

Institution: 10007140 Birmingham City University
Unit of Assessment: 21: Sociology
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>a) Overview</p> <p>Sociology is a burgeoning area of excellence for the Birmingham City University (BCU) which has a 175-year heritage of educating students in a wide variety of disciplines. Though submitting for the first time, our UoA 21 submission consists of 14 staff (14 FTE) who have significant responsibility for research (SRR) amongst a total of 21 staff members and 10 PhD students. Our staff helped secure nearly £3 million of research funding in total and produced over 100 outputs. The Unit is centred in the Department of Criminology and Sociology, situated in the School of Social Sciences within in the Faculty for Business, Law and Social Sciences (BLSS). Following the creation of BLSS in 2014, and an increase in focus on research, we implemented an effective and inclusive research strategy that led to significant developments in key areas of Black studies, cultural studies, educational sociology and political sociology. With a strong emphasis on equality and diversity the internationally esteemed research produced by the unit was strategically organised within the Centre for Critical Social Research (CCSR). The Centre provided an interdisciplinary space for social researchers from the Department of Criminology and Sociology, the Business School and the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences (HELS).</p> <p>b) Context and Structure</p> <p>In 2014/5, BCU made a strategic decision to invest substantially in BLSS and the Faculty, in turn, invested in the development of the Department of Criminology and Sociology in order to establish a high-performing team that produces excellent sociological research which could be fed into research-led teaching and that would be a hub for all sociological research taking place across the University. This required investment in new staff, a new research centre, and new programmes as well as improving the opportunities available to researchers in order to expand their abilities to publish and attract research and enterprise funding.</p> <p>One aspect of our strategy was creating a new research centre that facilitated the collaboration of colleagues engaging in sociological research within the Faculty and across the University. We created CCSR and initiated recruitment and development of talented staff; we then incorporated members of the existing Social Research and Evaluation Unit (SREU) into the Centre while enabling them to maintain their organizational entity.</p> <p>SREU was formed in 2012 but has its roots in the Centre for Research into Quality established at the University in the late 1980s. SREU focuses on two key research areas: quality in higher education and vulnerable people. The team published widely on aspects of quality assurance and quality improvement processes in higher education. Over the course of many years, members of SREU were involved in advising higher education institutions on managing student feedback processes. Since its inception, SREU has also been involved in a wide range of projects that explore policy and practice relating to the most vulnerable groups in our society including prisoners, victims of domestic violence, and people suffering health conditions. SREU, under the directorship of Professor MacDonald, has led several large-scale EU projects detailed in Section 3. Professor MacDonald is an acknowledged expert in the fields of prisoner health, domestic violence, drugs and related health issues.</p> <p>CCSR, formed in 2015, was a product of the wider Faculty strategy for improving and increasing research. The Centre sought to produce research that is “both critical in nature and urgency” and that would impact “a range of publics locally, nationally, and internationally” across key areas of Black Studies, Cultural Studies, Higher Education and Political Sociology. In total, 27 people were part of the Centre between 2015 and 2020, including members from other Faculties (see</p>

Section 2). As discussed in Section 1c below, in 2020, the three centres of the school separated by subject were replaced five interdisciplinary centres.

Centre Structure

The strategy behind CCSR was to facilitate a research environment that would enhance engagement, promote the development of research skills, and further research culture in a university that is largely teaching focused. Within that context, the investment in sociology sought to create a department that was able to compete nationally in terms of research. CCSR was also developed in such a way as to maximise the potential of all staff and enable the development of research leadership. CCSR operated with a management structure of one Director (Andrews), one Deputy Director (Nulman), and four cluster leads. The clusters – in alphabetical order – were Black Studies; Cultural Sociology; Higher Education and Society; and Policy, Activism and Politics. These clusters formed around strategic staffing and expansion of key areas of both research and teaching interests at the Faculty level. These clusters had their own mission statements which helped drive their internal strategy.

The Black Studies cluster concentrated on an “interdisciplinary subject rooted in the experiences of African diasporic communities and in a commitment to improving the conditions faced by these communities on a local, national and global scale. [Black Studies] is an emerging discipline in the UK which the CCSR was at the forefront of developing”. The specific topic areas of research for the cluster were black organisations and the voluntary sector; black politics; racism and resistance in education; the representation of black women in the media; oral histories of local communities; and others.

The Cultural Sociology cluster centred on the empirical and theoretical study of a broad range of areas of culture and cultural forms, with particular reference to popular culture. It sought to produce high quality, critical, and collaborative work in the field of cultural sociology. It focused on the specific topics of culture, identity and inequality; the production and consumption of culture; the politics (and impact) of cultural representation; and others.

The Higher Education and Society cluster was concerned with the ways in which the higher education community interacts with, affects, and is affected by the society around it. Much of the work the cluster engaged with was designed to make an impact on society both through research and teaching. The cluster’s approach to research was methodologically pluralistic and interdisciplinary and engaged with key debates such as quality management, student experience, widening participation, the ethical graduate, and the internationalisation of HE.

The Policy, Activism, and Politics cluster specialised in cross-national and comparative social policy and politics, as well as grassroots interventions in politics and policy in the form of social movements from a sociological perspective. The cluster’s aims were to develop research that furthers the understanding of inequalities within society in the efforts to: alleviate social problems; investigate and research contemporary socio-political contexts with the aim to influence policy change and future social policy; promote partnership with the local community and build upon established relationships; and build links with other universities and networks in the UK, EU, and internationally in pursuit of the other aims.

Given the research expertise held in Sociology regarding Black Studies, one of the new undergraduate programmes established was Europe’s first undergraduate Black Studies programme which challenges the Eurocentric curriculum by recognising Black perspectives and embeds the teaching of empire and colonialism and its impact on Africa and the African diaspora. Since then the University has developed the BA Honours programme in Black Studies in Criminal Justice and a future Master of Arts in Black Studies.

c) Research and Impact Strategy

BCU expanded its efforts at engaging in research and growing its research capacities in a context where that was previously lacking. Despite being a teaching focused university, BCU

has placed strategic emphasis on expanding and promoting its research environment in the REF2014 period. The University and Faculty strategy toward research has changed drastically since that time. Faculty Research Committees (FRCs) implemented new, localized strategies for accelerating research output, quality and funding, setting a clear steer for developing high quality research activity in all subject areas.

As of January 2015, the target for UoA21 was to return 10 staff with an output pool of at least 35 publications. With additional recruitment and mobilization around these targets, it soon became clear that they would be surpassed. The target later shifted to 12 staff and 40 outputs. With the unit's staff FTE at 14 the target has been surpassed. Based on present staff levels across the Faculty with significant responsibility for research, UoA21 represents 14 of 93, or approximately 15%. The initial output target has also been substantially exceeded. For REF2021, the unit had 101 outputs.

In March 2015, annual research and enterprise income targets were determined for each academic year up to 2019/20. The target across the Faculty was £400,000 in academic year 2015/16, with a gradual increase leading to an annual BLSS target of £1.3 million starting in 2017/18 and carrying on at this level until 2019/2020. Sociology's target represented 15% of the Faculty total. In total, UoA's pro rata research and enterprise income target from 2015/16 to 2019/20 was £765,000. To assist in achieving these targets, the School appointed a Director of Research (Mavritsaki) in 2016. As discussed in Section 3, the total value of project secured by UoA21 staff members including BCU-led or partner-led research funding, was nearly £3 million (£2.95 million). Of this, over £700,000 of research income came to BCU.

Future Goals

Targets up to 2024/25 have been made for the Department of Criminology and Sociology regarding Research and enterprise income and student research; regarding research income, the Department level target is set at £707,000 between 2020-2025. The Department's 20/21 to 24/25 target for number of students undertaking a PhD is set at 39. Targets were also set for UG and PG student take-up of opportunities to get involved in research and an increase in post-docs or research assistant posts.

To achieve these targets, a new strategic plan known as Excellence with Impact was developed in the School of Social Sciences and is in the process of being fully implemented. The plan focused on better integration and coordination of research across the departments of Criminology and Sociology and Psychology. This strategic coordination is being facilitated through the creation of five cross-disciplinary research centres across the school: (1) Identities and Inequalities, (2) Crime and Society, (3) Security and Extremism, (4) Health and Wellbeing, and (5) Lifespan and Behavioural Science. A majority of those in UoA21 are based in the Identities and Inequalities centre.

The strategy has also improved and expanded partnerships working through knowledge exchange programmes and a rooted focus on research *for* Birmingham, in line with the University's motto. The new strategic vision is for "Birmingham City University to be a recognised international centre leading on and facilitating excellent and impactful research, innovation and scholarship in the social sciences". Its mission is to ensure that "The School of Social Science engages with all its partners to build an environment that develops creative solutions to contemporary local and global challenges." A new School Research and Development Committee has also been established to support the School Research Strategy. The Committee reviews progress of the School against outcomes, identifies and allocates opportunities for grant capture, focuses on challenges in reaching targets, and reports on pipeline activity and current projects. To achieve the objectives, the School-level strategy has begun to implement three strategic initiatives: Birmingham 2029 (B29), the Social Sciences Data Lab, and Research Realism. These initiatives target areas of research excellence regarding outputs, impact and collaboration (see Section 2).

2. People

Equality and diversity

Sociology at BCU has placed equality and diversity at the forefront of the strategy in the process of hiring and staff development. The UoA's research focus on race, identity, and Black Studies has served as a constant reminder of the inequalities particularly when it comes to race and ethnicity. It has led to a widely accepted appreciation of the importance of ensuring equal employment and development processes within Sociology. As successful outcome of the underpinning approach to equality and diversity, BCU's proportion of BAME academics among the Sociology staff is one of the highest in the country. Seven of 18 permanent staff in the unit are BAME. Of the staff with SRR, nearly half are BAME. Of Professors in the unit, 3 out of 4 are BAME. The racial and ethnic makeup of staff is reflective of our student body, helping to ensure equality in teaching as well as research. The gender breakdown was similar across both SRR and total staff and at two of the four Professors in the unit are women. All staff with disabilities were included in our submission further demonstrating the framework of fairness that underpinned the submission.

Equality and diversity are central to the University's values and centrally there have been a number of important changes that have occurred in order to ensure equality across a range of factors concerning employment and working conditions for academics and promote diversity. To this end, the School of Social Sciences has a Bronze 'Departmental' Award for Athena SWAN and BCU's Athena SWAN Project Manager is a member of the Sociology unit of assessment. BCU also holds an institutional Bronze Award for Athena SWAN. To further our success in this area, the Athena SWAN lead for the School assessed the areas of improvement and is developing an action plan that includes mandatory training for line managers to challenge and report discrimination on behalf of staff; a co-chairing scheme that rotates a female and male chair for all decision-making meetings to enable gender-balanced leadership growth; and determining whether there is an imbalance in pastoral care and outreach responsibilities for female staff and if so to adjust this using the Workload Allocation Model.

Staffing strategy and staff development

Staff recruitment was made fair through a series of mechanisms utilized by the University. These included the anonymisation of applications, anonymized shortlisting procedures, and clearly established criteria for recruitment. In addition, we had similar procedures on a departmental level regarding research responsibilities and roles. In addition to nurturing and supporting existing junior staff to develop their research capabilities, considerable attention was paid to recruiting new staff with a track record of successful research, high quality publications, and promising future research plans. Recruitment also enabled Sociology to add to or expand prior areas of research excellence and fit the University's values.

Sociology strategically singled-out key areas of research strength and recruited staff in those areas. These strengths were reflected in the clusters for the Centre for Critical Social Research, particularly Black Studies; Cultural Sociology; Policy, Activism, and Politics. Investments in these areas were substantial and, between 2014 and the census date, 14 new SRR staff were appointed - though some have since left to join departments in other universities. Since the census date, an additional two research-active staff members were appointed on permanent contracts and two more appointments have been scheduled.

The Black Studies cluster was formed after the appointment of Dr Kehinde Andrews who has since become Professor of Black Studies. His work and efforts in the development of the cluster provided even greater strategic incentive to develop it further. Dr Denise Noble, Dr Lisa Palmer, and Dr Karen Wilkes were then hired to expand the work within this cluster to include a black feminist research focus. After the census date, Dr Tony Talburt brought a socio-historical research background to the Black Studies team. Dr Arantza Gomez Arana, with her focus on the social impact of EU policies, and Dr Eugene Nulman, with his work on social movements,

alternated responsibility for leading the Policy, Activism, and Politics cluster from its inception. Dr John Narayan was strategically appointed to deepen the focus on activism, to intersect with the Black Studies cluster, and to expand on the work of political sociology. Since the census date, Dr Sam Burgum has been appointed to expand interests in social movement research with his focus on urban movements. The Cultural Sociology cluster was led by Dr Gary Hazeldine. Dr Nazia Hussein was strategically appointed for the Cultural Sociology cluster with her work on 'New women' and their representations and Dr Nathan Kerrigan was appointed to broaden the cluster's emphasis to include the rural. In 2019 Zaki Nahaboo was also strategically hired in this area.

This mix of developing the skills of our junior research staff, and recruiting exceptional talent enabled Sociology's research ambitions to be realised. By the census date the number of SRR staff grew to 14 and a pool of over 100 outputs, showing the success of this strategic approach to enabling academics to realise their potential. Our strategic approach ensured that staff were provided with time, support, training, and internal funding opportunities for conducting high quality research as discussed in detail below. New staff were expected to publish and or develop research bids for external funding and this is facilitated throughout the Centre, School, Faculty and University research structures discussed above.

Research Grant Development and Support

One objective of the University and Faculty was to increase the number and quality of research bids to grow externally funded and self-supported activity. We achieved this objective by implementing a multi-layered strategy addressing structural inefficiencies with managing research funding applications (discussed in Section 3) and improving staff support to generate such applications. Regarding supporting staff in applying and obtaining for research funding, the Faculty made changes in three key areas: provision of seed funding; development of research competence; and facilitation of research and collaboration opportunities (see Section 4).

At the University level, the establishment of the Research, Innovation, Enterprise & Employability (RIEE) professional services department enabled oversight and management of all pre-award and post-award activities for externally funded projects through the Research and Innovation Gateway (RIG) team. At the Faculty level, seed funding was provided in several ways in order to facilitate and encourage research outputs and the development of grant application writing. Starting in 2015, Small Development Grants (SDGs) provided seed funding for research, enabling staff to apply for internal income of up to £1,000 to support pilot projects with an expectation that the recipient would then apply for external funding. Between 2015 and 2019, the Faculty allocated over £70,000 pounds in grant funding through SDGs across the three Schools in the Faculty. The Department received £14,000 in SDG funding in that period, helping 12 different researchers develop research projects.

In addition, funds for cross-faculty collaboration between BLSS and HELS was established to promote interdisciplinary research and an equipment and resources grant was introduced to support the purchase of specialist equipment required to conduct research on new or existing projects. The Faculty provided information and generated confidence among staff for applying for research grants through a series of training sessions on grant writing that was based on the identification of needs at the cluster level and integrated into the wider staff development initiative. The Faculty also developed a Community of Practise for Grant Writing: a series of meetings of researchers that are involved in developing bids. These meetings are comprised of experienced and non-experienced researchers who provide peer support to aid the development of grant proposals. The sessions have a specific theme drawn from staff suggestions and link back to training that is provided at the Faculty level. The School of Social Sciences also introduced a grant mentoring scheme where senior academics assisted early career researchers and those new to grant writing in a peer-review and training process for proposals. In addition, the Faculty created a Masterclass series that included general information regarding grant writing as well as more detailed information for specific grants the Faculty was targeting.

Furthermore, CCSR was crucial in developing a strong research environment that helped to inspire, motivate, and strengthen the research efforts of its members by facilitating impact discussions, providing support for developing and writing research grants, providing updates on funding applications, as well as providing a space for collaboration on new projects. As demonstrated in Section 3, the unit was successful in securing relatively large research grants for such a newly established area of research for the University.

At the School level, part of the future strategy will be a new initiative brought in to formalise mentorship by allocating emerging researchers at least one external academic mentor to challenge and support individuals submitting competitive bids for research funding and with reviews and comments on proposals to improve content and quality. These mentors will come from strategic partnerships with universities who are ranked in the top 500 global universities and share a similar ethos to BCU. The mentors are to be selected based on their success and sustained record of securing research grants from a variety of sources and fit into BCU values as well as the School Vision and Mission.

Support with Research Outputs

Different levels of the University support research in different ways. The raft of measures discussed below resulted in researchers in the UoA publishing 12 monographs, 52 journal articles, 31 book chapters, 2 edited books, and 4 reports over the REF period.

As a whole BCU has improved its system for determining and allocating research hours to ensure that research-active staff are able to undertake research activities within their workload. Research time allocation is a ring-fenced entitlement recognised through the Work Allocation Model (WAM). Additional time is allocated to externally funded research or knowledge exchange projects, or for pilot project awarding funding or sabbaticals. This model protects research time as a departmental priority. The Director of Research in the School of Social Sciences, in liaison with the Head of Department and Research Directors monitor this process to ensure that all allocations are transparent and form part of the their Individual Performance Review (IPR): a regularly scheduled discussion between staff and their line managers that forms part of the University Performance Management Policy.

In addition to the research time allocated to staff with SRR, emergent researchers (ERs) – academics without SRR – are usually staff who are completing or have recently completed doctoral study. ERs are allocated the standard 180 hours Scholarly Activity Allowance (SAA) to undertake activity that contributes to their professional or practice field which underpins their teaching and supports their professional and academic learning. An additional 162 hours (0.1FTE) may be allocated in the WAM to support completion of a part-time doctoral programme (a maximum of seven years study as per University regulations). On successful completion of a doctorate, a post-doc allocation of 162 hours can be negotiated (0.1FTE) to support early publication development towards becoming an independent researcher with SRR.

The Faculty also launched a transformed sabbatical scheme which allowed research active staff to apply for research leave for an extended but finite period where staff would be excluded from their usual roles and responsibilities in order to focus on a specific activity or outcome explicitly aligned with Faculty priorities, usually leading to one or more high quality outputs. Sabbaticals were available to all Sociology staff, ranging from one month to a full semester. The protection of research time is coupled with research objectives in annual reviews and expectation of roles. The University, and BLSS in particular, are promoting a research-led teaching initiative that seeks to ensure research is informing the curriculum and teaching approaches by assessing this at course approval stage. This is coupled with the Faculty's desire to develop a more flexible curriculum that supports developing research portfolios of staff and centres and creates an exciting, cutting edge student learning experience.

To further support research, the Faculty created the Volunteer Research Assistantship (VRA) scheme. The VRA scheme is a Faculty-wide initiative to facilitate and encourage engagement

with research by providing an opportunity for UG students to get hands-on experience with research by supporting research projects. The scheme, initially piloted in the School of Social Sciences, provides students with research awareness and with an opportunity to consider pursuing a research degree in the future but also supported staff research projects that would have otherwise been difficult to accomplish. For example, volunteer research assistants' duties include conducting literature reviews for new projects, collating information to inform grant applications or helping to run pilot studies. Staff members create small research projects that are advertised to students who can apply via a competitive process. The successful students are then assigned to a project and work closely with a member of staff for a five-week period on the research project. This work provides students with a wide range of research experiences, including literature review and synthesis, writing ethics proposals, data collection, analysis and verbal presentation skills. The Student Researchers scheme expands on VRA by enabling students with research experience to be hired as part of funded research projects. This supports student development while accelerating the process of attracting research assistants to funded projects, helping to ensure the project's successful completion in a timely fashion.

The Faculty provided a system of internal and external evaluation and support across outputs, impact, and funding which also strengthened research networks. BLSS also provides specific Masterclasses focused on research and writing to assist staff and organised and funded writing retreats which took place at the Woodbrooke Study Centre. This was paired with the CCSR's own digital writing retreats where staff members could feel part of a community of researchers engaged in writing together and motivating each other. The digital writing retreat was facilitated by dynamic software which also served as another place for research communication across CCSR members regarding grants and funding, impact, and research support. The research centre assisted with submission and acceptance of publications of journal articles, book chapters, and books from the initial stage of publication idea and recommendations for publishers, to reviewing and commenting on drafts of publications.

Support with Research Impact

The Faculty established an impact strategy group supported by a cross University team of Impact Officers. This team created systems of tracking and storing information regarding impact and the Faculty engaged in seminars and training programmes to develop knowledge around impact. Impact plans also became an important factor in developing internal and external research bids as well as PhD bursaries.

In a move to provide opportunities for staff to begin disseminating research in order to develop impact, the University established RESCON, an annual internal research conference designed to support and promote the research of junior academics at the University. Each year's conference is themed to provide a focus on new outstanding research across the University and aims to build confidence and enable early career and postgraduate researchers, who are expected to attend and participate, to gain presenting experience.

At the school level, the Social Sciences Data Lab was developed as an 'impact hub' that helps organisations make sense of data to improve policy and practice, locally and globally. The project seeks to address the use of data and work with organisations and individuals in the private and public sectors to maximise opportunities to increase return on investment on a new commercial development, or for public sector organisations to refine policy interventions for targeted groups. The BCU Social Sciences Data Lab is underpinned by core funding but also has a consultancy stream to support cost recovery. The project harnesses opportunities to engage with other BCU initiatives such as STEAMhouse.

Each cluster in CCSR also had a distinct impact strategy that was in line with Faculty objectives and targets. These strategies were driven by cluster leads and overseen by the Centre Director and Deputy Director who assisted throughout the process. Potential impact case studies rooted in underlying research were drawn out of these clusters and assessed and evaluated by the

Centre Director and Deputy Director, as well as the wider School and Faculty research managers and administrators.

In addition, Research Realism is a recent initiative developed in the School of Social Sciences that focuses on building and developing partnerships with people and organisations to resolve common and shared problems. It promotes practical research by using our expertise and excellence to improve the lives of people locally and globally. The framework recognises that research needs to be done in partnership with external organisations which will lead to focussed solutions that have lasting and demonstrable impact. Such an approach was also coupled with Birmingham 2029 which was developed to improve the School's performance across income generation, impact, outputs and collaboration.

Birmingham 2029

At the School level, the B29 initiative enables additional support of research development through support and seed funding. B29 is the School of Social Sciences community-university engagement programme which aims to respond to the social, political and economic challenges faced by residents of the city.

B29 has connected internally and externally with a range of stakeholders and has positioned itself to undertake impactful, co-produced research and community engagement through partnership development and internal pathway grants, with a strategy that will enable the findings to be disseminated. The programme focuses on three core activities: internal promotion and engagement, external connections and partnership building, and strategic partnership.

B29 introduced a Pathway Grants programme for Social Sciences academic staff to apply for a research grants of £3,000 to co-produce, develop, or strengthen an existing partnership with local voluntary and community organisations. The Pathway Grant aimed to connect our staff with communities and jointly undertake an achievable project. Seven grants were made and had started. From March 2020 to the end of July 2020 all projects had been suspended due to COVID-19 lockdown.

B29 has built community and voluntary sector relationships and partnerships with local organisation including the New Biggin Community Trust in Handsworth, Birmingham and Legacy WM in Lozells, Birmingham. This has initiated co-produced community research, training, and capacity building for local people as community researchers and has attracted BCU students as volunteer researchers. In addition, B29 has made links with the Royal Society of Arts to convene a joint event exploring the role and benefits of a publicly engaged university.

In July 2020, Birmingham City Council commissioned B29 to undertake a 12-month community engagement project in East Birmingham, a large area under-going regeneration. The project is worth £114,000 and represents a significant partnership to develop an anchor place-based project. B29 also commissioned Birmingham Voluntary Services Council to provide an insight report on responses to COVID-19 and the learning for future community-university engagement.

Additionally, B29 also offered 5 fully funded PhDs across the School, two of which are in the Department for Criminology and Sociology. B29 has also partnered with Policy Press / Bristol University Press which provides a pipeline for data to be published as monographs as well as peer review journal articles.

PGR Students and PhD Support

When PhD students register, they are linked to one or more of the School's research centres. As with staff, PGRs may belong to multiple centres, reflecting the diversity of expertise and collaborative spirit of the School. Funded students receive a fee waiver and monthly stipend reflecting RCUK rates during their studies. PGRs are also able to take up to 6 hours a week of paid teaching work related to their emerging expertise and area of study, an opportunity which enables them to develop their understanding of the relationship between research and teaching.

We consider students as co-creators of knowledge and this principle applies to all our students, starting from undergraduate students all the way to the PhD students. The latter are included in all research initiatives available to staff, including research centre membership, research development workshops and relevant funding calls. As such, PGRs have opportunities for involvement in bid writing, ongoing research projects, research dissemination, conference organisation and attendance at national and international conferences. At the School level, PhD students are included in a Community of Practice for PhD Research programme, peer mentoring, research seminar presentation opportunities, and are invited to attend other School level initiatives such as the Community of Practice for Grant Writing. These programmes benefit our PhD students to develop into academics in the future.

During the REF period, the Department invested in appointing new staff and developing existing colleagues including PGR students, some of whom are now members of staff. Across the Department, there are 9 staff members who had been PGR students at BCU. This reflects our sustainable approach to building a friendly and supportive research community, which is evidenced in our recruitment and promotions since 2014.

Our unit had one PhD completions during the REF period and a further 10 currently undertaking PhDs with one near completion and two in their final year. Although the numbers are small, this is a significant growth for a burgeoning unit. PhDs have up to three supervisors to provide them with additional mentoring and support throughout the PhD process. The supervision team must include at least two completions to ensure knowledgeable experience in supervising to completion is present. PGR supervisors are provided with training to strengthen their competency in PGR supervision. All supervisors are provided with a training course at the beginning of each academic year. The University runs a Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) accredited professional development programme entitled Community of Practice around Research Supervision. The Community of Practice provides peer support and guidance through the supervision process as well as sharing the best practice methods for PhD supervision. This Community of Practice consists of workshops, which take the form of conversations in which participants share experiences and explore different strategies and approaches to PhD supervision. The program scaffolds supervisory practice with an understanding of the theory, available resources, and commonly experienced challenges within supervision.

The Doctoral Research College (DRC) is a professional service based within RIEE that functions as a point of contact and communication for all PGRs, providing support for applications, admissions, enrolment, induction, progression monitoring, examination and award to all PGRs. Applications for PhD study are made via the DRC and are subsequently reviewed by Sociology staff with relevant expertise and the capacity to provide research supervision. Applicants are invited to interviews where they discuss their proposed project and allow potential supervisors to assess the interviewees' suitability for postgraduate research study. Offers are issued via the DRC, who assist students and supervisors with the applications, admissions, and enrolment process. Additional support is provided at the Faculty level by the Faculty Research Degrees and Environment Committee (FRDEC) which reports to the Faculty Research Committee and at the University level by the University Research Environment and Training Committee (URETC). URETC reports to the University Research Committee (URC).

PhD students are supported through the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice. All new research degree students are expected to attend and complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Research Practice during the first year of their PhD. The programme informs students about the journey of the PhD and trains them in fundamental research skills by providing the students with support and guidance to help the production of knowledge and impactful, far-reaching research. The programme is taught during the first six months of the PhD and it complements the traditional practice of research degree supervision.

Another course open to all PGR students is the Learning and Teaching for Postgraduate Researchers course. The course is SEDA accredited and introduces philosophies, techniques, and values that underpin learning and teaching. It equips PGR students with knowledge and skills to facilitate and support learning in a variety of situations, providing them with knowledge about a future in academia. On completion of the course, students are awarded a nationally recognised certificate in Learning and Teaching for Postgraduate Researchers. There is additional PhD peer mentorship where Senior PhDs students (in their third year of study and beyond) can take part in a mentoring scheme, through which they provide support and advice to first and second-year PhD colleagues. The strategic income support provided for staff for conference support is also extended to PGR students. Since 2015/16, nearly £10,000 has been invested in PGR students for funding conference and workshop participation.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

The University, Faculty, School and Department have worked to enable income-generating research, enterprise, and knowledge exchange. Through the funding of pilot projects, research officers and trainings, and the promotion of collaborations (see Section 4), members from the UoA has been able to engage in significant levels of income generation.

The UoA's members were able to secure a total of over £2.95 million in research grant funding across projects led by BCU or partner institutions during the REF period, of which over £700,000 came to BCU. Members of the unit also obtained funding from consultancy and conferences, totalling over £156,000 in income, of which over £75,000 was income brought into BCU. Some of our largest projects include the Families: Social Exclusion and Places of Safety project; the Learning and Teaching Space in Higher Education project, and the Enabling Mental Health Benefits project.

Professor MacDonald led the European Union funded Families: Social Exclusion and Places of Safety (FSEPS) project with industry and university partners in the UK, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy Romania and Austria. The FSEPS project developed a programme of activities that actively supported mothers who live with their children in refuges or other places of safety. The project's aims were to combat social exclusion, aid recovery from abuse, and facilitate stable sustainable family relationships by providing learning and therapeutic activities, supported free play, educational trips, and communal food activities to create positive memories for families living in refuges or other places of safety. The project was awarded over €425,000 by the European Commission.

James Williams led the Learning and Teaching Space in Higher Education, an Erasmus+ project set out to develop a set of core principles that institutions can use to help them design, construct and develop new learning and teaching spaces, providing a framework for institutions to work within to ensure that they make best use of their resources. The project involved partnerships with other universities including Universidad Publica de Navarra (Spain), Universita Degli Studi di Milano (Italy), Universiteti Aab (Kosovo), Wirtschaftsuniversitat Wien (Austria), Uniwersytet Jagiellonski (Poland), Stiftung Evaluationsagentur Baden-Wuerttemberg (Germany), and Universidade De Aveiro (Portugal). The project received over £300,000 in funding.

Professor Lee-Treweek won an Erasmus+ grant of over £250,000 for the project Enabling Mental Health Benefits: resilience, achievement, competencies and engagement in improved higher education policy and practice for student wellbeing (EMBRACE HE). EMBRACE HE sought to bring together models of innovative best practice and embedded curricular, extracurricular, pedagogical, pastoral and collaborative activities (with Students' Unions, external stakeholder etc.), to address student mental illness and wellbeing, with a unique open access toolkit training model. The project will conclude in 2022 and the project consortium includes the Public University of Navarre, the Western Balkans Institute, the University of Crete, and Vilnius University, with BCU leading the project.

Aside from successful grant capture, members of this new UoA also applied for a further £1m+ in funding but these bids were unsuccessful. In addition to the long list of funding support discussed in Section 2, research officers, part of the Research and Enterprise Support Office, sent calls for grants, held workshops to assist in grant capture, and have provided direct support for applications.

Infrastructure and Research management

Effective research governance is managed strategically at Faculty level by the Faculty Research Committee and the Faculty Research Degrees and Environment Committee (FREDEC) who hold regular meetings. The Faculty Academic Ethics Committee (FAEC) has cross-faculty responsibility for ethical approval and compliance. Research ethics reviews are undertaken by FAEC and reports to the University Research Ethics Governance and Compliance Committee (UREGCC) which reports to the University Research Committee (URC). The Research Excellence team coordinates support for ethical review of staff and PGR research. The University subscribes and conforms to the Universities UK concordat to support research integrity. BCU approved a Research Data Management statement to guide the development of data management and access policies in years to come.

The Faculty has implemented a range of improvements to support research, including adopting new software for collating and tracking research bid data, obtaining additional administrative assistance through the appointment of research support officers, and improving communications between research leads and the Finance Office. Research activity within the BLSS Faculty has been supported by the creation of high-quality physical research spaces, technical support, intellectual resources, and the IT infrastructure required to conduct world class research and innovation. In the summer of 2015, the BLSS Faculty moved from City North Campus to The Curzon Building, a new, purpose-built facility on the City Centre Campus. This facilitated an important step-change in our identity and external profile when it came to collaborations. In 2017, the Curzon Building was extended, and a new PGR Hub was opened within this space. This provided dedicated research spaces to support the growing PGR community, with a common room, kitchen and 60 shared office spaces to enable them to effectively work on their research and develop a strong sense of community.

On top of the standard IT and library provision, the University has provided the use of Adobe Suite applications on University laptops which have been used to promote and disseminate research in new and innovative ways. One particular example of this is the reproduction of an academic paper by Professor Andrews, 'The Psychosis of Whiteness', which explored the representations of the transatlantic slave trade in film. The article was made into a feature length documentary film by another member of the UoA in order to demonstrate how an academic article can be made into popular content. The film has since been selected for the 16th Annual Oakland International Film Festival and has been screened in cinemas and to facilitate conversations between film enthusiasts and scholars, psychiatrists and psychologists, race and ethnicity scholars, and NGOs.

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

Collaboration was central to CCSR which had the aim to “develop a tradition of critical social research that builds links to organisations, communities and movements outside of academia, in local, national and international contexts.” The strategy of developing an outward-focused team of critical social scientists actively enabled large levels of collaboration across both academic institutions and external organisations including NGOs, community groups, and society at large. This multi-pronged strategy to facilitate collaboration supplemented University-wide initiatives.

At the Faculty level, meetings for a large segment of staff across subject areas were arranged to identify potential opportunities for partnerships on interdisciplinary projects. The Faculty also encouraged collaboration through the creation of cross-faculty seminars and actively recruited new external partners in order to generate potential project ideas and funding applications. Each cluster within CCSR was able to make their own relevant links to external partners, but support was distributed across the team to share best practice and experiences.

Our UoA has been particularly strong in developing strategic collaborating across national and international lines through a wide array of different routes which have bolstered our research culture, connectivity, and cohesion. Through strategic engagement this unit has connections with over 175 institutions and organisation across 29 countries and five continents.

University partnerships formed as a result of the focus on collaboration and impact that was at the heart of the UoA’s strategy. In particular, strong links were made with Tarrant County College in Texas, Xavier University of Louisiana, Tulane University, the University of Ibadan, and the University of Bremen. These partnerships have led to academic visits and public discussions that produced the exchange of innovative research and methodologies.

The development of collaboration was bolstered by the establishment of the Blackness in Britain: Beyond the Black Atlantic research network. The Blackness in Britain network received AHRC funding of £36,338 which functioned to redress the marginalisation of people from the African diaspora by bringing together an interdisciplinary range of academics, activists, and artists who engaged in close dialogue that explored Black life in Britain and made links across the African diaspora. Specifically, the network resulted in three symposiums, a conference, a book writing workshop, an edited book, and a book series with ZED Books.

The unit has furthered its networks through regularly hosting public lectures and research seminars with over 12 international speakers from universities in 7 different countries, alongside dozens from around the United Kingdom. International speakers included Professor Stephen Small of the University of California, Berkeley, Dr Alessandra di Maio from the University of Palermo, Professor Verene Shepherd from the University of the West Indies and Dr Camilla Hawthorne from the University of California, Santa Cruz. UK based scholars who have presented in events hosted by our unit include retired Professor Gus John, Dr Mónica Moreno Figueroa from Cambridge University, Dr Angelica Pesarini from the University of Leeds, and Dr William Ackah of Birkbeck University.

In addition to academic partnerships and collaborations, strong connections have been made with dozens of local and international businesses and non-governmental organisations across 13 countries including the Società di Medicina e Sanità Penitenziaria in Italy, the Centrul Pentru Promovarea Invatarii Permanente in Romania, and the New Urban Collective in the Netherlands. Events hosted at BCU also featured non-academics such as playwright Don Kinch, theatre producer Aduke Aremu, filmmaker Medhin Paolos, the Paramount Chief of Essikado (British Sekondi) Traditional Area and President of the Traditional Council from Ghana; and activists such as Sister Esther Stanford-Xoseia and Antumi Toasije. This helped to strengthen not only academic collaborations but also engage the wider public and help to produce greater impact.

Of course, members of the unit have also engaged in the academic community through our position as board members and peer reviewers for major academic journals and publishers. Our

UoA has contributed to dozens of journals and publishers, both UK-based and internationally. These include *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, *New Media and Society*, *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, *Gender, Work, and Organization*, Palgrave Macmillan, Routledge, ZED Books, Policy Press, Bristol University Press, and many more.

The wide range of collaborations have led to important contributions to wider society. The work of the unit has led to major inroads in the promotion of Black Studies across Europe where little educational focus has been placed on people of African descent and the socio-political consequences of European colonialism. The neglect of these important areas of knowledge has slowly been rectified through the work of the unit and the strategic decision-making of the University and Faculty. BCU created the first Black Studies undergraduate programme in Europe, while Professor Andrews helped inform the European Union Resolution On Fundamental Rights of People of African Descent in Europe. Andrew's work on Black Studies is held in high esteem and he is regularly invited to speak and give keynote lectures at prestigious institutions and to large public audiences. From 2015 to 2019, Professor Andrews presented at over 80 events in 8 countries across four continents. These included keynotes at the University of Manchester, UCL, LSE, Leeds University, the British Sociological Association, and the British Sociological Association Medical Social Conference. He has also regularly appeared on television and radio.

Professor Morag MacDonald's work in the field of prison reform is also world renowned and has made important impact. She has been consulted by a range of international organisations and for publications in important medical journals including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations; the International Affairs Directorate of Health Canada and World Health Organisation; and *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*. Her work has been cited or acknowledged in over 30 reports and publications by organisations including European Parliament reports, the UNODC's Bangkok Rules, UN's International Labour Organisation, and the World Health Organization. MacDonald's work has had important impact on prisons and vulnerable people through its effect on national and international policymaking with regarding to the Dublin Declaration on HIV/AIDS in Prisons in Europe and Central Asia.

Other important contributions from the unit have been the creation of campaigner training, consultations on gender inequalities in the workplace, knowledge exchange development and many more. These contributions to society have been facilitated by a strategic approach to developing collaboration, an environment that produces successful grant capture for large-scale and collaborative projects, a focused effort toward local as well as international impact, and through additional financial investments in dissemination activities including conference funding.