdeen 2040* (See *REF5a*). **Keating**'s ESRC-funded work has involved extensive national and international collaboration via the Centre for Constitutional Change, involving academics from other institutions across the UK, Republic of Ireland and Europe. **Smith**'s Horizon 2020 grant on EU capabilities in conflict prevention and peacebuilding was based on extensive collaboration with 12 international partners (academic institutions, NGOs and think tanks). Other staff have acted as Co-Investigator on funded projects with national and international academic partners: **Bennie**'s ESRC-funded project with colleagues in

Edinburgh and Essex; **Danilova**'s AHRC-funded "Hero" project with colleagues in Birmingham and Durham; and **McEvoy**'s project funded by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with University College Dublin. **Vij**'s work on Precarity and IR has included collaborative roundtables at BISA, ISA and an edited volume with international colleagues (co-edited with scholars at Cardiff University and George Southern University, US). PIR's collaboration with international institutions has included several important scholarly exchange programmes and visiting fellowships. **Smith** was awarded the prestigious Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Fellowship at the European Union Institute, Florence, Italy (Spring 2018). **Teti** was ACCESS Europe Visiting Fellowship, University of Amsterdam and Free University of Amsterdam (2015-16); Visiting Professor, University of Ghent (2018); Visiting scholar, University of Cagliari (Italy) and GramsciLab (November 2018).

(ii)   Collaboration with Research Users

The Department has made considerable effort to engage with researchers and wider audiences over the assessment period and we see this area as an opportunity for further growth in the years ahead. All our research projects have sought to implement mechanisms for user engagement with a view to delivering impact. We see these non-academic collaborations as offering important potential for our ongoing research strategy.

Some of our collaboration with research users relates to work on public policy and constitutional politics. **Keating**, in addition to his work described in the ICS, has engaged with international public officials on questions of sovereignty and referendums (the Directorate for Foreign Affairs, Basque Government; delegates from Papua New Guinea and Bougainville; the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs, Quebec; a delegation of the US Department of State in Edinburgh). **Keating**'s user engagement has included written and oral evidence to parliamentary committees on 48 occasions and 160 talks throughout the UK and in Canada, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway and Spain. Drawing on ESRC-funded research *Delivering Renewable Energy Under Devolution*, **Toke** has engaged with policymakers in Scotland on renewable energy policy debates in the context of constitutional debate and the 2014 independence referendum. This work included dissemination of policy reports; meetings with UK and Scottish government officials and evidence presented to the Scottish Parliament's Economy Energy and Tourism Select Committee. **Toke** chaired a conference in 2019 "Powering Offshore Oil and Gas with Marine Renewables" in collaboration with a coalition of non-government organisations and small and medium sized enterprises. **Bennie** provided written evidence and presented to the Scottish Parliament Local Government and Communities Committee (2016) on how to encourage voting in Scottish local government elections. **Paget** co-authored an internal report for the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the FCDO on political parties in Tanzania after the 2015 general election. Examples of our policy engagement with think-tanks include **Bennie's** briefing paper to the European Centre for International Affairs on the Scottish independence referendum.

(iii)   Contributions to the Research Base and the Discipline

PIR is committed to enhancing the research base and the vibrancy of our discipline. Our strategy has been to work to sustain the health of the discipline in addressing the problems facing our ever complex and interconnected social and political worlds. Supporting the research base, PIR staff hold editorships and memberships of editorial boards of important journals and outlets in the discipline: **Smith**, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, *European Security*; **Bain**, "Lexington Series on Cuba" co-editor, Lexington Books; **Keating**, *Territory, Politics, Governance*; *Regional and Federal Studies*; *West European Politics*; *European Urban and Regional Studies*; **Bennie**, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*; **Teti,** *Middle East Critique*; **Vij**, *Philosophy and Global Affairs*; *Globalizations*; *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*; **Danilova**, *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*; and **Xypolia**, *Journal of Global Faultlines*. Staff invest time in supporting and training new entrants to the discipline via external service commitments. For example, **Thomas** has been an instructor at the ECPR Winter School in Methods and Techniques and the ECPR Virtual Summer School, is a Co-chair of the ECPR Standing Group on Political Methodology and a Board Member of the European Survey Research Association. **Bennie** has been a member of

the Awards Committee for the inaugural ECR Publication Prize for the APSA (American Political Science Association) Political Organisations and Participation Research Group.

PIR has secured important disciplinary recognition and awards. **Keating** was awarded the Senior ESRC Fellowship on the Future of the UK and Scotland; is Chair of the Royal Society of Edinburgh Social Science Section (2019-), a member of the Council of the British Academy (2015-18) and a member of the Advisory Board, ESRC UK in a Changing Europe programme (2017-). **Teti** was elected to the Governing Council of the British Society for Middle East Studies (2019-). **May** was recipient of the Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship and **Harvey** secured a Fulbright Fellowship 2020-2021 to research and teach on UK and US politics at Villanova University, Philadelphia. **Smith**'s work was awarded the Most Downloaded Article of the Year in the *Journal of European Public Policy*.

PIR staff regularly give invited keynote speeches, lectures and undertake conference chair roles. **Bain** has participated in workshops and conferences at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada; the Institute for the Study of Strategic Regions and Ibero-American Centre of the Charles University in Prague; Cuba en la Política Exterior de los Estados Unidos de América in Havana, Cuba; and Estados Unidos y Mexico at El Colegio de Mexico. **Smith** has given a series of keynote lectures, including at the Belgrade Security Forum, the Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels; and the EUI and Athens Security Forum. **Teti** was invited speaker at numerous UK and international institutions including the American University in Cairo, Amsterdam University, EUI, Lund University and Oxford. **Danilova** was panel chair of an AHRC-funded conference at the Royal Geographical Society and at a workshop at the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland. **Harvey** gave talks on constitutional referendums at the University of Tallinn and the University of Vilnius and presentations on the Scottish independence referendum at secondary schools and town halls in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

PIR staff regularly contribute to national and international print and broadcast media. Our contributions to media on constitutional politics in the UK and beyond, the Scottish independence referendum and Brexit are particularly extensive: **Keating** has held 540 media interviews since 2013 in English, French, Italian and Spanish. **Bennie** has contributed to Newsnight Scotland, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC Radio 5 Live, *The Guardian*, *Economist*, *New Left Review* and participated in an expert panel for the *Sunday Mail*/*Daily Record* on the UK general election 2019. **Bennie**'s media engagement on Brexit and UK politics has extended to outlets in France (*Le Monde*, Mediapart), Germany (*Junge Welt*), Canada (*The Globe and Mail*) and Mexico (*El Universal*); **Harvey** has held interviews with *The Herald*, BBC Radio Scotland, BBC World News, *The Irish Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, ABC Radio (Australia), *El Mercurio* (Chile) and *La Razon* (Spain). **Bain** has had extensive media engagement on constitutional politics in Cuba and Cuban-Russian relations: BBC Radio Scotland; BBC Scotland Television; Radio Voice Moscow; PowerFM, South Africa; and *The Globe Post*. **Teti** has made more than a hundred contributions to media over the REF cycle on Middle East politics with outlets including BBC TV/Radio, Al Jazeera, ABC Australia, *Deutsche Welle* and the Italian state broadcaster. Contributions to press have included *Newsweek* (US) and daily newspapers in Italy and Egypt. **Paget** regularly contributes to media on politics in Tanzania including Bloomberg, *Deutsche Welt*, Al Jazeera, the BBC and the *New York Times*. **Bentley** has commented on political apology with TRT World (TV) and Talk Radio. **Xypolia** regularly contributes to media on Turkey, Cyprus and Middle East politics (*Jerusalem Post*, Sputnik UK, BBC, Greek and Cypriot press). Colleagues also regularly contribute to blogs, from the School of Social Science blog to *The Conversation*, the Centre on Constitutional Change, LSE blog and the Political Studies Association blog.

Moving ahead as a growing department in PIR, we look forward to integrating colleagues who have joined the Department in recent years, consolidating our achievements and further building our research culture. We will continue to develop our traditional research strengths while embracing new, innovative research agendas. Colleagues in our four research themes will take forward the plans set out in our research and impact strategy, focusing on growing our external grant portfolio, enhancing collaboration with academic and non-academic partners in ways that

deliver impact and supporting staff across the various levels of seniority. As a medium-sized, ambitious and thriving Department, our next phase will be focused on ensuring that PIR continues to deliver research excellence, driving our intellectual environment for high quality outputs and research user engagement.