

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
School of Global Studies

RESEARCH STRATEGY 2024

Transformative Research for Global Justice

April 2024

Disclaimer: This is a School Research Strategy that applies across Departments. However, Departments, Research Centres and Research Groups are encouraged to create their own strategies complementing the School Research Strategy. As strategies need to live, this document will be regularly updated.

Introduction

This School Research Strategy develops the research components of our wider School Strategy, as laid out in 2019 for the period 2020-25. It aims to spell out new initiatives to drive improvements in our research culture and general performance.

As part of the wider University, we are developing our strategy in line with *Sussex 2025*, the current University Strategy, as well as the evolving *Strategy 2035*. As *Sussex 2035* is being finalised, we will further develop this document in 2024-25 and align it with the strategic research goals of ESW and LPS as part of the new Faculty of Social Sciences from Autumn 2024.

This document has been developed through dialogue and input from across the School. From an initial draft informed by regular School Forum meetings and minutes compiled by JoAnn McGregor and Geert De Neve as DRaKE and HoS, it was then modified in the light of a School Research Strategy awayday on 16th April 2024. The draft has been circulated within the School to solicit feedback, and was further amended through input and discussion at the School's Research Committee.

Vision for transformative research

Transformative research for global justice is at the heart of the identity of the School. We seek to be creative, imaginative, rigorous, ethical and engaged in pursuing our research. We invest in global collaborations and partnerships to co-produce research with impact where it is most needed. Being creatively disruptive, we build on a tradition of radical critique that challenges conventional thinking and proposes hopeful alternatives for a fairer, safer, more sustainable and more inclusive world. This vision also shapes our understanding of the risk-taking and innovation needed to be agenda-setting intellectually and to produce ethical engagements and interventions suited to local understandings, challenges and demands.

At the core of this lies a collegiate and supportive research culture. Global Studies fosters an inclusive, respectful and enjoyable research culture for all, in which staff and students alike can find a safe and conducive environment to perform to the best of their ability and flourish as researchers, whatever stage of their career they are at. This vision is closely aligned with the University's 2025 vision of 'Better Research for a Better World', with the University's core values, and with the emerging vision of *Sussex 2035*.

In the context of multiple global challenges, uncertainties and crises, it is the aim of the School to conduct research and impact work that seeks to further a **global social justice** agenda. As global challenges are not isolated events, we recognise the **poly-crisis** facing humanity and seek responses and interventions based on an interdisciplinary understanding of interconnected causes and effects.

Central to this vision is a shared focus on research that seeks to:

- Lead on global environmental sustainability and climate justice
- Transform understanding of global migration, mobility and displacement
- Produce knowledge to tackle poverty, exclusion and inequality
- Nurture peace, security, health and culture for human flourishing
- Champion decolonising, anti-racist and reparative justice approaches to social science research

Thematically, we seek to pursue our vision through evidence-based research that focuses on environmental change and climate justice, migration and mobility, violence and insecurity, global trade and finance, health and sexual politics, religion, human rights, and cultural heritage and identity. We are particularly attuned to understanding and countering the social structures and forms of knowledge that produce intersectional inequalities and exclusions – based on race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, ability, caste and/or class – and imagining alternative notions of rights, justice, citizenship and belonging. Reparative approaches hinge on investigating the historically produced structural conditions and colonial epistemologies that infuse knowledge production and shape justices today.

The overarching vision of the School of Global Studies is thus to co-produce and share transformational knowledge for global social justice with fellow researchers, research participants and users across the world.

The School of Global Studies: research overview

The School of Global Studies brings together research in the Departments of Anthropology, International Development, Geography and International Relations. Formed through University restructuring, it was the successor to the School of Social and Cultural Studies. Over the course of its nearly 15 years of existence, the School has built a strong sense of collective identity, marked by a wealth of intersecting interdisciplinary research, impact activities, civic engagement and teaching initiatives. We consider ourselves a global research hub at the heart of the University. Our engaged research and critical pedagogy address the most pressing global challenges of our times.

The School's research is conducted by around 100 faculty, 10-15 postdoctoral scholars, 120 doctoral researchers, and a significant number affiliated and visiting research fellows. The research is supported by a dedicated Research Office comprising professional service colleagues.

Our School research agendas and priorities are multiple, continuously evolving, and encompass a wide range of regional and thematic expertise organized around challenges across the global North and South, and a radical social justice agenda.

Features of our current research environment include the following institutionalised strengths and challenges:

- **Research centres:** we lead on two University Centres of Excellence, the Sussex Centre for Migration Research and the Sussex Sustainability Research Programme, while hosting several university-wide and School-based research centres (see the list in the Appendix);
- **Cross-campus interdisciplinary networks:** our connections ramify not only internally, but also across the University. We have longstanding collaborations with LPS and ESWs, with whom we are to merge into a single Faculty of Social Sciences. We also have important arts and humanities networks with MAH around strengths in heritage studies, film studies, visual media, and digital humanities. Finally, we have close interchange and on-going research partnerships with IDS, BSMS, USBS and Life Sciences, including in areas where our research and teaching is closely aligned, such as around sustainable development, climate research and policy, food and development;
- **Success in capturing external research grant income.** Over the last 5 years, researchers in the School of Global Studies have been awarded over £13 million of external research income from a wide range of research councils, government bodies and charities. While our grant income dipped during the pandemic (2020-21 and 2021-22), by 2024 it had

recovered to pre-pandemic levels and higher. In 2021-22, the School had the second highest research recovery rate in the University, at 71%;

- **Support for research with Impact.** Our research is supported by the School's Impact Advisory Board (IAB), comprised of members from government, the private sector, the media and international and not-for-profit organisations. The IAB convenes twice a year, giving colleagues the opportunity to present their work, and strengthen it through feedback. The IAB has played an important part in our success in achieving outstanding research impact, for both REF purposes and beyond, and in making our research more impactful beyond academia. We have a **School Impact Lead**, currently Prof David Ockwell, who works with departmental research directors and individuals to develop their impact and engagement work. He is assisted by an **Assistant Research Manager** as well as **two research coordinators**.

A Challenging Environment. Our research has global recognition, reflected in our REF 2021 performance. But our capacity to build on these successes faces a challenging external environment, posing significant threats: the effects of Brexit on EU funding, collaborations, and mobility; the government's visa policies and their effects on our internationalism, partnerships, collaborations and recruitment. The UoS environment also poses challenges to our capacity to build on our strengths: moving from a research-intensive to a research/teaching intensive framework; shift to Faculties; removal of SDF; lack of UoS doctoral funding all threaten our research culture. Overall UoS rankings are limiting us compared to our own subject rankings. We have an old School building that is bad for environmental sustainability and our Geography labs and offices in Chichester I are affected by RAAC that will take years to address. We have insufficient PS support, for example around research communication and social media.

Research objectives

The School has 6 **main research objectives** that aim to strengthen, expand and enhance our research, engagement and impact activities across our Departments and Research Centres. In all of these, *how* we do our research, is centrally important. They are:

1. **Research excellence:** To enable the co-creation of world-leading, impactful research that is rigorous, ethically grounded, internationally recognised, and that challenges orthodoxies and pushes disciplinary boundaries;
2. **Inclusive research environment and culture:** To create a supportive and enabling research environment for all colleagues, at all career stages, and to foster a diverse and inclusive research culture in which everyone can pursue the research they value, work to the best of their abilities, and thrive as researchers;
3. **Equitable partnerships:** To develop local, national and global collaborations and partnerships that are genuine, ethical and equitable, that foster mutual learning and development, that challenge conventional power relations, and that empower everyone involved to work towards social justice and a sustainable future;
4. **Impact for social justice and sustainable futures:** To maximize the impact of our co-produced research, with the view to shape policy and governance and to deepen our civic engagement with society and communities across the world. To pursue research that co-creates knowledge for meaningful, transformative, and even disruptive, change towards the goals of global social justice and a more equitable, fair and sustainable future;

5. **Interdisciplinarity:** To strengthen our interdisciplinary engagements within the School and across the new Faculty of Social Sciences, while also fostering collaborations with other departments and centres across the University and the IDS on areas of particular research strength (culture/heritage; climate/environment; migration/mobility; rights/conflict);
6. **Diverse ecology of external research funding:** To provide mentoring, peer support and seed corn funding to enable colleagues to pursue research in line with large funder priorities and to enhance the School's capacity to attract research funding from a wide range of funders, including research councils, government, private and charity sectors; to enhance our success in large grant capture as well in a variety of smaller and medium-sized grants.

Research strategy

In order to work towards these objectives, we will put supportive, developmental and leadership mechanisms in place, including:

1. Research excellence:

- Forefront and maintain our achievements as No 1 in the world for Development Studies (eight year in a row, SQ Subject Rankings) and further improve other metrics of global recognition (REF 2021; 2 departments in top 100 QS);
- Grow capacity through structured research mentoring, particularly through a) our School's BAME and Women's Mentoring and Coaching Network, b) our 'research buddy' scheme, c) our PRP processes, and d) ensuring mentoring is adapted to the specific needs and career stage of individual researchers, and led by senior faculty;
- Strengthen ECRs' research and knowledge exchange capacity through events, workshops, training and mentoring; communicate opportunities for internal and external funding; collect data on uptake and results; and enhance ECR's integration into the wider research community;
- Expand mechanisms for peer review of publications through Departmental initiatives: such as peer review colleges, research buddies and/or research cluster support;
- Engage closely with our ERAs to continuously review the quality of outputs and impact case studies, with a view to enhance our overall research excellence and maximise 3* and 4* outputs for REF 2029;
- Commit to providing research funding at School level for pump-priming and strategic research development (through the DRaKE Fund and Department level training);
- Connect with research excellence and opportunities beyond the School (across UoS and globally).

2. Research environment and culture:

- Our Director of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion works with a team that supports initiatives focusing on eliminating inequalities, exclusions and discriminations across the School;
- Our BAME and Women's mentoring and coaching network - open to faculty, doctoral

students, ECRs and PS colleagues alike – provides support with research development and career progression, shares information on promotion and DPR processes, and works towards addressing pay gaps by gender, sexuality, ethnicity and ability;

- Develop Department, School and UoS mentoring schemes and research buddy structures;
- Continue and consolidate our daily Collective Writing Sessions, termly writing retreats, and regular information workshops, all of which are inclusive of doctoral researchers and ECRs;
- Strengthen our doctoral and ECR community through dedicated research workshops, training sessions, brown bag lunches and writing retreats;
- Improve understanding of REF processes and assessment criteria on the part of new colleagues, ECRs and postdoctoral fellows;
- Ensure ‘diversity in the workplace’ and ‘bullying and harassment’ training is taken by all;
- Work with ERAs and across the Eastern Arc consortium to learn from other institutions about best practices around fostering a culture of inclusion, diversity and equality;
- Work towards the re-instatement of UoS Chancellors PhD scholarships to enhance funded doctoral research, and towards opportunities for larger internal pump-priming funding for faculty.

3. Equitable partnerships:

- Invest in long-term relationship building as the basis for co-produced research for impact and knowledge exchange;
- Continue to build genuine and equitable partnerships with researchers in the Global South, with an alertness to the need to avoid tokenism and superficial or instrumental collaborations;
- Continue to welcome visiting scholars and doctoral researchers to the School, and consider fee-waiver where possible;
- Develop new opportunities for Global Studies faculty to visit other institutions and organisations with the view to develop research collaborations, including through the strategic use of DRaKE and HEIF funding;
- Develop research collaborations that address the interconnected global challenges and poly-crises that disproportionately impact the Global South, including through research centres.

4. Impact and engagement for social justice and sustainable futures:

- Grow our impact and knowledge exchange capability, giving recognition to forms and frameworks beyond REF, while further enhancing our performance in the latter;
- Continue to invest in dedicated Impact Lead at School level to foster new impact case studies and to assist the development of existing ones;
- Continue the use of the exemplary Global Studies Impact Advisory Board in which a panel of external experts advise on potential impact and how to achieve it;

- Integrate impact, engagement and knowledge exchange in annual PRP meetings;
- Organise regular Department and School Impact Awaydays to share successful REF case studies; circulate and discuss available support for impact; signpost sources of funding for impact, engagement and knowledge exchange; discuss data collection and impact statement drafting; share info on publicity, media and lobbying;
- Provide dedicated support, training and mentoring on impact to ECRs;
- Optimise impact data capturing systems and ways of reporting on it;
- Secure adequate Professional Services support for impact case study development and data capture, replacing lost capacity at School level post-REF 2021;
- Maximise the publicity and impact of our research by optimising our web and social media presence;
- Maintain and enhance a vibrant seminar culture across departments and research centres;
- Support the production of a diverse range of outputs beyond peer reviewed papers and books, such as blogs, policy briefs and social media posts.

5. Interdisciplinarity:

- Our School research centres will continue to play a key role in encouraging and facilitating interdisciplinary research across the University and beyond through the organisation of workshops, seminars and outreach events;
- Ensure ongoing financial and administrative support for University and School research centre activities through our dedicated School DRaKE Fund;
- Circulate and discuss UoS and external funding sources for interdisciplinary research;
- Foster collaborations across the new Faculty through new research culture initiatives, such as the recent successful bid to the UoS Research Cultures Fund;
- Encourage and support collaborations beyond the School and Social Sciences with colleagues and research units across campus and the IDS.

6. External research funding:

- Continue to devote School DRaKE funds for pump-priming pilot research, strengthening research networks, and developing larger and smaller grant proposals;
- Continue to use the School DRaKE fund for supporting ECRs in developing research grant applications, and grow applications from this cohort;
- Encourage and support all colleagues to apply for funding appropriate to the nature of their research and the stage of their career;
- Provide training and mentoring for colleagues by those with a successful track record of raising external research funding, and large, interdisciplinary research grants in particular;

- Routinely share and discuss information about sources of funding, including about funder and schemes with Full Economic Costing;
- Sustain rigorous internal peer review of grant applications prior to submission, including through peer presentations of draft applications and sharing of best practice in grant writing;
- Ensure adequate Professional Services support is available at both School level and University level, especially for the development of large funding bids and impact work.

APPENDIX 1: Global Studies Current Research Environment, further details

1. Research Centres

The School's reputation for transcending disciplinary boundaries and for pioneering research agendas is fostered through a number of world-class research centres. Our research centres encourage exchange and collaboration amongst our community of scholars, visiting fellows, early career researchers, postdoctoral fellows and our 120+ cohort of doctoral researchers. They provide a focus for knowledge exchange and collaboration within Global Studies and across the University, as well as with strategic partners in other universities, governmental institutions, non-governmental bodies, international organisations and the private sector.

The School of Global Studies leads on two University of Sussex **Centres of Excellence**:

- Sussex Centre for Migration Research
- Sussex Sustainability Research Programme

The School houses the following **School-based centres**, which also ramify across the campus, with members beyond Global Studies:

- The Centre for Global Health Policy
- Centre for Cultures of Reproduction, Technology and Health (CORTH)
- Centre for Advanced International Theory (CAIT)
- Centre for Global Political Economy
- Centre for Rights and Anti-Colonial Justice
- Sussex Centre for Global Insecurities Research
- Climate@Sussex
- Sussex Centre for Coastal Research
- Sussex Asia Centre
- Latin America and Caribbean Network

Many of these School level centres have been important in growing grant income and international collaborations. Recent examples from CORTH, include: a Newton networking grant with IDS to study zika mothers and infants in Brazil; Norwegian Research Council funding for collaboration with University of Bergen's centre for excellence in global health; MRC funded research on public health communication; ESRC-funded research on sex selection in the UK; Sussex funding for 'Narrating Blood' etc.

2. Research income

Year	Research Grant Income (£'000)
2018-19	2,490
2019-20	5,450
2020-21	1,307
2021-22	1,122
2022-23	2,556
2023-24 (to March 2024)	3,026

3. REF results 2021

For the next Research Excellence Framework 2029, we will build on our excellent performance in REF 2021, where we achieved the following results across three Units of Assessment:

Anthropology and Development (UoA 22) research was assessed overall as **41%** 'world leading' (**4***) and **51%** 'internationally excellent' (**3***); **92%** was judged as either 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent'; **66.7%** of Impact was deemed 'outstanding' and the remaining **33.3%** as 'very considerable'.

Geography (UoA 14 Geography and Environmental Studies) research was assessed overall as **45%** 'world leading' (**4***) and **49%** 'internationally excellent' (**3***); **94%** was in these top two levels. Regarding Impact, **83.3%** was judged 'outstanding' and the rest 'very considerable'.

International Relations (UoA 19 Politics and International Studies) was assessed overall as **44%** 'world leading' (**4***) and **47%** 'internationally excellent' (**3***), therefore **91%** of our work was assessed as either 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent'. **62.5%** of its research environment was assessed to be 'conducive to producing world-leading research and outstanding impact' (**4***). **100%** of Impact was found to be either 'outstanding' or 'very considerable'.

According to the [Times Higher Education REF 2021 rankings](#), our Anthropology submission was ranked **7th** in the country, and both Geography and International Relations ranked **13th** in their respective subject areas, for the overall quality of their submissions, by GPA (grade point average). Additionally, our Geography impact was tied **3rd** in these rankings, and our International Relations environment was tied in **9th** place.

100% of the Impact Case Studies submitted by the School as a whole were judged **3*** or **4*** star – so 'very considerable', and in many cases 'outstanding'.

Excellence in research in **International Development** is reflected in our **1st in the World** ranking in the [QS World rankings](#) for the last 8 years in a row.

APPENDIX 2: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading on interdisciplinarity alongside excellence in disciplinary knowledge production • Global recognition of Development studies (1st in the World for 8 years in QS) • Global reputation for critical, engaged and agenda-setting research in all our subject areas • Strong and extensive global networks and collaborations for the co-production of knowledge • Excellent 2021 REF results • Leading research centres, including two University CoEs • Diverse, inclusive and supportive research culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources for research communication • Lack of joint-up data capture and data reporting • Lack of support for impact/engagement work and for the development of impact case studies • Lack of resources to support research centres • Large grant capture remains challenging • Research mentoring not equally spread across the School • Research and teaching facilities for Physical Geography under threat from RAAC and generally ageing labs
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to capitalise on our 1st in the World ranking • Opportunity to connect with politics, social work, law, sociology, etc across the new Faculty • Opportunity to link up with other research centres and groups across the new Faculties • Further scope for increasing interdisciplinary funding • Enhance the visibility of our research and connections • Building on increased demand for our expertise • Opportunity to develop consultancy, short courses, etc. • Contribute to, and benefit from, Strategy 2035 (for visibility, networking, funding, etc) • Change of government? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall in student recruitment and its financial impacts on resources for research • Threats to research time because of demands from teaching and admin roles • Lack of internal research support and development funding, including PhD funding, HEIF funding, etc. • Increased competition for available research funding • Short term deadlines of funding calls • Lack of research development support for funding applications • Hostile political environment • Difficulty of furthering humanities and science collaborations outside the new Faculty