

Institution: Newcastle University (NU)

Unit of Assessment: 32 Art & Design

1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

Structure

Fine Art is part of the School of Arts and Cultures (SACS) in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS). SACS, where Fine Art combines with UoAs in Music, and Media, Communication & Heritage Studies, is distinctive for its strong relationships with cultural partners and its critical mass in creative practice. Fine Art is central to SACS' vibrant research environment, with a unique, long-standing culture of bringing together art history and practice-led research. Our research challenges orthodoxies, crosses boundaries, and cultivates impacts from individual and institutional, to global societal challenges. We champion interdisciplinary exploration and innovation. We are global in our outlook and partnerships yet locally rooted in our community and regional arts ecology.

Category A staff: 31.7.20

	Total staff numbers	Women	Men	Open-ended	Fixed-term	ECR at census
FTE	27.4	11.05	16.35	24.5	2.9	9.5
Head count	35	15	20	31	4	12

The Unit as a community

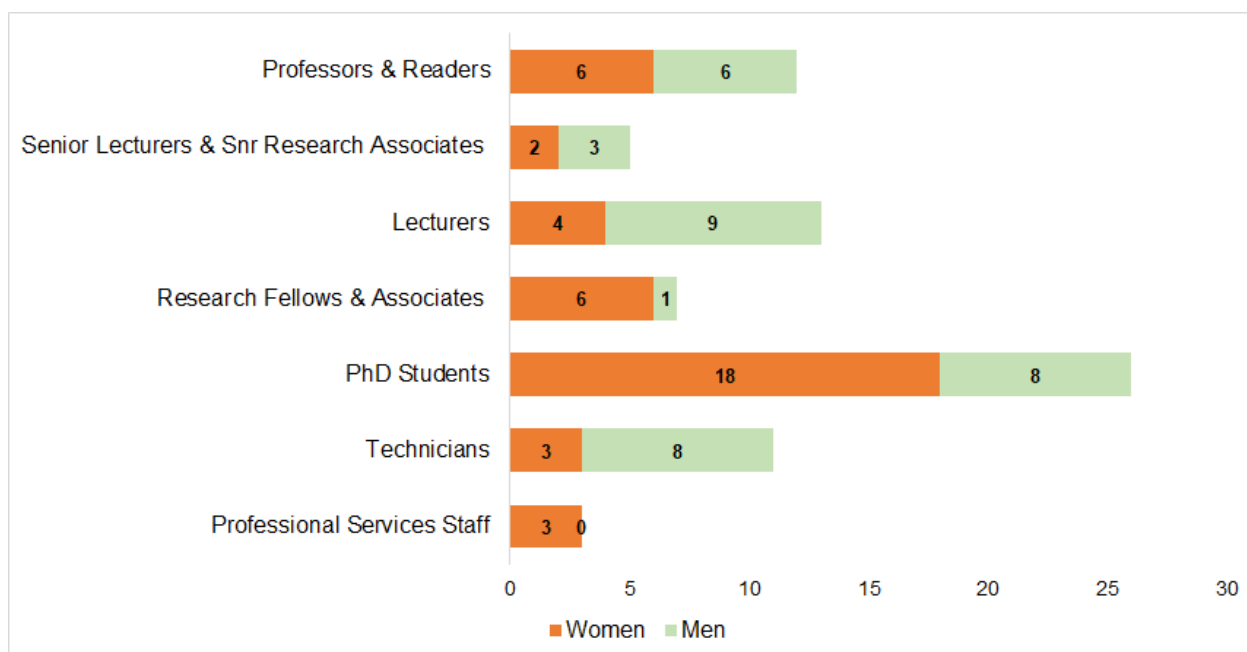


Figure 1: bar chart showing roles in the unit, broken down by women and men (individuals).

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Since 2014, the Unit has benefitted from strategic investment, growing from 16.25 FTE to 27.4 FTE, doubling numbers both in our professoriate and in our ECR base. In parallel with growth in capacity, our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) has led to a more balanced, diverse and capable research community.

Chairing the SACS Research Committee (SRC) in rotation enables shared leadership of local research policy, especially its ethical and EDI dimensions. Membership is inclusive: senior staff, ECRs, PGRs, Impact Champions, technical staff and our EDI teams are represented. Faculty and University Research Committees (FRIC & URIC) lead institutional policy, where we have a central role; Talbot serves as Director of the Faculty's cross-cutting **Newcastle University Institute for Creative Arts Practice (NICAP)** (ILES:2.2.3), and Pollock is the University's Dean of Culture and Creative Arts, tasked with leading the institution's strategy for Culture and Creative Arts - one of the University's five thematic strengths (ILES:1.1/2.3.1). This position, at the heart of institutional strategy making, has enabled us to help steer NU's vision for research, in particular shaping commitments to culture, interdisciplinarity and inclusivity.

Strategy 2014-20

The Unit's sustained aim is to build a leading international centre for fine art research with a diverse community of outstanding researchers engaged in experimental, risk-taking, practice-based and theoretical research in our key thematic areas. This brings innovative creative thinking to urgent, challenge-led research agendas, including social justice, caring for the environment and the UN Strategic Development Goals (SDGs).

New investment and research funding enabled us to meet, and go beyond our plans outlined in 2014:

Progress since 2014

Strategy 2014-20	Actions	Results
Initiate and support interdisciplinary collaborations.	Unit embeds processes of research co-production through peer-to-peer mentoring and partnership working.	Sustained partnerships with UK and global visual art and heritage organisations underpins Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs) and Knowledge Exchange initiatives.
Grow and strengthen leadership, art history and ECR base.	Strategic investment by University and the Unit	16 Category A appointments since 2014; 11 of these ECR, 8 in art history. 3 new professors appointed.
Researcher development at all levels.	Career development initiatives: improved mentoring for ECRs. New promotion criteria benefitting practice-based researchers.	Most recent staff survey: 95% give highest grade to collegiality and supportive environment.

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Integrate art history and fine art practice. Promote cross-pollination across research themes.	Candidates' commitment to interdisciplinary perspectives a criterion in recruitment.	Ten new projects, where researchers across our core disciplines and at all career stages collaborate.
Influence University research strategy.	Key staff on high-level governance bodies and participating in pan-NU strategy development.	Unit benefits from investment in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NUAcTs (ILES:3.2.4) • NU Heritage (see below) • Research Excellence, Global Challenges and Policy Academies (ILES:2.2.5)
Grow external and internal research income for research and impact.	Nurture grant writing capabilities.	Grant income quadruples. 64 bids, 41% success rate.
Grow and support our PhD community and develop our supervisor base.	More interdisciplinary supervisor teams. Capitalise on Northern Bridge and its partnerships.	Supervisor density reaches 66%. Doctorates awarded and PhD community double 2014 numbers.
Work towards a more equal, diverse and inclusive environment.	EDI training for all researchers. IDEA (Inclusive, Diversity, Equality, Access) group established. New recruitment policies and practices.	Athena Swan Bronze 2018. 60% new recruits women, 25% from established careers in practice. Respectful Cultures Policy introduced. Facilities made fully accessible.

Interdisciplinarity

Much of our research extends beyond the boundaries of the Unit. During this REF cycle, major UKRI-funded projects like Mapping Contemporary Art in the Heritage Experience (MCAHE), (2017-20), Expanded Interiors (EI) (2017-19) and Jetty (2013-15) have transformed the way we conceptualise our research, reflecting the way we better understand the value of teamwork and interdisciplinary. Clay's AHRC Commons Fellowship (2015-17) was radical in the way it drew together researchers from multiple HEIs and across the creative industries. We introduced practice-led methodologies into ten externally-funded projects led by other disciplines: in Social inclusion through the Digital Economy (SiDE) (2009-15), our creative approaches supported tackling social exclusion; in the Poetics of the Archive (2013-15), we brought visual thinking to unlocking a key poetry archive; while our work in Plural Heritages of Istanbul (2016-18) and Urban Living Partnership (2016-18) brought digital design expertise to pressing challenges within urban conurbations. We collaborated with the Centre for the Rural Economy, the Biosciences Institute, and the School of Geography to establish six artist-in-residence schemes funded by Leverhulme, ACE, NICAP and Wellcome. We worked with humanities subjects such

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

as Modern Languages to co-curate art exhibitions (Jones 2018). These interventions have led to sustained and reciprocal benefits. For example, graduating PGR Mulvihill, appointed first as artist-in-residence in Geography, then becoming CI in their AHRC-funded project, Turning Fylingdales inside out (Feb 2020). Embedding fine art perspectives and methodologies in disciplines across the natural and social sciences and humanities is central to our research strategy.

Unit Leadership

Interdisciplinarity has been facilitated by Unit leadership at all levels. First, the strengthening of NICAP's remit to promote interdisciplinary practice-led creative arts research since 2014 has led to new research groupings: the 'Spatial Practices' and 'Writing with Images' groups are led by Unit staff (Huber and Juler), and the Art & Biomedical Science group by a PGR (Turner). NICAP nurtures interdisciplinary projects at their early stages: Expanded Interiors and Networking New Opportunities for Artists in East Africa (NOFA) (2018-19) benefitted from pump-priming, enabling their future PIs to develop international partnerships, with each project going on to win AHRC grants.

Second, the Unit has been instrumental in driving the development of **Newcastle University Centres of Research Excellence (NUCoREs, ILES:2.2.1)**. Three of these, Centres for Heritage, Cities and Landscape (NU Heritage/Cities/Landscape), are key to our future plans. NU Heritage, within which we are strongly represented, draws together heritage stakeholders to nurture interdisciplinary research, facilitating £60k of HEIF funding for pilots for two future projects: Volunteer Voices, reshaping the way heritage organisations engage volunteers with contemporary art; and All our Histories, drawing together heritage organisations and early career BAME artists.

Third, in leading **the Global Challenges Academy's (ILES:2.2.5) Creative Practice in International Development Network**, we led NU's first three GCRF/AHRC-funded projects in East Africa, building capacity within the visual art ecologies, in collaboration with NU Business School's Entrepreneurship Research group and researchers at Makerere University (Anderson, Burton 2018-20). Coordinating this work with NU's £33m GCRF-funded hubs in Water Sustainability and Living Deltas, strengthening their creative practice strands for further partnership working in LMIC (low and middle-income countries), to responding the UN's SDGs is central to our future global strategy.

Future Plans

The next five years will be critical to consolidating our progress, and to sustaining our resilient, progressive and diverse research environment. We will continue to prioritise the quality, accessibility and impact of our research in a challenging landscape.

Plans 2021-6

Objectives	Approach
Ambitious collaborations with existing and new partners.	Develop Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), Follow on Funding projects and CDAs. Develop new partnerships through our GCRF networks.

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Optimise our engagement with NU resources, promoting interdisciplinary research.	Support further developments in NICAP, the NUCoREs and the Global Challenges Academy.
Embed EDI and promote diversity, particularly regarding ethnicity and protected characteristics.	Tangible responses to EDI initiatives in recruitment policy and practice, using training and peer-to-peer mentoring to embed EDI best practice across all research activities.
Sustain current trajectory of grant-capture.	Increase PI capacity so more staff hold grants from diverse sources, achieved through ECR training and mentoring.
Nurture our intellectual and creative capital. Encourage risk-taking and long-term planning.	Mentoring and career development for all staff. Foster ECRs within PGR supervision teams. Phase out precarious contracts.

Strategic aims in research impact

Our impact strategy focussed on two key areas:

- Increasing public benefit from contemporary art through innovative approaches to engaging diverse publics and stakeholders.
- Co-producing strategies, policies and tools to improve the status and livelihoods of creative practitioners; building capacity in the creative industries.

Both were underpinned by investing in and nurturing partnerships with non-HEI bodies, for instance those developed through four AHRC-funded 'Follow-on Funding for Impact and Engagement' projects ([Weileder, 2016](#)), ([Burton, Kiguru, M'Mbogori, 2019-20](#)), ([Anderson, Burton, Kimani, Nabuline, 2020-21](#)), ([Schofield, 2019](#)) and one KTP. Our partners ranged from inner-city FE colleges to cultural organisations to grass-roots artist groups. Over £500k grant income was awarded for this work, benefitting communities including children in low-income areas of Tyneside and early-career art writers in Africa, who saw their work published for the first time. Such projects, and our CDAs, ensure sustainable co-production and adoption of research innovations. We maximise impacts from earlier research: Weileder secured an £80k AHRC grant for [Transfer-Impact](#) (2016), which built dynamic new impacts from his 2006 project, 'Transfer'. Since census date, we have been awarded [two further](#) AHRC [FoF awards](#) (bids submitted before July 2020) and two CDAs, a firm foundation for ongoing impact work.

Our Impact Case Studies review work by staff at all career stages and show development of impact through novel engagements with publics and organisations. One is a detailed analysis, one an overview of several projects, the third having an ECR focus. Each contains examples of how we use grant-funding to generate impact from research.

Structure of Research

Since 2014, research has been supported through **six research themes**. These integrate art history and practice, and are porous to encourage cross-pollination.

Digital Cultures focusses on innovative engagements within digital public spaces. Our contribution to consortium projects, [SiDE](#) and [The Creative Exchange](#) (Bowers, Shaw 2012-17), and UKRI calls, such as 'Next Generation of Immersive Experiences', is characterised by innovative research conducted in and with public space ([Schofield 2018](#)). Projects have included acoustic interventions in church buildings (Shaw, Bowers 2019), and work introducing innovative digital creative methods into cultural organisations, changing their working practices and developing Augmented Reality (AR) apps to connect Tyneside children with literary archives ([Schofield 2018](#)).

Life Work Art connects researchers with communities of creative professionals in local and global contexts, and includes research centred on activism, participatory and socially engaged practice. To make our research societally relevant, a fundamental principle underpinning this theme has been developing our capabilities for co-designing and co-producing research with our partners: e.g. with Makerere University, NGOs in East Africa and NU Business School. [In 2018-20](#) we developed innovate entrepreneurship and creative strategies for practitioners in East Africa, helping build sustainable visual art eco-systems. In our region, we embed our research in creative industries, for instance in the Newbridge Project (see Section 4) and Northern Stage theatre, where our KTP (2019) supported both creative digital, and business innovation.

Material, Process and Making explores forms of thinking, creativity and engagement associated with, and specific to, materials and processes. It is set against the background of the availability of new technologies and methods, and of critical and historical understanding of traditions and orthodoxies associated with established disciplines and areas of enquiry. The work of two ECR fellows, Masterman and Korda, (Korda's fellowship established in [partnership](#) with BALTIC), explored the boundaries of ceramics research, while Cuddon's Leverhulme Fellowship (2019-) resurfaces under-researched narratives connecting clay with text. Our 'Material Memories' conference (2014), organised by distinguished academic and PGR Gwen Heeney (1952-2016) convened international researchers working with the material legacy of the post-industrial landscape. Theoretical work here includes analysis of studio practice from the perspectives of practice-led researchers (Mieves, Jones) and art historians (Lotery, Moonie, Spalding).

Curating, Archives and Heritage connects researchers exploring creative methods for engaging with archives and other cultural institutions. It supports the development of reciprocal, interdisciplinary partnerships, transforming perspectives on how cultural heritage and archives are preserved and shared. Innovative approaches to curating and exhibition making as research have drawn together practitioners and art historians (e.g. Grayson, King, Lotery). We have worked with institutions ranging from the Hayward Gallery (Wilson and Wilson) and Pavilion (Park) to the Bagpipe Museum in Northumbria (King). Innovative engagements with heritage include projects led by ECRs ([Schofield](#)), while high-level partnership has been key to projects such as [MCAHE](#). Tyne and Wear Museums and Archives (TWAM) and Woodhorn museums co-supervised three CDAs in teams also comprising art history and practice-based staff.

Film, Photography and the Digital Image explores the capacity of lens-based and digital media to negotiate between real, imagined and constructed worlds (Maclean, Noonan-Ganley). Researchers have experimented with innovative methods to create visionary cinematic language (Coombes) and to combine film with photography and sculpture, to create installations that probe collective anxieties (Wilson and Wilson). Kögelsberger's billboard performances brought intimate portrait photography into the public realm, while Anderson and Guy work with LGBTQ+ photographers to exhibit and preserve non-institutional archives.

New Engagements in Scientific and Rural Ecologies, a new theme, catalyses areas of interdisciplinary working: Art and the Rural (involving challenge-led work by PGR Sallis with the Anthropocene Research Group), and Art and Medical Sciences (PGR Turner, who leads the Arts & Biomedical Science group). Growing out of the AHRC-funded Northumbrian Exchanges (Pollock 2014), which examined the contribution of visual art within the rural cultural economy, research with the Centre for Rural Economy developed further shared interests in the rural as a differentiated site of practice. An expanding network with organisations such as VARC (Visual Arts in Rural Communities) and Allenheads Contemporary Arts has an international dimension through an ESRC collaboration grant, enabling Japan/UK exchange visits to explore the role of art in rural development in each country (Pollock, 2020). Collaborative projects such as A Scientific Encounter (2017, with Montpellier University) explored through artistic research how we see the world through scientific objects, and how those objects affect us.

Open Access, Discoverability, Dissemination

To help our research reach wide and varied audiences and support other researchers, we have focussed on making it as accessible as possible (ILES:2.3.3). To complement our textual outputs in NU's ePrints Open Access repository, we have worked with the University to invest in a flexible repository suited to the range of media outputs we generate. This is fully compliant with cOAlition S principles, ensuring we are in line with UKRI best practice. For example, Huber's unique 3-D scans of Herculaneum are available to researchers in any discipline. In addition to disseminating research via the SACS research web pages, we encourage other channels, such as work being acquired for public collections and, to extend the reach and longevity of exhibitions, the production and dissemination of catalogues and websites. We are conscious of the value of sharing resources and will continue discussions with bodies such as the Society for Artistic Research and VADS to promote sector-wide dissemination.

Research Ethics and Values

NU commits to research integrity (ILES:2.3.2). In addition to requiring researchers to undertake ethical research training, SACS is proactively building strengths in responsible research, with our 'General Principles for Collaborative Working' (2020), an exemplar of cross-School working. We played a key role in NU's declaration of Climate Emergency in 2019, and now take practical measures, such as: reviewing international research practices to minimise travel; using low-emission modes of transport; and making events online. We offer all our community 'carbon neutral' grants from our Bartlett Endowment to cover premium costs of using sustainable resources in their work. Projects such as Jetty (2015) explored new models for contemporary public art to shape debates about sustainability.

2. People

Staffing strategy and staff development

Since 2014 we have nurtured our foremost research asset, the creative and intellectual capital of our research community. Ensuring its continued wellbeing, individually and collectively, is our priority for the future. At previous REF exercises, we have characterised ourselves as a small Unit but have prioritised growth since 2008, trebling in size from 9FTE, through 16.25FTE in 2014, to 27.4FTE now. As a Unit we are fulfilling our ambition to reflect the vibrant spectrum of work that characterises the contemporary art ecology. Investment has enabled us to broaden the

base of practice-led research and strengthen our research leadership and art history teams. Recent appointments are building our diversity.

Recruitment: strengthening leadership and invigorating the research base with ECRs

Category A appointments since 2014 (including former members of staff at census)

Total new appointments	Women	Men	ECR at appointment	Professorial appointments
FTE: 16.35	FTE: 9.1	FTE: 7.25	FTE: 13.15	FTE: 2.2
Head count: 20	Head count: 12	Head count: 8	Head count: 16	Head count 3
Percentage of appointments (by head count)	60%	40%	80%	15%

We were delighted to appoint Jane and Louise Wilson to the Fine Art Chair (2017), with the University's re-investment in this post, frozen since 1986, a sign of the Unit's buoyancy. Recognising the unique nature of their practice, this was an unprecedented *joint* appointment, bringing an exemplary model of research and citizenship within the fine art community, demonstrated by their artistic achievements and work on the boards of Tate and BALTIC. Art Historian and Broadcaster Richard Clay (2015) is NU's first Professor of Digital Cultures, a cross-disciplinary post conceived to promote HEI/public engagement. Exceptional ECR appointments have invigorated the research environment and provide for future leadership. Rachel Maclean's recruitment (2020) to the first cohort of NUAcTs, a £30m fellowship scheme (ILES:3.2.4), is another example of an acclaimed artist attracted by our unique research environment, affording her opportunities to collaborate with VR and facial recognition experts, and to recruit a PhD student. Laura Guy and Joseph Noonan-Ganley joined the Unit (2018) as Fellows of the Research Excellence Academy (ILES:4.1.3), a £14.6m University investment in the strongest performing UoAs in 2014. Our Norma Lipman Fellows in Ceramic Sculpture, Serena Korda (2015) and Eva Masterman (2018) expand our research within the field of ceramic sculpture.

Building strengths in art history

Eight appointments (six new posts, two replacing Spalding and Wells) since 2014 have doubled our art history team. This expansion was undertaken to support integration with practice-led research and encourage collaboration. It has sparked innovative and interdisciplinary research through collaborations on internally and externally funded projects (e.g. [A Scientific Encounter](#) (2017)). Our innovative approach to connecting art history, theory, and practice-led research was recognised by the Association for Art History, who invited us to co-convene their annual conference with Northumbria University in 2020. A strengthened art history team provides PhD students with more options for combined supervisory expertise, connecting historical, theoretical and practice-led methodologies, and has enabled the Unit to recruit more art history PGRs, with applications more than doubling since 2014.

Nurturing and supporting staffPromotions since 2014

to Professor/Reader		to Senior Lecturer		fixed term to open-ended contract		technician to lecturer	
women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men
4	1	2	3	6	1	1	-

All staff, whatever the stage of their career, contract type or source of funding, are full and equal members of the Unit. All benefit from **research mentoring**: a long-term mentor, usually a senior colleague, is assigned upon appointment. Shorter periods of peer-to-peer mentoring support specific activities, such as when a colleague is first PI, while mentors from outside the Unit are available to promote interdisciplinarity. In addition to these mechanisms, an active culture of support means all members of staff benefit from one-to-one advice on their research, for example at weekly drop-ins with the Head of Research.

A comprehensive **research induction** for all new starters (open to all staff) in SACS is delivered each semester, (whose two-year probation is formally reviewed at Personal Development Review (PDR) meetings – with all new appointees successfully completing the probationary period). Annual PDR meetings provide an opportunity to identify development and training needs in relation to career goals, and space for proactive discussion of promotion (replacing a self-nomination system). Staff share their Personal Research Plans at annual meetings with the Head of Research, which consider research and impact goals, and progress over the year.

For ECRs, the Certificate of Advanced Studies in Academic Practice includes modules in practice-led research methods, research ethics and PGR supervision. **Training to support impact and research for all staff** is organised through the NU Open Learning Programme (with modules in all aspects of leadership, EDI, research and scholarship skills, wellbeing, and health & safety). The NU Academies offer training to work with policymakers and enterprise. The HaSS Research Development team provides research funding workshops and tailored individual support for UKRI, European and international funding. ECRs benefit from reduced workloads during their first two years and are mentored through administrative responsibilities in preparation for senior roles. This encourages shared and sustainable knowledge of policy, and equity in undertaking management roles.

A thriving group of **RAs** has developed since 2014 with 20 individual RAs employed over the assessment period, fulfilling key roles on UKRI-funded projects. This important group in our community undertake an award-winning training programme provided by NU's Organisational Development Unit, tailored to meet the University's commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (ILES:3.2.3). At Unit level, we build on this, supporting RAs' transition to independent research by protecting one day each week for personal research, (exceeding UKRI guidelines). Dedicated social spaces, an online RA forum and an annual NU-wide post-doc conference contribute to a framework supporting a cohesive and ambitious community. 100% of our RAs have progressed to new/extended research contracts or academic appointments, with SACS providing bridging funds between appointments.

A transparent workload model **protects at least 40% hours for research** for all Category A staff. All Category A staff (other than research fellows) take one semester in every seven as **sabbatical leave** (two for those completing intensive administrative roles, and parental or sick leave also counts towards time worked), with 31 sabbaticals taken since 2014 (ILES:3.2.8).

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Shorter leave periods are negotiated to meet pressing exhibition plans or publication deadlines. External funding has supported other research leave, e.g. Cuddon's Leverhulme Fellowship. Time is allocated in our workload for participation in support groups such as Disability Interest, BAME, Rainbow, Parent and Carers, and Technicians.

Research is supported and undertaken by our award-winning **technical team** who regularly undertake training to update their exceptional skills across a wide range of processes. Technical Manager, Davoll, is a member of SRC. As a founding signatory of the Technicians' Commitment (ILES:3.2.6), we are dedicated to increasing recognition and career development for our technicians, and hosted the Technician Partnership Conference in 2020. Technicians can request time for independent research, are eligible for internal grant-funding schemes and receive mentoring to support career progression. We support transition to academic posts. For example Servin, a printmaking technician, was mentored in research skills and awarded internal grant funding to establish a NU/Mexico printmakers exchange network. She later secured a Lectureship in Printmaking, which she combines with her 0.5FTE role as technician.

Leveraging our distinct context as an art school within a Russell Group University, we have been leading NU's commitment to osmosis between academia and professional practice (ILES:2.3.1), with unique appointments that link us to industry (25% of new hires joined us direct from the creative industries). Creating academic posts within research projects instead of employing consultants gives colleagues the opportunity to develop careers with us after projects end: King (appointed 2017) now has a joint career as an academic and as Creative Director of Arts&Heritage, meaning that we benefit from the experience and networks of a renowned leader in the professional field of contemporary art in heritage.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion

The Unit recognised that gender balance at senior level was poor in 2014; three in every four professors were men, while overall, the Unit comprised 59% men, 41% women. Since then, we established an EDI and Athena Swan working party (SACS achieved bronze in 2018). Our EDI action plan identified pathways to enhance all aspects of inclusivity and diversity, highlighting areas where we needed to develop, particularly in the balance of ethnicity of staff, where we are still 91% white European/North American. We committed to positive actions to recruit, promote and sustain a constructive working culture for global majority ethnic colleagues, and to achieving a diverse demographic at all career stages, with regard to all protected characteristics. This shapes our approach to recruitment and promotion: gender-balanced panels include colleagues at all career stages, who undertake unconscious bias and active bystander training. We have led the University in other developments, requiring candidates to evidence a commitment to EDI in their applications, using inclusive language and framing new opportunities to attract staff offering crucial new global perspectives in art practice and art history. We are learning from our experience of building diverse research teams with our partners in Africa, and are proactively engaging with strategic initiatives, such as supporting a recently recruited RA to join the University's first BAME Leadership programme.

We have committed to progressively transferring staff on fixed-term contracts to open-ended posts. These are reviewed annually and transferring seven colleagues to open-ended posts since 2014 has made a difference within our research environment, affording these colleagues time and space to take risks and invest in their long-term role in the Unit. Many staff work part-time and have caring responsibilities, so research meetings and training events are scheduled when most can attend. We support mid-career researchers too, championing their research

trajectories through promotion and careful stewarding of the PDR process. As staff approach retirement, we offer tapered contracts.

Supporting promotions: we successfully advocated for inclusive promotions criteria with regard to non-textual outputs and staff on fractional contracts. This has helped achieve a more balanced gender profile at all career stages. In a discipline where women students significantly outnumber men, we are better reflecting and setting role models for our whole community. All our senior management posts are held by women and we have gender parity among Professors and Readers.

NU's commitment to [EDI](#) (ILES:3.4) includes diverse support. Parental leave and flexible working arrangements are particularly important given the high number of staff working on fractional contracts. All staff can apply for Returners Support Grants, with Cuddon awarded £10k after maternity leave, providing her bespoke support for teaching relief, training and technical support to restart her research.

SACS' IDEA (EDI) group is acclaimed within NU for its proactive approach, and in the SACS anti-racist curriculum review research project. We have also established a weekly Fine Art Anti-Racist Forum, focused on decolonising studio teaching and supporting diversity in research. In 2018, Unit staff initiated city-wide creative interventions, including an exhibition and talks programme, as part of 'Freedom City', marking the 50th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King Jr accepting an honorary PhD. NU has signed the Race Equality Charter, with Talbot co-chairing its campus committee. We have shared with other HEIs our experience of practical approaches to co-producing research in developing countries, which empowers partners, promotes gender equality and engages disenfranchised/low-income communities. NU is a University of Sanctuary, and we support projects that engage marginalised communities (2017) and develop creative, empathetic perspectives on complex subjects such as dementia (Bromwich, 2020) and HIV/AIDS (Anderson, 2016). **Improving access** has been the priority in refurbishing our buildings; since 2016, all our facilities are fully accessible for wheelchair users and people with reduced mobility, for the first time.

EDI principles have shaped this REF submission, through the training undertaken by all decision makers and our inclusive REF preparation process, where workshops have focussed on the importance of capturing the diversity of our work, our collaborative ethos, and the strong contribution of ECRs. Our Respectful Cultures policy, introduced in 2019, applies to research governance, including discussions around the contributions of individual researchers to REF 2021.

Research Students

54 PhD students studied in the Unit during the review period. 28 PhD degrees (21.36FTE) have been awarded (16 women, 12 men). This compares to 8.73FTE reported in 2014. Many research students join us with established professional profiles, choosing the Unit for its reputation for excellence in interdisciplinary supervision and outstanding resources such as dedicated studios. We work carefully with each candidate to structure their supervision team, offering examples of teams combining expertise in art history and practice, and, for example: poetry, music, archaeology or computing science, and responding to suggestions for supervision spread across other disciplines within NU and the NBDTP. Eight students holding **CDAs** extend this further, with co-supervision provided from non-HEIs including Helix Arts, AV Festival, TWAM, National Trust and V&A. Extending the disciplinary range of co-supervisions is part of our future PGR strategy, for example through NUAct-funded studentships.

Our supervisor density has grown to 66%. Since 2014, the key source of PhD scholarships has been the AHRC Northern Bridge Doctoral Training Partnership (NBDTP ILES:3.2.2), a consortium of seven universities, and partner organisations, offering up to 64 competitive studentships annually. 21 Unit PGRs have held full studentships this cycle, awarded through the NBDTP or linked to research projects such as Creative Exchange. Our current PhD community numbers 26, 13 holding AHRC studentships and 3 full Research Excellence Academy (ILES4.1.3) studentships. An increasing number of those holding studentships are researching topics related to film, participatory and socially engaged/participatory practices, confirming our reputation in these areas. From 2021, NBDTP will ring-fence two scholarships for BAME applicants.

We are committed to providing an **accessible environment** from application onwards; if candidates indicate needs relating to a protected characteristic, Student Wellbeing offers a support meeting. Each application is reviewed by the Unit PGR Director (Juler) and potential supervisors, with training in unconscious bias a requirement for selectors.



Figure 2: PGR workshops in the XL Project Space.

Research seminars, coordinated by Noonan-Ganley, emphasise parity between exegesis and practice-led study, and include gallery workshops where students test their work, experiment with artistic methods and consider provocations, such as a model for a performance-led viva. Sessions open to all NBDTP PGRs are a forum to share research while students engage with peers in other disciplines through initiatives such as 'Valence', initiated by PGR Turner's **Art and Biomedical Science** group. Funded by a £30k Wellcome grant, made to a student, this embeds students for residencies in the Centre for Mitochondrial Research. NICAP hosts a monthly

Creative Arts Practice Forum, and an annual PGR conference brings the NU community together. Funding is available for students to travel and present at conferences, with a Pioneer fund established during Covid-19 to support research resilience.

School- and Unit-specific induction directs students to 700 hours of flexible **training in research** provided by SACS, HaSS and the NBDTC (ILES:3.2.2). Practical and theoretical skills including research management, ethics and wellbeing are relevant to a range of research. PGRs have at least one monthly meeting with their supervisors, with all interactions recorded on an 'e-portfolio', which can also log visual material. These are monitored through **Annual Progression Review**. PGR students gain experience of UG studio and seminar teaching once they have completed the certificated **Introduction to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education**. SACS' PG Student Voice Committee provides the forum for researchers to shape the agenda for their facilities and training needs, while students are co-opted onto working groups looking, for example, at new studio provision.

Of our 28 graduates since 2014, 16 have progressed to hold academic positions (13 in the UK, three internationally), with six working as independent artists and six employed in the cultural sector.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

We have delivered our 2014 strategy to grow research income, with a near fourfold increase in external grants over the REF cycle, to over £2.3m. We have led 22 HESA-reported projects to completion, collaborated on a further 14, and our ECRs are well-represented among PI and CI roles. Our PI/CI density is 54% and success rate is 41%, with 26 awards from 64 bids. Grants awarded to staff but not reported to HESA have grown from £430,056 in 2014 to £1,600,025 in 2020. This strong performance demonstrates the success of our mentoring strategy, support for bid writing and above all, our commitment to interdisciplinary and collaborative research.

Income

HESA reported grant-spend

	2001	2007	2013	2020
Total	£152,660	£768,049	£597,412	£2,367,426
per FTE	£16,962	£51,203	£36,763	£86,402

Our funders are more diverse, with grants awarded by fourteen bodies. The AHRC continues to be our primary external funder, with projects such as MCAHE (£774,895 fEC), EI (£345,560) and Jetty (£347,195) all winning initial grants through the standard research route, with follow-on-funding grants awarded for further impact and partnership work. Other AHRC awards include Clay's Commons Fellowship (£257,367) and three GCRF awards for projects in East Africa (£259,467). Other awards include EU funding for CruiseV (Anderson) and Recall (Weileder), an EPSRC Next Generation of Immersive Experiences grant (Schofield), and Wellcome Trust awards to Wilson and Wilson. We encourage bids to schemes for experimental, smaller-scale projects, e.g. Mapping Mapusa Market (Burton, AHRC/India Science and Technology Fund) in collaboration with Goa University. We recognise the transformative value of individual awards made direct to researchers outside the HESA-reporting system. These include 43 awards from 30 bodies, including the Elephant Trust (Korda, Grayson, Noonan-Ganley); Terra Foundation

(Anderson, Guy), governmental cultural organisations from five countries, and many awards from Arts Council England, Wales and Creative Scotland. Increasing the diversity of our funders creates future income streams and makes us more resilient to changes in the funding landscape.

Staff have been CIs on 14 NU-led interdisciplinary projects including Poetics of the Archive (AHRC £474,919); Eighteenth-Century Political Participation and Electoral Culture (AHRC £758,756); Urban Living Partnership (EPSRC £398,467); and Northumbrian Exchanges (AHRC £201,173). Bowers, Clay and Shaw have led strands within large-scale consortium projects: £12m, SiDE; £4m Creative Exchange and £4.5m Creative Fuse North East, led by NU Computing Science, Lancaster University and NICAP.

Internal funding schemes

Generous and diverse schemes, tailored to researchers at all career stages, were boosted by our 2014 policy decision to pool 70% of fEC overheads in a fund shared across all SACS researchers, meaning that our success in external grant captures benefits our whole community. Our grant capture strategy values the bid-writing process in itself, irrespective of outcome, welcoming the way the process has led to new partnerships and other benefits. We support staff to develop bids through mentoring, workshops, supportive peer review and by fully exploiting the Faculty's Bid Preparation Fund, which provides up to £10k to support any aspect of bid development. 16 awards (£97k) from this scheme since 2014 have resulted in nine successful bids.

All staff have a non-competitive annual £1,500 (pro-rata) Research and Impact allowance. We have benefitted from a range of **internal investment**, including grants from NICAP, NU Global and Policy Academies, and FRIC, whose grant funding schemes have different priorities, e.g. ECR awards from the Faculty Research Fund (up to £4K), Faculty Impact Fund (up to £5K) and Impact Acceleration Awards (up to £10K). NU prioritises creative arts within its HEIF strategy with over £200k committed to the Unit's new KTPs, policy work and impact activities.

Since 2014, these combined research support schemes have distributed over £0.8m of internal funding across the Unit, supporting 130 projects. Every researcher, including PGRs, has benefitted. We ensure that internal grant funding and our people strategy are joined up; as internal funding can be used for teaching relief, robust policies ensure contingent staff, employed on fixed-term and part-time contracts, are treated equitably and can themselves apply for funding and research/scholarship time.

The Unit is entrusted with over £1.5m of philanthropic endowments and has invested £0.5m income since 2014 to support five research fellowships (Grayson, Guy, Korda, Masterman, Noonan-Ganley) and engage students with research, supporting over thirty student initiatives each year. For example, the publication, *it's all about dis-course* (2020), reflects on the experiences of BAME students in fine art education. Capitalising on our long-standing partnerships with the British School in Rome, we created four Forshaw research residencies for women students to undertake research residencies there.

Research Facilities



Figure 3: The Hatton Gallery.

Our historic **Fine Art Building**, a dramatic pairing of 1960s Brutalism with the original 1911 art school, houses the **Hatton Gallery**, one of the region's foremost art galleries, reopening in 2018 after a superb £3.8m HLF/NU-funded refurbishment. The Hatton, managed in partnership with TWAM (ILES:2.1.1), presents an exciting contemporary, free-to-enter ACE-funded programme. Its importance for research is threefold: i) as a venue for research developed at other universities, disseminating since 2014 work by researchers at Reading (2015), Northumbria (2018), Cumbria, Sunderland, RCA, UAL (2019) and Southampton (2020); ii) to disseminate Unit-led projects: e.g. *Speculations: Thinking, Making, Drawing* (2015), curated by Talbot, and interdisciplinary projects, such as those developed with the Institutes of Neuroscience (2020) and Policy, Ethics and Life Sciences (PEALS, 2019); and iii) for its internationally recognised permanent collection of 14th-21st Century art, built up over seventy years by the Unit, with the new display of its iconic centrepiece, the Schwitters' *Merzbarn*, conceptualised by Talbot.

The public-facing **XL Project Space** (curated by Jones) is a space for risk-taking, with peer reviewed projects and exhibitions by researchers from the Unit and many other HEIs (e.g. Lancaster, Victoria Ca.). We also show cutting-edge work on campus, turning the University's main 'Arches' gateway into a sound-art space. We have used our role as a leading cultural player to negotiate generous long-term loans by leading artists such as Antony Gormley.

Our superb purpose-built **studios** are an exceptional asset and a place where research is produced. Our long-standing practice of providing staff with generous self-contained studios within the building links research to teaching. Five workshops combine cutting-edge technological resources with traditional tools for art production, from architectural-scale ceramics

to stone-lithography. Such resources are scarce in the North East, so we make them available to artists and researchers across the region, as well as to visitors preparing exhibitions in our spaces. **Culture Lab**, the base for our Digital Cultures group, houses industry-standard sound/video/anechoic facilities as well as live-performance and events spaces. NU's origins are in science, engineering and medicine, and our researchers regularly access a wealth of high-end equipment and specialist resources in these faculties.

These outstanding facilities for creating and disseminating research are the base for our students, synergising research and teaching, and embodying our ethos that staff introduce our students to the processes of research in action through their teaching. This goes beyond the studio: NU vacation scholarships enabled students to work with their peers in Uganda (2018), who we also funded. Described by one student as a 'transformative, life-changing experience', this brought another dimension of sustainability to our GCRF projects, helping secure our partnerships in Africa for the long term.

The multi-award-winning **Robinson Library** (scoring 98% approval ratings at the latest Postgraduate Research Experience Survey) houses 1.2m books, e-books and comprehensive journal subscriptions. We worked with their Special Collections and Archives unit to acquire (2019) the **archives** of Locus+ and a-n, two North East-based organisations whose impact on the British visual art ecology is under-recognised and under-researched. We are working with them to open these archives to wider publics, drawing on groundbreaking work 'unlocking' the Bloodaxe and UNESCO-recognised Gertrude Bell photography archives.

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

Engaging our partners in the co-design and co-production of research is fundamental to our strategy. During the review period, we have worked in partnership with over 200 organisations across 30 countries, ranging from internationally recognised cultural and policymaking institutions to small grassroots artist-led organisations. Over £200k of in-kind support committed on HESA-reported projects underscores the importance of collaborative research to our partners. Our global scope has enabled us to create synergies between partners addressing common challenges in markedly different cultural and economic contexts. In developing non-academic partnerships, particularly with smaller LMIC-based organisations, where power-balance is an issue, we are attentive to engendering and sustaining transparency and trust, for example by co-authoring all our GCRF bids to ensure that all contributions are valued equally.

We have collaborated with 34 HEIs internationally, with diverse activities ranging from professorial exchanges (Weileder), to residencies (Laskarin), to welcoming [five ECR artists from India](#) (e.g. from Hyderabad and Visva-Bharati Universities) to work in our studios for extended periods (funded by Charles Wallace India Trust). We are members of nine academic networks and have participated in many reciprocal Erasmus+ projects and exchanges. We have collaborated with 24 universities on HESA-reported projects, directing grant funding in GCRF projects to prioritise funding new academic posts with our partner universities in Africa (e.g. Kiguru 2019). Our memberships of CHEAD and ELIA have strengthened our participation in art and design HEI networks and in EU-funded projects: as part of [Recall](#) (2014), we joined six European universities to commission new works to reinterpret Europe's difficult inter-war heritage.

We have benefitted from **Visiting Professorships** by John Akomfrah (2016), Nick Broomfield (2015) and Matthew Jarratt (2018). Our research engages publics ranging from visitors to the world's most renowned art museums including the National Portrait Gallery (2014), Tate Modern (2014), Getty Museum (2017), and the MET (2018), to market workers in India (2014) and in

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

Bwaise informal settlement (2019), for whom accessing any art gallery represents a challenge. Our events have included ambitious large-scale events (e.g. the [MCAHE conference 2019](#)), attracting academics and practitioners globally to Newcastle, and topical public discussions such as [The Producers](#) (2018-). We have co-produced art biennials (2014/16, with Northern Print), participatory events, such as public gatherings to debate the future of Europe's largest wooden structure ([Jetty](#), 2015), processions celebrating once-thriving mining communities ([Dragon of Profit](#), 2017), as well as public readings, performances and screenings. We have organised [137 public lectures](#), inviting influential speakers ranging from the Director of Tate to art critics and activists, The White Pube, to engage and inspire our community. Despite cancelling the highly anticipated [Association for Art History annual conference 2020](#) (co-hosting with Northumbria) due to Covid-19, we learned from this, moving many events online and attracting even larger audiences. An exemplar of pan-HEI/sector collaboration, Clay's AHRC Commons Theme Leadership Fellowship, [Common Ground](#) (York, 2016), drew over 500 academics, creative industry professionals and community groups to showcase and celebrate a community that shares and manages a common resource: knowledge.

Our partnerships mean that our research impacts on and engages with wide but also targeted audiences. Clay's acclaimed film, [A Brief History of Graffiti](#), was broadcast on BBC4 at the 9pm slot (2015), while Bromwich's [Worker's Maypole](#), the exuberant centrepiece of the Great Exhibition of the North (2018), was estimated to have been seen by over [3 million people](#). Coombes discussed his micro-budget film [Seat in Shadow](#) (2017) at LGBTQ+ film festival award ceremonies across Europe, while Anderson's research for [Cruising the Dead River](#) (2019) engaged communities impacted by HIV in the USA and UK (2016), and Servin worked with *Muxhe* (third gender) communities in Mexico (2019). In all such work, we endeavour to engage our stakeholders with our research through interactions that build and sustain its relevance and value across diverse communities.

Our leading role within the creative economy of the North East places us in a unique position to research our region, its landscape, heritage and communities. By collaborating with the Centre for the Rural Economy and independent region-based organisations such as Allenheads Contemporary Art and VARC, and partnering with Northumberland County Council, we see our role not just to deepen knowledge of the region (e.g. through [Meeting Point](#) (2015) and [MCAHE art commissions](#)) but also to enrich rural communities through research. [Gallery of Wonder on Tour](#) staged innovative exhibitions of contemporary art in a marquee that travelled across remote Northumberland shepherds' fairs. Other events spark critical debate; monthly '[Wor Culture](#)' events (2020-), organised by Pollock and Clay have convened over 100 freelance practitioners, arts organisations including ACE, Creative Scotland, National Trust, Historic England and every local authority in the North East in a forum that addresses pressing issues in the region's creative economy.

Our research has explored different strategies for safeguarding the future of precarious tangible ([Jetty](#) 2015) and intangible ([Northumbrian Exchanges](#) 2014) heritage, and proposed different ways in which it might be understood and appreciated ([Dragon of Profit and Private Ownership](#) 2017).

Contribution to society and the research base

Our approach to cross-pollinating research is illustrated in our work with Art Monthly, artist collective the Newbridge Project, based in Gateshead, NGO 32° East Uganda Arts Trust, based in Kampala, other partners in East Africa and the University's Business School.

1. Research with the Newbridge Project was co-produced through three projects: [Collective Studio](#), [More than Meanwhile](#) and [Art and Inequality in the Platform Economy](#) (2017-20) (collaborating with Leeds University). These drew together creative practitioners, local business and government, to find research-led solutions to challenges facing artist-run initiatives. Outcomes included innovative needs-led development programmes, long-term business models and testbed models for alternative pedagogy. To make this work impact on policy, we invited North of Tyne Combined Authority into the partnership, who changed their cultural strategy in the light of their involvement.
2. Our long-standing partnership with Art Monthly, co-producing [Producers II](#), (2018-) brought 20 eminent curators to NU, reprising our groundbreaking 'Producers' debates, initiated by Susan Hiller in 2001. [Producers II](#) paired speakers from the original debates with new counterparts, to critically examine contemporary curating. We anchored these important events within the region's art community by inviting the Directors of MIMA and NGCA (Sunderland and Teesside Universities) to chair events.
3. Three AHRC/GCRF funded projects (2018-) partnering Makerere University, 32° East and over 100 organisations and individual art professionals from six East African countries explored practical solutions to collectively identified constraints to the development of sustainable livelihoods and a thriving visual art ecology in that region. Responding to key blocks to development, particularly in capabilities and capacity for art writing, curating and entrepreneurship, we initiated interactions between our partners, linking the editorial teams of art magazines, Nairobi Contemporary and Art Monthly, to devise ways to support early career writers with the skills needed to realise their ambitions.

This **cross-cultural exchange**, fostered between academics, artists and the leadership teams of artist-led organisations, led to a range of transformational projects with impacts both in Africa and the UK. Collectively, we secured two further AHRC/GCRF grants for a joint programme of activities including co-producing publications, exhibitions, commissions, films, workshops and mentoring in entrepreneurship skills, and an art-writers toolkit. Outcomes have received outstanding feedback from participants, who testify that they have been empowered through the projects. New art writers have seen their work published, including in Art Monthly and Nairobi Contemporary; marginalised and low esteem *Jua Kali* ('working under the sun') artisans have had their work valorised by Ugandan film makers; four ECR curators are being mentored by leading African curators; and we are now working with our partners on strategies for establishing the groundwork for national collections, essential for building sustained public esteem for this cultural activity, by developing archives of individual artists.

Our partnership work in **heritage and contemporary art** has linked academia with heritage, cultural and sector organisations at a level not previously seen in the contemporary art context, and has made a significant contribution to establishing this as an emergent field of research. Unit researchers began to engage this field through independent projects within heritage sites (e.g. Fox 2014, Brown 2015). In 2016, we recruited King, one of the UK's leading professionals in the field to join our team to critically examine the motivations and practices of heritage organisations commissioning contemporary art. Students were involved too, for example in [a widely publicised](#) intervention, [The Great Cover Up](#) (2018), which exposed how women have been largely invisible in certain heritage narratives. [MCAHE](#) has attracted interest for the policy developments the research initiated, for example enhancing the role of heritage volunteers as advocates for contemporary art. At Pompeii, [Expanded Interiors](#) has created a new model for

mutually beneficial collaboration between artists and archaeologists, and for instilling a sense of ownership within regional communities for local heritage.

We contribute to **capacity building in the UK and international creative industries**: Creative Fuse North East (2016-19, ILES:2.4.3) was a multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder £4.5m AHRC/ERDF/ACE-funded research collaboration between five North East universities, SMEs and individual creatives that devised innovative approaches to supporting skills and aptitudes needed for a thriving and sustainable CDIT sector in the regional economy. Our work involved Clay's innovative 'CAKE' (Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange) events, drawing together stakeholders over coffee and cake. These were praised for the imaginatively simple and direct way they engaged stakeholders and were recognised as a re-energising intervention in the project.

Weeks' work with artists working in the gig economy (2019-20) means that the needs of artists themselves are better understood and, through Butler and Pollock's work with Newbridge, better provided for. Their research, and significant NU investment in a new Newbridge building (ILES2.4.4), developed both new strategies and infrastructure for professional development and more equitably shared resources, such as studios and incubator spaces. Working more broadly across the North East Cultural sector, our KTP with Northern Stage (2017-19) aimed to benefit early career actors by empowering them to incorporate new design-based technologies in their work, broadening their skills for theatre employment. Building on this, we created opportunities for both North East theatre and PROTO, a centre for immersive technology start-ups through our AHRC network grant (2019) that connected them with counterparts in Shanghai.

Recognition

The **honours, prizes, and creative engagements** that enrich the research base, cultural life, economy and society of the UK and beyond capture and reflect the diversity and career stages of our research community. Kimani was selected for the *Inclusive Futures BAME Leadership programme*; Davoll was shortlisted for *THES Technician of the Year*, and the full technical team won the *Papin Award for best Technical Team* in the UK Higher Education summit. The Wilsons were elected RAs and were invited to coordinate the *2020 Summer Exhibition*. Masterman represented new British talent in the *British Ceramics Biennial* (2015); Maclean represented Scotland at the *Venice Biennale* (2017), and Bromwich at the *South East Asia Triennale* (National Gallery of Indonesia, 2016). Burton won Gold Prize and People's Prize at the *Korea Ceramics Biennale* (2015). Grayson curated the *Adelaide International* (2014), Spalding *Virginia Woolf* at the NPG (2014), and Park *Interwoven Histories* at Leeds Industrial Museum (2017). Our films won Best Experimental Film at *Vila di Condo* (Wilson and Wilson, 2018), Best Feature at the *Amsterdam Renaissance Film Festival* and Best Micro-Budget Feature at the *Berlin Independent Film Festival* (Coombes 2017). Our commissions for *Great Exhibition of the North* were mentioned in Hansard, (Bromwich, Wilsons 2018). Bailey performed his work at the Hepworth (2015), and Noonan-Ganley at the South London Gallery (2019). Our researchers have been featured in key publications: Price (PGR) and Cuddon featured in the Phaidon *Vitamin* series, with work acquired for the key collections at the MET and Tate (Wilson and Wilson 2016), and the Arts Council (Cuddon 2019). Staff have been Visiting Professors at Jillin (2017), Makerere (2015), Politecnico di Milano (2017), Technische Universität Munich (2015) and Victoria (2018), and have served as UKRI panellists (Pollock) and PRC members (Burton, Huber, Pollock, Schofield, Talbot).

We take our research into society to engage with diverse communities. We have valorised the creativity of craft workers in the contrasting contexts of East London (2019), India (2014) and

Unit-level environment template (REF5b)

East Africa (2017); engaged schoolchildren with birdsong ([MCAHE 2019](#)); young adults with making public sculpture from recycled material ([Jetty 2014](#)); and connected displaced communities with their heritage through exhibition making (Park 2017). Bromwich's [Art Lending Library](#) (2016) enabled many people to reflect upon contemporary art in their own homes for the first time. We have made tangible commitments to the UN principles of 'leaving no one behind' and its SDGs through our projects in Africa, India and Turkey, as well as on our doorstep, in deprived areas in the North East. Our work engages audiences in physical public spaces: Cuddon's [Wal Pawb \(Our Wall\)](#) in Wrexham Market (2018), radically linking art and commerce through broadcast films (Clay 2016-20) and novel use of virtual space (Grayson 2018). As a unit, we understand the importance and value of engaging our local community, which has embraced the transformative impact of creative arts research. This was recognised in 2020 when the poet, artist and video filmmaker Imtiaz Dharker became University Chancellor. The research culture discussed throughout this document is vibrant and sustainable, and will ensure that the NU commitment to art and culture will keep the Unit at the forefront of work in the University, the region, the nation and globally.