

**Institution: Aston University**

**Unit of Assessment: 26, Modern Languages and Linguistics**

### Section 1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

#### Context and structure

The research and impact of the UoA has been transformed since 2014 through the implementation of a set of strategies, structural changes and investments (Institution Level Environment Statement [ILES] 2.3). The UoA comprises staff from the Department of English and the Department of History, Languages and Translation. The UoA sits within the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) which is part of the College of Business and Social Sciences. The academic community has grown by 16% between 2013 and 2020 (Table 1). Through a series of strategic appointments we have expanded our research base from 18.50 FTE returned to UoA 28 in REF2014 to 36.2 FTE in this return (ILES 2.4).

	31/07/2013	31/07/2020
Teaching and Research	28.98	27.60
Research only	1.50	8.80
Teaching only	7.92	8.13
Total	38.40	44.53

Our research draws on a distinguished tradition of scholarship and teaching going back to the 1970s, having pioneered the study of language in contemporary society. In this tradition, the UoA is currently positioning its subject remit within the digital Fourth Industrial Revolution. Our strategic approach is reflected in a number of noteworthy achievements as well as ambitious plans for future development: a decade's worth of strategic support and investment in Forensic Linguistics resulted in a £5.4 million award of E3-funding from Research England in 2019, to further develop this group into a University Research Institute (ILES 2.5). Our strategic and supportive approach to other research areas has also paid off with substantial grants achieved in TESOL, Corpus- and Discourse Analysis, Modern Languages, and Modern History. Current and emerging research focuses include digital humanities, ageing, content and language integrated learning, linguistics in education, and literary linguistics.

Research in the UoA addresses big, forward-looking questions: What is the interplay between new communication forms and societal changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How do digital methods change the way we approach Humanities and Social Sciences? How can our research contribute to solving real world problems? Addressing these research questions has gone in tandem with an expanded, three-pronged impact strategy: i) two School Impact Directors were appointed to coordinate and expand public engagement and impact activities; ii) funding through the University Impact Acceleration Fund (ILES 4.13) was increased; iii) impact was embedded in promotions and study leave criteria (ILES 3.3). This strategy ensures that our priorities are focused on our regional, national and international beneficiaries, in line with Aston's overall strategic approach.

Research in the School is supported through the Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics (AIFL), which is one of only four new University Research Institutes; and through three research centres: the Centre for Language Research at Aston (CLaRA); the Centre for Critical Inquiry into Society and Culture (CCISC); and the Aston Centre for Europe (ACE). All were set up as strategic initiatives in the REF 2008-14 cycle and, with increasing investment by the School, have delivered significantly increased research activity on an interdisciplinary basis (ILES 2.9). They award seed funding, support internal collaborative projects, coordinate external collaboration and develop strategy. With the recent strategic growth of Humanities within the School, an additional Centre will be established in 2021 in the form of the Aston Research Centre in the Humanities (REACH). This will host a sub-group for Digital Humanities which will strategically support growth in this area in a transdisciplinary way, encompassing staff from across Social Sciences and Humanities, Aston

Business School, Computer Sciences, and Law. With its strong focus on digital methods and applied science, the University and School will thus enhance its position as a strong research base to investigate the impact of digitisation on various sectors of the economy and society.

Research in the School is closely linked with Learning and Teaching (ILES 2.4). Scholars belong both to Research Centres and to Departments, which represent organisational hubs for Learning and Teaching, line-management and professional development. Thus, the UoA comprises scholars from AIFL, CCISC and CLaRA, and two of the School's Departments: (i) the Department of English; (ii) the Department of History, Languages and Translation (HLT). Both have recently expanded their disciplinary portfolio: English has extended its remit into teaching and researching literature, and HLT (formerly Languages and Translation Studies) now offers History. In each Department, three new permanent posts were created for these areas through Strategic Investment Funding from the University, complementing existing expertise across the UoA. The School's commitment to its broadening Humanities portfolio led to a constitutive name change in 2020, from 'School of Languages and Social Sciences' to 'School of Social Sciences and Humanities'.

For REF2014, scholars within the two departments submitted together to the MLL panel for the first time. This joint submission gave the stimulus for further integration and growth. Since 2014, the UoA has seen growth of 17.7FTE (96%) and research income of 89% (see sections 2 and 3). With respect to doctoral students, there is an increase in PhD completions of 12% (REF4a), with an additional 23.5 awards made in this REF period comprising students graduating from our distance learning programme, and those who have completed their writing up outside of the UK.

Inter-Departmental collaboration has increased, and the joint appointment of a Lecturer in French and Corpus Linguistics in 2018 has set a precedent for further combined departmental appointments in future. The close relationship between the two Departments increasingly shapes a distinct approach to research, combining (and going beyond) Humanities and Social Science methods to include, for example, computational and digital methods and legal research approaches. This strategy has allowed us to access a wider mix of funding bodies and institutions compared to 2014, awarding an increased number of grants to researchers within the UoA (see section 3). We now engage in more varied forms of multi-, inter-, and transdisciplinary research, with a focus on the analysis of discourses and communicative practices across English and Modern Languages in Forensic Linguistics, and the study of modern cultures, literatures and histories.

The current REF-cycle has seen significant transdisciplinary developments going beyond the School. In addition to Digital Humanities, which straddles four Schools, colleagues working on narratology and cultural representations of dementia are also members of the Aston Research Centre for Healthy Ageing, based in the College of Life and Health Sciences. The Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics incorporates colleagues from Computer Sciences and from Aston Law School, with its Language and Law research stream led by a newly appointed Professor (Devine, F) jointly appointed with Aston Law School. Many of the UoA's researchers publish in more than one language, collaborate as part of international research networks, and act as reviewers not only for Anglophone journals and funding institutions but also for the French-, German- and Spanish-speaking contexts (see section 4).

The following researchers have been included as Category A or B staff in our return UoA 26. Their work falls primarily into the following areas of expertise:

**Applied Linguistics, Sociolinguistics and Translation Studies:** Prof Frank Austermühl, Dr Elisabeth Barakos (ECR), Prof Judith Baxter, Prof Urszula Clark, Dr Erika Darics, Dr Sue Garton, Dr Henry Jones (ECR), Dr Nur Kurtoglu-Hooton, Dr Emmanuelle Labeau, Dr Robbie Love (ECR), Dr Daniel McAuley (ECR), Dr Muna Morris-Adams, Dr David Orrego-Carmona, Prof Gertrud Reershemius, Dr Marcello Giovanelli, Dr Chloe Harrison.

**Forensic Linguistics:** Prof Tim Grant, Prof Jack Grieve, Prof Lauren Devine, Dr Kate Haworth, Dr Krzysztof Kredens, Dr Tahmineh Tayebi (ECR); Research Fellows: Dr Andrea Mojedano Batel (ECR), Dr Emma Richardson (ECR), Dr Marton Petyko (ECR), Dr Lucia Busso (ECR), Dr Sarah Atkins, Dr Felicity Deamer, Dr Emily Chiang (ECR), Dr Leigh Harrington (ECR), Dr Nadia Makouar (ECR), Dr Ria Perkins, Dr Nicci MacLeod.

**Literature, Culture, History and Society:** Dr Abigail Boucher (ECR), Dr Stephen Fay (ECR), Dr Claudia Gremler, Prof Stefan Manz, Dr Raquel Medina, Dr Uwe Schütte, Dr Brian Sudlow, Dr Ilaria Scaglia, Dr Joseph Yannielli (ECR), Dr Volker Prott (ECR).

### Research and Impact Strategy

The four priorities of the Aston University Research Strategy (ILES 2.3-2.8), which was adopted in 2018, are to pursue impactful, collaborative, excellent, and sustainable research. From REF2014 forward, this was developed in part from the School's strategy to ensure a research culture that is interdisciplinary, innovative, responsive and sustainable. Our developing strategies, and their implementation have guided all decisions on staffing, collaboration, funding applications, project development and publication within UoA 26.

A good example is the School's now well-established infrastructure for the promotion of impactful research. This includes funded time for an Impact Director and Deputy Director, and an Impact Steering and Strategy Committee mandated by the School Management Committee to encourage and enable the development of impact from research projects across the School. Through a series of regular workshops and events, the School Impact Committee has encouraged all staff from ECRs to more senior researchers to develop impact portfolios from their research projects, irrespective of whether these have been developed into impact case studies for REF submission. Annual performance reviews, as well as promotion and study leave criteria now give increased weight to academics' impact activities. Within the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Department (RKE) (ILES 4.4) an Impact Acceleration Fund (ILES 4.13) was established which gives financial and organisational support to both emerging as well as more developed impact stories.

This strategic commitment to heavily promote impactful research clearly aligns the School with the University's Research Strategy, and this environment has meant that we have developed a rich portfolio of social and economic impacts regionally, nationally and internationally, from which we have selected and developed four into Impact Case Studies for REF2021. Impact stories that have not been selected this time include:

- work with local schools on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL);
- work with AQA to develop the A-level English Language and Literature syllabus and examination practices and work with post-16 English teacher training nationally;
- a teachers' guide in stylistics, made available to every English teacher in the UK;
- AHRC-funded work with museums in the UK and the US on digital representations of slavery;
- the project 'Promoting German Pop Music Studies in the UK', funded by the German Academic Exchange Service, which engages with artists, the music industry and schools;
- GCRF-funded work on narratological approaches to Alzheimer treatment in Colombia and Cuba;
- work with schools in Kent around the World War I poet Siegfried Sassoon;
- quality assurance for taking evidence to court in forensic speech science, which includes work on a 10-minute rule bill presented to Parliament;
- cooperation with Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust to improve translation of health guidance into community languages;
- British Academy-funded work on translation policy by Basque, Catalan and Galician regional governments.

More broadly, the success of this strategy has included impact stories beyond UoA 26, which again were not selected for submission to the current REF exercise. These include work engaging with policy and media coverage regarding Russian oligarchs living in the UK in UoA 21, and policy work with Hungarian and Central Eastern European governments on international development cooperation in UoA 25. The success of our strategy with regard to impact can be measured in the breadth of our impact generation and therefore goes far beyond those four Impact Case Studies that have been selected for REF submission. Our success is the outcome of policy and environment created over the last 10 years. It is not serendipity.

Throughout the period since REF2014, our research strategy has been operationalised through the consolidation and growth of the Institute and the Research Centres. These have been tasked with the delivery of the following objectives:

**To maintain and increase the quality and quantity of research outputs**

The School has provided annual funding for Research Centre activities which has increased from £2,500 per Centre per year in 2014/15 to £5,000 per annum from 2017/18 onwards. Additional funding totalling £40,000 was invested in the four Centres in 2018/19. The Research Centres use these funds to provide focussed support for the UoA's researchers – including early career researchers, postdocs and postgraduate research students – to publish together, cooperate on research grant applications, organise seminars, workshops and conferences, collaborate on impact and communicate their work within and beyond the University, both nationally and internationally. Centres regularly organise events that are aimed to facilitate cross-disciplinary discussions (ILES 2.10), attracting colleagues from across the University and beyond. CLARA hosted:

- the Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) in September 2015;
- a BAAL-SIG workshop on African Languages in January 2015;
- the biannual conference of the Forum of Germanic Language Studies (FGLS) in January 2016;
- the symposium 'French in Multilingual Urban Centres' in September 2018;
- the annual meeting of Women in German Studies (WIGS) in November 2018.

The Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics (and as its predecessor, the Centre for Forensic Linguistics), has used its funds to organise an annual symposium around an invited distinguished visitor. This has now become an annual event for Forensic Linguists, attracting national and international delegates from academia and law enforcement communities.

Within CCISC, funded events hosted at Aston include, for example:

- an international conference on 'Kraftwerk' in 2015 which was covered by the BBC and the national press;
- the first international conference on Spanish Cinema in 2016;
- the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference 'Discourse, Communication and Enterprise' in 2017;
- the workshop 'Exploring Language: From Genes to Brains to Minds' in May 2019 which brought together specialists from the areas of Biology, Neuroscience, Linguistics and Cognitive Stylistics;
- the conference 'Bodily Fluids in the Long Nineteenth Century' in 2018;
- a conference on 'Cognitive Grammar in Stylistics';
- an 'Unconference day' in 2016;
- a 'Discourse day' in 2017;
- the online conference 'Conceptual Analysis and Thematic Corpora: Theory, Methodology and Indicative Case Studies' in 2020.

The strategic focus on Research Centres has proven to be particularly fruitful in the case of Forensic Linguistics. After ten years of successful work as CFL, with a growing body of

publications, external research funding, completed PhDs, active participation in legal court proceedings and close working relationships with police forces in Britain and internationally, the Centre was successful in obtaining a £5.4 million Expanding Excellence in England grant from Research England in 2019. This award was matched by a further £600,000 investment from the University and recognises the value of Forensic Linguistics at Aston. Its purpose is to build capacity in the area of Applied Linguistics both nationally and globally. This expansion has prioritised employing postdoctoral researchers from across linguistics sub-disciplines and to draw linguists both from within the English Department at Aston, and from further afield, to apply their skills to forensic texts and problems. To this end, intensive programmes of seminars, networking and partnership events, research seed-corn funding and impact acceleration are all being delivered alongside specific projects which will deliver a forensic linguistic text repository as a lasting benefit to the research community.

### **To maintain and increase the quality and quantity of impact**

Growing interdisciplinarity is also reflected in our regional, national and international impact work. The four Impact Case Studies (ICS) of this UoA come from different disciplines, testifying to the fact that there are strong and sustainable pipelines from research to impact across the entire unit. In addition to external funding, all ICSs have received support from the Aston Impact Acceleration Fund (ILES 4.4):

- i. For the first time, the UoA submits an ICS with a historical focus, tackling First World War memorialisation (Manz). Its scope is global, generating impact and transforming memory cultures in five different countries. It was supported by major AHRC impact grants and a period of study leave mostly granted on the basis of impact generation.
- ii. International impact has also been generated by the ICS in Applied Linguistics. This was a Tempus IV project funded by Erasmus+, which has transformed the training of teachers of English as a Second or Other Language in Russia, Uzbekistan and Ukraine.
- iii. The ICS in Forensic Linguistics documents outputs from a decade-long collaboration with police in the ongoing fight against online abusers and includes a highly unusual secondment of a postdoctoral researcher into a police intelligence unit. The collaboration received a commendation from the National Crime Agency recognising the assistance given in an international three-year investigation into an enormously dangerous and harmful abuser of children and young adults.
- iv. The fourth case study has had a wide-ranging regional and national impact, transforming attitudes to the spoken dialect of the West Midlands. Supported by major grants from the Leverhulme Trust and the ESRC, the ICS has contributed towards a more positive regional identity and life chances amongst speakers, as well as shifting negative attitudes amongst non-speakers.

### **To increase external research grants and awards**

In REF 2014, our research income was £1,325,644. This has increased by 89% to £2,510,553 in this REF return. In the seven financial years 2013/14 to 2019/20, grant capture in the UoA has totalled £2,777,916, compared to £1,681,387 in the previous REF period. This will underpin our research income for the next REF period. In addition, in 2019 £5.4m was awarded through the Research England Expanding Excellence in Education (E3) award to the Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics. This research-related grant was one of 13 awarded nationally, from a field of 138 applications. It is funding growth in infrastructure and capacity, including the recruitment of eight independent researchers.

## **Section 2. People**

### **Staffing strategy and staff development**

As well as teaching expertise and quality, our strategic criteria for the appointment of colleagues are excellence in research, their potential for generating impact, and their fit with the UoA's research themes. We have added 17.7FTE to our REF return (96% growth) since 2014, including 18 ECRs who started their careers as independent researchers on or after 1 August 2016. ECRs are supported by the University (ILES 3.9-3.14), and in addition, the School has put in place a

catalogue of measures to support newly appointed colleagues, in particular ECRs, in their research development:

- all newly appointed colleagues are offered mentoring by an experienced member of staff;
- all ECRs who are taking up their first lectureship receive a start-up fund of £5,000 to develop their research portfolio;
- ECRs have a reduced teaching load during their first three years of employment;
- in contrast to other members of academic staff, ECRs can apply for research leave after 2.5 (and not three) years of service;
- an ECR School Forum, led by one of the UoA ECR academics, for mutual support and representation at School level.

Staff in the School have the opportunity to discuss their personal development in an ongoing development conversation with their line manager (ILES 3.8). For all members of staff on a research or research and teaching contract, the development of an individual's research portfolio is a central part of this. To achieve this objective, the School offers research support to academic staff in the following ways:

- all academic staff can access funding for conference travel or other research-related activities. This funding has increased from £400 p.a. in 2014/15 to £1,500 and is now available to all academic staff, including colleagues on fixed-term contracts. In addition, all researchers within the UoA can apply annually for extra funding of up to £350 from the Aston Modern Languages Research Fund (AMLRF);
- all researchers have one day a week blocked in the time-table as their personal research day;
- all researchers can apply for a period of research leave (six months) after three years of service (ILES 3.11)
- financial support to academic staff to aid completion of a research monograph, which as a prestigious output in Social Science and Humanities research is considered a significant stepping-stone towards promotion. The grant is awarded on the basis of a book contract with a publisher;
- up to £5000 (£2500 annually) are provided for academic staff to pay for teaching relief in order to focus on larger-scale grant applications.

The University conducts an annual workshop for grant writing, which runs over a period of six months and is designed to support academic staff to develop, write and submit a significant research proposal (ILES 4.5). In addition to this, AIFL is running a specific training programme for its ECRs focussed on research fellowship applications. The School has developed a peer review process for grant writing, which aligns with the University Policy (ILES 2.13). Each proposal has to be reviewed by two colleagues before submission. For projects by ECRs, these reviewers are experienced researchers with a track record of funding (for the School's infrastructure supporting researchers, see section 3).

The University provides a structured programme of support via its Research and Knowledge Exchange Service (RKE) (ILES 4.5). The RKE runs monthly surgeries and drop-in sessions in the School, organises an annual University wide grant-writing workshop for ECRs and mid-career researchers, and offers bespoke individual support. Dedicated RKE staff include two Strategic Funding Managers (one for SSH, the second with expertise in international and EU funding) and a Grants and Contracts Officer. They advise on all aspects of research funding, from developing new research ideas and finding collaborators, selecting appropriate funding streams, navigating the specific requirements of different funders, and costing the bid (including match funding requirements).

### **Staff Wellbeing**

Aston has a comprehensive suite of Health, Safety and Welfare policies, procedures and guidance which we engage with fully (ILES 3.7): Leave and Attendance (including the Parenting at Aston

Scheme, Flexible Working, and Compassionate Leave); Wellbeing (including EDI, Work-Life Balance, Work-Related Stress and Menopause); all aspects of Working at Aston. Furthermore, AIFL as part of its commitment to ethical research has a particularly strong focus on researcher well-being. AIFL has engaged specialist psychological support (a police psychologist who provides support to the local anti-paedophile unit) who offers group sessions to all AIFL research active members of staff and individual sessions for those specifically dealing with disturbing or distressing research data. This provision has also been opened up to other researchers across the school who may deal with distressing material.

### **PGR students**

Since 2014, 47.5 PGR-students (56% female; 44% male) have completed their PhDs in the UoA, compared with 20.5 in the previous REF period (see section 1, page 2). Currently, 27 PGR students (56% female; 44% male) are supervised by researchers in the UoA.

PGR-students are enrolled on a School-wide research degree programme (MPhil or PhD) overseen by Aston Graduate School (ILES 3.15). The primary contact for doctoral students in the UoA is their thesis supervisor who is a specialist in their chosen field. The student's supervisory team also has at least one associate supervisor. All supervisors receive an initial supervision training by Aston Graduate School in the form of a one-day workshop, with a refresher course conducted at least every three years (ILES 3.16). In collaboration with their supervisors, PGR students keep detailed records of their meetings and of the development of their research planning. In addition, students enter their research training and development activities on a University-wide on-line record system. They also receive guidance from the College's Director of Research Degree Programmes who is responsible for the four core research methods modules taken by PGRs which cover all core requirements of the ESRC. In addition, all students (including distance learning) engage with an annual PGR conference within the College, and a dedicated PGR-Tutor provides pastoral support.

At the beginning of their first year of study, PGR-students and their supervisors conduct a training needs analysis which is the basis for a training programme tailored towards the individual needs of the student (ILES 3.17). The training needs analysis is revisited at the beginning of each of the following years of study. PGR students are required to complete a total of 90 hours of research methods training during their three-year-registration period. In their first year, all UoA students undertake the research methods modules that are aligned with the ESRC core requirements. In addition, they can book training courses offered by Aston Graduate School, an annual programme of training activities aimed specifically at PGR students, including courses on viva preparation, Qualifying Report preparation, academic writing and others. The University's Library Services offer additional training for PGR students, with courses specific to finding and using information, such as advanced literature searching, measuring impact of published articles, EndNote and publishing in journals (ILES 2.15).

At College level, PGR students are involved and supported at every stage of their programme. All the UoA's PGR-students are encouraged to become members of one of the SSH Research Centres. PGR students in the UoA have a personal research development fund of £1,000 to be spent over their registration period (3 years FT/6 years PT) to use for any research development activity, including conferences, fieldwork, summer schools, methods workshops and others. The UoA's PGR students can also apply for additional funding of up to £350 annually to the Schools AMLRF-Fund (see above). The School supports and funds the annual Social Sciences and Humanities PGR students' conference, which is organised and run by PGR-students and supported by the College's Director of Research Degree Programmes. Students have the opportunity to volunteer for the conference organising committee and gain experience in event and conference organisation, issuing calls for papers, and selecting abstracts and panels.

Aston Graduate School together with the Aston Postgraduate Research Student Society and the University's Careers Service runs an annual programme of employability workshops for PGR students. It is also developing a university-wide module on enterprise education to introduce students to entrepreneurial thinking in order to increase employment opportunities. PGR students

are encouraged to take an Introduction to Learning & Teaching Practice course, funded by the University and delivered by the University's Education Team. This course confers associate membership of the Higher Education Academy and counts towards a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning & Teaching in Higher Education, a prerequisite for an academic career as a Lecturer or a Teaching Fellow. Aston Graduate School organises an annual interdisciplinary lunchtime talk series where invited speakers from inside and outside the University present their interdisciplinary approaches to research to PGR-students in an informal environment (ILES 2.10). An annual interdisciplinary PGR-conference jointly organised by Aston Graduate School and a team of PGR students brings PGR-students from across the University together to contribute to a specific topic from their various different disciplines. In spring 2019, the interdisciplinary conference was held on the topic 'Urban/Rural'. In September 2020 this event took place as an online conference under the topic 'Challenges and Resilience'.

PGR students are also encouraged to act as PGR representatives at the College's Research Committee and at the University's Graduate School Management Committee. This is a learning opportunity for students to understand the administration and decision-making process of a higher education institution.

### Equality and diversity

As set out in Aston's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (ILES 3.4) our vision is to create an inclusive environment in which individuals can operate at all levels regardless of their personal circumstances. Within this Strategy the UoA has been working to document and address inequalities with regard to the protected characteristics. The University holds Athena SWAN Silver, and the School received an Athena SWAN Bronze award in 2020 (ILES 3.6). In the self-assessment process preceding the application, working groups analysed staff and student data and reviewed the School's practices and procedures in relation to equality and diversity. The working groups identified achievements and issues addressing barriers to equal opportunities in the School. Since then, activities have been under way to increase transparency and support for colleagues with regard to recruitment, promotion, parental leave, and flexible working (ILES 3.7). With regard to this strategic agenda we recognise both that we have made considerable progress, but also that inequalities remain to be addressed.

The distribution of female and male researchers at Aston University submitting to UoA 26 is detailed in Table 2. At Lecturer and Senior Lecturer level, female researchers form a majority; at Reader level the distribution is equal. Male researchers are a majority among the professoriate, although within the UoA this distribution is more favourable than within the School as a whole, where only 22% of professors are women. The University is committed to increasing the representation of minority groups amongst all staff and students, and *The Guardian* named Aston [University of the Year 2020](#) in recognition of this commitment and our track record (ILES1.2). While BAME staff are under-represented within the UoA (11% FTE), the Equality Impact Assessment conducted in January 2021 indicates that there is alignment between % FTE of BAME staff and output attributions (10%) for this REF return.

	Female	Male
Independent Researchers (10)	90%	10%
Lecturer (16)	50%	50%
Senior Lecturer (7)	63%	37%
Reader (2)	50%	50%
Professor (7)	57%	43%

In relation to research, issues arising from this analysis have been addressed in the following ways:

- Since 2014, 12% fewer women applied for research grants compared to men and women were 5% less likely to submit successful applications. In order to address this issue, the School introduced its first all-female writing retreat at the Bamford Quaker Community in Derbyshire in



May 2018. Ten women from the UoA took part, four of them ECRs, and worked together on research grant applications to the AHRC, the British Academy, the ESRC, the Nuffield Foundation and the Nordic Council of Ministers Art and Culture programme. Since then, further writing retreats for female researchers have been organised but had to be postponed due to Covid-19.

- The analysis of the representation of women and men on major committees in the School between 2015 and 2017 showed that overall, service on various School committees reflected the gender demographic of academic staff with three exceptions: the Senior Management, Research, and Promotions Committees. Measures have since been taken to ensure that more women serve on Research Committee and that men develop a stronger interest in Learning & Teaching, Curriculum Development and Equality & Diversity. As a first step, all chairs of major committees were alerted to the issue in May 2017 and were asked to develop measures to increase the gender balance and reflect on gender-bias in chairing a committee meeting. As a result of this discussion, a half-day training programme on gender-bias in chairing a meeting was held for all Senior Management Committee members by the University's HR department in June 2017. Female representation on Research Committee increased from 21% in 2017 to 43% in 2018. In 2019/20, 47% of members of Research Committee were female. Promotions committee has moved to a policy of strict gender balance.

- For RAE2008, all members of staff who could show four publications for the relevant period were submitted. As a consequence, 90% of female and 91% of male academic staff were included. Preparation for REF2014 was more selective: papers and books were reviewed in a process of internal and external evaluation. 53% of eligible female staff and 71% of eligible male staff were submitted. For this REF return, Aston committed to a 100% submission of eligible staff. Section D of our [Code of Practice](#) sets out our process for selecting outputs, with the peer review process for outputs set out in more detail in Appendix 6. In SSH, two workshops were run for all staff to explain these processes, and those involved in selecting outputs also participated in a comprehensive EDI training session which was developed in conjunction with colleagues at Advance HE. Our selection of outputs took gender, ethnicity and career stage into account and the inclusive nature of our return is reflected in our final Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (conducted January 2021). The EIA compared outputs attributed to all Category A staff (using FTE, not headcount) with those outputs attributed to those with protected characteristics (gender, age, disability and ethnicity). The analysis highlighted no significant effect based on a protected characteristic in any of Aston's Units of Assessment.

Our Individual Circumstances process (Code of Practice, Appendix 7 and 8) was run centrally through RKE, and the unit level reduction (REF6b) submitted for this UoA reflects the high number of ECRs included in our return. In line with our commitment to an inclusive return, all employees who submitted a declaration of individual circumstances were invited to indicate if they would like to be contacted by an HR Business Partner to discuss their circumstances, and any support that they may require. Under the guidance of our Impact Champion (Grant) and Associate Dean Research (Mizen), our EDI approach carried through to our selection of ICS; our four ICS were led by two female and two male authors.

Equality and Diversity is increasingly embedded into all management and administrative processes. Equality and Diversity are set points on the agenda of all meetings in the School including Research Committee. The Equality & Diversity Committee chair is a full member of the School's and College's Senior Management Committees and reports annually to the School Staff Meeting. Since 2017, single sex appointment panels have been abolished and since 2016, unconscious bias training has been made compulsory for all members of staff in the University.

### **Section 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

#### **Income**

The UoA and the School are committed to expanding income generation further by pursuing a six-point income strategy involving:

- i. an internal peer-review system for all applications above £5,000;
- ii. the expectation that UoA researchers who have been granted a period of research leave will develop an application for research funding;
- iii. financial support awarded on a case-by-case basis for researchers to develop more substantial bids;
- iv. supporting ECRs by funding annual grant-writing workshops and grant writing retreats;
- v. use of the University's International Collaboration Fund (formerly called Distinguished Visitors Scheme) to engage visiting researchers as experts in advising on grant application;
- vi. basing applications for research funding in the School's Research Centres in order to encourage cross- and interdisciplinary approaches.

The UoA's staffing strategy has both focussed on enabling more senior colleagues to bid against substantial calls, and also on recruiting and developing promising ECRs, and supporting their capacity to secure external research funding. Although ECRs are generally less likely to secure large grants, the UoA has been able to grow its grant capture, and some of the staff members recruited as ECRs during the assessment period have been successful in attracting external funding (Yannielli, AHRC; Orrego Carmona, British Academy; Fay, GCRF; Calderon Martinez, Brown University International Advanced Research Institutes (BIARI)). We expect our career-development policies to enable many ECRs in the UoA to emerge as high-profile PIs in the post-2021 REF period: the support mechanisms outlined in Section 2 are already having an impact in terms of number and quality of applications submitted by ECRs.

The £5.4m E3 award to AIFL has funded infrastructure development in terms of facilities as well as research projects, notably through the development of a Forensic Linguistic Databank, a research repository for the field. The award also supports structurally important activities such as symposia, practitioner workshops, visiting scholar programmes, and network and seed-corn monies.

Our funding bodies have become more diverse and more international since 2014. Academic bodies include the, ESRC, AHRC, UKRI, the British Academy, the Leverhulme Trust, the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Gerda Henkel Foundation (Germany), the Wellcome Trust, the Brown University International Advanced Research Institutes, the Independent Social Research Foundation, the Society for Latin American Studies, the European Commission the Belgian Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique, and the Association for French Language Studies (AFLS). We have also received awards from a range of charities and policy and consultancy-based funders, testifying to the impactful nature of our research: Communications Headquarters GCHQ, the Defence Human Capability Science & Technology Centre, the West Midlands Police, the Bell Foundation, the Joint Information Systems Committee, the Spanish Government and the British Council.

In addition to the research awards listed above, Applied Linguistics researchers within the UoA have also successfully accessed funding for Learning & Teaching initiatives that have cross-cutting effects in helping to sustain research networks and collaboration. These include successful applications by Garton to the Erasmus +KA2 Capacity Building in Higher Education call worth €200,590. This work is described in detail in one of the four Impact Case Studies.

### **Infrastructure and facilities**

The UoA's research support infrastructure has been remodelled since REF2014, through changes at University, College, School and Department level. In 2016, the University established a dedicated RKE service (ILES 1.3) to enhance research and streamline processes across its three Colleges. Teams within RKE, such as Aston Graduate School (ILES 3.15), the Aston University Research Integrity Office (AURIO) (ILES 2.12), the Knowledge Exchange Team and a group of Strategic Funding Managers (ILES 4.5) support researchers in all aspects of their work. Dedicated staff in the Finance Office support funding proposals and project management.

At School level, the Institute and the Research Centres form the main framework for research and are key to its collaborative, interdisciplinary research environment (see section 1). The Associate Dean Research (ADR, Mizen) has overall responsibility for research in the School. The ADR reports to the Executive Dean (Feiger) and the School's Senior Management Committee, chairs the School's Research Committee and is a member of the University Research Committee. The ADR works closely with the Directors of the Institute and three Research Centres, the Research Directors of the four Departments within the School, with the Director of Research Degree Programmes (DRDP), the PGR Tutor and the School's Impact Champion who are all members of the School's Research Committee. The DRDP deals with all issues related to PGR-students, works closely with Aston Graduate School and represents the School at Graduate School Management Committee. The PGR tutor is responsible for all issues relating to the pastoral care of PGR-students in the School. The Research Directors in the School's four Departments support researchers with peer-review and advise in relation to publications, open access, research integrity, applications for research funding and in developing their individual impact strategies.

A dedicated support team within the School comprises two Research Officers dealing with all research-related issues apart from PGR administration. In addition, AIFL has its own Operations Manager, whose responsibilities include identifying income generation opportunities and liaising with RKE staff (in particular the Strategic Funding Managers (see section 2)). As of 2019, admission and progression of PGR students from across the University are administered by a central team managed by Aston Graduate School. A dedicated officer in the University's Library and Information Service advises researchers on all issues in relation to Open Access (Green and Gold), copyright and Open Data (ILES 2.15).

As a Unit, we undertake research that impacts positively on the real world, and we are supported by the Aston Research Integrity Office for all issues relating to research integrity and research ethics (ILES 2.11 and 2.12). We take seriously our responsibilities to our partners and beneficiaries and have embedded research integrity and ethics in our daily practices. With the successful expansion of forensic linguistic research from July 2019, we needed to address the greater volume of ethically complex research within the School. In July 2020 AIFL received approval for its own Ethics sub-board under the new University structures to approve lower risk projects, and in collaboration with University Research Ethics Committee and Research Integrity Office, develop protocols to enable a process for rigorous ethical scrutiny of such projects. In academic year 2020/21, a further local ethics committee for the College will be established with a similar remit for more general projects.

### **Facilities**

PGR-students from the UoA have access to three open plan offices within the School; in addition, Aston Graduate School provides a teaching room and a PGR-student common room, which includes a kitchen. These facilities were designed to support student well-being and the opportunity for PGR-students across the University to socialise and exchange ideas (ILES 3.15). The AIFL has developed a new research suite comprising offices, a meeting room, a secure data analysis lab with safe storage facilities, and a multipurpose meeting area with a kitchen. The Institute applies an open and integrative approach to all researchers from the UoA and beyond and sees the new facilities as an opportunity to increase collaboration and exchange for both, staff and PGR-students.

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

### **Collaboration**

Collaboration is one of the four cornerstones of Aston's Research Strategy 2018-2023 (ILES 2.1), together with impact, excellence and sustainability. Focused strategic investment ensures that our research and knowledge exchange activities deliver for our beneficiaries both within and outside academia. This approach has permeated all activities across the UoA, for example, Research Centres have prioritised seed funding for collaborative projects; collaboration and co-authoring is emphasised in personal development and promotions.

A potent result of this more strategic approach is the newly accredited Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics. A key element of the E3 bid was the outstanding collaborative strategy of the AIFL in engaging with a range of users and audiences. The University complemented the £5.4m from Research England with an additional £600,000 in order to increase the Institute's contribution to the research base, economy and society. The Institute's beneficiaries include police forces (including the Metropolitan Police, West Midlands Police, Greater Manchester police and a number of smaller more regional forces), the National Crime Agency and Security Services, as well as local councils and the charitable sector (such as the NSPCC). As a Research Centre, Forensic Linguistics at Aston has had a considerable impact over the last ten years in advancing the discipline and generating positive societal impacts such as law enforcement and improving professional practices. As a University Institute, AIFL is now scaling up these impacts both at national and international levels. International partners include universities in the USA, Australia, Spain and Germany, as well as law enforcement agencies in these countries. This is evidenced in the impact case study on assisting police in investigations of child exploitation and abuse.

International collaboration in particular is now conducted in a more coordinated and strategic way. At University level, the former Distinguished Visitors Scheme was replaced by the International Collaboration Fund (ILES 2.9) which helps make international research collaboration sustainable by funding academic travel. Under these two University schemes, our Research Centres have hosted 40 international and national visitors since 2014 from the following countries: USA (10), Spain (7), Germany (7), Canada (3), France (2), Austria (2), UK (2), and one each from Australia, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden. The School complemented the university schemes with a clearer Academic Visitors policy. This sets out the terms for welcoming PGR students and researchers who want to spend a period of time at Aston, attached to an individual colleague within a Research Centre. Like Distinguished Visitors, Academic Visitors have contributed to the UoA's research environment by giving papers in the Research Centres' seminar series and working with PGR-students. This initiative sparked further international exchange. Since 2014, 22 academic visitors from China, UAE, Spain, Sweden, Japan, Italy and Germany have been hosted by researchers from the UoA and their respective Research Centres.

At College level, the newly created role of Associate Dean International (ADI) has provided improved coordination for strategic expansion of our international research partnerships. This role was taken on by the UoA's Prof Austermühl and has generated deeper collaboration such as funded research stays (at Auckland, New Zealand) and joint seminars (with Örebro, Sweden). Taken together, these measures have expanded and deepened national and international collaboration, leading to joint funding applications, academic outputs, and impact generation.

Concrete examples beyond AIFL include:

- Giovanelli's collaboration with Prof Billy Clark (Northumbria) and Dr Andrea Macrae (Oxford Brookes) on the 'Integrating English' project since 2014 has led to a successful British Academy/Leverhulme grant application and to the publication of four joint-authored journal articles and a chapter in an edited book.
- Labeau's cooperation with Prof Anne Dister (Brussels) on the corpus of spoken French in Brussels has resulted in two conferences, two jointly authored publications and three successful funding applications (British Academy; Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique [Belgium]; Délégation générale à la Langue Française et aux Langues de France DGLFLF [France]). A project with Prof Hélène Blondeau (University of Florida) on micro-diachrony was funded by the Modern Humanities Research Association. It was then extended to Prof Mireille Tremblay (Université de Montréal), leading to nine conference presentations and a paper since 2015.
- Manz won a Gerda Henkel research grant to produce a co-authored monograph on the First World War with Prof Panikos Panayi (De Montfort). With Prof Anne Schwan (Co-I; Edinburgh Napier) and a range of public partners he won two AHRC impact grants, as evidenced in the Impact Case Study. He has co-authored articles with Prof Mark Benbow (Marymount University Washington) and Prof Tilman Dederling (University of South Africa), and was appointed a Research Associate at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. For

his AHRC funded Internment Research Centre he brought together an Advisory Board consisting of scholars from the UK, USA, Canada and South Africa.

- Medina's work with Prof Barbara Zecchi (Amherst, USA), Prof Santiago Fouz-Hernández (Durham, UK) and the CinemAgender network resulted in three successful applications for research funding, three conferences and a jointly authored article.
- Orrego Carmona (PI, ECR) and Auster Mühl (Co-I) were awarded British Academy funding, together with Prof Kobus Marais (Co-I, University of the Free State, South Africa) to organise a workshop on African Translation and Interpreting Studies. The workshop at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, was attended by ECRs from across Africa.
- Prott won a grant from the Independent Social Research Foundation, together with Martin Jørgensen (Aalborg University, Denmark), for an international network project on the management of international conflicts in the twentieth century.
- Reershemius has closely cooperated with Prof Evelyn Ziegler from the University Duisburg-Essen (Germany), who is PI of the largest project to date investigating linguistic landscapes ('Metropolenzeichen') for which Reershemius acted as member of the Advisory Board. The cooperation has resulted in two jointly authored publications and three joint presentations at international conferences.
- Yannielli (Co-I, ECR) won an AHRC-grant, together with Dr Christine Whyte (Glasgow), for the project 'Connecting Digital Histories of Fugitive Slaves' under the scheme UK-US Collaborations in Digital Scholarship in Cultural Institutions. This supports international collaboration between academia and a number of museums such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, and the Yale Centre for British Art.

Visiting research and fellowship positions were held at the German Historical Institute Washington DC (Manz, 2015); Université Saint Louis Brussels (Labeau, 2015); University of Auckland, New Zealand (Orrego Carmona, 2020); and the Centre for Teaching and Research in Economics (CIDE) in Mexico City (Calderon Martinez, 2017).

As a consequence of collaboration and high standing in their respective disciplines, members of the UoA were invited on numerous occasions to deliver keynote speeches, conference papers and research seminar presentations both in the UK and abroad. Selected keynote speeches include:

- Clark: Third International Conference on Dialect and Literature (Sheffield, 2016).
- Darics: Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise (Leuven, 2019), The Dark Side of Communication (Aalborg 2019), 20<sup>th</sup> Warwick International Conference in Applied Linguistics (2017).
- Garton: British Council Young Learners Conference (Santiago, Chile, 2017), International Summit on the Future of the TESOL Profession (Athens, 2017), CELP English Language Learning, teaching and Research (Malta 2019).
- Grant: Law, Language and Communication (Casserta, Italy, 2014), E Mag English Language A-level conferences (London 2014, 2017 and 2019), IAFL annual conferences (Guangzhou, China, 2015; and Porto, Portugal, 2017).
- Giovanelli: BAAL/Routledge Cognitive Linguistics in Education (Glasgow, 2018), International Federation for the Teaching of English (Sydney, Australia, 2020).
- Kurtoglu-Hooton: 4th Cukurova International ELT Conference (Adana, Turkey, 2018).
- Kredens: Asian Conference of the International Association of Forensic Linguists (Manila, Philippines, 2016); (In)formative Forensic Linguistics (Madrid, 2014).
- Labeau: Association for French Language Studies (Toulouse, 2018).
- Manz: British Library Graham Nattrass Memorial Lecture (London, 2017); The Aftermath of the First World War in Southern Africa (Pretoria, South Africa, 2018).
- Medina: Lo público y lo privado: Género, compromiso y transgresión entre el siglo XiX y el XXI (Alicante, Spain 2019), Artistic, Cultural, and Social Representations of Aging (San Sebastián, Spain, 2017).

- Prott: Minorities and Self-Determination: 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Post-World War I Plebiscites (Flensburg, Germany, 2019).
- Reershemius: Minority Languages in the Digital Age (Greifswald, Germany, 2018); Multilingual Landscapes: Planning, Policy and Contact. Linguistic Perspectives (Manchester, 2018); launch event of the Centre for Smaller and Regional Languages (Flensburg, Germany, 2014).

#### Contributions to the research base:

Members of the UoA make an outstanding contribution to the various disciplines represented by the UoA. They serve as journal editors and editorial board members, in leadership positions in scholarly bodies, as well as acting as peer reviewers for funders, publishers and journals. This goes well beyond Anglophone academia and includes contributions to research in the French, German and Spanish-speaking worlds.

Members of the UoA have been widely represented among the editorial offices and boards of leading international journals and book series, for example: Giovanelli is associate editor for the journals *English Studies* and *English in Education*. Austermühl is co-editor of the online journal *T21N - Translation in Transition*. He is also member of the editorial board of the journal *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* and member of the advisory boards of the journals *Asia-Pacific Translation and Intercultural Studies* and *Translation Spaces* and editor of the journal's Translation, Globalization, and Communication Technology track. McAuley was managing editor for *Languages, Society & Policy* from 2016-17 and then co-editor from 2017-18. Reershemius is member of the editorial board of *Journal of Germanic Linguistics* (2010 - 2017), *International Journal of Humour Research* and *Niederdeutsches Wort*. Further editorial board memberships include the journals *TESOL Journal and Language Teaching* (Garton), *Discourse, Context and Media* (Darics), *Ampersand* (Clark), *Language and Law/Linguagem e Direito* (Kredens and Grant), *Speech Language and Law* (Grant), and *Revista Internacional de Literaturas y Culturas* (Medina). Advisory board memberships include the journals *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines* (Haworth), *Chronos and Cahiers de Praxématique* (both Labeau). Grant is founding editor of the new Cambridge University Press series *Elements in Forensic Linguistics*, and Manz is a founding co-editor of the publication series *Political Music History*, Göttingen University Press.

Researchers within the UoA have held a number of leadership positions in professional associations during the period since 2014:

- Austermühl: Board of the *European Masters in Translation Network*.
- Clark: Chair and founding member of the *BAAL KALE SIG* (Linguistics and Knowledge about Language in Education Special Interest Group).
- Darics: Vice President for Europe, Africa and the Middle East of the *Association for Business Communication*.
- Garton: Chair of the Standing Committee for Research of the *International TESOL Association* (2013 to 2015).
- Giovanelli: Membership Secretary for the *Poetics and Linguistics Association*; Treasurer for the *Siegfried Sassoon Fellowship*; on the Committee for *Linguistics in Education* (CLiE).
- Grant: President of the *International Association of Forensic Linguistics* (2015 to 2017).
- Labeau: President of the *Association for French Language Studies* (2011-15), currently the organisation's Vice-President for UK Affairs; representative for French Studies at the *University Council for Modern Languages*; Research Support Officer for the *Society of French Studies*.
- Harrison: Treasurer for the *International Association of Literary Semantics* (IALS).
- Manz: Executive Committee member of the *Association for German Studies*.
- McAuley: website officer of the *Association for French Language Studies*.
- Reershemius: President of *Forum for Germanic Language Studies* (2014-2019); section leader for digital media of the *Internationale Gesellschaft für Dialektologie des Deutschen*

- Scaglia: Executive Board member of the *American Historical Association's Coordinating Council for Women in History*; Chair of the *Women in the Society for Historians of American Foreign*.
- *Relations* (SHAFR) Committee (2019-20).
- Sudlow: Executive Committee member of the *Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France* (2015 to 2017).

All researchers in the UoA have acted as peer-reviewers of academic articles, covering a total of 77 journals. Some examples of journal titles include: *Ageing and Society*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Business History*, *Journal of Business Communication*, *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *German History*, *International TESOL Quarterly*, *Journal of European Studies*, *Journal of French Language Studies*, *Journal of Literary Semantics*, *Journal of Romance Studies*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Language and Literature*, *Langue Française*, *Law and Society*, *Letras Hispanas*, *Translation Studies*, *Zeitschrift für Angewandte Linguistik*.

Since 2014, UoA staff have also been acting as external PhD examiners for 40 PGR-students, 23 of these in the UK and 17 at universities in Spain, Germany, Australia and South Africa.

UoA staff actively contribute peer review to a number of research councils and foundations, for example the Leverhulme Trust, ESRC, AHRC, DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), and *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Council).

On the basis of their outstanding achievements and contributions to research, members of the UoA have received a number of prizes, awards, commendations and nominations:

- Garton: awarded Honorary Professorship from Mykolaiv University in Ukraine in 2016; and Honorary Doctorate from Voronezh University in Russia in 2017.
- Giovanelli: awarded the Terry Furlong Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Teaching of English Through Research by the National Association for the Teaching of English in 2019.
- Grant: commendation from the National Crime Agency for his work on an investigation leading to the identification and arrest of a serious online abuser.
- Manz: the monograph 'Constructing a German Diaspora' was named a CHOICE Outstanding Academic Title 2014; he also received a Gold Standard Letter from the AHRC for his 'particularly significant and outstanding contributions to the Peer Review College' in 2019.
- Medina: nominated for the Krasna-Krausz Foundation's Moving Image Book Award in 2019.
- Scaglia: co-recipient of the 2019 Rachel Fuchs Memorial Award of the American Historical Association (AHA) for services to the profession, including mentoring.

### **Contributions to the economy and society**

With impact being at the forefront of Aston's University Research Strategy, contributions by UoA staff have gone beyond their academic disciplines to engage with, and finding responses to, real world problems. In addition to the four impact case studies described in Section 1, national and international contributions to the economy and society were strategically supported by School and University funds and have also attracted external funding. Examples include:

- Calderon Martinez' network 'Paradoxes of Innovation in Latin America', funded by Brown University International Advanced Research Institutes, brought together economists and policymakers from across Latin America to develop pathways to innovation on the subcontinent.
- Castro's project on 'Stateless Cultures in Translation' was funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant scheme (2018-20) and focused on the international circulation of Basque, Catalan and Galician literatures in English translation.
- Darics held workshops for professionals on communication, including for the NHS and the European Speechwriting Guild.

- Fay's work in Latin America on narratological approaches to dementia therapy has been supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund. Together with the Antioquia Neuroscience Group in Medellín, Colombia, he completed a pilot study with patients and will continue his work in Colombia after the end of travel restrictions. In 2019 he was an advisor to a delegation accompanying Prince Charles on a state visit to Cuba.
- Giovanelli has directly influenced post-16 English curricula in schools and FE/sixth form colleges. As Chair of Examiners for A-level English Language and Literature, he has responsibility for curriculum and awarding standards for AQA. Giovanelli was also series editor for the suite of textbooks published by Cambridge University Press which influenced post-16 English teaching (around 40,000 students per year). He co-convenes a blog that disseminates research for secondary English teachers, *The Lang-Lit Lab*, originally funded by AQA and now run in conjunction with *Team English*, a large grassroots movement of UK English teachers.
- Labeau is convening 'Learning through Languages UK' to promote Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). She has secured funding from the Association for French Language Studies, the Association for Modern and Contemporary France (with Sudlow), the Society for French Studies and the University Council of Modern Languages to work with local teachers and organise an online summer school in CLIL.
- Manz was a founding Co-Director (2015-2019) of the Midlands German Network which connects schools and universities in the Midlands with local employers. This has been supported by the German Embassy in London.
- Schütte and Manz were awarded funding by the German Academic Exchange Service for their project 'Promoting German Pop Music Studies in the UK' which builds cultural bridges between Germany and the UK. This is closely connected to Schütte's bestselling monograph on the band Kraftwerk (Penguin, 2019) and related work with the Düsseldorf tourism board.
- Yannielli's work on digital representations of slavery has been funded by the AHRC and connects museums and academia. It engages critically with ongoing inequalities arising from slavery, both in the United States and the UK. A public online event on black lives in British history attracted a worldwide general audience of more than 1,000, testifying to Aston's active engagement with current societal issues.
- Going forward (2021-22), Manz (PI) and Yannielli (Co-I) have been awarded a £99,600 Follow On for Impact grant from the AHRC for their project 'South Africa in World War 1: Digital and Virtual Experiences'.

Researchers in the UoA have engaged extensively with the media, writing comments and giving expert interviews to a variety of regional, national and international outlets. Examples of newspapers, websites, radio and TV stations include BBC, BBC World, CNBC, CNN, Al Jazeera, The Independent, Le Monde, Tagesspiegel, Times Education Supplement, and The Conversation. Shields' interviews on French and European politics, Calderon Martinez' interviews on Latin American politics and Manz' interviews on historical topics have been broadcast by all major international TV stations and seen by millions of viewers. Nineteen Articles by UoA members for The Conversation have achieved a combined readership of 330,000.