

Institution: SOAS University of London
Unit of Assessment: History
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>1.1 Context and structure</p> <p>The UoA is defined by its commitment to rethink understandings of the past through frameworks that decolonise existing narratives about the histories and peoples of Asia, Africa and the Middle East and prioritise their experiences and interests. Richly diverse in regional foci and methodological approaches, SOAS Historians support a vibrant research culture actively engaged with audiences in their regions of study and beyond.</p> <p>The 25 FTE members of the UoA are based in four different departments at SOAS: the School of History, Religions and Philosophies (HRP), the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics (LCL), the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy (CISD), and the Centre for Gender Studies (CGS). This reflects the institution's unique history and development.</p> <p>Historical scholarship at SOAS revolves around two different but complementary methodological foci which shape research and impact strategies.</p> <p>The first brings together many of the historians in HRP and LCL whose work is situated within regionally defined schools of historical scholarship engaging with Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Often drawing on non-European language sources and research cultivated in partnership with scholars and academic institutions in the regions themselves, their work addresses historiographical debates as well as contemporary political and popular concerns in these regions. This scholarship continues a tradition of challenging the dominant discourses of historiography to reposition the historical lens on non-western agency; SOAS historians continue to be at the forefront of work relating to epistemological decolonisation. Growing academic and popular interest in de-centring European histories and considering legacies of empire has opened new opportunities for disciplinary and public engagement for this scholarship closer to home, in the UK. This is a powerful intellectual node around which many of our members situate their research and interconnect with research partners in other departments, other institutions in the UK and Europe and, most importantly, in universities throughout Asia, Africa and the Middle East.</p> <p>The second key research axis in the UoA comprises historians of international relations and diplomacy based largely in CISD. Examining the past through the framework of the post-war global order, historians in CISD interacting directly with actors in international public fora on issues of pressing global as well as local concern. These include stateless peoples, human security, arms control, modern slavery and more besides. This scholarship draws on political and state-focused historical methodologies to uncover the historical roots of many urgent contemporary issues of concern to policy makers and practitioners.</p> <p>The interdisciplinary nature of SOAS itself provides critical spaces and opportunities for conversation and collaboration for members of the UoA. SOAS' regional institutes and centres (IES§1) and thematic and disciplinary research centres play an important role in building a lively and enriching environment for historical research. UoA members from across the university contribute to and benefit from participation in the annual lectures, weekly seminars, workshops, and international conferences funded and organised by these specialist collaborative spaces.</p> <p>This vibrant research environment has enabled SOAS Historians in the production of 15 monographs and 8 edited or co-edited volumes, 60 substantive journal articles, and 60 chapters in scholarly volumes during the REF period. The UoA has generated over £2.95 million in research income, an almost fourfold increase on the previous REF period (from £772k; §3); and its members have supervised 68 doctoral students to completion (§2.2).</p>

1.2 Research strategy

1.2.1 Strategy in the current REF period

We have worked to cultivate a research strategy that sustains and supports the rich regional diversity within the Unit while also supporting collaboration and capacity building across the Unit and with external partners. The confidential feedback from REF2014 noted that our 'research strategy was under-developed' and that 'income was also well below what might be expected'.

We have thus focused on:

1. strengthening the UoA's research culture;
2. improving institutional monitoring of equality and diversity within the UoA and building greater support for early career researchers;
3. increasing research income; and
4. increasing the impact of the UoA's research.

The UoA adopted three strategic priorities to **strengthen the research culture**:

1. fostering research collaborations across the university and beyond;
2. enhancing institutional support structures for historical research;
3. providing and enhancing research time for all members of the UoA, particularly given major geographical **research foci are located outside of Europe** and thus members of the UoA, like those elsewhere in SOAS, require substantial periods of time to undertake fieldwork.

In 2016-17, the HRP Research Committee reconfigured its previously regionally-focused Historical Research Seminar as a forum to bring together academic and doctoral students from across the university to **discuss and build greater trans-regional research themes and approaches on Asian and African historical topics**. Presenters engage with their colleagues and receive feedback while simultaneously enabling colleagues to identify potential research collaborators within the wider History research community. This has resulted in the development of seven distinct but interlocking research strands that straddle and complement the focus on regional expertise within the Unit:

1. Histories of **trade, poverty and wealth** (Charney, Clarence-Smith, Cox, Dooling, Fuccaro, Janku, Miller, Newbigin, Rodet, Sadan);
2. **Conflict, diplomacy, and international relations** (Charney, Cox, Plesch, Reid, Rofe, Sadan, Song);
3. The **urban environment** (Fischel, Fuccaro, Lockyer, Rodet, Tejani);
4. **Gender, labour and slavery**, and histories of social inequalities (Dooling, Janku, Khatun, Karamursel, Newbigin, Rodet,);
5. **Migration, borders and borderlands** (Caron, Charney, Dooling, Fischel, Janku, Karamursel, Khatun, Karlsson, Mancini-Lander, Laamann, Rodet, Sadan);
6. **Belief, nationalism and identities** (Hirschler, Janku, Laamann, Legendre, Mancini-Lander, Matsuba, Parker, Singh, Tejani, Webb, Wirtz);
7. **Education and scriptural traditions** (George, Hirschler, Janku, Kennedy, Legendre, Matuszak, Mirelman, Parker, Weeden, Wirtz).

These clusters have enabled the UoA to identify more clearly how its research can drive innovation within the historical discipline, on the one hand through critical engagement with Eurocentrism in historical debates, and on the other by connecting its scholarship and scholars more closely to policy-making agendas and public debate. The development of these clusters has realised our aim, stated in the REF2014 submission, to 'develop clusters of shared interest and innovative thematic projects which will help to set intellectual agendas in the broader discipline as well as in the trans-disciplinary study of our respective regions'. Teaching staff in the UoA have built new course modules around these clusters. This ensures SOAS History teaching is research-led while **enabling staff to draw research benefit from their teaching work**.

Outside SOAS, the UoA has worked closely with universities, institutes, and museums in the **non-western world**, in particular through the work of Sadan, Weeden, and Charney in Asia

(India, Bangladesh, China, Japan, Myanmar, and Thailand) and Rodet in West Africa. These collaborations help to break down the divide between UK and non-western institutions and further the decolonisation of knowledge and methodology. Engaging locally in London, the UoA has also developed research linkages with neighbouring HEIs, the British Museum and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, including major exhibitions and consultancies, which draw on the strengths of members of the UoA as area specialists (§4.1, 4.3). SOAS Historians have also forged new collaborative partnerships in the visual and performing arts with the BFI (Newbiggin), through an Arts Council England-funded project with Tamasha Theatre Company entitled *Decolonising History* (Janku and Newbiggin), and through work with performance group Zipang.org online to host an online world premiere of an ancient Mesopotamian dialogue, translated for the first time by Matuszak.

The UoA **enhanced institutional support structures for historical research** by reconfiguring the History Research Committee, now the HRP research committee, led by a designated research director, in 2015-16. The Committee develops cooperative and individual strategies that move beyond the customary reliance on bureaucratic structures, guiding UoA members towards achieving clearly identified research goals that speak to major global and regional challenges. The committee also **spearheads a peer-mentoring scheme** built around formal personal research plans developed by all UoA members that culminate in an annual discussion between the individual UoA members, their research mentor, and their HoD (see §2.1.2).

In order to **enhance research productivity**, SOAS provides a term of research leave after every 8 terms of normal service (a substantial enhancement of previous arrangements; see IES§2, 3.1), and offers two terms of post-probation leave to allow ECRs to reconnect with their regions of study, develop new projects, build networks and pursue writing projects. The **creation of a Doctoral School** in 2012 eased some of the administrative burden associated with PhD training and allowed UoA members to invest more resources in supervision. The Doctoral School collaborates with UoA staff in providing additional support and training opportunities for doctoral students, which significantly enhance their post-graduation career opportunities, in line with doctoral training arrangements across the UoA (§2.2).

Greater peer mentoring and clearer internal systems have been an important part of the Unit's effort in **promoting equality and diversity** and providing greater support for early career researchers. These changes have been brought in in tandem with reforms and restructuring at the institutional level (IES§2).

The UoA has drawn on these changes to achieve its third major research priority, the **increase of research funding**. The UoA made extensive use of **peer-to-peer mentoring and writing groups** that worked alongside the Research Committee to provide robust advice on and peer review of research funding applications at all stages of the submission process. The **Research Office** has provided substantial support for the development and management of research funding applications, as part of the institution's investment in building capacity for research support (IES§4.1). The UoA was also able to benefit from university-wide competitive **seed-corn funding** for projects that show promise of leading to substantial research and impact. These measures successfully led to an increase in the percentage of high-quality bids: UoA members made 88 applications and secured 34 awards during this REF cycle, a success rate of 38%. The UoA's research strategy has thus increased the research income for historical research to a **total research income of more than £2.95 million** (2014-20).

1.2.2 Future strategic plans

The UoA's current and future staffing planning (§2) will ensure the fundamental sustainability of its ongoing and developing research strategy over the next REF cycle:

- Over the next five years, the UoA will further consolidate points (2), (3) and (4) in its current research strategy (§1.2.1), with a further emphasis on **developing the global reach of research collaborations** and knowledge users;

- Through a series of new hires, expressly focused on building capacity across the UoA's thematic research strands and developing decolonising approaches, the UoA will further consolidate its focus on **developing historical research that centres experiences and concerns of the Global South**;
- The UoA will prioritise building institutional collaborations with colleagues in universities in Asia and Africa, based around teaching but with capacity to build up research expertise and to extend the reach of SOAS History research to global and regional audiences;
- SOAS is actively developing an **ambitious and refocused internationalisation strategy**, and UoA members will be integral to that ambition, strengthening already-existing partnerships with institutions in our regions of focus, and forging new ones in alignment with our research priorities;
- **Sharing research facilities and networks to build equal partnerships** with colleagues within these collaborations will provide the UoA with an even stronger basis from which to develop research bids and knowledge exchange strategies that foreground the UoA's research themes and approaches.

1.3 Impact strategy

1.3.1 Strategy in the current REF period

The more robust processes of measurement and support for research activity put in place since 2014 has been designed to support new ways for historical research methods to contribute to more meaningful and socially relevant interdisciplinary projects than was possible in earlier iterations of a strictly mono-disciplinary department. A major transformation since the last REF cycle has been new recognition of the Unit's need to regularly record research activities in a meaningful way in order to trace impact activities, prospects and opportunities. This has been aided by SOAS' strategic investment in capacity to support impact (IES), with impact team members working closely with members of the UoA to integrate impact into their external funding bids.

The UoA has focused on building a clearer set of impact strategies that capitalise on its international and UK-based partners and audiences. This has included a strategic focus on changing the UoA's **role in the public eye**. SOAS historians have used their work to inform policy development and social and public debates, in global, regional and local fora. Members of the UoA have been part of international public fora speaking directly to policymakers and practitioners on stateless peoples, human security, arms control, and modern slavery, offering insights into how knowledge of the past can shape solutions for contemporary and future problems and influence better policy. SOAS Historians have also played an important role in shaping cultural debate and public engagement through their work with museums, media outlets and, in the course of this REF cycle, the performing arts (§4.1, 4.5). The UoA has committed itself to expanding the **extra-academic impact** value of its research and is increasingly keen to influence policy, reshape education at all levels, and intervene in issues of pressing contemporary concern.

The HoDs and centre directors, research directors and impact team have collaborated to ensure the UoA's impact-positive approach. This approach has sought to create a well-supported research culture in which staff have been able to pursue their research and also have the time and financial ability to disseminate their research and findings to **non-academic users and audiences in the UK and across the world, and to governments and NGOs globally, in Africa and Asia, and in the West**. As demonstrated in the impact case studies below (§1.3.3) and the external connections and collaborations of unit members (§4.1, 4.3, 4.6), the UoA has been very successful.

These developments have been greatly enhanced by **structural improvements** at the university level, especially the appointment of a dedicated Impact Team and the provision of impact enhancement funds supported by the School, as SOAS does not meet the minimum threshold size to be allocated an impact acceleration fund. The schools and centres of the

History UoA have been proactive in promoting and engaging support for impact as part of the impact-positive approach: for instance, the very first meeting of the re-constituted History Seminar in 2015 included the Impact Officer and was devoted to discussion of impact.

1.3.2 Impact case studies

The three impact case studies submitted from the UoA exemplify the range of ways in which SOAS Historians are using their work to put experiences and histories of the Global South at the forefront of the way in which we approach the past and have been selected from a rich array of potential case studies. Marie Rodet has connected her research to **modern day slavery**; Dan Plesch has used his research to change approaches by the United Nations and other organisations to **human rights and teaching on genocide**; and, at a time when Islamic State was destroying the archaeological remains of the Middle East's pre-Islamic past, Andrew George resurrected and preserved all we know about **the most important ancient epic of Mesopotamia**. They show the interventions Unit members are making in policies and public debates in the global south (Rodet), international politics and policy making (Plesch), and processes of heritage and disciplinary innovation (George).

ICS-1: Empowering Communities with Ascribed Slave Status in Mali and Internationally to Fight Discrimination and Stigma (Rodet)

Rodet's research analysed historic accounts of slavery, resistance against slavery and emancipation in the period 1890-1940 in the Kayes region; and explored how this historic knowledge can be mobilised as a resource to fight for human rights and against contemporary forms of exploitation, including modern slavery. One output was a 23-minute documentary *The Diambourou*, released in 2014. Rodet's work has benefited communities in Mali, and the documentary film has experienced a second life as an anti-slavery activist tool. The film has helped to bridge the gap between endogenous historical fighting against slavery and contemporary anti-slavery activism in the Kayes region and in the diaspora in Europe, who have played a large part in creating and funding **the anti-slavery movement Gambana/Ganbanaaxun**, a transnational Soninke diaspora organisation based in France and particularly involved in the 'Kayes slavery crisis'.

ICS-2: Secret history of War Crimes Trials: Lessons for Ending Impunity Today (Plesch)

SOAS research on the 1943-48 United Nations War Crimes Commission raised public awareness of and altered understandings of the wartime Allied response to Nazi crimes. The findings were used to develop contemporary approaches to ending impunity for those who commit gross violations of human rights and led to the Commission's archival records—sealed for over 65 years—becoming accessible to the public through partnerships with Holocaust education networks and museums. This research changed policy by the UN and then the US and the UK to release war crimes documents kept secret since 1949. The research led to briefings of the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations, the EU Directors General Middle East and Western Balkans, its Human Rights Director and staff and the Commissions Genocide prevention staff at EuroJust as well as the War Crimes office at the UK FCO and the Dutch MFA.

ICS-3: The Epic of Gilgamesh: Ancient Poem as Modern Inspiration (George)

The research for this ICS regarding the Epic of Gilgamesh changed modern understanding of the poem in major ways, by adding many new lines and even whole passages. The critical edition aimed not only to present the new material as an original contribution to Gilgamesh studies, but to do it in such a way that scholarship was provided with a definitive decipherment and a modern philological and critical response to the problems posed by the text. The key achievement was not just to bring knowledge of the poem completely up to date, but also to set new standards in Assyriological text-editing. The discovery since 2003 of further manuscripts, and a continuing engagement with the epic as a literary composition, have prolonged George's work on the poem, so that his research has continued throughout the period of eligibility, with further decipherments of texts and fragments of the poem.

1.3.3 Future impact strategy

Historians in various centres and departments are looking to improve the future impact of research through a variety of foci. The HRP will continue to prioritise research projects and grant applications that incorporate impact from the beginning (in collaboration with the SOAS Research Office; IES§4.2). The Unit's Research Director will continue to organise seminars in which colleagues who have already secured large grants provide feedback and advice about this process to other colleagues. Members of the UoA will continue to develop and enhance strong links with arts and community organisations both in the UK (Khatun, Matuszak and Newbigin) and globally (Rodet in West Africa, Weeden in Iraq and Turkey) and to collaborate and develop new research and capacity building projects within these partnerships. Through work such as Newbigin's contribution to the Royal Historical Society's Teaching Portal (<https://blog.royalhistsoc.org/?s=newbigin>), members of the UoA will build on research-led teaching about decolonisation and histories of the Global South to develop networks with academic and non-academic collaborators

Historians in CISD, including Plesch, Charney, Cox, Rofe and Song have started a web portal for a research network for historians who work on Global Policy relevant issues, entitled 'Global Policy and History'. The UoA intends to use this network and forum to publicly elucidate **the biggest challenges affecting some two-thirds of the world's population** in the twenty-first century. These challenges include environmental degradation, economic change, failed states, endemic conflict, the resurgence of nativist ideologies, and global migration.

1.4 Open access and research Integrity

The institution has adopted robust Open Access and Research Data Management policies and procedures, with the goal of exceeding REF requirements (IES§2). Staff receive support and advice from the SOAS Scholarly Communications Manager in the Library on best practice in open access and research data management at project design stage. The Information Compliance Manager and Research Ethics Panel review and support our research projects and their Data Management Plans to ensure they meet the highest ethical standards, and—in line with SOAS policy—all staff and doctoral students are required to complete the Epigeum Research Integrity online course (IES§4.1).

Our pursuit of open access—most obviously in our use of the institutional OA repository, SOAS Research Online (SRO)—has made our research much more available to the Global South and the countries we focus on in teaching and research, whose staff and students often cannot afford expensive journal subscriptions. We are proud of the fact that, as of March 2021, the single most downloaded item from SRO was a book by a History UoA member (George), with almost 25,000 downloads.

UoA members have gone beyond the existing REF requirements for Open Access, for example, nearly all the book chapters deposited in SRO since 2016 include the full text. Other notable examples include:

- Rodet's online resource of interviews with the residents of freed slave towns in the Sahel;
- Hirschler's contribution to the Oxford University's Ashrafiya Library Database project;
- Lockyer's and Matsuba's contributions to the British Museum's digital Hokusai database;
- Charney's various contributions to Oxford and Cambridge UPs online bibliographies;

UoA members have also made significant contributions to online OA journals, newspapers, working papers series and magazines including *The Guardian* (Plesch), the website of the British Film Institute (Newbigin), and *Humanetten* (Charney).

2. People

2.1 Staffing strategy

The UoA maintains a strong research community, with commitment and support of the institution to equality and excellence (IES§3.1). The UoA has striven to recruit and retain high quality academic staff with a view to rebuilding research capacity in general, to developing particular strands of the UoA research profile, and to enhancing the delivery of postgraduate research

programmes. High quality research—already achieved and in progress—is one of the main criteria the UoA uses for all levels of academic appointment, with a focus on the **recruitment of promising early career researchers** on the basis of a worldwide search. The UoA has made several **excellent hires** including the appointment of Karamursel and Wirtz, who have continued to build on the UoA's traditional strengths in the Near and Middle East, Khatun who has brought new expertise in the South Asian global diaspora and Cox who has bolstered the UoA's newer strength in US history, diplomacy, foreign policy and security. The 25 FTE at the census date is marginally below the previous REF FTE (27.5), but with plans for replenishment following a period of retrenchment in the face of a difficult institutional financial situation and sector-wide challenges (IES§1), the UoA is set to rebuild and grow, with a reorientation towards global connectedness and a renewed emphasis on research excellence. At the REF census date, the staffing contract level profile of eligible and submitted staff in the UoA was 12% Professor, 48% Reader/Senior Lecturer, 32% Lecturer and 8% Research Fellow; 80% of staff were on permanent contracts, with 20% (5, including 2 postdoctoral fellows) on fixed-term contracts.

2.1.1 Structure and collaboration

The UoA developed a **new phase of collaboration** between historians across the institution, and **between history and other disciplines**. The latter has resulted in the integration of ancient history and history of religions into the new School of HRP; and the development of major interdisciplinary research projects such as the **Drugs and Disorder project**, which brings together **History and Development Studies** and is itself creating opportunities for early career historians. Institutional restructuring to devolve more power to departments broke up the silos that the Faculties had become and strengthened the convening role the Department of History came to play. This brought Shihadeh, Weeden, George, and Caron into the department and with them new strands of research, while also consolidating more traditional strengths, including faith and politics in modern Central Asia, the Near and Middle East in antiquity, and the **intellectual history of Islam**. Further, while most members are on permanent contracts (§2.1), at various points during the current cycle the UoA has included fixed-term appointments, largely brought in through successful Leverhulme fellowship applications, who have proven very valuable in enriching the research environment. HRP appointed Legendre who greatly enhanced work on the early history of Islam and the Middle East; Matusak, whose interests and research on Sumerian literary texts complemented other ancient research foci in the unit; and Wirtz, who has brought crucial expertise on the Ottoman empire in particular.

2.1.2 Staff development

All research-active colleagues are supported by a range of processes and initiatives, introduced since 2014 and themselves under continual review. SOAS has a robust **research mentoring scheme** for new staff. As part of our commitments under the Concordat to support the career development of researchers, we ensure that ECRs have access to regular meetings with a designated senior mentor to help them address development priorities, research and publication goals, and regularly convene all ECRs across the institution to facilitate peer-to-peer networking and provide opportunities such as advice on book proposals and manuscript development from publishers. The one-to-one mentoring component is further supported by additional research-specific mentoring, provided by the UoA Director of Research who has worked with staff to develop personal research plans that cover a five-year period.

Following the introduction of a new Staff Development Review (SDR) at School level, which places a renewed emphasis on research career development and realising personal plans and goals, the departments and centres of the History UoA use annual SDRs as opportunities for reflection and further mentoring and developmental support (IES§3.1). **Early-career researchers** are given particular types of support in balancing their workloads and creating sufficient time to develop their research, carefully monitored by the HoDs and departmental Directors of Research. These colleagues have reduced teaching loads during the normative three-year probationary period which is designed to help those colleagues establish themselves in their respective fields. At the same time, no significant administrative duties are given to such colleagues for up to three years from the time of their initial appointment. Once the probation

terms have been successfully completed, academic staff are granted two sabbatical terms, as part of our generous approach to research leave.

As a result of the various staff development policies in place, the UoA has seen a range of promotions since REF2014: five from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer (Laamann, Newbigin, Rodet, Wallach, Weeden); two from Senior Lecturer to Reader (Plesch, Rofe); and one from Reader to Professor (Charney).

2.1.3 Research leave and allowances

In line with School policy, academic staff are eligible to apply for one term of **research leave** after eight terms of normal duties (see IES§3.1); this is a substantial improvement on previous arrangements (one term after 12), implemented after REF2014, and allowing a significant increase in Unit members' dedicated research time. Additionally, since 2015 HRP has undertaken a substantial revision of its undergraduate and taught postgraduate curriculum to build flexibility into the system and allow colleagues to more effectively manage, and protect, their research time.

All staff are allocated a **personal research allowance** of between £750 (HRP/LCL/CGS) and £1500 (CISD) per annum for expenses and conference attendance; this fund can be topped up once a case has been made for a particularly important long-distance conference or for the funding of a SOAS-based conference. As noted earlier, the Research Office also supports proof of concept research projects, research workshops and initial scoping studies with **seed-corn funds**, from which a number of members of the UoA have benefited over the REF period, often by using these funds to develop major research bids or further collaborative initiatives that have resulted in special issues, books and other publications. Substantial resources are also available through central Impact and Knowledge Exchange funding schemes (IES§41.).

2.1.4 Postdoctoral researchers

The UoA deeply values the contribution of postdoctoral researchers, and actively seeks to integrate them into the research culture of the Unit. The UoA currently hosts 2 British Academy postdoctoral fellows in the Ancient Near East section, who participate in the research life of the institution through organising seminars and public lectures, over and above their publications—including Mirelman's convenorship of the weekly public lecture series 'Text and Performance' during Autumn 2019, and collaborating with the British Museum on cuneiform text curation and publication in the case of Ait Said Ghanem. Similarly, postdoctoral researchers mentored by Janku included close cooperation on an environmental history of cultural landscapes in Yunnan (Yang Yuda), as well as the mentoring of and several research seminars by Isabella Jackson and Jia Guojing. External grant-funded positions have been particularly significant in contributing to the vitality of the UoA's research environment (§3.1).

2.2 Postgraduate research students

Unit members have supervised 68 doctoral students to completion during the REF period, at a rate of 2.6 per FTE (this number might have been higher, but SOAS took a decision early on in the Covid crisis to grant extensions to submission deadlines in recognition of the extraordinary situation and in order to support our students). The average annual number of PhD enrolments during the period was 49. The overall gender ratio year-by-year stands at 39%:61% F:M; a slight change since REF2014 (45%:55%) and an imbalance we are keen to address. However, the data on ethnicity are substantially encouraging, with a year-by-year average of **52% of doctoral student enrolments from BAME backgrounds** up from 44% in REF2014. Not unrelatedly, an average of 42% of our PGR enrolments are classified as Overseas. The UoA, its constituent departments and the University are committed to principles of EDI (§2.3) and view a diverse student as well as staff body as a key factor in enabling and furthering the Unit's and School's research priorities (§1.2; IES§1, 2).

Since 2014, the HRP has continued to develop its doctoral education programme. It has for example, expanded its research methods workshop for first-year History MPhil students to Religions and Philosophies students which has aided interdisciplinary discussions and

contributed to an overall improved research profile and a stronger research culture at the staff-student interface. The UoA has also developed collaborative doctoral arrangements with other UK and overseas institutions, for examples through partnership arrangements with Bloomsbury PhD Scholarships.

The UoA's postgraduate funding priorities have been to:

1. introduce new School-funded scholarships;
2. join the Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts South-East England (CHASE) doctoral training partnership; and
3. encourage students to take benefit from a range of funded studentships in History, e.g. the Swire scholarship.

These measures have had concrete results: in the REF2021 period, the UoA has had 11 internally funded and 25 externally funded PGRs, including Wolfson, AHRC, AHRC-CHASE (2019/20 saw the first 2 students funded through this consortium), Biswa Bangla (a scholarship funded by the Government of West Bengal, in collaboration with the SOAS South Asia Institute) and Felix scholarships among others.

PhD training is coordinated through the SOAS **Doctoral School**, which supplements discipline-specific training in the component parts of the UoA (IES§2.2, 3.2). Training includes close contact with first supervisors and the supervisory committee throughout their period of enrolment, with particular emphasis in the first year on careful development of a research plan for upgrade, including data management, ethics and other requirements. **Newly introduced software** (PhD Manager) has facilitated the setting of clear and definite targets, identification of training needs (including in the many languages offered at SOAS through the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, and the Language Centre), and careful monitoring of progress.

As with postdoctoral researchers (§2.1.4), PGRs are closely integrated into the intellectual life and research culture of the constituent parts of the UoA, including through the HRP History Seminar series.

2.3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Since 2014, the UoA has succeeded in creating a supportive and nurturing **culture which recognises the different needs and circumstances of colleagues** whilst at the same time seeking to bring everyone together within a coherent research environment with a clear, upward trajectory. There has been a strong focus on addressing historic gender imbalances within the UoA. Over the period of the last REF cycle, the UoA has made 7 hires to full time positions, 3 of whom have been women; at the REF census date, the F:M gender ratio within the UoA was 36%:64%; this marks an improvement since REF2014 (33%:67%). Female colleagues have played a central role in leadership and management in the UoA, with three **of five of key administrative offices in the HRP management team, for example, occupied by female colleagues**. The department has put in place provisions to better support work-life balance. During the current cycle, four female colleagues had extended periods of maternity leave. The department has used its mentorship system and Keeping In Touch policies to support colleagues during these periods of leave and through the return to work, specifically in terms of helping colleague to protect time for research work and reorientate research practices around family commitments.

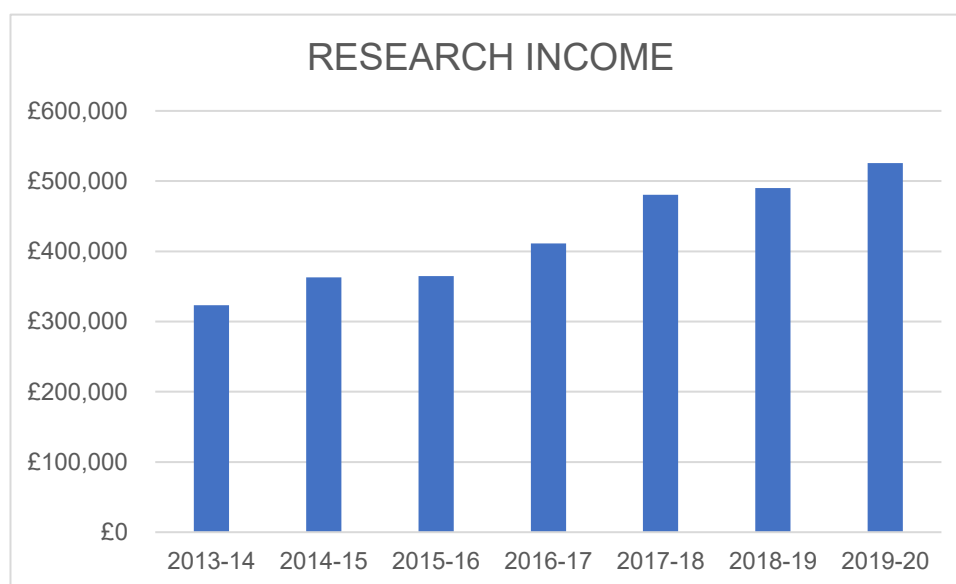
Equality and diversity training is mandatory for all staff. The School's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and its Dignity and Respect Policy are key frameworks for enhancing equalities and creating an enabling research environment (IES§3.3). Members of the UoA have followed keenly the Royal Historical Society's work on Race and Equality—including contributing to the resources produced by the RHS's Teaching Portal (§1.3.3)—to address racial inequalities within the discipline. The UoA has 20% BAME staff (80% White/Other); this compares favourably with [statistics compiled by the RHS in 2018](#) of academic staff nationally (85% White) and History staff in particular (93.7% White). Nevertheless, the Unit, its constituent Departments

and the University are committed to continual and iterative action to address racial disparities and increase diversity, particularly in hiring and promotion practices (IES§2.1).

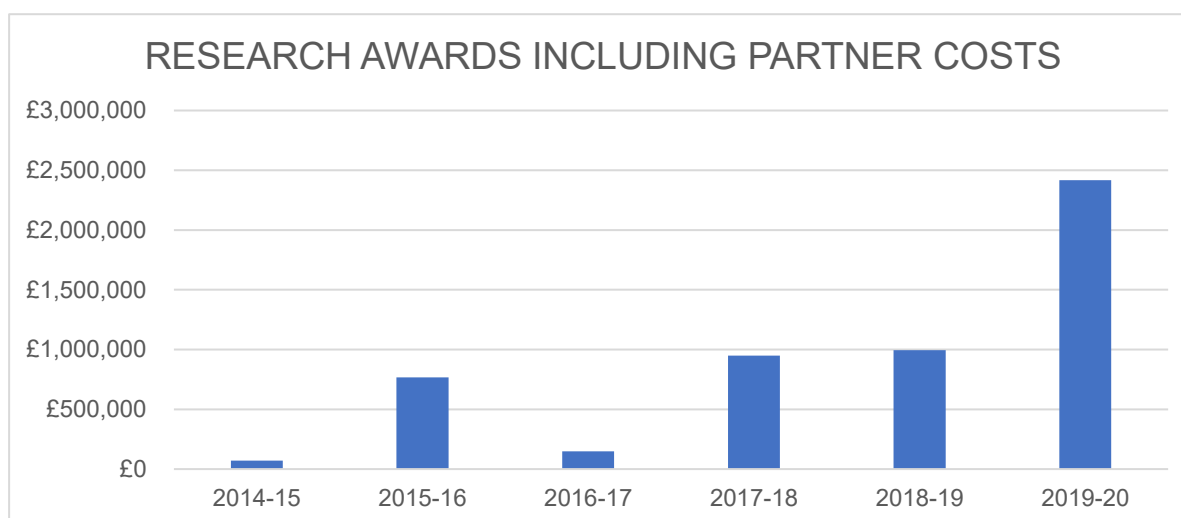
3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

3.1 Income

Research income data demonstrate the sustainability, vitality and most importantly upward trajectory of the UoA. The unit has almost **quadrupled its research income**, from a total of £772k in the previous REF cycle to over £2.95 million in the current period, an average of £118k per FTE. The annual research income has steadily increased from £323k in 2013/14 to £525k in 2019/20.



A consideration of research awards inclusive of partner costs—indicative of **the unit's extensive collaborations beyond the institution**—paints an even more dramatic picture, with the 2019/20 total of £2.4 million dwarfing 2014/15's £71k.



Major grants have come from a variety of funders, and strongly indicate the diversity of research projects across the UoA, as well as their alignment to our strategic research priorities (§1 above). Many have constituted research income; several of the most significant have been for postdoctoral fellowships, the significance of which for our unit's research environment cannot be overstated. These include:

- £301,723 British Academy postdoctoral fellowship (N. Ait Said-Ghanem, 2019-22)
- £296,961 British Academy postdoctoral fellowship (S. Mirelman, 2018-21)
- £300k of a £2.5 million AHRC Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) grant (Sadan as Co-Investigator)
- £286k of a £944k AHRC grant to the British Museum (Lockyer as Co-Investigator and Matsuba as postdoctoral researcher)
- £254k British Academy postdoctoral fellowship (Webb as postdoctoral researcher)
- £226k ESRC (Rodet)
- £235k Leverhulme Grant (Reid as PI)
- £215k of a £251K ESRC- DFID Development Frontiers Research Fund grant (Rodet as PI)
- £187,885 Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship (George)
- £112k Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Pears Foundation (Wallach)
- £107k British Academy grant (Hirschler as PI)
- £77k Rowntree Trust grant to support the SOAS Disarmament and Globalisation project (Plesch as PI).

In addition to the major awards detailed above, the UoA has benefitted from **internal institutional funding** on a competitive basis for a variety of projects in terms of SOAS' Seed-corn, Engagement and Impact, Knowledge Exchange, and Impact Acceleration funds—this constituted a **direct institutional investment of over £140,000** during the period. An example of an ongoing seed-corn-funded project is Laamann's 'International Manchu Database Project', with Leiden University, which envisages the production of a digital database of all Manchu texts kept at European libraries.

3.2 Infrastructure and facilities

UoA members benefit from a **shared research support infrastructure** coordinated at the institutional level through the Research Office (IES§4), which has been instrumental in increasing research income (see §3.1) and supporting members at the pre- and post-award stages. The **Directors of Research and research committees** in the various constituent parts of the unit similarly provide coordinated support for the mentoring of research staff and the development of projects (§2 above).

In SOAS Library, the UoA has access to one of the **leading libraries on Asia, Africa, and the Middle East** in the world, with significant collections of primary and secondary research material essential to historians. A **dedicated subject librarian** ensures that both teaching and research-related acquisitions are made promptly and strategically. We have also collaborated on exhibitions regarding urban history and ethnic communities from the global south in spaces made available by Brunei Gallery and the SOAS Library (IES§4.2).

SOAS IT services and technicians provide facilities and support for collaborative online initiatives, offering us the possibility of creating accessible online portals to showcase our research. Since January 2018, UoA members have worked collaboratively to create a free, online portal (<http://www.soashistoryresources.co.uk>) for teachers interested in the OCR A-level history course, 'From Colonialism to Independence: The British Empire 1857-1965'. The portal focusses on four key topics which takes a rounded approach on the governance of the empire; opposition to British rule; impact of imperial power; and its legacy on international relations. This work has been supported by **SOAS' Access, Participation and Success Delivery** team with whom UoA members have worked to deliver student masterclasses and teacher training sessions for staff and pupils local to the SOAS campus. Input from these sessions has facilitated further development of the site, working to dramatically furthered the unit's research and impact strategy (§1.2.1 above).

SOAS Radio, our own dedicated radio station run by the Students' Union, provides an institutional facility for SOAS research. In recent times, members of the UoA have been working with **SOAS Radio and IT facilities** to develop audible research outputs (see below).

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

4.1 Collaborations

History at SOAS has a specific mission to publish **world leading research on history of global and regional importance in relation to Asia, Africa and the Middle East**. Collaboration and inter-disciplinarity is achieved through diverse and extensive array of collaborations with colleagues based at universities, research institutions and societies that interconnect areas, periods and regions of interest. These collaborations both enhance and reflect the work of our Unit's thematic research clusters (§1.2.1 above).

A survey of some of the individual collaborations outside the university include international research projects that speak to **the UoA's global and region-focused research strategy addressing contemporary global challenges**. Four major themes under which such collaborations have been taking place include:

Identity and conflict:

- Charney worked with the **International Committee of the Red Cross** on identifying indigenous Buddhist traditions that might encourage limits on the deployment of violence against noncombatants in warfare in order to reduce the occurrence of war crimes in the future in Asia, including participation in a workshop that brought together Serving and retired generals from various Buddhist countries in Asia, Buddhist monks, INGO workers, and a handful of scholars of religion and violence;
- Charney worked with colleagues at the Dutch KITLV on **indigenous warfare** in South East Asia, which included co-organizing panels at EUROSEAS and co-editing a resulting volume from the papers;
- Fuccaro worked with colleagues at the Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin on **urban violence in the Middle East**, funded by the AHRC and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (2014-16).

Migration and slavery:

- Rodet produced an international film series 'History on Film: Slavery and the African Diaspora from a Global Perspectives', hosted by SOAS in 2014 and 2016;
- Clarence-Smith worked with the British Library to assemble a travelling photographic exhibition on 'Islam, Trade and Politics across the Indian Ocean'.

Borders and borderlands:

- Caron collaborated with the Hanns Seidel foundation and University of Peshawar in Pakistan to run a year-long teleconferenced reading group in critical **borderland history** with the University of Peshawar political science department and running an annual borderland studies conference in Pakistan;
- Charney was part on an **expert mission brought to Bangladesh** to advise on Rohingya refugees by the Bangladeshi government which also include consultations with the staff of the **Liberation War Museum in Dacca**;
- Dooling was involved in a major exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam on the four centuries of the **Dutch and South African Relationship** which led to a publication in which he contributed a chapter;
- Janku was a research fellow of the Institute of Environmental History of the Southwest at **Yunnan University in Kunming** to work on the BA funded research project 'Imperial Views of Yunnan: Documenting Environmental Change in a Chinese Frontier.'

Belief and texts:

- George worked on the DFG-funded project 'God Lists of Ancient Mesopotamia', at the University of Jena (2018–21);

- Janku collaborated with the Institute of Historical Geography at Fudan University, Shanghai (2014-17);
- Matuszak contributed to a text editing project in Geneva, Switzerland (2014-18) and collaborated with colleagues in Germany on a publication project on Sumerian literary tablets;
- By means of a grant obtained from the Chiang Ching-Kuo (CCK; Taiwan), Laamann has participated in a project on religion in recent history in the Chinese province of Sichuan, mapping out all known locations where from the 17th century onwards Christian communities were known to have existed, and building links with scholars in Chengdu, who have stayed at SOAS as visiting scholars;
- Weeden collaborated with the Japanese Institute of Anatolian Archaeology excavations at three sites in Turkey, the University of Queensland for palaeobotany, on the University of Toronto excavations at Tell Tayinat, on the University of Bologna and University of Istanbul excavations at Karkamish, on the Ankara University excavations at Ortaköy and Eskişehir, on the University of Glasgow work on plants;
- Weeden is a regular collaborator with the British Museum, London Centre for the Ancient Near East (Chair), British Association of Near Eastern Archaeology, British Institute for the Study of Iraq, British Institute At Ankara, University of Bern collaboration on Neo-Hittite history and culture, Harvard University on 2nd millennium BC Anatolian Geography, with the Freie Universität Berlin on the Re-thinking Oriental Despotism, Munich University online edition of Luwian texts, collective edition of the Tawagalawa letter; with the Ankara Museum of Anatolian Civilisations on acquisitions or publication of existing collections;
- Weeden was consulted by film companies and the tourism industry in Turkey.

An Arts Council England-SOAS funded project between members of the UoA and Tamasha Theatre Company resulted in the production of 5 audio dramas, inspired by historical teaching and research work done at SOAS and produced using SOAS recording facilities. As part of the project, Fin Kennedy, director of Tamasha Theatre Company ran a series of workshops for SOAS staff and students on radio drama and podcast making. The final recordings were shared at public listening events at SOAS, Rich Mix (London), Impact Hub (Birmingham), Royal Exchange Theatre (Manchester) with panels featuring UoA members and staff.

4.2 Contributions to the research base and discipline

Given the UoA's specialist areas of geographical expertise, UoA members make a substantial contribution to the discipline and research base through their editorship of **significant scholarly monograph series and academic journals that focus on Asian and Africa**, as well as on editorial boards and in learned societies.

4.2.1 Journal editorships

These include:

- Reid, editor, *Journal of African History*;
- Charney, editor, 'Southeast Asia research monographs', Anthem Press (2011-18);
- Newbigin, associate editor for South Asia, *Modern Asian Studies*;
- Laamann, editor, *Central Asiatic Journal*;
- Clarence-Smith, chief editor, *Journal of Global History*;
- Weeden, co-editor, *Iraq*; editor-in-chief, *Brill Handbook of Oriental Studies*; regional editor, *Anatolia*.

4.2.2 Editorial boards

These include:

- Caron: *Review of Human Rights*;
- Dooling: *Journal of Southern African Studies*; *New Contree Journal*; *South African Historical Journal*;
- Sadan: *South East Asia Research*;
- Janku: *Zaihai yu lishi (Disasters and History)*;

- Macnaughtan: *SOAS Studies in Modern and Contemporary Japan* in association with Bloomsbury Academic;
- Charney: *Independent Journal of Burmese Scholarship*; *Journal of Burma Studies*;
- Clarence-Smith: *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*; *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, *Mashriq and Mahjar*; *Journal of Middle East Migration Studies*; *Monde(s): Histoire, Espaces, Relations*; *Comparer: Revue Électronique des Comparaisons en Sciences Sociales*; *Ebisu, Études Japonaises*;
- Weeden: *Iraq*; *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*; *Eothen. Collana di studi sulle civiltà dell' Oriente antico* (Turin); *Studia Asiana* (Rome); *Anatolia*; *Harvard Semitic Museum Publications*; 'News from the Land of the Hittites';
- George: *Biblioteca del Próximo Oriente Antiguo* (Madrid); *Oriens Antiquus* n.s. (Rome); *Revue d'Assyriologie* (Paris);
- Shihadeh: *Journal of Global Intellectual History*; *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World*; *Oriens*.

4.2.3 Learned societies and professional organisations

UoA members also make important contributions to learned societies and professional organisations. Prominent examples include:

- Charney: Executive Committee of the Association of South East Asian Studies (2012-16), UK; Board of Directors of the INGO, Forces of Renewal in Southeast Asia (FORSEA);
- Fuccaro: Trustee of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq and the London Middle East Institute (2014-16);
- Janku: Council Member of the Association for East Asian Environmental History, UK;
- Sadan: Academic Board Member of the Inya Institute in Yangon, Burma; Scientific Advisory Board of EVERJUST, UK;
- Weeden: Chair of the London Centre for the Ancient Near East and on the Shapoorji Pallonji Scholarships panel; board member of the International Association for Assyriology.

George and Kennedy are also Fellows of the British Academy.

4.3 Consultancy

SOAS Historians undertook **formal and informal engagements** with a wide range of user groups and communities. The UoA made important contributions to research databases available to the broader academic community. Rodet participated in the reorganisation and preservation of historical archives in Mali. Lockyer and Matsuba contributed to the British Museum's digitization of the works of the 18th-century artist Hokusai Katsushika. Charney advised the Dutch KITLV and Leiden University on indigenous warfare in South East Asia. Sadan served as a member of the Academic Board of the Inya Institute, Yangon and as a member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Humanity Institute, Myitkyina, Myanmar.

Consultancies also included **national and international media** including the BBC, Sky News, Radio France, Deutsche Welle, ANews, France24, as well as online and print newspapers and magazines (Charney, Lockyer, Newbigin, Rodet, Sadan). Newbigin, for example, wrote a series of historical background notes for newly digitised films on India held in the collection of the British Film Institute, which were picked up by Northern Town Film Company and was a contributor to a two-part documentary series about Indian film which was screened in Singapore in 2019. The UoA also supported the development of documentaries and other work on regions of interest (Charney, Lockyer, Reid, Sadan). In addition, there has been work with a wide variety of cultural organisations in the UK, as well as museums and cultural organisations in regions of interest (Lockyer, Reid, Rodet). Charney advised the Royal Armouries UK on the Asian elements of their collections and exhibits.

Members of the UoA also **consulted for industry and government** on behalf of the Research & Enterprise and Media Relations Offices. This included Government and INGO debriefings—

SOAS historians being highly sought-after for briefing European embassy staff prior to postings in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East—as well the Executive Training Programme on Japan and Korea, a three-week module to instruct for up-and-coming entrepreneurs on the historical, political, economic and cultural background necessary to understanding the East Asian business environment (2012-14). The UoA also delivered long-standing services to government and business by advising on issues relevant to extra-European populations associated with the former British empire through debriefings of FCO personnel and the European Commission.

Some UoA members also contribute to the administration of Research Centres and Institutes at SOAS. Caron was Chair of the Centre for the Study of Pakistan. Janku served as Acting Director of the SOAS China Institute in 2016. Charney is the Director of Research of the Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy. In their capacity as heads of several of SOAS's core Area Studies research units, Caron and Janku organised and hosted internationally significant annual lectures, workshops and conferences that served an **interdisciplinary mandate**.

4.4 Interdisciplinary workshops and conferences

Members of the Unit have also hosted several interdisciplinary workshops, conferences, and events of international significance. Some activities that provided opportunities for developing impact activities in a more targeted, focused way were:

- Charney's hosting of a 2020 international (virtual, due to covid) **Roundtable of academics, humanitarians, and activists** on the possibilities for Reconciliation between Rohingya and Rakhine ethnic communities in the aftermath of the **Myanmar Genocide attended by thousands** and which has been cited in reports as a **key historical moment** in the direction of **peace and reconciliation** in Bangladesh and Myanmar;
- Rodet's 2017 international conference (Co-sponsored by the Laboratoire d'études et de recherches en droit et développement local, Université des sciences juridiques et politiques de Bamako), 'Slavery and the Law in West Africa,' that assembled scholars from law and history to discuss the **identification, evaluation and comparison of legal norms** originating from local traditions and texts produced by **slavery and post-slavery societies** in the colonial and postcolonial states of West Africa;
- Fischel's 2016 workshop 'Local History in the Persianate Cosmopolis' (funded by The British Institute of Persian Studies), which invited historians and art historians to explore the variety of **local histories written in Persian** in the region stretching between **West, Central, and South Asia** within comparative and transregional contexts by expanding the **definition of local history** beyond textual sources by including architectural moments and portable artefacts;
- Hirschler's 2015 conference 'Arabic Pasts: Histories and Historiography', which brought Area Studies and Religious Studies scholars into direct dialog with Historians, from Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States, to discuss the ways in which the various disciplines construct their **narratives of the Arab world**;
- Rofe's 2017 workshop (Co-sponsored by CISD, France-based think club Sport & Démocratie, and New York University), 'The Power of Sport and Diplomacy', which focused on **cultural diplomacy** through the prism of sports;
- Rofe's 2019 workshop, 'Games of Change: Sports Diplomacy and the Korean Peninsula';
- Cox's 2017 workshop, '100 Years of Wilsonianism: Global Historical Perspectives', which brought together international scholars on the topic of the history of US **Foreign Policy and security threats**.

4.5 Service stakeholder collaboration

SOAS Historians also devote a good deal of their individual time to humanitarian concerns. Such issues include ethnic and religious violence, slavery, migration, and many others for which the UoA is uniquely situated in the UK to mediate an informed, comprehensive, non-western perspective to the British public. Some key examples of service-oriented stakeholder collaboration include:

- Charney's membership in a team of experts brought to Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh in 2018 by the Government of Bangladesh's Foreign Ministry to advise the government on refugee policy;
- Charney's talks on the Rohingya issue before the French National Assembly, at the Jewish Museum Berlin, at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, for the INGO Hasane in Cologne, at Columbia University and the LSE;
- Rodet's regular media appearances on human trafficking and the evolving crises in Francophone Africa.
- Caron's running of a summer school in Pakistan on governance, participants in which are emerging influencers (civil society; journalism; civil service) from all provinces of Pakistan and typically from about five provinces of Afghanistan, while other participants in previous years have also come from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Iran, and Oman;
- Laamann's public talks at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich and the Barbican Centre in London, Rodet's workshops around the theme of 'Slavery on Film';
- Charney's interview for a TV documentary on the Thai-Burma Death Railway and talks to the descendants of former colonial railwaymen in the UK given to the British India Society;
- Charney's talk in 2020 at Eton College on African and African-American contributions to the Burma Campaign in WWII;

These examples speak to issues at the **heart of national debate** on the place of the **United Kingdom** in the world today, what its humanitarian mission should be, and what it means to be British.