

Institution: University of Leicester
Unit of Assessment: 34b
<p>A. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p><b>Unit context and structure</b></p> <p>Established in 1966, the School of Museum Studies is the only UK university department devoted to this discipline. Postgraduate only, with 19 Category A (18.5FTE) staff (including palaeontologist Unwin, submitted to UoA7) and around 80 current PGRs, it is the world's largest museum studies research community and has played a leading role in shaping the field globally. Museum studies at Leicester is an interdisciplinary field with strong ties to the museum profession; our PhD graduates are as likely to enter the profession as they are academia. Staff have backgrounds in history, art history, anthropology, geography, cultural studies and computer science. Our aim is to use our research to impact lives, policies and practices by interrogating the social agency, cultural ecosystems and digital transformations of museums, heritage and art. We are committed to tackling questions of power and difference.</p> <p>In this period, institutional commitment to our vitality and sustainability (Institutional Environment Statement [IES] 1.1) has resulted in a 68% increase in Category A staff. This was invested strategically to scale-up, diversify and deepen four areas of long-term focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)</b> works in partnership with the museum sector in the UK and internationally to develop the 'socially active museum' as a research-led, socially impactful, inclusive institution (Dodd, <b>Sandell, MacLeod, Golding, Bunning, Morse</b>).</li> <li>• <b>Collective for Research into the Institutions of Art (CRÍA)</b> interrogates institutions and practices constructing art and its histories (<b>Knell, Marstine, Whitelegg, Boldrick, Shirley</b>).</li> <li>• <b>Museums &amp; Technologies (MusTech)</b> engages in collaborative research on digital transformation in museums and heritage (<b>Parry, Vavoula, Turner</b>).</li> <li>• <b>Heritage Lives</b> undertakes critical explorations of the intersections of heritage and everyday lives, focusing particularly on cultural diversity and social inequalities (<b>Dudley, Gibson, Watson, Cai, Angel, Martinez, Tilche, Wakefield</b>).</li> </ul> <p>The development of these expanded, mutually supportive, groups has led to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 49% increase in research income (compared to REF2014) (£1.6m to £2.4m),</li> <li>• A 250% increase in research monographs (four to 14)</li> <li>• A 295% increase in PGR completions (20 to 77; HESA 15.5 to 54).</li> </ul> <p>These numbers, however, barely begin to describe the degree to which we have surpassed the objectives established in 2014.</p> <p><b>B. Achievement of strategic objectives 2014-2020</b></p> <p>Our strategic objectives for research and impact in 2014 recognised the role the School could play in providing global leadership to the discipline by offering a research-led model to an academic field shaped around professional practice. The following are examples of the ways we attended to those objectives. Other examples appear throughout this document.</p>

- **To expand international collaboration**

We have used this period of recruitment to extend our intellectual and geographical reach in all research groups:

- **Bunning & Boldrick (USA)**
- **Cai (Malaysia)**
- **Martinez (Central and Eastern Europe)**
- **Tilche (India)**
- **Turner (Canada)**
- **Wakefield (Gulf states)**
- **Whitelegg (Brazil)**

As a School, our strategic focus has been on Asia and Latin America where the discipline is still emergent. The School has been active in Asia for 30 years and possesses a large Asian PGR community. **Dudley's** career-long work in Myanmar, for example, and more recently in India, has involved local partnerships, working with the British Council and British Museum, the Indian National Museum Institute and the AHRC/Indian Council for Historical Research symposium on Rapid Urbanisation and Cultural Heritage in India. The recruitment of **Tilche**, a specialist in rural India, has strengthened this engagement. Partly through recruitment, we attempted to address a number of geographical and cultural lacunae in the discipline; for example, **Cai**, **Wakefield** and **Knell** published research on Malaysia, the Gulf States and Mongolia. Major investment in museums and heritage in mainland China made that country a core interest for the first time in this period: in 2015, **MacLeod** led academic and professional partners in Hong Kong universities to deliver a conference and book on museum design; in 2018, Marstine spent a semester as Research Fellow at Fudan University developing a collaboration on art, museums and children in care; in 2018 and 2019, **Knell** built a new research-led collaboration with Shaanxi Normal University leading to a series of conferences, public lectures, meetings with museum professionals, and fieldwork around contemporary museology and digital literacies. **Parry** and 12 college-funded PGRs joined this project; **Parry** also worked with partners in Taiwan. In 2019-20, **Cai** worked with academics at Xiamen, Nanjing and Peking Universities to research heritage creation in Southeast China. Many of our publications were translated into Mandarin by our Chinese partners as part of this developing relationship. Chinese academics and professionals have been keen to emulate the School's distinctive research-led approach to the subject. For example, CRÍA inspired the invention of a similar centre at Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

Between 2014-2017, **Knell** led museums and academics in Mexico City in a series of research-based, British Council-supported, conferences, Cátedra Extraordinaria de Museología Crítica, on territoriality, political violence and social justice which brought together researchers and professionals from across the Americas. **Whitelegg** was recruited to strengthen our Latin America engagement. Collaborating with Fundação Bienal de São Paulo and the network of multi-use SESC (Social Service of Commerce) in Brazil, she worked on agency and memory in arts institutions. From 2016, **MacLeod** and **Sandell** collaborated with Fundación TyPA in Argentina, repeatedly contributing to the biennial conference series, Reimagining the Museum, presenting a three-day research-led laboratory, and building a network with scholars in Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay.

- **To produce research that speaks to contemporary debates**

**Watson's** *Origins of Nations*, **Tilche's** work on Indian nationalism and migration, and **Knell's** two monographs, responded to rising nationalism and intolerance. Like **Dudley's** British Council and GCRF-supported work on human displacement in Myanmar's border settings, which gained particular resonance with the renewed expulsion of Rohingya since 2017, these studies positioned museums as institutions building peace and cohesion. **Dudley, Cai, Tilche** and **Turner** each contributed to burgeoning debates on indigenous rights and culture. **Bunning's** *Negotiating Race and Rights in the Museum* was one of three School monographs discussing race published as Black Lives Matter protests erupted around the world. **Boldrick's** *Iconoclasm and the Museum* was in press as Colston's statue was toppled in Bristol; she became actively engaged in the debates that followed. **Cai** (2020), **Marstine** (2017), **Knell** (2020) and **Wakefield** (2020) considered museums, authoritarianism and censorship. **Angel, Dodd, Morse** and **Sandell** have engaged in ethical debates on the disabled, medicalised, criminalised, pathologized body as well as on health and well-being. **Tilche** led the GCRF-funded project 'Mitigating the impact of Covid 19 among India's indigenous and nomadic communities'. **Gibson's** UK-focused £1.5m AHRC project 'Understanding Everyday Participation' (UEP) considered social stratification, participation and the politics of cultural funding. Our PGRs researched refugees and asylum, violence against women in conflict zones, looting, the Rwandan genocide, state-capitalist tensions, art counterculture in China, etc.

- **To design research around impact**

RCMG has led the development of the socially active museum (ICS1&2). It was invited by the National Trust in 2016 to lead a national public programme, *Prejudice and Pride*, which researched unknown or suppressed histories of same-sex love and desire, and gender diversity. RCMG worked across the entire Trust promoting risk taking and innovation in the Trust's organisational thinking, practices and culture. Activity at twelve National Trust properties in England and Wales reached 353,553 visitors and generated over 500 press and media mentions. A series of short films disseminated through the organisation's intranet raised awareness and built a commitment to LGBTQ equality across its 65,000 staff and volunteers. In 2019, RCMG began a new collaboration with the Trust called *Everyone Welcome* which led to a University-wide strategic partnership (IES, 2.5).

**Morse**, who works collaboratively on museums and health, was recruited to complement RCMG's work on wellbeing and ageing in such projects as 'Mind, Body Spirit' and 'Unexpected Encounters'. RCMG's research on narratives of disability influenced major museum redevelopments: Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons; Thackray Museum of Medicine, Leeds; the acclaimed *Medicine* at the Science Museum; *Being Human* at the Wellcome Collection; and policy and practice across the field. Its disability research was known to 84% of practitioners and has provided a model for socially-engaged research centres developed at the Louvre and National Museums Scotland.

Like RCMG, the MusTech group has sustained a number of connected, collaborative, impact-led, funded projects. For example, **Parry's** AHRC-funded 'One by One' (£0.47m) and '2 by 2' (£70K) have enabled him to initiate and lead international scoping and analysis of the museum workforce's digital literacies and how they translate to digital leadership within the sector. This work directly informed the design and development of the UK government's new *Digital Culture Compass* (2020). This national and global impact of this work is captured in an Impact Case Study returned to Leicester's UoA34a submission (UoA34a, ICS2). **Vavoula** led research on the

development of new conceptual frameworks for the analysis, design and evaluation of digital cultural heritage, enabled by €0.7m funding in three EU Marie Curie Actions and Fellowships at Leicester, £125,000 funding from NESTA, ACE and HLF Digital R&D Fund for the arts, and as Co-I on the School of Business's AHRC Connected Communities funded 'Affective Digital Histories' (£413,405).

- **To open up new research opportunities through intellectual leadership**

**Sandell's** socially active museum and **Parry's** digital literacies are two conceptual developments led by us. In *The Museum's Borders*, **Knell** argued for the museum to be understood as a site of border negotiation critical to the operation of knowledge-based democracies. This built on his earlier articulation of a new *Zeitgeist*, 'the global contemporary', which offered a lens through which to imagine the newly purposeful *Contemporary Museum* (2019). This concept gained ground in a series of conferences and papers in English and Mandarin and is one of a number of studies that introduce a conceptual reorientation. Work in CRÍA, for example, has probed the boundaries of art and institutionalisation: **Shirley** (2015) gave a new exploration of the visual culture of rural modernity; **Whitelegg** (2018, 2020) examined the biennial and other non-collecting institutions; **Boldrick** (2019) showed how deeply ephemeral art disrupted museological assumptions; Bowry (Leverhulme ECF 2016-19) established a foundational relationship between the Early Modern garden and gallery; and with *National Galleries*, **Knell** gave the discipline its first monographic global study of a museum genre and opened up previously unseen fields of enquiry. Exhibitions, such as **Whitelegg's** curation of *Signals: If You Like I Shall Grow* (London, New York; 2017), which led Tate Modern to prioritise overlooked artists, works and histories for conservation and exhibition, transitioned discourse into practice.

Similarly, Heritage Lives produced five field-shaping monographs: **Dudley** (2020) provided new critical approaches to displacement, difference and things; **Cai** (2020) and **Wakefield** (2020) examined the politics of cultural development; and **Martinez** (2018) and **Watson** (2020) considered the complex emotional interactions between museums, materials and publics.

- **To foster an open and ethical research environment**

Openness and generosity are central to our mission. Since 1999, all RCMG reports have been OA, a model that has developed school wide. Preprints of journal papers, books/chapters, and PhD theses are deposited in the OA Leicester Research Archive. Our journals, *Museum & Society* and *Museological Review*, have been OA since 2003 and 2004 respectively, and in this period were transferred to the University's open journals site, [journals.le.ac.uk](http://journals.le.ac.uk), giving them long-term sustainability. OA thinking led us to develop multimedia project microsites such as [www.humankind.le.ac.uk](http://www.humankind.le.ac.uk) and [www.unrulybodies.le.ac.uk](http://www.unrulybodies.le.ac.uk), and underpins our collaborations, in which museum and heritage professionals and volunteers become fellow researchers. We argue that this is an ethical necessity for research targeted at social, intellectual and professional transformation beyond academia. We also realise the practical benefits of the formal requirement for staff and students to submit research programmes for approval to the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee, which ensures adherence to professional standards and legal requirements, as informed by the Universities UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity (IES, 2.7).

### C. Strategy for Research and Impact 2021–2028

Our leadership of the field has been established through bold, grounded, conceptually strong, ethically driven, high-impact research. We aim to continue to lead and in doing so propagate

open, ethical and mutually supportive modes of working both within the School and externally. Our research groups structure our engagement and give a granular level of vision to the School's overarching aim. We are committed to growing their effectiveness.

- **RCMG** will develop new collaborative, externally funded research projects to advance socially purposeful thinking and practice by building on established strengths such as its involvement as founding partner of the new Queer Heritage and Collections Subject Specialist Network which focuses on LGBTQ heritage. The Centre will nurture new ECR-led strands of activity around social care, race and children's rights.
- **CRÍA** will facilitate collaborative, externally funded, interdisciplinary research that bridges social art history with studies of institutions, organisations and infrastructure, nationally and internationally, focusing particularly on museum approaches to contested objects; contemporary art and institutional memory; and intersections of the contemporary art world with rural lives and communities.
- **MusTech** will grow externally funded and collaborative research as it develops its relationship with the University's Research Institute for Cultural and Media Economies (CAMEo); **Parry** becomes CAMEo Director from 2021. Our aim is to establish Leicester as the global centre for research around museum and heritage organisational maturity (leadership, vision, process) and staff digital literacy (skills, agency, creativity).
- **Heritage Lives** will grow research at the interfaces between museums, heritage and everyday life, examining how these are defined by the contemporary and the historical. It will examine contested contexts of forced displacement and rapid social change; poverty, indigeneity and inequality; and public space and disparities in social and cultural capital. Its geographical focus is the UK, Myanmar, Gulf States, India and China.

The School is planning for further investment as part of the University's strategy to build on its research strengths. This will enable the development and extension of our research engagement. We plan to boost our vitality by using research overheads to seed-fund impactful and ambitious research which opens new research trajectories. We aim to enrich our research culture through international ECR and senior researcher residencies in the School, using these to strengthen research collaborations in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

We will safeguard our sustainability by continuing to diversify our staff base and supporting equality of career progression through positive action in recruitment, bespoke mentoring and coaching; seeking philanthropic support for PGR scholarships and postdoctoral posts targeted at minority ethnic and other underrepresented groups; using the opening up of UKRI funding to international applicants to attract excellent researchers from the global south's least developed countries and through the University's Nairobi Alliance (IES, 2.1). We are also planning investment in our infrastructure around collections and technological research facilities using both external (e.g., AHRC CapCo) and internal funding (IES, 4.2).

## 2. People

### A. Staffing: strategy and development

We have successfully delivered on our goal of growing the scale, breadth and vigour of our research and impact while capitalising on the unique collaborative opportunities afforded by being a small unit. This has been achieved through proactive, strategic retention, recruitment

and development of exceptional Category A staff, enabled by a collegial, nurturing and supportive culture. Rooted in a School-wide commitment to excellence, interdisciplinarity, equality, creativity and mutuality, this values-led environment has been understood by successive leaderships as critical to our identity and success. It is underpinned by the principles foregrounded in the University's EDI strategy (IES, 3.1) and by facilitating all colleagues to feel heard and supported. Our common senses of purpose, belonging and trust in each other, are cultivated as integral to everyday expectations, working practice and celebrations of success. Our Category A staff, all on open-ended contracts, come from a mix of backgrounds, e.g., 43% of those submitted have previously worked as museum or art gallery professionals; 23% come from outside the UK; and 89% have been employed, held fellowships and/or conducted extensive research, internationally. Our strong, diverse PGR community and RAs (below) are a vital part of this mix.

### **Staff recruitment**

We sustain intellectual dynamism by seeking the best ECRs for a first permanent post, while centralising staff development (below) at all levels. Our 11 Category A appointments this period attracted globally outstanding, diverse candidates. Our most recent recruitment (2019) attracted 179 applicants from 10 disciplines and 10 countries. We use targeted and open calls, as strategically appropriate: searches for specialists to drive our work on art museums and museum learning, led to appointments of **Boldrick, Whitelegg** (2015-16) and **Morse** (2017-18); wide calls, utilising multiple disciplinary tags in advertising, enabled us to enhance our scope while building existing strengths. Our process includes DORA-compliant output reviews conducted by an all-career-stage School group broader than the selection panel and representing multiple research approaches. All panel members maintain regular training in recruitment and selection, equality and diversity and unconscious bias. We always include a similarly trained colleague from a different School in panels, to challenge us against tending towards those who are 'like us'.

### **Staff development**

Continuing academic and career development, at all levels, is critical to sustaining our innovation and culture, as well as to retention and succession planning. It has enabled us to build upon the achievement of 2008, when we became the highest scoring unit in any discipline in the RAE: these staff now occupy senior positions in the School and University and have shaped subsequent strategic growth.

All staff benefit from annual personal development discussions (PDDs), with more frequent, informal reviews for ECRs. Guided by the Leicester Academic Career Map (IES, 3.2), which recognises contributions to citizenship and leadership as well as research and teaching, all PDDs set objectives and include discussion of career trajectory and promotion planning. PDDs also intersect with biannual research meetings for all colleagues, led by the Head of School, Research Director and REF Lead. These provide dedicated space to discuss longer-term research agendas, support and development needs, immediate research and publication priorities, grant applications, and recruitment of funded doctoral students.

New Category A staff undergo a three-year probation. Development is directly overseen by the Head of School supported by a formal academic mentor within the School. Mentors listen, advise and encourage across all areas of activity. They support ECRs to grow in confidence in their individual contributions, facilitate training and development in research and leadership skills, and input into probationary reports. We also support informal mentorship for staff at all

career stages. These relationships – e.g., **Sandell** and **Macleod** – often progress into mutually supportive, long-term collaborations. We encourage colleagues to initiate mentoring relationships in particular areas of activity, beyond as well as across the School, e.g., Marstine was mentored in ESRC grant application development by Schürer (UoA28). Mid-career staff are encouraged to take on mentoring roles as part of their, as well as mentees', development. Mentoring commitments are recognised in the workload allocation model.

In addition to Category A ECRs, five funded postdoctoral fellows were appointed (Marie Curie, Leverhulme, AHRC). Our funded research has also supported 49 postdoctoral research assistants who, like PGRs, are mentored towards successful fellowship applications (e.g., Bowry, Brouwer) and supported through University, College and School funds (below). We proactively build development and mentoring opportunities into our projects, e.g., **Parry's** One by One project included a career development residential to help five RAs prepare for their next posts.

Our ECRs run an active support group that includes two current teaching-focused fellows. The ECR group reports directly to School meetings and our Equality and Diversity (EDI) Working Group. ECRs are supported to undertake leadership roles in and beyond the School: e.g., Leverhulme ECR Bowry was the institutional ECR rep on the University's Research and Enterprise Committee; ECR **Bunning** directs our teaching and sits on the Management Team.

Training is embedded institutionally and includes mandated modules (equality and diversity, data security, GDPR). Staff also attend University sessions on grant applications; research ethics, integrity and software; PGR supervision and examination; etc. In School Research Committees and at Research Away Days, we deliver bespoke development sessions on generating research impact, producing output excellence and building long-term external partnerships, as well as connecting with each other's ideas. Our pedagogical support group also contributes to our research culture by introducing new and creative research methodologies into our research.

Colleagues across all career stages undertake leadership training in line with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the University's Concordat Action Plan 2017–2019. Since 2014, 10 staff across all grades have completed University and external leadership programmes; five subsequently took up senior leadership roles in and beyond the School (below) and four were promoted to Professor (**Dudley, Gibson, Macleod, Parry**).

### **Supporting research and research impact**

We protect research time in a number of ways: workload model capture of externally funded PI/Co-I time and (IES, 3.2) a universal allocation of 40% research time; two ring-fenced 'research-only weeks' each term; a vacation duty-cover system to free up research time; additional time allocation for ECRs (e.g., 30% in Y1). Our close, direct support of all colleagues by the Head of School, Research Director and REF Lead, allow us to flex resource reciprocally and transparently across the School. We support each other across teaching and leadership as appropriate to make time for research (such as to enable completion of a monograph). All colleagues are able, at equal intervals approximately every 3.5 years, to apply for one semester of research leave; periods of ill health or parental leave have no adverse impact on eligibility. We have been awarded 16 person-semesters of research leave this period, underpinning output production and funding applications.

All colleagues, regardless of contractual status, are entitled to an annual School research

allowance (£650) to support research-related activity. We also strategically leverage College and University pump-priming funds (below), and share the benefits of grant capture by inviting open applications from School colleagues for funding from research overheads to support data collection, networking, impact, etc. We purposefully direct research support into areas of activity, regardless of grade, to propagate and develop a diverse research culture.

Our REF output review panels, and informal peer reviewing of output drafts, grant applications and impact plans, include ECRs as well as other colleagues. This diversification across academic experience sharpens our critical insight and enables less experienced staff to increase their skills. Informal support within research groups aims to enable organic, rather than top-down, collaborations. Our Research Director and Director of Impact play pivotal roles in spreading enthusiasm and expertise.

### **Postgraduate Researchers**

Our PGR programme empowers our students to become our peers, partners and successors. PhD graduates now working as academics, and our continued research collaborations with former PGRs, underpin our long-established relationships with Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong, and in this period have helped extend networks into Nigeria, Kenya, UAE, Mexico, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and China.

We offer robust training and expert supervision, enabling PGRs to develop a global view of their field and international network of peers and future collaborators. Our PGR Director (0.2FTE, three-year role) works closely with the Research Director and PGR representatives (who sit on our Research and Enterprise Committee). The Doctoral College (IES, 3.2/3.3) has regulatory oversight and provides generic career development and research skills training that complements our bespoke offer. Training encompasses a wide range of research methods, ethics, grant writing, teaching qualifications, wellbeing etc. Our PGRs may teach (including in sessions based on their research) and participate in assessment on our campus-based and part-time masters programmes.



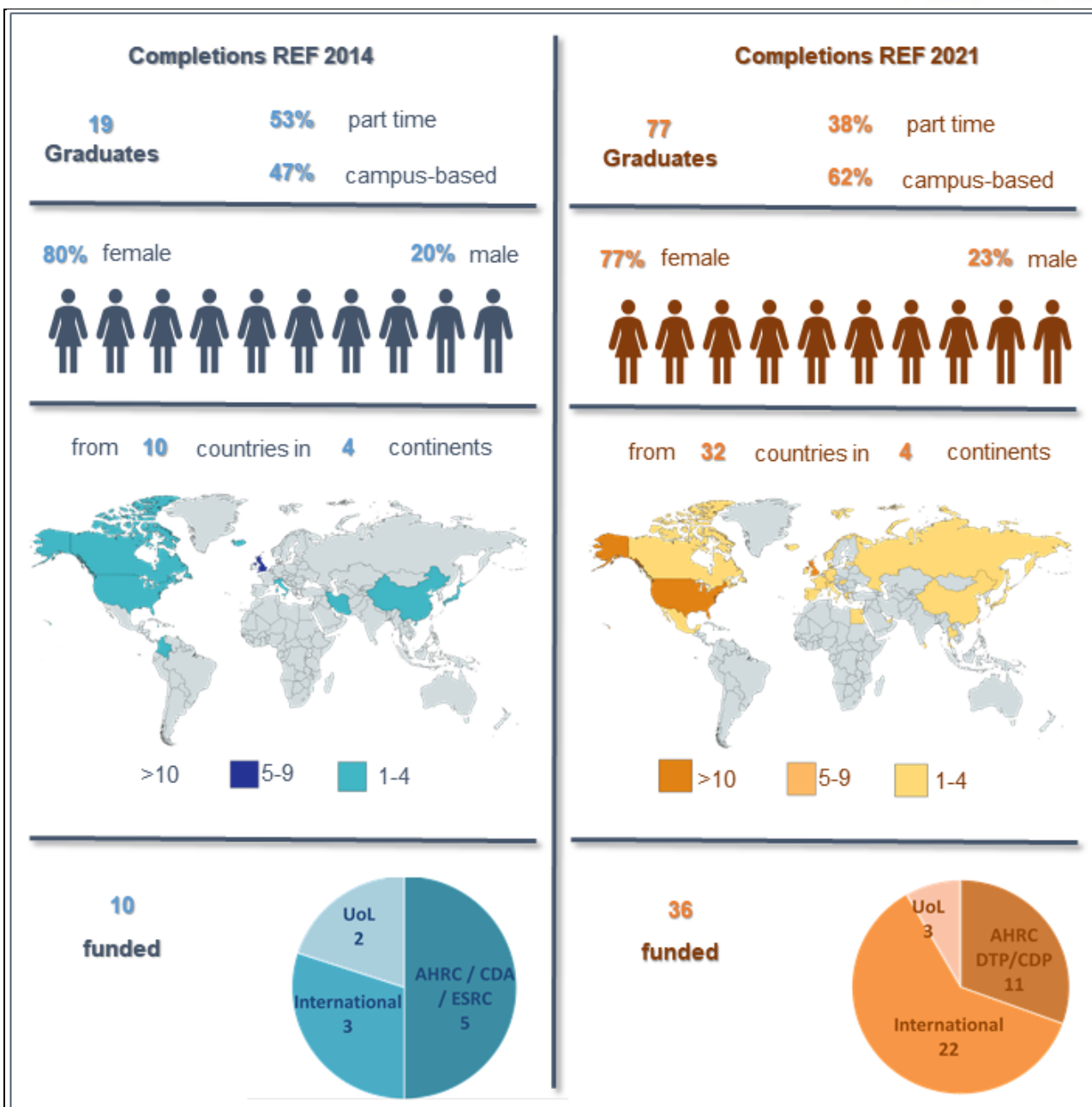


Figure 1: PGR completions, REF2014 and REF2021.

Figure 1 shows the exceptional growth in our PGR programme. The fourfold increase in completions includes 54 (70%) HESA-recognised graduates: over twice the UoA’s Russell Group average (25.6) in REF2014. 45% of our graduates were funded by UKRI, University of Leicester or international studentships, including employer/government sponsorship.

We offer campus-based (full-time) and part-time PGR modes. 40% of international and 32% of home PhD graduates this period were museum, heritage and arts professionals studying part-time. In 2014, we introduced a practice-centred PhD route, encouraging professionals to undertake practice-enriching research projects. For example, Wilkins, director and co-founder of DigVentures, researches the innovative blended model of archaeology participation and engagement pioneered by the DigVentures platform.

All PGRs have at least two supervisors, with arrangements tailored to the individual's needs, and

with 'open-door' access to other School expertise and research conversations undertaken annually in reviews conducted by academics outside the supervisory team. Over 20% of completed projects were co-supervised with other Schools, universities and/or a non-HEI supervisor. Supervisors support each other within supervisory teams and through our regular supervisors' forum.

We are a member of the AHRC Midlands 4 Cities (M4C) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP), and the ESRC Midlands Graduate School (MGS) DTP in which we lead the Museum Studies pathway. Additionally, we have won Collaborative Doctoral Partnership awards with Glasgow Life, Oxford University Museums and the British Museum. This period, we hosted 19 PGRs (11 completed) through these funding routes. The DTPs provide training tailored to the needs of the cohorts; opportunities for networking; funding for research, conference travel or student-led events; and professional development opportunities including industry placements. Examples include: M4C funded Marabelli's one-year stay at the Ashmolean Museum and her placement at the Vatican Museum (2019-20); Rodrigues's organisation of an international roundtable on art museums and contemporary collecting practices; and Zardini-Lacadelli's placement at the National Science and Media Museum.

Our PGRs organise an annual PhD Research Week, structured as a summer school with PGR presentations, staff lectures, training sessions, workshops and field trips. PGRs also co-organise, with staff, fortnightly research seminars with external and internal speakers. Research seminars and Research Weeks are livestreamed as standard, enabling part-time PGRs to participate. PGRs may apply to the College's PGR Fund for contributions to costs of travel or development of conferences and other events. Our PGRs have developed their own, School-hosted international conferences (*Museums Alive!* 2014; *Museums (em)Power* 2018) and exhibitions (e.g., Wright's Asia-Africa research led her to curate the Korean artists Bang&Lee at Nafasi Art Space in Tanzania). They also edit the OA journal *Museological Review* and are encouraged to develop an online media presence, e.g., PGR Stienne became internationally established through her thesis-related *Mummy Stories* website.

### **Equality and diversity**

We foster an environment in which people with diverse backgrounds and needs can thrive, and we value the richness this brings to our research. Additional to mandated institutional training, the School's EDI Working Group provides biannual training for all staff and students. The group's chair sits on our Management Team, foregrounding equality and diversity matters across all areas of activity. Our Disability Action Awareness Group actively addresses barriers faced by students and staff with disabilities of all kinds. Enhancing staff diversity in ethnicity is a high priority in the next period, through positive action in recruitment and our strategy of identifying and mentoring leading ECRs. We will address pipeline issues via PGR studentships and postdoctoral fellowships for Black, Asian and other minority ethnic researchers.

We piloted the Athena SWAN Good Practice in the Employment of Women in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences programme, acquiring the Gender Equality Mark Bronze Award in 2014 and an Athena Swan Bronze Award in 2019. Our work to address the 'leaky pipeline' in women's career progression has had a major impact. Our Category A staff are 77% female (similar to our PGRs); 90% of the seven staff promoted to Professor (Dodd, **Dudley, Gibson, Macleod, Parry**) or Associate Professor (Marstine, **Vavoula**) this period are female. 50% of heads in our 54-year history, and both of those covering this REF period, have been female. Female T&R staff are actively supported through peer mentoring to overcome gender-based

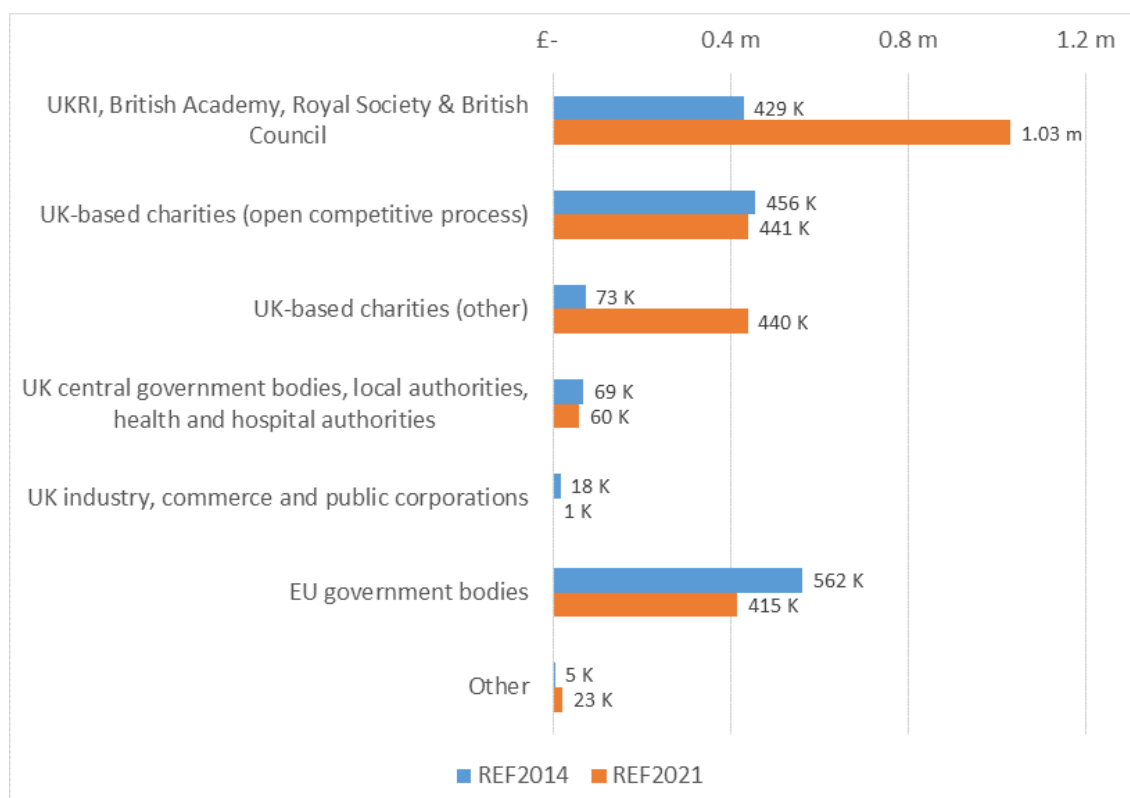
barriers in UK research funding (e.g., fewer women apply for large research grants) and publications. In this period, 60% of our larger research awards (>£130K) had female PIs; 10 of our 14 monographs were produced by women (including five female ECRs).

The number of staff with a declared disability (13.3%) is above the national average (5% in 2017-18) and the highest in our College. In addition to institutional policy – the University is at Level 2 in the Disability Confidence Scheme (IES, 3.1) – the Head of School, mentors, the workload allocation model and the Occupational Health Service are central to managing individuals sensitively and supportively, in order to maximise potential while assuring wellbeing and balancing workloads. 46% of Category A staff have had flexible working arrangements or other reasonable adjustments for at least part of this period, 38% of these because of caring responsibilities. Similar support is given to PGRs. We also ensure part-time and contract staff are fully integrated into the activities of the School, including Research Away Days and staff support and development systems. Contract staff are supported via end-of-contract conversations with access to career support and redeployment opportunities, and post-contract 1-1 support from line managers and mentors in the School.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

**Income**

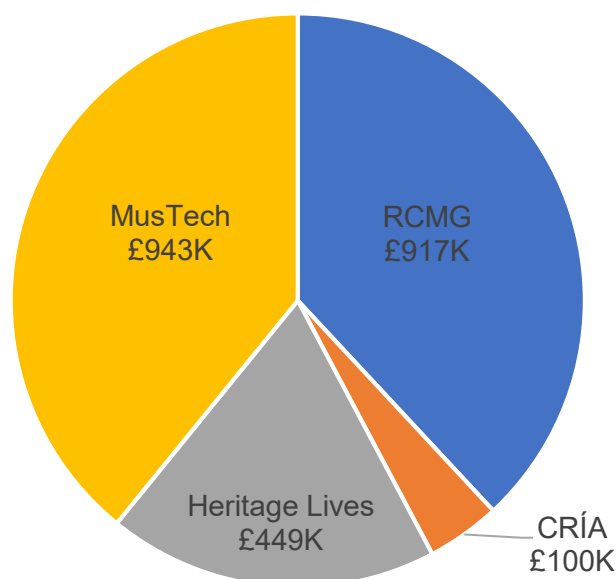
Our cumulative research income for this period was £2.4m (Figure 2). This represents growth of 49% compared to REF2014. Per FTE we have remained in the top 10% for research income in the Media and Communication category (HESA).



**Figure 2: Breakdown and growth of research income in this period.**

The drivers for income generation were the consolidation of research expertise and leadership around the strategic themes of our research groups, as well as the development of sustainable

collaborations that enabled grounded, co-produced, sector-facing, impact-oriented research. Each research group has its own distinctive funding ecology. For example, RCMG's institution-facing social impact research has benefited from charities; MusTech, which in this period has grown to match RCMG's income, has made extensive use of EU funding (Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Income per research grouping**

In Heritage Lives, **Gibson's** six-year (2012-2018) Understanding Everyday Participation project was supported by a £1.5m AHRC award (£563,287 FEC to the School), the largest in the Connected Communities programme. It elicited national and international debates around the exclusive nature of state cultural support and the social effects of participation. A series of British Council and British Academy awards totalling £112,000 enabled **Dudley's** new research engagements in ODA-recipient countries including India (2014-17), Myanmar (2018-) and (with **Morse**) Morocco (2018-2020), working with museums in Ladakh, Jaipur, Yangon and Rabat. This research underpinned her development of 'displacement anthropology' as a novel lens through which to examine the mutability and potential of the material world in exile, migration and displacement. These interrogations of culture in everyday life fuelled the development of the Heritage Lives group.

In RCMG, **MacLeod's** sustained programme of research into visitor experience gained momentum through increasingly ambitious projects: Imperial War Museum North funding (£12,000) led to a National Trust award at Calke Abbey (£150,000) and to her joining with the University of Cambridge on an AHRC award (£450,000) for the CineMuseSpace project on Port Sunlight. These projects inspired her *Design for Creative Lives* monograph (2020) which argues that museum spaces can be developed as spatial-social forms that enable inclusive, democratic, creative empowerment and wellbeing. Similarly, MusTech's projects, discussed earlier, demonstrate our ability to build and sustain funded research trajectories.

Funding enables us to establish and nurture deep, strategic, collaborative partnerships to underpin the co-production of research and impact. For example, for its high impact work on LGBTQ heritage and history (ICS2), RCMG mobilised diverse funding including from Glasgow Museums, the National Trust, Museene i Sor-Trondelag, and the AHRC/Clore Leadership

Foundation. These sources concretised research-in-practice partnerships with leading institutions and directly impacted practice and policy. Similarly, **Parry's** One by One and 2 by 2 projects mobilised 21 academic and professional partners, NGOs and charities in the USA and UK. These have amplified relationships with change-makers in the UK and globally, transforming digital practice and potential.

### Infrastructure

The School's Research and Enterprise Committee (REC) includes all academic staff and postdoctoral researchers as permanent members. It acts as a forum for shared discussions and decisions on strategy, funding opportunities, collaborative working and PGR development. It is chaired by a Director of Research (0.3FTE role), who as a member of CSSAH REC ensures the School is integrated into the University's and College's research infrastructure, strategy and policies, and coordinates School activity on funding strategy and research development. She works alongside the Research Impact Lead (0.2FTE), who oversees impact strategies, pathways and capture; Research Engagement Lead (0.1FTE), who leads dissemination and outreach; PGR Director (0.2FTE); REF Lead (0.2FTE); and Ethics Officer (0.1FTE), who oversees research ethics training and planning for staff and PGRs and sits on one of the University's Ethics Committees.

The School's Research Development Fund (RDF) uses research overhead allocations to offer staff at all career stages the opportunity to apply for up to £5,000 in a single year, for pump-priming grant applications, impact, dissemination and knowledge exchange. In this period, the School has used c.60% of its overheads allocations to seed fund new research directions and networks for staff, such as **Knell's** investigation of Mongolian modernism (£2,222). 60% of this spending was directed to PGR/ECR research, e.g., ECR **Morse** received funding for her project on museum professionals and organisational change (£4,800).

The School RDF is complemented by schemes at College and University level for staff and PGRs. For example, **Tilche** was awarded £8,159 from the University's GCRF-QR fund for her project on COVID in India's indigenous communities; Turner received £9,900 (also GCRF-QR) for her Zulu history project; and Marie Curie postdoctoral research fellow Mason was granted £1,920 for the development of follow-on grant applications. College and Enterprise and Business Development funding pump-primed **Gibson's** symposium and book on the histories of cultural participation (2017) (£5,912). College funding also enabled field research for **Boldrick's** (2020), **Dudley's** (2020) and **Knell's** (2020) monographs. In total, we received more than £0.8m from College and University pump-priming funding, stipends, match funding and small grants, including funds from University's ESRC Impact Accelerator Account (IES, 2.3). College and University funding for staff totalled £316K and for PGRs £492K.

The University has invested in R-only staff in RCMG since the Centre's establishment and the School funds its pump-priming and exploratory activity (£2,000/year). This has provided the Centre with the capacity to drive its own research impact-led agenda.

In this period, the University has significantly strengthened its structures for supporting research – planning, partnership brokering, management, post-project legacy and impact – through the Research and Enterprise Division, the Innovation Hub, five Research Institutes, and Key Funder Working Groups (IES, 2.2/4.1). **Parry's** research on digital literacies was supported by CAMEo's administrative infrastructure. School academics have participated in cross-institutional interdisciplinary projects supported by Leicester Institute for Advanced Studies (LIAS)-funded

'Tiger Teams'. **Vavoula** was a member of the award-winning 'Vauxhall Gardens and VR' tiger team in 2019 and is now leading a follow-on AHRC bid to explore VR design as a multi-disciplinary method for archive studies. **Martinez's** international workshop 'Academic Boundaries at Work' was funded and hosted by LIAS.

The School contributes significantly, and disproportionately to its size, to these University infrastructures: **Gibson** chairs the AHRC Funder Group, led the College research strategy as CSSAH Research Dean (2016-19) and leads UoL's REF submission as DPVC Research (2019-21); **Parry** led the University's Digital Campus initiative and Digital Literacy Framework, as DPVC Digital (2017-19); **Sandell** was Chair of the University's REF Code of Practice Working Group responsible for producing Leicester's REF2021 CoP. We have provided one of the four Senate-elected representatives on the University Council – the University's governing body – for eight consecutive years, through **MacLeod** (2014-17) and **Dudley** (2018-21).

### Facilities

The School occupies a purpose-designed building, with two adjacent annexes added in this period, including an onsite café. These provide single-occupancy academic offices and spaces for conferences, seminars and workshops, excellent technological infrastructure for remote and face-to-face research and supervision, and reserved spaces for project meetings, collections and exhibitions work, display and experimentation. We have a dedicated PGR room with regularly upgraded computers.

We have a diverse handling collection of objects that originated in the Wellcome Collection. In this period, this collection has been extensively documented, subject to PGR and staff research supported by College funding, and formed the pivot of a panel at our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference (2016) on the materiality of museum documentation practices.

The University's David Wilson Library hosts the country's leading collection of museum studies books and journals, including special and archival collections. At our request, it has expanded its non-English literature in this field in order to reflect our international community of researchers. Its Special Collections have hosted PGR and staff research in this period. For example, **Vavoula's** AHRC Connected Communities Affective Digital Histories involved working with Special Collections to crowdsource memories of Leicester's cultural quarter. PGR De Filippo conducted experimental research into visitors' sensory and emotional engagements with rare manuscripts from the Special Collections; this involved the Library's staff expertise and dedicated spaces, and led to a partnership with the universities of York, West of England and Trinity College, Dublin.

Significantly increased IT integration across the institution has been key to strengthening research collaboration, support, dissemination and training since 2014. Key developments for the School have been the MyPGR system, which streamlines PGR administration and training, and supports the growth of our programme; the Open Journal platform on which we host our blind peer-reviewed OA journal *Museum & Society*; and the figshare-powered Leicester Research Archive on which we deposit OA research reports and papers.

Our research infrastructure and facilities extend beyond the University through in-kind support from our collaborative partners. For example, the National Trust, Historic Royal Palaces, English Heritage and Historic England gave access to curatorial and equality expertise and a rich body of experimental professional practice, which enabled the establishment of the UK-wide *Queer*

*Heritage and Collections Network* (of which RCMG was a founding partner) for which seed funding from the Art Fund was secured in 2020. India’s National Museum Institute, the University of Rajasthan and the government of the Union Territory of Ladakh all provided space and technical support for several symposia as part of **Dudley’s** ‘Things Encountered, Things Unbound’ project. Partners’ in-kind support is invaluable at PGR level too, enabling CDAs and externally-partnered PhD students to develop and test interventions in museum spaces, access operational archives, etc.

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

**Research collaborations**

Our international partnerships and research leadership underline our vitality and societal impact. In this period, we collaborated with 275 museum, heritage and art institutions, HEIs, creatives, community groups and charities, in 34 countries on six continents (Figure 4).

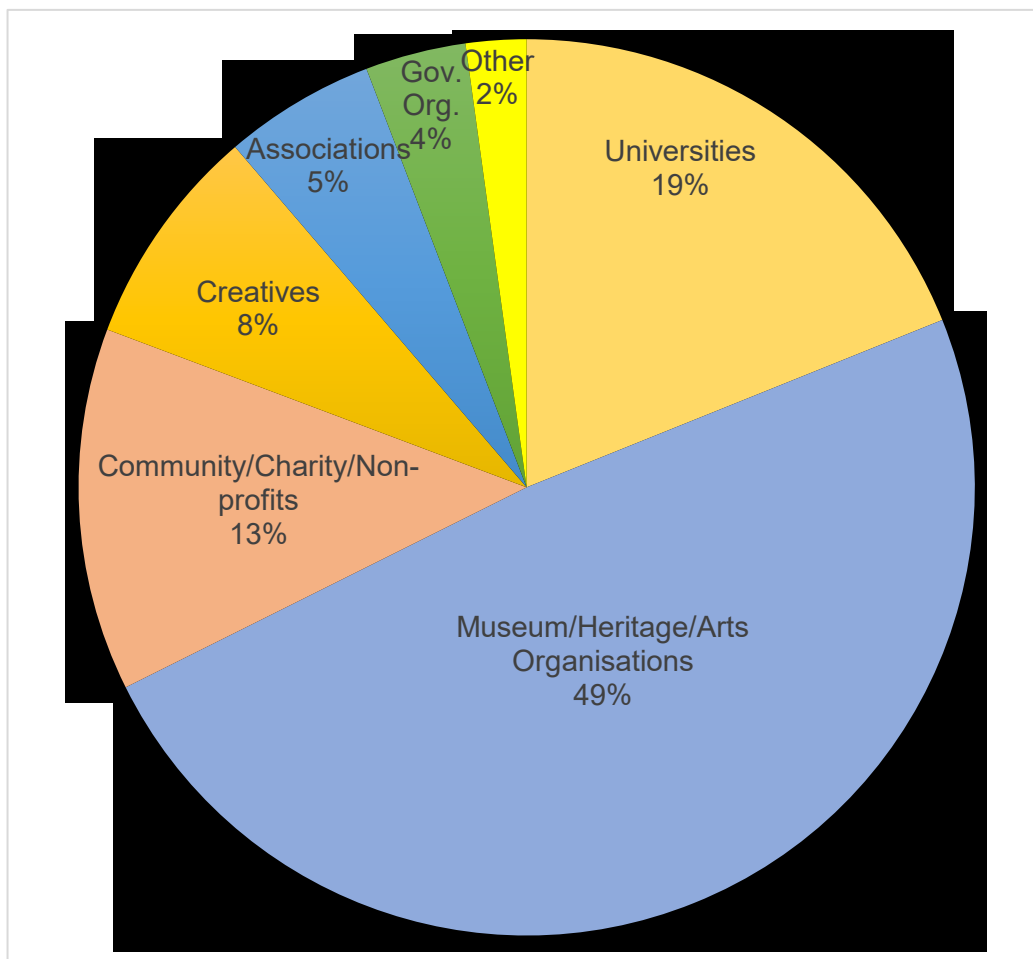


Figure 4. Research partnerships in this period.

**Collaboration is at the heart of everything we do**

Every academic in the School has been engaged in collaborative research with sector associations and institutions, as seen in RCMG’s work, and with academic organisations. We use collaboration to build interdisciplinary teams, to incorporate different social/cultural/national viewpoints and experiences, and to champion research within the museum profession—to create and support practitioner researchers. These collaborations have been reported throughout this document.

### Leading contributions to the research base

Our unique departmental status keeps us focused on the conception and shaping of museum studies as an interdisciplinary field. In this discipline, the monograph continues to lead debate. The production of 14 monographs in this period reveals a research community willing to propose major new concepts and ideas, that is engaged in contemporary debate, but which also remains grounded in public-facing professional communities and institutions (see Section 1). Through our own PGR community, we sustain and extend this debate still further – museums and representation (Terry, 2020), ethics (Diaz, 2017), human rights (**Bunning**, 2019), social justice (Bergevin, 2019), accessibility (Plumb, 2018) – and as examiners we influence ECR communities internationally. In this REF period we examined 45 PhDs in 29 HEIs in seven countries.

### We lead debate around the world

In 2016, our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference, *The Museum in the Global Contemporary*, brought 261 participants from 24 countries to Leicester. However, in this period our conferences have more often been developed collaboratively abroad. For example, in 2015, we organised *The Agile Museum* in Tokyo in collaboration with Japan's National Museum and leading professional organisations, museums and universities from across the region. This was one of a series of conferences we organised in East Asia, which subsequently led to our engagements in mainland China which have included collaborative conferences such as *Interaction, Integration and Flow* in Xi'an in 2019. As already discussed, we have collaborated in organising conferences around the world. This capacity has been extended with recent recruitment. For example, **Wakefield** leads the biennial *Museums in Arabia* conference series. Our standing in our discipline means we are also asked to lead debate in conferences organised by other organisations; we gave more than 288 keynotes and invited lectures in 45 countries.

### We edit leading academic journals and book series

**Dudley** was founding editor of *Museum Worlds*; **MacLeod** chairs the Board of *Museum & Society*; **Vavoula** is associate editor of *International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning*; **Gibson** is on the editorial committee of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*; **Martinez** sits on the editorial boards of the *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* and the *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*; **Parry** on the editorial boards of *The Science Museum Group Journal* and the Chinese Association of Museums' *Journal of Museum & Culture*. We edit three book series for Routledge: *Museum Meanings* (**Sandell**); *Leicester Readers in Museum Studies* (**Knell**); *Cultural Heritage, Art and Museums in the Middle East* (**Wakefield**). **Gibson** edits Palgrave's *New Studies in Cultural Participation*. **Martinez** edits Berghahn's *Politics of Repair*.

### Our work is recognised in prizes, awards and honours

**Sandell's** co-edited book *Museum Activism* was awarded the Canadian Museum Association's Outstanding Achievement Award 2020 and RCMG's socially-engaged collaborative research won the Third Sector Equality (Pink News) Award 2018, the *Observer* Ethical Award for Arts and Culture (2014) and underpinned the Museums Association's sector-wide policy 'Museums Change Lives' (2015). **Martinez** won the 2018 Early Career Award of the European Association of Social Anthropology for his *Remains of the Soviet Past in Estonia*. In 2019, PGR Stienne was recipient of University Alumni Association's *Future Leader* award. In 2017, PGR Settimini accompanied the University's Vice Chancellor to present at the G7 conference in Italy on 'University Education for All'. In 2016-17, PGR **Angel** won a Fellowship at Cornell University Society for the Humanities (2016-17). In 2018, Marstine was awarded a Research Fellowship at



Fudan University, and in 2019, **Whitelegg** received a Visiting Scholar award from FAPESP Brazil. **Shirley** was selected to participate in the Wellcome Collection Ideas Hub in 2020. **Knell** was invited to give The William Smith Lecture at the Geological Society of London in 2015.

### **We provide expertise and leadership to external organisations**

We are members of the AHRC Peer Review College (PRC): **Gibson** (2006-14), **Parry** (2009-17) and **Vavoula** (2018-24, and recognised for significant contribution in 2020) and the ESRC GCRF PRC (**Dudley** 2018-). **Gibson** was a member of the AHRC *Care for the Future* Steering Committee (2011-18); **Parry** of the AHRC/UKRI *Towards a National Collection: Opening UK Heritage to the World* (2019-), AHRC Image Gallery (2014) and the *National JISC Horizons Group* (2018-19). We sit on research award panels: AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award programme (**Gibson**, 2019), AHRC UK-US Collaboration for Digital Scholarship in Cultural Institutions Partnership Development Grants (**Vavoula**, 2019), AHRC Creative Industries in China (**Gibson**, 2018), Norwegian Research Council Culture and Media Studies Research Grant Panel (**Gibson**, 2019-20), British Council (**Gibson**, 2014), EU Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (**Vavoula**, 2019-20). We have reviewed for research councils internationally, including Australian Research Council, Dutch Research Council, European Research Council, SSHRC Canada, Research Foundation Flanders, Croatian Agency for Science and HE, Danish Council for Independent Research.

### **Contributions to economy and society**

Our research seeks to deconstruct, challenge and redirect the peculiar socio-political power of museums, heritage and art institutions; as well as expose new potential. It often leads to institutional change and policy initiatives, and by extension contributes to public debate and societal action.

### **Equality, diversity and inclusion permeate our research**

Amongst our outputs, Marstine's *Critical Practice* shows how artists' interventions can redress exclusions, inequalities and relational frictions between museums and their publics. **Sandell's** *Museums, Moralities and Human Rights* demonstrates how museums are implicated in the ongoing struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex human rights.

We strive to lead and support change in the museum, heritage and art sector. Supported by philanthropic donation, RCMG established the annual Activist Museum Awards in 2019. Inaugural awards were made to the International Slavery Museum, Climate Museum UK and the network for working class museum professionals, Museum as Muck. **Parry** is Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Jodi Mattes Trust for accessible digital culture. We contributed case studies to the University's successful submission to become a Stonewall Top 100 employer (IES, 3.1). **Sandell** was appointed to inclusion advisory boards and working groups for the Wellcome Collection (2019-21), National Trust (2020) and National Trust for Scotland (2020-21).

RCMG research on disability and LGBTQ rights (ICS2) has informed public opinion, enriched professional thinking and practice, supported disability and LGBTQ rights movements and organisations, and stimulated and informed new approaches to museum practice and policy. The Centre's research collaboration with the Wellcome Collection's new permanent gallery, *Being Human*, featured in the *New York Times* article 'Is this the world's most accessible museum?' (2019).

MusTech's research on digital literacies directly informed the Smithsonian Institution's work

towards the 'Virtual Smithsonian' initiative and its strategic aim annually to reach a billion people globally. It also formed the basis for the UK-wide Leading the Sector (LTS) executive training programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project has established 'Digital Commons', an online, international, collaborative space (see UoA34a, ICS2).

### **We realise social impacts through public engagement**

**MacLeod's** co-produced installation, *HumanKind*, at Calke Abbey was based on research challenging ideas of loneliness and social isolation. **Shirley** curated *Creating the Countryside* at Compton Verney in 2017 and **Boldrick** curated the Sculpture Court for Aberdeen Art Gallery's acclaimed reopening. **Tilche's** co-directed film *Broken Gods* was selected for the 2020 DISTRIBUTE virtual film festival. RCMG's *Exceptional & Extraordinary* included live performance events in seven leading UK medical museums. In all, we have co-produced 4 permanent and 19 temporary public exhibitions, six research films, six live performances and festivals, 10 radio shows and audio-based media.

### **Our work is informing government policy**

**Morse** contributed to the All-Party Parliamentary Working Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (2015-17); in July 2018, the government announced £4.5m for GPs to prescribe arts for health. RCMG's Generic Learning Outcomes methodology (2004) has been adopted as a model to assess impact in REF2021 Panel Criteria and Working Methods. **Gibson** was one of two special witnesses for the Select Committee for Culture, Media and Sport's Countries of Culture Inquiry (2016). PGR Brouwer's research on children's agency in engaging with difficult issues led to a six-month AHRC-funded postdoctoral placement with the International Slavery Museum in which she directly informed its interpretive strategy – work shared in Parliament.

### **We contribute solutions to contemporary issues**

**Tilche's** GCRF-funded project aims to mitigate Covid19 impacts on India's indigenous and nomadic communities through a series of podcasts spreading information in local languages about health and safety measures as well as rights and accountability. In July 2020, **Vavoula** and Anastopoulou published findings of a survey of museum educators on the role of digital on school visits post-lockdown; it has become the most viewed item on the University's figshare research archive.