

Institution: The Open University

Unit of Assessment: D27 English Language and Literature

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

Overview

Research in English at The Open University (OU) is produced by 31 researchers (28.9 FTEs) based in the Departments of English and Creative Writing (27) and of Language and Applied Linguistics (4). In the current REF cycle, established areas of research in Book History and Postcolonial Literature broke new ground with fresh initiatives; emerging areas like Creative Writing expanded substantially, especially in enhancing the impact of research in English; and areas of inter-disciplinary study – the Digital Humanities, Literature and Music, and the Gender and Otherness in the Humanities Centre – were led by researchers in English. Researchers in English have played a major part in the OU's contribution to BBC programming, making substantial contributions to five television series.

Research and impact strategy for English at the OU is generated by the Research Strategy Group (RSG), which comprises: a chair; one researcher representing Literature, Creative Writing and Language respectively; one researcher from each of the research groups; the impact lead; the postgraduate convenor; and the chair of the OU's D27 REF panel.

Overseeing all strategic planning for research in English, the RSG identified four priorities for the REF 2021 cycle:

1. **To strengthen the seven research groups.** The vibrant intellectual communities generated by the two English research groups first established in the 1990s – the Book History and Postcolonial Literature Groups – have inspired the general adoption of research groups as *the* fundamental organisational structure for all research in English. There are now seven research groups: three based in English – **History of Books and Reading (HOBAR)**; **Postcolonial and Global Literatures (PGL)**; and **Contemporary Cultures of Writing (CCW)** – and four inter-disciplinary groups with substantial contributions by researchers in English: **Literature and Music (L&M)**; **Digital Humanities (DH)**; **Medieval and Early Modern (MEM)**; and **Centre for Gender and Otherness in the Humanities (GOTH)**. The activities and achievements of each of the groups are distinctive (detailed below), but they share the same broad commitments: to include researchers in English as active participants in collegial research communities; to nurture individual research specialisms; and to enable fresh research initiatives, collaborations and synergies. In 2014, six of the 21 researchers in English (including three professors) functioned as 'individual researchers' or in small, isolated groups; in 2021, all 31 researchers in English are active members of at least one of the research groups, with the majority members of two or more groups. In addition, researchers in English have provided crucial leadership for the inter-disciplinary groups – **Da Sousa Correa** as co-director of the L&M Group; **Benatti** as co-director of the DH Group; and **Katritzky** as director of the GOTH Centre.
2. **To integrate impact-generating activities into all research.** All seven research groups have prioritised impact-generating activities as integral to their research outputs and projects. Embracing the OU's long-standing commitment to public engagement and social justice, and building upon the successful impact case studies led by **Towheed** and **Campbell** for REF 2014, the impact of research in English is now evident in many more contexts in the current REF cycle (see Section 4). One important initiative to enhance the impact of all research in English has been the creation in January 2018 of the post of Media Lead in English. **O'Reilly** has taken on the role, mentoring all staff in writing for non-HEI audiences (for example, the readership of *The Conversation*); alerting colleagues about opportunities for disseminating their research at public events; and maintaining a lively

English blog, with 46 1,000-word contributions by colleagues and doctoral students, and 55,000 comments posted by October 2020.

3. **To sustain and expand collaborations with partner institutions.** Long-established partnerships with the BBC, the Institute of English Studies (IES) at the University of London, the British Council, the British Library and the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) have been refreshed and invigorated by new co-initiatives. Many new partnerships have been forged, including with the Milton Keynes Literary Festival, Bloomsbury Publishers, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), the Cowper and Newton Museum, and the AHRC-funded Open-Oxford-Cambridge (OOC) doctoral partnership. Strengthening collaborations is integral to the aim of ensuring the long-term impact of research in English (see Section 4).
4. **To increase external funding.** The final aim of increasing the number and quality of bids for external research grants was adopted in order to achieve priorities 1-3. As a result of the commitment to increase external funding, the total number of bids submitted by researchers in English more than doubled from 17 in the REF 2014 cycle to 41 in the REF 2021 cycle (see Section 3).

These four priorities have been pursued and realised in distinctive ways within each of the research groups.

RESEARCH GROUPS IN ENGLISH

HOBAR Group. Established: 2011. Directors: **Towheed** and **King**. Membership: 30, including 14 entered under English for REF 2021 (**Benatti, Brown, Gibson, Gupta, Haslam, Johnson, Jones, Katritzky, Parmar, Tagg, Towheed** and **Watson**), with the balance comprising past and current OU PhD students (7), retired former colleagues (3), and researchers elsewhere in the sector. An expanded incarnation of the Book History Research Group which began in the 1990s, HOBAR was awarded three large external grants in the current REF cycle totalling £254,679, as well as several smaller awards (see Section 3). The funding has been used to enhance the research environment in different ways. For example, Towheed's ICS (**ICS 2: Transforming individual informal readers into communities of reader-researchers**) has employed research associates Parmar (2016-21) and Blackburn-Daniels (2019-21) to work on the Reading Communities and READ-IT projects. Secondly, large-scale externally funded collaborations have been central to HOBAR's activities, with the UK Reading Experience Database (UK-RED) extended in partnership with the French-funded 'Reading Europe' project (2014-2017) ultimately producing the Reading Europe Advanced Data Investigation Tool (READ-IT) (2018-2021). Thirdly, members of the HOBAR Group have participated in many events with direct impacts on the public, notably the Being Human Festival (2016--), the Imagine! Belfast Festival of Politics and Ideas (2017--), Book Week Scotland (2017--), the Milton Keynes Literary Festival (2018--) and the Cambridge Science Festival (2019). Complementing such efforts have been partnerships with organisations such as Verbal Arts (Northern Ireland) and the Brilliant Club Scholars Programme, which have developed pedagogical material on histories of reading for schools. Fourthly, the HOBAR Group has consolidated existing research partnerships (with the IES, Oxford Brookes and UCL), and established new partnerships (with SHARP and the European Network for Researching Books and Reading). HOBAR researchers have also organised numerous research events, including seven annual seminar series hosting over 50 speakers; four major conferences, as well as guest lectures, workshops and joint events with UK and European universities (see Section 4). Publications by members of HOBAR include three monographs (Brown, Gupta and Watson); three edited collections (Johnson; Tagg; Towheed and King); one scholarly edition (Haslam); and many journal articles and book chapters. In addition, Towheed is the co-editor of the discipline-defining series *New Directions in Book History* (Palgrave, launched 2014), which has published 33 monographs and edited collections and collectively registered 60,000 'uses' (purchases, subscriptions or downloads) in this REF cycle. The vitality of HOBAR is evident in the research initiatives scheduled for 2020/21, notably the 'Bookshelves in the Age of the COVID-19 Pandemic' online conference co-hosted with

SHARP in November 2020, which attracted 30 speakers from 25 countries and 233 participants, and the Group's ongoing 'Reading and Wellbeing' blog.

PGL Group. Established: 1992. Director: **Tickell**. Membership: 33, including 8 entered under English for REF 2021 (**Campbell, Doloughan, Gupta, Griffiths, Johnson, Parmar and Towheed**), with the balance comprising past and current OU PhD students (8), retired former colleagues (3), and researchers from elsewhere in the OU and beyond. The retirements of Professors Allen, Fraser and Nasta early in the current REF cycle have been compensated by the additions to the PGL Group of Campbell, Doloughan, Gupta, Griffiths and Parmar. The global research interests of the PGL Group have inspired a wide variety of contributions to the research environment. The Group has integrated impact-generating events into its research projects, with members of the Group delivering 12 public lectures, and Parmar organising the five exhibition launches accompanying the UK tour of 'The Heart of the Nation: India in Britain' (see Section 4). Secondly, members of the Group have organised 22 international conferences, symposia and workshops, several of which included non-HEI audiences (see Section 4). Thirdly, members of the Group have published prolifically, with six monographs (Doloughan, Griffiths, Gupta (2), Johnson and Parmar), five edited or co-edited books, and numerous special issues of journals, journal articles and book chapters. Fourthly, members of the group have won research grants from external funding bodies to the total of £131,961 (see Section 3). Plans for future projects led by PGL Group members are well under way: Gupta has established a collaboration between Humanities and Engineering researchers on social/public concepts of artificial intelligence; Tickell has co-founded the British Chinese Studies Network, which has several public events in prospect, notably a major exhibition on British Chinese history with the British Library in 2023; and Johnson and Griffiths have set in motion an international project on re-reading British colonial periodicals in order to inform efforts to decolonise high school curricula.

CCW Group. Established: 2011. Directors: **Neale and O'Reilly**. Membership: 22, including 12 entered under English for REF 2021 (**Bullock, Campbell, Doloughan, Giaxoglou, Hogan, Reardon, Richardson, Seargeant, Sweeney and Yeh**), with the balance comprising past and current OU PhD students (4), and researchers from elsewhere in the sector. The rise in the number of Creative Writing researchers from four in 2014 to nine in 2020 has seen a much greater contribution from creative writers to the research environment. This contribution has been reflected in enhancing the impact of research in English, most notably in Campbell's ICS (**ICS 1 Supporting survivors in post-conflict zones through Creative and Expressive Writing**). Members of the CCW Group have delivered readings and lectures at over 200 public events in the UK and abroad. Complementing these live presentations, CCW researchers have written extensively for popular readerships, most effectively for *The Conversation* (see Section 4). Secondly, the Group has forged productive long-term collaborations with several partner organisations, including the IES at the University of London, NAWA, Bloomsbury Publishers, the British Library and the BBC (see Section 4). Thirdly, the CCW Group has organised 46 research events, including 13 conferences, three panel events hosting well-known writers, and thirty seminars. Most of these events have attracted academic peers, practitioners and members of the public. Fourthly, the CW Group's members have published extensively, with seven novels (Bullock (2), Hogan, O'Reilly, Reardon, Richardson and Sweeney), two poetry collections (Campbell and Yeh), and two monographs (both by Seargeant). Plans for future activities are well-advanced – a £120,767 AHRC-funded project (awarded October 2020) for adapting Campbell's successful Expressive Life Writing methodology for post-conflict communities in Lebanon; an international conference on the 'The Personal as Political' in 2021; three seminar series on eco-writing, life-writing and ethnography; and a journal special issue on multimodality.

INTER-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GROUPS

L&M Group. Established: 2001. Co-directors: **Da Sousa Correa** and Samuels (Music). Membership: 14 members, including 3 entered under English for REF 2021 (**Towheed and Benatti**), six from Music, and the balance from other disciplines at the OU and beyond. During the current REF cycle, the Group has collaborated with the Oxford Lieder Festival to co-organise four

public engagement events. Members of the Group have published in total 11 outputs, notably Da Sousa Correa's cutting-edge collection, which establishes the parameters of the field.

DH Group. Established: 2012. Co-directors: **Benatti** and Perkins (Classics). Membership: 19, including 5 entered under English for REF 2021 (**Paterson, Tagg, Towheed** and **Watson**). During the current REF cycle, the DH Group organised 16 research events focused on research in English: Benatti's six seminars on 'Digital Books, Digital Readers' (co-organised with HOBAR), and Watson's three two-day international workshops, two online workshops and five conference panels on Romantic Europe: The Virtual Exhibition (RÊVE). The impact of English-based research in Digital Humanities has been enhanced by Watson's ICS (**ICS 3 Informing and enabling changes in exhibition practice on and offline in literary museums and archives**). Inter-disciplinary events with substantial elements of English research have included 3 public engagement events and 26 postgraduate training events.

MEM Group. Established: 2014. Co-directors: Clark (Art History) and Coffey (Music). Membership: 37, including 6 entered under English for REF 2021 (**Brown, Gibson, Katritzky, King, Lavery** and **Ziegler**). Brown, Gibson and Katritzky have contributed to the research culture of the MEM Group as co-organisers, speakers and chairs at the three 'Spaces and Places' inter-disciplinary conferences run by the MEM Group (2017-19); King co-organised a conference on 'Offensive Shakespeare' in 2017; Gibson co-organised a conference on Walter Raleigh in 2018; and MEM researchers have published important work in the field, notably monographs by Brown and Lavery, and co-edited collections by Gibson and Katritzky.

GOTH Centre. Established: 2019. Director: **Katritzky**. Membership: 56, including 12 entered under English for REF 2021 (**Benatti, Brown, Campbell, Doloughan, Gibson, Gupta, Haslam, King, Lavery, Paterson, Towheed**). GOTH is a re-launch of the Gender in the Humanities Group originally founded in the 1980s. Researchers in English have been prominent in GOTH, with Katritzky and the Group's committee organising five research events (including a critical reading group, workshops, and a symposium), and raising £152,851 in 2019 and £19,100 in 2020, principally for a fully-funded doctoral studentship. During the REF cycle, Katritzky published 20 outputs and Paterson 7 on topics related to the concerns of the GOTH Centre.

2. People

Staff composition and recruitment strategy

The OU's successes in teaching English to large numbers of students are based upon its dynamic research culture. During the current REF cycle, 36,191 students were awarded credits for OU English modules; 1,409 BA Honours degrees in English; and 1,069 MA degrees in English. The key to producing modules and degrees attractive to such large numbers of students has been the synergy between research and teaching. All staffing decisions are driven by the desire to sustain this synergy.

The OU employs two main types of lecturing staff: (1) central academics, who are expected to be research-active alongside their teaching and administrative duties, and (2) staff tutors, who manage the University's tutoring staff and are contractually permitted (but not required) to do research. The research environment is supplemented by individual research fellows and postdoctoral researchers. On the REF 2021 census date, there were 31 researchers in English with significant responsibility for research (28.9 FTEs) comprising 24 central academics (24 FTEs); 4 staff tutors (3 FTEs); one senior research fellow (0.6 FTE); one research fellow (1 FTE), and one research associate (0.3 FTE). The majority (18) publish research in Literature, 9 in Creative Writing, and 4 in Language.

Seven researchers in English left the OU during the current REF cycle: three professors and two senior lecturers retired; and two lecturers moved to other universities. A dual strategy has been followed to replace departed staff: (1) to appoint new staff at lecturer level, and (2) to promote established staff to senior lecturer and professor. Accordingly, nine full-time permanent central academics were recruited at lecturer level (**Campbell, Giaxoglou, Hogan, Jones, King, Paterson, Reardon, Tagg** and **Yeh**), as well as two 0.5 permanent central academic lecturers (**O'Reilly** and

Sweeney), two fixed-term lectureship appointments (**Griffiths** and **Ziegler**) and one 0.3 fixed-term research associate (**Parmar**). To meet increased administrative demands following the closure of seven OU regional centres in 2015, the number of staff tutors in English has increased from four to twelve, with three of the new staff tutors meeting the threshold for 'significant responsibility for research' (**Bullock**, **Griffiths** and **Richardson**). Of the new appointments, six are early career researchers (ECR; **Bullock**, **Hogan**, **Griffiths**, **Reardon**, **Sweeney** and **Ziegler**). All recruitment in English follows the OU's Equality, Diversity and Fair Selection criteria and procedures (elaborated in the Institutional Environment Statement). In addition to requiring proven competencies in teaching, research and administration, the job specifications for all posts in English specify impact-generating experience and abilities as highly desirable.

The second element of the staffing strategy – the promotion of existing staff – has led to the promoting of eight lecturers to senior lecturer (**Campbell**, **Doloughan**, **Gibson**, **O'Reilly**, **Richardson**, **Tagg**, **Tickell** and **Towheed**) and of two senior lecturers to professor (**Brown** and **Haslam**). As a result, a balance has been maintained across the grades (five professors, ten senior lecturers, eight lecturers, twelve staff tutors, two research fellows, and one research associate). Also attached to the Department of English and Creative Writing are eleven honorary research associates and the six emeritus professors, all of whom are active members of the research groups.

The most striking development during the current REF cycle has been the increase in the number of Creative Writing researchers. Driven by the successful introduction of two undergraduate modules and an MA degree in Creative Writing, which together recruit about 2,000 students per year, the number of Creative Writing researchers has increased from three in 2014 (with one entered for the REF) to nine in July 2020. This represents an increase in Creative Writing researchers entered for the REF from 6% to 30% as a percentage of the staff returned for English Language and Literature.

Staff support and development

The University is committed to nurturing an open, supportive and integrated research environment. The Institutional Environment Statement elaborates upon how this commitment is expressed at all levels: the University code of practice prescribes the ethical principles of inclusion to guide all research practice, as well as the need to respect the values of diverse individuals and communities; at Faculty level, all new staff and PhD students are briefed on the procedures ensuring an open and equitable research culture, including the points of contact for raising concerns – discipline research leads, school directors of research, postgraduate co-ordinators, and the associate dean of research; and within each discipline, a combination of formal and informal mechanisms is in place to support staff in developing their research.

All research staff in English complete an annual appraisal with the Head of Department. The appraisal addresses workload planning, with the balance between research, teaching and administration discussed and agreed with each individual researcher. Complementing the appraisal are annual research conversations conducted between the chair of the RSG (**Towheed** (2014-19) and **Tickell** (2019--)) and each individual researcher. These one-to-one research conversations address: plans for research leave; anticipated research outputs; scheduled research events and impact-generating activities; and potential bids for external research funding. A third level of individualised support is provided by a mentoring system in which all staff at the lecturer level are allocated a senior colleague as a research mentor. Mentors for early career researchers play a particularly important role, as they provide additional advice on adapting to the unique demands of the OU's distance learning culture. The research mentor typically works in the same research field as the lecturer and provides advice on matters such as which journals and publishers to approach, which funding bodies to target for bidding, which conferences to attend, and which networks to cultivate. As a rule, the research conversations are scheduled for the winter (Jan-Mar); the appraisals for the spring (April-May); and conversations with mentors take place throughout the year.

The OU makes generous provision for research leave, research funding, and training in the development of research skills. The research leave system grants central academics 44 research days per year and staff tutors 22, with more days available on request. The OU's teaching model enables considerable flexibility as to when research leave is taken. This flexibility facilitates long-term planning, with research leave scheduled for all individual researchers with an eye to the collective best interests of OU research in English. All OU researchers receive an annual research allowance of £500 to use at their own discretion. Supplementing this allowance, researchers are encouraged to bid for funding to attend conferences; to visit archives and libraries; to generate impact from their research; and to meet the costs of publishing outputs, notably those associated with supporting open access publishing. A simple system operates for processing all such 'operational' research bids within the School of Arts and Humanities, and bids for larger research projects are considered by the Faculty Research Board (see Section 3).

The ongoing development of new research skills for ECRs, mid-career and professorial researchers is strongly encouraged. Complementing the opportunities provided for all OU staff (and outlined in the Institutional Environment Statement), researchers in the Arts have ready access to bespoke in-house media instruction for dissemination and impact-generating activities. Where appropriate, researchers are funded to undertake specialist media and digital training beyond the OU.

Postgraduate Research Students (PGRS)

The quantity and quality of PhDs. The steady rise in the number of completed PhDs in English at the OU has continued, from 12 in the RAE 2008 cycle to 17 in the REF 2014 cycle, and up to 23 for the REF 2021 cycle. This increase has been achieved at a time when the overall number of completed English PhDs in the UK has been declining (HESA figures: 475 in 2013/14 to 395 in 2017/18). At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the number of OU PhD dissertations published as monographs or novels. For REF 2014, two OU PhDs in English were converted into monographs; during the current REF cycle, 11 PhDs have been converted into books with major presses – six Literature PhDs and five Creative Writing PhDs: Helen Boyles, *Romanticism and Methodism* (Routledge, 2016), Helen Chambers, *Conrad's Reading* (Palgrave, 2018), Katia Chornik, *Alejo Carpentier and the Musical Text* (Routledge, 2015), Marion Dell, *Virginia Woolf's Influential Forebears* (Palgrave, 2015), Toby Manning, *John Le Carré and the Cold War* (Bloomsbury, 2018), Patricia Neville, *Janet Frame's World of Books* (Ibidem Press, 2019), Emily Bullock, *The Longest Fight* (Myriad, 2015), Sarah Butler (yet to graduate), *Jack and Bet* (Picador, 2020), Edward Hogan, *The Electric* (John Murray, 2020), Heather Richardson, *Doubting Thomas* (Vagabond Voices, 2017) and Emma Sweeney, *Owl Song at Dawn* (Legend Press, 2016)

Recruitment. The recruitment of PhD students is overseen by the postgraduate convenor (Doloughan 2012-15, Haslam 2015-19, Campbell 2019--). Interviews are conducted by the postgraduate convenor and at least one of the potential supervisors (though more commonly by both), with fair selection, equality and diversity considerations embedded in the selection criteria and procedures. The University Human Research Ethics Committee scrutinises PhD submissions with an eye to advising students undertaking topics requiring such guidance. Successful applicants are drawn both from the two OU MA programmes in English and from other universities. During the current REF cycle, 645 students completed the MA in Literature, and 424 the MA in Creative Writing (which awarded its first degrees in 2018). Of the 23 PhD graduates, 9 completed OU English Masters degrees, with the balance from other universities.

Infrastructure. OU PhD students receive infrastructural support: for full-time students, a desk on campus, a laptop, IT support and £1000 annually for their research trips, conference attendance and book purchases; and for part-time students, IT support and £500 annually for research expenses.

Supervisory support. All PhD students have two supervisors, as well as a third-party monitor as an alternative route of advice. Aligned with the University code of practice for graduate supervision, all supervisors in English undertake: to provide written feedback within two weeks of receiving draft chapters; to meet students for regular feedback meetings (10 times/ year for full-time students, 5 times/ year for part-time); to discuss in detail the feedback on draft chapters (with minutes kept of

all meetings); and to submit together with student input twice-yearly reports recording the progress of the thesis. A probation mini-viva (after 12 months for full-time students; after 24 months for part-time students) establishes whether students are making satisfactory progress and have a clear programme for timely completion. Supervisors also prepare their students to deliver presentations on their work at the annual PhD conference organised by the English Department. Supervisors are proactive in advising students about conference attendance, publishing possibilities, and their participation in public-facing, impact-generating activities.

Skills training. A full programme of skills development and career preparation is available for research students at University, Faculty, School and Department levels. An intensive 2-day induction programme is run by the Graduate School and Faculty every autumn for all new PhD students, who are guided through the OU library resources; introduced to all research groups, networks and initiatives relevant to their dissertation topics; and informed of opportunities for further specialist training in both research skills and impact-generating activities. Discipline-specific skills training continues for the duration of the thesis, led by the two supervisors, with further input from members of the students' research group(s). Individual researchers lead specialist PhD skills training events: Benatti (for DH students); Johnson and Tickell (for PGL students) and Watson (for HOBAR/ DH/ Romanticism students) – see Section 4 for details.

Contributions to the research environment. OU postgraduate students contribute in many ways to the research environment. As far as possible, they are integrated into one (or more) of the research groups, participating fully in the groups' events and activities. For example, PhD members of the HOBAR Group, Chambers and Choroba, co-organised seminars hosted at the IES (University of London); PhD members of the PGL Group participated in the planning and organisation of the four one-day conferences for UK and European PhD students in Postcolonial and Global Literatures (see Section 4); and PhD members of the CCW Group have presented their research at NAWE conferences and CCW seminars. OU Creative Writing PhDs continue to make long-term contributions to the wider research environment: five of the nine OU Creative Writing PhDs have secured permanent lectureships at UK universities.

Equality and diversity

Policy. Equality and Diversity are core to the institutional DNA of the OU. OU English is in synchrony with University commitments, ensuring that the valuing and advancing of equality and the improving of diversity are integral to all aspects of the research environment. The current constitution of the D27 research cohort is one indicator of the relative success of these commitments: of the 31 researchers, 19 self-identify as women and 5 as BAME.

Recruitment. In common with OU employment practice, English scrupulously applies fair selection, equality and diversity processes at all stages of the job application and interview process. All members of interview panels undergo training in how to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants.

In the workplace. The university has a policy of flexible working that is interpreted generously to accommodate different personal circumstances. With both staff and graduate students living across the UK, unique demands are placed on day-to-day working patterns. Accordingly, measures to facilitate remote working have been adopted, principally that meetings can be attended remotely using University-approved software, enabling those with child-care or other caring responsibilities, as well as those with short-term workload pressures, to participate fully in all decision-making forums. In the same spirit, all meetings are scheduled to avoid time-consuming travel.

Fixed-term staff. In line with OU policy, fixed-term staff in English receive the same research support as central academics on permanent contracts. Scrupulous care is taken in the annual appraisal meetings and in the research conversations to ensure that fixed-term staff take their full allocation of research time and receive the same mentoring support for external grant applications and in how to access internal research funding.

Staff tutors. Considerable flexibility is applied in managing the research trajectories of staff tutors. Research active staff tutors are encouraged to apply for more than their allocated 22 days of research leave (subject to operational pressures), and receive the same mentoring, support and access to internal research funding as central academics.

Research students. The majority of OU English PhD candidates are mature students who come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds. The University and the discipline provide an exceptional level of support and pastoral care for PhD students, and supervisors in English are particularly experienced at developing the skills of students who begin their studies with less preparation than is typical at other institutions.

REF 2021 Preparations. The OU's English submission has been prepared by a panel of six (3 men, 3 women), whose appointments have been ratified by both the Faculty and the University. The panel includes: the UOA lead, the RSG chair and impact lead, the three ICS leads, and representatives of Literature, Language and Creative Writing (several panel members represent more than one constituency). All members of the panel have received the Equality and Diversity training required by the OU's REF 2021 Code of Practice. All members of the UOA were invited to submit their eligible outputs, and these were assessed in two stages: in January-April 2019 and in February-May 2020. Combining the two rounds, 154 outputs were assessed, with all outputs assessed by two members of the internal panel, and 115 outputs (75%) assessed by the external consultant-assessors. The scores of the internal and the external panellists correlated closely: for 105 outputs, the internal and external scores were identical; for 28 outputs, the externals scored higher than the internal panellists; and for 21 outputs the externals scored lower than the internal panellists. The final selection process was concluded in November 2020. According to the processes set out in the Code of Practice, all members of the UOA were able to submit individual circumstances to the University to determine any reduction in the overall output submission pool. All decision-making meetings of the panel have been formally minuted by a member of the Faculty's administrative staff.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Income

In order to achieve the three strategic goals of strengthening the research groups, maximising the impact of research in English, and extending collaborations with external partners, a further priority has been to increase the funding required to realise these goals. Such funding has been derived from external and internal sources.

External research funding. Bidding for external research funding is now firmly embedded at all stages of the annual research cycle: it is discussed during research conversations (Jan-March) and at annual appraisals (April-May); it is an ongoing conversation in all mentoring exchanges; and it is an agenda item at all department meetings. Overseen by the RSG Chair, individual researchers in English circulate draft bids among colleagues in proximate research areas, who provide detailed written feedback; colleagues in the School with relevant knowledge and expertise then comment upon revised drafts of the bids-in-progress; and the Faculty Research Office provides comprehensive administrative support. The Faculty administrators perform a range of functions: publicise opportunities for bidding; advise on the costing of bids; monitor ethical and legal considerations relevant to the bids; consult closely with Faculty's Associate Dean for Research; and provide oversight of short- and long-term financial planning. Great efforts have been made to synchronise the input at Discipline, School and Faculty levels, with research in English benefiting demonstrably from these procedural improvements. In the current REF cycle, the number of bids for external funding has doubled from 17 (8 successful and 9 unsuccessful) in the REF 2014 cycle to 41 (12 successful, 27 unsuccessful, 2 pending) in the REF 2021 cycle. Of the unsuccessful bids for which feedback was provided, three of the large ones were ranked at 5*, which suggests that peer reviewers have assessed them as eligible for funding (even if overall the percentage success rate has dropped). A further development has been to seek out funding sources beyond the AHRC, British Academy and Leverhulme, with the successful bids of Benatti, Katritzky, Nasta and Towheed (listed below) attesting to progress in this direction.

The successful bids for funding in excess of £10,000 were:

Benatti, *A Question of Style: Individual Voices and Corporate Identity in the Edinburgh Review and Quarterly Review*, £17,158 from The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals (2017)

Gupta, *Framing the Financial Crisis and Protest: North-West and South-East Europe*, £121,960 from Leverhulme (2014 to 2016)

Gupta, *Entrepreneurial Literary Research*, £10,000 from British Academy (2016 to 2017)

Katritzky, *Gender and Otherness in the Humanities (GOTH) studentship*, £152,851 from Philanthropic Donations UK (2019 to 2023)

Nasta, *At the Heart of the Nation: India in Britain*, £20,000 from the Nehru Centre (2017 to 2018)

Tagg, *Co-I on Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating linguistic and cultural transformations in superdiverse wards in four UK cities*, award value: £1.6M; value to the OU: £13,407 from AHRC (2015 to 2018)

Towheed, *Reading Communities: Connecting the Past and Present*, £78,432 from AHRC (2015 to 2016)

Towheed, *Reading Europe Advance Data Investigation Tool (READ-IT)*, £159,089 from AHRC (2018 to 2021)

Watson, *Dreaming Romantic Europe*, £36,257 from AHRC (2018 to 2020)

In addition, a number of researchers bid successfully for smaller grants, notably **Haslam** (£5,127 from the British Academy in 2014); **Katritzky** (£4,846 from the Wellcome Trust in 2015); and **Towheed** (£8,221 from the British Academy in 2018, and £600 from the School of Advanced Studies in 2017).

Looking to the future, the prospects for future external research funding have been boosted by **Campbell** winning £120,767 from the AHRC in October 2020 for the project *Expressive Life Writing and Telling During Crisis: Addressing Urgent Needs in the Akkar Governorate, Lebanon*.

Internal research funding. Researchers in English benefit from substantial internal funding. Since the re-structuring of the University in 2016, with the establishment of the Faculty/ School/ Discipline division, researchers in English have been able to supplement their annual £500 personal research allowance by submitting bids to two committees for further funding: (1) the School research committee, which considers bids of up to £2k for conferences (both organisation and attendance), archive visits, publications costs, and other such 'operational' research costs; and (2) the Faculty research committee, which considers larger bids of up to £5k to support longer-term strategic objectives like the development of external bids, impact-generating initiatives, and collaborations with external partner organisations, and makes its awards from the Faculty's Strategic Research Investment Fund. There is no limit on the number of bids individual researchers can submit.

During the current REF cycle, researchers in English have received generous internal financial support: the School research committee awarded £70,678 at an average of £17,670 per year; and the Faculty research committee awarded in the region of £37,000 at an average of £5,285 per year. Although there have been year-on-year fluctuations, internal investment on research in English has increased from £13,467 in the 2014-15 financial year to £28,846 (£12,103 Faculty Strategic Investment + £16,743 School funding) in the 2019-20 financial year. An additional source of internal research income was **Campbell's** award from the OU's Global Challenges Research Fund, which conventionally supports projects in development studies, but made an exception in awarding Campbell £12,371 in 2019 for her project on *Expressive Life Writing and Post-conflict Communities in Lebanon*. This award also signals the OU's recognition that Campbell's project exemplifies the University's commitment to supporting research serving social justice.

Funding for enhancing research impact. With the integration of impact into all aspects of research a priority, internal funding to support this commitment has been generous. Since 2015, **Towheed** has been the impact lead for English, attending external impact briefings; advising all colleagues about impact-generating opportunities during the annual research conversations; working closely with the leads of the impact case studies; and reporting on all impact-related matters at department meetings. With funding from the Faculty Strategic Research Investment Fund, Towheed has been supported by two impact consultants: **Parmar** (Oct 2018 to April 2019)

and Blackburn-Daniels (Sept 2019 to March 2021). The impact consultants have compiled a comprehensive database of impact generated by all the researchers in English; gathered existing evidence of impact for the leads of the three impact case studies; supported and co-organised new impact-gathering activities in close dialogue with the three ICS leads; and assisted in the drafting of the three impact case studies and the Environment statement. Their contribution has been to raise substantially the profile of impact as integral to all future research-planning.

Funding for PhD students. A limited number of studentships for PhDs in English at the OU have been awarded in this REF cycle: 5 funded by internal OU studentships (Borkett-Jones, Hogan, Manning, Sinha and Sweeney); and 2 funded by studentships from the AHRC-funded Consortium of the Humanities and the Arts South-East England (CHASE) and OOC Doctoral Training Programme Schemes (Butler and Stewart). Two of the completed PhDs were OU associate lecturers who took advantage of the University's fee waiver (Bullock and Harlow).

Research infrastructure and facilities

The University's research is overseen by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Enterprise and Scholarship, who manages the Research Office and Graduate School. Research in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) is led by an Associate Dean. S/he chairs the Faculty Research Board, which takes a strategic overview of research activity in consultation with the heads of research of each school. Research in English is represented on the Faculty Research Board by the head of research for the School of Arts and Humanities. The Faculty Research Office works closely with the University's central Research and Enterprise team and the Graduate School to support bid development, the management of awards, research student administration, and the distribution of internal funds for research.

The Faculty's commitment to sustaining research is evident in its support for the research groups, with the directors of the groups, as well as individual group members, able to access funding to support research and impact projects. The annual allocation of funding is: the HOBAR Group (£3,500); the PGL Group (£1,500); the CCW Group (£1,500); the Medieval and Early Modern Group (£1,500); and the Digital Humanities Group (£2,000). Examples of events supported by these funds are detailed in Sections 1 and 4.

Library support at the OU is tailored to scholars who work remotely from the University's headquarters at Milton Keynes. Staff and research students are provided with online access to a world-class collection of over 275,000 subscribed academic journals, 540 online databases, 590,000 e-books and a vast selection of online newspapers, images, video and sound, with 24-hour helpdesk support and a range of face-to-face and online training facilities. An efficient inter-library loan system geared to providing online and print access to research materials (via pdfs of documents, articles, loan copies, etc.) complements the OU's own library resources. Researchers in English have benefited especially from the library's investment in all the databases essential to the discipline (Early English Books Online; Eighteenth-Century Collections Online; the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography), as well to many more serving specific specialisms within English Studies: The Calendar of State Papers Online, Adam Matthews Medieval and Early Modern Studies Online, Mass Observation, Drama Online, Granta Online and the new ProQuest One Literature collections of black and world literatures. The multi-million-pound investments in online services include the University's repository Open Research Online (ORO), with over 40,000 OU publications and over 70,000 full-text downloads a month from all over the world. All publications by researchers in English are included in ORO, and where possible, the full-text content of these publications is available freely online.

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

The strategic commitments to enhancing impact-generating research activities and strengthening collaborations have been amply realised during this REF cycle, with the three impact case studies complemented by many more successes in sharing the benefits of research in English with a wide range of non-HEI constituencies.

COLLABORATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOCIETY AND ECONOMY***Collaborations enhancing understanding, learning and participation.***

Towheed's ICS 2 has had an impact on the understanding, learning and participation of four constituencies of informal readers. Complementing this case study, researchers in English have dedicated their efforts to generating similar kinds of impact in many more contexts.

As consultants for BBC television. English at the OU has a long-established partnership with the BBC, which has flourished during the current REF cycle. Researchers have collaborated with the BBC in producing five television series and two individual programmes. Six researchers contributed to Series 1 and 2 of BBC4's 'The Secret Life of Books' (broadcast 2014-15): **Watson** was the chief nominated academic for both series and the consultant on the programmes on *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and *Swallows and Amazons*; **Brown** the consultant on *The Faerie Queen*; **Da Sousa Correa** on *The Mill on the Floss*; **Neale** on *Cider with Rosie*; and **Towheed** on Edward Lear's *Nonsense Songs* (viewership: 2.69 million). **Johnson** and **King** were the academic consultants for 'Living Shakespeare', an OU collaboration with BBC World Service Television and the British Council, which featured eight lectures by global figures, was screened on BBC World TV (viewership: 20 million) and published by the British Council in eight booklets (2016). **Jones** was the academic consultant for the BBC2 series 'Icons: The Greatest Person of the 20th Century', with responsibility for two of the seven episodes: 'Artists and Writers', and 'Entertainers' (2019) (viewership: 8.56 million). **Neale** and OU PhD student Harlow were the consultants for the three-programme BBC4 series *Sleuths, Spies and Sorcerers: Andrew Marr's Paperback Heroes* (2016) (viewership: 2.39 million). The two individual programmes with input from OU English researchers were: **Gibson** as academic consultant for the programme 'Shakespeare Live! From the RSC', which screened on BBC2 Television in April 2017, attracting 1.7 million viewers; and **Haslam** and **Neale** for the BBC/OU drama on the Brontë sisters, 'To Walk Invisible' (2017) (viewership: 4.29 million). Plans for future BBC collaborations are well-advanced, with **Reardon** and **Watson** the academic consultants for the BBC4 series 'Write Around the World' (due 2021), and **Watson** for a forthcoming documentary on Kate Tempest. In addition to the BBC collaborations, **King** was the consultant for the Sky Arts series 'My Shakespeare', a 6-part documentary on Shakespeare's plays fronted by prominent actors. The series was screened on Sky Arts in the UK and on PBS in the US (2014) (combined viewership: 270,000).

As contributors to online magazines. Researchers in English have been especially effective in extending the reach of their research through their contributions to *The Conversation*: **O'Reilly's** 15 articles have been read by 135,400; **Seargeant's** 12 articles by 472,018; **Campbell's** co-authored article by 16,597; and **Hogan's** co-authored article by 90,729. In her role as Media Lead, O'Reilly has facilitated contributions to *The Conversation* by research associate **Parmar** (1 article) and PhD student Chappell (2 articles, which have had 64,483 reads) (figures 31 October 2020). In addition, researchers in English have published articles on their research in *The Washington Post*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, *The Independent on Sunday*, and *The Irish Times*. **Seargeant's** contributions to online media deserve highlighting, as he has published 27 articles in different outlets, including *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Mirror*, *Forbes Magazine*, *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *open democracy*, *The Sun* and *BBC News*.

As contributors to the OU's free online teaching resources. The OU provides opportunities to communicate research in accessible forms to audiences of millions through several free online platforms. (1) The OU/ FutureLearn MOOC hosted **Neale's** Start Writing Fiction course, which has had over 300,000 registered users during the REF period. (2) The OU's YouTube channel hosted twelve of **Seargeant's** short videos showcasing his research, attracting 6.5 million views since 2014. (3) The Open Learn web platform has hosted short courses and samples of research by English researchers. The numbers of readers for the short course have been especially impressive: **Brown** and **Gibson's** course Reading Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (2017) has had 40,169 page views; **Neale's** Start Writing Fiction (2015) has had 40,516; and **Yeh's** Creative Writing and Critical Reading (2016) has had 118,522. Page views for individual contributions average about 700, and include the following: **Brown**, *Songs of Love and Hate: On Leonard Cohen* (2016); and **Bowie** as a conduit (2016); **Da Sousa Correa**, *Women Writers: Katherine Mansfield* (2015); **Doloughan**,

Women Writers: Jeanette Winterson (2015); **Benatti**, How technology can challenge our understanding of *Frankenstein* (2018); **Giaxoglou** and **Sergeant**, What effect is social media having on the way we mourn global tragedies? (2017); **Haslam**, Protest Banners across history, from Chartism to Hillsborough (2018); **King**, Shakespeare: For All Time? (2017) and Fakespeare: Rewriting the Bard (2019); and **Sergeant** and **Tagg**, Social media: fake news, filter bubbles and sharing wisely! (2018); **Watson**, Of skulls and hearts (2014), The author at home (2015); Poetry prescription (2016); and The Writer's Room: J. K. Rowling (2017).

As researchers hosting public engagement events. **Parmar** and Nasta organised the five exhibition launches accompanying the UK tour of 'The Heart of the Nation: India in Britain'. The launch events attracted up to 500 visitors, and the associated website *Our Migration Story*, an open database of teaching materials for secondary school students, has had 2,079 unique page views, and was short-listed in the Research Impact category of *The Guardian* University Awards 2019.

As researchers contributing to educational websites. In July 2016, **Sergeant** wrote and produced four 20-minute animations on 'Shakespeare Speaks' for the website BBC Learning English (September 2020: 483,730 unique uses of the webpages).

Collaborations enhancing the impact of research on creativity, culture and society.

Watson's ICS 3 has had an impact on creativity, culture and society in the context of museum curation and exhibition across Europe, as has the research of many more English researchers in other contexts – details below:

Radio. **Neale** was the principal consultant for the biennial BBC World Service *International Radio Playwriting Competition*, and negotiated the collaboration between the OU, the BBC World Service, the Commonwealth Writers Association and The British Council. Six plays were broadcast, attracting a total audience of 33 million (2014 to 2019). Researchers in Creative Writing have frequently been on radio: **Bullock** on BBC Radio London (2015); **O'Reilly** on regional BBC radio stations 23 times since 2014; **Richardson** on three occasions on BBC Radio Ulster (2018); **Sweeney** on five occasions, including twice on Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* (2016-8); and **Yeh** on the Radio 4 programme *Poetry Please* (2019).

Public readings and lectures. A striking development in this REF cycle has been the 200+ public readings researchers in Creative Writing have delivered: **Bullock** (15); **Campbell** (25); **Hogan** (12); **Neale** (11); **O'Reilly** (6); **Reardon** (10); **Richardson** (35); **Sweeney** (51); and **Yeh** (40). A smaller number of researchers in Literature gave public lectures on aspects of their research: **Gupta** (4); **Johnson** (1); **Katritzky** (3); **Tickell** (1); and **Towheed** (2), **Watson** (5).

Museums and libraries. In addition to **Watson's** work with literary museums, other researchers have also developed similarly productive relationships. **Campbell** was employed by Manchester Museum to run a series of ekphrastic workshops (2019); **Doloughan** organised the European Literature Night with the British Library on three occasions (2014-16), with writers, translators and editors addressing large public audiences; **Giaxoglou** was the 'Death Café' organiser and facilitator' (public events for people to talk about death) at the Stanley Picker Gallery (Kingston) (2015); **O'Reilly** collaborated with the People's History Museum, Manchester to organise a major exhibition and conference on the anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre (2019); and **Reardon** supported an exhibition and lectures at the Corinium Museum, Cirencester (2014).

Publishers. A collaboration between the CCW Group and Bloomsbury's publication *The Writers and Artists Yearbook* has led to six public events, two in London, two in Edinburgh, and one each in Belfast and Cardiff. Organised by **Hogan**, **Neale** and **O'Reilly**, these events have showcased local writers, publishers and academics.

Collaborations with an impact on social welfare, health and well-being.

Campbell's ICS 1 demonstrates the impact of her research on post-conflict survivors in Lebanon and Iraq. Most recently (in August 2020), the OU's 'Urgent Covid-19 Response Fund' has supported Campbell's work with a nurse practitioner graduate of the OU MA in CW at the North

Tees and Hartlepool Foundation NHS Trust on a project 'Creative Writing with Health Care Workers after COVID-19'. Three workshops with front-line health professionals explored how expressive and creative writing could aid the NHS response to the Covid-19 outbreak. Impact of a similar nature has resulted from **Sweeney's** research into the connections between disability and literary creativity. Sweeney's Arts Council England-funded writing residency at Mencap (commenced April 2020) explores links between learning disability and poetry via mentorships and workshops, producing co-drafted poems by both people with learning disabilities and those supporting them. The poems and interviews are publicised via Mencap's website, podcasts and social media feeds, with an ultimate audience reach anticipated by Mencap and the Arts Council of 840,500.

Contributions with an impact on public policy and law.

Campbell's ICS 1 elaborates upon how her research has had an impact upon social policies in Lebanon and Iraq. More impact of this kind is evident in **Sergeant** and **Tagg's** research into fake news, which has influenced the UK government's education policies: both researchers delivered expert evidence in three stages to the Parliamentary Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Cross-party Committee enquiry into 'Disinformation and fake news' in 2018. Their evidence has thus informed government policy on digital literacy education in HE.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE RESEARCH BASE

Contributions to post-graduate training. **Benatti** organised four workshops for PhD students for the CHASE Digital Age training programme (2015-2019), training over 100 students in total; and is organising a similar programme for the OOC Consortium. **Johnson** and **Tickell** co-organised four one-day conferences for PhD students in Postcolonial and Global Literatures in Britain and Europe: at the OU London Offices in 2014; at Kent in 2016; at Sussex in 2018; and at Southampton in 2019. **Watson** as President of BARS organised conferences for PhD students of Romanticism in 2014, 2016, 2018.

Collaborations with other universities. At the level of the research groups, the long-established collaborations of the HOBAR and CCW Groups with the IES, University of London have continued to flourish during this REF cycle: the HOBAR Group organised five seminar series with 36 seminars in total, and the CCW Group organised 12 seminar series with 36 seminars in total.

Editorships of book series. **Da Sousa Correa** has been general editor of the Edinburgh UP Katherine Mansfield Studies series (one book per year); **Johnson** is the general editor of the Edinburgh UP series *Key Texts in Anti-colonial Thought* (three volumes to date); **Tagg** is the co-series editor of the new Routledge Focus series *Language and Social Media*; and **Towheed** is co-series editor of the Palgrave series *New Directions in Book History* (33 volumes since 2015).

Journal editorships. OU researchers contribute to the editorship of journals, with several playing leading roles: **Neale** as the principal editor of *Writing Practice: The Journal of Creative Writing Research*; **Paterson** the editor of the *Journal of Language and Discrimination*; **Tagg** an associate editor of *Discourse, Context & Media*; and **Tickell** an associate editor of *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* and *Wasafiri*. Two have been reviews editors: **Brown** of *The Spenser Review*; and **Paterson** of the *Journal of Language and Discrimination*. Ten more serve on the editorial boards of 18 international journals.

Invited keynotes. OU researchers in English delivered well over 30 keynote addresses at universities in Britain and around the world: **Da Sousa Correa** (Basel); **Doloughan** (Beijing); **Giaxoglou** (Lausanne); **Gupta** (Campinas and Plovdiv); **Haslam** (King's College, London); **Johnson** (Oxford Brookes); **Katritzky** (Glasgow, Mainz, Florence, Leeds and University College London); **Tickell** (Oxford University, Goethe University in Frankfurt, Auro University in Gujarat and Naples); **Tagg** (Aalborg); **Towheed** (Haverford College, Campinas, São Paulo, Le Mans, Oxford Brookes, Réunion, and Pretoria); and **Watson** (Chawton House, Sogndal, Kracow and Oxford University).

Membership of research councils. Eight researchers in English serve as assessors for UK and international research councils: **Campbell** (the Arts Council of Northern Ireland); **Giaxoglou**

(Flanders Research Foundation (FWO) and the ESRC (UK)); **Gupta** and **Haslam** (AHRC Peer Review College); **Johnson** (AHRC, Leverhulme and National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF, SA)); **Tickell** (AHRC and Swiss National Science Foundation); **Towheed** (AHRC, NRF, SA, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research); and **Watson** (AHRC, and the research councils of Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the Netherlands).

Contributions to professional bodies. **Benatti** is an Executive Council Member of centerNet; **Da Sousa Correa** is on the advisory board of the International Association for Word and Music Studies, a trustee of The Katherine Mansfield Society, and an executive member of University English; **Haslam** is the chair of the Ford Society; **Katritzky** is on the steering committee of the Theater Without Borders Early Modern Theatre Collaborative; **Neale** was chair of the HE section of NAWE; **Tagg** is Secretary of the British Association of Applied Linguistics; **Towheed** is a founding member of the International Vernon Lee Society; and **Watson** has been President and Past-President of the British Association for Romantic Studies, and is founder and co-ordinator of European Romanticisms in Association (ERA) (2016-).

Refereeing academic publications. Sixteen of the researchers in English regularly review submissions for over 70 international journals and for 20 leading publishers.