

<b>Institution: Brunel University London</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 21 – Sociology</b>
<b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b>

Brunel Sociology is a dynamic, ambitious academic community of 20 staff with international roots and a global perspective. It examines core sociological issues through a distinctive cultural and media sociology lens, with an emphasis on societal and political relevance. Through three strategic research clusters, staff work across disciplinary and institutional boundaries, advancing theoretical agendas, while generating public engagement and impact on social and cultural policy and practice, nationally and internationally. Our work is highly collaborative and methodologically innovative. Since 2014, we have applied sociological concepts to contemporary societal shifts including plastic pollution, social cash transfers in Africa, cultured meat and France's *gilets jaunes* movement. Investment in new areas of agenda-setting research such as digital culture and critical criminology is helping shape the future of UK sociology. Our progress since REF2014 is reflected in an expansion from 12 to 19.6 FTE, and a trebling of both PhD graduations (from 7 to 20) and external research income (from £800k to £2.7M, or £1.1M to £4.8M fEC). UKRI funding has increased 20-fold.

All 20 staff belong to the Division of Social Science and Communication. Research focuses around three interconnected strategic clusters. Each member belongs to one primary cluster and usually a secondary cluster, which promotes synergy and coherence across our research:

***Cultural production and creative processes (Primary: Coggins, De Benedictis, Henderson, Howarth, Ingravalle, Lockyer, Malik, Moody, Sharma, Weaver. Secondary: Degen, Jones, Ozduzen, Ozgul, Riesch, Roberts, Stephens, Wilkin.)***

Our research on cultural production examines difference and inequality across social structures and how diverse groups resist their representation. Linking UK and international contexts, our work spans cultural forms from comedy to architecture. This research is distinguished by theoretically and methodologically distinctive approaches that are public and industry facing, collaborative and often co-designed with non-academic partners. We construct analytical work that is both about cultural production and informed by the creative processes of its development.

***Bodies, technologies and conflict (Primary: Degen, Jones, Stephens. Secondary: Coggins, De Benedictis, Henderson, Howarth, Lockyer, Sharma, Weaver.)***

Society is lived, communicated and experienced through bodies. Through this premise we explore myriad interactions between bodies, environments and technologies as sites of social change and conflict. We study body modifications, body politics, dance, experiential geographies, resistances and technologies (digital, robotic and urban). Our research examines classic sociological concerns such as gender, race and class, and contemporary challenges including “big tissue”, gender performativity, and digital urban transformations.

***Control and responses to control (Primary: Ansell, Ozduzen, Ozgul, Peyrefitte, Riesch, Roberts, Wilkin. Secondary: Ingravalle, Malik, Moody.)***

This cluster's research examines social control through, for instance, state and corporate regimes of (digital) surveillance, urban governance and social, environmental and education policy. Research also attends to modes of resistance to marginalisation and disenfranchisement such as activism, and creative participatory responses such as alternative

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media projects. Emergent technologies are explored as drivers of change in the nature of politics and work. Cluster members focus on multiple scales from the politics of urban space to global agendas shaping social policy and education systems. Often working alongside activists, research is empirically innovative and engages theoretical approaches including anarchist social theory, world systems theory and decolonial theory.

## ACHIEVEMENT OF STRATEGIC AIMS FOR RESEARCH AND IMPACT DURING THE ASSESSMENT PERIOD

The key objectives set out in 2014 were:

### ***to maintain the highest standards of academic excellence in research, enabling increased knowledge transfer and impact***

Since 2014, research by Brunel Sociologists has generated strong outputs and impact. Current staff have published 34 books (Jones' *Beautyscapes* and Coggins' *Mysticism, Ritual and Religion in Drone Metal* both won prestigious prizes detailed below), 243 journal articles and 103 book chapters, with over 1000 citations. We have organised seven international conferences and delivered keynotes in 17 countries. Our growing focus on knowledge transfer beyond the academy has engendered many forms of engagement (see Section 4), involving almost every staff member. Our research impact is indicated by the two case studies submitted and, for instance, Ansell's £50k ESRC-DFID follow-on-funding award with Lesotho's teacher training institutions to transform teacher education for rural children (activity delayed by COVID-19).

### ***to expand our research collaborations and diversify and increase our external grant income***

Since 2014, we have developed or expanded collaborations with academic partners, major institutional research users and grassroots organisations, across the UK and internationally. Scopus analysis shows 61% of Brunel's Sociology publications from 2013-18 had international co-authors. Our collaborations have helped secure a trebling of research income (£2.7M to Brunel Sociology PIs) from sources including ESRC-DFID, AHRC, Wellcome, Leverhulme, British Academy, Arts Council for England and Film London. Malik, for instance, led a consortium including Queens University Belfast, Sussex, Strathclyde, Sheffield Hallam and community partners in England, Northern Ireland, India and Palestine to win AHRC funding for her "Creative Interruptions" project (£1.2M). Similarly, Ansell's ESRC-DFID-funded project, "Education Systems, Aspiration and Learning" (£595k) involved academic collaborators from the Netherlands, Scotland and Lesotho, Plan International and Gram Mitra, an Indian NGO. Brunel Sociologists have also secured six significant fellowships: Leverhulme Mid-Career (Sharma, Roberts), British Academy Mid-Career (Degen), Wellcome Trust (Stephens) and Leverhulme Early Career (Ingravalle with Malik, Coggins with Weaver). Projects are detailed in Section 3.

## STRATEGIES THROUGH WHICH WE HAVE ACHIEVED THESE AIMS

Sociology's successes are attributable to a comprehensive strategic approach. Framing our planning processes, a Departmental Director of Research (currently Malik) and College Research Strategy Group develop strategies, facilitate collaborative research and ensure alignment with University aims. Financial, development and management resources are provided at institutional level (see Section 3). Strategies supporting staff and doctoral researchers feature in Section 2.

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### 1. Promoting reflection on research directions

Core to our strategic approach are mechanisms to promote individual and collective reflection.

**Annual research away days:** The entire team gathers off-campus to review and reflect on progress, develop strategy and policies, propose new initiatives (e.g. the mentoring scheme below) and plan events.

**Research mentoring:** Every team member is mentored by a professor or reader, meeting termly to discuss progress and plans for research and impact. Mentoring support has encouraged mentees to plan more strategically and to apply (successfully) for funding. Mentors meet collectively to review issues and develop support measures.

**Work-in-progress seminars:** At monthly seminars, two Brunel Sociologists present work for feedback. These have led to publications including Coggins' forthcoming chapter on irony in black metal music culture.

### 2. Facilitating interdisciplinary collaborations

Brunel Sociology values interdisciplinary research as a creative way to address challenges. We have participated enthusiastically in University initiatives.

**The Institute for Environment, Health and Societies** is one of three Research Institutes established in 2014 with cross-College membership to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration. Ansell, De Benedictis, Degen, Howarth, Henderson and Lockyer are active members.

Outcomes include:

Degen's seminar series on "Exploring Digital and Sensory Methods" with colleagues from Education and Occupational Therapy.

Ansell's project on "Education Systems, Aspiration and Learning" with Froerer (Anthropology).

Henderson's forthcoming NERC/GCRF project with Jobling (Environment).

**The Global Lives Research Centre** is a College Research Centre established in 2017 to nurture interdisciplinary research that improves social, cultural and economic lives locally, nationally and internationally. Directed by Jones, it includes ten Sociologists. Internal funding of £130k has been deployed to support external grant applications, pilot projects, research clusters, international and national networking, and an annual international visiting professor.

Outcomes include:

The Science, Technology and Society cluster (led by Stephens) ran a one-day conference and published three papers.

The Immersion/Presence cluster (co-led by Moody) resulted in a journal article on virtual reality filmmaking and a VR film for an on-campus event and symposium.

The Vagina Network (led by De Benedictis and Jones) organised "The Travelling Vagina Workshops", bringing 30 artists, activists, academics and medics together to conceive and plan vagina artefacts.

The Deep Fakes cluster (led by Moody and Howarth) is developing a grant application and has produced a journal article.

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Weaver's International Collaboration Award for "Satire, Populism and Brexit" with Raul Perez (University of Denver) led Facebook to consult him on their approach to humour and satire.

Henderson's International Collaboration Award for "Plastic Pollution in Nigeria" resulted in a published article and book chapter with a Nigerian co-author.

**The Centre for Comedy Studies Research** (CCSR), directed by Lockyer, is the only international research centre focusing on the production, content, reception and socio-political implications of comedy. It comprises leading academics, writers and practitioners from Sociology, Communications, Political Science, Film and Television, Theatre, English, Creative Writing, Business and Management, Psychology and Social Work. Winning competitive University-wide Research Seminar Series Awards annually since 2013 (£15k in funding), it has collaborated with Brunel's Magna Carta Institute, Education and Social Work to organise seven "Beyond a Joke" seminars at Leicester Comedy Festival (collaborating with the Big Difference Company) and events at the Edinburgh Fringe.

### 3. Facilitating grant capture

The Research Support and Development Office (RSDO) helps staff develop and strengthen funding applications (see Section 3). Grant applications also benefit from systematic peer review at College (or in the case of the ESRC, institutional) level, and preparation for interviews. Stephens, for instance, had two practice interviews for his Wellcome Fellowship.

### 4. Supporting knowledge transfer and enabling impact

Brunel Sociologists are committed to ensuring their research contributes meaningfully to society. Through University mechanisms (see Section 3) and more local strategies, we have boosted knowledge transfer to academic and non-academic audiences, securing impact on policy and practice.

**Conference and research support:** An annual budget averaging £600 per staff member funds conference presentation and minor research costs. Ozduzen, for instance, was funded to attend a MeCCSA conference where she met scholars from Brighton and two Turkish universities. The resulting collaboration secured a £45k AHRC UK-Turkey Creative Industries Networking Grant for "5GXR—Exploring the Potential for 5G for the Games and Performing Arts Sectors". De Benedictis' Sociological Review Foundation award (£6k) to run a Welfare Imaginaries seminar series was supplemented, enabling her to employ a facilitator to compile contributions into an online zine, raising the series' prominence. Moody received funding to visit to a US archive to research his EMI monograph.

**Book writing workshops:** Through Global Lives, Jones established fortnightly College-wide workshops during summer 2018. Monographs completed include Moody's *EMI Films and the Limits of British Cinema* (published Nov 2018) and Jones' *Beautyscapes* (2019).

### 5. Building a responsible and equitable research culture

Brunel Sociologists are committed to undertaking ethical, non-exploitative research and making outcomes publicly available. Research integrity training is mandatory, and researchers secure ethical approval for all work with human subjects. Open access publication is encouraged, with funding for Gold Open Access, a dedicated team within the library and a requirement to upload publications to Brunel's open access repository. CWTS Leiden 2019 ranks social sciences and humanities at Brunel 3rd of 45 UK institutions and 9th of 963 institutions globally in the extent to

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which research articles are available open access. Where appropriate, data is also made accessible. Data from Ansell's ESRC-DFID-funded projects, for instance, is deposited with the UK Data Archive.

## FUTURE STRATEGIC AIMS AND GOALS FOR RESEARCH AND IMPACT

We will continue to pursue a productive mix of applied and practice-based approaches, alongside more theoretical work. While our work will be rooted in our three clusters, we will also work across them and expand our collaborations with other disciplines, institutions and research users.

### ***Cultural production and creative processes***

We will extend our work on **difference and inequality in cultural production**, and establish **new collaborations**. Malik, for instance, is Co-I on a forthcoming AHRC project: "The Colour of Diversity: A Longitudinal Analysis of BFI Diversity Standards Data and Racial Inequality in the UK Film Industry" (£937k), working with the BFI, the Cabinet Office's Race Disparity Unit and the Guardian. Others plan to examine **COVID's impacts on the cultural sector**. Degen, for instance, will explore the future of cultural institutions with The Museum of London (funding from Arts Council England) and Coggins' Leverhulme fellowship will now address post-COVID responses in popular music.

We will develop and promote our expertise in **collaborative research design**, extending well-established networks with non-academic partners to explore new creative methodologies. Our co-production agenda complements the work of Sociology's **decolonising** working group, strengthening its intellectual and political force. We will further this goal through a conference or seminar series. Partnering with organisations will also diversify our sources of research income in a challenging funding environment.

The **TECHNE DTP** is a further route through which we will develop new industry collaborations and grow our doctoral research profile.

### ***Control and responses to control***

We will deepen our focus on **social and political movements**. Roberts, for instance, is editing a special issue on the topic for *Capital and Class* alongside new projects on Momentum activism and free speech activism. Future work explores **reactionary activism**, including Ozduzen's PSA/Global Lives-funded pilot study on the motivations and social identity of anti-lockdown protestors, Sharma's Leverhulme Fellow (2021-4) working on "Affective whiteness: racializing Hungarian national identity" and Coggins' examination of far-right symbolism in extreme metal music culture.

Relatedly, Brunel's investment in our new Criminology degree, the recruitment of Peyrefitte in 2019 and two further posts in 2021 will support emerging work on **critical criminology**. Ozduzen will lead a work package on a €3m H2020 grant on "De-Radicalisation in Europe and Beyond".

### ***Bodies, technologies and conflict***

Jones has been appointed Director of the **Institute of Communities and Society**, Brunel's latest (fifth) interdisciplinary research institute. With Sociologists at its core, this major investment, will stimulate new research agendas. Among planned initiatives, Jones is pursuing funding for a Leverhulme Centre on Intersections, Wellbeing, Inequalities and the Lifecourse.



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Plastics are of growing societal significance. Henderson's new **Sustainable PLasticS research** (SPLaSH) group links Sociologists with colleagues from Environmental Sciences, Design and Engineering, supporting three new projects on which Henderson is Co-I: "A Systems Analysis Approach to Reduce Plastic Waste in Indonesian Societies" (NERC/GCRF £3.8m), "Providing the 30% Recycled Content for Food Packing" (NERC £453k) and "Plastic-less Society" (European Space Agency €200k).

### **Digital culture**

This emerging focus cross-cuts all three clusters. De Benedictis, Degen, Howarth, Lockyer, Ozduzen, Ozgul, Roberts and Sharma are developing projects on digital culture and will be complemented by two new lectureships in 2021 (in "digital work and society" and "digital communication and journalism"). Roberts, for instance, is commissioned to write a monograph on "Social Class and Digital Work" and exploring how Momentum activists and COVID community volunteers use digital media for organising. Degen is co-authoring a monograph entitled "A New Urban Aesthetic: experiencing urban change digitally". Howarth is seeking external funding for work on CGI-Deep Fake technologies. The **Institute of Digital Futures**, Brunel's fourth research institute, launched in October 2020, builds on Sociology's existing portfolio and will foster interdisciplinary and industry collaboration to develop new intellectual agendas and generate impact.

## 2. People

### STAFFING STRATEGY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Our staffing and staff development strategies underpin our achievements. Since REF2014 the University has supported strategic appointments to consolidate and extend the strengths of our three research clusters: *Cultural production and creative processes* (Moody and De Benedictis); *Bodies, technologies and conflict* (Jones); and *Control and responses to control* (Peyrefitte, Ozduzen and Ozgul). Four further posts will be filled in 2021 (delayed due to COVID-19) and three postdoctoral fellows will transition to permanent lectureships (see below).

Sociology's recruitment policy reflects a concern with vitality and sustainability. We have adopted an explicit policy of recruiting preferentially to early career positions to enhance long-term sustainability. Of the six new staff, four were appointed as lecturers, one senior lecturer and one reader. They replaced professors (Seale, Williams and Wainwright) and a reader (Armstrong). Meanwhile, existing staff have been promoted (see below), ensuring sustainable leadership. Two staff (De Benedictis and Ozduzen) were appointed on temporary contracts covering periods of externally-funded research leave. De Benedictis, whose 3-year post was associated with Malik's AHRC grant, benefited from the support available to early career researchers and has been promoted to a permanent senior lectureship. Moody, appointed on a teaching-only contract in 2014, was promoted to senior lecturer on a teaching and research contract in 2017 and has since published his first monograph. The Unit has also expanded to include Ansell, transferred from Social Work in 2016 and Howarth from Journalism (now within the Division). Having just one lecturer on a temporary contract (renewed to cover a second research fellowship) both enhances stability and facilitates planning. All outputs submitted to REF2021 are authored by *current* Brunel Sociology staff, which attests to our vitality.

Staff development is promoted in various ways. All staff are supported through the Performance Development Review cycle. Through biannual meetings with a designated reviewer, staff reflect on

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their activities, develop targets and consider career development needs. Training is available from multiple sources within the University. The Department Director of Research, grant writing workshops, our research mentoring scheme and internal peer review provide valuable support (see Section 1).

Eleven staff have benefitted from Research Leave, Knowledge Transfer Leave (see Section 3) and Sabbaticals since 2014. Brunel invites applications for specific programmes of activity; the absence of strict requirements for intervals between periods of leave makes the system responsive to opportunities. £93k of internal funding for teaching relief has enabled staff to focus on high quality research and impact activities.

Staff are encouraged to apply for externally-funded fellowships. Degen secured a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship for her project “Timescapes of Urban Change”. Leverhulme Fellowships were awarded to Sharma for “The Ecology of Digital Racism” and Roberts for “The Spatial Governance of Free Speech” (see Section 3). Introducing a more flexible undergraduate programme made it easier to release staff from teaching commitments to undertake research.

These support mechanisms have enabled staff to make successful funding applications, undertake high quality research and produce significant outputs and impact. Many have thereby met promotion criteria. Of the nine staff remaining from REF2014, Riesch and Weaver have been promoted to Senior Lecturer; Degen, Henderson, Lockyer, Roberts and Sharma to Reader; and Malik to Professor. New arrivals Moody and De Benedictis have also been promoted to Senior Lecturer.

## POSTDOCTORAL AND EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

Postdoctoral researchers are important within Brunel Sociology and, in contrast to REF2014, our current submission includes three independent postdoctoral researchers (Stephens, Ingravalle and Coggins). Brunel actively solicits promising researchers to work with academics to develop proposals to submit to fellowship schemes. Ingravalle and Coggins were selected and supported to secure Leverhulme Early Career Fellowships. Stephens joined Sociology as a PDRA but subsequently secured a prestigious Wellcome Trust fellowship. All three now have permanent contracts with Brunel: when their fellowships expire they will become lecturers.

Postdoctoral researchers since 2014 include Dumbili whose Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness Mildred Blaxter Postdoctoral Fellowship (2016-7) allowed him to write eight articles from his PhD on media consumption, alcohol and sexual risk behaviour. The Centre for Comedy Studies Research has hosted two fully-funded international postdoctoral researchers: Higgie (Australian Endeavour Research Fellowship 2015-6) and Pare (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2016-8). Their work at Brunel generated four academic publications. When applying for research grants, staff are encouraged to incorporate postdoctoral researchers. Six such researchers have been affiliated to Brunel Sociology since 2014. Our postdoctoral fellows enhance the interdisciplinary research environment, bringing experience from, for instance, Religious Studies and Music (Coggins) and Film Studies (Ingravalle).

Brunel Sociology implements the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Postdoctoral researchers are integrated into Sociology through, for instance, presenting at and attending seminars. They discuss career development formally with a mentor and are supported in writing for publication (those on funded projects co-author articles). Besides support from Sociology, the Graduate School provides continual professional development through

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its Researcher Development Programme, aligned to the national Researcher Development Framework. The College Early Career and Researcher Development Series delivers four events a term, focusing on securing research income and achieving impact. Supported by these mechanisms, Stephens secured his own Wellcome fellowship. Others have progressed to academic careers elsewhere. Vrikki, for instance, a Research Fellow on Malik's AHRC "Creative Interruptions" project, obtained a Lectureship in Digital Media and Culture at KCL.

**Other ECR support:** Reduced teaching and administrative loads are mandatory for probationary staff. This enabled De Benedictis to win a Brunel Research Initiative and Enterprise Fund award for her "Period Poverty" research during her probationary period. This relieved her entirely of teaching for a term, enabling her to make two external funding bids (Wellcome Trust and AHRC) and build a reputation around period poverty. Consequently, she has been invited to join the Government Equalities Office's Period Poverty Taskforce, Plan International/Brook's Let's Talk. Period network, to advise on Plan International's 2019 *State of Girls' Rights in the UK* report and to speak at six conferences and third sector events.

Our support for ECRs also builds capacity in the Global South. Ansell worked with ECR co-investigators from two African institutions on her ESRC-DFID-funded project on social cash transfers. Henderson hosted two Association of Commonwealth Universities Blue Charter Fellowships (£20k) through which researchers from Sri Lanka and Nigeria were trained and mentored in researching socio-cultural ideas about plastics waste.

## DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS

Twenty doctoral researchers have been awarded PhDs since 2014, compared with 7 in the previous REF period. We currently supervise 12 students. Eleven current Sociology staff have supervised doctoral researchers, who are recruited through several channels. Some seek out specific supervisors; four current students are graduates of Brunel's taught programmes; others are attracted by interest in our research.

We participate in the TECHNE AHRC DTP which currently funds two of our doctoral researchers: Jaspreet Nijjar (supervised by Jones and Malik); and Tom Butler (supervised by Degen, Moody and Lauren Parker at the Museum of London). Gabrielle Samuels was funded through the Wellcome Trust's London & Brighton Translational Ethics Centre. Elaine de Vos (based in Sport), supervised by Stephens, has an ESRC Grand Union DTP studentship. Brunel also offers studentships, enabling doctoral researchers to undertake work that adds value to funded research projects. Laura Batatota's research complemented Ansell's ESRC-DFID "Education Systems, Aspiration and Learning" project, and Aditi Jaganathan works on "Black Audio-Visual Culture and Coloniality" within Malik's "Creative Interruptions" project.

Supervision and support of doctoral researchers is governed by the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees. All doctoral researchers have two academic supervisors and a Researcher Development Advisor who supports their broader development as a researcher, ensuring they develop skills for an academic career. Training is provided by both the Graduate School and College, with programmes combining generic and highly bespoke training. Progression requirements are applied strictly through panel meetings at 4 weeks, 9, 20 and 30 months for full-time students (or equivalent part-time). The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey indicates satisfaction among Brunel's Social Studies students 4.9% above the UK benchmark.



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Doctoral researchers are supported both to publish (as sole and co-authors) and achieve impact from their research. Jasbinder Nijjar, for instance, has eight articles in refereed journals, articles for the Institute of Race Relations and, drawing on his research, worked with the local Southall community to secure plaques to honour local anti-racist activists and bring discussion of Southall's anti-racist history to local classrooms.

Doctoral researchers have achieved noteworthy outcomes. Gabrielle Samuels secured a Wellcome Trust "Ethics and Society" Postdoctoral Fellowship with the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology and currently holds a postdoctoral position at KCL. Emeka Dumbili has secured consecutively a Mildred Blaxter postdoctoral award, a Humboldt Foundation Georg Forster Research Fellowship and an ACU Blue Charter Fellowship. Evelyn Callahan secured a research post at the OU prior to thesis submission.

**PROMOTING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

Brunel gives great emphasis to equality and diversity and has appointed Department Directors of Equality and Diversity with equivalent status to Directors of Research and of Education. In this role, Lockyer sits on the Department Management Board and contributes to the strategic development, implementation and monitoring of Brunel's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) strategy. All new staff are required to attend equality and diversity training and to formally update their knowledge annually. Departmental strategies include monitoring teaching workloads for equity. Members of Department promotion panels and recruitment panels are required to complete ED&I training.

To further our equality agenda, Brunel participates in the UK Aurora Programme for women in leadership (Henderson). Colleagues provide mentoring through the BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) London Universities Mentoring Scheme (Malik), Brunel's Women's Mentoring Scheme (Ansell) and a Feminist Studies Association Mentoring Programme (founded by FSA Co-Chair, De Benedictis). Degen has co-organised university-wide workshops within Brunel's "Success for All" initiative that encourages women, BAME, LGBTQ+ and disabled colleagues to consider applying for promotion. Whereas 41.7% of staff in Sociology's REF2014 submission were female, 60% of the current submission are female, including both professors and four of the seven readers, a change partly attributable to these measures.

Our doctoral researchers, too, are highly diverse. There is usually a near equal male-female balance, with some identifying as non-binary. Currently 45% of the students are Asian, 27% white and 9% black. 31% come from outside the UK (from Europe, North America, Central Africa, Southern Africa, the Middle East and Asia). 9% have declared disabilities. 54% are aged 30+.

Brunel, as a research-intensive university, is submitting 100% of eligible academic staff. We followed the processes set out in our Code of Practice for the fair and transparent identification of independent researchers and to ensure that the submitted outputs provided a balanced and unbiased representation of the work of our diverse academic community, their characteristics and contractual positions (age, disability, race, sex, part-time workers and fixed-term employees). Output selection was monitored through regular Equality Impact Assessments.

Our Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the outputs submitted for Sociology are a well-balanced representation of the protected characteristics and contractual positions of staff. This includes 10% of staff of Asian ethnicity contributing 12% of the outputs and 5% of staff on part-time contracts contributing 10% of the outputs. The 25% of staff aged 30-39 and the 30% aged 40-49

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contribute 13% and 24% of the outputs respectively. The 45% of staff aged 50-59 contribute 63% of the outputs and the 15% of staff on fixed-term contracts contribute 7% of the outputs. This distribution partly reflects the fact that some ECR staff have only recently begun to publish from their research. The strategies outlined above will support them to publish more high-quality research over coming years.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

#### RESEARCH FUNDING AND STRATEGIES FOR GENERATING INCOME

We have increased our external research income more than 3-fold since REF2014. Sociology PIs have been awarded £2.7M of external research funding, £1.6M of this from Research Councils (ESRC £940k, AHRC £630k). (This compares with £83k awarded by Research Councils reported in REF2014.) Most of the remainder was awarded by the Wellcome Trust (£480k), Leverhulme (£377k) and British Academy (£111k).

This income generation success is attributable to the strategies outlined in Section 1 (annual away days, mentoring, work-in-progress seminars; involvement in University Research Institutes, College Research Centres and University Research Centres to facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations; drawing on RSDO to facilitate grant capture; supporting knowledge transfer and impact and building a responsible and equitable research culture) and Section 2 (strategic staff appointments; supporting promotion; research and knowledge transfer leave; encouragement to apply for fellowships; funding and teaching relief for ECRs; support for doctoral researchers; and promotion of equality and diversity). It has also been facilitated by our use of institutional infrastructure (see below).

#### MAJOR AND PRESTIGIOUS EXTERNAL GRANT AWARDS

Eight colleagues have secured three major research grants as PIs and six prestigious fellowships.

***Creative Interruptions: Grassroots Creativity, State Structures and Disconnection as a Space for 'Radical Openness'*** (AHRC £25k plus £1.2M, of which £555k was awarded to Brunel). Enabled in part by a Brunel-funded pilot study, Malik led a consortium of academics, community partners and international collaborators spanning mainland UK, Northern Ireland, Palestine and India to examine how creative acts have agitated for social change. The project co-produced, with marginalised communities and community partners, a major theatre production with a 10-day run at the Lyric, Belfast (and 4 other Northern Ireland venues), three films, and an art festival in rural Punjab.

***Education Systems, Aspiration and Learning in Remote Rural Settings*** (ESRC-DFID £595k). Ansell led a team of researchers from the UK, Netherlands, India, Laos and Lesotho, plus NGO partners, to explore how education shapes children's aspirations and in turn how their aspirations shape their engagement with schooling through ethnographic research in India, Laos and Lesotho. The team have so far published 5 papers in peer reviewed journals focusing on encounters with globalised schooling in remote rural places. Follow-on-funding (£50k) will enable impact-focused collaboration with Lesotho's teacher education institutions.

***Social Cash Transfers, Generational Relations and Youth Poverty Trajectories in Rural Lesotho and Malawi (ESRC-DFID £300k).*** Ansell led researchers from the UK, Sweden, Lesotho and Malawi to research how social cash transfers affect relations within and between households in rural communities, and the impacts on young people's poverty trajectories. The participatory ethnographic approach generated data that support a move from poverty-targeted to universal transfers, which has stimulated interest among government and non-governmental agencies in the region and internationally.

***Timescapes of Urban Change (British Academy £111k).*** Degen's Mid-Career Fellowship explored how diverse timescapes converge or conflict in urban regeneration processes across structural and experiential levels to produce particular senses of place. Two public events and academic workshops were held at the Centro de Cultura Contemporanea in Barcelona and UCL Urban Lab. The funding led to three academic articles and a research collaboration with the Museum of London to map the temporal and sensory identity of Smithfield Market, the museum's new location.

***Big Tissue and Society (Wellcome Trust £261k).*** Stephens' Research Fellowship analyses three case studies of the mass production of human and animal tissue: cultured blood, cultured skin and cultured meat. The project develops the notion of "Big Tissue" as an analytical framework for assessing the socio-politics of these biotechnological innovations that renders explicit the economic, ontological, and cultural issues of each case, and of Big Tissue as an emergent category. This builds on Stephens' earlier postdoctoral research at Brunel and attests to the University's outstanding support for the development of ECRs.

***The Ecology of Digital Racism (Leverhulme £50k).*** Sharma's Research Fellowship examines the entanglements of racism between users, interfaces, algorithms and digital platforms. The funding is supporting the publication of a monograph that offers an innovative approach to analysing the proliferation of online racisms that are increasingly difficult to challenge.

***The Spatial Governance of Free Speech at Hyde Park, 1945 to 2017 (Leverhulme £55k).*** Roberts' Research Fellowship investigates the spatial exercise, design, and governance of free speech at Speakers' Corner, London from the socio-political regime of post-war welfare governance of public parks to the transition in the early 1980s to neoliberal governance of the so-called 'quasi-public' realm. This is one of the first studies in the UK devoted solely to exploring both empirically and theoretically the sociology of free speech.

***Whose Film Heritage? Postcolonial Perspectives on Film Archives and Museums (Leverhulme £86k).*** Ingravalle's Early Career Fellowship (mentored by Malik) focuses on the acquisition, preservation and (analogue and digital) exhibition of archival footage that documents imperial, colonial and post-independence histories. (£54k COVID-19 extension awarded.)

***Ambiguity, Controversy, and the Politics of Marginal Religiosity in Black Metal (Leverhulme £93k).*** Coggins' Early Career Fellowship (mentored by Weaver) builds on his PhD research, producing ethnographic evidence and theoretical frameworks for understanding audience engagements with extreme and marginal musical cultures.

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**LINKS BETWEEN RESEARCH FUNDING AND HIGH-QUALITY OUTPUTS AND IMPACT**

91 of our 2014-20 publications report findings from funded research. In some cases, the research was undertaken in the previous REF period or before the authors joined Brunel. External funding to Brunel Sociology since 2014 has so far led to 4 papers from Ansell's "Education Systems, Aspiration and Learning", 3 from Degen's British Academy Fellowship, 3 from Malik's "Creative Interruptions" and 15 from Stephens' various projects. These include, for instance, Stephens' highly cited review on cultured meat in *Trends in Food Science and Technology* and Degen's "Timescapes of Urban Change" in the *Sociological Review*.

Degen's impact case study is rooted in funded research, in particular her AHRC networking grant "Sensory Cities" which facilitated collaborations with the Museum of London, Cologne City Museum, Centro de Cultura Contemporanea de Barcelona and the respective city councils and is shaping the urban landscape in Barcelona and London. Ansell's research, too, is enabling ongoing collaboration with Lesotho's training institutions to transform teacher education. Stephens' research has informed debate on cultured meat in 10 Downing Street, the European Parliament, the US Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration. Malik's research has led to theatre productions, films and an arts festival in the UK and India.

**ORGANISATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND IMPACT**

**Research Development Fund (RDF):** RSDO provides funding to develop networks and pilot projects to assist external grant capture. Malik's RDF award supported her successful AHRC application for a Research Development Award for her "Creative Interruptions" research. This led, in turn, to an AHRC Large Consortia Connected Communities Grant (£1.2M). Degen secured RDF funding to collaborate with the Museum of London on "Sensory Explorations of West Smithfield". She wrote a report and organised three training/feedback seminars for museum staff and architects involved in its relocation to Smithfield. The findings were incorporated in the masterplan for the new museum and in planning the surrounding urban environment. The project also led to an AHRC TECHNE collaborative doctoral award in partnership with the museum. De Benedictis was recently awarded £2.6k from the RDF to facilitate her application for an AHRC Early Career Grant on "Mediations of Menstruation".

**Research Seminar Series Awards:** Internal funding is available on a competitive basis for the organisation of seminar series, nine of which (worth £17k) have been awarded to Sociology staff since 2014. These include awards to the Centre for Comedy Studies Research (mentioned above). Malik and Degen currently have funding from this scheme to organise a one-day symposium: "A New Urban Museum?" with the Museum of London (part of the London Architecture Festival).

**Knowledge Transfer Awards:** Three staff have been awarded funding and teaching relief through this scheme. Ansell spent a term engaging with policymakers in Lesotho, India and Laos, discussing how her research on education and aspiration could translate into changes in policy and practice. This led to a successful ESRC-DFID Follow-on Funding application in collaboration with colleagues at the National University of Lesotho and Lesotho College of Education. She also organised an international interdisciplinary conference on "Theorising Young People's Aspirations in a Global Context" which led to three journal special issues.

Henderson's Knowledge Transfer Leave focused on engaging policymakers and industry concerning plastics. She used sociology insights to help PlasticsEurope develop communication

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

strategies enabling industry and policymakers to engage with audiences/users more effectively, and involved them in a successful bid to NERC for a project on smart sustainable plastics packaging (£453k led by Engineering). She also secured funding for high level public affairs internships, enabling Brunel students to work in Brussels for a year.

Peyrefitte's Knowledge Transfer Leave (postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19) will develop a long-term programme of participatory research and knowledge transfer activities with Barnett's Colindale Communities Trust (CCT). She will work with residents to better understand the demographic make-up of Grahame Park Estate and develop a theory of change. This aligns with Brunel's commitment to improving the lives of people, organisations and businesses in West London.

**Impact funding and support:** Impact is a focus of our regular research mentoring meetings. Researchers benefit from advice from a Research Impact Officer and Media Relations team, as well as the Knowledge Transfer Leave scheme and RDF funding. GCRF QR funding for impact enabled Ansell to return to Malawi and Lesotho to discuss her findings on social cash transfers with policymakers. This generated great interest and resulted in an invitation to address Lesotho's Ministry of Social Development.

**Library and digital infrastructure:** Through Brunel library, we access a wealth of electronic research resources including databases, journals and ebooks, a subject librarian who liaises closely with us, a copyright officer and data management support. Brunel's figshare account is used to share research data that is not deposited in other open access repositories. All publications are uploaded to Brunel University Research Archive which links to individual webpages, making our research more visible and accessible. Through impact tracking software we both learn and record how our research is making a difference.

**Media relations:** Sociology benefits from Brunel's media relations manager who advises on and assists with securing publicity for research, including writing press releases and for outlets such as *The Conversation*.

<b>4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society</b>
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Since 2014, we have fostered the excellence, distinctiveness and visibility of Brunel Sociology through empirically grounded, theoretically engaged, policy relevant research. All staff work collaboratively, and most have established international collaborations, often across disciplinary boundaries, and engaged public and/or policy communities. To achieve this, we draw on institutional support and create expectations through research awaydays and mentoring. In turn, collaboration and engagement builds the dynamism of our research environment.

## **RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS, NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Driven by strategies outlined in Section 1, we collaborate with academic and practice communities, locally, nationally and internationally. Our major research initiatives involve **international collaborations**. Ansell's ESRC-DFID funded "Education Systems, Aspiration and Learning", for instance, includes academic and NGO partners in the Netherlands, Scotland, Lesotho, Laos and India. Malik's AHRC-funded "Creative Interruptions" project involves collaborators in Pakistan, Palestine and Ireland.



## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

**Network creation** has been a prominent focus. Riesch is a founding member of the “Science in Public” research network. Degen’s AHRC-funded “Sensory Cities” network involves the Museum of London, Centro de Cultura Contemporanea de Barcelona and the Cologne City Museum. Ozduzen’s AHRC UK-Turkey Creative Industries Networking Grant focuses on 5G in games and performing arts. Henderson’s GCRF Mobility and Networking Grant developed collaborative work with sea turtle farmers in Sri Lanka.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH RESEARCH USERS

Lockyer **collaborated** with the Leicester Comedy Festival and Edinburgh Fringe Festival on events including “The Comedy Asylum”, a programme of Arts Council-funded workshops (£8k) with multiple partners (BrightSparks, The Bradgate Mental Health Unit, Big Difference Company, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust and Beauty and Utility Arts). Stephens co-founded “Cultivate”, the leading UK policy forum on cultured meat, hosting annual meetings since 2016 and producing reports. He was awarded £25k from Wellcome to run workshops with practitioners. Degen was co-investigator on the project “Women Involved in Street Sex Work in the UK” for U-Turn Women’s Centre (£30k). These collaborations have benefited the non-academic partners, and also strengthened our research, leading to several publications.

Our research has provoked numerous invitations to fulfil **advisory roles**. Ansell is on the **Impact Initiative** Strategic Planning and Advisory Group and chairs the board of **Global Justice Now**. De Benedictis is on the **Government Equalities Office’s** Period Poverty Taskforce. Henderson sits on the Creative Advisory Board of **Wastebuster CIC** and was a scientific adviser on “A Plastic Ocean” (**Netflix** 2017). Jones is on the **Vagina Museum’s** Advisory Board. Malik is a Trustee of the **Voice of the Listener and Viewer** as an expert on diversity and public service broadcasting. She is also a Curatorial Advisory Board Member for Unlocking Film Heritage with the **British Film Institute** (BFI) and an Advisory Panel Member for BFI’s Heritage 2020. Sharma is an Academic Board Member of the **Runnymede Trust** and on the Advisory Board for the **Ada Lovelace Institute’s** “Artificial Intelligence Racial Justice Fellowships”.

We also **address policy and practice audiences** concerning our research findings. Henderson has spoken about public attitudes to plastic pollution to **BEIS**, the **Foreign Office** and the **Commonwealth Secretariat**, and was keynote speaker at **Polytalk**, a major industry event. Degen hosted and organised the international conference “Sensory Cities”, bringing together 120 museum curators, urban planners, architects and academics. Ansell was invited by **Lesotho’s Ministry of Social Development** to present her research findings to 14 civil servants. Roberts spoke to **Outerspace Landscape Architects** on “Designing, Regulating and Governing Public Space and Public Parks”.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Brunel Sociology enthusiastically brings sociological work to **public audiences**. Jones hosted the first international conference on the Kardashians (*‘Kimposium’*), attracting over 100 participants and extensive media coverage. The Centre for Comedy Studies Research seminars are open to the public: their Sacha Baron Cohen symposium was covered by the THES and a Leicester Comedy Festival seminar was nominated for the festival’s **Make Me Happy Award** for Community Engagement.

**Brunel Public Lectures** have been delivered by six staff. Jones, for instance, lectured on “Online Beauty: Digital Challenges to Normative Ideals”. Moody organised a three-day public **film festival**

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

and lectures in West London on EMI's early film experiments (2014 and 2015) with audiences of 180 at each. Peyrefitte convened a **portrait exhibition** in Toulouse (*Habitantes d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*) as an alternative way of engaging the public with sociology.

Public audiences are also engaged through the **media**. Degen was interviewed on BBC R4 **Woman's Hour** on her report "Women involved in street sex work in the UK" and for BBC R4 **Thinking Allowed** on "Sensory Landscapes"; Roberts on **BBC London radio** about his research on Speakers' Corner; and De Benedictis by the **Canadian Broadcasting Corporation** on Love Island. Malik discussed Meghan Markle's representation in the press on **CH4 news**. Weaver's piece on "What is the point of offensive humour" for *The Conversation* has had 116,144 reads and was republished in the *Daily Mail Online*, Medicalxpress.com and *International Business Times*. Stephens' article for *The Conversation*: "Meat grown from cells" was reproduced in the *i Newspaper* (print), Yahoo News, Stuff.co.za and Science Ukraine. He has also been quoted in *The Times* and *The Grocer*. Jones has written for *The Guardian* ("What's wrong with studying the Kardashians?"). Roberts has written on free speech, comedy and politics for *Huffington Post*. Howarth co-wrote an op-ed for the *Weekly Bulletin of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles*. Henderson writes for the **BMJ blog**, *The Conversation* and is a founding editorial team member of the BSA **cost-of-living.net** blog.

## RESPONSIVENESS TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES

The extent to which our research speaks to issues of national and international importance is indicated by the frequency of invitations to give evidence to government bodies. Moody's chapter on Film4 was submitted to **House of Lords Communications Committee** on the privatisation of CH4 (2016) and his journal article on diversity in British cinema was submitted as evidence to a **House of Commons** inquiry into diversity in the media (2017). Henderson has served as a scientific consultant for **DEFRA** on marine pollution policy, as an expert participant in a **European Chief Scientific Advisors** workshop on "Environmental and Health Impacts of Microplastic Pollution", and contributed to a **UN Environment Programme** report on eliminating plastic litter commissioned by the **Government of Japan**. Stephens was invited to **10 Downing Street** for three meetings and a teleconference with a Special Advisor to David Cameron in 2016. He co-authored a briefing paper on UK cultured meat and his work was mentioned twice during an evidence-gathering event by the **US Department of Agriculture** and the **Food and Drug Administration**. His work was also cited 16 times (more than any other source) in the **Chatham House** Research Paper "Meat Analogues: Considerations for the EU" presented at the **European Parliament**. De Benedictis and Malik submitted evidence to the **DCMS** public inquiry into reality television and De Benedictis is on the **Government Equalities Office's** Period Poverty Taskforce. Jones gave evidence as an expert witness to the **Nuffield Council on Bioethics**. Weaver was consulted by **Facebook** resulting in a change in their definition of satire and policy on allowable forms of expression.

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY OF THE DISCIPLINE AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Brunel Sociologists have been active in advancing the discipline and its contribution to wider academia. Publication plays a prominent role. The 34 **books** published since 2014 include Wilkin's *Hungary's Crisis of Democracy* and *Worker Resistance and Media*, Roberts' *Digital Publics* and *New Media and Public Activism* and Ozgul's *Leading Protests in the Digital Age*. Some outputs have won **prizes**. Jones' *Beautyscapes* won the Foundation for the Sociology of Health and Illness 2020 Book Prize. Coggins' *Mysticism, Ritual and Religion in Drone Metal* was awarded the International Association for the Study of Popular Music Book Prize 2019. Degen's "The real

## Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

modernity that is here” won the 2016 Prize for Best Published Paper in *City and Society*. Ingravalle’s “Allegories of the past: Nitrate film’s aura in post-industrial Rochester, NY” was listed among *Screen’s* “Articles with Impact”, being the most read article of 2019.

We have organised major **international interdisciplinary conferences**: Roberts (with colleagues in Theatre) organised the International Artaud Forum 2015 Conference which attracted international speakers and performers; Riesch organised the 2015 “Science and Popular Culture Conference” at Klagenfurt, funded by the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology and Wissenschaftsverein Kaernten; Jones organised “The Body and Human Rights Symposium”, with the Knowing Our Rights Research Project and Britain in Europe think tank; Lockyer organised “Alternative Comedy Now” (University of Kent, 2019); Coggins was on the review and organising committees for Nordoff Robbins Plus International Research Conference, 2017. Degen is co-organising the TECHNE Doctoral Training Partnership annual Congress at Brunel in 2021.

We regularly host **international visitors** who contribute to the research culture through lectures, seminars and less formal activities. Professor Anne Cranny-Francis was Inaugural Visiting Professor, Global Lives Research Centre. (Emma Briant, the 2020 Global Lives Visiting Professor, was postponed due to COVID-19.) We have hosted two Blue Charter Fellows from Nigeria and Sri Lanka and 8 visiting PhD students from Brazil, Italy, Spain and Estonia.

## INDICATORS OF INFLUENCE, CONTRIBUTIONS TO AND RECOGNITION BY THE RESEARCH BASE

By developing and consolidating our international networks through exchanges and visits, we extend our sociological imagination. **Visiting positions** have been held by Ansell (Wollongong, Australia; Norwegian University of Science and Technology); Coggins (OU); Jones (UTS; Sydney; Leeds); Moody (Exeter); Ozduzen (Lund).

**Grant evaluation**: Brunel Sociologists have served on **peer review colleges** of the ESRC (Ansell), GCRF (Ansell), AHRC (Lockyer and Malik), AHRC Strategic Overseas Development Assistance College (Malik), European Science Foundation (Henderson); **programme commissioning panels** for the EPSRC (Henderson) and GCRF (Ansell); and as **reviewers** for the AHRC, EPSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC, British Academy, GCRF, COST, ERC, European Commission, European Cooperation in Science and Technology, Australian Research Council, Carnegie, Catalan Research Council, Dutch Heart Foundation, Icelandic Research Fund, Irish Scholarships Council, National Science Centre (Poland), Netherlands Organization for Health Research and Development, Social Sciences Research Council Canada, Swedish Institute and Research Foundation—Flanders.

**Editorships**: Ansell was **editor** of *Geoforum* until 2014; Sharma is a founding editor of *darkmatter*. Others edit **book series**: *Routledge Studies in Radical History and Politics* (Roberts); *Gender, Bodies and Transformations* (Routledge, Jones—founding editor); *Palgrave Studies in Comedy* (Lockyer—founding co-editor); *Children and Development* (Palgrave, Ansell).

**Editorial boards**: Ansell (*Geoforum*; *Children’s Geographies*); Degen (*Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*; *Journal of Urban Studies and Social Sciences*; *Space and Culture*; *Senses and Society*; *Art and the Public Sphere*; Henderson (*Critical Public Health*; *Microplastics and Nanoplastics*); Howarth (*International Journal of E-Politics*); Lockyer (*Comedy Studies*; *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*; *International Studies in Humour*; *European Journal of Humour*

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

*Research*); Malik (*South Asian Popular Culture*; *Open Screens*; *Journal of British Cinema and Television*); Peyrefitte (*Entanglements*); Sharma (*Subjectivity*).

**Learned societies and professional bodies:** Roles include Co-Chair of the Feminist Studies Association (De Benedictis); co-founder of Political Studies Association “Social and Political Movements” Specialist Group (Roberts); board member of the International Society for Humor Studies (Lockyer); secretary of the International Society for Metal Music Studies (Coggins); Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine (Henderson); Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (Henderson and Malik).

**International keynotes and plenary lectures:** Ansell (Trondheim; Wollongong; Women’s University of Africa); Degen (Oslo; Bielefeld; Autonomous University Barcelona); Henderson (Malta; Vietnam); Ingravalle (Vienna); Jones (University of Technology, Sydney); Lockyer (Bologna; Quebec; Holy Names, Oakland, California); Roberts (Western Brittany); Sharma (Utrecht; Maynooth; Trinity College Dublin); Weaver (Bologna; Dresden; Helsinki). 23 keynotes have also been delivered in the UK.

**Invited lectures and seminars:** 60 further invited talks have been delivered overseas (in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Lesotho, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, USA) and 127 in the UK.

**PhD external examining:** staff have examined 46 theses (15 for overseas institutions; 31 in the UK).