

Institution: The Open University
Unit of Assessment: D32, Art & Design: History, Practice & Theory
1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy <p>1.1 Unit Context</p> <p>Art and Design at the Open University is a submission from 29 academic staff in the Art History Department and the Design Group. The Open University (OU)'s digital platforms for open access research, impact and open entry teaching at a distance, support cross-disciplinary collaborations between Art History & Design (AH&D). Design at the OU is unencumbered by disciplinary silos and is understood as an expanded field that enables social change, as well as creating places, products, and services for consumers and publics. Art History at the OU is similarly progressive in its advocacy for the democratisation of the discipline. In addition to its commitment to widening participation, it provides critical reflection and theoretical contributions on global and transcultural perspectives. Collectively, the AH&D vision is to be a creative force for transformational cultural, economic, ecological and social change, through multi-disciplinary perspectives on making and creating of past, present and future material and visual cultures. This vision reflects a shift in priority away from chronological divisions, with the aim to undertake challenge-led research in collaboration with a diverse range of academics, businesses (from large firms to small social enterprises), public and third sector organisations (from museums to makerspaces), practitioners (designers, curators, artists, architects) as well as local community groups and publics. AH&D researchers are active in debates that shape research agendas, through Arts and Humanities Research Council priority themes and journal editorials and by influencing change in public policy. The AH&D collaboration has been strengthened in this assessment period through inter-disciplinary research as well as constructively questioning the nature of OU art and design initiatives to develop a tripartite characterisation of what we do as a single unit of assessment.</p> <p>1.2 Unit structure</p> <p>AH&D at the OU brings together academics from two faculties: the Art History Department in Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and the Design Group in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Research into art and design, history, theory and practice at the OU is organised around three themes. This structure provides a framework that demonstrates how OU AH&D research supports engagement with all stages of the creative, technical and social dimensions of art and design processes. With this structure, AH&D upholds a longstanding commitment to innovation, responding to challenges that are changing society as a whole, as well as to methodological shifts in art and design specialist fields.</p> <p>(1) Research on the inception of art and design includes the front-end actions, activities and practices that engage external publics in processes of designing and patronage. This research engages with the democratic challenge of public participation in art and design. Here research on participatory design and community engagement has not only advanced knowledge in the field but also improved the environments and lives of people involved in projects (evidenced in both publications and impact activities; Zamenopoulos, Alexiou, Lotz and Luck funded by AHRC, ERC). How people with disabilities participate in design are concerns for Luck and Bowers (ERC, Innovate UK) whose research has informed the BBC Big Life Fix and 'Happie audiences for the future' (section 4.2). Barker's insight into the participation of the blind in the street life of eighteenth-century Paris demonstrates the importance of considering disabilities in</p>

the past, through close analysis of paintings by artists such as Chardin. Relationships between power and activism are brought into focus in research on 20th-century Mexican muralism (**Carter**) and investigations on art activism in the public sphere (**Charnley**). Research on the patronage of art and the processes shaping the inception of artistic projects informs studies on topics ranging from art designed to enhance the pilgrimage experience to the patronage of country houses (**Clark, Benzan, West, Woods**).

(2) Studies of **creative practice in the world** analyse works of art, investigate the production of visual and material culture and engage with the challenge of **changing practices of designing and making**. Research includes studies of the processes and practices of designers (**Eckert, Johnson, Jowers, Luck** (EU, ERC)) that advance foundational design methods and practices of creative exploration; this includes computational design theory and the digital practices used in twenty-first century fabrication (lo-fi prototyping, 3D fabrication and complex systems modelling in the creative industries) (section 4.3.1). The unit's studies of artisans explore the production of works of art, visual and material cultures and architecture in diverse historical contexts in studies on topics that range from the creation of Byzantine Hell frescoes to the design of eighteenth-century wallpaper (**Lymberopoulou, Christian, Taylor, McKellar, West** (Leverhulme, Mellon)). The identity of creative practitioners is also examined in the research into artist-writers (**Shaw**) and filmmakers (**Charlesworth**). The unit has also developed an expertise in the global conditions that give shape to artistic practice (**Carter, Wainwright, Dohmen** (Leverhulme)).

(3) **Reception of works of art and design that seek to change society and challenge how the world is connected**: including trade and cultural exchange, materiality, decoloniality and transcultural creative practises, which spark debate on diversity and inclusion (**Dohmen, Wainwright, Charlesworth** (Leverhulme)). This research has informed the BBC *Civilisations* series and a new volume of the internationally acclaimed *Art in Theory*, subtitled 'the West in the World' (**Wood, Wainwright**). Also central to these inquiries is the mobility, display and categorisation of objects, including Chinese propaganda posters, Chinese porcelain, and antiquities in Western collections and museums (**Barnes, Clark and Christian** (British Academy, AHRC, American Academy, Rome; Humboldt)). The expansion of design education globally has been promoted through research by **Lotz, Jones and Holden** in Botswana and Mexico (British Council funded travel). The Design Transitions programme of research advocates a more equitable world designed in harmony with ecological processes, which includes: net-zero product-service systems, sustainable fashion, infrastructure and urban environment futures (**Cook, Caird, Eckert, Dewberry, Warren** (Western Power, EPSRC, Innovate UK)).

1.3 Strategic aims for research

Since REF2014, the unit has built on the 2014 strategy to establish AH&D as a centre of excellence in **understanding reflective processes of making and creating in interdisciplinary material cultures: past, present and future**. The centre of excellence in AH&D has been strengthened by managing the generational change in leadership, research and impact, through career development and promotion (section 2.1) and research collaborations. These collaborations have taken various forms, ranging from co-hosted seminars and externally funded co-design research (AHRC £1.4m) to cross-faculty supervision and doctoral training partnerships as well as joint publications. Cross-disciplinary conversations demonstrate that novel insights can be gained from looking at a shared subject from different disciplinary perspectives. A special issue of the [Open Arts Journal](#) (the unit's open access journal) illustrates how each discipline offers distinct perspectives on the urgent issues of our time: the climate

catastrophe and the project of decoloniality. Other **interdisciplinary collaborations** across the university are with Geography, Ecology, Computing, Engineering, Development Policy and Practice, and in the Medieval and Early Modern Research Group co-chaired by Art History and Music. AH&D collaborations beyond the OU are detailed in section 4. These initiatives also led to impact and engagement work, by sharing best practice and challenges.

The unit has expanded its **open access digital archives** to **support the dissemination of research projects and the innovative interplay of physical and virtual ‘objects’ for the purpose of understanding art, architecture and design** (aim in REF2014). Digital initiatives that have been particularly successful include the preparation of open access resources for the Open Arts Archive platform, the production of the *Open Arts Journal*, the preparation of teaching materials based on OU research made freely available to all on the OpenLearn platform and the [Design blog](#). The foundation of the [Open Arts Objects](#) (OAO) platform, hosted on the Open Arts Archive, has provided an innovative means of bringing the museum into the classroom through open access films, which are used in schools and HE institutions globally, thereby extending the reach and significance of the Open Arts Archive (ICS1). The Design blog highlights the impact, engagement and pedagogical activities of the Design group, while the *Open Arts Journal* continues to be a world-leading open access publication.

Another strategic aim in this REF period was to **create a best-practice digital research environment** alongside our campus-based centres and two AHRC doctoral training centres Design Star and Consortium for the Humanities and Arts South East (CHASE). AH&D was commended for its doctoral research training in REF2014 and has continued to build on this best practice. The success of the Design Star and CHASE DTP research training environments is evident in continued AHRC investment in the Open Oxford Cambridge DTP (OOC). The OU initiated and convened the annual Design Star research methods training workshops. Growth in research student numbers has also taken place through Horizon 2020 investment in two studentships (DTA3 Doctoral Training Alliance).

1.3.1 Strategic aims for the next five years

The first aim is to further **strengthen the centre of excellence in AH&D** with the next generation of researchers at the OU. The unit will support AH&D research that demonstrates the relevance of these disciplines for **addressing global, social and economic challenges**. The unit aims to build on its successful bidding record to expand research by creating fellowships, impact, cross-disciplinary initiatives and novel knowledge exchange activities (Section 1.4, 3 and 4). AH&D will continue to consolidate research strengths around the unit's three themes, through the appointment of new staff, investment in staff development and its continued flexible response to the world around us. In pursuing these aims, the unit will draw on existing support structures, mentoring schemes, cross-faculty initiatives, and doctoral student research training.

The second aim is to **expand pioneering digital research environments**. The unit will build on its existing strengths in open digital tools, platforms and initiatives that are central to AH&D's **open research environment**. It will develop digital tools that **foster new ways of communicating with diverse audiences**, in order to collaborate on content creation and improve the accessibility of public materials in an innovative interplay of physical and virtual objects. A foundation for further development is provided by the research project ‘Beyond the Now’ (Section 4.1), which was initiated in response to the pandemic.

The third aim is to **enrich the unit's postgraduate and research student environment**. AH&D will continue to strengthen research training through the AHRC OOC DTP and establish other partnerships for collaborative doctoral awards (section 2.3). The unit aims to continue to lead in delivering excellent provision, both face-to-face and at a distance, whether in its online MA in Art History or in supervising and examining PhDs. It will also involve Post-Graduate Research Students (PGRS) in impact and widening participation activities (including socially engaged research and fostering links with external organisations), thereby securing the continued vitality of the disciplines into the future, through collaboration, partnerships and advanced digital delivery.

1.4 Enabling Impact

Building on the impact strategy from 2014, AH&D developed an action plan to ensure that current and future impact work can be undertaken effectively, and that impact underscores research activities. Initiatives include:

- Regular workshops for AH&D, relevant to different stages of project development: introduction to impact, impact planning, designing and brainstorming, and developing skills in impact literacy
- Impact discussed as part of the induction process for new researchers
- Encouraging colleagues to apply for internal seed funding to support impact work
- Incentivising impact by providing adequate time in annual workloads to explore possible impacts
- Involving PGRS in impact activities and as members on impact projects, to develop skills in impact and evaluation.

AH&D's research and impact activities are undertaken in accordance with the university's Code of Practice for Research and research integrity policies described in REF5a 2.4. All academics and research students undertake mandatory training on data security and GDPR as part of their induction. Design research predominantly involves contact with human subjects and requires approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). All research data has a lifespan and data disposal is defined for each project.

New appointments have strengthened AH&D's potential for impact, as newly recruited academics have experience in public engagement and knowledge exchange and are particularly keen to develop their impact literacy skills. For impact infrastructure see Section 3.5.

1.4.1 Areas of Impact

AH&D's research is routinely conducted with non-academic partners in co-design and co-production collaborative arrangements. AH&D's challenge-led research makes direct connections with the publics that engage in each project. The three impact case studies (ICSs) that are submitted to REF2021 illustrate AH&D's research strengths in diversity in education and changes to learning, community engagement and designing future urban environments.

Impact on teaching and diversifying Art History: The unit's research engages the public in multiple ways, including the provision of free short courses as well as the adoption of textbooks across the globe. AH&D's research has informed FE school teachers' and HE lecturers' teaching, thereby having impact on understanding, learning and participation as well as practice. ICS1 **Open Arts Objects** (OAO) brings together a team of Art Historians at the OU (**Clark et al.**), who have pioneered a new expanded, global and object-centred approach to art history, which challenges traditional perceptions of the discipline as elitist and Eurocentric. Their innovative

research methodologies and novel theoretical frameworks have reached more than 14 million people and have had a significant impact by: protecting A-Level Art History and shaping its new curriculum (the OAO films are now adopted by A-level Art History exam boards, Pearson and the National Extension College); enhancing teacher understanding and informing students' comprehension of global approaches to art history; and attracting new audiences to art history and widening participation.

Impact on practitioners, community groups and artists: Central to much of AH&D research is a radical concern for democratic participation, whereby engagement with public community groups from Mexico to Scotland results in authentic knowledge exchange regarding pressing social concerns. This includes working with migrant workers, people with disabilities, and co-designing community spaces, thus having impacts on understanding, learning and participation as well as practice. For example, ICS2 **Empowering co-design**, which involved research on place-based innovation with communities across the UK (13 AHRC funded projects), has enabled disenfranchised groups to become co-designers of their local environment and effective agents of change (**Alexiou, Zamenopoulos**). Notably, the research enabled: a grassroots group in North London to build community support and obtain planning permission for a plan to save a Latin-American market; UK charities and social enterprises to use co-design and extend their reach and impact, leveraging over £6 million to tackle social isolation; and 55 UK faith groups to develop and acquire funding for projects that enhance the historic, cultural and social value of their spaces.

Impact on the design and interpretation of urban spaces: AH&D's research has changed urban spaces through the design of smart cities and the co-design of regeneration projects, thus having an impact on practitioners and delivery of professional services and on public policy and services. For example, ICS3 **Designing sustainable urban innovations** has been central to a series of practical application trials in Milton Keynes for the design of sustainable urban transport infrastructures (**Potter, Cook**). The design academics' contribution to these projects has been to engage with users and influence policy development, by working in partnership with professional designers and engineers. This research in collaboration with public and private sector partners has contributed to: the creation of a UK-leading electric vehicle charging network in Milton Keynes; supported the development of demand side response measures for smart grid to meet increased demand from the electrification of transport in the Midlands; and facilitated user participation in designing a travel information app to augment urban transport infrastructures in Milton Keynes. Overall, participation in these innovation trials has increased the uptake of sustainable designs and technologies, as well as input into practices and policies at a national and international level.

Evidence for these impact claims is cited in the three impact case studies. Other areas in which the unit continues to make an impact, as it responds to global and local challenges, include television production and content, museums and heritage institutions, and industry and the creative economy, as outlined in section 4.

2. People

2.1 Staffing composition and strategy

AH&D has been characterised by growth during this assessment period. The UOA comprises 29 staff (28.8 FTE) at different career stages, with significant responsibility for research, an increase

from 25 (23.2 FTE) returned to REF2014. For REF2021, AH&D returns 18 people who identify as female and 11 as male (18:11). There are 5 professors, 15 senior lecturers, 8 lecturers and 1 independent post-doctoral researcher. This includes 3 people categorised as Early Career Researchers (ECR).

The research potential of all categories of staff is encouraged within this unit, reflected in the 5 staff tutors (17%), who are returned to D32 (defined in REF5a). This has been a period of successful staff development. There has been substantial progression from early to mid-career, with 10 promotions to Senior Lecturer within this assessment period (**Caird, Christian, Clark, Jones, Jowers, Lotz, Luck, Lymberopoulou, Taylor, West**). There has been investment in a new ECR post (**van Duppen**), and 2 promotions to Professor (**Wainwright** and **Cook**) as well as **Christian's** decision to take promotion to a senior professorial post at Humboldt Universität Berlin. During this REF assessment period, 6 members of staff have retired (Profs **Perry, Earl, Potter, Fortune** and Dr **Woods** and **Wood**) but they remain affiliated to the institution as emeritus or honorary staff. In 2013, **McKellar** was appointed as Professor in a strategic post to enable collaborations between art history and design. **McKellar** retired in 2020 and was replaced with a senior post in 2021. There has been investment in staff development, in impact training and mentorship (section 1.4 and 3.5). Since the REF21 census deadline, there has been investment in two further ECRs on permanent contracts. Interview panels for new posts include both Art History and Design academics.

The unit's strategy throughout the assessment period has been to recruit academics with research potential and to mentor them towards promotion rather than appointing senior academics from outside the institution. The effectiveness of this strategy is evident in the growth of mid-career researchers, 10 promotions to senior lecturer, and the transfer of researchers on fixed-term contracts onto permanent appointments (**Caird, Charlesworth, Jowers** and **Luck**). This strategy has proved effective for maintaining the UOA's performance at previous high levels.

In part the growth in this unit is due to the introduction of a named BA degree in Art History and Visual Cultures (5 new posts). The university has also committed to invest in a distinct design pathway, Bachelors in Design programme (BDes), with 5 new posts. There is potential through recruitment to also strengthen the research expertise of the unit.

2.2 Recruitment, formal staff appraisal and development

All staff are recruited according to fair selection policies and processes, as set out in the REF5a. AH&D welcomes applications from academics with diverse backgrounds, as evidenced by the recruitment of staff (and in particular staff tutors), whose career trajectories do not follow a typical academic path but include experience of working in the heritage sector, design practices and schools of art. At annual staff appraisal conversations, planned and completed activities are recorded on standard proformas, workload planning is reviewed, as are commitments to teaching, research, impact, and development needs using the University's academic workload planning system.

Core research skills in writing journal papers, reviewing conference and journal articles and preparing bids to attract external funding are often developed in collaboration with more experienced colleagues. Such opportunities for career development enable more junior colleagues to gain necessary experience and confidence while more senior colleagues gain experience as mentors. This staff development has led to the completion of research projects,

enabled impact, and supported organising, attendance at, and reviewing for conferences, which has built national and international networks and enhanced individual research profiles. Colleagues are also supported through media training relevant to research and impact, as well as workshops and seminars on, for example, impact and bidding for funding, providing opportunities for scholars to collaborate across the university.

2.3 Research students

PhD research training in Art and Design forms a core part of AH&D's research culture and continues to be key to its mission to develop new generations of design and art history researchers. The OU has taken centre stage in national developments in doctoral training in the Arts and Humanities with roles in three AHRC Doctoral Training Partnerships: Design Star consortia (Goldsmiths, University of Reading, Loughborough University, Brighton University) and the CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership (Birkbeck University of London, Goldsmiths, Courtauld Institute of Art, SOAS, University of Essex, University of East Anglia, University of Kent and University of Sussex) as well as with Oxford and Cambridge universities (OOC). These collaborative arrangements have created new opportunities with partners including the National Trust and the Ashmolean and Fitzwilliam Museums. They have also strengthened existing relationships, for example, with cross-participation in the Oxford architectural history seminar series. Design Star students receive specialist research methods training and contribute to international conferences. AH&D has also been awarded 2 AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards with the National Railway Museum in York and the other with the Sanderson Company Archive. Other research students training partnerships include Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Extended University Alliance Doctoral Training (DTA3) with 15 university partners.

The University infrastructure provides essential support in meeting or exceeding the requirements of RCUK and QAA. An Emeritus Professor in Design, **Potter's** book, *Doing Postgraduate Research*, originated from the doctoral training programme he developed. This book informed the development of the Research Degrees Handbook which is now used across the OU and at the University's 15 Affiliated Research Centres (ARCs) in the UK and abroad.

AH&D has 39 (12 AH; 27 Design) currently registered research students. Since August 2013, 25 PhDs (48% part-time; 52% full-time) have been awarded. AH&D's strong commitment to part-time as well as full-time students exemplifies the university's mission by making research degrees accessible to all qualified candidates regardless of their life circumstances. Flexible supervision and training ensure that the particular needs of mature students are met. A notable feature of the research environment is the way that many part-time students are embedded in practice. Students take an active part in the wider research community by visiting international research centres and collaborating with industry, museum and gallery partners. This outward-facing strategy for doctoral research enables AH&D to respond to complex social challenges, for example, energy system studentships funded through the Doctoral Training Alliance Horizon 2020 programme. There is also substantial internal investment from the STEM Faculty, which since 2018 has provided one studentship per year to the UOA and one studentship per School, for which Design applicants can apply. FASS and STEM Faculties provide match funding for DTP studentships. Additionally, some students are self-funded. AH&D has jointly supervised three students in cross-Faculty collaborations including one funded through Design Star.

PGRS play a vital role in the research community on campus and are critical to the unit's research pipeline as they develop skills for career development, in impact and knowledge

exchange. AH&D runs a doctoral conference every year (in London and MK, online during COVID-19), at which research students present papers; they also attend international conferences and events held in museums and galleries, gain research experience at universities (e.g., MIT) and make full use of extensive digital resources including the Open Arts Archive. PGRS are active team members on the OAO project, for the Open Arts Journal, and as session chairs at the Medieval and Early Modern Research Group's annual conference (section 4).

Both Art History and Design (under a 'Management of Innovation' banner) run all online Masters programmes, each with around 250 students. The current Art History MA (launched 2015) recruits about 25 international students per year, who study from home in locations ranging from North America to Asia. Outstanding MA Art History theses have been shortlisted for the Association for Art History dissertation prize. Adaptable learning is particularly important for students with disabilities, for example, one student successfully completed the MA in Art History with Distinction while experiencing locked-in-syndrome and has now progressed to PhD studies. The MA has proved to be a successful feeder for high calibre graduates to continue their studies to doctoral level.

The recruitment of doctoral students is conducted in accordance with Research Degree Regulations; when a position is advertised, a candidate is interviewed by academics with EDI training. The supervision team are scrutinised for competence, relevant subject expertise and previous experience of supervising to successful completion before a PGRS is given an offer to study at the OU (approval by School, Faculty and Graduate School). Supervisors attend mandatory supervision training, and several have completed HEA Senior Fellowship through Applaud and undertaken student mental health training. Each PGRS is appointed a Third Party Monitor to provide pastoral support that is independent of the supervision team. Art History follows the research degree approval processes in FASS, with a Postgraduate convenor in each Department and a Faculty Director of Research Degrees. Design research degrees approvals are overseen at School level by Postgraduate Research Tutors PGRT and by the Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship in the STEM Faculty. A new on-line system for PGRS monitoring is being implemented in 2021 across all faculties. Three AH&D academics contribute to the PGRS approval progress monitoring and one has Faculty responsibility for the research degree programme in STEM.

The OU validates the ARCs doctoral training environments (REF5a). Staff from AH&D provide academic support for the ARC programmes, in particular at the Architectural Association, with around 30 doctoral and 200 masters students. Additionally, a staff member in Design acted as the academic assessor for the continued award of research degrees at the Architectural Association.

During COVID-19, the OU as a distance learning education provider was already in a strong position to migrate from face-to-face activities to digital interaction, with reliable platforms (including the Graduate School virtual learning environment), hosting recorded training sessions (for asynchronous skills development). A new research training series, 'Conducting research at a distance', to which two AH&D academics have contributed, migrated onto this platform; other online events, such as virtual PhD conferences and more informal coffee mornings, have also sustained the PGRS community. The OU was part of the writing group that revised the QAA Quality Code when conducting PhD vivas remotely during the pandemic. Revisions to the QAA Code built on existing OU procedures for remote viva examination.

2.4 AH&D Equality diversity and inclusion (EDI)

The unit implements the OU's policies on equality, diversity and inclusion (REF5a). For example, flexible working is arranged as part of the standard support and consultation when staff return to work following a period of parental or extended sick leave. As outlined in the REF5a, remote working is a standard practice at the OU, for the sake of staff well-being; this has been of great benefit during the COVID-19 crisis, particularly for those with childcare or other caring responsibilities.

The University's approach to promotion fully recognises the potential disadvantage faced by part-time employees and those who take maternity leave (REF5a). For example, one staff member chose to return on a part-time basis following maternity leave to have a better work-life balance with the intention of returning to full-time work when feasible. Particular care is taken over such cases at annual promotion meetings (two members of staff have returned from maternity leave in this assessment period; one has since been promoted). All protected characteristics are taken into consideration at appointment and for promotions. Women have been particularly successful in advancing their careers: since 2014, 8 out of the 10 colleagues promoted to senior lectureships identify as women; there have been 3 female Heads of Department, and 2 female members of the UOA have held senior management roles as Head of School and Faculty Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship. This supports the Athena Swan agenda (REF5a) and the Silver award held in the Design Group's School. The unit recognises, however, that it is not diverse enough across all protected characteristics, despite the varied cultural backgrounds (European nationalities and North America). The unit has established an equality, diversity and inclusion working group to recruit more diverse candidates and to promote inclusive research, impact, and teaching in the future. AH&D PhD students, however, are drawn from a more diverse range of cultural backgrounds (Asia, Europe, and North America).

2.5 REF2021 Preparations

The OU's AH&D submission has been prepared by a panel of 6 members from Art History and Design (identifying as 1 male, 5 female) whose appointment has been ratified by both Faculties and the University. They were selected for their management experience and for the breadth of art and design research expertise they represent. All panel members have received the Equality and Diversity training required by the OU's REF2021 Code of Practice. All members of the UOA were confidentially invited to submit individual circumstances to the University REF-coordination team. The panel was informed of any reduction in the overall output submission. All members of the UOA were invited to propose up to 6 outputs for submission during the mock REF (2019) and later invited to propose further recent outputs. The panel selected outputs in consultation with an external adviser (a former REF subpanel chair) and in accordance with the OU REF Code of Practice. All outputs were graded according to an agreed template to ensure a fair assessment. All decision-making meetings of the panel have been formally minuted by a member of administrative staff. Impact case studies were selected on the strength of their evidence and underpinning research.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Attracting investment in research through externally funded research projects is a strategic priority (Section 1.3.1), reflecting the importance of external investment as an indicator of research excellence within a competitive research landscape, and as a marker of the vitality and sustainability of the unit.

3.1 Research income

The UOA has an excellent track record in external research income generation and has ranked consistently in the upper third of the sector in the years for which benchmarking data are available. This funding has enabled AH&D to expand its research impact initiatives, fellowships, and to strengthen expertise in collaborative and participatory design in particular, as outlined below. For REF2014, AH&D received a total of c.£2.1 million while in the current assessment period we have seen an increase to £2.5 million. There has also been significant income, £79,533 to support research degrees training through DTP funding successes (AHRC Design Star, CHASE and OOC and EU DTA3).

A major funded project spanning AH&D is the substantial award, 'Connected Communities & Design Highlight: Empowering Design Practices' (AHRC 2014-20, £1.2 million (**Zamenopoulos, Alexiou, McKellar** and **West**)), which included 2 PhD studentships. Significant grants also underpin the unit's collaborations (as described in Section 4), such as **Wainwright's** funding from the European Science Foundation for HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) 'Creativity and Innovation in a World of Movement' (€48,054) and **Johnsons'** European Commission/EU grant income of £441,835. **Cook** and **Potter's** collaborations on Smart Cities (2019-21), multi-partner projects collectively amounted to £2.5million (total grant value to consortium) from Innovate UK and the ESRC.

Fellowships recognise the significance of researchers' individual work and frequently support archival research, lead to major publications and monographs and enable individual career development. Three Leverhulme awards were: a network grant to **Lymberopoulou** for 'Damned in Hell in Venetian-dominated Cretan Frescoes (13th-17th centuries)', when received, was the largest grant the funder had awarded (£176,600); a fellowship to **Dohmen** for 'Colonial Art in British India: Power, Gender and Race under the Raj' £54,650 (2020-21, delayed due to COVID-19); and a Philip Leverhulme Prize £70,000 (2013-16) to **Wainwright**. The Paul Mellon Centre for British Art awarded **McKellar** a prestigious Senior Fellowship in 2018-19 (£32,000) and **Taylor** a Mid-Career Fellowship £15,000 (2020-21 delayed due to COVID-19). **Van Duppen** was awarded an ESRC Early Career Fellowship before joining AH&D.

Research awards to develop specific networks and collaborations with researchers globally include: **Clark's** Co-I on an AHRC 'Mobility of Objects across Boundaries, 1000-1700' (2018-20 £24,864 with the University of Chester, with follow on funding received for 2021-22); **Benzan's** participation as Collaborator on 'Before the 'Great Divide': The Shared Language(s) of Art and Science in the Early Modern Period' (Université de Montréal, \$202,060 CND (SSHRC 2019-24)) and funding from British Council for 4 projects on inclusivity and design education in Mexico (**Lotz, Holden, Jones**, total £70,000) (described in Section 4). Additional awards have also been received from: the British Academy, the Leventis Foundation, Santander, Seven Pillars of Wisdom, ESRC and the Society for Renaissance Studies.

Visiting Fellowships add to the vitality of the unit's research, with benefit in kind including the use of archives and museum collections internationally: for example, **Christian** received the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung Fellowship for Experienced Researchers (2011-14) and the American Academy in Rome, Donald and Maria Cox Postdoctoral Prize (2016-17), **Barnes** was an Honorary Visiting Fellow at the School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester (2011-2017), and held a Cultural Engagement Partnership Fellowship at the British Library from the British Inter-University China Centre (BICC, University of Bristol, 2015), while **Clark** held a

Visiting Scholar Fellowship, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon (2019). A number of researchers have held Visiting Professorship positions for several years and use the infrastructure and facilities at HEIs internationally: **Eckert** at Changchun University of Science and Technology (2019), Jubilee Visiting Professor Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, Sweden (2018), Department of Industrial and Materials Sciences, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) (2017), and Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis, Agro Paris Tech (2015), and for **Cook** at Swedish Life Sciences University, Uppsala, Sweden.

3.2 Support for bidding and management of awards

The bidding and management of AH&D research awards is supported by each of the Faculty Research Offices, ensuring compliance with faculty and university processes and governance. In the STEM Faculty, the Research Enterprise and Scholarship Team provides pre- and post-award research services for Design academics, including direction to funding calls, active support and advice in the development of external bids for funding, partnership contracts, project finance and legal compliance, as well as management, advice and guidance for grants in progress. Support is also provided for the administration of PhD studentships; enterprise and partnership development; external engagement; and scholarship activity. Art Historians are supported in similar pre- and post- award services, provided by the FASS Research Office. Support for grant acquisition at University level is described in the REF5a.

3.3 University research investment

Following REF2014, AH&D was identified as a priority research area and received investment of strategic funds for the enhancement of the unit's research. REF strategic funds have been used to enable travel to archives, to cover fees for monographs (copyright, copyright researchers, indexing, and colour subvention), to enhance digital content (including supporting the *Open Arts Journal*), and to support impact activities (including appointing consultants to support the impact cases). Costs such as copyright are a particular burden to Art Historians and the university's support in this area enhances the vitality of research publications in the discipline. In addition, Faculty and strategic REF investment has been used to create a new ECR post in the area of participatory design (**van Duppen**) to strengthen the pipeline of research expertise.

Internal research funding has been allocated for personal research, conference attendance, international travel, archival visits, etc. from a variety of sources, including School research budgets to total c£290,000. Specific internal schemes for seed funding include the Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) and the FASS Strategic Research Investment Fund (SRIF). Internal investment has supported: OAO's first series of films and for impact and outreach activities with teachers (**Clark** and **Charlesworth**); 'Decolonizing the Museum: Educating Museum Staff about Objects' in Norfolk Museums (**Dohmen**); 'Incubating Civic Leadership' (**Alexiou; Zamenopoulos**), as well as financing the publication of the *Open Arts Journal* (**Wainwright**). This investment has enabled the unit to target current areas of Impact and to identify future areas. An additional award of £1000, Runner Up prize in the OU's annual Research Excellence Awards in 2019, in the category of Outstanding Impact of Research on Society and Prosperity, recognised **Clark's** achievements.

3.4 Infrastructure and facilities

The university campus in Milton Keynes is the physical workplace for AH&D academics and for research students, with dedicated offices and space for supervisions and meetings. The vibrant

research culture on campus is paralleled by remote collaborations on digital platforms; for example, Stadium technology is used to broadcast freely online (for hosting research days for the large cohort of international MA Art History students).

There has been significant investment in laboratory facilities and technician support for a programme of research that explores both digital and physical representations throughout the design cycle: generation (rules), analysis (tools), prototyping (additive manufacture) and shape capture (3D scanning) in the Fab Lab, Design Observatory, Media Lab. The OU's high-quality filming studio supports broadcast standard film production on campus. Researchers in AH&D have also benefited from the library's investment in the major databases essential to art history and design, specialist journals, eBooks, and online repositories, targeted to support remote users (REF5a 4.2).

3.5 Impact Infrastructure

Impact initiatives in AH&D are supported by Impact Managers in both Faculties who lead on relationships with a range of non-academic bodies. The Impact Lead for AH&D attends external impact briefings on behalf of the unit and cascades advice and training to colleagues to develop impact literacy skills and put them into practice (section 1.4).

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

Collectively, AH&D has an engaged approach to research, with structures in place to support research collaborations as well as promoting the vitality and sustainability of art and design disciplines: through research councils, editorial boards, broadcast media and activism.

4.1 Effective research collaborations, networks and partnerships

OU AH&D academics are active in research networks and internationally renowned for their research, with more than 120 invitations to present at 31 different universities outside the UK and through visiting appointments (section 3.1). This includes collaborations with computational design research centres across Europe and the US, which have strengthened relationships and support emerging research in this field (Design Society's Special Interest Group on Modelling and Management of Engineering Processes; activities with Ecole Centrale Paris and KIT). These collaborations have also resulted in exchange visits for doctoral students, enriching the international research community. These international networks also enhance and enable the unit's impact, such as **partnerships with industry, the design of smart cities, community activism, and participatory design** (section 4.3). For example, during COVID-19, artists and other professionals working in community activism have collaborated virtually in a new digital environment to share insights, experiences, and responses, for 'Beyond the Now.' Partners include Tate Exchange; Counterpoint Arts (UK); Ettijahat (Beirut); Create (Ireland); Coculture (Berlin); Plymouth College of Art; and Mozilla fest (USA).

At the OU, invited international speakers and Visiting Fellows play an important role in stimulating debate and expanding the field of AH&D, its diverse theoretical perspectives and methods. Events organised and hosted by the unit include **i. research conferences** 'Inclusive Environments: shaping transitions from theory to practice' (ESRC); 'Image and Ascent: Mountain Terrains in the History of Art' (conference co-organised) at the Warburg Institute; Edwardian Culture Network conferences; the annual interdisciplinary 'Spaces and Places' conference; **ii. Convening panels** including for the Renaissance Society of America, the Association of Art

History, Participatory Design Conference, American Anthropological Association and the Historical Materialism conference; **iii. running seminar and workshop series** including, Modelling and Management of Engineering Processes (MMEP) and Marxism in Culture, at UCL. Indicative of the open research environment, these contributions and debates are made public through Design@Open Blog communicating design research, scholarship and thinking and the Open Arts Archive (through podcasts and films) (section 1.3).

Collaborations across faculties at the OU include interdisciplinary research on sensory experiences (Art History, Music, History, English), the Centre for Ancient Material Religion, the Digital Humanities Steering Group and NATUrE, the urban environments inter-disciplinary network with ecologists, life scientists, engineers and acousticians. Indeed, a characteristic of AH&D challenge-led research is that it is often interdisciplinary and is enriched through the cross-fertilisation of theoretical perspectives and methodological vantage points from subjects such as: mathematics, geography, ecology and anthropology.

The unit's **academic interests in equality, diversity, and inclusion** inform many collaborations, including participation in the 'Year of mygration' events from the OU's research group on Citizenship and Governance (Strategic Research Area, REF5a) and research in partnership with the third sector involving community groups (section 4.3). These collaborations have also resulted in **impact on inclusion and the accessibility of the built environment**, which includes a programme of research on inclusive design, with evidence adopted by the Women and Equalities Committee on Disability and the Built Environment and response from government. Membership of Gender and Otherness in the Humanities group (GOTH) also illustrates links between past and present issues of diversity and inclusion.

4.2 Engagement with key research users, beneficiaries or audiences

In the run-up to the OU's half century in 2019, the OU held two notable conferences exploring its own history and contribution to the development of the cross-disciplinary subject area of Art History and Design. In 2015 '40 Years On: The Domain of Design History – Looking Back Looking Forward' (Convenor: **McKellar**) and in 2019 'Revisiting Modern Art and Modernism at the OU', (Convenors: **Charlesworth** and Honorary Associate **Davies**) both looked at the contributions of the unit's courses in these areas, reflecting the uniqueness of Art History and Design at the OU, where its research underpins the writing of textbooks adopted across the world. '40 Years On' also resulted in a collaboration with the [Canadian Centre for Architecture](#) (CCA) exploring the OU's pioneering role as 'the University of the Air' broadcasting modern architecture and design to the general public. This co-partnership produced a significant online programme of films and an international travelling exhibition held in Montréal and then Belem Cultural Centre (CCB) Lisbon (**McKellar** and Emeritus **Benton**).

AH&D collaborates with community groups to participate in projects and develop methods to address social issues. This is particularly evident in participatory projects, such as in Mexico, where OU researchers have fostered collaboration between Universidad Privado de la Península and governmental and industry sectors in the Yucatan, applying design thinking approach to employability initiatives (**Lotz, Holden, Jones**). These projects have supported the formation of a network between female scientists, researchers, and entrepreneurs to collaborate on regional sustainable development projects (e.g., with Mayan communities). This also involved co-creating the community Fablab La Campana with community members, Lat Am collectives, and Tecnológico de Monterrey. Ongoing collaboration with partners has also been adjusted for

engagement during the pandemic, which have reduced marginalization and promoted inclusive education with the mediation of digital technology in Higher Education.

4.2.1 Impact on television production and content

AH&D research underpins academic advisory roles in the co-production of BBC programmes and informs open access content to support learning for the public, which in turn lead to new collaborations, including:

- 2017-18 *Civilisations*, 9-part series, with OU academic consultants overseeing the remake to reflect a more a diverse and global art history, reaching over 13.7 million viewers. The educational poster was ordered by c. 35,000 people and is used in classrooms across the UK, and teaching films were made in collaboration with OAO, with one A-level teacher stating she was using the programme as her 'text' for the new global specification
- 2018 *Inventing the impossible: The Big Life Fix*, 4-part series had 6.2m viewers, 410 downloads of inclusive design paper (ERC-funded research) and led to public volunteers joining the charity Remap, to invent life-changing solutions for individuals with a disability
- 2020 *Secrets of the Museum*, 6-part series reaching over 10.2 million viewers (with a sequel airing in 2021). This programme led to a new collaboration between OAO and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), including films to be produced for the adult learning programme at the V&A (on hold due to COVID-19).

Other collaborations with BBC Ideas featured **Lymberopoulou's** Leverhulme funded project on Hell with a film and blogpost (67,300 viewers), building on her open access database which makes available hundreds of previously inaccessible images.

4.3 Wider contributions to the economy and society

4.3.1 Impact on industry and the creative economy: Research on computational design and digital fabrication (lo-fi prototyping, 3D fabrication and modelling) has advanced understanding of the interplay between creative freedom and the need to reuse and work around existing solutions in the design processes. In partnership with Volvo lorries, this research has informed the development of sector guidance on design margins in complex production systems, leading to efficiency gains. In collaboration with the jewellery designer Lyn MacLachlan, the exploration of form through computation has extended the reach and aesthetic potential of computational design research, with impact on the creative industries. With the Royal College of Art fablab, design academics collaborate in digital fabrication initiatives that have opened up debate on the significance of mathematics and computation in everyday life at public events (Engineering the Future: V&A Digital Design Weekend (attendance c. 24,000, over two days); Big Bang Fair, NEC Arena (attendance 75,000 over four days); Exhibition at Science Museum (attendance c. 1,600, over five days).

4.3.2 Place-based research, building communities with impact on local and regional growth: In partnership with local government, utilities, industry, and urban design charities, AH&D influences real world projects and the empowerment of communities. This includes two of the unit's impact case studies: Design's partnerships with Milton Keynes Council, Western Power Distribution, Arup, and CGI, to extend the development and understanding of sustainable transport systems in the UK and internationally, as well as the Empowering co-design research which included partnerships with Historic England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Glass-

House Community Led Design and numerous collaborations with local authorities, charities and social enterprises (section 1.4.1).

4.3.3 Impact on Education and Informal Learners has changed public understanding of Art History & Design through the development of OpenLearn (the OU's online free short courses) and AH&D's digital initiatives. The unit has sought to distinguish itself as part of the most publicly accessible higher education institution in the UK, engaging with diverse communities across the globe, with its reach extending beyond formal learners. OAO (ICS1) clearly underscores the use of OU Art History's research by university, college, and schoolteachers in the UK, Europe and North America, supported by collaborations with charities such as Art History Link Up, Art History in Schools, and the Association for Art History, as well as over 30 museums and heritage institutions (see section 1.4.1). This builds on the unit's previous collaboration with GLAADH (Globalising Art, Architecture and Design History), which sought to transform the teaching of Art History to adopt a more diverse curriculum. Working with GCSE Design and Technology students in MK, research on inclusive design changed student perceptions and raised their awareness of the need for design for people with disabilities.

Through prominent roles on the Council of the Design Research Society, leading special interest groups (SIG), the unit has shaped debates on the future of design research and advanced design education as a field of research. This was especially notable in the rapid transition to online teaching and learning when **Jones** as a Member of Coronavirus Leadership Team in the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design (CHEAD) established [Distance Design Education](#) a web-based repository of design resources for distance education, used by universities pivoting online in the pandemic. Conversations on OU design education with the Design Council have cemented the importance of design as a skill set that makes a valuable contribution to business and GDP as well as to the creative economy. **Dewberry** and **Lotz** were invited to be part of a British Council project to visit Indian Design HEIs, to discuss teaching and research opportunities and contribute to a roundtable discussion that explored international design education futures. AH&D research has also been disseminated to the public through TedX talks staged at the Open University by **Jones** and **Eckert**.

AH&D's open access short courses on OpenLearn, the topics of which have ranged from 'Inclusive Design and Making' (3478 views) to 'Travelling Objects' (over 69,000 views), are underpinned by the unit's research. In addition to the unit's digital platforms already mentioned, AH&D researchers contribute to external international online platforms, including Art History Teaching Resources and the Conversation. AH&D researchers' participation in public festivals has also provided opportunities for research dissemination and public engagement (ESRC, British Academy Showcase Festival, and Being Human and the festivals mentioned in Section 4.3.1). Feedback from the public at these festivals demonstrates, for example, that these activities have changed perceptions of art history's relevance to contemporary issues such as global trade and identity politics.

4.3.4 Impact on Artists and Artistic Practices

True to its radical mission, AH&D at the OU has been involved in a number of projects concerned with art, activism and gender including Tate Exchange; The Showroom, London; Pavilion, Leeds; and Meeting Point, Leeds (**Wainwright**, **Charlesworth** and **Charnley**). Run in conjunction with a diverse range of communities, charities and galleries, these projects have entailed working with migrant workers and refugees with third sector organisations. **Charlesworth**, for example, acted

as co-producer and research consultant on *They Call Us Maids* (2015) an animated film about migrant domestic workers and modern-day slavery, which has won three international awards and was shortlisted for the AHRC Research in Film awards (2016).

4.3.5 Impact on Museums and heritage institutions

AH&D at the OU has taken a lead in addressing aspects of the diversity agenda, exploring new policy directions for decolonisation in museums and collections. The research underpins engagement with public audiences, user groups, museums, curators, volunteers, and designers thereby having an impact on creativity, culture and society. This includes leading sessions at the Théodore Monod Museum summer school in Dakar, Senegal funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung, Germany and the 'Global Art Map' at MOMA and consultancy for the Arts Council England on the Asia Triennial Manchester (**Wainwright**); and work with New Walk Museum & Art Gallery in Leicester, and consultancy roles with heritage and non-heritage organisations across the UK, developing Heritage Lottery and other funded projects (**Barnes**). External collaborations have also led to curatorial contributions including Gallery II at Bradford University (**Charlesworth**) and Wolverhampton Art Gallery (**Shaw**). A close collaboration with ArtUK, has resulted in OU resources being showcased on their website.

The unit's pathways to impact through public engagement involve public talks at museums and heritage institutions with day events and public lunchtime lectures at the National Gallery (c.300 audience) (**Clark, Barker**); public talks at Chawton House on women artists and Jane Austen, at the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (**Barker**); on wallpapers at Wrest Park (English Heritage, **Taylor**); and on film (Armley Industrial Museum and Hyde Park Picture House, Leeds, **Charlesworth**).

4.4 Contribution to the sustainability of the discipline and wider influence

4.4.1 Advisory contribution to research agenda and research funding bodies: The unit continues to shape the fields of Art History and Design research through involvement in national and international learned societies and peer review panels, thus influencing the distribution of grants and the definition of new research themes/agendas. Activities include contributing to a new AHRC research programme, as part of the AHRC strategic and academic peer review college (**Dewberry, Luck**). AH&D researchers also hold leadership roles in prominent learned and subject associations societies (**McKellar** was appointed the first female President of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain in 2020).

Other advisory and review work includes: British Academy (**Clark**) as well as discipline specific panels such as Historic England Advisory Committee (**McKellar**), Council of the Design Research Society (**Dewberry, Jones**), Design Society (**Eckert**, Board of Management), Education Secretary and Trustee of Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (**West**), Higher Education Committee of Association for Art History (**Barker**), and Christie's Education (**Clark**). This also extends internationally including: the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) (**Clark**), European Science Foundation, Research Council of Norway, the NWO Netherlands Scientific Organisation (**Wainwright, Luck**), National Science Centre, Krakow, Poland (**Lymeropoulou**), FWO Research Foundation, Flanders (**Luck**) and Horizon 2020 (**Eckert**).

AH&D academics in journal **editorial roles** act as gatekeepers for their discipline, regulating the quality of published research and identify new research themes that are associated with each

discipline: as Deputy Editor for the journal *Design Studies* (**Luck**), as Editor of *Open Arts Journal* (**Wainwright**), while others sit on editorial boards (including *Open Arts Journal*, *Third Text*, *Georgian Group Journal*, *Design Science*, *IEEE Transactions of Engineering Management Research in Engineering Design*, Publications Committee of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, and Lund Humphries Architectural Advisory Board) and as editors of journal special issues (such as *Design Studies*, *Research in Engineering Design*, *Artificial Intelligence in Engineering Design*, *Analysis and Manufacturing*, *Journal of Early Modern History*). AH&D academics have been able to promote particular research agendas and collaborate with leading international academics in the field. AH&D academics also act as referees for academic publications, engage in **peer-review for more than 100 different academic journals** and for academic presses (including Bloomsbury and Cambridge University Press).