

<b>Institution: Birkbeck, University of London</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 14</b>
<p><b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b></p> <p><u>1.1 Research structure</u></p> <p>Following REF2014, Geography was identified by Birkbeck as an area of excellence with significant potential for future growth. We developed a strategic plan to establish Geography as a flagship Department with the expectation of making a single UoA submission in REF2021. In REF2014, as the Department of Geography, Environment and Development Studies, 8.6 FTE were returned to UoA 23 (Sociology) (up from 8 FTE in RAE2008). In 2016/17 we became the Department of Geography with 15.2 FTE staff. In 2017/18, the Department was placed in the Top 30 Geography Departments in the country (QS World University Rankings). We currently have 19.8 FTE staff, 20 on permanent Teaching and Research contracts and 1 Leverhulme Early Career Fellow, all being returned for REF2021 (130% growth since REF2014), as well as a growing number of Post-Graduate Research (PGR) students (section 2.2).</p> <p>Our research centres on four overlapping clusters which span the discipline: Cities, Housing and Home; Environment, Landscape and Climate Change; Geo-analytics &amp; Modelling; and International Development and Social Justice.</p> <p>Cities, Housing and Home has a national and international focus, spanning multiple methodological and theoretical approaches from cultural to social and economic geography and GIS modelling/planning. Key research themes in this cluster relate to the lived experience of space, and the impact of mobility on those experiences. There are specific projects relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• migration, diaspora, exile, and housing (Cox, Gideon, Harris, PI ECF-2019-618 Leverhulme £93k, British Academy £0.6k, Sheringham, Col AH/V013904/1 UKRI COVID-19 Rapid Response £7.6k, PI COVID-19-related Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF, £2.5k; Watt)</li> <li>• domestic labour (Cox, PI ES/J007528/1 ESRC £221k)</li> <li>• the future of cities globally (Butcher Col ESRC ES/R006857/1 £31k; Maclean, PI RF-2015-331 Leverhulme £48k; Nogueira, Col UWB190208 British Academy £106k)</li> <li>• gentrifying neighbourhoods (Ackah, Fulbright Scholarship; Watt)</li> <li>• gender in the city (Butcher, Col RP2012-V-041 AHRC-HERA [Humanities in the European Research Area] £88k)</li> <li>• intergenerational relations in the city (Vera-Sanso, Birkbeck-Wellcome, ISSF £10k)</li> <li>• preparing homes and lives for future threats (Barker, Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF £40k)</li> <li>• GIS modelling/planning (Barros, Col ES/N011449/1 ESRC £22k)</li> </ul> <p>This is socially engaged, policy relevant research, with staff routinely collaborating with a range of stakeholders including national and local governments, NGOs, and creative industries (section 4.3). Staff from this cluster are involved with Birkbeck's Institutes of Social Research (BISR) and Humanities (BIH) and the interdisciplinary Birkbeck Gender and Sexuality (BiGS) group. Cox and Butcher have been Directors of BISR and Maclean was Director of BiGS from 2014-2019.</p> <p>The Environment, Landscape and Climate Change cluster explores both the past and potential futures, including drawing on historic patterns and cultural contexts to inform environmental management:</p>

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

- Foley explores island climates and resilience to future climate change (PI NE/T004517/1 NERC, £69k)
- Pooley's Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF (£28k) investigated traumatic human-wildlife encounters in India and South Africa
- Brooks' Leverhulme Research Fellowship (PI, RF-2015-045, £43k) reconstructed contemporary landscape responses to storminess and the implications for future morphology. Similarly, Engels documents historic insect biodiversity in order to understand present climate dynamics
- work by Brooks in collaboration with the Department of Computer Science (Birkbeck Research Innovation Fund) has developed methods for field data collection in the context of the 'internet of things'
- longer time-scale changes are investigated by Engels and Briant, from river, lake and onshore marine sequences including improvements to radiocarbon protocols at the limits of the technique (Briant PI, NRCF 1848.1014, £9.6k in-kind) and stable isotope measurements of chironomid head capsules (Engels PI, NEIF 2236.0320 £19k in-kind)

Staff have links with Birkbeck's Department of Earth and Planetary Science, including research collaboration, co-supervision of PhD students and shared laboratories (section 3.3).

The Geo-Analytics and Modelling cluster focuses on spatial quantification applied to local and global environmental, social and policy problems including:

- transport networks (Barros, Col ESRC ES/T000287/1 £111k)
- monitoring and modelling coastal sand movements (Brooks, Col NERC NE/N016009/1 £60k)
- understanding spatial patterns of crime and epidemiology (Shiode PI British Academy SG130660 £9k; Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF £13k)
- using environmental niche modelling to understand crocodile attacks (Pooley, Lambert Bequest)
- modelling landscape evolution over tens of thousands of years (Briant, Col VW Foundation €25k in-kind) and historical climate reconstruction (Foley)
- understanding conceptualisations of localness in search engines (Ballatore, PI Ordnance Survey £40k; advisor, AHRC 'Mapping Museums'; Facebook Research 'Localising Content Governance in Place-named Facebook groups')

Researchers in this group have strong links with non-academic stakeholders e.g. Brooks' impact case study 'Transforming shoreline management policy and practice' (section 1.4). Staff also interact with the Birkbeck Institute for Data Analysis (BIDA) and Birkbeck Computer Science (Brooks and Ballatore).

International Development and Social Justice (IDSJ) focuses on issues of justice within developing nations, including research in the fields of diaspora, migration, age, gender, health and reproductive justice. Members of this cluster are recognised internationally for their expertise in:

- healthcare (Gideon, PI ESRC ES/P006353/1 £152k)
- childhood (Wells, PI ECE190059 British Academy £105k)
- gender and reproductive years (Wilson, PI GCRF £10k)
- later life (Vera-Sanso, Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF £10k, advisor, GCRF 'Care of Older People in Southern Africa')

Members of this group are socially engaged and have strong collaborative and advisory links to NGOs and policy makers through their work with advocacy organisations, think tanks and networks. The cluster works with an array of stakeholders, including artists (Wells, PI 2014-AIR-

067 Leverhulme £14k), and different mediums such as film (section 4.2), including Gideon's use of craft and documentary film-making in her impact case study (Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF, £2.5k). Wells is a former director of BISR and all members are engaged in organising Birkbeck institute funded events (section 4.2).

### 1.2 Research objectives since 2014

Our key aim outlined internally in 2014 was to '*develop a vibrant, dynamic, supportive and excellent research community where everyone is making progress.*' This was achieved via the following objectives:

(a) increasing external research grant income to improve our ability to carry out high quality and impactful research through supporting all staff in applying for external funding and developing research partnerships. Section 3.1 shows we have successfully created a culture in which it is expected that all staff will apply for external funding for their research, supported by mentorship and peer review. This has supported our growing staff numbers to achieve a 97% increase in application numbers and a 100% increase in external research funding awarded between 2014 and 2020.

(b) publishing the highest quality research for both academic and lay audiences by both communicating expectations (e.g. tracking research success via annual reporting at School level) and providing support. Feedback on drafts is available through both mentoring and Work in Progress events. Staff published their research in a range of outlets, including *Transactions of the RGS-IBG*, *Nature Scientific Data* and *Annals of the AAG*. Three of our outputs were the 'most downloaded' articles in a year: Nowicki et al. (2019) in *Geographical Journal* (Harris), Pooley et al. (2016) in *Conservation Biology* and Watt (2018) in *Cities*. We regularly communicate new work to wider audiences and policy makers, for example, Butcher and Pooley in *The Conversation* both gained over 30k hits (section 4.3).

(c) increasing the number of research collaborations and partnerships and raising the Department's research profile with academic and non-academic partners. To do this, we have used seed funding from the Department, School and Birkbeck Institutes to run events designed to build collaboration both internally and externally (sections 1.4, 3.1, 4.2). Our website and other outward-facing fora highlight our research and we also feature on wider Birkbeck webpages, contributing to the 'Birkbeck Explains' series (e.g. Pooley, 14k views) and the Birkbeck Blog. Our involvement in the Royal Geographical Society raises Birkbeck's profile within the discipline (Briant, Athena SWAN network; Cox, see section 4.4). Our staff have had their research featured in mainstream media including print, radio and television (section 4.5).

(d) to increase the number of funded PhD students (details in section 2.2)

Fulfilling these four objectives has allowed us to produce a successful research culture, increasing grant applications, awards, and the quality of research outputs. We have maintained an egalitarian approach through mentoring and peer support (section 2.1.1) and developed and recognised breadth and depth in research accomplishments (section 2.1) to ensure all staff are engaged with the Department's research strategy.

### 1.3 Research objectives 2021-2026

Having now set a strong foundation for a dynamic and supportive research community, exceeding our initial expectations, over the next five years our aim will be to '*maintain and grow a culture of excellence*' whilst also seeking out areas for expansion and growth, through the following activities:

(a) expanding existing areas of excellence and supporting interdisciplinary research, responding to national and international research priorities (e.g. gentrification, climate change, sustainable development goals, migration, exile, inequalities and representation of minorities). We will do this by maintaining an in-depth understanding of colleagues' research areas, approaches, potential funders and avenues for outputs. We will support building relationships across clusters and Birkbeck departments (e.g. in mentoring or through the Birkbeck Institutes) to enable cross-disciplinary collaboration.

(b) continuing to support applications for external research funding including sharing insights from the increasing number of staff who review UKRI and international funding applications (section 4.5). We are establishing mechanisms for tracking mentor/mentee interactions to ensure that these happen regularly and harnessing the experience of successful awardees to help others, particularly where these include significant overseas fieldwork. We also plan regular presentations from grant-holders to disseminate expertise and build aspiration.

(c) continuing to facilitate high quality publications by supporting staff through mentoring, cluster and Departmental events and annual research reviews. All staff review publications for journals and many are on editorial boards (section 4.5); this insight will be harnessed to improve the quality of drafts. We will also support a diversity of outputs in the most appropriate format for their intended audiences (e.g. visual). All outputs will be made available through open access (section 1.6).

(d) further developing collaborations and partnerships within and beyond academia, building on our established networks, and facilitating all staff to find and work with appropriate partners (section 1.5).

(e) seeking to increase funded PGR numbers (section 2.2), tighten progression procedures, improving on-time completion (aiming for 90% after COVID-19 disruptions have passed) and continuing to include PGR students in all Departmental support mechanisms (section 3.1). We will actively promote PGR study to appropriate Masters students, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

### 1.4 Impact objectives since 2014

Our aim has been to '*support pathways to impact by developing and undertaking inclusive activities with relevant stakeholders, particularly addressing issues of social justice and environmental sustainability, aiming to both influence policy and benefit people at the grassroots*'. Actions to support impact include:

(a) developing a research culture that embeds and values impact and engagement with non-academic audiences/partners. This is seen in both Academic Review (section 2.1.1) and promotion, where engagement is now a key criterion, explicitly valuing activities such as

dissemination of research in non-academic outlets (e.g. industry reports, practice-based workshops, the media) and consultancy work.

(b) developing pathways to impact as an integral part of grant planning and support, with the Research Director initiating conversations early in the application process and flagging it in start-of-grant meetings, particularly encouraging the relevant involvement of local stakeholders.

(c) fully utilising available institutional support for impact. We work closely with the School Impact Officer to develop strategies for impact, establish and nurture productive relationships with non-academic partners, trace and document research impact and inspire new initiatives. The Impact Officer also works closely with the Public Engagement team to support researchers in communicating their work. We have been successful in specific impact initiatives, including the Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF Public Engagement funding that supported part of Gideon's impact case study and Sheringham's COVID-19 research with refugees and asylum seekers (section 1.1). We also ensure that all staff and PGR students access appropriate training events, at Departmental, School and College level.

(d) supporting relationship-building. The Department, School and Birkbeck Institutes provide seed money to support work with external partners and to enhance impact (section 4.2). We have also developed links and communicated with policy makers, practitioners and journalists through BISR 'Breakfast Briefings', forums and a range of other initiatives, detailed in section 4.2.

Our impact case studies indicate the success of our overall impact strategy and exemplify the reach and significance of our work across the discipline (see also sections 4.2 and 4.3). Both Brooks' and Gideon's recent promotions to Chair and Reader respectively were enhanced by their impact work (action a). Brooks engaged with a wide range of policy and management organisations on coastal flooding, at a Birkbeck-funded and hosted event "Talking Floods" (2018) (action d). In addition, the relationships that led to Gideon's 'Crafting Resistance' project were initiated at a 2013 workshop hosted by Birkbeck. The accompanying film was produced and translated into Spanish and Swedish through a Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF grant for public engagement (action c). Brooks was awarded a Birkbeck Research Innovation Fund award (£5k) to develop new coastal monitoring capacity that further enhanced collaboration with national agencies responsible for coastal management ((action c). Both Gideon and Brooks attended multiple Birkbeck-hosted impact case study workshops (action c). Both case studies have been comprehensively supported by our Impact Officer (action c).

### 1.5 Impact objectives 2021-2026

Our aim for the next five years is to '*continue to support and resource staff to impact real world challenges, for and with stakeholders in various fields, particularly using our interdisciplinary strengths in urban and environmental change*'. We will do this by:

(a) facilitating relationship-building between staff and external partners, particularly for early career colleagues. Our unique, largely part-time, student body are often employed in organisations strongly linked to our research interests. We aim to maintain relationships with our alumni who work with potential stakeholders, and lead networking events to gain insight into working with their sectors. We will also run training on developing new networks, supported by the Impact Officer.

(b) develop a comprehensive understanding of impact amongst all staff, particularly ECRs and PGRs, and share good practice, for example presenting the 2021 impact case studies to

colleagues and supporting colleagues who are beginning to build impact from their research both as general good practice and in readiness for the next REF return.

(c) ensure visibility of open access research outputs (and increasingly also data) on our webpages to make our research readily available to non-academic stakeholders in the context of our open research environment (section 1.6).

(d) communicate activities providing support for impact which will be ongoing in the next assessment period. For example, encouraging staff and PGR students to use School, Department and Institute (e.g. BIH, BISR, BIDA, BIMl) funds to support relationship building and impact generating activities.

### 1.6 Research integrity and progress towards an open research environment

We support the REF open access policy by requiring all staff to deposit publications accepted in the last three months on Birkbeck's green open access system, BiRON. We are aiming to be fully Plan S compliant by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and support initiatives for Birkbeck to join read-and-publish agreements. 10 of our 50 submitted outputs already have openly-accessible data, but we aim to extend this in 2021-2026 by encouraging colleagues to make more datasets open access, either hosted on or signposted from Birkbeck's Data Management system, BiRD. Departmental funds are available to support necessary formatting of data, especially for projects not funded by UKRI. Working towards the open availability of data is a key part of our research integrity, allowing our research to be transparently reviewed by stakeholders and other academics. We demonstrate care and respect for researchers and research participants by continuing to operate high-standard ethical approvals, overseen by a dedicated Ethics Officer and thorough fieldwork Risk Assessments by our Fieldwork Officer.

## **2. People**

### 2.1 Staffing strategy and staff development

We currently have 21 Category A eligible staff (19.8 FTE)

Following the strategic re-profiling of the Department, four new posts were created and four departing staff replaced with the aim of bolstering our priority areas, as defined by our clusters.

In this way, we have consolidated our strategy of building a clear research identity while maintaining a balance of staff across the department, with a mix of staff at all points in their careers to allow for effective succession planning.

#### 2.1.1 Staff development strategy for all research-active staff

In line with Birkbeck's commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (HR Excellence in Research [HRER] action 5.1), teaching and research and research-only staff are all supported by formal research mentoring, to identify individual priorities and needs (e.g. publication strategies or grant applications). Staff are encouraged to meet regularly with their mentors and this scheme is refreshed periodically to ensure mentoring relationships are as effective as possible (section 1.3). New staff also have a Probationary Advisor (section 2.1.3).

Post-probationary staff are supported through Academic Review, an annual appraisal undertaken by the Head of Department (HoD), used to ensure staff identify and undertake training opportunities (sections 1.3 and 1.5), and maintain an overview of their funding and impact activity (section 3.1). Academic Review supports staff to plan for promotion, as does mentoring from colleagues with experience of promotion panels. Research progress is monitored through individual research monitoring annually at School level, tracking outputs, grant activity and esteem indicators for each staff member. This gives the Research Director oversight of research activity and enables them to support colleagues more effectively.

We support grant applications through formal peer review, research mentoring and group feedback at 'Work-in-Progress' events to enable staff and PhD students to receive feedback on funding applications and papers at every stage. Staff also have access to Departmental and School funds (a standard baseline and opportunity to apply for larger sums) to support research, including travel for field work and conferences or to carry out pilot projects. For example, following a period of maternity leave, Briant used these funds to seed a successful NERC application for radiocarbon dates in 2014 (section 1.1). Geography researchers have gained an average of £9k per year from School additional funds to pump-prime research activity (£55k total).

#### 2.1.2 Effectiveness of staffing and recruitment policy

Since 2014, we have recruited eight permanent, three fixed-term teaching and research staff, and four fixed-term research-only staff (three post-doctoral research assistants on grants for Barker, Cox and Gideon [section 1.1] and one early career fellow). No fixed-term contracts have been less than a year and research-only staff have been able to also undertake hourly-paid teaching for career development. Two of the three fixed-term teaching and research staff were subsequently appointed to open-ended contracts at Birkbeck and Birmingham.

The effectiveness of our staff development policy and the trajectory of research success can be seen in the many promotions since 2014 (eight to Senior Lecturer; four to Reader; five to Professor), with four staff (all female) promoted twice during this time. The recent development of a Professoriate – Cox, Watt, Wells, Brooks and Butcher – reflects our growing research profile (section 3.1). As of October 2020 (section 2.1) our staff profile provides both senior experience and leadership, and scope for career development for ECRs.

#### 2.1.3 Support and integration for early career staff

Most of our early career staff are appointed as Lecturers and supported through probation. Probation mentors are appointed on the basis of research match and are expected to become long term research mentors. As well as monitoring progress, the probationary advisor helps shape a mentee's research strategy, including writing high quality outputs and funding applications.

Research-only staff (section 2.1.2) access staff development and research support in the same way as teaching and research staff, as well as being encouraged to plug into the College level ECR network (HRER action 2.1), with teaching opportunities if appropriate.

#### 2.1.4 Research leave and secondments

All research-active staff (fixed-term, permanent, full-time and part-time) are eligible for a term's research leave after completing nine terms, to provide a period of time to produce research outputs, write grants and undertake field work. The HoD tracks staff eligibility for leave, ensuring

equality of access, and works with colleagues to schedule leave optimally. All eligible staff have taken all their allotted research leave within the census period. Specific targets are set for research leave by the individual and activity reports are reviewed at School level by the Dean. To date none of our research links with external partners have involved staff formally going on secondments or taking unpaid leave to work with a partner, however Birkbeck has established processes to support this should opportunities arise.

#### 2.1.5 Rewarding staff for research and impact

Research is a significant promotion criterion on the Birkbeck Teaching and Research pathway. From 2019, criteria also encompass engagement and impact (section 1.4). Research and impact are explicitly included (0.33 FTE) within the Departmental workload model. Staff success in research, impact or outreach is regularly celebrated in the termly Departmental newsletter, circulated internally and externally.

### 2.2 Research students (PGR)

#### 2.2.1 Recruitment

The Department has a small but growing PhD community (2 new enrolments in 2013/14; 7 in 2019/20). (None are research-based professional doctorates). PGR students are recruited on the basis of a match in research interests and skills, following an application and interview process. We actively recruit a diverse student body due to our relevant research interests and pool of diverse MSc students. We are building a community of practice that celebrates this diversity and supports all students. Birkbeck has a number of initiatives to support under-represented groups into PGR study, including the Diversity 100 Scholarships (2019) for BAME PGR students. Ackah leads the 'BSc to PhD' project and the UK-wide African Diaspora PhD students' network (section 2.2.4). The work that we do recruiting and supporting these students is particularly important for the sustainability and increasing diversity of the discipline.

#### 2.2.2 Studentships from major funding bodies

Since 2014, students have secured five internally-funded Birkbeck Studentships, three Bloomsbury Scholarships (from eleven offered each year across the member institutions of Birkbeck, LSHTM, RVC, SOAS, IoE(UCL)), one Boughton and one Bonnart Trust Scholarship (philanthropic funding) and funding from external sources such as the Brazilian Government, Bayelsa State Scholarship Board, Nigeria, and corporate. In 2014 the Department was not a member of any Research Council Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs), and one of our key objectives was to rectify this (section 1.3). We are now members of all three relevant research council DTPs: UBEL (UCL, Bloomsbury and East London ESRC DTP), CHASE (Consortium of the Humanities and the Arts South-east England AHRC DTP) and the London NERC DTP. Briant is on the London NERC DTP Management Board. Vera-Sanso is Director of the UBEL Gender and Sexuality Pathway (previously Cox) and Gideon has replaced Maclean on the CHASE board.

Geography staff are active as co-supervisors of PhD students based in other Birkbeck Schools (e.g. Cox, BEI, Arts); within London through the Bloomsbury Scholarships (e.g. Wells, Cox, Gideon, Ballatore, Foley, Vera-Sanso) and further afield, e.g. Cox (NTNU Trondheim, Kent), Brooks (Cambridge), Ballatore (Leicester), Engels (Stockholm, Braunschweig, Germany), Wells (Rutgers, USA) and host international visiting PhDs (Barros, Engels, Pooley).



### 2.2.3 Monitoring and completion

The PGR Director coordinates activities and oversees annual PGR progress reporting. Recent clarification of annual progression processes resulted in improving completion rates. Since 2014, 17 PhDs have been completed and our students have gone on to academic and policy roles.

### 2.2.4 Support for research students

Within the Department, supervisors undertake training needs assessments with students as part of the annual review process, ensuring students are aware of how to identify their needs and relevant opportunities. Students have subject-specific training at Departmental level, including a bi-monthly Work in Progress meeting at which attendance is expected (virtually during COVID-19 restrictions). Generic training programmes are also offered by the Birkbeck Graduate Research School and via the Bloomsbury colleges Postgraduate Skills Network. For example, in 2017 students attended a School event 'No Trespassing: The Risks and Rewards of Interdisciplinary Research', which brought together PGR students from across the School to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and offer insights into interdisciplinary funding bids. Students have also started their own research initiatives, e.g. a 2020 reading group on 'reproductive justice', attracting 25 members from a variety of countries including India, the US and Peru. Ackah (with external colleagues Beckford, Beckles-Raymond, and the organisation Leading Routes) has expanded the African Diaspora Postgraduate Seminar to provide support to c. 25 Black PhD students across London. In this, current and potential doctoral students meet once a month to present ideas, get feedback on their work and to discuss issues that they experience as Black students navigating academia.

Apart from training and mentoring, students have designated hot desking space in the School. Departmental and School funds are available to research students to support fieldwork, conference attendance and other research costs. We aim to increase student employability by providing opportunities such as Teaching Assistant roles or funded Departmental or Institute internships (e.g. producing the termly Department newsletter).

### 2.3 Equality and diversity

In contrast to the predominance of men in the discipline we are pleased to have significant representation of women academics in the Department, including four out of five Professors. As in Birkbeck as a whole, we are concerned by our low BAME representation within our staff body. We are addressing this in recruitment by actively encouraging greater diversity of applicants when advertising and including BAME colleagues in shortlisting and on recruitment panels where possible without burdening them. We are actively supporting our diverse PGR students to be employable, for example through Ackah's African Diaspora Postgraduate Seminar (section 2.2.4).

Equality and Diversity initiatives are taken forward at a local level through the Departmental Equalities Rep (Wilson) and School Assistant Dean for Equalities (Wells 2017-2020). We are also fortunate to have Ackah sharing his national level work on representation with the Department. Ackah and Wilson have led on linked initiatives to support BAME PGR students, close the BAME awarding gap in taught programmes and decolonise the curriculum, e.g. in the BISR Decolonising Academia group. c.5 staff have also been mentors for the award-winning Compass Project providing access to higher education for refugees. Birkbeck-wide initiatives include multiple relevant awards and actions, e.g. equality and diversity and unconscious bias training has been mandatory for all staff since 2016. We also have staff networks for all protected characteristics

(Briant co-chairs the parents' network) and equality objectives set by the Birkbeck Equality and Diversity Committee.

Staff development initiatives outlined in section 2.1 all operate with sensitivity to the need to support equality and increase diversity. Research leave, financial support (section 3.1) and mentoring are open equally to all staff, regardless of protected characteristics and contract type, with monitoring of uptake to ensure that all staff benefit. The exceptions are the Aurora and Stellar HE leadership programmes that are targeted at particular groups. Geography has had two staff members complete each of these programmes.

To support colleagues with caring responsibilities, enhance work/life balance, and model sustainable practices, flexible and remote working, including virtual participation in meetings, has been supported even before the COVID-19 restrictions. Reasonable adjustments are made for staff with disabilities as well as teaching and research staff, research-only staff or PGR students returning from leave, either parental or long-term sick leave. This is to enable staff to relaunch their research immediately on their return. The Academic Review process identifies other areas where particular research support is needed such as colleagues who are struggling to make their expected progress and addressing any structural barriers causing this on a case-by-case basis, e.g. adjusting teaching allocations to allow staff with young children to work more frequently from home.

Research-related leadership roles are open to all, with our last four Research Directors and two PGR Directors being female, in line with the gender balance of senior staff in the Department. Part-time contracts are not a barrier to advancement because promotion criteria are based on quality rather than quantity, as can be seen in the promotion of three part-time staff since 2014.

Geography outputs have been selected according to the Birkbeck REF Code of Practice, with bespoke REF equality and diversity training for all Departments. Requests for reduction of outputs are dealt with centrally and anonymously with no input at Department level. Each UoA in the College follows the same format and discussion is solely about outputs, not the individuals who wrote them. Following a Birkbeck-wide equality impact assessment showing slight (but not statistically significant) underrepresentation of BAME staff and those with disabilities when the data was viewed at the College level, we identified additional outputs from staff in these categories to be read for the next panel.

### **3. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

#### 3.1 Research income

Grant income has increased exponentially since 2014 (£0 new grants awarded) to 2019/20 (£0.88M awarded), with a tenfold increase in expenditure. The total value of external grants including GCRF QR and Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF awarded to the Unit since January 2014 was £2.34M. Over the same period, grant application values from the Department also increased at a similar rate – from £1.07M in 2014/15 to £3.49M in 2019/20, and a total over the REF period of £13.4M. Vindicating our research strategy of supporting all staff members, 19 of 21 current staff members (90%) have held an external grant since 2014.

We have had five projects funded by the ESRC (Barros x 2, Butcher, Cox, Gideon, section 1.1), with an overall success rate of c. 29%. Other UKRI funding (success rate c. 29%) includes three NERC projects (Horn, Col NE/00471X/1 £17k; Brooks, Foley, section 1.1) and an AHRC-HERA

project (Butcher, section 1.1). We have also gained an Australian Research Council Discovery Project (Brooks, project partner); a Fulbright Scholarship (Ackah 2016-17) and two Leverhulme Research Fellowships (Maclean, Brooks, section 1.1), c. 22% success rate for Leverhulme. In addition, we have been active in seeking and securing small grants from various other sources, including Ordnance Survey, the Royal Geographical Society, the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, the British Academy and the London International Development Centre (c. 38% success rate). Research funding has led to strong outputs (submitted as part of UoA) including Cox and Busch (2016, ESRC), Brooks (Pollard et al., 2019, NERC), Wells and Bailey (2020, Leverhulme), and Barker (2020, Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF).

We have been very successful in securing internal funding. We have received five awards through the Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF (a block grant to institutions in receipt of the largest sums from Wellcome): Barker (2017-19, leading to a Wellcome Trust standard grant application shortlisted in June 2020), Maclean (2015-16), Pooley (2017-19), Shiode (2015-18) and Vera Sanso (2017) (section 1.1). More recently, four £5k awards have been made from the alumni-funded Birkbeck Research Innovation Fund, open to researchers outside the Wellcome remit (Brooks, Briant, 2018; Engels, 2019, Cox and Butcher 2019), which has also led on to grant applications, such as an application made by Brooks to a targeted NERC call in 2019. Similarly, Geography researchers have been successful in competing for internal and external Global Challenges Research Fund awards (Butcher, Cox, Gideon, Wilson; internal awards totalling £55k, 2018; Wells, section 1.1; Gideon, PI EP/T003898/1 £105k, 2019).

### 3.2 Organisational infrastructure

Since 2014, the Birkbeck Research Office has been increasingly well-resourced, providing valuable support for grant applications and management. They disseminate targeted funding opportunities, calculate costings and oversee the process of internal approval. The Department has been particularly successful at gaining UKRI funding associated with themed calls (e.g. Foley's NERC-funded project, section 1.1). Further Research Office support includes School and College level workshops on successful applications and talks from specific funders. In addition, cross-Departmental research institutes (section 1.4) have enabled collaborations to develop both within and outside Birkbeck (section 4.2).

### 3.3 Operational and scholarly infrastructure

Software and databases needed for research (e.g. ArcGIS, Nvivo, Digimap) are provided centrally and supported by IT or the Library. The Department currently shares laboratory space with Earth and Planetary Sciences for basic sample processing and microscopy. The College has also authorised the provision of further palaeoecological facilities, to be completed early in the next REF period. For specialist analyses, there is a laboratory budget to pay external providers.

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

### 4.1 Support for research collaborations

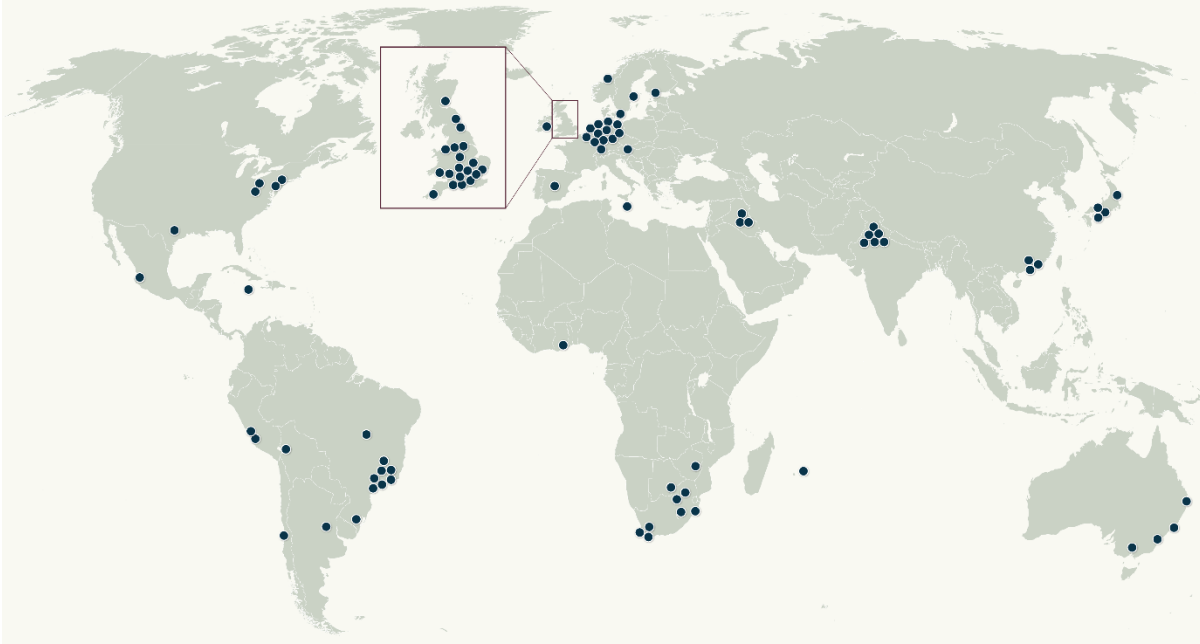
The internal support detailed in sections 3.1 and 3.2 also supports the development of research collaborations, for example inks were strengthened by Foley's 2018 Birkbeck-Wellcome ISSF

funded 'Talking Flooding' event. We also take advantage of the School and BIH Visiting Fellowship schemes, enabling us to host scholars from the global south and elsewhere.

The effectiveness of these processes can be seen in the scale of our external research collaborations. For example, within London, researchers co-author publications and co-supervise PGR students with UCL (Gideon, Barros, Vera-Sanso), LSE (Nogueira), Kings (Barros, Shiode), SOAS (Gideon, Foley, Vera-Sanso), QMUL (Sheringham, Briant), RHUL (Briant, Harris, Engels). Other examples of national collaborations are with Southampton, Liverpool, Plymouth, St Andrews, Glasgow, Cambridge in the NERC BLUE-Coast Consortium (Brooks, section 1.1) and UCL and Birmingham on the ESRC Smart Cities project (Butcher, section 1.1).

Internationally, we collaborate with more than 70 HEIs across six continents (see map). A number of these projects bring together multiple collaborations (e.g. Foley PI NERC; Barros Co-I ESRC; Butcher Co-I ESRC; section 1.1). We have a memorandum of understanding with the Delhi School of Planning and Architecture (Butcher), establishing collaborative field trips in Delhi and London (June 2020, COVID-19-disrupted).

## Birkbeck UoA14 Geography Active Research Collaborations 2014-2020



### NORTH AMERICA

University of Texas at Austin, USA  
Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA  
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, USA  
Rutgers University, USA  
New York University (NYU), USA

### CENTRAL AMERICA / CARIBBEAN

Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico  
University of the West Indies

### SOUTH AMERICA

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Peru  
Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Peru  
Universidad de Valparaiso, Chile  
La Universidad Católica, La Paz, Bolivia  
Universidad Nacional del Litoral, Santa Fe, Argentina  
Federal University of Pelotas, Brazil  
Institute for Applied Economic Research, Brazil  
University of São Paulo, Brazil  
Federal University of ABC, Brazil  
Institute of Education and Research, Brazil  
Brazilian National Institute for Spatial Research  
Inspere – Institute of Education and Research, Brazil  
Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil  
Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), Brazil

### UNITED KINGDOM

Plymouth University  
University of Swansea  
University of Cardiff  
University of Liverpool  
University of Bournemouth  
University of Manchester  
University of Southampton

Sheffield Hallam University  
University of Leicester  
University College London  
Kings College London  
London School of Economics and Political Science  
SOAS, University of London  
British Geological Survey  
University of Cambridge  
University of St Andrews  
University of Durham  
Newcastle University  
University of Essex

### EUROPE

University of Alcalá, Madrid, Spain  
University College Dublin, Ireland  
Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium  
University of Basel, Switzerland  
Erasmus University of Rotterdam, Netherlands  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands  
Utrecht University, Netherlands  
University of Twente, Netherlands  
L-Università ta' Malta  
German Aerospace Center, Germany  
City University of Applied Sciences, Bremen, Germany  
University of Kassel, Germany  
University of Bayreuth, Germany  
Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany  
GFZ – German Research centre for Geosciences, Germany  
University of Vienna, Austria  
University of Trondheim, Norway  
University of Stockholm, Sweden  
University of Lund, Sweden  
University of Helsinki, Finland

### AFRICA

University of Ghana  
University of Botswana

University of Zimbabwe  
National University of Lesotho  
University of Cape Town, South Africa  
The Samson Institute for Ageing Research, South Africa  
Stellenbosch University, South Africa  
North-West University, South Africa  
University of Pretoria, South Africa  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa  
University of Mauritius

### MIDDLE EAST

Al-Qasidiya University, Iraq  
University of Kufa, Iraq  
University of Baghdad, Iraq

### ASIA

School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi, India  
University of Delhi, India  
Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, India  
Centre for Equity Studies, New Delhi, India  
Jindal Global University, India  
Indian Institute of Science Education and Research  
The University of Hong Kong  
Shenzhen University, China  
Sun Yat-sen University, China  
National Institute of Technology, Kagawa College, Japan  
Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan  
Kyoto University, Japan  
Tohoku University, Japan

### AUSTRALIA

Monash University Melbourne, Australia  
Australian National University, Australia  
University of Newcastle, Australia  
University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia

4.2 Engagement with stakeholders since 2014

A key part of our impact strategy (sections 1.4 and 1.5) is building relationships with key research users, identifying consultancy opportunities, and responding to invitations to advise Government, NGOs and other organisations, as seen in each research cluster:

In Cities, Housing and Home, Butcher & Maclean's Urban Change film series (2017-18) reached a public audience of activists and artists, as well as students. Harris's 2019 event 'Narratives of Urban Change: Rethinking the City after 2008' was attended by local government, architects, housing developers and property companies. In 2019, BISR, BIH and Geography funded a symposium involving academics and artists discussing urban communication strategies (Butcher and colleagues in Applied Linguistics & Communication). Also in 2019, Ackah was an invited speaker at the Office for Students (50 people including key policy leaders) about decolonising the curriculum and the BAME awarding gap. Ackah also consults for the Council for World Mission on racism and anti-racism in children's educational materials. Butcher co-organised workshops and public exhibitions in Shanghai, Delhi and Leiden, to explore gendered experiences of the city with artists and activists (2014-16).

In Environment, Landscape and Climate Change, Foley's 'Birkbeck Talking Flooding Symposium' (2018) reached key stakeholders, and her 2020 online symposium about island adaptation to climate change reached almost 100 academic and government participants. Drawing on his work on human-wildlife interactions in Southern Africa, Pooley developed a poster campaign that is being used in Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland (e.g. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, in KwaZulu-Natal, and the Mbuluzi Game Reserve in northern Eswatini). Brooks has been invited to advise both the Environment Agency Technical Assurance Group and individual landowners on the technical details of coastal management (section 1.4).

In Geo-analytics and Modelling, a recent BISR-funded 'Experimental Collective' on 'Urban Intersections' (Ballatore, Butcher, Nogueira) with Film, Media and Cultural Studies will focus on skills training for PGRs as well as public seminars and a research colloquium. In addition, Shiode gave a keynote to the London Mayors Office in 2019.

In International Development and Social Justice, Vera-Sanso's photo essay exhibition 'We too Contribute: we work, we contribute, we don't retire' and documentary films, 'We're Still Working' and 'The Forgotten Generation' were exhibited at the HelpAge India & UNDP conference, the Right to Food and Work Campaign's National Convention, Gujarat, a knowledge exchange event with HelpAge International and Age International in London. In 2016, Wells' BIH-funded 'Precarious Citizenship' event on Private Fostering arrangements with Birkbeck School of Law, built external relationships. In 2017, Wilson and Wells reached practitioners with a BIH funded conference 'Resisting the (Internal) Border'. In 2018, Gideon ran 'Equalities in Public Private Partnerships,' workshops in Mumbai and Brussels for practitioners. The cluster has also provided significant advice to various agencies and built relationships with artists to explore a wider range of ways to engage stakeholders, for example hosting Leverhulme Artist in Residence, Ain Bailey (2014, section 1.1).

4.3 Contributions to the economy and society in the context of national and international research priorities

All our research directly addresses national and international research priorities, such as climate change, sustainable development and the sustainable development goals (SDGs), gentrification

and liveable urban communities, biodiversity crises, migration and exile, Brexit and COVID-19 (see below). In addition, the positive impact of our work on society is embedded through actively co-producing knowledge with stakeholders.

In Cities, Housing and Home, Butcher and Watt's work on urban transformation, gentrification and regeneration in east London has led to impact with local councils. Ackah is Chair of the Transatlantic Roundtable on Religion and Race, and Senior Research Fellow at the African Diaspora Consortium. Barker's research on governance and biosecurity was harnessed by the House of Lords EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee inquiry into impacts of Brexit on UK biosecurity (2018), being broadcast on Parliament TV and part of a publication that received a government response. Harris's collaborative work on pop-up social housing in Lewisham, rapid build housing in Dublin, and families living in hotels in Dublin has contributed to policy debates, including encouraging Dublin City Council to make rapid build housing permanent for social housing tenants and a submission to the Irish committee on children and youth affairs on the Impact of Homelessness on Children. Cox is an acknowledged expert on au pairing, for example influencing the British Au Pairs Agencies Association to change their definition of au pairs to reduce abuse of the scheme. Cox has also provided expert testimony for a case being brought by the Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit. In December 2020, the case was won, ruling that family workers should be paid the minimum wage, and with an ongoing campaign for change in legislation. Cox has also advised the EU and the Flemish parliament on au pairs in the context of Brexit.

In Environment, Landscape and Climate Change, staff address biodiversity and climate crises. Pooley is in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Crocodile Specialist Group and member of the IUCN Task Force on Human Wildlife Conflict since 2016, preparing standard guidelines for international conservation policy and practice (SDG15 'Life on land'). He has ensured snakes were added to the IUCN critical list and advised the Forestry Department of Belize and Uganda Wildlife Authority on their human-wildlife conflict policy. Foley's current NERC-funded project (SDG 13 'Climate action') has drawn together researchers from academia, Government, (Cook Islands), and NGOs (Scottish Natural Heritage), taking a holistic approach to climate adaptation on islands. The NERC-funded BLUEcoast consortium (Brooks, section 1.1) contains a number of stakeholder partners, including the UK Environment Agency and the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CeFAS), as well as the Norfolk and Suffolk Coastal Partnership (NSCP), the British Geological Survey and the National Trust.

In International Development and Social Justice, Wells' recent British Academy grant (section 1.1) (SDG4 'Quality education') works with teachers in the global South. Gideon has worked with Eurodad (European Network on Debt and Development) on several policy briefs on public private partnerships in health (SDG3 'Good health and wellbeing').

#### 4.4 evidence of the unit's contribution to the sustainability of the discipline

As a broad-based Geography Department, our understanding of 'discipline' embraces interdisciplinarity: from cross-departmental supervision and training of PGR students (sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.4), to our engagement with the multiple Birkbeck Research Institutes (section 1.4) and working with colleagues in other Schools (section 4.2), to national and international collaborations. In addition, we contribute to furthering theoretical understanding of interdisciplinarity, e.g. Pooley keynotes at Society for Human Ecology conference (2018) on

interdisciplinarity; and at a workshop 'Interdisciplinary challenges in the study of human-animal interactions' (2017).

Brooks is involved in supporting secondary school level Geography teaching, giving multiple talks over the REF period, including the keynote at the Geographical Association (GA) annual conference in 2015. Brooks is also a member of the editorial board of the GA journal *Geography*, winning a prize for her 2017 review article. The national and international recognition of our methodological expertise in specific areas is also demonstrated in invitations to train PGR students, e.g. Engels co-organises INTIMATE (INTEgrating Ice-core, MARine and TERrestrial records) summer schools, training in sampling and environmental analysis from lake sediments; Butcher presented on visual methods training at Bard College, Berlin (2015) and Trento International Summer School in Ethnography (2017).

Departmental colleagues are members of 17 professional bodies and are active in a number of sub-groups of the Royal Geographical Society (Cox, Chair of Gender and Feminist Research Group, recently producing guidelines for funders on how to fund childcare for fieldwork; Ballatore and Barros, GISc Research Group). Colleagues are also active in the Development Studies Association (Gideon), Quaternary Research Association (Briant), Black Studies Council (Ackah), British Society of Gerontology (Vera-Sanso) and GISRUUK (Ballatore, Barros), INTIMATE (Engels) and the IUCN (Pooley).

We have made a strong contribution to recent initiatives within Geography to 'decolonise the curriculum', with Ackah a leading expert in the field, speaking regularly at other universities as well as influencing wider curriculum development within Birkbeck, e.g. his 2015 talk on 'Why Isn't My Professor Black?', Bristol University Student Union, and 2018 keynote, Leeds workshop, 'Challenging Academic Debates Situating Decolonial Science, Art and Faith in the Syllabus'. Wilson was invited in 2018 to co-found the working group on Decolonising Development Studies Network, based at Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

#### 4.5 indicators of wider influence, contributions to and recognition by the research base

Colleagues have supported the research production process within Geography and related disciplines during this REF period on the editorial boards of 25+ journals (e.g. Gideon, Chief Editor, *Bulletin of Latin American Research*; Cox, Editor, *GEO: Geography and Environment*) and reviews for at least 100 journals, including *Transactions of the IBG*, *Quaternary Science Reviews*, *Environment and Planning B*, *Earth Surface Processes and Landforms*, *Nature*. Colleagues are on peer review colleges for ESRC (Maclean, Vera-Sanso), GCRF (Butcher, Vera-Sanso), UKRI Future Leaders (Cox). In addition to the Leverhulme Research and Early Career Fellowships and Fulbright Scholarship gained in the period (sections 1.1 and 3.1), we hold Visiting Research Fellowships at Oxford, Kwa-Zulu Natal (Pooley), Tokyo, Kwansai-Gansuin (Shiode) and Rutgers (Wells).

In total, we have given 40+ invited keynotes, e.g. Ballatore (Association of Geographic Information Laboratories in Europe, Sweden, 2018), Butcher (Urban / Extra-Urban Conference, Heidelberg 2018), Pooley (World Environmental Health, Gujarat, 2019), Wells (EU Society for Residential and Family Care, 2018); 80+ lectures and 140+ conference papers. We have organised 40+ conferences and workshops and chaired and organised 20+ conference sessions, nationally and internationally, e.g. Gideon ran the 250-attendee 50th Anniversary Society of Latin American Studies in 2014, Ballatore and Barros co-organised the 180-attendee GISRUUK 2020 online with



**Unit-level environment template (REF5b)**

UCL, Ackah organised the Transatlantic Round Table on Race and Religion in 2014, 2017, 2019 and Engels co-organised the EGU-funded INTIMATE Galileo workshop in 2018.

In addition, many of our colleagues regularly engage with diverse media channels, including print media, BBC radio and TV, e.g. Cox on au pairs (BBC, Guardian); Butcher and Watt on housing in London (The Times); Maclean on microfinance (The Guardian); Ackah on the Windrush Generation (BBC); Brooks on cliff erosion and coastal flood risk (BBC); Ballatore on the geography of new media (The Independent, Slate, VICE, >60k views); Pooley on wildlife conflict (CNN, BBC World Service).