

Institution: University of East London
Unit of Assessment: 34 Cultural Studies, Communication and Media Studies
1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

i. **Context and structure: overview**

Cultural Studies, Media and Communication at UEL has an extended record of success in research assessment exercises since 1996, representing **an outstanding tradition of socially engaged, interdisciplinary and conceptually innovative research**. In REF 2014 80% of our submission was graded 3/4 (with 33% graded 4); in RAE 2008 we were rated as 4*, again with 80% of research graded 3/4*. We continue to develop new and existing areas of research strength, and to bring new researchers into the area. We place the highest value on maintaining world-class standards of research excellence while making major contributions to public culture, better equipping ourselves, our students and our many collaborators and stakeholders to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century. We highlight **the politics of culture, social justice, community cohesion, collective memory and the cultural impact of technological change, in research with both global and historical range**.

The nineteen researchers in this submission are primarily located in the **School of Arts and Creative Industries**, across two departments (Media and Communication; Music, Writing and Performing Arts). The interdisciplinary structure of the school encourages the development of new **networks and synergies**; our submission also includes researchers located elsewhere in the university (Art and Design, Sociology), and our research centres similarly cross departmental and disciplinary boundaries. There are many points of commonality and convergence, as well as distinctiveness and complementarity, in the work of our diverse and dynamic group of scholars. Across these areas our **commitment to public engagement** as both an outlet for research and a practice informing that research has remained a key focus for our activities. We aspire to be a site of productive exchange between the academy and the wider public sphere.

Recent years have been uniquely challenging for many higher education institutions in the UK, and UEL is no exception. Our efforts to maintain a distinctive research culture have frequently been made against a backdrop of funding reductions, institutional restructuring and the loss of key staff. At the same time, however, **new initiatives and priorities in the university** (notably Vision 2028) have increasingly valued work that reaches outside the institution to create collaborations and interventions in the community, resonating with our long-established commitment to such work. We have been able to compensate for the loss of high-profile researchers since REF 2014 through our **commitment to staff development and support**, which has borne clear results in the promotion of active researchers to readerships and professorships. More recent appointments in the UoA also promise well for our ability to continue fostering a rich and distinctive research culture, and to facilitate collaboration and cross-fertilization while supporting researchers in developing their individual profiles.

Within the School research and impact activities are led by the **Director of Impact and Innovation** and the **Impact and Innovation Committee**, which includes senior researchers and research centre directors, representatives from the school's disciplinary areas, and Directors of Careers and Enterprise and Education and Experience. Also represented on the Committee are the chair of the School Ethics Committee and the Scholarly Communications Manager, who is based in the library and oversees all issues of compliance and open scholarship. This

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structure facilitates collaboration between UoAs, and connects our research focus with our commitment to continuing dialogue between research, impact and teaching; it also ensures that oversight of **research ethics and open scholarship** is embedded in our strategic planning process.

ii. Research and Impact Strategy

As a School and a unit of assessment, our aim is to build an **open, diverse and inclusive research culture, which promotes public engagement alongside research excellence**. We encourage and facilitate open debate, public education and cultural innovation, demonstrating the value of scholarly work for wider civic life while contributing to the quality of contemporary culture and public understanding of social, historical and political issues. We pursue social impact through the widespread dissemination of research, and through the cultivation of a **research culture that is in permanent dialogue with wider civil society and public life**.

Our strategic priorities in REF 2014 focused on growth: we aimed to increase PhD numbers and grant capture, develop our globalization and cultural diversity agenda, and continue to build research culture for the future by supporting younger researchers and building capacity. The wider changes in the sector have made elements of this harder to achieve than we anticipated. Our PhD numbers and our grant capture have remained at a similar level to 2014. However, we are proud to continue to highlight cultural diversity in our research and impact activities. We are also pleased to include in this submission some long-standing colleagues who were not included in REF2014 but have been enabled to develop as independent researchers during the intervening years, as well as continuing to focus on the support of new young researchers.

Over the last seven years, our **research strategy** has encouraged innovative and engaged approaches to cultural theory and cultural politics, engagement with local and global communities, and collaboration and interdisciplinarity, to generate excellent and high-profile research outputs, from academic publications and policy interventions to creative practice. **Our impact strategy** in the same period has focused on engagement with non-academic audiences, supporting research centres and researchers in a range of outreach activities through strategic QR funding and workload allocation. We encourage researchers and research groups/ centres to build external relationships with local community groups, councils and third sector organizations and to establish collaborative and co-producer research projects. We also endeavour to share best practice and ideas around community engagement and knowledge exchange within the School through regular presentations, research centre events, and workshops, and to develop knowledge exchange expertise by encouraging and supporting new research initiatives and groupings to build expertise in KTPs.

The impact case studies in this submission grow out of our commitment to engagement with non-academic audiences. 'Reviving progressive politics and culture in the UK' focuses on the impact of research into contemporary politics and cultural theory on political debate and movements; 'Historicising and promoting 1970s and 1980s New York City music, social dance and art culture' traces the impact of cultural historical analysis on the wider cultural industries in the USA and in Europe.

In the coming years, building on our long-established research expertise in cultural studies, film studies, cultural history, and memory, we aim to expand our range of activities and expertise to bring new areas into focus and to highlight innovative interdisciplinary and creative practice research. Building on existing local and regional partnerships, we will support projects around regeneration, community well-being and knowledge exchange, further widening our impact and our public engagement.

Our key strategic aims 2021-28:

- Review and develop research centres as key hubs for collaborative research and public outreach
- Continue to encourage collaboration, innovation, and interdisciplinary engagement
- Build on our success in communicating with multiple audiences and communities to raise the profile of the university and to enhance our capacity for impact
- Identify and facilitate the growth of new research areas, to maximize potential for high quality research and impact
- Develop partnerships and pathways to impact across the UoA, building capacity and expertise among staff
- Build capacity in funding applications to improve quantity and quality
- Support colleagues in developing as researchers, with particular attention to the representation of BAME staff and others with protected characteristics

iii. Research in the UoA: overview of research centres, groups and themes

Two research centres form hubs for much of our scholarly activity: the Centre for Cultural Studies Research and the Moving Image Research Centre. The more recently established Cultural Engine Research Group prioritizes work with marginalized communities in the Thames Gateway and Essex.

The Centre for Cultural Studies Research (CCSR, www.culturalstudiesresearch.org), co-directed by Shaw, Gilbert, and Lawrence, supports research into political and theoretical issues in cultural studies and cultural practice - themes which unite a wide range of research across the School. UEL has been a leading force in cultural studies since the 1980s, and researchers continue to produce ground-breaking and world-class research in cultural politics and cultural theory, with specific reference to the changing and intersecting landscapes of urban and digital cultures, and the social and cultural consequences of neoliberalism. CCSR's core activity is the Culture, Power and Politics series of public seminars and podcasts, which has an international following inside and outside the academy, playing a unique role in bridging the gap between innovative research in the field and a wide range of public debates. Held off-campus in a bar in Dalston, East London, the series has run for five years, moving online with lockdown in 2020. CCSR also holds regular conferences and seminars, including most recently a successful joint online conference on cultures of wellness with colleagues at Curtin University (Australia) in November 2020, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to collaborative, international and public work despite challenging conditions. The Centre also hosts a book series, 'Radical Cultural Studies'.

The Moving Image Research Centre (MIRC, <https://www.uel.ac.uk/research/the-moving-image-research-centre/>) was established in 2008 to promote early to mid-career artist filmmakers, and to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue between film practitioners, theorists, historians, and sector agents (funders, distributors, programmers). About twenty UEL scholars and filmmakers are attached to the Centre, from within the UoA and from other areas (art and design, music, and performance). Co-directed by Vitali and Maier, MIRC provides a hub for critical, theoretical, and practical work, linking research culture directly to teaching on undergraduate and graduate programmes, hosting PhD students, and regularly convening public events (screenings and symposia). It holds work-in-

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progress workshops for artists and critics, and since 2016 has run a programme of artist residencies, helping recipients raise production funds and find distribution; former artists-in-residence include Sebastian Buerkner, Alia Syed, Louis Benassi, and Frances Scott. MIRC has established successful collaborations with London galleries (e.g., Whitechapel, Bow Arts), British film festivals (e.g., BFI London Film Festival, East End Film Festival, Tongues on Fire: UK Asian Film Festival), art centres (e.g., FACT Liverpool, HOME Manchester) and independent cinemas (e.g., Close-Up Film Centre). It has also extended its activities to include practitioners, historians, and cultural institutions in Europe, South and East Asia (e.g., Mazefilm, Berlin; Institute of Transcultural Studies, Vilnius; Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art, New Delhi; Centre for Cultural Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala; Centre for Social Science Research, Dhaka; Centre for Cultural Research and Development, Hong Kong). With a strong record of creative practice in film, researchers in the UoA have produced prize-winning documentaries and art films (Daniels, Signorelli), as well as advancing the theorization of creative practice.

The Cultural Engine Research Group (CERG) is run by Branch and Sampson in the UoA, in partnership with external member Giles Tofield. Sharing CCSR's commitment to opening academic debate, and building on UEL's strong commitment to civic engagement, CERG focuses particularly on local interventions, working with marginalized communities marked by socio-economic deprivation in Essex and the Thames Gateway to improve the quality of life for local people. It promotes a critical and public exploration of the complex economic, social, and cultural factors framing the everyday practices of people and the places in which they live, through public-facing seminars and collaborations with local government and third sector organizations. [Community Engagement Initiative \(cerg.blog\)](http://cerg.blog)

Research themes and researchers

Staff research can be broadly mapped against three principal research themes, which also bring together researchers across these centres:

- **Cultural Studies: politics and cultural theory**

Researchers working in this field share a focus on contemporary culture and cultural politics. The **analysis and critique of neoliberal culture** and the challenges it poses for democratic practice and political organization are central to the research of Hughes and Gilbert; Gilbert is widely known to both academic and non-academic audiences for his work in this field. Vitali also combines elements of political economy with criticism and cultural theory in her attention to the relationship between **cinema and capitalism in India** and elsewhere. Voela brings a **psychoanalytic perspective to bear on neoliberal culture** and austerity. Urban cultures are a focus for Shaw, who explores intersections between **post-humanism, digital culture and contemporary urban experience**, and Lawrence, the leading authority on the cultural politics of the downtown New York music scene during its most creative period, highlighting the impact on it of incipient neoliberalism. Digital cultures also shape Sampson's analysis of the relationships between **technoculture and neuroscience**.

- **Cultural history, contemporary history and memory studies**

Our long-established interest in these areas, prominent in REF 2014, continues to inform significant work within the UoA. A focus on memory, subjectivity and autobiography is central to the work of Hodgkin in her exploration of the histories of subjectivity in early modern culture, and of Daniels, who explores these themes extensively in her work in and on documentary filmmaking. Vitali's research into film and commemoration in India engages with the politics of memory and the creative

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representation of recent history. The cultural history of gender, and the making of gendered identities, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, is a continuing focus of interest (Hodgkin), intersecting with more contemporary investigations of gender in neoliberal culture (Garrett, Voela). Research by Lawrence, Branch and Gilbert also addresses **contemporary cultural history**, investigating critical phases in the recent history of music cultures, and the intersections of music culture with histories of social and political change.

- **Film and Screen Studies**

Research in film draws on cultural theory and politics to offer diverse critical perspectives on cinema. Hallam and Gormley theorize affect through readings of horror and violence in cinema, drawing on psychoanalysis and Deleuzian approaches. National and international cinema cultures are investigated by Vitali, a leading authority on South Asian cinema who has also published on Chinese and Italian film, and Stott, an expert on cinema of East Germany in relation to the shifting politics of the GDR. **Creative practice** is also an important element of our work in film. Documentary film is at the heart of Daniels's research, both in her acclaimed experimental documentaries and as theorist and historian of the genre; Signorelli works with documentary to illuminate the changing meanings of European culture in the context of migration, while Maier's widely screened films operate at the interface between fine art practice and cinema.

2. People

I. Staff overview

Staff in the UoA work across a range of disciplines, as teachers and as researchers, including **film, music, media, communications, art and creative writing** - a rich mix which underpins the interdisciplinarity of our research.

As noted earlier the UoA has seen considerable change in the years since 2014, with the departure of a number of senior staff through retirement and through career progression; of the nineteen researchers in this submission, just six were included in REF 2014. Our succession planning has accordingly focused on **developing research capacity**, bringing mid-career and more senior staff into leadership roles, and supporting those at more junior levels to develop as researchers to ensure continuity in expertise and knowledge base. The last six years have seen a number of promotions from Reader to Professor, and from senior lecturer to Reader, with the result that the current submission has a high proportion of senior staff. We have **supported existing staff in developing their research profiles**, with six staff members in post but not submitted in REF 2014 now included in this submission, along with four more recently appointed staff including three ECRs. We have increased our interdisciplinary range, with researchers from Sociology and Art and Design included in the submission.

In the current submission, the levels and FTE of researchers submitted in the UoA are as follows:

Name	Level	Fraction	Research specialism
Gilbert	Professor	1.0	Cultural politics
Hodgkin	Professor	1.0	Cultural history
Lawrence	Professor	1.0	Cultural studies

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Sampson	Professor	1.0	Digital media
Vitali	Professor	1.0	Film
Daniels	Reader	0.7	Film (practice)
Shaw	Reader	0.8	Cultural studies
Voela	Reader	1.0	Cultural studies
Stott	Head of Department	0.4	Film
Aydin	SL	0.6	Hmm. Media?
Bailey	SL	1.0	Communications
Branch	SL	1.0	Media/ culture
Garrett	SL	0.6	Cultural studies/ literature
Gormley	SL	1.0	Film
Hallam	SL	1.0	Film
Maier	SL	1.0	Film (practice)
Hughes	Postdoc (ECR)	1.0	Cultural politics
Signorelli	L (ECR)	1.0	Media
Thomas	L (ECR)	1.0	Cultural studies

II. Recruitment and Staff Strategy

While the period since REF 2014 has seen some retrenchment, our strategy with recent appointments has been not only to **support the continuity and development of our research culture** but also to **identify trajectories for future development**. New and early career staff have reinforced critical and creative film research, and our ESRC-funded postdoc adds to existing expertise in cultural theory and politics. Another recent appointment represents an investment in research expertise for the future in **computer games and digital technology**, connecting with existing research on digital cultures; several new ECRs appointed since the REF census point will also contribute to the strategic development of this area. A further strategic priority in the coming years will be capacity building among mid-career staff; we are keen to see readers moving on to professorships, and senior lecturers to readerships. A new institutional academic progression strategy will support this aim. We target staff recruitment to key strategic priorities, among them equality and diversity (see below).

The School encourages both newly appointed and longer-standing staff to **develop as independent researchers**, especially in some of the newer areas where research capacity is currently low. New staff are assigned mentors and encouraged to engage in research, outreach, and engagement, including registering for doctoral study where appropriate. In the recently introduced researcher development framework, staff who identify as developing or re-engaging researchers participate in research training workshops on topics such as planning

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research projects, impact, ethics, doctoral supervision, and writing grant applications. Mentors support staff in achieving research targets set in annual personal development reviews, as well as providing more general advice and feedback. The School allocates research time in the workload model for all staff identified as having significant responsibility for research, as well as staff undertaking doctoral research.

III. PGR students and supervision

Our PGR students are a vital and growing part of the research culture of the UoA. We have 26 doctoral students and over 20 active supervisors drawn from across the school, reflecting the innovative and interdisciplinary scope of our doctoral research. Many of our PhD students are studying part-time while retaining an independent professional practice in the cultural industries, and their research is central to their practice. Staff members who have come into academia via professional practice rather than more usual academic routes also register for PhDs, and we are keen to support this cross-fertilization between creative and academic work. Four doctorates have been awarded to staff since 2014, and more are in the pipeline.

We take pride in the diversity and unconventionality of our research student body, and they make a vital contribution to our active and socially engaged research culture. In line with the interdisciplinarity of the School, our PGR students often work on **interdisciplinary and practice-led research**, with supervisory teams drawn from different academic areas across and beyond the School. This generates **unorthodox and creatively rich investigations, mixing cultural theory, film, creative writing and literature, sociology and cultural history**.

There have been 17 PhD completions in the UoA since 2013, including four who were funded by UEL's own internal Excellence studentships scheme, and three who received AHRC awards. A number of these have gone on to hold **academic posts** in the UK or overseas, carrying UEL's **distinctive cultural studies tradition into a range of disciplines and institutions**: five are in full-time permanent academic posts, and others are working in temporary and part-time posts in HE.

PGR completion rates 2014-20

Year	Number of completions
2014	5
2015	4
2016	2
2017	1
2018	2
2019	2
2020	1
Total 17	

Overall completions are comparable to REF 2014 (16 completions in the UoA); however, the annual average is lower than in REF 2014, which covered five rather than seven years.

Changes to the national funding regime and local market conditions for funding provision continue to present challenges in recruiting and retaining high quality PGR students. We remain highly selective as to the candidates that we do accept (and fund). We have worked hard in recent years to build a strong and inclusive PGR culture, which operates at school rather than at department level. Students are encouraged to take part in the range of events led by research centres across the

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school, creating opportunities to network and share their research more widely. The student-led Research Networks Committee is responsible for curating PGR events, supported by an annual budget of GBP 2,000. Reflecting our collegiate and anti-hierarchical ethos, this committee aims to bring students and academics together to develop research culture, promote networks and knowledge exchange, and support employability; events held in recent years include PGR conferences on 'Authenticity and the Arts' (2019) and 'Speaking from the Margins' (2020). Individual students are also supported to give conference papers and achieve research outcomes.

This investment in PGR experience underpins a strongly positive response in the 2018 PRES survey, where supervision, research skills and professional development were all rated at over 90%, and overall experience at 83.78%. Research culture, always a challenge in contexts with small student numbers and a wide disciplinary range, was rated at 68%, representing a sharp rise from 53.6% in 2015, and all categories showed improved ratings. These results demonstrate the success of the strategies put in place over the last few years, and we are keen to build on this improvement. We will continue to work on improving postgraduate outcomes and experience, including carefully monitoring training needs and career advice provision, ensuring that the various stages of the doctoral degree programme are clearly explained and transparent, and continuing to strengthen the school PGR research culture and networks.

IV. Equality and Diversity

Equality and diversity, in the staff body and in our teaching as well as in our research, are central to our ethos, as UoA, as School, and as University. Our research engages strongly with questions of **cultural and national identities, with social justice and exclusion, and with global perspectives**; our location in the **culturally and ethnically diverse East of London** ensures that community outreach and engagement activities are constantly engaging with these issues.

These principles underpin our efforts within the School and the UoA to promote equality and diversity across the entire range of our activities. The university was awarded a Bronze level **Race Equality Charter in May 2019**.

Objectives identified in the University Action Plan included:

- **an inclusive research environment**
- review and development of provision of **academic mentorship**, allowing for longer term career mapping and support; and
- an increase in the proportion of **BAME academic staff**

The School contributes to UEL's Race Equality Charter by committing to these objectives. In summer 2019 the School formed its own **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee**, whose membership includes the Director of Impact and Innovation as well as the UoA coordinators from the school's two UoAs. The Committee has established a **staff anti-racism group** and developed a School EDI Action plan mandating an alignment of ACI's research and enterprise activities, themes, and priorities with the University's EDI priorities. We also run EDI training events for staff.

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In relation to **gender equality**, the School is currently preparing a school-level submission for the Athena Swan Bronze Award. School staff take part in the **Athena Swan Mentoring Scheme** as mentors or mentees. The action plan addresses working culture, the staff base gender balance and representation at senior level positions, and strategies for supporting parental leave, ill health, mental health issues, caring responsibilities, and staff with protected characteristics, all of which have implications for research. We are working on objectives to ensure gender equality for both students and staff, maintain gender balance for REF submissions and for research leave, and monitor workload allocation practices. We are also mindful of the impact of the pandemic lockdown on childcare and caring responsibilities, and the potentially disproportionate impact of this on women researchers; we will be actively exploring strategies to rectify this in the coming year.

We carry out an institutional Equality Impact Assessment following each REF annual research review. The University's Office for Institutional Equity provides a mentoring programme aimed at staff with protected characteristics.

The current UoA submission has an even gender balance. However, there is more to be done to build the research base among BAME staff, with only one BAME staff member in the submission. Among staff currently identifying as developing researchers we have greater diversity, as we also have among our PGR students, and in collaboration with the School Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee we are developing strategies to offer dedicated support to this group as well as to other colleagues with protected characteristics in order to improve representation.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

i. Income

The UoA has had some success in grant applications, but less than we aimed for in REF 2014. This is partly attributable to the increasing competitiveness of the sector and diminishing success rates for applications across the board.

The bulk of our HESA funding for the period came from the ESRC-funded 'Muslims, Trust & Cultural Dialogue', led by Morey. This enabled Morey to run a large-scale and high-profile research project on representations of Muslims in the public domain, in collaboration with SOAS and involving academics, media professionals and third sector organizations; other staff in the UoA contributed papers and attended events, and outcomes (chiefly published after he left UEL) included an edited collection and a journal special issue. AHRC network funding supported a research network on early modern memory cultures, led by Hodgkin in collaboration with colleagues from three other UK universities, involving four symposia and eventually a journal special issue.

HESA Grant income 2013-20

Year	Award	Funder	Amount	Total for grant
2013/14	Hodgkin 'Memory and Community in Early Modern Britain' network	AHRC	GBP 6,084.38	
2013/14	Morey 'Muslims, Trust and Cultural Dialogue'	ESRC	GBP 99,051.12	
2013/14	Sosa, 'Latin America's Southern Cone'	British Academy	GBP 8,640.31	GBP 8,640.31

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2013/14	Butler, Bethnal GreenHeritage Memorial Project	Lottery Fund	GBP 45,308.77	
2014/15	Hodgkin (as above)	AHRC	GBP 5,907.95	GBP 11,992.33 (final phase of GBP 40k network grant starting 2012)
2014/15	Morey (as above)	ESRC	GBP 102,617.82	
2014/15	Butler (as above)	HLF	GBP 35,986.52	GBP 81,295.29
2015/16	Morey (as above)	ESRC	GBP 67,285.89	GBP 268,954.83
2016/17	Hardy 'Branded Content Research Network'	AHRC	GBP 1,067.08	
2016/17	Butler, Carpenters' Lock Canal evaluation study	and River Trust	GBP 9,942.68	GBP 9,942.68
2016/17	Butler, Groundbreakers: Heritage excavating history at QE Olympic Park	Lottery Fund	GBP 197,863	(withdrawn as he took VS that summer)
2017/18	Hardy (as above)	AHRC	GBP 16,039.08	GBP 17,106.16
2018/19	Gilbert, 3-year postdoc fellowship (Carys Hughes)	ESRC	GBP 92,541.14	GBP 92,541.14
2019/20	Hardy, Branded Content RKE	ESRC/ DTP Business	UBEL GBP 2,250	GBP 2,250
HESA total			GBP 492,722.74	

Other funding (consultancy/ education):

Year	Award	Funder	Amount	Category
2017/18	Dorrington, games development project with young offenders at Belmarsh Prison	LTE Group	GBP 60,833.33	Consultancy
2019/20	Dixon, Sparks collaboration with KAFU, Khazakhstan	CreativeBritish Council	GBP 30,000	Education
Total			GBP 90,833.33	

An annual average of around 5 funding applications has been submitted since 2013. Institutional support for funding bids has increased significantly during this time; regular funding workshops and one to one support are offered through the Research Development Support (ReDs) team, and applications are reviewed within the school before proceeding to submission. We will continue to work on both the volume and the quality of our research bids to improve our success rate.

Internal support for research and research-related activities

Funding support throughout the REF period has been available for a range of research-related activities, to individual researchers and to research centres. Research centres were funded at GBP 2000 per year in the first part of the assessment period, with time allocations for research centre directors. From 2017 this was replaced by funding on application: research centres requested

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funding to carry out specific activities, including conferences, seminars and outreach projects, and centres were encouraged to become more financially self-supporting.

Funding is now allocated under a budget held by the DII to support a range of activities by individuals and centres: new initiatives, applied research, high profile events, delivering conference papers, production costs for creative outputs, and so forth. Early career researchers and postgraduate students are offered funding to help with research development, and all researchers have been able to apply for funding for sabbatical leave and/or teaching remission. This fund also supports impact and knowledge exchange projects.

Support is also provided by the University via funds specifically targeting civic engagement and impact-related projects, including the Civic Engagement Fund, the Impact Fund, and the Student Internship fund. The **Cultural Engine Research Group** has been the major recipient of this funding in the UoA, receiving a total of GBP 15,000 for conferences, events, and internships since 2014.

ii. Infrastructure and facilities

Our East London location is a **key context for our research**, supporting our partnerships and offering access to a range of institutions and facilities. Significant connections with local and regional art galleries, archives and independent cinemas, creative hubs, heritage groups and councils, underpin a participatory and outward-facing approach to research.

The city's long history of migration also shapes our research projects and our international partnerships with researchers across Europe and Asia in particular. This hyper-diverse environment drives research not only in our UoA but across UEL; this in turn creates an intellectual infrastructure where problems, interests and perspectives mingle productively across disciplinary boundaries. Our **connections with researchers across the university** are founded in a shared commitment to transformative interdisciplinary research that engages with the key problems of our time and place. There are particularly close connections between our researchers and those in Performing Arts, Art and Design and Social Sciences. We host events jointly with other centres and participate in shared research networks, and our researchers collaborate on publications and projects.

Work in **film** benefits from our connections with local cinemas, galleries, and festivals. Practice-led research is supported by the facilities at the Moving Image Research Centre, which provides a vibrant context for filmmaking and debate. Its **state-of-the-art production facilities** enable it to provide screenings and work-in-progress workshops with London-based moving image artists, as well as an annual residency to mid-career artists and filmmakers.

A **team of technicians supports practice-based research** and teaching across the school, with eight assigned to the area of Media, Film and Communications, where much of the UoA's research is based, including specialists in media, games, and digital production.

In addition to the facilities offered by the many libraries and galleries of London, the university library holds several **archives relevant to researchers in the UoA**, including the Refugee Council archive and other collections relating to refugees; the British Olympic Collection archive; the East London People's Archive (an oral history collection); and the Gender, Sexualities and Ethnic Studies collection.

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

i. Contribution to the research base

The UoA makes an active and sustained contribution to the research base, reflecting our commitment to research that is collaborative and outward facing as well as excellent. We support the wider development and dissemination of our research as well as research produced by the wider research community through editorial and reviewing work, the delivery of national and international keynotes and invited lectures, our national and international collaborations with researchers based in other institutions, and the organization of seminars, conferences, and symposia.

We make a significant contribution to the field through our work as **journal editors**. Gilbert is sole editor of *New Formations*, one of the most influential voices in cultural studies and cultural theory. We work on the editorial boards of cultural studies, media and film journals including *Cultural Studies*; *History Workshop Journal*; *Journal of Media Practice*; *Memory Studies*; *Sine/Cine: Journal of Cinema Research*; *Triple-C: Journal of Communication, Capitalism and Critique*. We have edited special journal issues for *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* (on women and South Asian cinema); and *Memory Studies* (on early modern memory). We **peer review submissions** for publications including *Capital and Class*; *Continuum*; *Digital Journalism Distinction*; *Journal of British Cinema and Television*; *European Journal of Cultural Studies*; *Memory Studies*; *New Media and Society*; *Theory, Culture & Society*; as well as publishers including Continuum; Duke University Press; and Oxford University Press. We publish **book reviews** in a wide range of journals, from *History of Psychiatry* to *Political Studies*, and from *Textual Practice* to *Transnational Cinemas*.

We are actively involved in **book editing and publication**. The *Radical Cultural Studies* series, edited by the Centre for Cultural Studies and published by Rowman and Littlefield, has published 13 books in the seven years since it was established, including monographs and edited collections by four researchers and two PhD graduates from the UoA. We edited the book series *Routledge Critical Advertising Studies*. We have also edited books, including *Affect and Social Media: Emotion, Mediation, Anxiety and Contagion*, *Maurizio Lazzarato, Experimental Politics: Work, Welfare and Creativity in the Neoliberal Age* and *Radical Space: Exploring Politics and Practice*. We **review proposals and manuscripts** for a wide range of publishers, including Bloomsbury Academic, Duke University Press, Edinburgh University Press, Goldsmiths University Press, Hurst, Indiana University Press, Macmillan, Oxford University Press, Pearson Education, Peter Lang, Polity, Pluto, Routledge (Taylor and Francis), Sage, University of Westminster Press. We act as **research grant reviewers** for a range of grant-awarding bodies, including Austrian Science Fund, ESRC, the Hong Kong Research Grants Council, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (Council for the Humanities), Oesterreichische Nationalbank and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Reflecting the significant attention our research attracts, researchers in the UoA deliver **invited talks, keynotes and plenary lectures at universities and other institutions**, both nationally and internationally, including the Beijing Normal University, Berlin Transmediale, Bristol University, Carnegie-Mellon University Pittsburgh, Columbia University, Cornell University, the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia conference, Duke University, Folkwang University, Goldsmiths College, Graduate Centre CUNY, Massey University, MECCSA, Newcastle University, UMass Boston, New York University, University of California (Riverside), University of Iowa, University of Sussex, Warwick University and Yale University. Through these contributions we have developed research

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connections that have in turn led to further collaborations, including a substantial number of research conferences and symposia; a notable example is the Affect and Social Media network (see below), which emerged out of a talk by Sampson at a PhD summer school at Aarhus university in Denmark, and is associated with affect theory networks in Denmark and the USA.

We **collaborate nationally and internationally as researchers, research fellows and thesis supervisors** with other institutions and networks. Two research-council funded networks, 'Muslims, Trust and Cultural Dialogue' and 'Memory and Community in Early Modern Britain', noted above, had UoA members as PIs. Our major art-research project *Meanings of Failed Action: Insurrection 1946* (2017-18), commissioned for the 70th anniversary of Indian independence and partition, and exhibited in Mumbai and New Delhi, involved a collaboration between scholars and artists from the UK and India. We work closely with the DEFA Film Library and archive at the University of Massachusetts. We also contribute to the Wellcome Trust-funded research network 'Pathologies of Solitude, 18th to 21st century', based at Queen Mary University. Our research expertise **contributes to teaching** programmes internationally, with members of the UoA working as visiting professors, fellows and lecturers at institutions including Brown University, the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (Bangalore), the New School in New York, New York University, the School of Art and Design in Zurich and Warwick University. We have also supervised and examined PhDs at the University of Lausanne and the University of North Carolina. Our research is translated into French, German and Italian, with the translation into German of Gilbert's work on conjunctural analysis published alongside a series of responses by international colleagues in the journal *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*.

We are particularly proud of our contribution to the staging of **conferences, seminars, film screenings and other events**, both in terms of the number of events staged and our consistent success in attracting audiences that include the public as well as researchers, regularly engaging with diverse communities. The Centre for Cultural Studies Research organizes regular symposia which explore a wide range of cultural, social, and political themes, including the legacy of 1968, monster politics, the end of neoliberalism and vinyl culture; internationally, it co-hosted an online conference on wellness in the pandemic with Curtin University, Australia, and collaborated with NYU to stage a 'Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor' symposium. The Moving Image Research Centre curated a two-day film festival on the stories of women living in South Asia with FACT, Liverpool; co-organized a 'Nation, Gender, History' conference on Asian cinemas with the Centre for Asian Studies, Vilnius University; and co-organized the Film Studies and Cinematic Arts conference in Dakam. The Cultural Engine Research Group has shaped and sustained the Affect and Social Media network, a global network of academics and art practitioners that holds its annual conferences at UEL. Its Sensorium art show brings together international scholars and graduate students to debate cross-disciplinary issues relating to affective experiences with social media platforms.

Crucially, our events tackle the experiences of **diverse communities** and support a form of **open and participatory scholarship** that encourages the participation of these communities. From 2015 onwards CCSR has convened an annual public seminar series that brings together researchers in the fields of cultural studies and political studies with members of the public, artists, journalists, and political activists. These series have been organised and promoted in collaboration with non-academic partners including Open School East, Doomed Gallery, and the New Economy Organizers' Network, with all events also disseminated as podcasts. CCSR's 'Life and Death' collaboration with NYU foregrounded the participation of original contributors to the downtown art and music scene, many of them minority practitioners. In a similar vein, the Cultural Engine Research Group have convened a series of open 'Club Critical Theory' discussion events in Essex and East London to engage local populations in debate around key contemporary issues. Overall UoA members have

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organized ~100 public events since the beginning of 2014, several of them featuring high-profile speakers such as Andy Beckett, Rosi Braidotti, Paul Gilroy, Glenn Greenwald, Michael Hardt, Maurizio Lazzarato, Angela McRobbie, and Marc Stears. Access has been facilitated through the uploading of these contributions as podcasts. This has enabled us to enrich public discussion on contemporary social, political, and cultural issues, tackling the concerns of marginalized communities while encouraging their engagement.

ii. Contribution to society

Members of the UoA share a commitment **to outreach, engagement, and impact**. We work with partners and communities outside the university sector in a range of contexts to disseminate and activate our research. This includes policy advice, political interventions, contributions in the cultural and creative sectors, and engagement with local and marginal communities. Our efforts to historicize and promote New York City music, social dance, and art culture of the 1970s and 1980s, much of it created by diverse and marginalized protagonists, are charted in one impact case study (Lawrence). Our input into the revival of progressive politics in the UK, which concerns itself with democratization, participation and equality across class, gender, race, regional and sexual divides, is charted in a second impact case study (Gilbert). Our contribution to society reaches beyond these case studies in important ways.

Complementing Gilbert's impact case study and his contribution to democratization, **we work with local councils and third sector organizations to engage disenfranchised and marginal populations in debates over planning, regeneration, heritage, democracy and citizenship, migration, cultural tourism**. Our work as the Cultural Engine Research Group, for example, focuses on areas of deprivation and regeneration in Essex coastal areas and Newham, aiming to empower local communities by providing a space in which they can contribute to local policies. Since 2014 the group has run a series of public-facing conferences and seminars in informal spaces to establish dialogue between academics, policymakers and creative practitioners, with members of the public encouraged to participate. These include the 'Essex Futures' two-day conference (which included keynotes from Robert Hewison and Jack Monroe); two Resorting to the Coast conferences staged in Walton-on-the-Naze and organized in collaboration with Essex County Council; the 'Silvertown Sessions' community wealth-building workshops, which were organized in collaboration with the Royal Docks Learning and Activity Centre, and included City Airport, Crossrail, Newham Council, Tate & Lyle and local community groups as participants.

We have also (through the work of Hardy, who left UEL in the summer of 2020) **played a key advocacy role in the field of media regulation**. Hardy's research, consultancy and policy submissions have influenced Labour Party and Green Party policy debate and formulation and have been adopted by civil society organizations including the TUC, media unions and the Media Reform Coalition. Hardy has made a key contribution to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (secretary since 1995) and the Coordinating Committee of the Media Reform Coalition (member since 2018). He addressed the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology in 2015) and has made policy submissions to the Cairncross Review into the future of high-quality journalism in the UK, the IASA consultation on online ad-labelling, the CMA and Ofcom on the proposed acquisition of Sky by Twenty-First Century Fox, the House of Lords Inquiry on the Advertising Industry, and the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications Consultation on Media Plurality. He has addressed the wider public in articles published in *The Conversation*, *Free Press* and *Open Democracy*.

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Complementing Lawrence's concern with the creative and political importance of New York's music and art scenes of the 1970s and 1980s, our outreach activities also address the fields of **popular culture, youth culture and the arts**, with our work in **cinema and music** in particular enhancing well-being and sustaining a sense of community. Our contribution in South Asian film has generated an extended programme of public engagement and pedagogy in Myanmar, where Vitali developed and delivered a three-week intensive film history course at the Yangon Film School. The brief was to create a self-sustaining educational and film-making structure so involved the training of local personnel and the inclusion of local filmmakers as well as film lecturers. The project was funded by groups including the Finnish Foundation for Media and Development VIKES, the European Union and George Soros's Open Society Foundation.

Our **creative practice in film has been recognized through screenings and awards**. The film *My Private Life* (Daniels, 2014) received an honourable mention at the Athens International Film Festival (Ohio) and was screened in Toronto and Belfast. *Private Life II* (Daniels, 2016) won the Best Experimental Film award at the Ann Arbor Experimental Film Festival. *Breathing Still* (Daniels, 2018) was screened at film festivals in Australia, Croatia, Iceland, the Netherlands, Poland, and Spain, and was winner of the Jury Award for Best Documentary at the Small Axe@Tolpuddle Radical Film Festival, UK. Maier's films have been screened at 13 major festivals, exhibitions, and venues, including the Cannes film festival, the European Media Arts Festival, and the Whitley Bay film festival. The short documentary *Where is Europe?* (an exploration of European identity in the era of Brexit and in relation to the contemporary crises of forced migration, displacement, and diaspora by Signorelli) was screened at over 30 festivals, including the Venice Biennale, and won first prize at the Rome Independent Cinema Festival, the Mario Matteucci Award at Doc Anno Zero, best documentary short at the London independent film awards, and best short documentary at the Prisma Independent Film Awards.

Augmenting the c. 100 research-inspired audiophile-community dance events organized by Gilbert and Lawrence since 2014, the Cultural Engine ran a series of HLF-funded youth culture events at London Fields, Hackney, where artists, arts organizations (including the Museum of Youth Culture) and academics explored popular culture and 'establishment' representations. Another public event, 'Tribal Youth in Revolt', held in support of the Beecroft Gallery's Subcultures exhibition, evaluated the historical legacies and politics of youth practices. The UoA also convened a session for Metal Culture's Estuary Festival, 'Sound of the Delta', where musicians, writers, artists, filmmakers, and broadcasters examined the relationship between place and music.

In summary, as researchers who are also members of many wider communities, we are ambitiously outward facing. We aim to contribute to wellbeing and sustainability through creative and participatory outreach and engagement activities. We are equally committed to sustaining a supportive, dynamic, and collaborative research culture within the university, and to contributing to the wider national and international research field.