

**The  
British  
Academy  
Strategic  
Plan**

2018–2022



# Foreword

## Professor Sir David Cannadine



The British Academy consists of more than one thousand Fellows, who are distinguished academics from across the broad range of the humanities and social sciences. As its President I am delighted to have this opportunity to introduce our Strategic Plan for 2018–2022.

The Academy exists to recognise and support outstanding scholarly achievement in the humanities and social sciences and to promote their public value. One of the ways in which we do this is by putting our collective knowledge and ideas to work to try to shape a better world.

That knowledge and those ideas are vital if we are to engage with such timeless issues as identity and belonging, cohesive societies and the value of democracy; and with such pressing contemporary concerns as climate change, modern slavery, the changing nature of work and artificial intelligence.

The wisdom, insights and perspectives that our Fellows and their subjects provide are of crucial importance in helping us understand how our world came to be the way it is, and in enabling us to recognise and manage the challenging changes of our own times.

It is in this context that we have developed our Strategic Plan, which sets out what the British Academy aims to accomplish across the next four years, as we continue to champion the humanities and the social sciences, and as we engage with today's world, and with tomorrow's world, too.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'David Cannadine'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Professor Sir David Cannadine  
*President*



*The humanities  
and social sciences  
are essential if  
we are to tackle  
the complex  
challenges facing  
societies today*



# Our purpose

To deepen understanding of people, societies and cultures, enabling everyone to learn, progress and prosper.

The British Academy inspires, supports and promotes outstanding achievement and global advances in the humanities and social sciences.

We are a fellowship of over 1000 of the most outstanding academics and an international community of leading experts focused on people, culture and societies.

We are the voice for the humanities and social sciences. We use insights from the past and the present to help shape the future, by influencing policy and affecting change in the UK and overseas.



# Our Values

## Leadership

We count among our Fellowship the world's leading minds from the humanities and social sciences. We are committed to identifying and supporting the next generation of leaders. We invest in the most outstanding and exciting people and projects in our field, wherever they are found, to advance our disciplines.

## Integrity

We act always on evidence and our academic independence is paramount and non-negotiable. Our long history of trustworthiness and impartiality provides the foundation for our enduring relevance.

## Enlightenment

We believe in the value of knowledge both for personal enrichment and for the health of society. We are continually unlocking new insight and fresh perspectives. We engage with curious minds and promote a life of learning. We help to provide the very best insight into people, culture and societies.

## Connectedness

We collaborate with partners across the globe, bringing people together to exchange knowledge and test reasoning. We demonstrate the relevance of our research to all people, societies and to the future of humanity. We are active internationally, funding research of global significance, and we use our convening power to bring together diverse communities. We share ideas to shape policy and enrich public debate.

# Our strategic priorities

This strategic plan sets out the priority areas that the Academy will focus on over the next four years.

The humanities and social sciences are essential if we are to tackle the complex and interconnected challenges facing societies today. Through the connections between our disciplines and those in science and technology, including the life-sciences, we will be better able to understand and shape the great themes of our age. This includes the future of work, peace, trust, justice and equity, global security, demographic and technological change, respect for diversity and difference.

Our work as an Academy and the research we will fund over the next four years will touch on some of these key themes as well as continuing to advance and champion research into the timeless aspects of culture and society that help us to understand what it means to be human.

We will maximise our global reach and engagement too, through our Corresponding Fellows, research funding, global partnerships, collaboration with sister academies, capacity building programmes, and support for the British International Research Institutes.

As the national voice of the humanities and social sciences, we will demonstrate and articulate the value of our disciplines and the critical role they play in deepening understanding and shaping a better world.

We will support the best ideas and insights both through our Fellowship of leading academics and our extensive support for research both in the UK and internationally, fostering the next generation of researchers. We will apply all this knowledge and expertise for the common good.

Our vision is for a humanities and social sciences community that is genuinely diverse. Over the next four years we intend to play a greater role within higher education in making that so – through our own funding schemes and in partnership with universities and others to examine the barriers that prevent people of particular backgrounds from progressing in their academic careers. We will ensure that our community is representative of all corners of the UK, reflects new subjects and developments within disciplines as well as acting to preserve those subjects that are at risk.

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*To speak up for the humanities  
and social sciences*

2

*To invest in the very best  
researchers and research*

3

*To inform and enrich debate around  
society's greatest questions*

4

*To ensure sustained international  
engagement and collaboration*

5

*To make the most of our assets to  
secure the Academy for the future*

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For further information  
about our strategic priorities visit:  
[thebritishacademy.ac.uk](http://thebritishacademy.ac.uk)

# To speak up for the humanities and social sciences

## Context

The humanities and social sciences and those who study them enrich and deepen our understanding of the world around us. Since its creation, the British Academy has celebrated these subjects and demonstrated their contribution to the understanding of humanity, economies and societies. Over time we have influenced policies on the assessment and funding of research and teaching and, with other national academics, on the funding of research and innovation as well as on higher education and skills. We recognise that the next generation of academics in this field is facing a new and different sets of challenges in pursuing their careers. As higher education in the UK undergoes a period of great change and uncertainty, we must continue to speak up for the immense value of our subjects and those who study them.

## Our vision for 2022

We will emphasise the centrality of our subjects in a world of rapid change and continue to develop the evidence and the arguments that articulate the value of our subjects. We will be visible at the heart of discussion, debate and policy and strategy-setting in higher education and the future of academic research in the UK and internationally, including discussions on issues such as open science. We will mobilise our community of Fellows, researchers and all those whose work is structured by reason and evidence, to form a powerful voice that celebrates our subjects and the values they represent. Working with all of these individuals and organisations as partners, we will build a strong coalition that champions our disciplines. We will use our national voice to speak up for a research base that reflects our society, highlighting the barriers that prevent a diversity of gender, age and ethnicity at the top levels within our disciplines. This extends to ensuring the Academy is reflecting new ways of thinking within our disciplines and celebrating the increasing geographical spread of excellence within UK higher education.

## To deliver our vision we will

Deliver a programme of public engagement, using digital communications to reach a wider audience, to showcase the ideas of our disciplines and the people behind them to enrich public understanding and inspire the scholars of the future.

Create the narrative, arguments and evidence to make a powerful case for our disciplines and demonstrate the connectivity between our subjects and those within the sciences.

Take the Academy out beyond its physical home in London to engage throughout the UK and beyond with those in higher education, policymaking and funding.

Monitor the health of our disciplines (such as languages) and use our influence to shape the conditions that will enable them to thrive.

Strengthen partnerships with academics, funders, policymakers and others at home and overseas, building a coalition of powerful voices who can help us to speak up for our subjects.

Work with the sectors that use the skills, expertise and research fostered by our subjects to articulate the significance and value of our disciplines.



# To invest in the very best researchers and research

## Context

Researchers are the lifeblood of the UK's knowledge economy and must be cherished and supported. Our funding helps scholars take the next step, wherever they may be in their academic journey: supporting the next generation, as they take up postdoctoral roles, through to enabling a mid career academic to write a key publication. The British Academy provides the platform for researchers to achieve a wider impact, and we have supported much innovative, often pioneering, research. Our funding has nurtured many careers at an early stage and has been instrumental in creating a sustainable research community in the UK and worldwide. Many of our Fellows were recipients of our funding earlier in their careers and cite this investment as a significant moment in what they have gone on to achieve.

## Our vision for 2022

We will be recognised as a pivotal organisation in ensuring the UK's research capacity remains world class, supporting UK researchers to work abroad to build international experience and collaborations. We will continue to invest in the UK's top research talent to enable scholars to develop and extend their research, and to support and nurture the ambition of the next generation of researchers. We will fund research excellence wherever it is found and by whomever it is done – including enhancing the UK research base by bringing the best in the world to our universities through the provision of Fellowships. There will be greater interaction between our funded researchers, with increased support, mentoring and collaboration between those at different stages of their academic careers. Our funded researchers will be visible in the public and policy realms, using the skills and support that we have provided and exploiting new technologies to deliver meaningful and impactful engagement.

## To deliver our vision we will

Support the very best researchers and emerging ideas in our subjects through our flagship schemes and by exploring new funding streams to provide targeted support for excellent researchers in under-represented groups in academia.

Enhance our support for British Academy funded researchers to enable them to experiment more, explore new modes of scholarship, public and policy engagement and dissemination and make the most of emerging technologies.

Develop our research programmes for early career researchers in the humanities and social sciences.

Create a more active network of current and past award holders and Fellows to support the work of the Academy and to help us make the case for our subjects.

# To inform and enrich debate around society's greatest questions

## Context

In all that we do, the Academy seeks to provide answers to society's questions: from timeless curiosity about the nature of societies and cultures, to the most pressing challenges of the modern world, such as the effects of climate change and the future of work. We have brought together leading academics from different disciplines and from around the world to pursue new areas of enquiry, generate innovative ideas and respond to many of the great questions facing humanity today. These range from social integration to the future of work; from the governance of our country, to how we manage and use big data; and from sustainable development to the skills needed to support the Government's Industrial Strategy.

## Our vision for 2022

The Academy will highlight the issues that matter and put these on the policy map with a range of evidence and analysis, drawn from our unique resource of the Fellowship and our funded researchers, and drawing in the wider humanities and social sciences community. We will be recognised among policymakers and expert practitioners as a place that provides the very best insight from these disciplines as they form their opinions and positions. We will make that resource available for the common good too, intervening in public debates about the big issues of our time and being seen as a trusted and robust source of reason, evidence and insight.

## To deliver our vision we will

Work with our Fellowship and research community to identify the big issues of our time where the humanities and social sciences are well-placed to offer insight, knowledge and expertise and get these issues onto the policy agenda.

Be strategic and focus our efforts and approach on the issues where the Academy and its Fellowship is best placed to make a unique contribution.

Strengthen our relationships with Government, policymakers and other stakeholders to ensure that our work helps shape policy and practice.

Demonstrate how our academic disciplines, including the study of the past, can be applied to the analysis of contemporary issues.

# To ensure sustained international engagement and collaboration

## Context

Wherever you look around the world, researchers play an important role in public and intellectual life. It will take fresh perspectives and collaboration across disciplinary and geographical boundaries to respond to the complex and interconnected questions that face our society. We want to ensure the full and active participation of British researchers amidst the global community of academics and help to uphold and develop open and vibrant centres of inquiry and scholarship around the world. A significant increase in funding for international programmes and collaborations has enabled the Academy to extend our global reach, build new partnerships in strategic areas of the world, support the development of UK and international researchers, and influence national and international policies benefiting research in the humanities and the social sciences.

## Our vision for 2022

The Academy will be recognised as playing a key role in convening international expertise to inform and influence global policy debates. In doing so, we shall demonstrate the importance of the humanities and social sciences in addressing today's global challenges. Our role as a convenor will also enable us to facilitate greater knowledge and cultural exchange, harnessing the excellence and expertise of the humanities and social sciences community worldwide to foster global cultural understanding and engagement. We will continue to advocate strongly for the value of international collaboration and mobility and aim to strengthen international research and knowledge systems.

## To deliver our vision we will

Continue to deliver international research funding programmes, including challenge-led research programmes where they bring together scholars from different disciplines.

Work with our sister academies and other bodies to champion and strengthen the voice and influence of the humanities and social sciences in Europe and the rest of the world.

Develop our programmes to attract early career global talent and world-leading senior researchers to the UK.

Foster UK-international partnerships and exchange, by expanding our global network of strategic partnerships for the future.

Support the network of British International Research Institutes in showcasing its value and significance to stakeholders.

Enhance new capacity building initiatives in targeted countries, linking them up with UK counterparts; and demonstrate the value and impact of the Academy's international activities.

# To make the most of our assets to secure the Academy for the future

## Context

In order to fulfil the potential of the Academy, we must place ourselves on a strong and stable footing. We have increased our financial, physical and human resources significantly over the past few years, as our income, physical footprint and staffing have doubled in size. We have invested more in our ability to fundraise from philanthropic sources, individuals and other bodies and we continue to generate valuable unrestricted funds through the use of our distinctive home at 10–11 Carlton House Terrace. Our distinguished, world-leading Fellows give tirelessly to the work of the British Academy, with many thousands of unremunerated hours each year, most notably in the form of expert peer review, public and policy engagement activities as well as countless other invaluable contributions. We have a dedicated and expert staff who drive forward our programmes and activities. These are all unique, distinctive resources and capabilities and ones we intend to deploy to greater advantage during the lifetime of this strategic plan.

## Our vision for 2022

We will transform the use of our home at 10–11 Carlton House Terrace, further developing its infrastructure, and renewing our business processes. We will increase and broaden our capital base. Our culture will be one of flexibility, innovation and continuous improvement. We will support, train and develop all our staff to support the work of the Academy. We will be proactive in identifying ways in which the organisation and its people can reflect the full diversity of society.

## To deliver our vision we will

Look to secure our long-term future at our home on Carlton House Terrace and undertake a transformative project to develop a building which fosters our values and champions the humanities and social sciences, and their relevance, to new audiences.

Work with the other National Academies to make a compelling case to Government for investment of GDP in research and development, and to secure funding for our own activities at the British Academy, especially in the lead up to the next Comprehensive Spending Review in 2019.

Build strategic partnerships with a range of public, philanthropic and third sector organisations, in the UK. And internationally, who share our values and vision.

Underpin the strategy with sound financial plans and effective financial management; we will continue to increase our financial resources through venue hire and philanthropic donations, and seek to make the most of those resources by investing where return is greatest, working smarter and more flexibly across the Academy.

Support the implementation of this strategy by upholding sound risk management and governance principles appropriate to a Fellowship, National Academy and independent charity.

**Find us**

The British Academy  
10–11 Carlton House Terrace  
London, SW1Y 5AH

020 7969 5200

[thebritishacademy.ac.uk](http://thebritishacademy.ac.uk)

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