

**Institution: University of Cambridge**

**Unit of Assessment: 25 Area Studies**

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

The Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies (FAMES) originated as Oriental Studies in the late nineteenth century. It was founded on a commitment to scholarship based on thorough knowledge of the textual legacies and historical traditions of the cultures of East and South Asia and the Middle East. Today, FAMES aims to be a premier institution for research and education on much of North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and East Asia both historically and from a contemporary perspective. FAMES is interdisciplinary, with specialists in literature, history, anthropology, linguistics, and politics.

FAMES consists of two Departments, the Department of Middle Eastern Studies with 13 full-time, University-funded academics and the Department of East Asian Studies with 17. The Faculty has a further seven staff working in academic related positions such as language teachers and librarians, as well as 16 support staff members. The two Heads of Department act as co-Chairs of the Faculty as a whole. The Cambridge colleges contribute to the research life of the Faculty through their support for colleagues who are also college members as well as for our students, all of whom are college members.

An important characteristic of FAMES is the large number –19 at present – of early career researchers (postdoctoral co-workers, Junior Research Fellows, research associates, and full-time academics in the first three years of their careers). We are proud that we are attractive to researchers in the first phase of their career. We take our task to support them and so help safeguard the future of our fields very seriously, as will be further elaborated in Section 2: People.

There is much that binds us together beyond our commitment to the importance of knowing other cultures through the texts of all kinds they produce. Much of our research crosses disciplinary boundaries and regional descriptors, from studies of trade in pre-modern East Asia and the Middle East to the ethnography of today's migrant Syrian merchant communities in western China. In the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, Arabic and Persian are linked as the two main languages of the classical Islamic world. Arabic, Hebrew and Aramaic overlap as fellow Semitic languages, and Persian and Sanskrit connect as languages of South Asia. There is a concentration of expertise on neo-Aramaic at Cambridge, unique in the UK, which has led to important interdisciplinary research work. In the Department of East Asian Studies, modern East Asian history closely connects Japan, China and Korea. Other main areas are Chinese manuscripts; Japanese arts of the book; medieval Chinese and Japanese history; modern Chinese and Japanese literatures, and cultural studies, along with modern history and the politics and international relations of East Asia. Cambridge is one of the few universities where the modern and pre-modern forms of our languages are taught and researched together (for example in weekly seminars, colloquia and reading groups), enriching both and eliminating an artificial dividing line that arose from now dated theories of modernization.

FAMES' research strategy at the beginning of the assessment period aimed at increasing the number of postgraduate students and postdoctoral co-workers and integrating them further into our research activities; creating greater synergies among the research activities of teaching staff, especially those whose research has common methodological elements; and expanding into the languages of Central Asia—which lie geographically between the Middle East and East Asia—through pursuing possible new sources of funding for research positions.

This strategy was modified as a result of the report of the University's Strategic Research Review of the Faculty at the beginning of July 2016. This review by an external panel reinforced the first two objectives of increasing postgraduate and postdoctoral numbers and strengthening synergies. It modified the third: rather than seeking posts in a new language group, the faculty decided to build upon existing strengths, as a result of which FAMES gained university support for new posts in Chinese and Korean Studies, which have now been filled.

Following the 2016 review, our research strategy became:

1. Develop our graduate programmes and strengthen our research culture.
2. Develop strengths in both pre-modern and modern area studies and in particular to support research work that cuts across this chronological distinction.
3. Enhance our connections with other departments locally and internationally.

Two organisational changes made at the end of the last assessment period and the beginning of this one contributed towards achieving our strategic goals. First, a FAMES Research Committee now reviews grant applications, organizes cross-Faculty annual research days, promotes new research initiatives, and keeps watch over our research environment. Second, research-active staff, postdoctoral researchers and graduate students of the Faculty now belong to one of six Research Groups: (i) China Studies, (ii) Japanese and Korean Studies, (iii) Studies of India, Iran, Central Asia and the Caucasus, (iv) Modern Middle Eastern Studies, (v) Studies of the Pre-Modern Middle East, and (vi) Hebrew and Semitic Studies. These groups are complemented by disciplinary clusters which draw together individuals working in different languages but in the same discipline: Contemporary Culture and Society, History, Manuscript Studies, Literature, Linguistics, Politics and International Relations, and Social Anthropology.

To meet our first objective, we have instituted new taught MPhil programmes in Chinese Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Japanese Studies. The MPhil in Chinese Studies now regularly attracts over 60 applicants for ten slots. To support these, and strengthen our research culture, we have initiated regular research seminars, informal reading groups and study circles to foster a research culture in which graduate students, postdocs and research-active staff interact in a variety of overlapping sub-groups. In the case of Chinese Studies, for instance, there is a weekly China Research Seminar which regularly attracts around 50 attendees, a weekly text-reading seminar held in cooperation with the Needham Research Institute, and a weekly Buddhist Studies Seminar. The Japanese Studies Section also holds a weekly research forum that highlights eminent scholars residing locally and from around the world. A Middle Eastern Studies roundtable brings together on a weekly basis staff from around the University working on Middle Eastern topics to read and discuss ongoing research. Some (but far from all) of these seminars and reading groups paused at the beginning of the pandemic restrictions. However, once it became clear that online seminars were entirely practicable, most were resumed, including the Dunhuang Texts Seminar and the seminars and meetings of the Centre for Islamic Studies. Because it became possible for those not physically in Cambridge to attend these seminars, they have grown their audiences. For postgraduate students, they are now even

more important in order to foster a sense of community and maintain engagements.

The Faculty has certainly seen a rapid increase in the number of our MPhil and PhD students over the assessment period. Between 2015 and 2019, the annual intake of new postgraduate students has risen from 25 to 42 and applications from 110 to 180. Because the MPhil course is designed to train students for PhD work, a significant number continue on for the PhD. Our PhDs have proved competitive: they hold posts in leading departments in the UK and internationally. We are proud of our role in maintaining our fields academically.

To meet our second and third objectives, we have encouraged staff to engage more fully with other institutions in the University. Colleagues have made more intensive use, for instance, of the University's Humanities Centre (The Centre for the Arts, Sciences and Social Sciences at Cambridge, CRASSH). It provides excellent facilities for organizing workshops and seminars. It also runs a scheme that provides early career researchers with additional time free from teaching and administrative duties. As explained in Section 4 below, several staff, Professor Khaled Fahmy and Drs Brigitte Steger and Boping Yuan among them, collaborate intensively with colleagues across Cambridge's Arts and Humanities Faculties.

The Global Humanities Initiative of the School of Arts and Humanities, initiated in the 2019/20 academic year, further enhances our collaborations with partner Departments and Faculties at Cambridge and in the wider world. Its aims are to contribute to the globalisation and decolonisation of the university curriculum and university research through closer collaboration with colleagues at the American University in Beirut, Ashoka University in India, Fudan and Nanjing Universities in China, Universidad Diego Portales in Chile, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In collaboration with our partner universities, the initiative will develop a suite of core themes such as conceptualizations of the good life and good governance; formulate and secure funding for joint research projects; and facilitate cloud-based joint teaching activities to bring students and teachers from all partners together. Professor Hans van de Ven is co-Chair of the initiative, which has already provided three grants to FAMES academics for Global Humanities Projects (elaborated below) to bring together scholars from partner universities with Cambridge academics.

All these initiatives have had a tangible impact on the research environment at FAMES. The total volume of publications and other research-related professional activities is evidence of the Faculty's success. Over the assessment period, we produced 37 books and nearly 400 other outputs. Nineteen staff participated in more than 50 different research collaborations, networks, and partnerships around the world, while fifteen faculty members held 39 journal editorships. Thirteen members of staff delivered more than 134 keynote lectures all over the world during the REF period, and more than half of our colleagues refereed manuscripts for 152 peer reviewed journals and publishers. Our grant income was over £11M.

FAMES benefits from a supportive institutional framework for impact. FAMES stands out because we work closely with two units, the Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre Centre for Islamic Studies and the Genizah Research Unit, whose remit is impact. FAMES hosts the former. The Centre for Islamic Studies promotes a constructive understanding of Islam and Muslims in the UK and the wider world. The Genizah Research Unit at the University Library promotes the

understanding of medieval Jewish culture, history, law, and commerce in the wider world. It too provides one of our case studies. Our Impact Case Studies are the result of their activities.

We emphasize impact potential in recruitment, in grant applications, and in supporting colleagues, with our Research Committee, the Faculty Co-Chairs, and our Impact Champion acting in a coordinating capacity. While there is no expectation that all colleagues engage in impact activities, we instead seek out and support projects that do have this potential. The University and the School provide effective institutional support by providing impact grants and advice.

The Faculty runs an active visiting scholars scheme. We have welcomed 101 visiting academics and 12 visiting students to Cambridge during the assessment period. Applications are vetted by the relevant department and we insist that each has a close research relationship with their host. Our visitors make use of our facilities and are typically actively involved in the academic life of the faculty. Our visitors not only contribute to the life of the Faculty while they are here, but are enormously helpful to us in providing contacts and local access to us after their return to their home countries. This has benefitted especially our historians and anthropologists. We have welcomed an especially large numbers of academic visitors from China. Our library resources are such that even now, during the Covid-19 pandemic, a number still want this association in order to consult them. In 2020, the Japanese Section launched a new collaborative initiative with Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry that will bring a senior ministry staff member to the faculty as an annual visitor. This scheme complements the University's Centre for Science and Policy initiative intended to strengthen links between academics and policy makers.

All students and colleagues must comply with the 2012 Concordat on Research Integrity and the current ESRC guidelines on research ethics in Humanities and Social Science research. Overall responsibility for research integrity and ethics in the Faculty resides with the FAMES Research Committee. Where a research project is deemed to require specific ethical review, all but the most straightforward cases are passed to the specialist Ethics Committee of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Simple cases are reviewed within the Faculty, by committees formed by the relevant department (Middle Eastern Studies or East Asian Studies).

FAMES has just completed a review of its policies and practices used for ethical review of both student and staff research work. Our graduate students now regularly review and cite the ethical provisions that may influence their studies when formulating and presenting their own research projects. We also have a standard risk assessment process that Faculty members and students must complete before embarking on work away from the University. The risk assessment process for students is continuously under review to take account of the importance of addressing the challenge of working in rapidly changing parts of the world, especially those involving acute conflict.

The global pandemic of 2020 has of course presented significant challenges to FAMES' research activities. However, the Faculty has been well-placed to respond, with the support of the wider University. Health and safety considerations, government restrictions and international travel restrictions have all impacted on various aspects of FAMES' work. All of these factors prompted an acceleration and intensification in FAMES' use of Information Technology in research activities, in supporting postgraduate researchers, and in outreach and impact activities. FAMES' responses to the pandemic as they relate to research activity are outlined further in the relevant sections below.

## 2. People

### Staffing strategy and staff development

In this section, staffing strategy and staff development are addressed under five headings: recruitment of staff on long-term contracts; postdoctoral staff; support for research staff; postgraduate students; and equality and diversity. In general, our staffing strategy is directed to support our strategic objectives (see Section 1, above).

In all aspects of staffing and staff development, FAMES is committed to proper regard for protected characteristics. FAMES implements the principles of the 2008 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and is supported very effectively by School and University policies and practices. Appointment committee members are all trained in diversity, equality, and unconscious bias.

#### *Support for research staff*

FAMES' policies and practices promote well-being, equality and diversity in order to maximise all colleagues' opportunities to produce high quality research and impact, and develop professionally. All new appointees are linked with a mentor who provides advice and support outside of more formal management structures. Lecturers on probation (usually five years) meet their Head of Department termly to complete a report which notes expectations, achievements and issues. Probationary staff are given lighter administrative and teaching roles and the School's STINT workload assessment contributes to tracking their workloads. After probation, Faculty researchers meet regularly with their Head of Department, and are expected to be formally appraised every two years.

All new appointees are required to take Personal and Professional Development modules on the supervision of students and equality and diversity. All staff have access to an extensive range of training provided by the University, and are encouraged to take this up. Examples include career development training for postdoctoral fellows, leadership training for mid-career colleagues, support with grant applications and IT skills.

In keeping with our strategy, FAMES' approach to recruitment seeks to enhance existing strengths and establish new collaborations within the Faculty, with other units in the University, and with international partners. In the assessment period, this meant developing capacity in the early modern and modern periods, supporting collaborations across the University and further afield, and maintaining strength in history, literature, and culture in Persian, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic languages. These objectives are reflected in the eight long-term appointments made in the assessment period:

1. Professor Mickey Adolphson, Keidanren Professor of Japanese Studies, specialises in the medieval Japanese world, has contributed to collaboration across departments in medieval history and to extensive collaboration with partners in Japan, especially in supporting graduate study.

2. Dr Assef Ashraf, University Lecturer in Eastern Islamic Lands and the Persian Speaking World, specialises in the early modern and modern Persianate world and joins the Persian Studies and Modern Middle Eastern History clusters.
3. Professor Khaled Fahmy, Sultan Qaboos Chair of Modern Arabic Studies, specialises in modern Egypt and strengthens our Middle Eastern History and Contemporary Arab Studies clusters, the University network of modern Middle Eastern historians, and our connections with colleagues in Egypt and the wider region.
4. Dr Noga Ganany, University Lecturer in the Study of Late Imperial China, expands the faculty's strength in Chinese Studies and early modern history.
5. Dr Heather Inwood, University Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature and Culture, specialises in poetry, genre fiction and modern media.
6. Dr Andrew Marsham, Reader in Classical Arabic, joins the Classical Arabic cluster and the growing network for Late Antiquity and Medieval studies across the Humanities at Cambridge; he has led the reorganisation of our Middle Eastern Studies MPhil pathways.
7. Dr Charis Olszok, University Lecturer in Modern Arabic Literature, has a research speciality in modern North African literature.
8. Dr Vicky Young, Kawashima Lecturer in Japanese Literature and Culture, researches modern literature in Japan and Okinawa.

In line with University policy, we actively encourage applications from people with protected characteristics, make efforts to advertise this in our recruitment materials, and advertise our posts widely, both nationally and internationally. Of the appointments to long-term positions made in the assessment period, 50% are women and at least 20% identify as BAME.

There are four main subjects for future expansion, in line with the School's focus on the development of the global humanities, outlined in Section 1. (1) In September 2020 we finalized the appointment of a University Lectureship in Korean Studies as a key element of a full Korean Studies programme. (2) A joint project is underway with a Cambridge College to secure a position in South-east Asian Studies with a view to enhancing connections between Middle Eastern Studies and South Asian Studies. (3) The further development of the study of Islamic Art at Cambridge is a priority, building on the research of Professor Amira Bennison, Dr Andrew Marsham, Emeritus Professor Charles Melville and Dr Deniz Türker, and developing inter-faculty collaborations. (4) The on-going Japan and the World initiative has led to four outside bursaries for postgraduate students and two postdocs.

The most immediate impact of the pandemic on staffing policies were two University decisions to partially freeze new posts and to devolve sabbatical research leave deferral decisions to faculties. FAMES is unaffected by the recruitment freeze, with the recruitments mentioned above being in train before the pause. Applications to defer leave were discussed at subject group level before they were submitted to the Faculty Board. At least one colleague with significant childcare responsibilities had their leave deferred to 2021–22 from 2020-21, so that they were likely to be able to make better use of their research leave.

#### *Postdoctoral staff*

Postdoctoral researchers are supported and mentored to ensure they receive maximum benefit from their time at Cambridge and to support them in moving on to the next stage of their careers. Their development as researchers is a priority for the Faculty, and while opportunities for teaching and other contributions to academic life are provided, we are careful not to let these hamper their research. During 2017-18 and 2018-19, four Leverhulme postdoctoral students (Dr Arthur Dudley, Dr Nathaniel Miller, Dr Elizabeth Monier, Dr Krisztina Szilágyi) offered teaching in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. Postdoctoral researchers teaching in East Asian Studies have included Dr Casper Wits, Dr Justin Winslett, Dr Tristan Brown, Dr Ewan Donald, Dr Joshua Batts, Dr Matthew Shores, and Dr Wu Junqing.

Postdoctoral researchers on collaborative projects receive guidance and direction from the relevant PI, while postdoctoral researchers with individual projects and colleagues on short-term teaching contracts meet regularly with their mentor or Head of Department to discuss the future direction of their work and their broader career plans. When possible, new grant or postdoctoral applications are encouraged and supported. (For example, Dr Nathaniel Miller joined us as a Teaching Associate and then secured a three-year Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship). Researchers are encouraged to take advantage of University-wide initiatives that promote interdisciplinary and collaborative research – for instance at the University's Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities and the Language Sciences Interdisciplinary Research Centre, which formerly included Professor Geoffrey Khan on its steering committee.

A large number of postdoctoral researchers pass through the Faculty – at least 25 in the assessment period – as well as affiliated lecturers and researchers from other areas of the university who have interests that connect closely with ours (such as Dr Sami Everett, Dr Elizabeth Fowden, Dr Francois de Blois, and Dr John Williamson). They and our postgraduate students profit from the many academic visitors who spend six months to a year at Cambridge, creating connections important to us all.

Our innovative research projects and the appeal of working with specific researchers have attracted a growing number of outstanding postdocs. We encourage potential postdocs to apply to us via the Leverhulme-Newton Trust and British Academy schemes as well as non-UK funding bodies such as the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation. In the Leverhulme-Newton Trust competition, we have succeeded frequently, with between one and three new Early Career Research Fellows joining the Faculty each year. The Junior Research Fellowships of Cambridge colleges usually attract hundreds of applicants. Recent increased success of Area Studies early career researchers in open these competitions has brought many scholars into collaboration with FAMES.

Fundraising has allowed FAMES to support postdoctoral researchers with dedicated funds. The Centre for Islamic Studies has appointed six postdoctoral researchers in the assessment period: Dr Julian Hargreaves, Dr Ryan Williams, Dr Mehrunisha Suleman, Dr Deniz Türker, Dr Emanuelle Degli Espositi, and Dr Arafat Razzaque. A recurrent three-year postdoctoral research position in Japanese Studies is currently held by Dr Joshua Batts (a specialist in medieval Japanese history). The Japanese section has raised additional funding for a further postdoctoral fellowship. Funding has also been secured for a Postdoctoral Research Associate in Taiwan Studies.

Postdoctoral researchers from FAMES frequently go on to secure prestigious research positions. Examples include: Dr Ryan Williams, now Lecturer at the University of Queensland; Dr Sherzod Muminov, now Lecturer at the University of East Anglia; Dr Casper Wits, now Lecturer at the University of Leiden; Dr Clinton Godart, now Lecturer at Tohoku University; Dr Matthew Shores, now Lecturer at the University of Sydney, and Dr Triston Brown, now Assistant Professor at MIT.

University Teaching Officers (Lecturers, Senior Lectures, Readers and Professors) are entitled to take sabbatical leave (one term for every six). Staff choose whether to take leave immediately or whether to save up and take two terms in the fifth, or three terms in the seventh year as leave. Two junior probationary staff took sabbatical leave in the first term of 2019 to enable them to complete publications in time for REF 2021. Additional research leave is supported by research grant income.

#### *Postgraduate students*

Postgraduate students play a vital part in the research culture and academic life of the Faculty. Research students are participants in, and sometimes organisers of, our seminars, reading groups and conferences. They contribute to teaching, outreach and the governance of the Faculty through their representatives on committees and the Faculty Board.

Applications for PhDs and MPhils by research are encouraged from accomplished students with outstanding projects that align closely with their potential supervisor's research. We are committed to fairness and equality in our admissions and funding processes and have made significant changes to policies and practices with specific, detailed and objective scoring criteria being used in assessing applications and for prestigious Gates studentships and University- and Faculty-run funding competitions. All potential students are graded on their written applications and interviewed in an online video call. The Degree Committee reviews all admissions and a dedicated graduate funding committee reviews funding decisions. All members of our Degree Committee have completed equality and diversity training.

FAMES uses its trust funds and additional grant income to support postgraduate research students. Trust funds are reviewed annually to ensure maximum benefit for our students. Offering partial funding allows us to approach relevant colleges and/or the Cambridge Trusts for matching funds. The Faculty focuses on raising dedicated funding from external, non-UK, sources. The Japanese section has secured in the assessment period three new postgraduate (PhD and Master level) scholarships (average £35K/student/year) from Toshiba, Nakagawa Associate Group, Tokyo and Quick, Inc, Osaka, in addition to the on-going Great Britain Sasakawa Scholarships. Postgraduates have also been supported by studentships attached to research grants, as in the case of Professor Barak Kushner's five-year ERC project and a



project on Azeri funded by the Odlar Yurdu Foundation (Professor Geoffrey Khan). These valuable resources have allowed us to attract and retain exceptionally high-quality candidates across the assessment period.

There are also Faculty and School funds to support postgraduate students in attending annual conferences and to allow them to organize workshops, including the 2019 University of Cambridge Graduate Conference in Middle Eastern Studies and a UK-wide conference of China Studies PhD students. Subject-specific trust funds support fieldwork as appropriate.

Postgraduates in our Faculty also have opportunities for financial support from UKRI funding bodies, in particular the AHRC through its Block Grant Partnership schemes. Our Faculty has applied for specialist funding in the AHRC BGP2 scheme for languages in our area in a consortium with the University of Oxford and SOAS, University of London. The Faculty has had eight research students funded by the AHRC since 2016.

Once admitted, research postgraduates work closely with their supervisors. Doctoral students also have an adviser from their subject area, to whom they can turn for additional academic advice and support. The welfare and wellbeing of students is the primary responsibility of their college tutor, through whom they can access college welfare and wellbeing support and advice and administrative support.

Postgraduate research students meet regularly with their supervisors throughout the academic year and complete self-evaluation reports annually. Supervisors and college tutors respond to these, and they are reviewed by the Faculty's Degree Committee. Because of the pandemic, many supervisors increased the frequency of their meetings with postgraduate students and continued them through the summer months, in some cases arranging weekly seminars with supervisees. Supervisors, advisers and tutors have supported students in responding to Covid-19's impact on research, and intermission, working away and extension policies have been modified by the University to take account of the pandemic.

All research students complete three development activities per term, recording them for their own reflection and review by their supervisor. For probationary PhD students there is a substantial written Progress Examination at the end of their first year, which is assessed by two reviewers. A more light-touch review takes place at the end of the second year. Throughout their research degree, students submit termly self-evaluation reports via an online portal, as do supervisors.

First-year research students are met with frequently and supported in participating in the life of the Faculty. In Middle Eastern Studies all postgraduate students participate in the *Theory and Method in Middle Eastern Studies* paper, which introduces key theoretical and methodological issues in Middle Eastern Studies, alongside a framework of workshops and assignments focused on research skills. Similar classes are provided for postgraduate students in Japanese and Chinese Studies. Other training and development activities include specialist reading groups, research seminars and departmental talks, training modules such as postgraduate supervisor training, academic writing, and language courses; and attendance at international conferences. Research students are encouraged to offer supervisions to undergraduates and may also offer other types of teaching. Core teaching is always undertaken by academic staff.

Research synergies across the University are supported by CRASSH. At CRASSH postgraduates, postdoctoral researchers and staff from across the University interact in interdisciplinary programmes, reading groups, workshops, conferences and other events, such as Professor van de Ven's international summer school in Chinese war history and the Byzantine Worlds project which supports Arabic, Armenian and Greek reading groups and a research seminar.

The majority of our doctoral students spend significant fieldwork time outside the UK in a wide range of research contexts, including many collaborations with institutions in Asia and the Middle East. Some recent examples include:

1. The Korea and Japan Policy Forum at Chatham House: through Dr Nilsson-Wright's work with Chatham House, FAMES research students have attended monthly discussion groups held at Chatham House, meeting policy-makers, journalists, diplomats and business community representatives.

2. Professor Geoffrey Khan's students have been accepted on visiting student schemes at universities in the Middle East and North America. A recent example is Johan Lundber – visiting student at Yale, September to December 2019, where he researched and taught Neo-Aramaic.

3. The China-UK Higher Education Research Partnership, supported by the Department of Business and the PRC, enabled three postgraduate students to work at East China Normal University's History Department; four ECNU's students came to Cambridge.

4. Professor Barak Kushner shares students with colleagues at Waseda University in Japan where he teaches a summer course. Postdoctoral researchers are employed in his group and at Shanghai Jiaotong University and participate in their project on GIS mapping of war crimes.

5. The Aoi Global Scholars programme, now in its fifth year, sends two students to Kyoto and Keio University in Japan each year for summer research; FAMES welcomes two Japanese students each year.

6. Faculty members have also taken advantage of new collaborative research opportunities between Cambridge and partner institutions overseas, such as John Nilsson-Wright's *Defining the Indo-Pacific Project* (2018-19), a collaboration with Science Po.

Many FAMES research students have gone on to hold prestigious academic positions. Some examples include: Eleanor Coghill (2004 PhD, Chair at University of Uppsala, 2016); Judith Olszowy, (1995 PhD, now Chair at University of Oxford); Meira Polliack (1993 PhD, now Chair at University of Tel-Aviv, Ronny Vollandt (2011 PhD, now Chair at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich); and Rana Mitter, OBE FBA (1995 PhD, Professor of Chinese and Director of Oxford China Centre, 2013-19). We hope that recent PhDs now in junior posts will have equally illustrious careers.

### *Equality and Diversity*

FAMES is working to further improve its regard for protected characteristics. This commitment informs all aspects of recruitment and support of research staff. There are legacy challenges to address when it comes to ethnic and gender diversity across academia. We also take the view

that Area Studies academics have a particular obligation to take into account the ethical complexities relating to protected characteristics and academic endeavour. This view is reflected in our commitment to greater international academic connections (Section 1, above), where we have made significant advances (Section 4, below).

We are committed to ensuring that FAMES is a fair and supportive research institution for all. We ensure mixed genders and career stages and student representation on all our committees. In assessing materials for submission for the REF, attention was paid to inviting all colleagues regardless of seniority and including postdoctoral researchers to contribute to the assessment of outputs. The members of the FAMES REF committee have all taken equality, diversity, and unconscious bias training.

Flexible working is accommodated wherever possible through the scheduling of teaching and meetings at times that support colleagues' other responsibilities. Caring responsibilities are the main reason for flexible working requests. The University's Returning Carers Scheme also requires reduced and flexible working on returning to work after leave for caring responsibilities. Adjustments may also be made to teaching hours and work expectations.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Consistent with our strategic goal of expanding our postgraduate and postdoctoral numbers, while also securing new posts in our existing language areas, the Faculty has made significant advances in expanding our income, infrastructure and facilities.

#### *Research Income*

FAMES is fortunate in having trust funds with a combined value of over £38M. They support the Sultan Qaboos Professorship of Arabic, the Keidanren Professorship of Japanese, the Needham Professorship of Chinese and nine lectureships, including four lectureships in Japanese Studies. In accordance with our strategy, we use this resource to maintain and strengthen our research operations. For instance, through careful internal planning and discussions with the School of Arts and Humanities, we have been able to expand Persian Studies and add a pre-modern Chinese and a Korean post. We use these funds to finance our Sanskrit programme. Our trust funds also allow us to allocate a £1,000 research allowance to each member of our academic staff, support conference attendance of graduate students, and fund undergraduate year abroad programmes.

FAMES has raised more than £11M in external research support in the assessment period. This sum includes research funds from RCUK and ERC. Examples are the ERC funded 'The Dissolution of the Japanese Empire and the Struggle for Legitimacy in Post-War Asia' project (2013–19); 'Trust, Global Traders, and Commodities in a Chinese International City' (2015–20); 'RESPOND: Multi-level Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond' (2017–20); and 'Cleanliness, Convenience and Citizenship: Plastic Waste in Consumer Societies' (2019–21). Dr Boping Yuan is Co-I of the £380K AHRC project on L2 Mandarin Chinese. Several faculty researchers participate in research projects based elsewhere, such as the School-wide AHRC funded 'Multilingualism' Project in Modern and Medieval Languages; the ERC funded 'Impact of the Ancient City' Project in Classics; and the ERC supported project 'Trodities: Trust, Global Traders and Commodities in a Chinese International City' at the University of Sussex. These collaborations are successful, producing numerous articles and books, and enrich our research environment by supporting research associations and postdoctoral co-workers.

#### *Institutional support for individual research funding initiatives*

FAMES encourages research-active staff to apply for one major grant every five years through mentoring, appraisal and support with sabbatical planning. Infrastructure that supports research and helps to secure and sustain grants is mainly provided at School level or via the Research Office. School research facilitators speak at research-focused events at FAMES, circulate information about grant calls, provide feedback on draft grant proposals, and help shepherd proposals through the University's approval process. The Faculty Administrator checks all grant applications to budget for appropriate administrative support. The Research Committee keeps a record of grant proposals and actively encourages colleagues to apply for them.

Junior researchers are now encouraged to pair with more senior colleagues and to apply for small to medium-sized grants as well as making larger grant applications as they gain

experience. For example, Dr Charis Olszok and Dr Christine van Ruymbeke are collaborating on an application for a project on Animals in Arabic and Persian Literature; Dr Barak Kushner and Dr Vicky Young have succeeded in securing funding for a project on historical and literary aspects of decolonial legacies in post-1945 East Asia through the Global Humanities Initiative. The same initiative also supports a collaborative project by Professor van de Ven and Dr Chau called 'Language, Empire, and Nation.'

*Charitable, commercial and foundation support to foster research networks between Cambridge and the wider global research community*

FAMES colleagues engage actively with funders in East Asia and the Middle East, as well as with private charitable donors, foundations and commercial sponsors. External sponsorship allows high-profile annual lecture series, such as the Chuan-Lyu and Ra Jong-yil Lectures, while also (in the case of the Ra Fund), creating an accumulating funding base to further promote disciplinary development. These initiatives are vital in developing new forms of collaboration and partnership (see Section 4 below), and in securing the sustainability of crucial aspects of FAMES' research.

Significant time-limited research funds are the 'Acquisition of Mandarin Chinese' project (2017–25); and a recent grant to support the Dunhuang Buddhist Manuscripts Research Project (DBMRP), which links with the International Dunhuang Project led by the British Library. This fund is managed by Dr Imre Galambos, who also has received US\$240K grant from the Glorison Foundation. Dr John Nilsson-Wright was also awarded £1M by the Nippon Foundation for a Chatham House's 'UK-Japan Global Seminar Series' (2013-19). In 2020, he received a five year (annually renewable) grant of £75K p.a. from the Korea Foundation and the Yeosijae (Future Consensus Institute) to fund a series of research initiatives focusing on UK-ROK relations and the international relations of the Korean Peninsula, which he will direct as the inaugural Korea Foundation-Chatham House Korea Fellow. He also has, since 2015, received support from the Korea Foundation to bring together Europe-wide early career East Asian specialists (The Korea Foundation-Chatham House Next Generation Programme). The Next Generation Programme for 2020 is likely to be substantially expanded beyond the conventional policy and academic sphere.

*Physical infrastructure*

Before Covid-19, the Faculty buildings and facilities contributed significantly to the research environment for all FAMES colleagues. The FAMES building re-opened in late September 2020 to the relief of colleagues for whom working at home was difficult. All academics have their own office space, with a desk, networked desktop computer, telephone and printer, as well as space for small group teaching. Before the pandemic, postdoctoral fellows funded through FAMES shared space in groups of two-to-three, each with their own desk, networked desktop computer, telephone and printer. The ground floor common room and the kitchen facilities were shared by all staff and students. Social distancing measures prevent that now, but we have put in place alternative outdoor and online socialising and hope to be able to resume more in-person indoor social interaction in the future.

To safeguard our students, staff, and academics who do use the building, all staff have undergone a personal risk assessment before being allowed to return to the building. Everybody

must now use the NHS Covid-19 app when they enter the building and a proportion of students are tested weekly for Covid-19 so that we can isolate outbreaks quickly.

The Faculty Library is a facility appreciated by all. Its service provision has been modified to take account of Health and Safety considerations during the pandemic. Likewise, some of the provisions made in response to research student requests for improved work and social space have been temporarily modified. Work carrels, break-out spaces and coffee-making facilities are available for research students, postdocs and academic visitors where they remain safe to use.

In June 2019, the Faculty adopted a new Environmental Policy that commits to an Environmental Plan, assessing environmental considerations in all activities, while aiming to significantly reduce our carbon footprint, increase sustainability and reduce pollution, and promote awareness of environmental issues. The University's environmental accreditation scheme awarded the Faculty the Green Impact Bronze Award in 2018 and 2019.

The IT infrastructures of the Faculty and the University are vital to supporting research, impact, knowledge exchange and outreach, as well as the career development of our researchers. All research staff have their own personal web page on the Faculty website, and PhD students are profiled on the site. The Faculty has benefitted from investment in its web pages in the assessment period, and the web pages underwent a complete redesign in 2019-20. The Faculty has its own Twitter account and Youtube channel. Many staff and research students maintain a professional social media presence, as well as blogs and other online activity. Our excellent IT infrastructure, including two rooms with a full AV set-up, including projectors, multiple webcams, audience and speaking microphones, and speakers, has allowed us to move many of our research activities and events online during the pandemic.

#### *Support for research dissemination, enhanced impact and open research activities*

Researchers at FAMES receive substantial institutional support with disseminating their research. The University of Cambridge provides extensive support with Open Access, and Open Access is embedded in local research policy and practice, for example by providing guidance to staff members on the use of online platforms such as Symplectic and Apollo to record and deposit our outputs. Significant financial and administrative support, and training, is provided by the University and the School for impact-related activity. All Cambridge staff who publish with Cambridge University Press have free Open Access publication offered to them.

There are a diversity of approaches to enhancing impact, outreach and knowledge exchange. In Middle Eastern Studies, the significance of the Prince Alwaleed Centre for Islamic Studies work has been noted above. Besides the activities mentioned in our impact case studies, worth highlighting are the Centre's publication series *Narratives of Conversion* and its project on Islamophobia and everyday hate crime in the UK which reported to the Ministry of Justice.

In East Asia Studies, the China section produces a newsletter, distributed to our alumni through their Facebook page with 1300 followers. The China Research Seminar maintains a Twitter account with more than 1000 followers. Similarly, the Japan subject group has established a regular newsletter to disseminate the work and activity of the section to alumni/ae and the wider public, and the group's *Japan and the World* initiative, supported by an active social media presence, has allowed faculty to reach a diverse community of interested supporters, helping to

facilitate student and faculty recruitment and wider media awareness of Faculty members' research.

The Japan section has instituted a regular alumni/ae-student liaison day in which former students are invited to the faculty to discuss their post-graduation professional experience and provide advice and mentoring to our current students. This is complemented by an annual Japanese Studies alumni/ae day, typically in London, to which all alumni/ae and current students and staff are invited.

Impact can also be enhanced not merely by reaching out to new audiences, but by refining our research and publication methods to make information more accessible. A small proportion of FAMES research is based on data management that can be meaningfully shared in the manner of scientific data. One important data set is that connected to the preservation of Neo-Aramaic languages, a cluster of projects led by Professor Geoffrey Khan which shares linguistic research data with local communities. Another set is Hans van de Ven's database on China Trade History 1850–1950. A recent initiative by our Hebrew and Semitics section is the newly established open access monograph series Semitic Languages and Cultures (Open Book Publishers), which is supported by Hebrew Trust funds.

#### *Library facilities*

The Arabic, Hebrew, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean collections at the University Library have few parallels in Europe or even the world. The Cairo Genizah Collection of medieval Jewish manuscripts is the world's largest. The Chinese Collection is rich for Chinese dynastic history and Dunhuang manuscripts. The donation of the personal holdings of Professor Makoto Iokibe, held at the University Library, is a valuable resource for students studying the diplomatic history and politics of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Japan, as is its unique collection of medieval Japanese manuscripts. The University Library also houses a collection of more than 2,000 fragile Sanskrit texts written on bark, including one dating from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. A recent project led by Faculty staff has digitized these so that they are widely available for research. For East Asian Studies, the Aoi Pavilion, a special wing of the University Library, is one of the best collections of Chinese and Japanese material in Europe. It also has extensive Korean holdings. The University Library also has large microfilm collections relevant to FAMES. University Library and HEFCE special grants have made it possible to acquire expensive special collections.

Linguistically qualified, specialised librarians within the UL, including Kristin Williams (Japanese and Korean), Charles Aylmer (Chinese) and Yasmin Faghihi (Near and Middle Eastern Department) liaise closely with Faculty staff in their acquisitions, including new databases and online archives (such as newspapers and digitalised diplomatic records in vernacular languages) that facilitate the research of both faculty members and undergraduate and graduate students. Cooperation between FAMES colleagues and Library area specialists is close. Many of the librarians belong to the Faculty Research Groups. FAMES staff have written catalogues of University Library manuscript collections, such as Professor Geoffrey Khan's catalogue of Arabic papyri in the Michaelides collection). The University Library is also the home of the Union Catalogue of Early Japanese Books in Europe project. Several staff at the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit are former doctoral students of FAMES and current FAMES staff work closely with this research unit on projects relating to the Genizah manuscripts in the University

Library. Some of the resources in the Faculty Library and University Library are also supported by our subject-specific Trust Funds.

Over the last few years, the University Library has undergone a transformation in the digital sphere with, in particular, its launch of the Cambridge Digital Library, a state-of-the-art platform for the display of the Library's manuscripts, rare books and other special collections. Currently, it is possible to search and view digital images and metadata for 13,000 items from the Cairo Genizah Collections of Cambridge University Library. In addition, the Library has begun to make available in the digital library other important Arabic, Hebrew and Persian manuscripts, including detailed descriptions of their content and codicology. The University Library also subscribes to the increasingly important databases of archival documents in Chinese, English, and other languages as well the China Knowledge database on which all scholarly articles in China can be accessed.

The Cambridge University Library manuscript collection of Persian and Arabic Manuscripts can now be searched and in some cases viewed online as a result of a joint project (FIHRIST) with the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Standards established for describing Middle Eastern manuscripts in FIHRIST facilitated a seamless integration of Middle Eastern source materials to the overarching digital library project. There is currently a collaborative project between FAMES (Dr Vincenzo Vergiani) and the University Library, funded by the AHRC, which is preparing catalogues, scholarly descriptions and digital images of 1,600 Sanskrit manuscripts in the University Library.

The library network also includes the many departmental and college libraries, some of which have large Middle Eastern manuscript and book collections (such as Pembroke, Queens' and Christ's). Researchers can also benefit from the theological library of Tyndale House, the library of the Needham Institute with its unique collection on the history of Chinese science, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and the Ancient India and Iran Trust.

The libraries mentioned above have made enormous efforts to reorganise their services for Covid-19, with book collection and scanning services being greatly expanded, and an even greater emphasis on the acquisition of outstanding online resources. In particular, the rapid and effective response of the University Library to the pandemic has been tremendously helpful. The Library made available online a vast number of new books and articles as well as research and archival databases. FAMES contributed to this development for instance by facilitating the inclusion of the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* (including all back issues), which is a significant asset for researchers working on the modern Arab world. The University Library has also introduced a 'click and collect' service for its non-digital holdings.



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

During the assessment period, FAMES had wide-ranging research partnerships and collaborations within the University of Cambridge, with UK and EU universities, and with universities beyond Europe, including in the regions that FAMES scholars research (see below). In the previous sections, we have already touched upon some of these. In addition, our researchers have engaged with the heritage sector nationally and internationally and with media organisations around the world. A wide array of government agencies and NGOs in the UK, the EU and further afield have been beneficiaries of FAMES research.

The following are a selection of our research collaborations locally and internationally:

1. Dr Imre Galambos has obtained funding from sources across Asia for projects on manuscript studies and codicology in collaboration with the British Museum, Beijing Normal University, and Lanzhou University incorporating scholars from China, Thailand, Taiwan and across Southeast Asia. These projects have led to a series of workshops, conferences, and lecture series in Cambridge, Hamburg, Ghent, Mount Wutai in China, Renmin University in China, and the Dharma Drum Institute in Taiwan. Galambos has turned Cambridge into a world centre for Dunhuang manuscript studies.
2. Professor Barak Kushner has used his five-year ERC funded project on war crime tribunals in Asia to establish deep links with Jiaotong University in China, Kyoto University in Taiwan, the National Cheng-chi University in Taipei, and Heidelberg University in Germany. This has led to eight workshops and conferences, articles, and – so far – four books and a close-knit network of more than 18 researchers around the globe, of whom ten have been formally connected to Professor Kushner's project as postdoctoral co-workers or graduate students.
3. Dr Ben Outhwaite of our Genizah Project has collaborated with scholars at the University of Pennsylvania, Orot Israel College, Professor Judith Schlanger at Hebrew University, and i-Link action. These collaborations have led to three conferences and have made an impact well beyond scholarly circles, as Dr Outhwaite's Impact Case Study 'Discarded History in the Cairo Genizah' demonstrates.
4. Dr Paul Anderson is the Cambridge PI of an ERC project headed by Professor Magnus Marsden (Sussex University) and also participates in the CNRS-funded Circomo project on the circulation of commodities in the Middle East. The first project has taken Dr Anderson, a contemporary Middle East specialist, to Yiwu city in China to lecture to Chinese policy makers.
5. Dr Laura Moretti runs a summer school in collaboration with Nishokagusha University of Japan in early modern palaeography that has trained 250 students.
6. Professor Khaled Fahmy's and Dr Andrew Marsham's University-wide Middle Eastern Studies reading groups, mentioned before, have brought more than 70 Cambridge-based scholars into dialogue for the first time. The groups have proven an effective way to stimulate new work.

These are just six of around 50 national and international collaborations. Many other colleagues than those mentioned above have been involved in ERC projects, including Dr Nathaniel Miller ('Qur'anic Commentary: An Integrative Paradigm' and 'Analytic Database of Arabic Poetry') and Dr Andrew Marsham ('The Early Islamic Empire at Work'). Other collaborations include Dr Michael Rand's long-term joint project with Professor Shulamit Elizur at the Hebrew University, Israel, on the liturgical poems of El'azar be-Rabbi Qillir. Professor Hans van de Ven collaborated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Modern History Institute of the Academia Sinica, and Keio University, Japan, in joint research on China's War of Resistance. This collaboration brings historians of the Sino-Japanese War together every two or three years and has so far produced five conference volumes. Dr Andrew Marsham led the 2014–16 AHRC research network on 'The Early Islamic World,' which brought together scholars from the USA, Europe and the UK. Professor James Montgomery works with NYU Abu Dhabi to produce high quality bilingual Arabic-English editions of Classical Arabic literature in the Library of Arabic Literature. In response to the current global pandemic, some of the major lecture and seminar series at the Faculty were moved online. These have proved to have a huge geographical reach, with one lecture in the Centre for Islamic Studies lecture series in May and June reaching more than 250 audience members on at least four continents. Dr Imre Galambos's Dunhuang Seminar now has a large, international audience.

Of the 22 ongoing collaborations within the University, Dr Steger's participation in the UKRI-funded 'Circular economy approaches to eliminate plastic waste' is a prime example. It is supported by a grant of £1M and she works closely with partner Cols in Chemistry, Materials Science, the Judge Business School, and Zoology. Two postdoctoral researchers provide research assistance and participate in the teaching of introductory anthropology seminars, thus training them in academic administration. Dr Boping Yuan's project on L2 Mandarin Chinese is part of an inter-departmental research programme called 'Multilingualism: Empowering Individuals and Transforming Societies.'

As to collaborations with non-University scholarly institutions, we have already mentioned the Needham Institute and the Skilliter Centre for Ottoman History at Newnham College. There is also the Woolf Institute for the study of relations between Jews, Christian, and Muslims. The Director of the Skilliter Centre, Dr Kate Fleet, teaches undergraduate courses in FAMES and supervises PhD students. Woolf Institute staff are affiliated formally to FAMES, contribute to our graduate teaching programme, and hold a seminar in our building. Dr Christine van Ruymbeké is a Trustee and the Honorary Secretary of the Ancient India and Iran Trust. Professor Roel Sterckx serves on the Management Committee of the Needham Institute. Many of our Chinese Studies staff participate in the Institute's Friday afternoon text reading group. There are also groups such as the Cambridge Forum for Jewish Studies, the Cambridge Central Asia Forum, and the Cambridge Endangered Languages and Cultures Group, each of which organizes research symposia bringing together staff, postdoctoral researchers and graduates and other research-related activities from across Cambridge, including FAMES. Such activities are reflected in the quality of our outputs in this area, as shown for instance by the award of the Levenson Prize to Professor Kushner's book on post-war Japan.

FAMES staff have made their knowledge available to museums. Professor Adolphson has acted as consultant for the British Museum, as has Dr Outhwaite, who has also advised the Jewish Museum in London. Dr Michael Rand has advised The Bible Museum in New York. Some of us have also acted as film and documentary consultants. Professor Sterckx has advised the BBC

and the Open University on a documentary about Confucius. Professor van de Ven did so for a three part documentary on the silver trade (Empire of Silver, Matchlight Productions) and 'Shanghai 1937: Where World War Two Began,' for which he was a "talking head". It aired on the PBS network in the USA and is available on Netflix. Dr Christine van Ruymbeke participated in a programme on the Arabian nights for 'Disney Alladin Online Education' and Professor Bennison in a PBS series 'Africa's Great Civilizations.' In terms of podcasts, Professor Hans van de Ven has contributed to Professor David Runciman's 'Talking Politics', in episodes dealing with Hong Kong and with the history of the Chinese Communist Party. Dr Arthur Dudley contributed to a 'The Provocateur Podcast' on Persian as a lingua franca and Professor Sterckx on 'The Han Dynasty' for a podcast of The Historical Association

Our Impact Case Studies highlight what we believe to be our most important impact activities. But impact is also the product of individual effort. The Sultan Qaboos Professor of Arabic, Khaled Fahmy, is a widely known public intellectual in the Middle East. His web portal on Middle Eastern politics and culture with material in English and Arabic (khaledfahmy.org) has a large following. It had nearly 280,000 unique visitors one year after its launch. Dr Nilsson-Wright, who acted as Head of Asia Programmes at the Chatham House think tank from 2014-16, continues to be active in track two diplomacy with respect to North Korean affairs, including by organizing events at Chatham House, supplying testimony to the UK parliament, and providing comment pieces to the media.

FAMES' researchers have engaged with a wide range of audiences beyond academia. Whilst Head of Chatham House's East Asia Programme Dr John Nilsson-Wright produced a series of consultancy reports, op-eds, and policy statements, while speaking regularly to track two diplomacy events in the UK, Japan, and Korea. He also testified to parliament on North Korea. FAMES staff contributed regularly to television, radio, blogs, and podcast programmes. Professor Khaled Fahmy appears regularly on English- and Arabic language news programmes about the Middle East while his blog (Khaledfahmy.org) is hugely popular, as mentioned. Professor Amira Bennison is a regular presenter on BBC4's 'In Our Time,' as are Professors Roel Sterckx and James Montgomery. Professor Barak Kushner has spent two weeks in Shanghai filming a documentary arising from his project on post-World War Two East Asia. Others who have contributed to radio programmes include Dr Arthur Dudley (NPR, on salt), Dr Andrew Marsham (Al Jazeera, 'The Caliph', BBC Radio Scotland, Sunnism and Shi'ism), Professor Geoffrey Khan (Al Arabiya, language), Dr Ben Outhwaite (BBC, Kitchen Cabinet). Dr Brigitte Steger's essay 'The Japanese art of (not) sleeping,' was a BBC Future's Best of 2016 selection and received 1.5M unique browser hits. Professors Bennison, van de Ven, and Montgomery, and Drs Dudley and Nilsson-Wright participated in literary festivals in Edinburgh, New York, London, Hay-on-Wye and elsewhere.

FAMES staff have engaged enthusiastically in widening participation and outreach. We run Sutton Trust summer schools for Japanese and Middle Eastern Studies and participate in all open days organized by the university. Those of us with a college appointment also participate in college open days. Colleagues regularly speak at schools and at the Oxbridge Conferences to promote language learning among secondary school students. As Deputy Chair of Melbourn Village College, Professor van de Ven successfully led a project to adopt Chinese as a mandatory language for all students. The first cohort is now preparing for their GCSE exams.

FAMES researchers contributed significantly to the life of their disciplines. We have already referred to the numerous editorial boards, grant assessment committees, visiting committees, and advisory boards on which colleagues serve. Below following a few examples: Professor Hans van de Ven serves on the 2020 RAE steering committee of Hong Kong's Universities Grant Council. Dr Imre Galambos is Secretary for the European Association for the Study of Chinese Manuscripts (2012–) and Associate Member at the Centre de Recherches sur les Civilisations de l'Asie Orientale, CNRS (2011–). Dr Laura Moretti is Secretary of the European Association of Japanese Studies. Dr Brigitte Steger served as Secretary of the Japan Anthropology Workshop. Dr Eivind Kahrs acted as Honorary Secretary, Director and Member of Council of the Pali Text Society (1994–). Professor Charles Melville served as Chair of the Research Committee of the British Institute for Persian Studies (2008), as a member of the Academic Council of the Iran Heritage Foundation (2008–), and as member of the Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA) (2008–). Professor James Montgomery was the UK Representative to the Union Europeenne des Arabisants et Islamisants. Dr Laura Moretti sits on the Steering Committee of the University's Centre for Visual Arts. Dr Boping Yuan served on the executive committee of the International Society for Chinese Language Teaching (2008–). He also is Advisor to the Singapore Centre of Chinese Language, and the British Chinese Language Teaching Association. As Fellows of the British Academy, Professors Roel Sterckx, Geoffrey Khan, Khaled Fahmy, and Hans van de Ven participate in its grant assessment processes and its efforts to promote the arts and the humanities.

Colleagues are sought out for prestigious lectures around the world. Professor Khaled Fahmy gave the keynote lecture at the British Institute for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) in 2018 and the British Association for Islamic Studies (BRAIS) in 2019; Professor Geoffrey Khan gave the Carlo Landberg Lecture in 2017 and his Ullendorf Memorial Lecture at the University of Oxford in 2018. Professor Michael Adolphson gave the 2018 Ishibashi Foundation keynote lecture. Dr Andrew Marsham gave the keynote presentation at the 2015 Society for the Medieval Mediterranean Conference. Professor Hans van de Ven represented Europe at the centenary commemorations of the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement of 1919 at Peking University, delivered the Chen Kewen Lectures at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2019, and was scheduled in 2020 to give the 'Public Lectures on History and Business at the Hong Kong Public Library'. Covid-19 has put this on hold.

In looking back over the assessment period, we believe that, thanks to the hard work of colleagues, we have been able to pursue our strategy with energy and that it has been effective. Our research culture has become far more intensive, our postgraduate programmes are thriving, and we continue to produce internationally sought-after PhDs. We now have a prominent place in the School especially in its Global Humanities Initiative. We have been able to retain what made FAMES unique in the past, including combining modern and pre-modern studies, while also positioning ourselves to exploit and contribute to new trends, both educationally and scholarly. We have been successful in acquiring grants and use them to good effect. We have developed a wide range of impact activities. The pandemic has accelerated developments that were already beginning to transform our research lives, especially a much better use of the possibilities of online research and collaboration. We look back with a sense of achievement and to the future with real optimism.