

# School of International Relations 2020-2025 Strategy

## International Relations at St Andrews

Established in 2003, the School of International Relations at St Andrews is world-leading and one of the few UK departments focused solely on International Relations. The School has always been known for its excellent scholarship on security and terrorism. Over the past decade, the School has expanded. We have grown our areas of expertise to include international political theory, strategy studies, regional studies, peacebuilding, environmental justice, and international organisations and law. Our research reach is extensive, and our commitment to knowledge exchange and impact is internationally respected. We are frequently ranked as one of the top three Politics/International Relations departments in the UK. These rankings testify to the excellence of our teaching, research, and impact across a range of global and regional areas of study.

## Aspirations

The School of IR, as it aligns its five-year strategy with the University's strategic objectives, is motivated primarily by our hopes to achieve the following:

- 1) To prepare for the next REF cycle: As a school with **Global** reach and **World-leading** ambition, and strong policy impact, we aim to be amongst the top 10 schools in the UK for research outputs, impact creation, and research funding success. We will do this by bringing in an unmatched programme to support staff at all levels in creating 4-star research outputs, large grant applications, and powerful impact narratives. We will also pioneer new connections internally and externally to the University, including those that will create new opportunities as we prepare to relocate to the listed Madras site in the town centre, along with the Schools of Economics and Finance and Management.
- 2) To maintain our **World-Leading** place as the best International Relations school in the UK for teaching and student experience. We will do this by supporting staff as they press ahead with innovative teaching initiatives whilst supporting and developing new student-centred **Entrepreneurial** programmes.
- 3) To achieve our teaching and research goals, the school must continue to strengthen its commitment to **Diversity** at all levels, including supporting staff and students in their greater social responsibility efforts. This commitment to EDI issues will include supporting existing staff at all levels, the hiring of new staff, the recruitment of students, and the support of our research efforts—so that in 5 years, we will be more diverse at all levels. We will prepare for an Athena SWAN silver award with full-school participation as a tangible sign of our commitment to this effort.

## Research Strategy

The School of IR at St Andrews will continue as a centre for world-leading research outputs and impact projects in a way that fosters collaboration and celebrates our wide-ranging research and impact achievements. This will position the School to be in the top 10 in REF 2028. We intend to create an environment that protects and nurtures a diverse and flexible research community that allows staff members at all levels to generate research and impact projects stemming from their interests and creativity. In particular, we wish to make sure our research continues to have a strong policy impact. Staff in the School are actively involved in

global impact activities for the UN, NATO, state governments in Europe, Central and South Asia, Oceania, and the Americas, and local and international NGOs in Scotland, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. We intend for our impact projects to grow, cementing our place at the forefront of impact initiatives.

As part of this, we also wish to increase the overall amount of grant capture achieved by members of the School to be amongst the top-10 in the UK (on a per-capita basis). At the same time, this will be achieved by incentivising staff members to apply for large grants that directly support their research ambitions—and not compel them to reach specific financial targets.

In summation, our research strategy is aimed at the creation of excellence across the board with the following three objectives in mind:

- Support all research staff to produce at least one four-star research output in the next REF cycle by introducing book workshops and internal teaching buy-outs. (A)
- Invest substantially in impact projects, from the nascent to the more mature, fostering a more robust impact profile and building relationships between the School and actors in the wider local, national, and international community. (B)
- Increasing the number and amount of our grant applications significantly through internal seed funding. (C)

#### Growing Research and Impact Excellence through our Centres, Institutes, and Think-tanks

To help achieve our ambitious research/impact/grant capture goals, we started to refresh our existing research centres/institutes/think tanks (CITs) in 2020. CITs have shown they are some of the most important hubs for our research, bringing together colleagues with shared interests but often different perspectives. Having completed a six-month review process of research centres and emerging research clusters, we have put in place a series of research/impact/grant capture expectations for our CITs. Each centre will create an end of process report on how it plans to do the following to achieve our three fundamental research objectives.

- To achieve (A), our CITs will foster a culture of excellence, bring world-leading scholars to the School and help publicise the excellent scholarship being produced by our members. We expect all CITs to continue supporting a broad array of events and programming to stimulate and propel staff output production.
- To achieve (B), our CITs will be expected to actively cultivate at least one potential REF impact case study, ideally inclusive of multiple members. Additionally, CITs should support junior scholars to begin impact and engagement through mentoring, participation in outreach events, and inclusion in existing networks.
- To achieve (C), at least one active member of each of our CITs will be expected to submit a large grant bid (£500,000) at least every three years.

#### Research Advancement Support Programme

Having set such ambitious expectations of our CITs and our members in general, we will support and incentivise their efforts through an ambitious programme of strategic support: Research Advancement Support Programme (RASP). RASP involves a layered system of three distinct financial and administrative support programmes for the next five years. RASP aims to support staff at all stages in their career and assist them in different ways to produce excellent research outputs and policy-focused impact projects while creating a steady supply of highly well-conceived and prepared large grant bids. These projects will help further project our presence to a global audience and at the same time help foster more significant links across the University. We would encourage staff members to apply for them to help their work with other Schools in the University, such as Economics and Finance and Management—with whom we will be co-locating in the future.

The layers would be: (See Appendix C for more detail.)

- **Major Awards:** This is seed money to support the preparation of an extensive grant application and the creation of 4-star research and impact contributions. The seed money can be used for teaching relief, research trips and fieldwork, and/or partner work for grant/output collaboration.
- **Project Network Awards:** This award is to fund a more speculative or nebulous project with the intended aim of a 4-star research or impact project. Because this project is more nascent, it is a smaller funding pot to support research trips and fieldwork, partner work for output/knowledge exchange/collaborations, and/or knowledge exchange events or projects to build a network.
- **Book Workshops:** The final award is aimed at helping ECRs with their monographs in the pre-publication stage by inviting senior and more experienced 'names' in the field to provide extensive feedback on a final monograph draft.

Together with the CIT reform process, the School will realise:

- At a minimum, ten large grant applications
- At least 20 4-star rated research outputs
- Support for up to 4 possible impact narratives a year

### Elevating Our Research Profile

Finally, elevating our research profile can also be accomplished by strengthening the School's international partnerships and online presence globally and locally. With the establishment of the School's Professor of Practice and practitioners-in-residence, the School seeks to become a place that brings policy-makers to St Andrews. We have a strong history of getting our research to others across the world, and, now, we want to make St Andrews a place that hosts globally critical, diplomatic, and agenda-setting discussions. Through the relationships we create, our research reach will grow.

We are also in the process of building a holistic media strategy. The following steps are to develop a more prominent online profile:

- Create a video that highlights the breadth of what the School offers in terms of teaching, research, knowledge exchange, and outreach;
- Start a podcasting series that takes off where the video leaves off, allowing us to explore the depth of our various initiatives, research projects, and pedagogical programmes;
- Devise a plan of action with Corporate Communications on retweeting, sharing, and general engagement with our staff members.

### **Teaching and Education Strategy**

The School of IR has an empirical record of teaching excellence evidenced in our exemplary rankings. Our academic and professional services staff have been nominated and won numerous internal and external teaching awards. We aim to maintain our position by protecting our small class sizes and continuing to emphasise research-led teaching. We have recently demonstrated a remarkable ability to enhance student engagement opportunities within our academic programmes and, more broadly, within the school. Such initiatives include:

- undergraduate and postgraduate student internships through the Centre for Global Law and Governance (CGLG) and the Institute for Middle East, Central Asia, and Caucuses Studies (MECACS);
- the Third Generation Project's Emerging Researchers programme;
- an inter-institutional (with University of Edinburgh and Glasgow University) annual research conference for our International Security Studies MLitt programme;

- hosting the Global Challenges Programme;
- publishing student research in our in-house journal, *Contemporary Voices: St Andrews Journal in International Relations*;
- forthcoming mediation accreditation for students in our new Peacebuilding and Mediation MLitt;
- forthcoming internship as media editor for the new podcast series;
- expanding and encouraging academic staff participation in University programmes, such as the Laidlaw Scholarship programme, the University's Undergraduate Research Assistance Scheme, and Vertically Integrated Projects (VIPs).

These successes encourage us to develop student engagement initiatives further while broadening the location of learning from the classroom to the School and the wider community.

We aim to substantially enhance these efforts over the next five years by focusing resources in three key areas:

- increasing student engagement with co-curricular activities through the creation of an education-focused Centre for Application, Practice, and Entrepreneurism (CAPE);
- enhancing the competitiveness of our postgraduate training for PGR students, notably by introducing the Pre-Doctoral Teaching Fellowships;
- and the relaunching of the School's MRes programme.

#### Centre for Application, Practice, and Entrepreneurialism (CAPE)

Our most exciting teaching and education goal is creating a Centre for Application, Practice, and Entrepreneurialism (CAPE) in the School of IR. In the School of IR, we identify with the entrepreneurial "opportunities to enrich learning, giv[ing] students practical opportunities to apply their learning" to the "creation of cultural, social, and economic values" from the University's Strategy. CAPE will be a centralised space where students can learn more about the School's co-curricular offerings, one that will help them draw connections between their modules and the wider world. It will help students:

- identify modules with entrepreneurial activities, including VIPs or service-learning opportunities,
- find placements for internships and work,
- acquire and identify lateral skills to help students build a competitive edge for their future careers,
- and apply their knowledge beyond the University walls.

Building student capacities for application, practice, and entrepreneurialism will take time and resources. CAPE leadership will require an administrative Director of Entrepreneurial Education position who works closely with the Associate Dean for Education (Arts and Divinity) and the Careers Centre. The Director will:

- centralise the tasks of building student engagement with our co-curricular programmes,
- serve as a specialised student advisor,
- fill the Careers Link role,
- and share with staff and students the knowledge of best practices on internships, service-learning, project-based learning, and pedagogical travel funding applications.

Additionally, the Director of Entrepreneurial Education will be responsible for implementing an Engagement Passport (see Appendix D). Engagement Passports will emphasise the fluid boundaries between and among our CITs, clusters, and programmes, allowing students to 'travel intellectually' and recognise interconnections amid our ongoing innovative applications

and research practices. The Engagement Passport will showcase a student's level of co-curricular engagement, and we intend that this will be noted on their transcripts.

### Improved PGR Student Training and Professional Development

The advancement of our PGR students' career progression is essential to the School. Currently, our students serve a crucial role in tutoring our sub-honours students. PGR tutoring is pragmatic and vital: it is a necessary component in keeping IR tutorial sizes small. It is key to providing PGR students with the professionalisation skills needed to be competitive on the job market. Still, we believe we could do more to support our PGR students.

To provide our PGR students with a critical edge in the marketplace, they need the option of teaching at the honours level. The Pre-Doctoral Teaching Fellowships are an opportunity for at least two PGR students a year, both with existing tutoring experience, to actively design and deliver an honours module in the School. Working with the module coordinator as a mentor, the PGR student would be asked to suggest adjustments that could be made to an existing module and would be responsible for creating and delivering one-third of the lectures and tutorials. Notably, both parties receive feedback on their teaching in this collaborative undertaking.

Looking ahead to the School's move to the Madras Social Sciences site, the School would like to relaunch our MRes programme focusing on interdisciplinary quantitative methodological training, creating a niche programme to help address the growing in-house need for such activity. With a focus on quantitative and statistical methods, it can cement interdisciplinary teaching across the Social Sciences.

### **Expanding Diversity and Inclusion**

As a discipline committed to knowledge about the international system and global politics, we must be equally committed to equality, diversity, and inclusivity, not just as a form of social responsibility but as a crucial piece of our research and education strategy. In recent years, the School has

- introduced a childcare fund for our PGR students,
- changed our hiring approach to attract more diverse applicants,
- initiated curriculum reflections to prompt diversification of reading lists,
- and formalised mentoring arrangements and activities for staff, particularly Early Career Researchers and PGR students.

We champion all forms of diversity, seeking to hire individuals from under-represented backgrounds alongside a commitment to widening access for students. Our commitment to diversity is also seen in the variety of what we teach, including human rights, migration, ethnic conflict, gender, race, and queer theory, and how we teach it. Our teaching and research speak to social responsibility, seeing our focus on conflict-writ-large, peacebuilding, justice, and sustainability as a means of grappling with some of the pressing issues facing Scotland, the UK, and the rest of the globe. Therefore, we have four goals in this area:

1. apply for Athena SWAN Silver Award
2. continue diversification in staffing
3. launch a seminar series on critical race, activism, and decolonisation
4. and widen student access, including through scholarships.

We were awarded the Athena SWAN Bronze in Spring 2019, and we will apply for a Silver Award in 2023. The School actively implements our Bronze Action Plan, focusing on hiring, PGR and ECR support, and staff training.

We know that the more diverse our staff are, the better our students and research outputs. Students learn better and continue with a programme when they see themselves in those who lecture to them. Research is more robust when it better reflects the key debates and incorporates a plurality of perspectives. Therefore, our staffing strategy will prioritise multiple forms of diversification, including gender, race, and socio-economic backgrounds.

We continue to commit ourselves to hold conversations about inclusivity. The School is launching a seminar series on Critical Race, Activism, and Decolonisation. The steering committee has been formed, and the first event was held in April 2021.

Finally, we will persist in widening participation. We aim to dedicate income from various activities to support our scholarship fund. We will also continue to work with Development on fundraising towards this goal. We want to keep widening access to students from areas noted by the SIMD at the undergraduate level. At the MLitt level, we will use scholarships to drive even more competitive applications. Finally, for our PGRs, we will at least double our Handsels and support the development of the post-doctorate programme.

## **Conclusion**

Building on these three areas, the School of International Relations will raise its research profile, support our staff as they excel at research and teaching, continue to develop innovative pedagogy, and enable students to be critically aware of the world around them, championing multiple forms of diversity and encouraging inclusive practices.