



Oxford School of Global and Area Studies Research Strategy 2020-2025 [Updated 2024]

Version history	Change	Date	Notes
V2	Added reference to OSGA Research MPhil in Global and Committee, Area Studies in the 24/11/2024 context Updated OSGA Research Thematic Priorities. Committee, 12/11/2024		

Context and Purpose

Oxford's School of Global and Area Studies (OSGA) forms one of the largest communities of Area Studies scholars in the world with research and teaching programmes dedicated to Africa, China, Latin America, the Middle East, Japan, Russia and Eastern Europe, and South Asia. Additionally, the School has introduced a unique and exciting multi-disciplinary, cross-regional master's programme in Global and Area Studies. The School has consistently been ranked as amongst the top in Global and Area Studies departments globally. It is committed to maintaining its role as an international leader in high-impact, inter- and multi-disciplinary research with a regional and global focus. Furthermore, the School is dedicated to creating strategic partnerships with top-ranked research institutions around the globe to deliver world-leading research that challenges current ideas and theories and explores new ways of understanding and benefitting society.

The research funding environment within the United Kingdom, Europe, and beyond has changed significantly over the past decade. Impact has acquired a significant role in the assessment of national, European and international funds, as well as in the Research Excellence Framework. Funders are increasingly directing resources at specific problem-focused challenges, often in line with UK government priorities. This approach incentivises researchers to work collaboratively in large scale, interdisciplinary and multi-institutional teams to address these challenges and optimise the impact of their research.

The OSGA Research Strategy 2020-25 has been developed with the objective of supporting the continued excellence and expansion of research in OSGA, and ensuring it is positioned to succeed in this shifting funding landscape. The goal is to provide a flexible, theme-based approach to managing the department's research activity which is responsive to funders' priorities, while maintaining the support for foundational and original research in the spirit of Oxford's long tradition of independent scholarship and academic freedom.

Strategic Aims

The objectives of the OSGA research strategy are:

1. to improve the strategic approach to long-term research planning; diversify sources of research funding, and create strategic collaboration with Area Studies institutions internationally
2. to improve research impact planning, monitoring, and assessment, and strengthening OSGA's engagement with external partners and public/communities;
3. to continue to create a stimulating and supportive research environment and research culture for OSGA's research community, with particular focus on early career researchers by improving their opportunities for training, networking, mentoring and career development.

Actions Supporting the Strategic Aims

Strategic Aim 1: To improve the long-term strategic approach to research planning, diversify sources of research funding, and create interdisciplinary and strategic collaborations with Area Studies institutions internationally

Maintain an updated map of the research interests and vitality indicators of the School

Research interests, existing internal and external networks and stakeholders will be surveyed annually through an online survey. The updated map will facilitate bringing together a critical mass of expertise from across the School to:

- Identify thematic priorities of interest emerging from the analysis of research foci in the School;
- Foster collaborative cross-regional and cross-country interdisciplinary research projects to increase the School's participation in large calls;
- Identify stakeholders on which the OSGA research can have an impact with the aim of embedding knowledge exchange and transfer practices into research design from inception.
- Partnering with public organisations and third sector bodies to facilitate initial and interim pathways to impact and;

- Encourage new partnerships, engaging internal/external stakeholders, identifying connections and/or resourcing opportunities to build on-the-ground links.

Increase the number of applications for large collaborative projects

- Keep revitalising the activities of the clusters by defining what they should do, nominating a coordinator for each cluster, and organising targeted events once per term;
- Promoting collaborative research projects involving institutions from the European network launched at the Future of Area Studies conference hosted by OSGA on 31st January 2020.
- Map Areas Studies-focused HE based worldwide and work to create opportunities for networking and collaboration

Strategic Aim 2: Improve research impact planning, monitoring, and assessment, and strengthening OSGA's engagement with external partners and public/communities and research outreach

Create a departmental pathway for impact planning, monitoring, assessment, and dissemination:

- Increase the showcasing of research via institutional communication channels to strengthen the School's public visibility and draw the attention of policymakers, thus enhancing our influence on national and international research, policy, and funding agendas;
- Create a powerful social media presence for School activities, thereby contributing to more evidence-based practice required by funders and REF, e.g. increasing access and visibility of OSGA research in lay language, and publishing regular reports of seminars run within the School;
- Identify impact indicators (and monitoring tools) to measure, track and record the effects (impacts) of research activities

- Foster joint-collection and/or the re-use of data collected by researchers of the school in full compliance with the GDPR data protection rules.

Strategic Aim 3: Continue to create a stimulating and supportive research environment and research culture for OSGA's research community, with particular focus on early career researchers, by improving their opportunities for training, networking, mentoring and career development.

Strengthen early career development:

- Continue to support applications for prestigious schemes from early career researchers (ECRs) in emerging fields;
- Provide mentorship by fostering networking activities among ECRs through cluster activities and training opportunities to facilitate research activities that can generate innovative and collaborative new research projects;
- Support the inclusion of ECRs in the development of the Divisional Research Strategy through established divisional channels;
- Activate a peer-review mechanism within the School for early career researchers both for new grants applications and research outputs;
- Run specific training addressed to ECRs on how to pitch research objectives and results.

OSGA Thematic Priorities

Thematic Priorities emerge from the multidisciplinary and area expertise of OSGA's seven regional centres, and are designed to deliver an innovative School research programme which addresses contemporary global challenges through the development of innovative cross-regional and multidisciplinary approaches. Growing out of a critical mass of expertise in the School, they represent areas of strength in relation to the thematic funding opportunities and agendas of major UK and international funding bodies. The OSGA Thematic Priorities provide a roadmap for strategic actions aimed at fostering major collaborative research projects, research networking activities, and pathways to impact, and enable significant contributions to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

1. Global and regional orders
2. Social and political activism
3. Institutional change
4. Intersectional and gender inequalities
5. Methods: methods and ethics in Area Studies research