Institution: Loughborough University

Unit of Assessment: D34 – Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

Loughborough made its first submission to the Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management sub-panel under REF2014. It was the second largest submission to this sub-panel (30.7 FTE) and 50% of the submission was rated 'world leading' and 37% 'internationally excellent'. The panel praised our 'outstanding, evidence-led' research strategy, 'outstanding and very considerable impact on policy' and noted 'a high proportion […] of world-leading research'. Our post-2014 REF cycle was marked by unprecedented institutional investment and growth, designed to further enhance the quality of our research and expand its reach and impact. This included a **30% increase in staff**, establishment of an **Institute for Media and Creative Industries** on Loughborough's new London campus, as well as **£2.2 million investment** in support for events, networking and partnership development, PhD studentships, and pilot research leading to external funding bids. This support enabled us to **more than double our external research income** compared to 2014, establish **three new research specialisms**, and develop an **outstanding leadership profile** nationally and internationally, within and beyond academia.

1.1 Research structure

Our 2021 submission comprises **40 FTE staff**; 31 based in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities on the Midlands campus, and 9 in Loughborough University London on our London campus. Our research infrastructure is organized through the Centre for Research in Communication and Culture (CRCC, est. 1991) and the Institute for Media and Creative Industries (IMCI, est. 2015). Together, they benefit from enhanced support via the university-wide Communication and Culture 'Beacon' (est. 2016), one of five university-wide 'Beacons' of research excellence.

From the very beginning of communication research at Loughborough (late 1980s) we have taken a distinctive **multi-scale, interdisciplinary approach,** ranging from the micro-dynamics of interpersonal interaction rooted in social psychology to the macro-dynamics of mediated communication and culture grounded in political science and sociology. This expertise coalesces into **five research specialisms** (Figure 1).
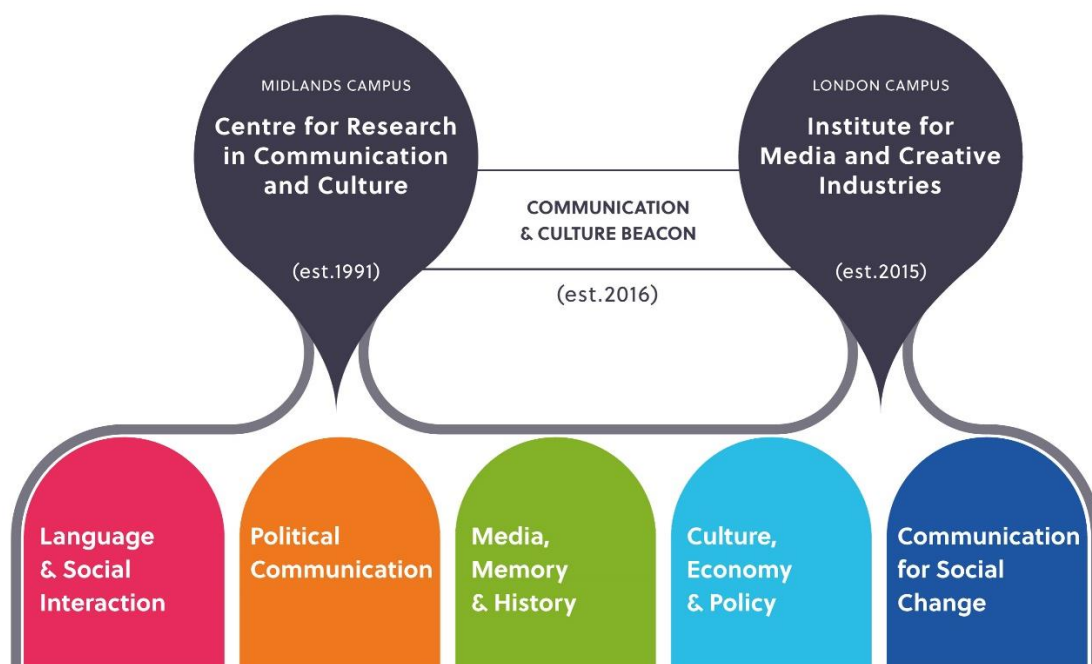

Figure 1: The organisation of communication and culture research at Loughborough University

The first two of these specialisms, 'Language and Social Interaction' and 'Political Communication', are long-established areas of strength and were identified as world-leading in the REF2014 feedback. 'Media, Memory and History', 'Culture, Economy and Policy', and 'Communication for Social Change' are the three new specialisms we have grown during this REF period via new investment and appointments.

1.1.1 Approach to supporting interdisciplinary research. Interdisciplinarity has been a hallmark of our approach to communication and culture from its inception. This is reflected in the disciplinary backgrounds of our staff, spanning the social sciences and humanities. Throughout the REF cycle, we have ensured that interdisciplinarity is embedded in our research strategy and infrastructure at two levels.

First, our organisational and funding structures support interdisciplinary collaboration in our Schools. On the Midlands campus, the Centre for Research in Communication and Culture (CRCC) acts as a cornerstone of interdisciplinary collaboration, from communication to sociology, political science, geography, and history. On the new London campus, we created an environment designed to encourage interdisciplinarity: the Institute for Media and Creative Industries (IMCI) is one of seven co-located institutes, alongside design innovation; international management; diplomacy and international governance; sport business, innovation and entrepreneurship; and digital technologies.

Second, interdisciplinarity is actively supported at university level, through institution-wide, interdisciplinary research priorities (known as 'Beacons' and 'Global Challenges'), introduced in 2016 as part of Loughborough's new 'CALIBRE' research strategy. 'Communication and Culture' is identified as a 'Beacon', with our staff leading interdisciplinary activity across the university and beyond. We also actively contribute to another university-wide priority via the 'Health and Wellbeing Global Challenge', reflecting growing expertise in health communication.

1.2 Achievement of strategic aims set in 2014

In 2014 we outlined four strategic aims, designed to extend the reach and impact of our research. This ambition was achieved and, in many ways, exceeded.

1.2.1 To develop communication and culture research as a core research priority at Loughborough. The University's research strategy placed an explicit emphasis on excellence and a sharper focus on identifying and supporting institutional research strengths, including the Communication and Culture Beacon, led by our staff (Downey, 2016-19; Keightley, 2019-). Its launch in 2016 was accompanied by immediate investment in eight academic posts, five PhD studentships, and a dedicated Research Development Manager. This was paralleled by the reorganisation of our research infrastructure. The Communication Research Centre (established 1991) was renamed as the Centre for Research in Communication and Culture (CRCC), expanding to encompass the growing importance of our research on culture and interdisciplinary collaborations.

1.2.2 To establish a research institute on our London campus. The Institute for Media and Creative Industries (IMCI), established in 2015, represents a major expansion of our research environment. It has proved instrumental in growing the reach of our research and impact nationally and internationally, acting as a base for international events and attracting London-based stakeholders. For instance, IMCI hosted two conferences (2017, 2020) on the General Election and the EU Referendum, which attracted leading pollsters, campaign directors, and journalists, and constituted an impact pathway for one of our ICSs. IMCI staff also led the development of a new research specialism: Communication for Social Change.

We incentivised collaboration across our two physical locations to ensure colleagues benefit from and cross-fertilise each other's research environments. For example, the success of a substantial five-year Leverhulme Leadership award *Imperial Memory and the Post-colonial Imagination* (£994,904, 2017-21, PI Keightley) was critically dependent on teams based on both campuses, enabling the examination of memories of Indian Partition among diverse communities in different parts of the UK. More recently, a joint visit from the CRCC and IMCI to

the University of Hyderabad (ranked first in India for Communication) led to award of an AHRC project on citizenship, conflict, and the media in India (2020-21).

1.2.3 To extend our research impact. Our plans envisaged a step-change in impact activity associated with research in Language and Social Interaction. This is reflected in the **rapid growth of the 'Conversation Analytic Roleplay Method' (CARM)** led by Stokoe, which transformed communication training practices across several sectors, including policing, dispute resolution, and healthcare. CARM funded four post-doctoral researchers between 2015 and 2020 and provided the basis for one of our Impact Case Studies. More recently, our investment in health communication expertise (appointment of Pino in 2017, and Parry in 2018) led to the establishment of **'Real Talk'**, a communication training resource developed by Parry and her team, designed to support health professionals engaged in palliative and end-of-life care. Since 2018, 'Real Talk' has been used to train over 500 health professionals, mostly NHS and hospice staff.

We have also seen a considerable growth of impact activity across other research specialisms, and **collaborations with high-profile stakeholders including major policy and industry players** such as UNICEF, Council of Europe, Ofcom, European Broadcasting Union, Victoria & Albert Museum, Tate Modern, and the British Museum.

Our increased impact capacity is demonstrated by **our involvement in shaping the public response to the COVID-19 crisis**. Early in the pandemic, Stokoe was invited to join both the UK government's SAGE Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Behaviours ('SPI-B') and the Independent SAGE's Behavioural Advisory Group. Parry was asked to produce evidence-based guidance for NHS staff engaged in difficult conversations with COVID-19 patients and families. More recently, Leguina became Co-I on a COVID-19 AHRC project investigating the impact of video streaming on widening access to arts and culture; Suzina started collaborating with NGOs and media in Brazil to devise strategies to tackle the impact of COVID-19 on everyday life, and Chadwick was invited to join the UK Government's new Counter-Disinformation Policy Forum, which brings together industry, civil society, academia and Government stakeholders to tackle the harmful effects of misinformation that have been magnified by the pandemic.

1.2.4 To enhance international collaboration. We have **invested strategically in the development of international networks and partnerships**, through embedding incentives and opportunities for international networking into our research infrastructure. For instance, sustained support between 2016 and 2018 enabled Loughborough colleagues to join the Global Media Studies Network (GMSN), with the University of Michigan, The New School for Social Research in New York, Jamia Millia Islamia University in India, and the Central European University in Hungary/Austria as partners. We have also hosted a wide range of high-profile communication scholars and impact partners from around the world and organised several international conferences and workshops. These activities directly contributed to the **growth of externally funded research networks and research projects involving international research and impact partners**, across all five of our research specialisms. Examples include an EU-funded COST network, two H2020 projects, and the award of a BA-funded Global Professor in 2020 (one of only 10 annual awards) to Punathambekar from the University of Virginia.

1.3 Facilitating research impact

Our submission includes four ICSs, which reflect three elements of our approach to impact. First, **the thematic range of our case studies illustrates our commitment to treating impact as an integral element of research across all five specialisms**. Two of our Impact Case Studies build on the established tradition of impact in Political Communication (*Improving the Quality of Media Coverage and Public Debate During Elections and Referenda*; *Improving the Accuracy and Impartiality of the BBC's Coverage of Rural Issues*), and one (*Transforming Communication Training*) is rooted in our long-established practice of applied conversation analysis under Language and Social Interaction. Alongside these traditional areas of impact, we have encouraged the development of impact in our new research specialisms (see 4.1.2). As impact

work in Media, Memory and History was most advanced, a case study from this area (*Challenging Cold War Stereotypes*) is included in our submission.

Second, all four ICSs **illustrate our emphasis on impact as a collective endeavour** in that they are all underpinned by research from more than one staff member, reflecting impact generated through activities built by several staff, including early career colleagues. For instance, *Challenging Cold War Stereotypes* is underpinned by research and impact generated by Mihelj, Reid and Huxtable, the two Political Communication ICSs are a collective product of Deacon, Downey, Stanyer, Wring, Smith, and Harmer, and *Transforming Communication Training* draws on research and impact developed by Stokoe and Sikveland.

Third, the four ICSs also illustrate our **broad understanding of impact**, as they are built through pathways that encompass traditional forms of public scholarship such as public lectures, blogs, and stakeholder workshops (particularly important for *Improving the Quality of Media Coverage and Public Debate During Elections and Referenda*), as well as more formal arrangements such as secondments (*Transforming Communication Training*), curatorial and advisory roles in cultural institutions (*Challenging Cold War Stereotypes*) or commissioned research for public institutions (*Improving the Accuracy and Impartiality of the BBC's Coverage of Rural Issues*).

1.4 Future strategic aims (2021-2025)

Our research strategy will be organised around **three key pillars ('three Is')** – **Interdisciplinarity, Internationalisation and Impact** – and characterised by a proactive commitment to **advancing equality and diversity**. We are aiming for **a step-change** in each area, moving significantly beyond past achievements.

1.4.1 **Interdisciplinarity** has been a distinguishing trait of our research activities from the start, but the problems faced by contemporary societies require us to expand our interdisciplinarity ambitions further. We envisage **two directions of development**, both reaching beyond the disciplines we have engaged with so far. The first direction will involve new **collaborative endeavours with STEM disciplines**, including computer science and engineering, to address, for instance, new challenges and opportunities brought by Artificial Intelligence and datafication in communication and cultural industries. The second direction will focus on growing **new connections with Humanities**, benefitting from a recent restructuring on our Midlands campus, which brought Humanities under a common roof with Social Sciences. Three strategically beneficial opportunities have been identified so far, one involving collaboration between our health communication experts and medical humanities, another bringing together our research on visual political communication with expertise in visual culture, and the third linking our expertise in memory and media history with research on art history and literature.

These developments are envisaged to enhance our capacity to address key societal challenges which require interdisciplinary solutions, while also contributing to the growth and diversification of income. Several recent developments are indicative of capacity in this area. A British Academy project on AI use among people with disabilities is already under way (PI Albert, 2019-21); new collaborative interdisciplinary work with speech analytics and AI-augmented conversation software companies is being developed (Stokoe, Albert, with Sentient Machines; Microsoft Research), and, in 2021, the Head of Conversation Design Outreach at Google will spend a month at Loughborough as Residential Fellow, working with our staff on research combining communication expertise with computer science and design.

1.4.2 Under **internationalisation**, our priority will be to **fully globalise and de-westernise our research priorities and networks**. To this end, we will focus on collaborative research with partners in four regions – Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia (with a focus on India), southern Africa, and South America.

Most of our **recently awarded externally funded projects are international in scope**, and several involve partners beyond the Global North. These projects are expected to further expand the reach of our research. Examples include the £1.9M DFID-funded *Para Sport Against Stigma* (2020-24), in collaboration with the International Paralympic Committee, focused on the upcoming Tokyo Paralympics, with partners in Malawi, Ghana, and Zambia, the AHRC-funded

Reframing the Nation project (2020-22), with Co-Is in India, and the *Advancing Creative Industries for Inclusive Development in Ghana* (2019-24), funded by the Danish International Development Agency, with partners in Denmark and Ghana. Our staff are also Co-Is on two Norface-funded projects with partners from across Europe – *Populist Backlash* (Co-I Celik, 2020-2024) and *Threats and Potentials of a Changing Political Information Environment* (Co-I Stanyer, 2020-24).

A new senior post in International Development and Social Change has been approved, to be based in our Institute for Media and Creative Industries. While advancing our internationalisation agenda, this also speaks to our ambitions in interdisciplinarity and impact, as the post will involve collaboration with STEM and with impact partners in the Global South.

Finally, **networking initiatives with global ambitions** are already under way. For instance, our Language and Social Interaction colleagues have augmented established Discourse and Rhetoric Group (DARG) 'data sessions' with online methods training attracting global participation. Our internationalisation efforts will also benefit from collaborating with Professor Punathambekar, who joined us in 2020 as a British Academy Global Professor for five years and will expand our expertise in digital politics and memories of Indian partition.

1.4.3 Our **impact** ambition for the years ahead is twofold: (a) to enhance the reach and visibility of our impact through consolidating links with high profile partners; (b) to grow impact activities benefitting marginalized communities. In a world marked by a global pandemic, structural inequalities, and major challenges to liberal democracy, the significance of communication research is increasingly accepted inside and outside academia, creating strong opportunities for translating our research into practice.

Several recent developments indicate these impact potentials. In January 2020 Andrew Chitty, **the AHRC Creative Economy Champion**, joined our team as a Professor of Practice, part-funded by a dedicated £885,585 grant to lead UKRI's Creative Clusters and Audience of the Future programmes. This appointment is central to a University-wide ambition to strengthen our connections with creative industries. We now host the 'Creative Research and Innovation Collaboration' (CRAIC), which brings together projects that examine the nature and impact of applied research and innovation in the creative industries. One of the first projects, launched in September 2020, will investigate the effect of COVID-19 on creative businesses in East London.

The expertise of our staff has recently been sought by high-profile partners that will remain important for us in the next five years. As well as providing support to the NHS, and joining national advisory bodies managing the UK's pandemic response (SAGE [SPI-B]; Independent SAGE; Counter-Disinformation Policy Forum), our staff have partnerships with key regulatory bodies and industry nationally and internationally. Sabiescu and Natale are collaborating with the Victoria & Albert Museum; Stetka and Mihelj are working with the European Broadcasting Union, the European Platform of Regulatory Associations and the European Federation of Journalists; Downey and Dasgupta are collaborating with the Indian Union of Journalists; and Vaccari acts as the rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Digital Technologies of the Council of Europe. These partnerships and our policy impact will receive a further boost through the planned establishment of **Loughborough's new Policy and Governance Unit**, on the London campus.

Several recently funded projects are designed to improve the livelihoods of marginalized communities. This includes the already mentioned 'Para Sport Against Stigma', which works with community organisations in Malawi and National Paralympic Committees in Malawi, Ghana and Zambia; Celik's partnership with a Turkey-based women's rights NGO Kampussuzler, supported by the European Endowment for Democracy (2020-22); and Suzina's Leverhulme-funded ECR fellowship (2020-23) that examines media use among riverside communities in the Amazon region.

1.4.4 **Equality and diversity:** The evidence in this statement and the range of our outputs testify to the fact that we have created a supportive research environment in which all staff and PGRs, including ECRs and colleagues of all backgrounds, are flourishing. Over the next REF cycle, we are determined to ensure that **a new generation of highly promising ECRs, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or other characteristics, fulfils their potential** by securing larger externally funded grants, being promoted to personal titles, and assuming research leadership positions.

Much has already been achieved but there is work yet to do. Having achieved the Athena Swan Bronze Award, our next objective is to secure the Silver Award, and Bramwell and Leguina are already contributing to Loughborough's Race Equality Charter submission, planned for 2021. This will be achieved through implementing the Athena Swan Action Plan, integrating EDI in all processes and practices relating to research and impact, monitoring progress annually, mentoring, and ensuring that all strategic initiatives across the 'three Is' are inclusive.

1.5 Open Research Environment

Loughborough University was a pioneer of the open agenda and currently ranks 9th in the CWTS Leiden Index for the proportion of outputs available open access. Our staff have embraced this agenda and deposit their research outputs, including book chapters, in the Institutional Repository within three months of acceptance, exceeding the REF2021 requirement. As a result of this policy, 100% of our submitted outputs (and 83% of all outputs, as well as 100% of all 2020 outputs) are openly available.

Colleagues make their research data available to other users through LU's institutional Data Repository and the UK Data Service, or through other specialist shared repositories such as TalkBank, used by conversation analysts, and the National Institutes of Health Figshare platform for healthcare research data. We also contributed to the culture of open research, for example, Deacon's work on an open access tool 'Diva' for calculating qualitative diversity in media coverage.

1.6 A Culture of Research Integrity

Our unit operates within the robust structures designed to support research integrity, embedded in Loughborough's institutional Ethical Policy Framework, which steers the work of the University Ethics Committee, and the institutional Code of Practice for Research. Our staff have developed protocols adopted by the University (Butler's work on how to research with children), across the community (Parry's work on consent-gaining amongst patient groups), and have researched consent-gaining practices directly (Stokoe).

Colleagues also actively advocate against unethical research practices or seek to raise awareness of ethical dilemmas arising through engagement with non-academic stakeholders. Pfoser published a journal paper examining the unequal pressures in artist-academic collaborations in the contemporary academy; Belfiore has given invited talks on the ethical dilemmas of combining research integrity with impact; Štetka has criticized the practice of 'predatory publishing'; Downey published a paper reflecting on the difficulties of conducting critically-informed public communication research; and Suzina wrote about the problematic impact of defining English as the *lingua franca* in academia.

2. People

2.1 Staffing and recruitment policy

A total of 40 FTE staff are returned in this submission, **an increase of 30% since 2014**. Of the staff submitted in REF2021, only 15 FTE were submitted in 2014, meaning that over 60% of staff submitted in the current cycle are new appointments. Given this **growth and generational change,** employing the right people, while retaining and developing existing colleagues, has been crucial for us in the current REF cycle. Our staffing strategy also enables **career pathways for part-time and fixed-term staff**: two staff members are on part-time contracts, including one professor. The achievements of our staff detailed below indicate that our staffing strategy has been outstandingly successful in enriching and sustaining our environment.

Our unit has benefitted from institution-wide recruitment campaigns and dedicated investment in new staff in our unit: eight appointments on the Midlands campus in 2016 (two Professors, six Lecturers/Senior Lecturers) and parallel investment in a completely new team on the London campus (two Professors, seven Lecturers/Senior Lecturers). In addition, our unit gained three senior appointments for the Midlands campus through a campaign called 'Excellence 100', initiated in 2017 to attract 100 of the world's best academics, at all career

stages, to Loughborough. This was followed in 2019 by the successful recruitment of a two-year postdoctoral fellow through a university-wide 'Doctoral Prize Fellows' competition.

To ensure consistency with our strategic plans, **recruitment was aligned with our five research specialisms, while also facilitating internationalisation and growth of impact**. In the interests of a good demographic balance, appointments have included both senior figures in respective areas (Chadwick and Vaccari in Political Communication, Peel and Parry in Language and Social Interaction, Tacchi and Tufte in Communication for Social Change, Belfiore in Culture, Economy and Policy) and highly talented early career researchers across our research specialisms. Reflecting our commitment to internationalisation, most of our new appointments have expertise in comparative research and/or research beyond the UK. This intellectual shift has led to a considerably more cosmopolitan staff profile; the proportion of international staff grew from 26% in 2014 to 43% in 2021. In line with our commitment to growing research-led impact, several new appointments also had an established record of engagement with external stakeholders (e.g., Parry – NHS, Tacchi – UNICEF).

We pay close attention to **succession planning** for research-related leadership roles, through appointing staff in deputy roles in preparation for them taking on key leading roles. Examples include the appointment of Keightley as deputy-lead of the Communication and Culture Beacon in 2018, followed by her taking on the Beacon Lead role in 2019; and the appointment of Belfiore as CRCC theme lead, as a stepping-stone to her appointment as CRCC Co-Director in 2019.

2.2 Staff development strategy

2.2.1 Probation – the 'New Lecturers' programme. New Lecturers have a reduced teaching load (year 1: 33% of normal teaching load, year 2: 50%; year 3: 66%). Over the course of the three years, they are expected to undertake a range of professional training, publish three high quality journal articles or equivalent, become involved in PhD supervision, and submit a funding application. Senior staff members act as mentors and support new lecturers through termly meetings; mentors receive dedicated training and a workload allowance.

Given the extensive recruitment drive and the large number of new appointments in our area, **almost a third of our staff have undertaken the 'New Lecturers' programme since 2014**. The clearest evidence of the effectiveness of this support is that five of our lecturers were successful in obtaining competitive external research funding: an ESRC New Investigator Grant (Pfoser), an AHRC Early Career Grant (Natale), an AHRC Early Career Leadership Fellowship (Sabiescu), a standard ESRC grant (Štětka), and a Leverhulme/British Academy grant (Albert).

2.2.2 Support and integration of Early Career Fellows and Research Associates. Loughborough is committed to providing a supportive environment for postdoctoral fellows and researchers on fixed-term contracts, as evident in the implementation of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers,* and provision of designated development and networking opportunities. This institutional commitment is important to our Unit, as **we attract growing numbers of staff in this category**. Since 2014, we have hosted nine postdoctoral fellows (none prior to 2014): two funded by the ESRC, one by the British Academy (Newton), one by Leverhulme, two by the EU (Marie Skłodowska-Curie), one by the Swiss NSF, one by Fulbright, and one by Loughborough. We also welcomed numerous postdoctoral researchers on externally funded projects.

All postdoctoral fellows and researchers are supported by a mentor and benefit from School and Unit-level support. For instance, selection criteria for CRCC funding for pilot research and events include participation of ECRs, and in London, an ECR network was established in 2018 to support career development.

The career trajectories of our former postdocs suggest that this support is effective, as several have gone on to full time appointments, including Lectureships in the UK at Goldsmiths, Leicester, and Cardiff and internationally at universities in Trondheim, Katowice, and St Petersburg.

2.2.3 Appraisal, reward, and promotion. All staff, including ECRs on fixed-term contracts, are supported via an annual Performance and Development Review, which was redesigned in 2017

to ensure a more transparent way of appraising staff and rewarding excellent performance. Trained reviewers, selected from among senior staff, facilitate discussion about ambitions, and areas for development across the full range of activities including research and impact. Consideration of progress against promotion criteria is an integral element of this developmental process. **Our staff have been highly successful in not only exceeding ambitious baseline expectations of annual performance, but in going on to secure promotion.** Since the last REF our staff received 17 promotions in total, with seven promoted to Senior Lectureship (Çelik, Dasgupta, Natale, Pfoser, Skey, Štětka, Thurnell-Read), five to Readership (Elder-Vass, Keightley, Nyhagen, Saukko, Tileaga), and five awarded personal chairs (Keightley, Mihelj, Stanyer, Vaccari, Wring). The analysis revealed a small underrepresentation of women among those promoted since 2014 (41% of promotions compared to 49% of women in UoA as a whole). While this disparity appears to be in part due to differences in years in post, we will monitor developments and take appropriate action.

2.2.4. Enabling staff to pursue research and impact. Our staff benefit from comprehensive support for research and impact, including ring-fenced workload allocations for research and impact, personal research allowances, and research and impact leave.

In our **workload model**, all staff have 34% of their workload ring-fenced for research. This is increased by 6% for each full-time PGR supervision and Research Associate. Our staff were granted additional hours for impact work, and, since 2016, those with Impact Case Studies were allocated 25% of their time for impact activities.

Staff across all grades receive an **annual personal research allowance**, totalling £161,000 over the course of the assessment period. Staff are also rewarded for bringing external funding and receive an additional allowance for the duration of funding.

All staff, except those on probation (who already benefit from a reduced load), are also eligible for **research and impact leave** through the internal fellowship system. In 2016, to step up research ambition, the University introduced a competitive, two-tier Fellowship system, one run at School level, with staff eligible to apply for up to six months leave, and one run at University level, allowing staff to apply for up to 12 months leave with funding to work on more ambitious projects. Our staff have been very successful in obtaining Fellowships at both levels. Since 2014, we attracted a total of 20 School Fellowships and 5 University Fellowship, **totalling 177 months of additional time for research and impact**. The study leave system played a vital role in pursuing our research and impact strategy. Several major research outputs in our submission, including three double-weighted monographs (Chernilo, Richardson, Tileaga) have been produced during periods of leave; and our Impact Case Study leads have all benefitted from leave (Deacon, Mihelj, Stanyer, Stokoe). Two further University Fellowships have been approved to start in 2021 for early career staff who are pursuing major externally funded projects, expected to lead to important monographs and impact (Pfoser, Štětka).

2.3 Support for postgraduate researchers (PGRs)

Our PGRs play an important role in our research effort and play an active role in shaping our research culture. We have a sustained record of domestic and international PGR recruitment, with 73 doctorates awarded since 2014. **Recruitment shows a rise over time since 2014, reflecting growth in internal and external funding**, alongside steady recruitment of self-funded PGRs:

- We are partners in ESRC and AHRC Doctoral Training Partnerships that will continue into the next REF cycle; since 2017 the CRCC leads the Communication and Media pathway of the ESRC-funded Midlands Graduate School (twelve studentships to date), and in 2019 IMCI joined the AHRC doctoral training partnership *technē*2 (two studentships to date).
- Our unit also hosted six PhD studentships funded through research grants, four associated with the Leverhulme Leadership award, and two AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards.
- Our unit benefitted from the university-wide scheme of mini doctoral training centres (DTCs), allocated to interdisciplinary groups of supervisors on a competitive basis. Our

staff have led two such DTCs, one in digital health (Saukko, 2014-18) and one on online civic culture (Chadwick, 2018-2022), and participated in three other DTCs.
- We also won the equivalent of 22 FTE studentships via university and school-level competitions.

Our PGRs benefit from support at different levels. University-level support is provided via the Doctoral College, which offers a wide portfolio of training courses for doctoral students, PGR events such as conferences, and funding to support travel for research and conferences via two schemes (Santander Travel Awards and International PGR exchanges). At School level, all doctoral students undergo 6-monthly reviews of progress, performed by staff independent of the supervisory team. Every PGR is guaranteed a desk on campus and a computer, receives an annual research allowance, and benefits from a dedicated Careers Consultant for our field.

In terms of unit-specific support, our world-leading expertise in communication research methods has been recognised by an ESRC award (2014-17) enabling staff to lead intensive advanced training courses for PGRs and ECRs (one of only eight such awards in the UK). These courses have been offered since 2014 and have been integrated into the ESRC Midlands Graduate School provision since 2017. Our doctoral students also benefit from the international profile of our unit. Loughborough is a consortium member of the European Communication Research Association's annual European Media and Communication Doctoral Summer School, which involves the participation of our lecturing staff and full funding for one current PGR per year. Thanks to our participation in the Global Media Studies Network, our PGRs were also involved in virtual seminars run collaboratively with the University of Michigan in 2017-18 and participated in Summer Schools run by the Network in 2017 and 2018. Loughborough also participated in the EU Erasmus+ funded Graduate SPIRIT (2018-20) project, which included nine leading graduate schools from across Europe, developed an inventory of best practices, and tested several training innovations.

Our PGRs actively contribute to our research culture and to delivering our strategic goals. They co-organise weekly seminars and collaborate with staff in the organisation of events, organise their own annual conference, and they have also contributed to our internationalisation efforts by organising two specialist international PGR conferences – on nation and nationalism (2018) and on media, memory, and history (2019). Our PGRs have won Loughborough Student Union prizes for their contributions to the PGR community, and they also co-lead Loughborough's Qualitative Digital Research Laboratory, which was established in 2009 as an interdisciplinary network for qualitative PGRs. Consistent with our commitment to impact growth, we have also seen a rise in the number of PGRs involved in collaborative research with external stakeholders, including two funded by the AHRC and five by the ESRC.

The effectiveness of this support is evident from **external recognition obtained by our PGRs, and their career trajectories post-PhD**. Hofstetter won the National Communication Association Language and Social Interaction Division Dissertation of the Year award in 2018; Joyce was voted 'favourite scientist' in the British Psychological Society's competition in 2019, Thomson joined the Diversification of the Media programme run by the Black Collective of Media in Sport, and Parslow was awarded a Fellowship at The Alan Turing Institute and a placement at the Microsoft-funded start-up Deployed. Our PhD graduates have gone on to successful careers in academia, with appointments including full-time lectureships at Exeter, Keele, Leicester, Lincoln, Liverpool, and Loughborough, and appointments abroad, including a Marie Curie Postdoc at the Leibniz Institute in Germany, a fellowship at Linkoping in Sweden, and lectureships at Curtin University, Australia, and Utrecht University and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands.

2.4 Equality and diversity

Our staff have played a leading role in the institution-wide culture change with respect to EDI. Since 2014, we have become considerably more diverse; the proportion of women among our staff rose from 43% in 2014 to 49% in 2020, the proportion of BAME staff from 5% in 2014 to 28% in 2020, and we have also seen a notable growth in the proportion of international (non-UK) staff (26% in 2014 to 58% in 2020). **Several women were appointed to key leadership positions** since 2014, with Stokoe currently serving as Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for REF

(2019-), having previously served as Associate Dean for Research in the School of Social Sciences (2014-18), Peel currently serving as Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for the Doctoral College (2018-), Tacchi as Associate Dean for Research in London (2017-), Keightley as the Communication and Culture Beacon Lead (2019-), Mihelj as Director of Research for Communication and Media (2018-), and Belfiore as CRCC Co-Director (2019-). Our staff have also led a successful School-level Athena Swan Award submission (Nyhagen) and are contributing to Loughborough's submission under the Race Equality Charter (Bramwell and Leguina). Finally, our staff also play a leading role in pursuing the EDI agenda internationally; Belfiore co-leads the Women in Academia Support Network, established in 2017, with over 11.000 members globally, which offers peer-to-peer support through a closed social media group and regional meetings.

While these successes demonstrate the depth of cultural transformation since 2014, we are not complacent, and remain committed to rigorous analysis of EDI data and taking appropriate action. The **most recent breakdown of our staff by job grade suggests that we are now approaching gender equality on this dimension**, with only a small underrepresentation of women at professorial level (42% of our professoriate are women, compared to 49% of women in UoA as a whole). In contrast, BAME staff are more significantly underrepresented at professorial level, with 13% of our professoriate self-identifying as BAME, compared to 28% BAME in UoA as a whole. An action plan for addressing this imbalance is under preparation as part of Loughborough's submission under the Race Equality Charter.

Equality and diversity were central to preparing our REF submission. Our core REF team comprised three men and three women, and all staff involved in preparing the submission have attended dedicated EDI training and have undergone an additional sight unseen review exercise to check for unconscious bias in reviews of staff outputs.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

3.1 Research Income

The unit started the current REF cycle with high aspirations for generating research income from blue-chip funders, to sustain and grow our world-leading research and impact. To foster the development of funding bids, support was put in place for pilot research, networking, and partnership development through competitive internal funding. The unit also benefits from experienced colleagues with strong funding records who can provide feedback on draft bids in addition to a formal peer review scheme.

This strategy has borne considerable fruit in a highly competitive funding landscape. The unit **more than doubled its research income** compared to the REF2014 period, reaching a total of £4,699,423 (£1,941,111 in 2014). This included funding gained as part of large international consortia (two H2020 awards, one EU COST Action) and prestigious leadership awards (Leverhulme Leadership Award, AHRC Early Career Leadership Fellowship). The composition of funding sources has shifted considerably since 2014, in a manner that reflects our strategic commitment to internationalisation and growth in new research specialisms, including investment in a completely new staff complement at IMCI in London. While the highest proportion of funding (46%) still comes from UK Research Councils and the British Academy, there was a notable increase in funding from the Leverhulme Trust (rising from 1.7% to 18% of the awards total, for four separate awards). The largest proportion of RCUK funding still comes from the ESRC (47%), but the unit also received significant funding from the AHRC (10.7%) and EPSRC (33%) which is consistent with our investment in culture-focused research specialisms since 2014 and interdisciplinary collaborations. Reflecting the more international outlook of our research, the unit has also seen a marked growth in funding received from EU government bodies, which grew from 2% in the REF2014 period to 14% in REF2021.

Since 2014 we have attracted **significant income across all five research specialisms**. Substantial income obtained in our two established research specialisms – Political Communication and Language and Social Interaction – confirms continued vitality in these areas and reflects shifts resulting from staff changes and new priorities. In Political Communication there has been a strategic shift towards online communication and political communication outside of the UK, moving beyond our traditional strength in UK political communication and

'legacy' media. Examples include: *The Illiberal Turn: News Consumption, Political Polarisation, and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe* (ESRC, £817,143, Štětka & Mihelj, 2019-21), and *Visual Misinformation in Global Perspective: Platforms, Devices, and Users* (Facebook, $150,000, Vaccari, 2019-20). In Language and Social Interaction awards have followed the planned expansion of expertise in health communication and enhanced international leadership. Examples include *Enhancing staff-patient communication in palliative and end of life care* (NIHR, £330k, Parry, 2018-21), and the *Conversation Analytic innovation for Teacher Education* (Research Council of Norway, £1.3M / £127k to our unit, Stokoe Co-I, 2018-21).

Among new research specialisms, the outstanding record of success in Media, Memory and History reflects rapid growth in this area, with projects coalescing around contested media histories and divided memories. The project *Screening Socialism: Television & Everyday Life in Socialist Eastern Europe* (Leverhulme Trust, £242,759, Mihelj, 2013-16) investigated socialist-era television, while the ongoing project *Circuits of Practice: Narrating Modern Computing in Museum Environments* (AHRC, £201,158, Natale, 2020-21) focuses on new media histories and heritage. Three separate awards focus on divided memories, including memories of the Indian Partition among British Asians (*Imperial Memory and the Post-colonial Imagination*, Leverhulme Trust, £994,904, Keightley, 2017-22), memories of the Soviet past in Eastern Europe and Eurasia (*Tourism as Memory-making: Heritage and Memory-wars in Post-Soviet Cities*, ESRC, £235,158, Pfoser, 2019-21), and women's memories in Turkey (*Women's Memory and Media in Turkey*, European Endowment for Democracy, £127,761, Celik, 2020-22).

Awards in Culture, Economy and Policy reflect a growing concentration on cultural participation and creative industries. Examples include *Performing Hip-hop Englishness: The Performance of Alternative British Identities through Rap* (AHRC, £37,972.80, Bramwell, 2016-17), *Connect2Aspire: Cultural Engagements and Young People's Professional Aspirations* (AHRC, £236,000, Sabiescu, 2019-21), and *Advancing Creative Industries for Inclusive Development in Ghana* (Danish International Development Agency, £1,464,927 in total/ £42k to our unit, Belfiore Co-I, 2019-24). The appointment of the AHRC Creative Economy Champion in January 2020, funded by a £885,585 AHRC grant, is expected to significantly boost this research area in the coming years.

We have also recorded several funding successes in our most recently established specialism, Communication for Social Change, which is indicative of potential for future growth in this area. Examples include *Para Sport against Stigma* (DFID, £1.9M / £982k to our unit, Tacchi, 2020-24); and *Cross-Border Queers: The Story of South Asian Migrants in the UK* (British Academy, £37,559, Dasgupta, 2019-21).

Across our five specialisms, there are **three funding-related achievements, aligned with our strategic aims, that we are especially proud to report:**

- ECR success: Five early career colleagues (Albert, Bramwell, Natale, Pfoser, Sabiescu, Štětka) won major grants and/or attracted funding through prestigious early career routes, and we also secured nine postdoctoral fellowships, which demonstrates our capacity to attract and nurture high calibre ECRs.
- Reflecting our investment in internationalisation, we have a strong record of funding for comparative and/or transnational research, with a particular concertation in comparative research on East European media and culture (Mihelj, Pfoser, Štětka, Tileaga) and on Asia and Asian diaspora (Dasgupta, Downey, Keightley, Punathambekar).
- External funding was instrumental in enabling us to undertake theoretically and empirically ambitious research, and resulted in several research outputs, including five double-weighted monographs (Elder-Vass, 2x Keightley, Mihelj, Nyhagen). As externally funded projects are still ongoing, two further monographs are currently in press or review, and several others under development.

3.2 Research and Impact infrastructure

In addition to university-wide support through the Research and Enterprise Office, our staff benefit from tailored support for our research area at university, school and unit level. At university level, we receive assistance from the **Communication and Culture Beacon**, with a dedicated Research Development Manager who helps with identifying funding opportunities,

fostering close relationships with funders, supporting interdisciplinary collaborations, and developing bids financially and intellectually. The Beacon was instrumental in funding several strategic initiatives, including Loughborough's participation in the Global Media Studies Network (2016-18), leading to a successful BA Global Professorship bid; our involvement in the Tate Exchange project and a week-long exhibition at Tate Modern in 2017; and a visit to India in 2020 that led to a successful AHRC-funded project.

At School level, staff on both campuses have access to **internal funding for pilot research and impact activities,** allocated on a competitive basis. Since 2014, our staff won £51,586 of funding for 21 projects. Several of these led to external funding, supported the early stages of our ICSs, or led to joint publications. For instance, funding allocated to Pfoser and Keightley supported pilot research for Pfoser's successful ESRC bid; and funding won by Mihelj and Deacon enabled the initial impact work that fed into two of our ICSs.

Our staff can also access **internal funding for events**. In the Midlands, the CRCC manages an annual budget of £20,000, which is used to support an interdisciplinary external speaker seminar series and the organisation of workshops, symposia and other activities. In London, IMCI runs seminars for PGRs and staff, along with an external speaker series. Funding for events is allocated on a competitive basis, with selection criteria prioritizing interdisciplinary projects, activities leading to research outputs, and events co-organised with ECRs and PGRs.

With regards to support for impact, dedicated **Partnership Development Managers** help our PGRs and staff with building knowledge exchange partnerships and generating impact, and with applying for **funding for impact activities** through the Enterprise Project Group, **supported by the** Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF). Our staff have attracted £225,300 for 11 impact projects, of which seven supported our Impact Case Studies, and the rest fed into other impact work. We also benefitted from **biannual sessions with an external advisor** (Fast Track Impact, since 2016) to ensure that we were following most up-to-date expertise in this area.

Our impact was also supported from sources beyond HEIF, confirming public sector and industry demand for our work. For instance, Stokoe's research on social interaction has been funded by, among others, the Metropolitan Police, Police Scotland, Typeform, Deployed, the NHS, and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service; and Thurnell-Read received funding from the Campaign to End Loneliness to examine the role of pubs in tackling loneliness.

An important university-level infrastructural development has been the establishment of the **Institute for Advanced Study** (IAS) in 2017, which offers funding for short and longer-term fellowships on a competitive basis and has been instrumental to supporting our internationalisation efforts. In its inaugural year, IAS sponsored a series on 'Communication', organised by the CRCC. This series saw eminent communication scholars such as Zelizer (USA), Lyon (Canada), Mazzoleni (Italy), Haddington (Finland), Kevoe-Feldman (USA), Broth (Sweden), Wasko (USA), and Wilkins (USA) come to Loughborough to collaborate with our staff and PGRs, and several further IAS-sponsored visitors followed since then. These visits have resulted in joint publications, networks, and funding bids. For instance, the 2017 IAS-sponsored workshop on media and illiberalism led to a special journal issue (2019) and helped partnership development for the ESRC *Illiberal Turn* project; funding for an international workshop in September 2017 laid the basis for the edited collection *Communicating for Change* (2020), and the 2019 visits by Haddington and Kevoe-Feldman generated a special journal issue (forthcoming 2021), an international research network on crisis communication, and a Routledge monograph (forthcoming 2021).

In terms of **facilities**, our Unit benefited from the opening of the £50M **Loughborough University in London campus** in 2015, which represents the biggest institutional investment to date. The new campus, which operates over 9,000 m^2 of collaborative learning space, is located in the former Olympic Broadcast building on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in the new innovation quarter Here East. The campus is home to our Institute for Media and Creative Industries and serves as a base for joint events organised by our staff from both campuses.

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

4.1 Support for research collaborations, networks and partnerships

4.1.1 Collaborating with academic partners across disciplines and borders
Several elements of the research infrastructure detailed in the previous section – the Communication and Culture Beacon, the dedicated Research Development Manager, the Institute for Advanced Studies, and internal funding for pilot research and events – support network building nationally and internationally. The effectiveness of this support is evidenced in the growth of externally funded networks and projects with both UK and international partners, which often involve interdisciplinary teams.

Nationally, **externally funded interdisciplinary projects with UK academic partners** enabled us to demonstrate the importance of communication and culture research in interdisciplinary approaches to key societal challenges. Peel is currently Co-I on an interdisciplinary ESRC funded project *Reforming Legal Gender Identity* (2018-2022), with colleagues from King's College London and Kent. The project brings together our expertise in Language and Social Interaction with expertise in law and political theory to tackle the question of gender as a legal status assigned at birth and investigate the implications of reform in this area. Another prominent example is Belfiore and Leguina's involvement on a major AHRC funded *Understanding Everyday Participation* project (2012-18), which brought together leading cultural sociologists, cultural geographers and cultural policy experts from Manchester, Loughborough, Leicester and Exeter, to investigate the cultural value of mundane activities, leading to a radical re-evaluation of the relationship between participation and cultural value.

Strategic investment in international partnerships also led to our participation in several **externally funded international research projects**. These facilitated our contribution to interdisciplinary projects tackling major global challenges, as illustrated by two EU H2020 projects:

- The *Toxi-Triage* project (2015-19) mobilized our communication expertise to help develop a new global 'gold standard' for how emergency services should tackle chemical, biological, radioactive, or nuclear (CBRN) incidents. Led by Loughborough's Chemistry Department, with Downey as Co-I, it brought together emergency and health services, defence, industry, and university academics, and produced recommendations on CBRN incidents for the European Commission.
- The *EduMAP – Adult Education as a Means to Active Participatory Citizenship* project (2016-19) brought our Communication for Social Change staff in conversation with educational experts. Led by University of Tampere, with Tacchi as Co-I, the project was designed to help policy makers, educational authorities and practitioners adapt adult education practices to better cater for the needs of young adults from vulnerable and minority groups.

International collaborations also facilitated the expansion of our research impact internationally, as illustrated by the following two examples:

- Our participation in the European Network of Political Communication Scholars (NEPOCS), a group of 17 leading political communication experts from across Europe who share an interest in comparative research, led to a successful funding for EU-funded COST Action network on *Populist Political Communication in Europe* (2014-18), with Stanyer as Co-I and Working Group Chair, which brought together 120 scholars from 31 countries to examine the role of communication in the rise of populism, a major challenge facing liberal democracies around the world.
- Our investment in training in Conversation Analysis and the Conversation-Analytic Role Play Method, aimed at scholars both domestically and internationally, inspired a major Norwegian Research Council project *Conversation Analytic innovation for Teacher Education* (2019-2021). The project, led by the University College of Southeast Norway, uses Stokoe's CARM method to enhance teacher education with the aim of improving assessment and feedback.

These and other collaborations provided fertile grounds for co-authored publications, some of which – for example, *Histories of Cultural Participation, Values and Governance* (Belfiore) – are included in our submission.

4.1.2 Engaging with professionals and policymakers
In addition to significant growth of impact activity under **Language and Social Interaction** (detailed in 1.2.3), we have also invested in impact activities in other research specialisms, well beyond the remit of the four ICSs.

Under **Political Communication**, impact activities beyond our two ICSs reflect the strategic shift towards online political communication and internationalisation:

- Chadwick and Vaccari's research provided evidence-based knowledge that can help mitigate the democratically dysfunctional aspects of social media, and has attracted attention among policymakers. They submitted evidence to the Online Harms White Paper consultation (2019); provided a testimony for the Democracy and Digital Technologies Committee of the UK House of Lords (2019); delivered a briefing on misinformation and trust at the Cabinet Office Online Harms division and DCMS (2019); became founding advisory board members of Clean up the Internet, an independent NGO concerned about the degradation in online discourse and its implications for democracy; and joined the Committee of Experts on Freedom of Expression and Digital Technologies of the Council of Europe (2020-).
- Štetka and Mihelj partnered with major international stakeholders representing media regulators and media professionals (European Federation of Journalists, the European Broadcasting Union, and the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities) and are using their expertise to help shape effective responses the role of the media and democratic backsliding in Eastern Europe. Štetka is also contributing to leading international media monitoring initiatives, including the Media Pluralism Monitor project, funded by the European Commission, and the annual World Press Index by Reporters without Borders, and has secured our partnership in the Athens Democracy Forum, a major global event organized by the New York Times, bringing together leading policy-makers, business leaders and scholars to debate contemporary challenges to democracy (2017, 2018).

Under **Media, Memory and History**, impact growth was aligned with our commitment to internationalisation, and driven by a twin focus on media heritage and divided memories:

- We have developed partnerships with major media heritage stakeholders nationally and internationally and have used our expertise to enrich museum collections and enhance the understanding of media history among heritage professionals and museum visitors. One strand, described in one of our ICSs, was focused on Cold War media heritage, while the second focuses on new media heritage. Here, Natale is collaborating with leading heritage institutions in computing (National Science and Media Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, National Museum of Computing, BT archives and others) and our PGR student Kitcher is working with the Science Museum, examining the history and heritage of the electrophone, the Victorian-era precursor to live streaming.
- We are collaborating with community groups, local authorities, heritage institutions and NGOs involved in the mediation of contested pasts, helping them develop more effective strategies for tackling divisive memories, and improve the visibility of minority experiences. Keightley's work with UK local councils, schools, and heritage and community organisations (e.g., Tower Hamlets, Leicestershire Museums, Charnwood Arts, Equality Action, BritBangla, Geeta Bhawan) is designed to improve the diversity and visibility of collective memories of Indian Partition; Pfoser's engagement with tourism stakeholders in Estonia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine (tourism departments in city administrations, tour guiding companies, independent guides) is aimed at developing more effective strategies of communicating contested pasts in the context of tourism; and Tileaga's work with leading Polish and Romanian heritage institutions (Polish Genetic Database of Victims of Totalitarianism, Institute of National Remembrance, Sighet Memorial Museum) is tackling the impact of generational change on the dissemination of communist heritage.

Impact activities have also grown under the **Culture, Economy and Policy**, aligned with our strategic focus on cultural participation and creative industries:

- One strand involves using arts and culture to foster public dialogue on citizenship, identity, and belonging. In 2017-18 we became partners on the Tate Exchange project; Belfiore and Pfoser participated in a week-long exhibition at Tate Modern entitled *Who Are We?* (2017) featuring the work of artists exploring issues of migration and identity and organised a symposium and exhibition at Loughborough (2018).
- The second strand focuses on using cultural activities to enhance participation among underrepresented groups. Bramwell collaborated with the Hackney Council, using his expertise in Hip Hop and Youth cultures to develop services aimed at improving outcomes for young black men in Hackney (2016-17); Nyhagen used her expertise on gender and religion to contribute to policy debates in the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement and Citizens UK's Commission on Islam, Participation & Public Life (2017-18); and Sabiescu is working with the Victoria and Albert Museum, developing recommendations for improving youth access to creative industries (2019-).

Colleagues in the **Communication for Social Change** specialism have already built an impressive range of impact partnerships with global, regional, and community organisations:

- At the global level, we brought UNICEF into the techne2 AHRC DTP as a full partner, and Noske-Turner (2020) edited an open-access book *Communication for Development*, co-authored with UNICEF communication for development staff from their New York headquarters, regional office in Eastern and Southern Africa, and country offices in Vietnam, India and Malawi.
- At the European level, Tacchi and Sabiescu's EduMAP project included close collaboration with the German Adult Education Association DVV International and resulted in two policy briefs and a final conference to deliver policy implications to the European Commission.
- At national and community levels, Tufte is founding chairperson of the HIP Edutainment Foundation that supports the International NGO Femina (a civil society initiative aimed at promoting heathy lifestyles, gender equality and sexual education in Tanzania), and Suzina is collaborating with NGOs, community media and community organisations in Brazil.

4.1.3 Wider contributions to society

Our wider contributions to society are also evident in **numerous awards from non-HEI bodies, invitations to speak at events aimed at non-academic audiences, and popular science publications**. To mention a few examples: Pfoser received an award from the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria for her interdisciplinary work with artists (2014); Stokoe won a *Wired* magazine Innovation Fellowship, awarded to 'innovators changing the world and promoting disruptive thinking and radical ideas' (2015); and Roman-Velazquez received an award from the United St Saviours charity in recognition of work with migrant and ethnic women and groups in Southwark (2018). Albert and Stokoe ran talks and science demonstrations at New Scientist Live (2018). Stokoe wrote a popular science book *Talk: The Science of Conversation* (2018) and has given invited lectures at prestigious venues, including TED (2014), the Royal Institution (2015), Cheltenham Science Festival (2018), Google (2019), and 'Word of Mouth' (Radio 4, 2020).

4.2 Contributing to the sustainability of the discipline

Our most influential contributions to the sustainability of the discipline are linked to **our leadership of key professional organisations in our field, nationally and internationally**. Downey served as Vice President of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA, 2016–21) and as member of the Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association's Executive Board (MECCSA, 2012-), Murdock as Vice President of the International Association of Media and Communications Research (IAMCR, 2016-20), and Miller as Vice-President and then President of the Association for Cultural Studies (2016-18; 2019-21).

Our collective commitment to leading the field extends across career stages, as evident in the **involvement of several ECRs** in leading sections of major international associations. Robles was Vice-Chair (2016-17) and then Chair (2018-19) of the ICA Language and Social Interaction Section, Štětka is Vice Chair of the Political Communication Section of ECREA (2016-), and Celik was member of the IAMCR Committee for the Improvement of Academic Life (2017).

These roles have enabled us to play an important role in **steering the development of our discipline through co-organising major conferences, lobbying key funders, bolstering the external visibility of media, communication, and culture research, and responding to national and international priorities**. In his role on the MECCSA Executive Board, Downey was involved in lobbying for more funding for communication research with the AHRC and the ESRC, and responded to national consultations affecting our field, including in relation to REF, TEF, KEF, and PhD training. As Vice-President of ECREA, he was responsible for the academic programme of three ECREA conferences, coordinated the work of sections, networks and working groups, and led on the establishment of a closer connection between ECREA and two major European journals in our field: European Journal of Communication and European Journal of Cultural Studies. As Vice President of the IAMCR, Murdock was responsible for liaising between the Executive Board and three key committees (Publications, Membership and Environmental Committees), and sat on the judging panels for annual IAMCR awards. He also bolstered IAMCR's external visibility through the expansion of the Ambassador Network, reorganization of IAMCR's relations with external agencies, and launch of a new journal.

We also played a leading role in **shaping interdisciplinary research agendas by advancing the visibility of communication and culture research in neighboring disciplines.** We achieved this through leading sections in major professional associations in political science, sociology, and psychology. International examples include Vaccari as Chair of the Information Technology and Politics Section of the American Political Studies Association (2019-20), Chadwick as Executive Committee member of the same section (2018-21), and Parry as Treasurer-Secretary of the Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis Section of the American Sociological Association (2013-15), Leguina as Board Member of the Sociology of Consumption section of the European Sociological Association (2017-19). Nationally, Thurnell-Read convened the Alcohol Study Group of the British Sociological Association (2012-18), Peel chaired the Psychology of Sexualities Section of the British Psychological Society (2014-17); and Wring is Advisory Board member of the Media and Politics Group of the UK Political Studies Association (2010-).

4.3 Indicators of wider influence

Since 2014 we have accrued significant recognition for our research achievements, as well as made substantial contributions to the research base nationally and internationally. As evidence of recognition of our research achievements, **our staff delivered a total of over 100 keynote lectures and plenary talks in 23 countries**. This included keynotes at major conferences of international professional associations in our field, including IAMCR (Keightley, Pickering and Tufte, 2016), ECREA (Mihelj, 2018), the International Pragmatics Association (Stokoe, 2017), the International Institute of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (Stokoe, 2019), the Association of Internet Researchers (Chadwick, 2017), various International Communication Association pre-conferences and regional conferences (Downey 2014, 2015, 2016; Mihelj, 2017), and the Central and Eastern European Communication conferences (Downey, 2016, Mihelj, 2018). Colleagues also delivered keynotes at thematically-focused conferences which reflect recognition of their specific areas of research. Example keynotes from early and mid-career colleagues include Skey (*Sport and Nation* Symposium, The Netherlands, 2018), Leguina (*Music Learning and Teaching* conference, Chile, 2017), Wigger (Power, Intimacy, and the State conference, the Netherlands, 2017), and Albert (European Conference on Conversation Analysis, The Netherlands, 2020).

As further evidence of recognition and influence, **a number of our research outputs have received prestigious awards**. Robles won the Top Paper award in the ICA Language and Social Interaction division for five years in a row (2012-16), Vaccari and Chadwick won the 2015 Walter Lippmann Best Article Award from APSA's Political Communication Section, and Vaccari won the APSA award for the Best Article in Information Technology and Politics published in

2016. Chadwick's *The Hybrid Media System* was the winner of the 2014 Best Book Award of the American Political Science Association Information Technology and Politics Section and the *International Journal of Press/Politics* Best Book Award (2016), which recognises an outstanding book on media and politics published in the previous ten years.

Further examples of recognition include **prestigious distinguished positions, fellowships, and awards**. Murdock and Tufte were elected as members of the Film, Media and Visual Studies section of the Academia Europeana (in 2016 and 2019), Peel was elected Fellow of the British Psychological Association (2016), Štětka received the 2019 Czech Science Foundation President's Award for outstanding scientific achievements, and Tufte received the INTERCOM award from for his contribution to advancing communication research in Latin America, Africa and Europe (2019).

Our Unit members contribute extensively to the research base as **peer review college members and peer reviewers** for a range of national and international research bodies, book publishers, and journals. Since 2014, our staff contributed peer reviews for all major UK research funding bodies in social sciences and humanities, and for national funding bodies from 14 EU countries, Canada, Australia, US, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Africa, Turkey, New Zealand, Peru, and Colombia. We have also significantly increased our presence on grant assessment panels and peer review colleges; four colleagues serve on the ESRC Peer Review College (Downey, 2010-; Nyhagen and Tacchi, 2015-; Tileaga, 2018-), four on the AHRC Peer Review College (Belfiore, 2012-19; Keightley and Mihelj, 2017-; Nyhagen, 2020-), and Downey was appointed to the ESRC's Grants Assessment Panel (2019-2023).

We contribute to our research communities by **organising workshops, symposia and conferences**. Since 2014, we have co-organised over 60 events in 14 countries. These include the largest conferences in our field (IAMCR, ECREA); subject-leading conferences including the International Journal of Press/Politics conferences (2018, 2019, 2020, hosted at Loughborough) and the International Conference on Conversation Analysis (ICCA, 2018, hosted at Loughborough) and numerous other events, including Conversation Analysis and Clinical Encounters (CACE, 2015) and ICA pre-conferences on Global Media and Populism (2018, Hungary) and Visual Politics (2020, Australia).

Our staff have also served as **editors of 15 journals and four book series, and as Editorial Board members for over 90 journals and 12 book series**. The journals we edit include leading outlets internationally, enabling us to shape our field across the full range of our expertise: *International Journal of Press/Politics* (Vaccari as Editor, 2019-), *Research on Language and Social Interaction* (Antaki as Editor, 2010-), *Media, Culture & Society* (Keightley as Editor, 2012-), and *Cultural Trends* (Belfiore as Co-Editor in Chief, 2020-). Our staff also edit important book series, including the Oxford Studies in Digital Politics (Oxford UP, Chadwick, 2010-present), New Directions in Cultural Policy Research (Palgrave, Belfiore, 2015-), Gender and Sexualities in Psychology (Routledge, Peel and Stokoe, 2017-present) and Palgrave Studies in Discursive Psychology (Palgrave, Tileaga and Stokoe, 2018-present).

Taken together, our collective service as editors, conference organisers, and peer reviewers is evidence of recognition and provides important mechanisms though which we shape future directions in our field.