



Social Sciences Division Research and Impact Strategy







Social Sciences Division

Research and Impact Strategy

Introduction

Grounded in Oxford's long tradition of independent scholarship and academic freedom, the Oxford Social Sciences Division delivers research that is distinctive in both its depth and breadth. The new Research and Impact Strategy will be integral to nurturing and growing a research culture that is beneficial to all.

The Division represents one of the largest groupings of social scientists in the world. We bring together over 1,000 researchers across outstanding departments, faculties, and schools committed to tackling some of the major challenges facing humanity, such as sustainable resource management, migration, global governance, justice, poverty, and development. Not only do our researchers debate current ideas and theories, but they also explore new ways of understanding and benefitting society. The economic and societal impact of our research is felt globally and puts the Division at the heart of many social science issues and debates.

The quality and diversity of our research also attract over 5,000 talented undergraduate and postgraduate students, allowing us to create an intellectually fertile environment for the next generation of world leaders. The Times Higher Education (THE) University Rankings continue to place the University of Oxford in the top three in the world for Social Sciences, awarding first place in 2022, 2019, and 2018.

A new strategy

First launched in 2015, the Research and Impact Strategy has been updated for 2023 - 2028 to continue to cultivate an effective and successful research culture to support our researchers and underpin their groundbreaking research.

It will act to summarise the Social Sciences Division's efforts to support the full breadth and depth of excellent social science research taking place at Oxford. It will complement departmental research strategies and contribute to the overall University strategic plan.





What does social science look like at Oxford?

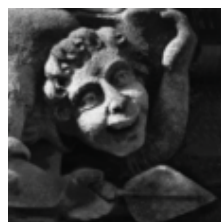
A combination of strands has been used to inform the strategy including departmental foci, the landscapes of funding and impact, and crucially, input from our staff and researchers.

Our Departments

Our academic and research staff are spread across 14 discipline-focused departments and units. These are supplemented by a large cohort of graduate research students pursuing a wide array of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and training pathways.

The Division is also home to the Oxford Martin School which brings together a vibrant community of scholars. Drawn from across the University of Oxford, they focus on pioneering research programmes that cut across disciplines to find solutions to the world's most urgent challenges.

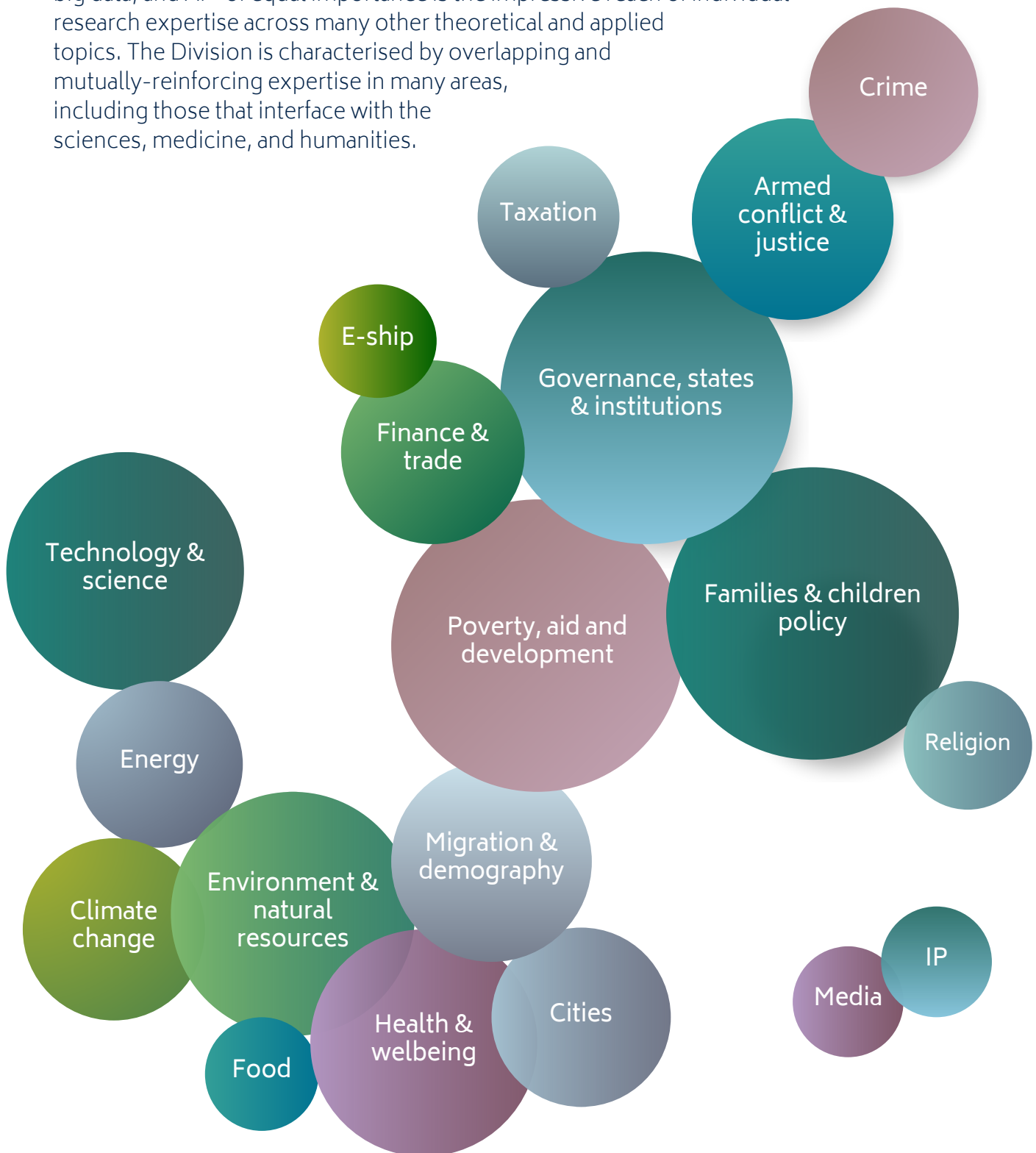
- Department of Social Policy and Intervention
- School of Geography and the Environment
- Oxford Department of International Development
- Department of Politics and International Relations
- School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography
- Oxford School of Global and Area Studies
- Blavatnik School of Government
- School of Archaeology
- Oxford Internet Institute
- Saïd Business School
- Department of Economics
- Department of Education
- Faculty of Law
- Department of Sociology



Visualising our research areas

The Social Sciences Division covers a range of research themes and methodologies. The diagram below helps to visualise the number of researchers working on some of the key subject areas.

While our researchers study some of the big issues of today - including migration, population, public health, economic precarity and resilience, climate change, big data, and AI - of equal importance is the impressive reach of individual research expertise across many other theoretical and applied topics. The Division is characterised by overlapping and mutually-reinforcing expertise in many areas, including those that interface with the sciences, medicine, and humanities.




E-ship = Entrepreneurship

◆ Funding

Funding is an essential part of ensuring a world-class research system. By investing in knowledge exchange, innovation, people, and business, research funders are crucial in supporting the success of future research projects.

Over the last ten years, the Social Sciences Division has secured increasing external research funding, growing from £40 million in 2013/14 to over £59.1 million in 2021/22 with notable funding from the UK Government and UK Charities.



Researchers within the Division have been awarded numerous Leverhulme awards, including several Philip Leverhulme Prizes and two major Leverhulme Centres

Researchers have had sustained success with a range of prestigious early career fellowships and grants. These include those funded by [Research England](#), [UKRI](#), [ESRC](#), [Leverhulme Trust](#), and the [British Academy](#). The Division has also maintained a strong performance with the European Research Council, securing Advanced, Consolidator, Synergy, and Starting grants.

[Read more about our recognised researchers and their projects.](#)

An impressive array of funding has been received for several initiatives and programmes including:

- Net Zero (Allen, Geography)
- Planned global AI Hub funded by Dieter Schwarz Foundation (Oxford Internet Institute)
- Transitions for care-experienced youngsters (Holmes, Education)
- Global Parenting Initiative (Lachman, Social Policy)
- Greenhouse Gas Removal (Hepburn, Geography)
- Local Learning, National Change (Feinstein, Education)

◆ Striving for future success

In order to strive towards the research and impact ambitions of Oxford social sciences, workshops and discussions with researchers and staff helped to identify areas to develop.

Enhancing career stability, carving out realistic research time, and nurturing staff well-being are essential to help researchers flourish. Considering pay rewards, overcoming institutional barriers, and rising to the challenges of the funding environment amidst the difficulties posed by political, economic, social, and environmental uncertainty all need navigating.

The workshops also recognised the importance of nurturing a skilled and experienced professional services staff network to ensure successful research support.

A strategy to take us forward

There is a clear desire to establish Oxford as a uniquely conducive and supportive environment for thoughtful, timely, and critical social sciences research.

By having a divisional level research and impact strategy, a cohesive research culture and common purpose between the departments can grow, enabling the opportunity to further amplify to the outside world what Oxford social sciences can offer.

Guiding principles

The Social Sciences Division has a team dedicated to Research, Impact, and Engagement (RIE) support for researchers. The strategy provides prioritisation and guidance for the team in planning their activities, while complementing departmental research strategies and contributing to the overall University strategic plan.

The strategy acts to summarise our efforts, especially after the hiatus caused by the Covid 19 pandemic, to:

- Support the full breadth and depth of excellent social science research
- Address equality, diversity and inclusion issues
- Nurture our researchers
- Encourage significant interdisciplinary research initiatives
- Ensure our research has meaningful impact at local, national and global scales

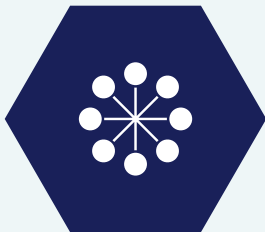


Our overall strategic aim is to...

...maintain the division's world leading status in terms of research and impact by demonstrating the value of social science research in addressing global challenges and enhancing and diversifying research funding through supporting departments with information, resources, advocacy and activities.

To achieve this, there are five objectives to...

... support our departments and units to build a cohesive, diversified and well-funded social science research community. These are:



Nurture, and help diversify funding for, strategic research activities



Strengthen engagement and innovation with external partners to enhance research impact



Support researcher career pathways across the spectrum from postgraduates to senior academics



Advance integrity, ethics and openness in research and impact



Support departments with strategic research and impact planning





◆ Our commitment

Over the next five years, we will endeavor to support our researchers to achieve their research goals.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) considerations will underpin and cross-cut all five objectives.

Through the Research and Impact Strategy, we are committed to increasing the diversity of the people, scholarship, and teaching across the division, and ensuring that each member is, and feels, valued, listened to, and respected, able to be themselves and to participate fully in the life of the Division. We will work closely with the Divisional EDI Panel to ensure that our activities support their evolving strategic goals.

Launching the strategy and evaluating our progress

To make sure that the strategy moves from words and aspirations to actions and improvements, we will ensure that the five pillars of activity are monitored and evaluated.

The Research, Impact, and Engagement (RIE) team will work alongside the academics serving as divisional advocates to monitor each of these pillars under the stewardship of the Associate Head for Research. Actions will be planned, costed, and undertaken on annual cycles with the aim of ensuring that all actions make a positive difference to our researchers and departments.

We will evaluate the progress and success of our actions against the objectives and aims through annual reviews by the Divisional Research Strategy Group.

Progress towards enhancing equality, diversity, and inclusion for our research, impact, and researchers will be monitored by the Divisional EDI Panel. Activities will be reviewed on a rolling annual basis and will consider the evidence of the costs/ benefits of each action and how they have contributed to the Divisional EDI goals. The Panel will be able to identify improvement opportunities and suggest new actions where appropriate.

[Visit the Research and Impact Strategy webpages for the latest detail and information.](#)







**Social
Sciences**

Visit <https://www.socsci.ox.ac.uk> for more information