
RETAINING RESEARCH & POLICY STAFF

Updated and elaborated position on maintaining the equal standing of Research and Policy Staff
under the Academic Annex

LSE Branch of the UCU
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I. INTRODUCTION

This document was produced as an addendum to a negotiating paper submitted to the School by the Branch's negotiating team in April 2025 for consideration in an ongoing series of Extraordinary JNCC meetings on revisions to the Academic Annex. This version has been very lightly edited to redact potentially sensitive information, to clarify points that may have read confusingly without context, and to correct minor errors and typos.

This document outlines the current position on research and policy staff of the negotiating team of the LSE Branch of the University and College Union (UCU). The document expands on our earlier position paper that was sent to the School side in November 2024 and sets out what the Union side considers to be the most important elements of a policy on research and policy staff retention. This document also responds generally to the School side's subsequent proposals, including a draft document prepared by the School side as a paper for the 24 March 2025 EJNCC meeting that outlined mainly existing policies and some proposals for retaining research and policy staff.

Our overarching position remains to (a) retain the existing Academic Annex redundancy procedure and equal standing of all academic staff currently covered under the Annex, including research and policy staff, subject only to amendments that are required by law or that enhance the employment and academic freedom protections of academic staff; (b) ensure consistent application of the Annex procedures (and any agreed revised procedures) to all covered staff categories; and (c) develop systems that support and enable the equal standing under the Annex redundancy procedure of all currently covered staff categories to mitigate the need for its use.

In this document, we outline approaches to more effectively tackle casualisation of research and policy staff that we believe will lead to more stable research careers and sustain high-quality research outputs, benefiting both staff and the School. Next, we lay out what we consider to be the most significant provisions of a policy for proactive redeployment and career planning, followed by what we consider to be the case for offering (limited) student fee-funded work to support research staff retention. We then explain our view on the importance of achieving job security for research and policy staff and for specifically ensuring full application of academic freedom safeguards as in the Annex. We then highlight some of the current challenges research and policy staff face at LSE in pursuing greater job security, demonstrating some limitations of existing policies summarised in the School side's draft document from 24 March. In the Appendix, we provide case studies of good practices at other universities and research institutes that illustrate some of the options available to ensure more stable employment and stronger academic freedom protections for research and policy staff, which should enable their equal standing under the Annex.

We understand that implementation of policies for realising the goals of our position, and any commitments made in accordance with our claim, will take time. Providing stability for research and policy staff also requires a culture shift. We are committed to working with the School to ensure the smooth management of this transition and to develop solutions where complications may arise.

While this paper focuses on Research and Policy Staff in line with the Academic Annex negotiations, we wish to note our belief that all staff employed in similar 'externally funded' posts should, where relevant, be covered by the same principles and proposals outlined in this document (or similarly appropriate policies adapted to local circumstances). We are committed to working in partnership with the School side, as well as with the other joint trade unions, to ensure job security for all staff categories at LSE.

II. OVERARCHING POSITIONS

The Branch requests that the School commit to a statement and principles on tackling casualisation with particular attention to enabling the equal standing of Research & Policy Staff under the Academic Annex. We propose a commitment worded along the lines of the following, which contains overarching principles / approaches we consider essential to a successful retention policy.¹

LSE values and celebrates its researchers, including all Research and Policy Staff as part of the academic community and their contributions to the institution's core mission and values. It also acknowledges their equal standing and significance alongside staff on other academic career tracks, including the New Academic Career and Education Career Tracks. The School wishes to ensure that research and policy staff are supported, trained, and enabled to fully participate in the School community. The School supports the principle that research and policy staff should be employed on secure employment contracts with appropriate career progression and full enjoyment of academic freedom. To that end, the School agrees to the following:

1. We will work with the UCU to implement policies that improve the security of employment of research and policy staff, with a view to breaking the link between an individual job and a specific piece of grant or other funding. This will include exploring a pooled resourcing model and transferring research and policy staff to genuinely permanent contracts not linked to limited funding periods.

2. We will move to a situation where genuine permanent contracts are the norm, reducing the use of both fixed-term contracts and open-ended contracts that are 'subject to funding' with an identified redundancy risk date, which are functionally similar to, and often experienced as, fixed-term contracts. We will agree to a target with our local UCU branch for such a transition within the next 12 months with a view to aligning with any final agreement on amending the School's Academic Annex through the currently ongoing series of Extraordinary Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (EJNCC) meetings. In the transitioning period, we will ensure that when issuing new employment contracts or extending existing contracts/funding commitments, any fixed-term contract or the time before an 'at risk' date in an open-ended-subject-to-funding contract is no shorter than 24 months, other than in agreed instances, such as parental leave cover.

3. We will work to reach agreement with UCU on a policy on the use of fixed-term (and open-ended-subject-to-funding) contracts that avoids use of such contracts other than in agreed, specified, and time-limited circumstances, e.g. for parental leave cover.

4. We will work with UCU to agree processes and put systems in place that support the continuity of employment and minimise the risk of redundancy at the end of a funded research project or at the end of a funding commitment period, thereby eliminating any perceived need to amend the Academic Annex to remove the application of associated redundancy procedures from research and policy staff or from staff employed on particular types of contracts. Such systems should include: proactive and meaningful redeployment, including the potential for redeployment across career tracks/staff categories; active bridge funding, including during periods of developing funding applications or waiting on decisions from funders; fair and stable options for limited amounts of teaching and other student fee-funded work; strategic planning in generating and allocating philanthropic funding; strategic usage of available financial resources including new or growing revenue streams; extended notice periods; and, as a very last resort, redundancy through the Academic Annex procedure, with an assurance of enhanced redundancy pay. These approaches will include specific provisions for staff who are pregnant, taking maternity leave, taking adoption leave, or taking shared parental leave during their redundancy protection period. These approaches should be integrated and should feed into an overall commitment to improving the security of employment of research and policy staff with a view to breaking the link between an individual position and a specific piece of funding.

5. We will work with UCU to create development opportunities and secure career paths for our research and policy staff with a view to retaining their current equal standing with other academic staff categories under the Academic Annex.

¹ This proposed text is adapted from the UCU [Research Staff Manifesto 2025](#).

III. IMPORTANT PROVISIONS FOR A POLICY OF PROACTIVE REDEPLOYMENT AND CAREER PLANNING

We consider certain provisions to be important for the redeployment and career planning aspects of a new policy for retaining research and policy staff.² For the purposes of (especially) this section, Research Assistants (band 5) should normally be treated as 'research staff'.³

RESPONSIBILITY FOR AVOIDANCE OF REDUNDANCY

The avoidance of redundancy is the responsibility of the employing institution. The policy developed according to these provisions should be linked to the School's general policies on redundancy (which is and should remain, in the case of research and policy staff, the same procedure in the Academic Annex as is applied to other covered staff categories) and redeployment. The policy should focus on measures to minimise the risk of redundancy for research and policy staff.

FORMATION OF CLUSTERS

Researchers with common research interests/themes should form 'clusters' or networks around these themes. Researchers may fit into multiple overlapping themes and could join more than one cluster. Clusters should mainly be 'virtual' across the School rather than co-located in the same Department/Centre/Institute,⁴ given the interdisciplinary character and social sciences core of the School. Clusters could accordingly be organised along empirical (e.g. sustainable development), [sub]disciplinary (e.g. international political economy), or theoretical or ontological/epistemological lines (e.g. social constructivism) lines. The process of forming appropriate clusters could be both bottom-up and top-down: staff should be largely free to conceive of and form clusters around shared, coherent research interests where there is sufficient demand; such efforts could also fruitfully be orchestrated by the Pro-Vice Chancellors for Research and Faculty Development.

Clusters should organise regular seminars during work time to permit staff to share research results and develop their careers. This approach complements existing research clusters and seminar groups across the School and could be grafted onto these structures. Clusters could also include NAC staff who have common research interests, and these staff should be incentivised to join clusters and encouraged to strategise to incorporate research and policy staff into their funding applications to the greatest possible extent, where suitable.

The aim of research clusters should be to:

- i. provide opportunities for joint fundraising activities and grant applications;
- ii. develop research programme themes; and
- iii. manage multiple successful project bids with staff, facilities, and estates (as appropriate) following the research.

Particular attention should be directed towards individual research and policy staff expected to act as PIs for the first time and towards integrating PIs who may not be part of a formal research group into research clusters. Attention should also be paid to early career research staff who may be less likely to win grants as PIs and to ensuring that they are provided with opportunities to develop their own research identities while remaining supported as part of a team and/or cluster.

ENHANCED CAREER DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Individual research and policy staff should be supported in elaborating and developing a 'research skills record' (RSR) alongside their academic CV. The RSR should summarise their current skills and

² The proposal is adapted from UCU's Model Policy of Proactive Redeployment and Career Planning for Research Staff in its 2024 *Challenging Redundancies guidance* (p. 37), which is itself based on a claim the unions submitted to employers in 2009.

³ The Union side understands that some Research Assistants (and potentially some PSS) are more specialised or generalist than others and that different arrangements may be needed to support their retention. In principle, these staff should normally be permitted to align with research groups and clusters where they wish to do so and included in the redeployment model wherever feasible.

⁴ In this document, we have attempted to be clear in stating whether we mean Centres, Departments, Institutes, or some combination of the three unit types. Where we refer only to one (usually Centres) and the point could apply to staff based in another type of unit, we assume it is understood that our point still applies, *mutatis mutandis*.

specific project contributions and experience; identify research groups or clusters into which they could be transferred more easily should the need or opportunity arise; and identify continuous professional development needs.

To support these aims, research and policy staff should be supported in meeting informally and participating in research seminars with staff in other research groups, including in other Centres/Institutes/Departments and in other staff categories (e.g. NAC), whether part of a shared cluster or not.

The RSR is additional to teaching experience and the development of skills outside of research activities, in line with applicable standards such as the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The RSR should be reviewed annually, possibly as part of the CDR process.

FUNDRAISING AND WORKFORCE PLANNING

In the absence of a named researcher for a specific position on a project, research staff should be budgeted in grant applications as high as possible, ideally on the top non-discretionary point of the relevant grade, to better facilitate redeployment.

Where feasible and appropriate, successful project bids could be delayed in order to maximise continuity of employment of staff. The possibility of delay should be discussed with affected researchers and within the relevant cluster(s) with the announcement of the successful bid.

When staff are allocated to a project, the following order of priority should normally apply:

- i. named staff in the original grant proposal
- ii. research staff in the same research unit/team
- iii. redeployees on any redeployment register
- iv. research staff in the cluster or department/centre/institute
- v. external applicants.

Human Resources should be responsible for ensuring posts are not advertised externally until all relevant internal applicants have been considered and that processes of fair competition at each level of priority are maintained. Trial periods in line with the current redeployment policy should normally be offered, with the right to withdraw on either side, particularly for (iii) and (iv) above.

Consideration should be given to innovative approaches to deployment and redeployment of research and policy staff to avoid potential redundancies. This could involve moving staff to different teams or projects (with their agreement) to create a vacancy in their original team or project, which could be used for another researcher whose current funding or project is coming to an end. By pooling resources across School-wide research activities, it should also be possible to fill partial positions (i.e., where a project needs research staff support but may not require – or may not have budget space for – a full-time researcher).

While it is understood that research staff should show flexibility in taking on projects or joining new teams, efforts should be made to ensure that researchers are able to continuously develop an individual research identity based on their own interests and ideas. Efforts should be made to ensure that the prospect of redeployment does not hinder research and policy staff from pursuing blue skies funding applications and designing their own projects. Research and policy staff should also be encouraged and supported in developing funding applications with external co-applicants, including outside the UK.

UNDERWRITING AND REDEPLOYMENT

The aim of the proactive redeployment and career planning policy should be to avoid redundancy of research and policy staff, as well as, where relevant and feasible, other staff who may be funded by 'external' income who are not named in the Academic Annex.

Funding could be provided by pooling resources across research activities, especially on a School-wide (or cluster-wide) basis, which may require a reordering of the current model of deducting contributions from grants.

In the case of a shortfall of funding affecting grant-funded positions that are not covered under the Academic Annex, or where the affected member of staff has less than two years of service [or any lower minimum qualifying period to claim an unfair dismissal], we believe that a minimum period of six months' underwriting at a time should apply to all potentially affected staff with over one year of service (or any shorter statutory minimum qualifying period before the right to claim an unfair dismissal). During this period, the staff member(s) should be placed on the redeployment register in the institution and should have a prior claim to suitable posts. This position is a potential starting point when developing procedures for research and policy staff; we acknowledge that adapting the policy to cover Research Assistants and Professional Services Staff will need to be developed with the joint unions.

The appropriate redundancy procedure as specified in the staff member's employment contract and/or the School's constitutional documents should always be followed, with a view to the School genuinely putting its mind to creating redundancy pools of candidates doing the type of work that the School is reducing rather than selecting solely on the basis of funding. We appreciate that it is necessary to adopt a nuanced approach to ensure that staff who successfully win funding are not generally penalised when insufficient funding is won by other staff. We also understand that some staff are named on a grant for which funding would not be transferable to other staff if they were made redundant. We are optimistic that enhanced approaches to financial management, workforce planning, strategic fundraising, and redeployment can avert most redundancy situations, mitigating any such concerns.

For staff covered by the Academic Annex whose service exceeds any minimum qualifying period to claim unfair dismissal, Council may feel it is 'desirable' to initiate a redundancy proceeding under the Academic Annex. It is anticipated that compulsory redundancies will be mostly unnecessary, and pooling of resources and strategic workforce planning could ensure continued funding for staff during any such process and any associated appeals process and/or subsequent notice period. Where necessary, underwriting should apply to all affected staff for the duration of the Academic Annex procedure and during any further appeals process and/or subsequent notice period. We note that the Academic Annex procedure includes efforts to avoid any redundancy. The staff member should be placed on the redeployment register and have a prior claim to suitable posts as indicated above.

Serious consideration should be given to more routinely ensure a prior claim to posts across staff categories. In any potential redundancy situation, efforts should be made to identify the staff members' willingness to migrate across staff categories/career tracks in a possible redeployment and to determine their suitability for such roles, e.g. where they possess relevant experience from other employers. It is already permissible and relatively common to shift from the research to the policy track (not necessarily as redeployment during a redundancy process), especially in cases where the staff member has prior experience of policy work. NAC positions are likely to be suitable alternative employment for research staff who hold a PhD and teaching experience/qualifications, especially where the move is lateral (across equivalent title/band). The same could in some cases be true for ECT positions, especially if the research staff member has extensive prior teaching experience. Such redeployment opportunities should be identified by truly bearing in mind that a role can also be suitable where a redundancy candidate could reasonably acquire relevant skills.

Consideration should be given to staff members' full experiences and qualifications in relation to the essential qualifications of individual posts, including at different grades across tracks. For example, some Research Officers have extensive policy experience. They may not have the publications for a higher-graded position on the research or NAC tracks but could potentially be redeployed to a more senior policy role, which has happened in practice (e.g. staff migrating from Research Fellow to Distinguished Policy Fellow at the Grantham Research Institute). Research Fellows should be able to be redeployed into the NRSC or NAC tracks, bearing in mind that the position parallels the former Lecturer position, and in 2015/6, most then extant Research Fellows were migrated into the NRSC as Assistant Professorial Research Fellows.

CONSULTATION AND MONITORING

Reporting mechanisms should be developed to ensure that any (unrecoverable or long-term) reductions in funding in a particular area and, therefore, numbers of staff at risk of redundancy and placed on the redeployment register will be reported to senior management and the trade unions in sufficient time to permit collective consultation to avoid the redundancy of staff. If a Research and Policy Staff Redundancy Committee were ultimately created and agreed, as the School side has proposed, notification to and consultation of the trade unions through that Committee could be appropriate. These mechanisms should, where applicable, complement (and may exist within) the procedures outlined in the byelaws of the Academic Annex.

The unions will reserve the right of any of their members to challenge their redundancy and to object, through applicable grievance or appeals procedures, to any failure to follow this policy fairly. The appropriate procedures for challenging the redundancy or filing a grievance or appeal will be those outlined in the Academic Annex for research and policy staff.

The implementation of the policy should be monitored jointly by the School and the relevant trade unions, including for discrimination (whether direct or indirect) on the basis of a protected characteristic.

The School and the unions should recognise that this policy will represent a major cultural change in the way that research and policy staff are currently managed and deployed, and they should recognise the positive impact that these changes represent for research and policy staff and on the research and impact activities being carried out.

IV. STUDENT FEE-FUNDED WORK

We have noted in this document that one path to more stable research and policy staff careers could be through teaching and other student fee-funded work (e.g., supervision of MSc or PhD dissertations; marking of exams and dissertations). This section focuses on this option for supporting research and policy staff retention, which might require a standalone policy.

Many research and policy staff at LSE already engage in student fee-funded work. They are meant to discuss teaching and supervision in their annual CDR, and they are asked to describe contributions to teaching and supervision at the School in applications for promotion. Provided this type of work normally continues beyond the end dates of specific pieces of 'external' funding, it is not appropriate that research and policy staff who do (or are willing to do) it should face automatic redundancy when a stream of grant funding ends.

The option to engage in student fee-funded work should remain that: an option. Significantly changing role profiles and increasing workloads is **not** what we are seeking. We are instead acknowledging that **a practice of using research staff for this type of work already exists** and could be **formalised to enhance retention**. We believe **research and policy staff could be more systematically offered and assured of this type of work to cover their salary costs**, as is done at some other institutions, and that this should result in greater job security. **The amount of student fee-funded work that research and policy take on should also be limited to ensure this is not their main function**, especially as they are not provided associated career development benefits like sabbatical leave. We are open to discussing appropriate limits; we imagine as a starting point that student fee-funded work perhaps should not normally exceed 0.2 FTE.⁵

We currently lack data on student fee-funded work carried out by research and policy staff. We request that the School side provide the following information for each of the 2022/23, 2023/24, and 2024/25 academic years:

- How many research and policy staff engage in teaching, marking, or MSc/PhD supervision as part of their normal research or policy staff contract and salary? Please separately break these data down further by type of activity (teaching; marking; supervision).
- How many research and policy staff engage in teaching, marking, or MSc/PhD supervision on separate contracts or as overtime or additional pay? Please separately break these data down further by type of activity (teaching; marking; supervision).
- What are the total (cumulative) and average (normalised by number of research staff) numbers of hours as *remunerated/contracted* that research and policy staff contribute to student fee-funded activities at the School each year, both overall and under the distinctions outlined above (i.e., as part of their ordinary contract, or as a separate contract or payment)? Please separately break these data down further by type of activity (teaching; marking; supervision).
- What are the total (cumulative) and average (normalised by number of research staff) numbers of hours as *contact/lecture hours* (i.e., calculated time that the work actually takes) that research and policy staff contribute to student fee-funded activities at the School each year, both overall and under the distinctions outlined above (i.e., as part of their ordinary contract, or as a separate contract or payment)? Please separately break these data down further by type of activity (teaching; marking; supervision).

⁵ It could *potentially* be acceptable for research and policy staff to take on extra student fee-funded work in limited and well-regulated circumstances – for example to provide last-minute emergency cover, to temporarily bridge their own projects, or where there is a strong research overlap with supervision.

- How many research and policy staff have done some form of student fee-funded work in more than one consecutive academic year over the past five years? Please separately break these data down further by type of activity (teaching; marking; supervision).
- For the above, please provide a separate breakdown of all data by research staff and by policy staff. If possible, please provide a further (additional) breakdown of data by job title within each category (e.g. average number of hours taught by Research Officers), or at least by NRSC/non-NRSC within the research staff category.
- For comparison, please provide information on the average teaching, marking, and supervision allocations of NAC and ECT staff.

Where we write 'as part of their normal research or policy staff contract and salary', we are referring to work that was not carried out under a separate employment contract (e.g. as a Guest Teacher) and for which the staff member did not receive additional pay but instead had part of their salary covered with funds allocated by a Department/Institute teaching budget or directly by the central School.

These data would be very helpful to get a clearer picture of the present situation, but we are already aware of numerous examples. It is common for research and policy staff to **supervise MSc dissertations**, especially in certain Departments (e.g., Grantham Research Institute and the Geography & Environment Department). Some research staff **(co-)supervise PhD students**. Many research staff also **mark MSc dissertations and other exams**. It is often unclear to the staff doing this work how they are compensated if they are employed in Centres. We believe degree-administering Departments normally transfer funds to Centres, resulting in 'buyout' of researchers' time, but we are also aware of cases where this work is compensated as a one-off additional payment or as part of a separate contract.

Other 'citizenship' activities of research and policy staff enhance the academic life of the School for students but are not supported by relevant, stable funding streams. For example, the Grantham Research Institute hosts a seminar series at which attendance is required of many Geography & Environment PhD students. But the research staff who devote significant time to planning the seminar programming are not supported by student fees and have no path to permanence. It is also very common for research and some policy staff to give **guest lectures** for courses in Departments, normally without any additional compensation or 'buyout'. Guest lectures provide high-value contributions to core education services at the School, sometimes at considerable expense to researchers' personal lives. We are aware, for example, of a member of research staff playing a lead role in **organising** a Cumberland Lodge weekend and of other research staff lecturing at these weekend programmes.

Many research staff who teach classes, seminars, and lectures are compensated on separate zero-hours contracts as a Guest Teacher. **Some research staff, however, arrange significant teaching as part of their normal employment.** We have received reports of cases of research staff who are based in a Centre and have **as much as 0.3 FTE funded by teaching in a Department as 'buyout' under their ordinary contract.** Some of them even report acting as course convenors. Some Centres encourage research staff to seek out such opportunities such that **teaching will be treated as 'grant income'**. This effort to drive research staff job security is commendable, but it **needs to provide more certainty and fairness:** if a Centre eventually does not choose, or is unable, to allocate additional funding to the researcher, then the researcher may have lost valuable research time to teaching, saving the Centre money to the detriment of their own CV with no job security in return. Yet, **this model clearly provides stable streams of funding to support more permanent positions and equal standing under the Academic Annex.** Such *ad hoc* arrangements partially resemble joint appointments between Centres and Departments found at other universities (see Appendix), but they warrant the same

security and academic freedom safeguards those types of positions afford. We believe it is therefore desirable for both the School and Union sides to normalise and better regulate this option.

There are many potential **benefits to the School** from adopting a system that normalises allowing limited student fee-funded work to contribute to research and policy staff permanence. **Research and policy staff have significant subject area expertise and impact experience that will enrich students' educational experiences** and offer a diversification of perspectives in LSE classrooms. This work does not need to and should not replicate or undermine NAC positions. Significantly, **research and policy staff offer much needed agility in delivering the School's educational services**. Research Centre staff are especially likely to be familiar with multiple disciplines and interdisciplinary scholarship, allowing them to **easily adapt to needs that arise across various Departments**. This could **significantly increase flexibility to fill crucial teaching and marking needs** relative to that currently afforded by the Guest Teacher and LSE Fellow models. We know of numerous research staff delivering student-fee funded work across Departments already, for example by supervising dissertations in one Department, marking dissertations in another Department, and teaching in a third Department – usually in exchange for one-off payments. Research staff could potentially, and sometimes do, **take on a larger share of supervision and marking** than many NAC staff.

Research and policy staff offer a good financial deal for the School. They are not provided sabbatical leave, and we are not suggesting that they should be allocated sabbatical. They do not currently receive individual research funds from the central School budget. At present, most research and policy staff do not even have a private office. Their teaching, marking, and supervision work comes at a significantly reduced cost to the School compared to NAC staff because it does not need to generate sufficient income to cover these costs. It is therefore fair that research staff doing a limited and regulated amount of student fee-funded work are provided a path to permanence.⁶

Effective workforce and resource planning in this area could also go a long way towards **decreasing casualisation** in other staff categories, thereby **boosting the School's prospects for the REF 2029**, which may include indicators on casualisation. With a stable pool of research and policy staff to contribute more systematically to student fee-funded work, Departments could over time become less reliant on Guest Teachers and LSE Fellows, which would also reduce the reputation and legal risks associated with high levels of casualisation.⁷

One potential option could be for Departments to create **registries of teaching needs** that allow research and policy staff to 'bid' for available work. We would want to ensure that the process of 'bidding' was fair, accessible, and able to provide consistent recurring work from term to term, where amenable to the Department and the researcher. It would also need to be designed to ensure that staff with higher salaries are not routinely locked out of opportunities where they would pose higher costs to a Department, and that junior staff are not forced to take on excess workloads. By having a pool of interdisciplinary research and policy staff who can be relied on to consistently take on work, **Departments might save time and administrative resources** currently spent trying to cobble together rosters of supervisors, guest teachers, and markers every term.

Despite all these benefits, we acknowledge and take seriously that **any student fee-funded approach to enhancing job security for research and policy staff comes with challenges**, but the Union side is committed to **partnering with the School to develop workable solutions**. It is also understood that student fee-funded work may provide a less viable route to job security for most policy staff, especially those who lack a PhD. As noted, there probably needs to be a cap on how much – or what type of – student fee-funded work a member of research or policy staff could do within the

⁶ "Limited" is a key distinction: the lack of these career development benefits and other perks are a key reason why they should not be exploited and made to teach at the same percentage or under the same terms as most NAC staff.

⁷ To be clear, we do not advocate the dismissal of existing LSE Fellows or Guest Teachers but instead emphasise the benefits of reducing over-reliance on the creation of casualised positions.

confines of their normal position. These positions should not completely mirror NAC roles and must remain research-focused. We are especially concerned about requirements for Research Officers, Research Fellows, and policy staff to take on responsibilities that resemble NAC role profiles but are paid considerably less. We are also concerned that research and policy staff who currently rely on student fee-funded work as overtime to supplement their income should not be forced to take an effective pay cut if they have been able to fundraise to cover the full costs of their normal salary. We also note that **we do not endorse using fundraising/funding targets as an explicit performance criterion for deciding on dismissals, which are used at some institutions where teaching credits 'offset' these targets.** This approach could fundamentally alter existing terms and conditions of employment. Pooled funding, effective workforce planning, partial [re]deployments, strategic investments of central revenue streams, and student fee-funded work combined should eliminate the need for that approach. Above all else, **providing options for student fee-funded work to research and policy staff must be prevented from becoming exploitative.** We want to ensure that any approach does not create unmanageable workloads or unsuitable responsibilities.

One particularly salient issue is that of the right to do student fee-funded work in the UK. **Research and policy staff on Skilled Worker Visas are classed under a different occupation code from other academic staff that prohibits their teaching, marking, or supervising.** For staff on the Global Talent Visa, this problem does not apply. In the interest of fairness, the School would probably need to **consider formally expanding role profiles to include limited teaching responsibilities and/or consider using different occupation codes for visa sponsorship,** as well as potentially encouraging and supporting more staff to apply for a Global Talent Visa. It is already problematic that research staff presently are encouraged to take on teaching responsibilities and are evaluated on these contributions for purposes of career development and promotion when such opportunities are not legally available to all research staff. We anticipate that it may be more difficult to provide these opportunities to policy staff who do not hold a PhD and may have a harder time obtaining Global Talent Visas. *[Edit: We believe the policy has very recently changed to allow some teaching work on Skilled Worker Visas.]*

We are committed to working with the School side to make a new model viable. A thoughtful approach to creating more permanent research and policy staff jobs with options for a well-regulated and clearly defined contribution to student fee-funded work would bring **enormous benefits across the School. Research staff are a valuable – and agile – resource for helping to deliver and enhance the School's educational offerings.**

V. IMPORTANCE OF PERMANENT CONTRACTS AND ACADEMIC ANNEX PROTECTIONS

Having permanent contracts and equal standing under the Academic Annex for research and policy staff is important for many reasons that are also in the long-term interests of the School. Aside from legal risks and ethical quandaries, providing job security and academic freedom protections for all academic staff ensures the quality and integrity of LSE research, enhances the mental health and wellbeing of LSE employees, and delivers on LSE's sustainability commitments.

AFFRONTS TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- ***Without the full application of all academic freedom safeguards afforded by the Academic Annex, research and policy staff are prone to self-censorship and feel unable to pursue their research goals.***
- ***Without assured financial resources, Directors and managers may seek to censor controversial views or inconvenient findings.***
- ***Research and policy staff need to develop their own research identity but feel forced to work on topics that do not align with their goals to keep their jobs.***
- ***Research clusters offer a better way forward than hiring 'generic' research staff.***

The 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (which covers research-only staff under the definition of 'teaching personnel') – a document that has in the past been endorsed and used by UUK and UCEA in defining academic freedom – sets out that **'security of employment' is a fundamental element of academic freedom**. The Recommendation considers tenure or its functional equivalent to constitute one of the major procedural safeguards of academic freedom and states that:

Security of employment in the profession, including tenure or its functional equivalent, where applicable, should be safeguarded as it is essential to the interests of higher education as well as those of higher-education teaching personnel. ...Tenure or its functional equivalent, where applicable, should be safeguarded as far as possible even when changes in the organization of or within a higher education institution or system are made, and should be granted, after a reasonable period of probation, to those who meet stated objective criteria in teaching, and/or scholarship, and/or research to the satisfaction of an academic body...⁸

The Academic Annex abolished tenure at LSE and provided the closest thing the UK has to a 'functional equivalent'. **The UNESCO Recommendation makes clear that research-only staff should be protected by the safeguards of a permanent position and robust redundancy procedures if the School is to adhere to the internationally recognised definition of academic freedom.** In 2022, the Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel found that the proliferation of temporary contracts and insecure employment in UK universities diminishes procedural guarantees of academic freedom.⁹ As a UK sector leader in

⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* (1997).

⁹ International Labour Office and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report: Fourteenth Session of the Joint ILO-UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel* (4-8 October 2021), para. 115-156.

casualisation,¹⁰ LSE should be concerned about threats to academic freedom created by its failure to offer genuinely permanent contracts and to retain or apply the procedural safeguards of the Academic Annex for hundreds of research and policy staff.

Research and policy staff are arguably in the most vulnerable position in the School when it comes to safeguarding their academic freedom. As a major UCU report noted in 2020, academic freedom means the right to choose what topics to research irrespective of pressure from managers and governments, but this right is seldom enjoyed by research staff who are pressured to follow funding streams. The report found that **research staff regularly feel 'dehumanised' because they depend on individual managers who hold large block grants to renew their temporary contracts, and managers tend to pursue their own or their institution's research goals**, leaving more junior research staff feeling as if they have no opportunity to pursue their own goals or interests if they wish to remain employed.¹¹ **We have observed and received reports of similar issues at LSE.** Research and policy staff may fear that their Centre/Institute Director or line manager will refuse to support an application for funding or refuse to renew their fixed-term contract or funding commitment from a block grant if they express a controversial or unpopular opinion or if their research questions might produce inconvenient findings for powerful stakeholders. **As a result, research and policy staff may not pursue their own research goals and interests, which is necessarily a restriction of their academic freedom.** Their fears are not always well founded: many Centre Directors are highly supportive of research and policy staff. But endless precarity creates a **culture of anxiety**.

Research and policy staff also self-censor, especially when more senior staff request that they reframe their analyses, redact their evidence, or reconfigure their conclusions. Centre Directors, line managers, and other senior staff might make such requests with good intentions as they seek to secure sustainable funding streams for their team. Research and policy staff and their managers may believe that their best prospects for continued employment involve renewing a grant with the same donor, whom they fear offending. Without assurances of employment protections and academic freedom safeguards offered by the combination of a genuinely permanent contract (supported by pooled resources and proactive redeployment) and full application of the Academic Annex, a chain of precarity adversely affects academic freedom. Not all research and policy staff at LSE may feel their academic freedom is at risk. But even a few instances of normalising self-censorship are too many. And even if managers at LSE would not target research and policy staff for redundancy based on their views, **the fear and realistic possibility of arbitrary redundancy in an environment of inescapable precarity can lead to (self-)censorship**.

These concerns are not merely hypothetical. One significant area of risk is policy work, as in applied research outputs and data collection, especially policy briefs, reports, and commentaries. It is understandable that policy work and other 'impact' activities sometimes involve trade-offs with unbridled exercise of free speech. Although UCU has long opposed the way impact is defined and measured,¹² it is understandable that certain impact activities require honing a particular message to users of research that precludes certain narratives. Yet research and policy staff can face obstacles that go far beyond navigating these dilemmas. **Research and policy staff may feel unable to overcome those obstacles because their positions are linked to limited-term funding and the often funder-demanded need to produce near-term impact.** We have received reports of and observed numerous situations in which research and policy staff were asked or felt pressured to remove arguments and findings from policy-focused outputs, which we shared with the School in the full version of this paper. Examples mainly involve individual researchers' findings not being aligned with a specific Centre's preferred narratives and grant-holders' fears that funders would react negatively

¹⁰ LSE Branch of the University and College Union, *The Crisis of Academic Casualisation at LSE: LSE UCU Report 2023* (2023).

¹¹ Nick Megoran and Olivia Mason, *Second class academic citizens: The dehumanising effects of casualisation in higher education*, University and College Union (2020).

¹² University and College Union, 'Research Excellence Framework', <https://www.ucu.org.uk/REF#statement>.

to certain publications. Examples also include broader restrictions, such as Centre managers limiting staff members' political speech for fear of upsetting funders.

These examples illustrate the **inherent tensions between the legally protected exercise of academic freedom and the artificial link between employment contracts and specific pieces of funding**. We believe senior staff are often looking out for their teams' interests by trying not to upset potential funders, and they would be less likely to impose or suggest restrictions – and other research and policy staff would be less likely to acquiesce with self-censorship – if the School retained and applied stronger employment protections and academic freedom safeguards, such as those afforded by the Academic Annex, combined with properly permanent contracts. Pooling resources across LSE's research activities and having a proactive redeployment policy would mitigate risks from alienating individual funders, as alternative sources of funding could be made available to ensure continued employment.

Having research clusters that pool resources School-wide would also help to **ensure that research staff are able to pursue curiosity-driven research in line with the School's commitment to academic freedom under its *Research for the World* strategy**.¹³ The School has suggested that recruiting 'generic' researchers is a desirable pathway to more stable research staff careers, ensuring maximum redeployment possibilities. This approach makes little sense for policy staff, whose work often relies heavily on networks in policy communities and subject-area expertise. **A focus on 'generic' researchers would particularly restrict the academic freedom of research staff, who would be prevented from pursuing curiosity-driven research in their field of interest. *Decisions on what topics, methods, and theories to prioritise would be left up to a handful of Centre Directors (and perhaps senior PIs) even more so than at present, stifling academic debate and innovation. This approach would over time significantly reduce the quality of LSE research. Some research staff already report being stressed by demands to conduct research outside their areas of interest/expertise to keep their jobs;* they feel obligated or pressured to collaborate with researchers with whom they have little overlap because of who holds funding in their immediate Centre/Institute.**

The 'generic hiring' approach is also inconsistent with the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (the Concordat), to which LSE is signatory. The Concordat is clear that research staff should be given time to develop their research identity, which is defined by their particular competencies and reputation in various academic activities.¹⁴ It is not meaningful for researchers to develop a distinct reputation in the broad social sciences, nor for the School to expect them to do so. Developing an RSR, as we have proposed above, could enable more adaptability and prospects for redeployment across projects without compromising on opportunities to develop an individual research identity, in line with the School's commitment to the Concordat. The generic approach is **bad for LSE because **research staff with no clear specialisms or identities are less likely to be quoted in the press or invited to speak** as they would not be 'known' in any particular field and would lack the type of in-depth expertise that journalists, event planners, and academics value.**

Finally, on 'generic' research staff, we note that **this approach as proposed by the School side would require an extensive and contentious re-negotiation of the NRSC**. The terms of our 2014 ACAS agreement on the NRSC include moving NRSC promotion criteria more closely in line with NAC. While we do not necessarily oppose jointly reviewing these criteria at some point, we feel that it would be

¹³ London School of Economics and Political Science, *Research for the World Strategy: LSE 2030: Shape the World* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2023), <https://www.lse.ac.uk/Research/Assets/RftW-Strategy-FINAL.pdf>, p. 5.

¹⁴ *The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers* (2019), https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Researcher-Development-Concordat_Sept2019-1.pdf, p. 6.

neither expedient nor appropriate to prioritise doing so at this time when we have outlined other options in this paper.

SUSTAINABILITY AND JOB SECURITY

- **LSE's Research for the World strategy effectively links sustainability and casualisation. It commits to using financial resources to provide stability for researchers and to reduce the School's environmental impacts.**
- **Casualisation drives up scope 3 emissions, jeopardising LSE's net zero target.**

Casualisation is a significant and often unacknowledged threat to sustainable development and the achievement of global net zero greenhouse gas emissions. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are conceived as 'integrated and indivisible' and include SDG 8 (full and productive employment and decent work for all) and SDG 13 (climate action).¹⁵ Casualisation is at odds with the goal of achieving full and productive employment: when contracts end abruptly in conjunction with limited-term funding, researchers become easily unemployed; when staff are constantly stressed about the prospect of redundancy, their mental health suffers and they are less productive. **Failing to deliver job security and equal standing under the Academic Annex is at odds with international definitions of sustainability.**

The School's existing commitments and its core research strategy promote this approach to sustainability and thus require reducing research and policy staff casualisation. LSE's **Research for the World strategy** is premised on three 'guiding principles and values', including 'Ensure a sustainable future'. The strategy states that LSE 'will lead the way in building a sustainable future for the social sciences by upholding rigorous standards of enquiry, **securing funding for research and scholarships, diversifying our income and making the best possible use of resources**'; it will also 'shape the global sustainability debate through our research, education, and public engagement, and reduce the environmental impact of our operations.'¹⁶ This strategy lists developing a sustainable and effective funding model for research under its core objectives, which the School commits to delivering by attracting, developing, and empowering talented academics, encouraging diverse research activity, and ensuring infrastructure and professional services support are sector-leading 'so that our researchers can focus on what they do best.'¹⁷ The School's own research strategy thus links environmental degradation, research staff casualisation, and effective resource planning.

LSE also has specific climate goals, including a net zero target that covers scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions by 2050.¹⁸ UCU Congress has acknowledged the relationship between casualisation and climate change.¹⁹ As noted in a major claim from the joint unions at the University of Liverpool,²⁰ there is a fundamental link between fair and secure employment and robust climate change mitigation. Casualisation erodes the quality of governance and collegiality needed to deliver on sustainability goals, but it also results in more direct impacts. Indeed, it is easy to see how research and policy staff feel less empowered to participate in Academic Board and other School governance functions. **Casualised workers are also less likely to live near campus, generating greater emissions relative to those on permanent or long-term contracts who will relocate.** When one is not sure where they will work in a year's time, committing to a new location is difficult and often prohibitively expensive. **Employee commuting is calculated in scope 3 emissions, which are within LSE's 2050 net zero target.**

¹⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1 (2015).

¹⁶ London School of Economics and Political Science, *Research for the World Strategy*, p. 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁸ London School of Economics and Political Science, 'Carbon', <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/estates-division/sustainable-lse/what-we-do/carbon>.

¹⁹ University and College Union, 'Green new deal', <https://www.ucu.org.uk/green-new-deal>.

²⁰ University of Liverpool Joint Trade Unions and Guild of Students, *Green New Deal Bargaining Claim*, https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/13211/Case-study-Liverpool-UCU-branch-GND-bargaining-claim/pdf/UoL_GND_bargaining_claim_Sep22.pdf.

Casualised staff who relocate with every new job are not only in a constant state of stress, but they generate significant emissions with frequent shipping of their belongings across the country or continent. Investing in casualisation now will help the School to achieve its long-term climate targets and **maintain LSE's credibility with climate-conscious prospective students and donors.**

MENTAL HEALTH AND LONG-TERM WELLBEING

- *Casualisation is bad for mental health. The persistent precarity research and policy staff face is especially pernicious when their employment is linked to funding decisions that may be made by a single manager.*
- *Without assurance of employment protections, research and policy staff do not know whether paying into the pension scheme is worthwhile and may miss out on sorely needed savings later in life.*

Casualisation is bad for the mental health and wellbeing of research and policy staff in the short- and long-term. Pooling funding resources to enable more permanent positions for research staff improved staff wellbeing and reduced anxiety where a pilot model was implemented at the University of Bath (see Appendix). Our Branch Committee is currently working on a report that highlights the significant mental health toll of casualisation on research and policy staff at LSE.

Research and policy staff also face other types of potential detriment to their long-term wellbeing relative to NAC and ECT staff, especially in relation to their ability to afford life after retirement. Research and policy staff are often employed on extremely short-term contracts and may hesitate more than other staff on contributing to the pension scheme. **The requirement to contribute to the pension scheme for at least two years to properly benefit from it creates an obvious issue for staff whose contracts sometimes last only a few months at a time.** Even those research and policy staff who are initially hired on contracts that last two years or more may struggle. Some of those hired at band 6 (Research Officers; Policy Officers) receive an initial two-year contract, during which time they may be unable to *afford* to pay into the pensions scheme. By the time they have received several annual incremental pay lifts, or potentially been promoted, they may have come to rely on very short contract or funding extensions of one year or less. **Never being sure that they have two years of secure employment ahead of them, the question of whether paying into the pension scheme is worthwhile becomes a persistent source of anxiety.** Even if they opt to pay in, they risk not receiving the full benefits. Research and policy staff should not be condemned to a worse retirement than other academic staff: it is bad for the sustainability of the pensions scheme and bad for these employees.

VI. CHALLENGES FACED BY RESEARCH AND POLICY STAFF AT LSE

This section details challenges and issues that research and policy staff at LSE face when making efforts to maintain their positions and avoid redundancy. Examples were collected through discussions with members and other research and policy staff, as well as from the observations and experiences of members of the Branch Committee. These examples help to illustrate why the School side's most recent proposals need to go much further.

FUNDER LIMITATIONS VS. MANAGER EXPECTATIONS

- **Centres/Institutes aim to establish coherent teams, but traditional funders seldom offer sufficiently large grants to cover full teams for extended periods.**
- **It is relatively rare to win sufficient funding for a full-time position on a single grant, and contracts are often issued only until the soonest funding end date.**

Securing grants for research and policy staff from conventional funders, such as UK Research Councils, has always been competitive. Research Councils account for an increasing amount of LSE research grant income, rising from just under £10 million in 2019/20 to nearly £15 million in 2023/24.²¹ Much of the thinking about and treatment of research staff at LSE seems to assume they are mainly employed to work on single, limited-term projects with a defined set of deliverables and funded by Research Councils. This situation might be the case for some Research Officers employed in a postdoctoral capacity, but many research staff, especially in Centres, are not funded wholly by single, project-specific grants. They are also expected to work in teams within Centres/Institutes on collaborative projects with varied time horizons.

It is very difficult for individual researchers to secure funding for their full salary with a single project grant from a traditional funder. Funders can be apprehensive about applications that budget for 100% of a researcher's time. Research Councils and similar competitive funders are more accustomed to funding teaching buyouts and possibly full-time postdoctoral positions to support the work of a PI. Some major UK-based funders, such as the Leverhulme Trust, do not allow research staff to fund their salaries with grants at all, offering solely teaching buy-out.

Research and policy staff are often pressed by managers to prioritise applying for funding as a team and to collaborate with others in a Centre, sometimes even discouraging applications for fellowships. It is important that the School promotes collaborative funding bids: drafting applications is an important skill-learning and network-building exercise for early career researchers, and collaboration can increase the likelihood of success. **Yet it is increasingly difficult to secure grants that cover the entirety of a full project team's salaries over several years.** There are, nonetheless, occasions where Centre Directors place such a strong emphasis on developing themes or teams within their Centres that they will deny approval of applications that do not incorporate a significant 'team' from the Centre.

In 2015, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) lowered certain funding thresholds, changing the range of allowable budgets for proposed projects under its research grant scheme (its main responsive mode grant scheme) from £200k-£2m to £350k-£1m.²² Although LSE has a comparably decent acceptance rate,²³ these grants are rarely won, and the funding ceiling has not increased at all since it was lowered a decade ago, despite more than 35% inflation (albeit not for

²¹ London School of Economics and Political Science, *Financial Statements: For the year ending 31 July 2024* (London, 2024), <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Finance-Division/assets/annual-accounts/PDF/2023-24-LSE-Annual-Accounts.pdf>, p. 19.

²² James Field, 'ESRC changes funding thresholds to boost success rates', *Research Professional News* (6 March 2015), <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-uk-research-councils-2015-3-esrc-takes-steps-to-boost-success-rates/>.

²³ Economic and Social Research Council, 'Analysis of ESRC funding data', <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/what-we-have-funded/esrc-analysis-of-esrc-funding-data/research-organisation-performance-and-regional-outcomes-for-esrc-funding/#contents-list>.

most LSE salaries). It is impossible to fund a team of five on a five-year project at 1.0 FTE for less than £1m. Other grants may be capped even lower, like the ESRC New Investigator Grant or the British Academy Knowledge Frontiers grant at around £300k, or the AHRC Curiosity Grant at around £100k. It then gets left up to the line manager or Director to decide whether to spend money to fill in the gaps, making the researcher more beholden to research goals set by others and potentially limiting development of their individual research identity in line with the Concordat.

LACK OF SENIOR STAFF

- **LSE has a dearth of senior research staff overall, limiting the ability of early career staff to attract funding and develop their careers.**
- **Senior research staff do not reflect the diversity of disciplines in Centres, limiting opportunities for collaboration with early career staff from different traditions.**

Centres and Institutes at LSE often lack senior research and policy staff, which has negative consequences for fundraising prospects and career development of early career researchers. **The deficit of senior research staff makes fundraising for early career staff very difficult. Centres lack prominent senior scholars, who tend to have a correspondingly high likelihood of winning funding that could support less established staff.** Some Centres and Institutes involve NAC affiliate staff more than others, but the School prohibits their permanent employment in Centres and Institutes.²⁴ Research staff are pressed to focus on developing collaborative funding bids with other staff in their home Centre, but this can leave them with few options for collaboration, mentorship, and successful fundraising. Table 1 below provides some relevant data on several Centres at LSE.

Centre/Institute	Research Officers	Research Fellows	Assistant Professorial Research Fellows	Associate Professorial Research Fellows	Professorial Research Fellows
<i>GRI</i>	6	4	5	2	2
<i>LSE Cities</i>	1	1	0	0	0
<i>CPEC</i>	11	8	10	2	1
<i>STICERD/CASE</i>	3	2	2	2	0
<i>LSE Health</i>	11	3	4	1	1
<i>MEC</i>	7	1	0	0	0
<i>FLIA</i>	0	4	0	0	0
<i>HO Centre</i>	2	0	1	0	1

Table 1: Distribution of Research Staff in select LSE research centres²⁵

There is a clear slant towards early career positions. For example, the Grantham Research Institute has 10 research staff below NRSC level and only four NRSC staff above the level of Assistant Professorial Research Fellow. LSE Cities includes two early career researchers and no other research staff. CPEC has a large number of research staff (32), but only three of them are above the level of Assistant Professorial Research Fellow, and senior staff indeed conduct much of the fundraising activity in the Centre. Positions in these centres are also often distributed unevenly across disciplines, making it even more difficult for early career staff who often have limited opportunities for collaboration on fundraising and publishing due to a lack of shared methodological skills and suitable mentors. **There is a particular dearth of full Professorial Research Fellows, who are likely to be those**

²⁴ London School of Economics and Political Science, *Governance of Research*, <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/govResCen.pdf>.

²⁵ Data are taken from the web pages of the relevant Centre and may not be entirely up to date.

research staff most capable of winning large grants. This situation makes redeployment even harder under the current procedure, as it usually happens (if at all) informally within the Centre. If there are no senior staff in one's discipline in a Centre (or no senior staff in the Centre at all) to develop new projects, especially in the researcher's field, then there is unlikely to be a suitable local vacancy.

Many of these centres house a wider range of policy staff, who may face different challenges and tend to work in more structured teams, especially those who have been hired more recently and did not convert from the older research track. They can find it difficult to be promoted where their team is small and the need for more senior roles is limited, but their ways of working might sometimes blunt the effects of having too few senior staff for fundraising and career development support. Policy staff also rely on philanthropic funding to a greater extent than many research staff. Several Centres – notably the Grantham Research Institute and LSE Cities – accordingly employ significantly more policy than research staff.

Research clusters with pooled resources, like we have proposed above, could help in expanding retention and redeployment opportunities for research staff, especially if senior NAC staff are brought into the clusters. These clusters would provide research staff with more structured opportunities to get to know, and develop collaborative funding applications with, staff from outside of their home Centre. This model could expand the pool of potential collaborators at more senior levels. **Explicit efforts to promote collaborative funding applications should be more proactively made, and the cluster model could make that more feasible.** More effective workforce planning and **strategic investment of block grants and central revenues in hiring diverse senior research staff** could also help.

INTERNAL BARRIERS AND INCONSISTENT APPROACHES

The School does not presently make even those funds and resources that are available *properly* available to research and policy staff. Two examples are **access to PAGE for support with philanthropic fundraising** and **regulations around internal funding opportunities.**

PAGE SUPPORT

- **Research and policy staff find access to fundraising support from PAGE to be inconsistent and opaque.**
- **Centre Directors are the primary conduits for PAGE support but cannot logistically manage to support all staff in their Centres this way.**
- **New systems could support more standardised project pitches to PAGE.**

Philanthropic funding is attractive to research and policy staff for many reasons. It is often more 'strings-free' than grants from Research Councils in the sense that staff are not required to provide detailed research designs, extensive literature reviews, and promises of specific deliverables in order to receive significant sums of money. The process of applying for funding can therefore be less time consuming or less intellectually demanding for the researcher. Philanthropic funding is not a panacea for all research and policy staff – especially research staff. Aside from related academic freedom concerns outlined above, it is often targeted mainly at applied research, and funders are not generally as interested in theoretical scholarship and academic journal publications. It is, however, the **preferred mode of fundraising for many policy staff** and an increasingly viable means of fundraising for at least a portion of some research staff members' salaries. **But access to support in philanthropic fundraising is very uneven and frequently extremely opaque.**

Philanthropy and Global Engagement (PAGE) is the LSE entity that aims to match funders and researchers for potential projects, but **there is no clear mechanism for research and policy staff to engage PAGE's services.** In general, one must pitch ideas to their Centre/Institute Director or Head of Department, who must in turn liaise with PAGE about possible funding opportunities. This 'rule' is, however, not normally disclosed to research and policy staff, who have reported being occasionally

told by line managers that they should be fundraising through PAGE without being told how to do so. Some research and policy staff, however, do liaise with PAGE directly, usually where they have an established contact in the Division (e.g., from prior funding relationships) or have brought in a very promising prospective donor through their own networks.

The current situation gives significant authority to Centre Directors in deciding which staff members' project proposals are prioritised for pitching to PAGE. For more junior staff, this may first require convincing a line manager who must then convince the Director. Where a Centre Director seeks to be supportive, the current situation requires them to maintain extensive knowledge about the research interests and ideas of every member of their staff, which is not always a reasonable ask. Their time is not infinite, and it is not feasible for Directors of Centres with 100+ staff to be aware of every potential research idea held by every researcher and to be able to effectively communicate those ideas to PAGE. We have heard from members that even when they are relatively senior within a Centre, **the process of getting a Director to select an idea for a pitch to PAGE, or for being permitted to work with PAGE directly to develop proposals for funders, is extremely opaque and uneven.** We are also aware that **PAGE staff often have excessive workloads and are under significant stress** in trying to meet demand for their services, even under the more limited current system.

It should be possible for the School to work with the Union to develop systems that enable more equal and regularised access to philanthropic fundraising services, assuming this is a model the School will continue pursuing to finance research activities. For example, there could be ways for research and policy staff to log ideas or interests, and/or to submit more extensive proposals for specific initiatives, in a database that allows PAGE to match potential ideas with interest from funders. It could also be worth exploring ways for funding applications submitted to Research Councils to be forwarded to PAGE for review to determine any potential funder matches. Centres/Institutes could also offer **more systematised and routine access to PAGE.** Directors could, for example, make more concerted efforts to engage especially with early career researchers and new arrivals in the UK (who may be more likely to lack connections to relevant donors) to discuss ideas and communicate them to PAGE. We are aware that Centre management often tries to identify teams for priority fundraising activities, but it is not clear that this is always done equitably or with full regard to the interests of all team members. **Centres also apply different rules and standards for different types of staff:** for example, the Grantham Research Institute Staff Handbook implies that more junior policy staff are not required to fundraise as heavily, while virtually all research staff are expected to self-fundraise yet have much less access to (and often relevance for) PAGE.

We want to work with the School to **develop approaches that do not overburden our PAGE colleagues** while enabling **more transparent and accessible philanthropic fundraising.** We also feel that the School could do a better job of **rewarding the types of research activities for which PAGE is more readily able to fundraise.** Many research staff are hesitant to accept funding from philanthropic sources or to engage in the types of projects that appeal to private donors because applied research does very little for their career, especially outside of LSE. **By linking internal incentives for philanthropic-funded research with permanent contracts and equal standing under the Academic Annex, the School would make it more rational for research staff to pursue this type of work and this type of fundraising.**

INTERNAL FUNDING SCHEMES

- **Internal funding schemes are often unavailable to research and policy staff on fixed-term and open-ended-subject-to-funding contracts**
- **Open-ended-subject-to-funding contracts are not treated as permanent contracts for purposes of internal funding schemes despite School claims**

When the New Internal Funding Schemes were launched in autumn term 2024, the requirements stated that staff must have a *contract* extending beyond the end date of the proposed project. But

research and policy staff on an open-ended subject to funding contract were also not permitted to apply unless their funding commitment extended beyond the end date of the proposed project. The R&I team would not accept applications in these circumstances because **R&I considers a funding end date to be a pre-determined end of contract and redundancy.** The criteria for most internal grants have since been updated to state: 'We would not be able to provide funding for the PI past their current funding date as our funding cannot be used to affect HR/staff contracts.'²⁶

These statements contradict the School side's claims at recent JNCC meetings that they consider open-ended contracts 'subject to funding' to be permanent contracts. There is no logical reason why 'internal' funding could not be used to sustain a 'permanent' contract, and there is every reason to think that internal funding should *always* be used to retain research staff where possible (as is required under the first Academic Annex byelaw). One of the streams in the New Internal Funding Schemes is explicitly for seed funding, which is supposed to enable a researcher to develop a larger external funding bid. This internal grant is expressly intended to help the researcher, if successful, develop a proposal for a grant that could sustain their position (and their colleagues' positions) for several years, but they cannot apply for the initial seed funding unless they have already secured full funding for the time it would take to carry out the 'seed' research. These arbitrary rules **penalise research staff who are trying to be entrepreneurial in generating funding** and who may even be likely or certain to remain at LSE but have not been able to formally sort an extension to their funding commitment before the deadline. Internal funds should anyway be awarded on the basis of the merit of the proposal, not the contractual status of the applicant.

²⁶ See, e.g., London School of Economics and Political Science, 'LSE Seed Research Fund', <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/research-and-innovation/research/apply-for-funding/lse-seed-research-fund>.

APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES

No single employer provides a perfect model for LSE to follow in the path to research and policy staff permanence. But many employers provide potential examples to collate and build on. There are many ways to enhance job security for research and policy staff, regardless of how they are funded and which redundancy procedure applies. In this appendix, we have compiled a collection of case studies with positive examples for the School side's consideration. **These are not necessarily 'best practices', but they are better practices.** Although these case studies do not provide one-stop-shop models that can be readily implemented, they indicate a menu of options available to the School in developing its own integrated approach to research and policy staff retention and their (continued) equal standing under the Academic Annex. **LSE has a chance to be the sector leader in offering high quality careers for research and policy staff, building on its pioneering work in developing the NRSC and Policy Fellow tracks.** This effort would over time boost the productivity and creativity of research and policy staff, delivering better results in the REF and league tables, attracting larger grants, and making all LSE jobs the envy of the sector.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

- **Employs more than 700 research staff with central University funds**
- **Creates permanent research positions through strategic use of revenue streams**
- **Permanent research staff covered by redundancy procedure in Model Statute**

Although Oxford has one of the worst casualisation rates in the UK, it is a relative leader in employing permanent researchers in absolute terms. Oxford employs vastly more Research Staff than Academic Staff (here meaning teaching-and-research). In 2023, it employed 4,158 Research Staff on externally funded contracts and 764 Research Staff on University funded contracts²⁷ – or 15.5% of its Research Staff headcount.²⁸ Oxford reported around the same time that 12% of its Research Staff were employed on permanent contracts.²⁹ Although we consider this figure to be unacceptably low, Oxford demonstrates that a peer institution in the UK can employ researchers with funds from a central university budget – and, indeed, can employ more than the entire number of research and policy staff currently at the LSE on that budget.³⁰ These staff, where employed on a permanent contract, are fully covered under Statute XII – Oxford's local iteration of the Model Statute on which our Academic Annex is also based.³¹

In 2019, Oxford established a Strategic Research Fund (SRF) to invest income from research commercialisation activities into major new research initiatives with the explicit goal of establishing permanent research staff positions. SRF states that its emphasis 'is on investment in people and creating new ongoing posts. SRF investments should normally create permanent posts and this is a standard requirement in relation to senior level SRF-initiated posts'.³² LSE could similarly seek to find ways to use central revenue streams to ensure research staff retention and underwrite permanent contracts for research staff while maintaining their full coverage under the redundancy procedures of the Academic Annex.

UNIVERSITY OF BATH

- **University and UCU signed commitment to work towards breaking the connection between individual jobs and specific pieces of grant funding**

²⁷ The term is defined as "those which receive 50% or more funding from the University."

²⁸ University of Oxford, *Annual Staffing Data 2022/23 reporting year (2023)*, https://hrsystems.admin.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/hrsystems/documents/media/staffing_figures_2022_23.pdf.

²⁹ University and College Union, 'New report exposes "gig economy" reality of prestigious university research departments' (31 January 2024), <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13444/New-report-exposes-gig-economy-reality-of-prestigious-university-research-departments>.

³⁰ According to data reported to HESA, **LSE had 545 research-only staff in total in 2023/24**. According to data provided to UCU by the School in February 2025, **100% of research staff in 2023/24 were employed on precarious contracts** (either fixed-term or open-ended subject to funding).

³¹ University of Oxford, *Statute XII: Academic Staff and the Visitation Board*, <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/statute-xii-academic-staff-and-the-visitatorial-board#collapse1382986>.

³² University of Oxford, 'Strategic Research Fund: Guidance', <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/funding/internal/srf/guidance#collapse1738421>.

In 2023, following a series of agreements and negotiations over anti-casualisation, the University of Bath and its local UCU branch signed an agreement on a range of anti-casualisation issues. The agreement included setting a standard that fixed-term contracts should always last for a minimum of two years unless it was entirely inappropriate due to funding. It also included three pilots in which all members of 'research groups' would be moved onto open-ended contracts with an agreed timeline for monitoring further rollouts of the approach. If both sides deemed the pilots successful, the agreement committed to a rollout in the following academic year. Importantly, the agreement committed the University to seeking 'to test breaking the connection of an individual job to a specific piece of grant funding'.³³

At the end of 2024, the University and the local UCU branch agreed that the pilots were a success. Research staff in the scope of the pilot had been migrated to open-ended contracts with a view to breaking the link between their individual posts and discrete pieces of researching funding. It was recognised by both sides that feedback from staff had been overwhelmingly positive, with staff reporting higher levels of work satisfaction. Moreover, the University determined there was a measurable savings in administration time and costs. The pilot was proceeding to cover more research groups, although overall roll out has been somewhat slower than anticipated. The branch noted that pilots had been done primarily within Centres or hubs, and more work was needed to roll this model out to smaller research units.³⁴ We have confirmed these accounts in conversations with Bath colleagues, who testified to the success of the model.

LSE could develop a similar model for pooling resources to ensure sustained employment of research staff and breaking the link between specific pieces of funding and research staff positions. We would like to see this approach go further, on a School-wide basis, provided that LSE is an all-social sciences university, and we think there could be scope to integrate the Bath model with a bridge funding model that pools overheads as well as project funds to ensure stable employment when writing and waiting for decisions on funding applications. As at Bath,³⁵ we would anticipate that where there was legitimately no further work for a member of staff, the redundancy consultation model would proceed as usual (that is to say, according to an unchanged Academic Annex procedure).

INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

- **Research staff are permanent but required to fundraise much of their salary**
- **Proactively promotes senior & early career staff joint funding applications**
- **Teaching covers salary for purposes of fundraising targets³⁶**
- **Review period & fundraising support before redundancy process if insufficient funding raised over time**

The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is a research institute and a higher education institution offering highly prestigious postgraduate degrees. IDS employs research staff on permanent contracts and deploys a combination of approaches in seeking to offer them stability and avoid redundancies. IDS essentially requires staff to cover a certain percentage of their salaries, as a target, through fundraising and teaching. To help staff with fundraising, IDS pro-actively fosters research collaborations that cut across different themes and seeks to ensure that especially junior staff are considered when senior staff craft their funding applications through mentorship programmes and network-building activities. Institute management aim to plan strategically to ensure that adequate fundraising opportunities and inclusion in grant applications that appeal to staff members' individual research interests are available.

³³ University of Bath, *Collective Agreement to Address Casualisation and Insecure Employment in the Education & Research Job Family* (7 March 2023), https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/collective-agreement-to-address-casualisation-and-insecure-employment-in-the-e-r-job-family/attachments/Collective_agreement_to_address_casualisation_and_insecure_employment.pdf, para. 6.1.

³⁴ University and College Union, 'Progress on ground-breaking anti-casualisation at the University of Bath' (13 December 2024), <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13807/Progress-on-ground-breaking-anti-casualisation-at-the-University-of-Bath>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The Union side is **not endorsing the use of fundraising targets** as a retention criterion. We believe pooled funding, effective workforce planning, partial [re]deployments, strategic investments of central revenue streams, and student fee-funded work combined could eliminate the need for this approach.

Staff can also teach and engage in other student fee-funded activities on the Institute's postgraduate programmes to cover their salary costs. They essentially earn 'credits' for hours spent on student-funded work that are equivalent to a percentage of their annual salary. This system can sometimes disadvantage more senior staff whose credits are more expensive to Departments for the same type of work. We believe the School side should seek to avoid such a situation by somehow controlling for (or subsidising) costs of teaching by senior research staff if it agrees to a teaching-supported model. The IDS approach has reportedly created frustration for students who wish to have more interactions with senior staff. It also arguably disincentivises doing the work for promotions where seniority makes the researcher more vulnerable to dismissal.

Persistent failure to raise sufficient funding or teach enough over a certain period of time can result in permanent staff undergoing a review to determine the reasons for performance shortcomings, which can potentially lead to a dismissal. During this period, it is intended that the member of staff is supported in improving on their ability to raise funds or to find teaching work.

IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON

- ***Some centres offer a sort of co-funded permanent position with teaching Departments. Staff can be hired in Centres on permanent contracts and later transition to a teaching Department.***

Imperial College London employs a significant amount of casualised research staff, but it also has some research centres and institutes that offer a different, more sustainable model than at LSE. For example, the Grantham Institute – Climate Change and the Environment at Imperial uses a very different model from LSE's Grantham Research Institute, its sister research centre, and other similar centres at LSE. Grantham Imperial has core funding from the same source, the Grantham Foundation for the Protection of the Environment. Grantham Imperial, however, often focuses on creating sustainable permanent positions using those funds rather than on hiring many fixed-term staff.

Grantham Imperial especially focuses on hiring around two schemes: Fellowships and Lectureships. Grantham Fellows conduct independent research in a more postdoctoral capacity and receive targeted training and career development opportunities for a policy-focused research career in academia. These are, to the best of our knowledge, almost exclusively fixed-term positions. Grantham Lectureships, however, are permanent positions that are jointly appointed between the Grantham Institute and a home Department at Imperial. Grantham Lecturers may have a more research-intensive position than some teaching staff and focus on delivering a specific programme of research for the Grantham Institute.³⁷ When these Lectureships are advertised, they often specify that the Grantham Institute's funding will cover the Lecturer's salary for the first ~3 years, during which time they will be based in the Grantham Institute before transferring into a Department.

This model deviates from the idea of a research staff career track like the NRSC. We do not wish to undermine or scrap the NRSC. We believe there is, however, significant demand from research staff in general and at LSE to transition into traditional teaching-and-research roles, and more such opportunities could be made available. This model also points to the promise of offering greater permanence to research and policy staff based on conducting limited teaching. Current pressure to teach in lieu of research time and examples of research staff securing sizable teaching roles within their main employment contracts suggest this approach is possible and potentially needed.

STOCKHOLM ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE (AND UNIVERSITY OF YORK)

- ***Permanent positions are common including in the UK***
- ***Core funding and workforce planning used to invest in and retain research staff***
- ***Other income generated from same sources as LSE pooled across organization***

³⁷ Grantham Institute – Climate Change and the Environment, 'Supporting world-class talent', Imperial College London, <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/grantham/research/supporting-world-class-talent/>.

The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) is a large research institute. Although focused on applied research, it has a strong academic bent, with many staff regularly publishing in prestigious academic outlets. The organization is based in Sweden but has two UK offices, employing research staff in Oxford and York. Staff at SEI York are employed via the University of York. Many SEI research staff – including research staff in the UK (and we believe at York) – hold permanent contracts and remain employed for many years without obvious risk of redundancy. Our review of job listings on the Internet Archive confirms that in recent years, both permanent positions and fixed-term positions with an opportunity to become permanent have been advertised at UK offices.

SEI is funded by similar structures to those of large research Centres/Institutes within the LSE. It uses 'core funding' to support its operations, sustain high quality staff, and invest in strategic research. SEI reports that its largest funder is the Swedish state, which provides the Institute's core funding, currently comprised of a recurring Government grant and a five-year funding agreement with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). This core funding amounts to 30% of the Institute's annual turnover.³⁸ Some LSE Centres/Institutes and research units are supported by core funding through large foundation grants or endowments. Such funding – for example, the core funding of the Global School of Sustainability, the Grantham Research Institute, or LSE Cities – may have (or had) longer time horizons and funding guarantees than five years. Single sources of funding may also account for more of an LSE Centre/Institute's revenue than 30%. LSE IDEAS, for example, reports that 39% of its income comes from the UK Government,³⁹ a considerably higher figure than the percentage of Swedish state income supporting SEI's operations.

SEI also derives a substantial portion of its funding from research councils, philanthropic foundations, and NGOs. The Institute reports that its second, fourth, and fifth largest sources of funding are Swedish research councils (equivalent to the UKRI research councils). SEI also attracts substantial income from UK research councils, including the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), and the British Academy.⁴⁰ SEI demonstrates that strategic usage of core funding and careful workforce planning enables long-term retention of many research staff on permanent contracts, and it shows that research staff will continue to generate significant funding from a wide range of sources even when enjoying permanent contracts.

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

- **Central research fund supports calls three times per year for comparatively more open and transparent competition for bridge funding**

A recent UCU report on the treatment of research staff in UK universities provided a case study of Sheffield Hallam University as an example of bridging funds that work better than others in the sector. UCU is careful to note that this case is not an example of best practice, but of better practice that still falls short of what is needed.

Sheffield Hallam University implemented the Sheffield Hallam Research and Innovation Fund (SHRIF), which aims to support inclusive and impactful research and innovation activities. SHRIF serves different purposes, one of which is to invest in individuals and teams of researchers. These efforts include providing bridging funds for researchers on fixed-term contracts (and, we expect, open-ended-subject-to-funding contracts) where there is a need to retain these staff to deliver on future grants or to retain key skills. The scheme operates three competitive calls per year via an application process, which is reviewed by 'the research community' and overseen by a Research Leadership

³⁸ Stockholm Environment Institute, *Commitment to impact: Annual report 2023*, https://www.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/sei10720-annual-report-240426b-web.pdf?_gl=1*7wfvoh*_up*MQ.*_qa*MjAyMTQwOTA5Ny4xNzQxOTA1MTY4*_qa_8GFFWQTLNz*MTc0MTkwNTE2OC4xLiEuMTc0MTkwNTE2OC4wLjAuMA, p. 53.

³⁹ LSE IDEAS, *LSE IDEAS 2023-2024 Report*, London School of Economics and Political Science, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/annual-reports/LSE-IDEAS-2023-24-AnnualReport-Digital-FINAL.pdf>, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Stockholm Environment Institute, *Commitment to impact: Annual report 2023*, p. 31.

Group against a list of fair and relevant criteria. The SHU branch, however, feels that implementation of the fund remains unclear and is communicated by mixed messages with rigid timelines.⁴¹

This approach is far from ideal. But the SHU model offers some important lessons, including more regularised (although possibly overly rigid) and publicised calls for applications and a set of objective criteria that are meant to be reviewed by a wider group of researchers. SHRIF also appears to offer the ability to win bridging funds where there is not necessarily another grant already in place to fund the researcher's salary after a set period of time, which remains a challenge at LSE.

ULSTER UNIVERSITY

- **Six months' extension offered through central university budget to research staff whose funding commitment is coming to an end**
- **Extension period can be used to develop fundraising proposals; does not require next project to be secured and does not require competition**
- **Enhanced redundancy pay includes LSE's PSS formula + 20% of annual salary**

Ulster University offers research staff on open-ended-subject-to-funding contracts an additional six months of funding support from the central University budget to create an automatic bridging period that builds in additional time for research staff to receive a decision on the outcome of funding proposals or to develop applications for grants and seek other alternative sources of funding for their research activities.⁴²

This case offers a particularly strong example that LSE could implement. We would ideally like to see a bridge funding period last longer than six months, provided that it can take up to a year to get a decision from some Research Councils, and it can take several months to draft a highly competitive funding application. We would also generally hope that bridge funding is seamlessly integrated with other approaches that eliminate the need for fears of redundancies. But the Ulster example is exceptionally positive in that extension funding is fairly offered to research staff without the need to compete for it, and it allows time to search for additional resources where no future grant has already been secured, which remains an unreasonable and largely unworkable requirement under LSE's existing bridge fund. LSE could also consider how to ensure expedited access to an officer in PAGE and/or LSE Consulting to explore philanthropic fundraising options and consultancy contracts with quicker turnarounds.

If the research or policy staff member is ultimately made redundant because they are unable to attract additional funding during this period, Ulster University offers an enhanced redundancy payment modelled on the statutory calculation with no weekly cap plus 20% of the employee's annual salary, substantially exceeding LSE's formula under the PSS redundancy procedure.⁴³

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

- **Notice period extended by 3 months for research staff with at least 4 years' service**
- **Extended notice may continue longer until a new role begins**

Like the Ulster case, University of Manchester offers a better model of extending contracts with funding to explore options. The University negotiated with UCU in 2011 to extend notice periods by up to three months where research staff with external funding had at least four years' continuous service. They recently negotiated an updated policy that allows for research staff to request reassignment to short-term work in the interest of their career development, and the University is required to make efforts to accommodate these requests. Employees are also allocated working time during the extension to focus on searching for another role both within the University of Manchester and externally. If a new role is identified at Manchester that commences within the

⁴¹ University and College Union, *Support for Research Staff (2023)*, https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/14251/FOI-2023---support-for-research-staff/pdf/UCU_HE_FOIs_-_research_staff_support_Dec_23.pdf.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

three-month period, the extended notice period continues until the role begins as a form of ongoing bridge funding.⁴⁴

Although this model is also far from perfect – four years is too long a service requirement, and three months is far too short to succeed in fundraising, for example – it affirms that other employers recognise that additional time is needed to look for work and apply for grants. Especially where research and policy staff are employed at 1.0 FTE on a project grant, they do not formally have any working time allocated to the search for funding and have to spend their free time doing this work, which, if successful, generates significant income for the employer and, through the researcher's work, goes on to elevate the employer's research profile. LSE could consider how it is able to provide more automatic extension funding for research and policy staff, which should also enable their retention and the proper maintenance and application of their equal standing under the Academic Annex.

⁴⁴ Ibid.