

<b>Institution: The Open University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: C19 Politics and International Studies</b>
<p><b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b></p> <p><b>1.1 Context and structure</b></p> <p>Politics and International Studies at the OU (POLIS) has a long record of producing internationally excellent research. Our submission to REF 2021 is a key step in a new, refocussed research strategy prompted by generational change in the unit and backed by renewed investment. We are submitting 9 FTE academics to Panel C19 (<b>surnames emboldened</b>). Our research covers two main areas: 'international relations beyond the west' and 'democratic politics: performance and participation' (see 1.1.1). These build on and extend in new directions long-standing research excellence on these topics. Our research is also distinctive in benefitting from the interdisciplinary academic culture of the social sciences at the University (see 1.1.2). It will continue to draw insight from the wider interdisciplinary environment of the School of Social Sciences and Global Studies (SSGS) and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) in order to enhance our contribution to politics and international relations.</p> <p><i>REF2021</i></p> <p>POLIS is excited to enter as a unit of assessment in the REF for the first time since 2002. In RAE 2008 and REF2014 POLIS research, income, postgraduates and impact case-studies made significant contributions to other UOAs – in sociology, geography and development studies. Subsequently, POLIS successfully made the case within the University to develop a refocussed approach to our research. This submission forms a key step within a longer-term research strategy intended to develop the vitality and sustainability of the unit over the next 5-10 years.</p> <p>POLIS's research strategy sought to exploit the potential of the post-Stern research environment and the OU's ongoing commitment to internationally excellent research that 'informs, inspires and influences'. As the OU's 2018-23 Research and Enterprise Plan makes clear, research forms an integral part of our ability to push the boundaries of new knowledge, support the OU's world-leading distance education and fulfil its social mission.</p> <p>Responding to this context and following the formation in 2016 of the new Faculty (FASS) and School (SSGS), POLIS secured a package of investment to fortify our research expertise and create a new postgraduate curriculum (MA in International Relations). With backing from the Faculty and University the unit appointed four early career researchers (ECRs) in 2019-20 and as a mark of ongoing growth, three more senior positions after the REF census date (senior lecturer and two chairs).</p> <p>In sum, REF2021 is an important first test of POLIS's new research strategy.</p> <p><u>1.1.1 Research groups</u></p> <p>As a relatively small unit, POLIS's research strategy groups research into two main areas of excellence: international relations beyond the west; and democratic politics: performance and participation. These groups drive forward and expand upon long-standing research foci within the discipline whilst encompassing a range of research areas and epistemological and methodological approaches. In outlining the main foci of POLIS research, the sections below note, where relevant, examples of research excellence developed by former colleagues on which these two groups build.</p> <p>Boundaries between these two groups are flexible, with some researchers and outputs contributing to both. The vitality of research is sustained by a productive cross fertilisation between more 'traditional' and 'critical' approaches as well as between disciplinary and interdisciplinary methodologies.</p>

### 1. *International relations beyond the west*

Researchers in this group include **Boni, Brown, Chatterje-Doody, Martin, Wastnidge** (plus Gaskarth and Weiffen, appointed after the REF census date).

A signature of our research in IR is its focus on non-western states and non-state actors and their capacity to impact on international affairs. The discipline of IR increasingly recognises the need to engage more fully with the non-western world in addressing contemporary challenges to the western-dominated international order. Debates around the utility of 'traditional' IR approaches, critiques of Eurocentric methodologies, postcolonial approaches and explorations of 'worlding beyond the west' have all helped expand the focus of the discipline. Four of seven recent POLIS appointees (**Boni, Chatterje-Doody, Gaskarth, Weiffen**) add to our capacity to respond to these developments, bringing expertise on a range of further non-western contexts to complement the existing work of **Brown** and **Wastnidge**.

Research within this group incorporates an expansive range of both research objects and approaches. Its geographical range includes Russia, Iran, the Middle East, China, Pakistan, South Asia, Africa and Latin America. Its substantive focus covers 'traditional' concerns, such as foreign policy and regional co-operation, but also cultural diplomacy, social media and development cooperation. As well as state actors, our research encompasses media organisations, religious foundations, militaries, NGOs and sub-state regional economic actors. Methodologically, researchers in this group utilise established methods of qualitative, quantitative and comparative political analysis, but also mobilise innovative and critical ideas and methods that focus on narrative, agency, culture and soft power.

**Wastnidge's** analyses of Iran's cultural diplomacy and his co-leadership of the Carnegie-funded SEPAD project ('Sectarianism, Proxies and De-sectarianisation') has involved policy briefings in the UK parliament on de-sectarianisation in the Middle East, and new analyses of soft power and de-securitisation in the region. **Chatterje-Doody** is a co-convenor of the BISA Russia and Eurasia Security Working Group and uses cutting-edge methodologies in discourse analysis, narrative studies and the role of emotion to understand Russia's use of social media and historical narrative to further its international influence. **Boni's** in-depth scrutiny of China-Pakistan cooperation includes his participation in a Carnegie-led and Ford Foundation-funded project on China. **Brown's** continuing work on questions of state agency and developmental unevenness includes work on the diversity of African states' actions within the field of development cooperation. **Wastnidge, Chatterje-Doody** and **Boni's** work explores Eurasian challenges and the possible emergence of counter-hegemonic security communities.

Though primarily belonging to the second research group, **Martin's** work on counter-terrorism and **Czajka's** emerging research on non-western approaches to climate resilience, and on democratic struggles in Turkey, both cross over creatively into this group. POLIS further strengthened this group with the appointment of Weiffen (comparative politics, regionalism and Latin America) and Gaskarth (security, international ethics and new powers).

Earlier research reflecting the focus of this group includes: Conway's ESRC-funded research on British emigrés in South Africa; and Grugel and Fontana's H2020-funded work on participation and development. Many of the issues raised in Isin's ERCFP7-funded work on citizenship after orientalism (discussed below) addressed non-western conceptions of citizenship, whilst Bloom's Leverhulme-funded work on 'noncitizenism' and the negotiation of the UN Global Compact on Migration (GCM), also contributes to POLIS outputs and impact in this group. The earlier research of POLIS Emeritus Professor Thompson (in IPE) also forms part of this group.

### 2. *Democratic politics: performance and participation*

POLIS scholars **Andrews, Czajka, Heffernan, Taylor, Martin**, and Usherwood and Weiffen (appointed after REF census date) all conduct research into different aspects of democratic politics.

Within the broad field of democratic politics, POLIS research has a particular focus on the performative aspects of politics and the ways in which they shape multiple modes, limits and experiences of political participation. Work on citizenship, identity, security politics, migration, leadership and loyalty all explore different aspects of performance and participation in democratic politics. Our researchers' combination of traditional and critical approaches contributes to the vitality and variety of POLIS research.

A key feature of POLIS's research on democratic politics concerns how performative politics shapes participation in the fields of citizenship and security. **Czajka's** work on performative democracy (see the monograph [Democracy and Justice](#)) is complemented by her innovative work on performative methodologies, including collaborations with the Tate Modern and a range of international arts organisations to explore issues such as migration and climate change.

**Czajka's** work notably extends a tradition of POLIS research interpreting citizenship as performative political repertoires enacted and disrupted by both citizens and non-citizens (see Isin's [Being Digital Citizens](#)). Performativity was a central focus of Isin's 'Oecumene: Citizenship after Orientalism' project (concluded in 2015) and a key strand of the OU's Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance (CCIG). Bloom's development of the novel concept of 'noncitizenism' and de Jong's work on migrant and gender politics also analysed performativity in citizenship, migration and refugee studies (see [Noncitizenism](#) and [Complicit Sisters](#), respectively).

**Martin's** research on the securitisation of British politics ([Counter-Radicalisation and the Securing of British Identity](#)) also builds on and extends previous POLIS research, continuing Huysmans' earlier contributions, grounded in theories of performativity ([Security Unbound](#)). Martin's analysis of the UK's *Prevent* strategy shows how it delineates the boundaries of political participation, identity and belonging. It extends the examination of the ways in which security politics can create and limit boundaries for democratic politics. **Taylor's** work on affective politics and anger as a political motivator (including articles and forthcoming monograph on [Spinoza](#)) also highlights performative aspects of politics, whilst his work on political freedom, resistance and post-Brexit political identities extends this work in new directions. **Chatterje-Doody's** research in the non-western IR group similarly stretches this tradition, exploring the relationship between historical memory and Russia's international identity-building via traditional and new media. This links with earlier research by Blakeley on Spanish politics and historical memory.

Current POLIS research also expands the unit's strong track record of exploring the different modes and lived experiences of political participation in democracies. This includes work on loyalties, identity and leadership. **Andrews** explores political loyalty via political biographical studies, including of [James Klugmann](#) and [John Cairncross](#) (with studies of Cyril Lakin and Thomas Wright forthcoming). **Heffernan's** well-known work on British prime ministerial power is being extended with research into the constitution and recruitment of the British political class and public attitudes towards political elites. This builds on his 20-year co-editorship of the 'state of the art' Palgrave series, *Developments in British Politics*, as well as frequent contributions to political analysis on the BBC and other media. **Czajka** and Weiffen's work on democratic crisis, Weiffen's research on democracy promotion, and from May 2021, Usherwood's research on Euroscepticism, further extend the work of this group.

In summary, POLIS's refocused research strategy and the addition of new staff has sought deliberately to build on and extend these two, longer standing research strengths within the unit.

### 1.1.2 Interdisciplinarity, structure and strategy (current REF period)

The vitality of POLIS research has been sustained for a long time through mutually-beneficial relationships across our Faculty that have enabled fertile interdisciplinary intellectual engagements. POLIS researchers have used those engagements to make unique contributions to the wider discipline. We continue with this approach but within a politics and IR-focussed research strategy and REF submission.

POLIS researchers helped to create and lead some of the key structures supporting research in the Faculty and University while, at the same time, benefitting from funding, external collaborations and administrative support they have provided. POLIS played a leading role in the formation of the internationally renowned CCIG research centre providing two of its directors and research stream leads. As the University established its Strategic Research Areas (SRAs) and CCIG's work came to an end, Isin led the formation of the Citizenship and Governance SRA in 2015 and de Jong led the workstream on Justice, Borders and Rights. We are extending this work today with **Czajka** and **Chatterje-Doody** leading the working group developing a new, interdisciplinary Centre for Global Challenges and Social Justice, launching in 2021.

POLIS draws on intellectual exchanges with colleagues in other disciplines to make unique contributions to research in politics and IR. These allow us to enrich established politics and IR analyses of leadership, participation, cooperation and power with innovative and critical approaches that scrutinise identity, security, culture, new media, affect and rising powers. Contributions include work on the intersection between development and IR (**Boni** and **Chatterje-Doody's** work on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and **Brown's** work on development policy and Africa); sociology (**Chatterje-Doody's** work on social media and **Czajka's** leadership of the Tate Exchange programme); culture and politics (**Czajka's** arts engagements and **Wastnidge's** work on culture, religion and diplomacy); political history (**Andrews** and **Taylor**); and language-based area studies (**Chatterje-Doody** and **Wastnidge**).

In previous REF periods, POLIS researchers made significant contributions to other units of assessment. In 2014, Isin, Conway, **Czajka**, Huysmans and Prokhovnik contributed to Sociology; **Brown's** work on African agency and sovereignty contributed to Development Studies, and Corry's global environmental governance research to Geography. We continue to engage actively with this interdisciplinary environment in the School and Faculty to enhance the development of our research in politics and IR, our submission to REF2021 and the further growth and development of our two research groups.

In addition to School and Faculty research engagements, POLIS holds monthly research meetings, presentations and peer-review of disciplinary and pedagogical research-in-progress, and discussions on impact strategy and funding. We have also supported research writing through School-wide 'writing circles', and a POLIS residential writing retreat in November 2019 which saw 7 academics work on a total of 9 outputs of which 5 are now published or submitted for publication. The event was described by attendees as 'really supportive' and 'the most comfortable I have ever felt in a research environment'. Use of dedicated research time and flexibility over teaching duties has also enabled POLIS researchers to deepen their engagements with their subjects, resulting in nine outputs submitted for REF2021 being monographs.

POLIS makes full use of the University's research infrastructure, including the practical support for Open Access principles and requirements embedded within the University's Open Research Online facility (ORO). As one of the UK's largest research repositories (43,000 OU publications and over 600,000 full-text downloads a year from 200 countries), ORO makes our research globally accessible within and beyond the disciplines of politics and IR. POLIS researchers benefit from the OU's new research grant handling tool, the Award Management System. Researchers in the unit also utilise the advice, regulation and risk assessment provided on research ethics via the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) which itself draws on the OU's internationally recognised expertise in the field of research ethics (see the Institutional Environment Statement (IES)).

### 1.1.3 Impact

POLIS research focuses on national and global challenges that are at the forefront of the University's aim to develop engaged research and fulfil its social justice mission. Our work in international relations and democratic politics has enabled us to engage with policy-makers and

think tanks at the national and international level (UK Parliament, Brookings Institution, South Asia Democratic Forum); international and national organisations working on migration and climate change (European Network on Statelessness, Tate Modern, Counterpoint Arts); and journalists and those working in the media (BBC and International Forum for Journalism).

POLIS benefits from substantial support from the wider Faculty and University to facilitate impactful research. This includes impact training events with FastTrack Impact; post-doctoral research assistance and consultancies to assist in developing impact (see Section 3); funding to enhance impact; and participation in Faculty and School impact workshops and reviews.

POLIS has utilised a range of appropriate pathways to boost research impact for key beneficiaries. These include workshops and engagement events; media appearances; and direct partnerships with third-sector organisations (such as Tate Modern). In line with University strategy, our research continues to inform, underpin and shape our award-winning curriculum as well as BBC collaborations and open access resources on OpenLearn (Section 4).

Two key areas of impact – on public policy, law and services; and on creativity, culture and society – are showcased in the two POLIS impact case studies. Bloom's research, expert testimony and advocacy in the negotiations for the UN GCM in partnership with international NGOs and networks was supported by the provision of study leave, assistance in funding bids, and provision of flexible teaching cover. Bloom achieved observer status for the OU in the UN negotiations enabling her own work assisting NGO groups to engage effectively in the process and creating access for other OU researchers.

Engagement with arts organisations stemmed from Isin and **Czajka** initiating a long-running relationship between the OU and the Tate Modern, focussed on the Tate Exchange programme. Within this, POLIS co-led the 'Who Are We' project (2016-2019) of participatory arts events exploring migration and identity, drawing on Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF, £21,460) plus support from the Faculty Strategic Research Investment Fund (SRIF) and the wider OU buy-in to the relationship with Tate (c.£8,000 annually). **Czajka** extended the engagement with arts organisations through the AHRC-funded 'Picturing Climate' project. Here too, POLIS has led the establishment of key external relationships that have enhanced the impact of POLIS research and that of other OU researchers.

## 1.2 Future research and impact strategy

During the current REF period, POLIS took the initiative to become a unit of assessment in its own right as a key step in a longer-term strategy to strengthen the vitality and sustainability of our research. We will continue to build on our established history in disciplinary and interdisciplinary research whilst seeking to create further capacity, quality outputs, funding success and impact in the two research groups outlined above.

Our **Research strategy** seeks to:

### 1. Sustain the vitality of POLIS's research groups

POLIS will consolidate its research around its two research groups and further embed the work of new and existing staff in unit and School research environments. We will do this by pursuing further individual and collaborative work within both research groups; continuing engagements with colleagues in other disciplinary areas in the School and Faculty; and building on existing, and developing new, external collaborations.

Key indicators of success will be the growth of existing and new collaborations across disciplines and HEIs involving POLIS researchers, as well as bringing to fruition our contribution to establishing the new Centre for Global Challenges and Social Justice (CGCSJ) in SSGS,

designed to further enhance the excellence and impact of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research in the School.

### 2. Develop high-quality research outputs

We will support early career and more established researchers to further improve the quality of their research. We will build on successful writing retreats and writing circles, and continue to draw on expertise from senior researchers in the School through the research-mentoring system. We will add to these initiatives with a new research outputs peer-reading group and by encouraging participation in School-level training and professional development.

As an indication of early progress, our 2020 internal audit of research showed POLIS researchers had 8 monographs in progress (2 of which are in press); 6 journal articles in press or review; 2 edited collections and 9 book chapters in press or under review. Highlights for early 2021 include major new monographs *Spinoza* (**Taylor**) and *Russia Today and Conspiracy Theory* (**Chatterje-Doody**).

### 3. Enhance sustainability of research through external bidding success

POLIS is increasing its bidding activity and building greater capacity for funding success (Section 3). This includes unit-specific training and support for bid-writing, induction sessions for new members of staff and building bidding experience among POLIS staff through participation in large collaborative bids with other HEIs (8 bids in draft or submitted). We will add to regular School and unit-level training by ensuring that annual career development and workload planning includes allocations for developing bids. An early indicator of success is **Czajka's** 2021 AHRC (GCRF) grant of £180k for 'Decolonising Climate Resilience'.

### 4. Continue an inclusive approach to research and scholarship

POLIS recognises and values the variety of research and scholarship in the unit whether supported by external income or internal resources. The unit includes six staff tutors, all of whom fall below the OU REF Code of Practice research workload threshold (categories of OU staff are explained in the IES). Some have career pathways focussed on pedagogically-oriented scholarship, others have plans for REF-able research. It is particularly important in the recently enlarged unit to enhance opportunities for all, ensure inclusivity and cohesion and strengthen teaching-research synergies.

POLIS will continue to ensure that sources of support and study leave, funding, training and other support, including research mentorship, are available for all categories of staff, regardless of REF status, in order that the unit continues to pursue both REF-oriented research and pedagogic scholarship.

Our **impact strategy** seeks to:

#### 1. Develop POLIS capacity to achieve impact

Through increased investment in staffing of research support (at University level, research impact senior manager, impact evidence manager), the University and Faculty have enhanced the expertise available to POLIS to develop our capacity to achieve research impact. Drawing on this support – as well as external training and workshops, where appropriate – gives us increased capacity to embed impact goals, pathways to impact and systematic evidence-gathering into our future research.

#### 2. Identify and target impact areas

Research in POLIS has the potential to achieve benefit or change in a number of areas. We have utilised research audits to begin to identify how to maximise impact across both research groups. We will build on recent POLIS successes in utilising internal funding from RES and the Faculty (see Section 3) to support our work in public engagement, impact generation and evidence gathering.

POLIS will also prioritise support for areas of research with greatest potential for significance and reach including opportunities in participatory arts research (**Czajka**); media and politics (**Chatterje-Doody**); democratic engagement in UK politics (**Taylor, Heffernan**); counter-radicalisation policy (**Martin**); and de-sectarianisation (**Wastnidge**).

### 3. Expand POLIS public engagement events

To raise further the profile of our research and build relationships with key practitioner groups, POLIS is developing a series of 'Open Politics' public engagement events highlighting POLIS research and teaching. The first, delayed by the pandemic from spring to autumn 2020 was 'Orwell, 1984 and New Authoritarianism' (within the 'democratic politics' group), attracting over 400 online participants. In the 'IR beyond the west' group, a planned policy-oriented event was repurposed due to the pandemic into an online seminar series exploring non-western perspectives on change in international order. Alongside our partnership in the UK Parliament week, we are re-energising our knowledge exchange activities around our core research groups.

## 2. People

### 2.1 Staffing strategy

Recent investment in staffing to develop our research and to expand our postgraduate curriculum has sought to build on existing traditions of research excellence and to expand them in new directions. As a commitment to the medium and long-term goals of the unit, and in line with the University's commitment to reduce casualisation, our approach to new staffing has focussed on full-time and permanent roles.

As a result of this investment, the unit now comprises of 4 early career lecturers; 5 SLs; a reader and, by early-2021, two professors, along with 6 staff tutors. Nine of those academics were in post by July 31 2020 and met the OU Code of Practice threshold for REF. We have made appointments to extend our research strengths in our 'IR beyond the west' (**Chatterje-Doody, Boni, Martin, Gaskarth and Weiffen**) and 'Democratic politics: performance and participation' (**Taylor, Martin, Usherwood and Weiffen**) groups. Appointments ensure that we have good coverage both of area studies and qualitative, quantitative, comparative and performative approaches and to support curriculum developments (Masters in IR).

Our staffing strategy has necessarily had to respond to a period of generational change in the unit. Building on their research and teaching achievements in POLIS, several staff (Blakeley, Grugel, Huysmans, Isin) moved on to senior positions at other leading HE institutions. We took the decision to prioritise recruitment of ECRs in order to refresh, renew and extend existing research areas. However, we have also extended our senior research experience and intellectual leadership with appointments of an SL (Weiffen, autumn 2020) and two chairs (Gaskarth and Usherwood, early 2021). This will strengthen our two research groups, enable the effective mentorship and development of the unit's ECRs, increase the unit's expertise in bidding and add substantially to the vitality and sustainability of POLIS research.

In a notable feature of our staffing strategy, POLIS transitioned fixed-term staff to permanent status, recruited only to full-time, permanent, research-teaching positions and moved academic-related staff to more academic roles. Our research strategy is therefore built on solid foundations. We have been able to do this by actively benefitting from a wider move in the University and Faculty towards less casualised employment. POLIS successfully applied for two fixed-term researchers to become permanent. All staff on fixed-term positions who wished to continue with POLIS were given that opportunity (POLIS had no part-time staff in this period). POLIS also facilitated the transition of staff in academic-related positions (Senior Faculty Managers) to academic positions (staff tutor roles) and we were successful in enabling one researcher to move from a staff tutor role to a central academic position.

In sum, POLIS has responded to a period of change with a staffing strategy that has invested in and developed our existing staff whilst also building in an exciting and strategic way for the future.

## 2.2 Staff development

POLIS aims to nurture an inclusive approach to research excellence, developing staff capacity in outputs, income generation, PhD supervision and impact activities. POLIS staff are entitled and encouraged to take 30% of their annual workload as research leave, a combination of study leave and in-unit research and scholarship days. Additional leave is also available for impact and knowledge-exchange activities with a view to ensuring the broader social and policy impact of POLIS research. This also ensures that cutting-edge research continues to underpin the unit's curriculum. Shared teaching duties enable cover for teaching and administrative responsibilities, with additional cover provided through funding consultancies. Leave can be taken flexibly during the year, enabling all colleagues, including those with flexible working patterns, to benefit equally.

POLIS staff use annual staff appraisal and research planning with the Head of unit (equivalent to head of department) and unit research lead to identify support needed in order to attain research objectives. All POLIS staff also have access to a research mentor, whom they meet on at least a semi-annual basis to discuss the progress of their research and ensure it is developing in a manner appropriate to their career stage and aspirations.

As noted in Section 1, regular POLIS research meetings provide disciplinary peer support, feedback and collaboration on research-in-progress and POLIS staff are actively encouraged to take up School, Faculty and University-level research development opportunities. POLIS also encourages staff to take up research leadership positions within the School and Faculty (including in this REF period, Director of Research Degrees for FASS; Director of Citizenship and Governance SRA; Director of CCIG; and SSGS Director of Research).

We see this work beyond the unit not only as good citizenship within the School, Faculty and University, but also contributing to the intellectual development and overall maturity and reach of POLIS itself.

## 2.3 Postgraduate Research Students (PGRS)

The postgraduate research community in POLIS is an integral component of the research environment. In this census period, research students have been funded through grant income ('Oecumene' and 'Enacting European Citizenship' projects) and major funding bodies (ESRC). **Czajka** and Isin had key roles in the successful establishment of the ESRC-funded Grand Union Doctoral Training Programme (DTP) with Oxford and Brunel, and **Czajka** and Bloom ran its interdisciplinary Citizenship Studies pathway. This enhanced the reputation of POLIS research and provided a route for expanding postgraduate recruitment. As Director of Research Degrees, **Czajka** standardised supervisory policies in FASS, and helped to develop a postgraduate programme of core and advanced training for students.

In the census period, POLIS had a 100% PhD completion rate, with 11 students finishing and moving on to positions in academia (7 graduates), education (1 graduate) and third sector organizations (3 graduates). With regards to the latter, one former student (McConalogue) is now the Editorial Director and Director of Communications at the think tank Civitas, while another (Arvidsson) is Curator at the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, Sweden. The seven who have gained academic positions have gone on to posts at Sheffield, Duisburg-Essen, Rio de Janeiro, Roehampton, London School of Tropical Medicine, Birmingham City and Bremen. Scheel also won the BISA Michael Nicholson prize for best thesis in 2014. The current POLIS postgraduate community comprises 5 students, who are a mix of ESRC-funded and self-funded, full and part-time, and students based in other units co-supervised by POLIS colleagues (including one funded by the Rachel Webb Political Psychology Studentship).



POLIS equips PGRS with research and teaching experience that enables them both to succeed in their PhDs and their post-PhD careers (demonstrated above). PGRS' recruitment and progress are overseen by the Postgraduate Convenor (**Boni**). Reflecting the excellent satisfaction ratings achieved by the University (see IES) former POLIS research students rated supervision as 'excellent' and noted that the unit was 'extremely encouraging, positive and constructive'. One former student remarked: 'when I supervise students as a lecturer, I try to do for them what my supervisor did for me'.

Over and above University-wide provision, regular supervisory meetings and participation in POLIS research meetings, POLIS provides additional professional development opportunities through participation in the PhD Student Teaching Scheme. This enables students to gain experience working with POLIS module teams. Students said this scheme was 'an incredibly valuable experience', allowing them to gain online and face-to-face teaching experience.

As noted in the IES, the University Graduate School provides a bespoke virtual learning environment giving access to a range of academic, training and professional development resources and an annual personal research allowance (£1000 plus further funding opportunities), additional support during the Covid-19 pandemic and support for students with disabilities (the Disabled Students' Allowance). PhD Students also benefit from the OU's Neurodiversity Network and the "Togetherall" 24/7 free, confidential, online mental health support.

#### **2.4 Equality and Diversity**

Over this REF period, POLIS has used unit-specific initiatives over and above wider University-level policies to foster greater equality and diversity within the unit.

Unit-level efforts to diversify our staff have included the School's first pilot project to reflect critically on our hiring practices with regard to gender, ethnicity and disability. POLIS collected and analysed data on recent appointments and produced a report with a number of recommendations, discussed at unit, School and Faculty level. Currently, seven of the 16 members of POLIS (including staff tutors) are women and two identify as BAME.

POLIS's staff development strategy has also focussed on the mentorship and promotion of women academics into upper-level administrative positions. Women from POLIS have held senior research positions (listed above), plus FASS Deputy Associate Dean for Teaching and Students, SSGS Director of Teaching; and the School's Athena Swan representative. Our staffing strategy has also focussed on diversifying areas of research excellence beyond the west, with a number of recent appointments specialising in non-western politics and IR.

We took the initiative to include on our internal REF panel two ECRs appointed in autumn 2019, to use the work of the panel as a means of REF-related mentoring, and to enhance and broaden REF skills and knowledge within POLIS. We have ensured the ethnic diversity and gender parity of the REF panel and have monitored grading (and inclusion of outputs in the submission) with regard to gender, disability and BAME authorship, within the University's REF Code of Practice. Consideration was thus given to inclusivity and representation in the very construction of the submission.

In enacting University-level policies, all POLIS staff have undergone unconscious bias and interview training and all POLIS REF panel members have completed Research England equality and diversity training. We have made full use of the University's extensive flexible working arrangements including how, and when, study and research leave are taken. This has enabled colleagues with caring and other responsibilities, disabilities, or flexible working patterns, to benefit equally from research leave provisions.

While availability, training and use of remote working tools (Teams, Skype, Adobe Connect) are a routine part of our working environment, they have enabled us to sustain the vitality of our research environment during the Covid-19 pandemic and avoid some of the accessibility issues

that have arisen elsewhere. POLIS researchers have thereby continued to work effectively, collaborate and engage intellectually at unit, School and Faculty level.

Flexibility and accessibility are also enhanced by online research and teaching support, including an extensive online library (see Section 3), online research and teaching workshops, training sessions, mentorship, and certification programmes such as Applaud (the University's accredited route to Advance HE fellowships). The University's Access to Work Scheme and Employee Support Programme for staff with disabilities and mental health and wellbeing needs, and the University's flexibility on staff returning to work from periods of absence, add to the support we offer.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

In order to realise POLIS's strategic aim of developing our research quality and its impact through our two research groups, we are seeking to build our bidding activity and success and will continue to draw on institutional support to do so.

#### 3.1 Research Income.

In response to staffing changes and the conclusion of some larger research projects, we have sought to reinvigorate our external funding success as part of our new research strategy. Key steps taken include providing support in the form of study leave, administrative support and internal funding to enable staff to develop bids (see 3.2); ensuring new appointments all have demonstrated achievement, or potential, to develop funding bids; and building experience of large funding bids through involvement in collaborative projects in the OU and in other HEIs. As a result, POLIS is seeing modest but welcome successes in funding with real evidence of much increased potential for success in the near future.

As PIs, POLIS researchers secured over £570,000 in external research funding in this REF period. This includes recent successes such as Bloom's Leverhulme Research Fellowship 'Noncitizenship and the Global Compact for Migration' (2018-19, grant value £40,176, income to OU £28,060) and **Czajka's** AHRC 'Picturing Climate' project (2019-20, £51,541, over £29,000 of which was spent in ODA-recipient partner countries). It also includes Isin's 'Oecumene' project (ERC FP7, 2010-2015, grant value £1.8M, income to OU in this REF period £384,371); Grugel's 'Contentious Rights' project (Horizon 2020, 2016-20, grant value €269 857,80; income to OU £52,790) and Conway's British in South Africa research (ESRC, 2013-14, £12,116), as well as smaller grants from a range of funders, including Santander, Royal Geographical Society, BISA and the British Council.

POLIS researchers have also been active as Co-Is in collaborative projects with other HEIs (see below). Funding from professional bodies has been secured to support research dissemination including **Brown's** BISA-supported African development workshop grant (£3,000); **Wastnidge's** BISA-funded Global Shia Diplomacy pilot (£2,500) and **Chatterje-Doody's** BISA Russia and Eurasian security working group grant (£3,500).

To improve this record further POLIS is building experience of bidding and leading larger research projects through (i) developing funding bids of our own and (ii) participation in collaborative bids with other HEIs. In terms of our own bids, POLIS had 8 bids between 2017-20 of which 4 were successful (the most recent being **Czajka's** £180k AHRC-GCRF bid) and a further 3 bids pending due to COVID-19. There are a total of 11 bids already, or due to be, submitted by the end of 2021 including **Andrews'** £40,000 Leverhulme project on Thomas Wright. Involvement in recent collaborative projects include **Wastnidge** as Co-I on the SEPAD project (2018-2020, led by Lancaster); **Boni's** involvement in the Leverhulme 'Why Decentralisation?' project led by Kent and **Chatterje-Doody's** involvement with the AHRC-funded 'Reframing Russia' project (£719,635, 2017-2020, Manchester and the OU). Collaborative bids underway include Transnational Media in the Middle East (**Chatterje-Doody** and **Wastnidge** as Co-Is on a £810,000 AHRC bid) and **Boni's** bid as Co-I on CPEC (China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor, c.£600,000, ESRC).

### 3.2 Infrastructure, facilities and research support

External funding enables us to achieve greater significance and reach in our research and POLIS will continue to use internal administrative support and funding to increase our grant income.

POLIS academics receive one-to-one support in bidding, grant maintenance and budget management from the Faculty Research Office (FRO). The expanding team of 14 in the FRO (including two senior managers) provide tailored support in research-bid development, knowledge exchange and impact activity. The Office also supports HEIF funding and management of external funding, strategic internal funding, and coordination of the REF submission. The Awards Management System enables tracking on all research and enterprise income and bid quality is reinforced by robust academic peer review.

Additional advice, support and training is available from the University Research, Enterprise and Scholarship unit (RES – see the IES) and researchers can also draw on extensive resources provided by the OU Library which is tailored for remote working. POLIS researchers have online access to a world-class collection of over 275,000 academic journals, 540 databases, 590,000 e-books and a vast selection of online newspapers, audio and video resources.

POLIS has used Faculty and University funding to help achieve its research aims in the following ways:

- Developing funding bids

The unit uses both internal and external funding to create pathways to larger external funding bids, including for ECRs. Examples include: **Czajka** using £2,300 of Faculty SRIF funding to support a successful bid to UKRI Climate Resilience fund; and **Chatterje-Doody's** use of £3,800 SRIF funding to develop a BA Knowledge Frontiers grant bid (pending due to Covid19).

- Collaborating and building networks

**Andrews** has utilised CCIG funding to hold research seminars in collaboration with Oxford and **Wastnidge** to support his participation in the 7<sup>th</sup> International Shia Studies course in Iran. **Brown** used International Development SRA funding to support an international workshop on African development in London, 2018. RES funding has been used to develop the POLIS seminar series on non-western perspectives on international order.

- Enhancing research outputs

POLIS has drawn from funding from RES (totalling £43k 2018-20) to develop research outputs including consultancies to conduct background research and a REF external advisor to review output quality. RES also funded our successful writing retreat in November 2019.

- Building research-teaching synergies

Further Faculty funding has been used for pedagogical scholarship on widening access to online teaching, (Smith, **Brown**, O'Cain and Hunter's projects) and **Czajka's** project on arts pedagogies.

- Achieving knowledge exchange and impact

**Czajka** utilised HEIF and SRIF funding to engage in knowledge exchange activities including a play and symposium at the Milton Keynes International Festival (£5,000, 2018) and the annual Tate Exchange programme (£21,460, 2016-19). **Czajka** used CCIG funding to develop the interactive game 'Uneven Journeys' on OpenLearn. POLIS used RES funding to run public engagement activities, develop impact evidence and fund the new series of 'Open Politics' events. Bloom drew on institutional support to gain OU observer status for the UN GCM negotiations.

- Enabling research collaborations in the pandemic

POLIS members have been drawing on online infrastructure and expertise to disseminate their research in collaboration with other HEIs, particularly during the global coronavirus pandemic (see 4.2).

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

Addressing some of the most pressing political issues of our time, and drawing on its expertise in 'democratic politics' and 'IR beyond the west', POLIS researchers are actively building national and international collaborations, contributing to public understanding of politics through partnerships with the BBC and open access resources, and via wider contributions to the discipline.

##### 4.1 Research collaboration

POLIS staff are involved in 8 collaborative projects with UK and international HEIs and other organisations. Examples include: **Wastnidge's** development of the SEPAD international network of 40 academics; **Boni's** collaboration with Nottingham and Lahore for British Council and ESRC grants on the BRI and CPEC; **Wastnidge** and **Chatterje-Doody's** involvement in the 'Transnational Media in the Middle East' bid (partners in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon); **Czajka's** 'Picturing the Climate' work with NGOs and universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cuba and Jordan; and Heffernan's visiting fellowship at Notre Dame. Other international networks include **Boni's** involvement with the 'Why Decentralization' and 'The politics of Chinese investments in Europe' networks; **Chatterje-Doody's** role in 'Slavic Studies Goes Global' and 'WomenInRus'; and **Martin's** involvement in the 'Rethinking Security' group.

These relationships provided fertile ground for collaborative events with UK and international universities, including with Oxford (**Andrews** - 'Divided Loyalties', 2016); Birmingham and Oxford Brookes (**Brown** - African development workshop, 2018); Manchester (**Chatterje-Doody**, 'Reframing Russia'); Burch International University (**Czajka** - 'Picturing Climate'); UCL (**Czajka** on migration, citizenship, climate change); George Mason, USA and Lancaster (**Wastnidge** - SEPAD).

POLIS researchers have used collaboration with colleagues from other universities to co-author and co-edit a range of research outputs, including 7 journal articles and book chapters (**Boni**; **Chatterje-Doody**; **Heffernan**; **Wastnidge**); 3 books (**Chatterje-Doody**; **Heffernan**); 1 edited volume (**Wastnidge**); and 1 special issue (**Wastnidge**). Collaboration has also fostered funding bids relating to both POLIS research groups including Isin's 'Oecumene' project (£1.8M ERC, concluded 2015) and **Wastnidge's** US\$400,000 extension to SEPAD (2019-21). Future plans for international and interdisciplinary collaborations include Lebanese, Pakistani and Kazakh universities and other partners (**Wastnidge** and **Boni**), bringing together historians, political scientists and area studies experts.

##### 4.2 Contributions to the discipline

POLIS staff actively engage across the usual range of scholarly activity in politics and international studies but have also made noteworthy contributions to the wider discipline during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In relation to the latter, POLIS has facilitated online research events and made a unique impact on pedagogical approaches during the global pandemic. **Boni**, **Brown**, **Chatterje-Doody**, **Martin**, Smith and **Wastnidge** organised and contributed to online events with other HEIs and scholarly associations in the UK and overseas. Smith co-organised a BISA/PSA joint webinar series in summer 2020 with contributions from Smith, **Brown** and O'Cain (live and YouTube audience over 450).

POLIS impact in this area draws on its research and scholarship and reflects the wider recognition of research-based pedagogic excellence: Blakeley (POLIS 2006-19) won the European Award for Excellence in Teaching in Social Sciences and Humanities (2019) and **Brown**, Corry and **Czajka** won the BISA Prize for Excellence in Teaching International Studies (2016).

POLIS staff serve on editorial boards of a range of politics, IR, area studies and pedagogic journals including *Asia Major* (**Boni**); *New Middle Eastern Studies* (**Wastnidge**), *Review of International Studies* (**Brown** to 2015) and *Higher Education Studies* (Smith). Isin served as Editor-in-Chief of *Citizenship Studies* and Huysmans as editor of *International Political Sociology*. **Boni** and **Czajka** have served as Associate Editor respectively of *Contemporary South Asia* (2017-18) and *Citizenship Studies* (2016-21). **Wastnidge** is co-editor of the MUP book series, *Identities and Geopolitics in the Middle East*, and **Heffernan** for 20 years co-edited Palgrave's *Developments in British Politics*.

Current POLIS staff contribute to peer review processes across the discipline. They have reviewed for 37 different journals, including *EJIR*, *RIS*, *World Development* and *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*. POLIS staff including **Heffernan**, **Wastnidge** and **Brown** have reviewed book proposals for 10 publishers including Palgrave and MUP and POLIS staff have served as funding reviewers for AHRC, Qatar University and the Berkeley Centre.

**Brown** and **Wastnidge** have acted as PhD external examiners in 8 universities including Oxford, Sheffield and Manchester; **Chatterje-Doody** served as external PhD reviewer for Manchester; **Czajka** served as external academic reviewer for Richmond University and Niccolò Cusano University. She is also on the Management Board (2016-present) and leads the Citizenship Studies pathway of the ESRC-funded Grand Union DTP.

POLIS members are active contributors to the wider discipline, and are represented in 11 national and international professional associations, including 8 UK-based (Society of Authors, Women's History Network, BASAS, BISA, PSA, DSA, British Institute of Persian Studies, British Society of Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES), Chartered Management Institute), and 3 international (European Association for South Asian Studies, EISA and ISA). Several POLIS members serve in leadership positions within these associations: **Boni** (Council Member of BASAS and Co-Convenor of the BASAS-DSA South Asia Study Group); **Chatterje-Doody** (co-convenor of the BISA Russian and Eurasian Security working group); and Smith (Co-chair of PSA Teaching and Learning network).

Several POLIS members organised and chaired large international conferences: **Chatterje-Doody** co-chaired the Russian and Eurasian Security section of BISA annual conferences 2018-20; Smith co-chaired the Teaching and Learning panels at PSA annual conference, and a collaborative teaching and learning conference hosted by PSA, BISA, ECPR and APSA; and **Wastnidge** co-chaired the SEPAD annual international conference and 3 international workshops. The research expertise of POLIS members is recognised internationally in **Heffernan's** Visiting Research Fellow at Notre Dame and **Wastnidge's** deputy Directorship of SEPAD. **Andrews**, **Boni**, **Brown**, **Chatterje-Doody**, **Czajka** and **Wastnidge** received 21 invitations to deliver keynotes, lectures and seminar series presentations at UK and international universities and institutions including Brookings and Sciences Po as well as invited talks at events dedicated to policy-makers.

#### 4.3 Contributions to economy and society

A unique feature of POLIS's contribution to society has been its impact on public understanding of politics by building on the large-scale public engagement supported by the University (see IES). This international reach is achieved particularly through collaborations with the BBC and via the OU's free-to-view OpenLearn platform.

Co-productions with the BBC consist of collaboration on both broadcast content and supporting open access educational materials. Drawing on their research, POLIS staff were academic consultants on three BBC 2 TV series: *Inside the Commons* (**Heffernan**, 2016); *Meet the Lords* (**Heffernan**, 2017) and *Inside the Foreign Office* (**Brown** and **Wastnidge**, 2018). This work continues with **Boni** and **Chatterje-Doody** supporting *Trump on the World Stage* (BBC 2, 2021). The total audience of the three BBC series was 19.71 million. POLIS produced OpenLearn material accompanying the series generating 28,307 unique visitors to associated OpenLearn resource pages. For those resource pages POLIS produced five videos, three articles and two audios with total unique visitor figures of 18,279.

Drawing on research in migration and the Middle East, POLIS co-developed innovative, interactive educational games on OpenLearn. 'Uneven Journeys' (exploring the difference between a refugee, migrant and investor's experience in acquiring British citizenship) and 'Saving Setrus' (exploring humanitarian intervention) had a total of 10,310 unique visitors. POLIS produced two free OpenLearn courses ('What is Politics?' and 'China and the US') with total unique visitor figures of 5,582, and 6 other audio programmes with visitor figures of 7,350. POLIS staff produced 37 other written pieces for OpenLearn between 2014 and 2020.

Video interviews with prominent IR theorists (by **Brown**, **Czajka**, Corry and Conway), available since 2014 on the OU YouTube channel, received over 400,000 views. Isin's Oecumene project made 14 podcasts available via iTunesU. POLIS staff (**Boni**, **Chatterje-Doody**, **Czajka**, Smith) and postgraduate research student (Colom) produced blog posts and videos, including contributions to an SSGS blog showcasing research on COVID-19 (co-developed by **Czajka**). Production is underway for a short course on *Media, Politics and Society*, in collaboration with the British Film Institute (led by Smith).

POLIS members are also highly sought-after as commentators by international, national and local media outlets. Over the reporting period, **Andrews**, **Chatterje-Doody**, **Wastnidge** and **Heffernan** all featured regularly as experts on outlets including Al Jazeera, BBC Radio 4, BBC Three Counties Radio, Channel 5, CNN, France 24 and Vice News.

As noted (Section 1) POLIS has launched a new series of 'Open Politics' public events extending a strong record of research-based public engagement activities. For example, 'Who Are We?' and 'Picturing Climate' (**Czajka**) were the two of the most highly-attended programmes under the Tate Exchange initiative (audiences 5,000 and 2,500 respectively). POLIS has also sponsored UK Parliament week (Smith, 2020); contributed to the Milton Keynes International Festival (**Czajka**, 2018), collaborated with the Photographic Community of Displacement programme at Galleria Media Nox, Slovenia (2017) and contributed to seminars and innovative events at the Migration Museum, London.

POLIS staff have also engaged policy makers and practitioners in a number of fora. This has included **Chatterje-Doody's** collaboration on conspiracy theories and COVID-19 with the International Forum for Journalism; **Wastnidge's** engagements with parliamentarians, civil servants and diplomats through SEPAD and the Foreign Policy Centre; and **Boni's** presentations at the South Asia Democratic Forum and the Chief of the Defence Staff's Strategy Forum, IISS. **Chatterje-Doody** presented research to the technology specialist adviser of the Select Committee on Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the British Embassy in Moscow; **Heffernan** presented research to members of the Select Committee on Public Administration; **Wastnidge** presented research to members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs; and Smith wrote PSA responses to the TEF Green Paper (Department of Business Innovation and Skills, 2015-16) and to the Office for Students consultation on digital teaching and learning during the pandemic.

## 5. Conclusion

In summary, POLIS is building on and extending in new directions long-standing research excellence in IR beyond the west and democratic politics. Renewed investment and a revitalised

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

research strategy have enriched and reinforced the sustainability of our research environment within which the unit will continue to develop innovative and impactful research in politics and international studies.