

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE



Supporting the early careers
of African researchers

The British Academy and
The Association of Commonwealth Universities



BRITISH
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**The Association
of Commonwealth
Universities**

THE NAIROBI PROCESS

Foundations for the Future: Supporting the early careers of African researchers

A paper commissioned by the British Academy
as part of the Nairobi Process

The British Academy
The Association of Commonwealth Universities

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Executive Summary

There is an urgent need to invest in talented individuals to ensure that Africa has a strong foundation of researchers, producing high quality research, and able to train successive generations. But it is vital that these investments in people are designed to strengthen the wider research base in universities and their faculties and departments. Many African universities lack sufficient numbers of PhD-qualified staff, and training new generations of doctoral students is particularly critical. But even where doctoral students are being trained – at home or abroad – they are not always able to build on their PhDs and to develop successful research careers.

This paper is a follow-up to The Nairobi Report, published by the British Academy and the Association of Commonwealth Universities in 2009. It offers an analysis of the challenges facing early career researchers in African universities, drawing on the discussions which led to the earlier Nairobi study, subsequent consultations, and on parallel work by other organisations. It identifies the key areas in which further support needs to be provided, and suggests ways in which new collaborative mechanisms might be designed in order to do this. The focus of this and the earlier Nairobi Report is on relationships between Africa and the UK, but much of what we discuss is undoubtedly relevant to research links within the African continent, as well as between Africa and other regions.

The immediate post-PhD years are vital: it is during this time that the expertise, skills and passion for research developed through postgraduate study are cemented, additional skills and greater confidence developed, first publications achieved, and new research conceived and initiated. However, many doctoral graduates struggle to establish their careers in these early years. This is often the result of barriers at institutional level. Some of these are financial in terms of resources and facilities. But critically many relate to institutional cultures and attitudes to research – cultures which support, protect and advance intellectual endeavour, support emerging scholarship, emphasise collegiality and communities of research, encourage vertical relationships within faculties, and set policies which protect and advance junior academic careers. Greater recognition and support for researchers in their immediately post-PhD years is critical to ensure that available talent is not lost. Unless we collectively address this, the brightest African scholars are liable to sink beneath waves of administration and teaching, rarely to be encountered in research communities again.

We identify here six areas where support is needed to ensure brighter prospects for African early career researchers.

1. Opportunities to stay connected to their peers, locally, regionally and internationally, through networks and conferences, and through participating in their respective research communities.
2. Guidance and support to enable the development of PhD work into publishable form and secure their first peer reviewed articles.
3. Time and assistance to define a research agenda, design new projects, and secure funding to enable it.
4. Access to modest seed funding to build on doctoral work, or to explore new ideas.
5. The ability to supervise future doctoral students of their own, in order to contribute to the research base of their departments.
6. A supportive institutional context, where the institution and its senior academics seek to enable their progression, encourage research and foster collegiality and mentorship.

In the longer term much of this will only be achieved and sustained by African universities developing their research agendas locally, and putting in place the policies and frameworks needed to prioritise and support their emerging researchers. This is likely to require a national-level commitment to supporting emerging

researchers, in addition to the creation or re-thinking of institutional frameworks where these are lacking. There are clear opportunities, however, and a strong logic, for collaborative mechanisms to support this in the medium term, and longer term to foster continued links between research communities between and within regions. African universities, and their partner universities overseas, have much to gain from stronger links at early career level. In the context of UK research, we believe that there is a strong argument for UK universities to increase their engagement with African universities and scholars in order to support their own research ambitions, to strengthen the UK's research base, and to add to the vitality of the UK scholarly environment.

The UK has a strong tradition of research with and in Africa. There is a plethora of activities and initiatives within individual universities – some research-driven, some around teaching support, and many with broader 'development' aims – and substantial funding from UK-based research councils and agencies. Yet it is relatively dispersed in nature, particularly in the extent to which it offers support at the early career level. Finding a means of framing and linking this activity better would be valuable, could strengthen the UK's support overall, and might feasibly enable additional funding to be secured.

Despite the UK's strong Africa-orientated research profile, and a range of funding and support initiatives, the humanities and social sciences are often overlooked, particularly beyond the more obviously development-related aspects of social and economic sciences work. While there is undoubtedly a clear need to support early career work in all disciplines, ensuring that the humanities and social sciences are not neglected – particularly those which are not directly linked to global development concerns – is vital if African scholarship and thinking is to take its rightful place internationally, African ideas and epistemologies are to be represented in academic and public debates, if genuinely African solutions to African problems are to be conceived, and if African successes and strengths are to be properly and fully celebrated.

There are a number of ways in which further support might be offered to African early career researchers, including PhD extensions, short postdoctoral fellowships, regional summer schools in Africa, collaborative research projects, distance support capitalising on the potential of online communications and platforms, and reintegration grants or seed funding for returning scholars. All of these are likely to be valuable elements of any package of support, but on their own do not fully address the needs we identify.

We conclude by suggesting a number of elements which ought to inform the thinking around future early career support, and around UK-Africa links which seek to enhance the development of researchers in their immediate post-PhD years.

1. The need to improve our picture of the existing landscape of funding, support and activity, and to capture this where possible for the benefit of the research funding and policy community, but also for scholars themselves, to enable opportunities, synergies and gaps to be identified.
2. The need to continue the conversation, building on the Nairobi discussions, but specifically considering UK support to African early career research, and the UK's intellectual engagement with the next generation African scholarship.
3. The need to ensure early career needs are more systematically and critically recognised in the design of future funding schemes, or successive rounds of existing schemes.
4. The need to ensure existing investments in early career training, particularly doctoral scholarships, are enhanced and that they serve as the foundations for continued research relationships, so that newly trained scholars do not simply disappear from research, and so that collaborative work can grow.
5. The need to consider new types of fellowship provision, whilst recognising the importance of existing schemes. Specifically considering what the most suitable form would be for an early career, as opposed to mid-career, fellowship, such that junior researchers could both integrate and reintegrate themselves at home, while remaining connected to colleagues elsewhere.

6. The need to consider ways in which UK support can be delivered within Africa, and not only on UK campuses, and the ways in which this might benefit early career researchers in both Africa and the UK, enabling them to build the communities of scholarship on which they will depend.
7. The need to ensure that senior academics are not overlooked in the drive to support emerging scholars, and to envisage efforts to revitalise research as a fundamentally intergenerational endeavour.

About the Nairobi Process

The work which enabled this study to be undertaken has been supported by the British Academy as part of on-going programme of work under what has become known as the ‘Nairobi Process’. Following the publication of the The Nairobi Report in 2009, this was the term coined by Prof. Paschal Mihyo of OSSREA (Organisation for Social Science Research in East and Southern Africa), to describe the range of initiatives and activities that shared a particular perspective with the Report, and were in sympathy with its ambitions, if not directly generated by it. More specifically, it is used here to capture the sense of a continued conversation between and with researchers who share an interest in and commitment to African higher education and to African studies more broadly. We hope that this conversation continues to grow, but that more importantly, it helps to initiate and contribute to visible improvements in research and scholarship in and of Africa.

This report takes one of the key themes of the Nairobi Report – the early research career – and attempts to further analyse needs and potential solutions. We thank the many staff of the various UK universities who took time to contribute their experiences and ideas, as well as alumni of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission who shared their own observations of early career needs. Discussions took place from October 2010 to January 2011. In the UK particular thanks are due to colleagues from the universities of Bath, Lancaster, Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores, Manchester, Nottingham, Hull, Salford, St Andrew’s and Warwick, and from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), University College London (UCL), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Universities UK and UKCDS who took the time to discuss these issues in more depth.

A draft of this paper was presented and discussed at a workshop jointly convened and organised by the British Academy, Higher Education South Africa (HESA) and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) on ‘Foundations for the Future: Supporting Early Career Research in Africa’, held at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa on 16 February 2011. Thanks are therefore due to colleagues from the universities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Limpopo, North West, Pretoria, South Africa (UNISA), Venda, Central University of Technology, Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique) and Botswana, and colleagues from the Africa Institute of South Africa, Higher Education South Africa, the Academy of Science of South Africa, the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research, the National Research Foundation (South Africa), and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Their collective ideas, experiences, criticisms and challenges have contributed greatly to this paper.

This paper has been written by Jonathan Harle at the ACU but with considerable advice and guidance from Dr John Kirkland and Nick Mulhern at the ACU, and Prof. Graham Furniss, Rachel Paniagua and Natasha Bevan at the British Academy.

1. Introduction: building on The Nairobi Report

‘The humanities and social sciences are critical and much needed fields of scholarship; their value must be emphasised and their profile raised. The perspectives and knowledge which they offer on history, culture, social interaction, political systems, economics and much more are vital to development and well-being.... Securing space for these conversations will be essential if Africa is to confidently articulate its own identity, define its own approaches and to build on the foundations of its own scholarship.... Such understanding will be vital if scientific and technical knowledge is to be effectively adapted and applied to tackling problems in public health or the environment. Beyond individual subjects, the humanities and social sciences are important for the analytical and critical abilities which they help to cultivate in their students, and the debates which they foster on the major issues facing the world today.’ The Nairobi Report, 2009¹

- 1.1 *The Nairobi Report*, published jointly by the British Academy and the Association of Commonwealth Universities in 2009, urged universities and funding bodies to re-invest in African scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, and presented a series of frameworks outlining how research might be rejuvenated. The importance of the early research career, and specifically the years immediately following doctoral study, emerged as one of the report’s central themes, and was felt to be sufficiently critical to warrant subsequent exploration. As the report argued, “The key to strengthening the humanities and social sciences will be to invest in individuals, to ensure that Africa has a strong foundation of researchers, producing good research and able to train successive generations... it is individuals who can, with appropriate support, galvanise activity within their departments and build research and postgraduate programmes around them”.
- 1.2 The report was an attempt not only to set out the difficulties that African researchers faced, but to conceive of practical ways of tackling these, with a particular emphasis on how collaboration with UK colleagues might help. Looking specifically, and in greater detail, in this paper at the early stages of a researcher’s career brings many of the wider problems facing research into clearer focus. It is evident that without strong support and mentoring early in a scholar’s career – the period during which they emerge from the research training of the PhD to establish themselves as fully-fledged academics – the future of high quality African research will be in jeopardy, and prior investments in doctoral level training will be imperilled. To quote again from *The Nairobi Report*, “Sustaining research, and training successive generations, depends on the flow of ideas, knowledge and skills from experienced researchers to their junior colleagues.” In short, a change of emphasis towards support for early career researchers is essential if the next generation of scholars is to be nurtured, and if they are to be able in turn to reproduce themselves to ensure the vitality of research into the future. Advancing early careers does not mean that *only* junior researchers are supported. Acknowledging the critical place of senior academics in the process – and their own research needs and interests – is vital, and mechanisms which support both to work together need to be explored.
- 1.3 This paper provides an analysis of the problems that early career researchers face, but is also concerned to set out mechanisms through which these challenges might be addressed. Since *The Nairobi Report* was published new initiatives have been established, and others have come to our attention. These are noted here where appropriate, and in doing so we hope that this paper also goes some way towards documenting existing activity and, where possible, learns from these wider experiences. It also draws on a further study undertaken by the ACU for Arcadia which explored the obstacles African researchers encountered in accessing online research resources, including scholarly journals,² in addition to insights from the ACU’s recent involvement in the early phases of a new social sciences research capacity initiative.³ *The Nairobi Report* was not the only study to highlight the early career needs of African scholars, and the issue has

¹ British Academy/ACU, 2009

² Harle, 2010

³ This is the DFID-funded Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR). The ACU undertook two scoping studies for this project, which although not directly quoted here, have naturally informed the thinking of this study. These will ultimately be publically available from www.pasgr.org.

received attention in much recent discussion. The now disbanded US foundations' Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, for example, initiated important conversations on the next generation of academics,⁴ and the Carnegie Corporation has retained this as a focus of its continued programme in Africa.⁵

- 1.4 It is worth noting that support for doctoral level work is not within the mandate of the British Academy, and our emphasis here is on what can be done to support work at postdoctoral level. Nevertheless, we recognise that the foundations laid at doctoral level are critical, and must be understood as part of any meaningful intervention at successive levels.

A note on context

- 1.5 This paper was commissioned by the British Academy as part of on-going work under the 'Nairobi Process',⁶ building on *The Nairobi Report*,⁷ which was published in 2009, and a preliminary paper published in 2007.⁸ The objective of this study was to provide an analysis of the difficulties that early career African researchers face, to determine the extent to which UK universities were interested and active in collaborating with African institutions to support the development of early career scholars, and to propose ways in which collaborative mechanisms might be developed to address these needs. The study took the priorities and needs identified by African researchers through the Nairobi Process as a starting point, supplementing this with other studies, but using this opportunity primarily to consult UK academics and institutions on their potential involvement in future initiatives.
- 1.6 *The Nairobi Report* focused specifically on the humanities and social sciences, but many of the issues on which it touched, and the frameworks it suggested, are manifestly applicable to research in any discipline. This paper retains a focus on UK/African relationships, and on the humanities and social sciences. Nevertheless, much of what it presents will be applicable to collaboration between Africa and other regions, within Africa, and on work in other disciplines. We use the term early career researcher to indicate those who have completed doctoral training, and who are what is commonly termed postdoctoral researchers. Recognising that the restriction of funding and scholarship opportunities means that many African researchers complete their PhDs relatively later than their peers elsewhere we deliberately avoid the term 'young researcher'. This paper does not address PhD training, which is beyond the scope of this study and merits a detailed analysis in its own right; nevertheless, we recognise that quality doctoral training underpins the development of a strong research base. For a recent set of analyses of doctoral training in eight African countries, see papers prepared for OSSREA as part of a proposed Research School for the Social Sciences in East and Southern Africa (RESSESA).⁹
- 1.7 Throughout this paper Africa is used to refer to Sub-Saharan Africa; our analysis therefore does not extend to North Africa. In addition, recognising that the context of higher education (HE) and research is very different, we do not specifically address the needs of early career researchers in South African universities. Nevertheless, there may be value in exploring what opportunities exist for postdoctoral collaboration between UK and South African universities, as well as the potential for South African universities to host early career researchers from elsewhere on the continent. In this vein, the ideas set out here have already been presented at, and informed by, a jointly convened workshop held at the University of the Witwatersrand. Finally, contexts, capacities and needs are highly country, institution, and discipline specific. This paper cannot hope to consider differences between countries and regions in the detail that they deserve and any programme of support would need first to think quite seriously about how it might be tailored to a specific country's needs, or to the needs of a particular area of research.

⁴ See the reports of a series of meetings convened by the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa at www.foundation-partnership.org/index.php?id=3

⁵ <http://carnegie.org/programs/higher-education-and-libraries-in-africa/investing-in-africas-next-generation-of-academics-and-university-leaders/>

⁶ www.africadesk.ac.uk/asauk/pages/nairobi-process

⁷ British Academy/Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2009

⁸ Harle, 2007

⁹ www.ossrea.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=484

How this study was undertaken: insights from UK universities and from African scholars

- 1.8 While the aim of *The Nairobi Report* was to understand more fully and articulate African researchers' needs, the intention of the present study was to further understand the ways in which UK universities might respond to these, and the extent to which they would wish to be involved based on their own priorities for research and international collaboration. It extends the initial study by consulting UK universities in more depth, both about the broad issues, and about the specific elements which might make up a package of support. Via the ACU's network of vice chancellors we sought to gauge the interest of UK universities in the establishment of new mechanisms to support African postdoctoral researchers, and invited their thoughts on how this might best be achieved. A dozen UK universities responded to indicate that they would be particularly interested in exploring these ideas further (see Annex 1) and detailed discussions were subsequently held with deputy and pro vice chancellors and deans at ten of these.
- 1.9 Although this study was commissioned by the British Academy, the UK national academy for the humanities and social sciences, consultations with UK universities have deliberately ranged more broadly. There are capacity needs and research interests in all fields, and it is acknowledged that initiatives and interests are not always limited to one particular discipline. Furthermore, if a higher profile UK response is anticipated, it may be beneficial to incorporate humanities and social sciences support within a broader, high profile response, rather than working in isolation with a separate initiative for each discipline. As one consultation indicated, a university's driving interest may be in the biological sciences, but once the conversation is opened there may then be space for humanities departments to signal their own interests. Such an approach may also create opportunities for interdisciplinary work, which will be critical both to address many of the continent's pressing socio-economic challenges, and to provide space for new types of social and cultural enquiry which range beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries.
- 1.10 In addition we spoke to representatives of a number of other UK higher education and research funding bodies, including the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE), Universities UK and the 1994 Group.¹⁰ It also benefited from further discussions with the UK Collaborative on Development Studies and through broader conversations through its research capacity strengthening group. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Germany was also consulted to learn about their own mechanisms of support, and experiences of what worked.
- 1.11 ¹¹ A draft paper was then presented at a workshop held at the University of the Witwatersrand which provided an opportunity to gain additional input from colleagues from Southern African universities (see Annex 1).
- 1.12 The ACU has a close relationship with the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC), managing its secretariat on behalf of the UK government. As a contribution to this study, the Commission invited former African CSC PhD scholars to participate by sharing, via email, their own experiences and ideas of how early careers might be better supported. Similarly, UK-based CSC supervisors were invited to share information about their own institutions' mechanisms for maintaining links with and providing continued support to former African students, their own experiences of doing so, and what forms of support they felt would be most valuable. Some 34 former Commonwealth Scholars responded and 31 supervisors, spanning a range of disciplines, and including natural sciences and technology, as well as the humanities and social sciences. Finally, heads and deans were also contacted at a number of universities to gain a broader insight on current activity and support, generating another dozen sets of comments.

¹⁰ Contact was made with the Russell Group but it was not possible to arrange a discussion during the study period.

¹¹ Thanks are due to Professor Volker Sommer, Pro-Provost for Africa at UCL.

2. Securing the next generation: why the early career matters

- 2.1 As *The Nairobi Report* and others have argued, there is an urgent need to invest in individuals, to ensure that Africa has a strong foundation of researchers, producing high quality research and able to train successive generations. But it is vital that an investment in individuals also helps to strengthen the research base in departments and faculties. Individual support and training must ultimately contribute to an *institution's* capacity for research.^{12 13}
- 2.2 An analysis by Wisdom Tettey of the academic staff deficit in 15 African universities argues that 'incommensurate staff and student growth rates, as well as high and increasing student-staff ratios, have put a tremendous burden on academic staff.'¹⁴ There are few empirical studies of the issue, good data on African higher education is notoriously hard to come by, and generalisations can be unhelpful when they hide significant differences between specific universities. However, there have been recent attempts to evidence and quantify the problem and to provide a greater level of detail.¹⁵ By highlighting below particular universities our intention is by no means to single these out as good or bad examples, but rather to help illustrate the challenges faced by particular institutions.
- 2.3 In Tanzania, Tettey finds, the student-staff ratio had grown by 60% (2003–2007) to 24:1 and at the University of Ghana by 93% (2000–2008) to 29:1.¹⁶ While confirming some of Tettey's observations, Cloete et al suggest somewhat better figures for a number of institutions – and a less dramatic increase in student to staff ratios – 18:1 at the universities of Nairobi and Makerere and 14:1 and 13:1 at the universities of Dar es Salaam and Eduardo Mondlane respectively.¹⁷ While they question the stereotype of mass overcrowding, they do note significant subject variations are masked by institution-wide figures, due to uneven expansion – numbers in the sciences are typically much better than in business studies for example.
- 2.4 Many accounts stress the significant gap in the qualification levels of academic faculties, with many members of staff not holding PhDs. A lack of doctoral-qualified staff is not insignificant. In turn this means that fewer students are taught by research active staff, and that there are fewer staff qualified to do and lead research and to undertake postgraduate supervision. Research by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation in South Africa of the country's research output found a significant correlation between the proportion of academics with doctorates and a university's research publications.¹⁸ Tettey's study calculates that only 28% of academic staff in Ghana, 15% in Mozambique and 12% in Uganda held doctorates.¹⁹
- 2.5 Taking an institutional perspective is more encouraging in some cases. At the University of Ghana 47% of staff held doctorates in 2007 and 50% in the same year at the University of Dar es Salaam according to Cloete et al, while the University of Nairobi had 71% of staff with doctorates in the same year.²⁰ Others fare less well: Makerere records 32%, the University of Botswana 20%, and Eduardo Mondlane 19%.²¹ A recent analysis of the situation in Kenya suggests a more positive picture for public universities on average – with 39% of academic staff holding PhDs, but with more serious gaps in private institutions where just 21% of academics are PhD qualified.²² While the figures differ by country and institution, and the strengths of some institutions should be celebrated, there can be no doubt that there are serious gaps in some universities.
- 2.6 Despite the surge in student numbers, the proportion of postgraduate enrolments – critical if there are to be a next and future generation – is low and falling in some cases. Over the same period the University of Ghana witnessed a drop from 14% to 7% of postgraduates as a proportion of all students, with just 4% postgraduate enrolments in Ghana nationally. The picture is more encouraging elsewhere, with Nigeria's

¹² Whitworth et al, 2008

¹³ As is common in HE we use 'institution' here to refer to universities and research institutes, but recognise that in the literature on capacity development the term 'organisation' is more typical, with institution reserved to describe the system level environment and conditions in which this operates.

¹⁴ Tettey, 2010, p.v

¹⁵ The figures below draw on Tettey (2010) and Cloete et al (2011). Data quoted are broadly comparable and they are thus used interchangeably – referenced in each case – according to the data they provide.

¹⁶ Cloete et al (2011) calculate a ratio of 31:1 for the University of Ghana in 2007

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.29

¹⁸ CHET (2010) cited in Cloete et al, 2011, p.30

¹⁹ Tettey, 2010, p.14. Figures are for 2007 (Ghana) and 2006 (Mozambique and Uganda)

²⁰ Cloete et al, 2011, p.28. Tettey quotes similar figures: 41% for the University of Ghana in 2008 and 59% for the University of Dar es Salaam in 2007.

- University of Ibadan managing to increase its proportion of postgraduate enrolments from 18% to 35% between 2001 and 2006, but this is in the context of just 7% of all enrolled students nationally being at postgraduate level in 2007.²³ However, the growth in postgraduate enrolment has overwhelmingly been at master's level, and in many cases for taught courses not designed to prepare students for future academic work.²⁴ Very low doctoral enrolment is particularly concerning: at the University of Ghana these represented just 6% of all postgraduate enrolments in 2007.²⁵ Doctoral growth has been particularly low year on year: just 6.7% annually between 2001 and 2007, 2.3% at Makerere, and *minus* 17% at the University of Nairobi while master's enrolments grew at the same time. More encouragingly the Universities of Dar es Salaam and Botswana have sustained higher doctoral growth rates – 23.3% and 31.3% respectively.²⁶
- 2.7 Enrolments are also low amongst women, which hampers efforts to address the low representation of women in academic positions. At the University of Dar es Salaam, where women accounted for just 22% of academic staff in 2006/7, female postgraduate enrolment that year was just 27% – and had fallen, proportionally, by 8% since 2002/3. At the University of Ibadan, 35% of postgraduate enrolments were female in 2005-6, a slight climb from 31% five years earlier. While the gender gap within faculties is narrowing progressively, improvements remain at best incremental across many universities, and women often occupy more junior positions.²⁷
- 2.8 PhD completion rates offer particular cause for concern. In 2007, across the whole institution, the University of Botswana produced just four PhDs, the universities of Dar es Salaam and Ghana 20, Makerere 23 and Nairobi the highest of the five with 32 doctoral graduates. Given that these are across all fields this is unlikely to suggest more than a handful of humanities and social science graduates in most cases.
- 2.9 Several countries, in a bid to increase the quality of teaching and research, have announced targets for the numbers of PhD holders amongst their academic staff.²⁸ Meeting these targets is unlikely with present doctoral capacity, high dropout rates and the slow time-completion rates for PhDs, especially when these must be completed alongside teaching duties.²⁹ The age profile of academic staff in many universities also gives reason for concern. Only 20% of staff at one Nigerian university were under 40 years of age in 2006/07, and 39% were over 50.³⁰ With significant numbers of the most experienced staff due to retire – the 'greying of the professoriate' – and insufficient numbers of new staff being trained, there is a substantial gap in the middle group.
- 2.10 A number of initiatives, both institutionally-led and donor-supported, are seeking to address this growing gap. Universities are strengthening their graduate schools, scholars are sent abroad for postgraduate training, there are pockets of support to enable fieldwork and thesis completion, and there are efforts to establish regional collaborative structures. A number of programmes have been established, within universities, and by external funding agencies, aiming to increase the stock of PhD graduates in African universities. These include fully funded scholarships at African or overseas universities, split site or sandwich arrangements, collaborative PhD programmes, and support to enable doctoral students, many of whom are also teaching staff, to undertake fieldwork or take time out to complete dissertations.³¹ These are vital, and much more PhD support is needed to meet the yawning gap.
- 2.11 Yet even where doctoral students *are* being trained, it is not clear that they are being employed to best effect. Accounts gathered during the Nairobi consultation, submissions from former scholars as part of this study, and many other anecdotal accounts recount how newly qualified PhD holders find their emergent research interests stifled through a lack of support, financial and collegial. It is this immediate postdoctoral or early career phase that this paper seeks to address.

²¹ Cloete et al, 2011, p.28

²² Opat, 2011

²³ Tetey, 2010, p.6

²⁴ Cloete et al, 2011, p.34

²⁵ Tetey, 2010, p.7

²⁶ Cloete et al, 2011, p.29

²⁷ Tetey, 2010, p.7, p.56, p.97-99

²⁸ In 2008 Nigeria and Kenya both announced that all university lecturers would be required to hold a PhD by 2009 and 2015 respectively. See Fatunde, 2008

²⁹ Tetey, 2010, p.7

³⁰ Tetey, p.10

³¹ OSSREA has recently begun to explore new mechanisms for doctoral training in the social sciences.

The post-PhD years

- 2.12 The first few years following the completion of a PhD are critical to the establishment of a successful research career. It is during this early career phase that the skills and knowledge developed through postgraduate training are cemented, key skills (such as proposal development and grant application expertise) are developed, when a researcher's first publications are achieved, and where the foundations for future research are laid. This is true of research careers in any country and there is growing recognition of the need to provide more effective support to junior staff in the research strategies of many institutions. In the UK it is reflected in the new Researcher Development Framework, developed by Vitae,³² and building on several years of targeted early career funding,³³ and in studies such as 'Researchers of Tomorrow',³⁴ the 'Changing Academic Profession'³⁵ and the OECD's 'Mapping Careers and Mobility of Doctorate Holders' study.³⁶ In many African universities, early career scholars face even greater difficulties, and with much less support. This is not a new observation, and much of the analysis laid out below echoes what has been written and discussed elsewhere. It nevertheless bears repeating as we seek to design more effective means of support.

From the individual to the institutional

- 2.13 The core challenge, and one which is often inadequately addressed, is to ensure that support to develop *individuals* is translated into research strength at the *institutional* level. In too many cases it is assumed that individual support will build institutions, without the policies and mechanisms being put in place to ensure that one is embedded in the other. Scholarships are a critical and valuable part of research training, offering both opportunities where there is insufficient capacity or funding at home, and the chance to build vital peer relationships at regional or international level. But building real, sustainable research capacity in African institutions requires that funders and partner universities go beyond training individuals to find ways to ensure that this potential is realised by departments and faculties, to provide the foundations for new research, and to support future doctoral training. To make individual support most effective it needs to be embedded within broader research and capacity building activities, and to work towards rebuilding what Cloete et al have described as the 'academic core' of an institution.³⁷
- 2.14 These efforts may be within individual institutions, or in the context of disciplinary and inter-disciplinary initiatives, such as multi-generational and multi-institutional research projects, or strategic programmes to develop research in individual departments, faculties or research clusters. Achieving this requires more than the selection of good candidates for postdoctoral support; it needs a careful understanding of the institutional and disciplinary contexts of research, and the interests of the institutions involved. In a context of limited resources these need to be deployed with care and to best effect. There is limited benefit in supporting researchers in isolation, or where existing research capacity or commitment to research is low, yet at the same time a carefully deployed form of postdoctoral support might feasibly catalyse improvements to local research cultures through the experience they offer and the networks to which they enable access. Some effort to develop concentrations in particular areas of research, drawing on appropriate subject networks or existing research consortia, or clusters in specific institutions, is likely to be valuable. This may help to develop critical mass, which will enable research to be sustained beyond postdoctoral funding, facilitate the gradual development of national and sub-regional networks at the early career level, and enable clusters of fellows in turn to become hubs of wider research and training.³⁸

³² www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234381/RDF-overview.html

³³ Often known as 'Roberts Funding'

³⁴ Education for Change, 2010

³⁵ Bennion and Locke, 2010

³⁶ Auriol, 2011

³⁷ Cloete et al, 2011

³⁸ A more sophisticated and detailed analysis of the institutional and national contexts of research, and the critical relationships between them is provided by Cloete et al, 2011

The struggle to continue research post-PhD

- 2.15 Early career research is often weakened by the inability of researchers to build on their PhD training, whether gained at home or abroad. Given the relatively substantial investments made by governments or funding agencies in overseas scholarships, the failure to make the most of this potential is of particular concern. Scholars who obtain funding to undertake doctorates abroad are often regarded as the lucky ones, and rightly so: they gain access to better resources, more expansive networks, and typically complete their PhDs within more lively research environments. Yet as the 34 responses from former Commonwealth Scholars and the responses from those consulted through the 2008 Nairobi conference show, while they enjoy many benefits, they also often encounter problems on their return. Reintegration into home departments and the continuation of research begun abroad often proves difficult. Poorer access to resources and facilities, from good libraries to adequately equipped laboratories, is a common and understandable complaint.
- 2.16 Many scholars speak of being unable to access the journals they need, or that they lack the software to analyse their existing data, or (in the sciences) the equipment to run new experiments. Recent studies add an important qualification to the issue of library resources: many of the most important journals are in fact available online and free at the point of use, but awareness of this and access problems remain barriers. Skills and technological constraints notwithstanding, significant too is the lack of a culture of research and scholarly discussion within some departments, which reduces demand for and use of what are now much stronger journal collections.³⁹ Access to research funding is also difficult and many scholars are unable to secure the most basic grants to support their work. With demanding teaching and administrative duties and without access to dollar or sterling grants returned scholars have few opportunities to ‘surface for air’ to keep their research going. For those training at home the barriers are even more strongly felt, since they may have relatively little experience of a supportive research environment.

Not simply financial: cultures of research and mentoring

- 2.17 While finances and resources are clear constraints, as *The Nairobi Report* argued, many of the barriers to research are nevertheless organisational, rather than simply financial. The problems which junior researchers encounter often relate to the responses of their departments and colleagues to their return home or ‘upgrading’ from student status. These are often far from supportive. One scholar reported the ‘negative attitudes towards research’ encountered on their return, while another spoke of an ‘unwelcoming environment’ where the institution lacked any clear policy on support to junior researchers and another of facing ‘intellectual meltdown’ and feeling ‘intellectually lost’. Years of underfunding and underinvestment have hollowed out the most basic culture of research within some departments, while the pressures of work and of funding have driven out the spirit of collegiality.⁴⁰ Low pay and under-resourcing have pushed many academics towards private or so-called ‘Mode Two’ teaching,⁴¹ or towards consultancy. Academic life has become an increasingly individualised pursuit as a result and research has been in the process de-institutionalised.⁴²
- 2.18 At the very heart of this is the need to foster a new generation of critical intellectuals, thinkers and scientists. These observations and anecdotes are confirmed by Cloete et al’s empirical work. The universities of Cape Town and Dar es Salaam have comparable ‘inputs’, but the former has much higher PhD graduations and research publications. Funding for research differs considerably, but university attitudes – and incentives – towards research, publishing and supervision are critical. The lack of ‘knowledge production’ is therefore ‘not a simple lack of capacity and resources, but a complex set of capacities and contradictory rewards within a scarce-resource situation’.⁴³

³⁹ For example, Harle, 2010

⁴⁰ This point is owed to an observation made by Professor Belinda Bozzoli in a presentation on early career research at the SARIMA 2011 conference

⁴¹ The term used to describe parallel, and often evening, intakes of fee paying students into publically funded universities. It should not be confused with Gibbons ‘mode 2’ knowledge production.

⁴² Mouton, 2010

⁴³ Cloete et al, 2011, p.34

⁴⁴ Tettey makes a similar point in his analysis (2010, p.20) as do contributions from early career scholars involved in a workshop organised by the Partnership for Higher Education (see Partnership, 2009)

The individualisation of research

- 2.19 The individualisation of university research has not only discouraged scholarly research but has also drawn academics away from postgraduate supervision and postdoctoral mentoring.⁴⁴ Attitudes to research are also critical. Colleagues often feel that it is only fair that a returning scholar should take on a greater proportion of teaching and administrative duties, to compensate for what they have avoided during their three years abroad. Rather than the scholarship serving as the springboard into future research, careers are often stalled and researchers are given the impression that the only hope lies in escaping overseas once more. Many of the brightest scholars sink beneath the waves of administration rarely to be seen again. An absence of support for research, not just materially but also in the cultures of their departments and in the lack of mentorship from senior colleagues, features prominently in scholars' accounts. The over-individualisation of research has led some senior staff to see junior colleagues as a threat to be checked, rather than as potential to be nurtured and encouraged.⁴⁵ In some cases scholars report outright hostility where they have tried to introduce new thinking; their energy, ideas and links to research networks abroad are often seen to pose a threat to more established senior colleagues, many of whom may have had few such opportunities since completing their own PhDs years before.
- 2.20 Tensions are understandable, particularly when many colleagues are not able to study abroad, or even to secure funding for doctoral study at home, but they clearly need to be addressed if universities are to benefit from what returning scholars can offer, if scholars are to develop their own emerging careers and remain engaged in research, and if the culture of vertical support which is so vital to a dynamic academic department is to be reinvigorated. Attention therefore needs to be directed not just to how to support junior staff but how to bring senior staff into the process too. It is not enough to simply recognise the next generation problem and address it through support to early career researchers: incentives need to be found to make it a priority for senior scholars too.

A lack of career structure

- 2.21 The first position to which newly qualified PhDs return is often a junior lectureship. While it is not uncommon to begin in such a post elsewhere in the world, in many African universities teaching and administrative duties are often particularly onerous, and there is often little or no time allocated to research. Promotion to head of department positions take some of the most promising scholars away from research all too soon, and before they have had the chance to establish and consolidate their research careers. Any research or writing which is done must be squeezed from a researcher's own time; ideas and thinking emerging from their PhD often cannot be explored further. Turning thesis material into publishable papers or books can easily take a couple of years for any academic, but when research time is so lacking this often proves near impossible for all but the most persistent scholars. In a northern university, and particularly in the sciences, early career researchers may have the opportunity of a postdoctoral research job, perhaps working closely with a senior academic or as part of a multi-year funded project. This structured research route, less common in the humanities and social sciences in any case, is often entirely absent in African universities.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the impact of consultancy on the social sciences in African universities and the associated individualisation of research see Wight, 2008

3. Understanding the needs of the early career researcher

- 3.1 At the most basic level what early career researchers need – and what their institutions need to ensure if they are to gain greatest benefit from the expertise and knowledge they offer – is the opportunity to pursue their research while still contributing towards the teaching and administration needs of their departments. Finding ways to release them entirely from teaching and administration, even for a limited period, is unlikely to aid their (re)integration, or address the complaints of their colleagues. Striking the balance between these, and creating genuine space and time for research, is more likely to encourage researchers to stay at home, rather than seek alternative postings elsewhere. Of those scholars who have spent time abroad, many genuinely want to return and to make real contributions to the intellectual life of their countries but they need the opportunity to develop productive and fulfilling careers when they do. Much of what early career researchers need can be captured under six principal areas.

Six areas of support

3.2 **Staying connected – conferences, networks, peers**

The future of HE and research is one in which early career researchers are likely to be ever more mobile. Making and retaining connections to peers and colleagues regionally and overseas is particularly important, for the practical purpose of ensuring that researchers stay engaged with their discipline, but also because doing so is likely to reduce the sense of isolation and disconnectedness that many scholars speak of. The ability to attend conferences and participate physically in academic communities and networks is an important aspect of this. Cross-disciplinary alumni or peer networks can be valuable in helping researchers to learn from others as they negotiate shared obstacles and challenges, while subject networks are invaluable for connecting researchers to their disciplinary community, horizontally and vertically. Established associations can be important in this regard – and early career researchers can help to reinvigorate these. But networks also arise – and wither – as projects or groups of scholars need them.

- 3.3 Improvements in communications technology mean that there is much that can be achieved at relatively low cost through sharing information, providing ways of discussing new thinking, and generally ensuring that scholars do not feel disconnected from academic conversations taking place elsewhere. But networks also require opportunities for face to face contact if they are to be sustained. Researchers need to meet, build relationships, and swap ideas. Ensuring early career researchers can participate in existing fora – or are supported to establish their own – is therefore vital.

Publishing from the PhD and platforms for discussion

- 3.4 Rates of publication are currently low across the continent, but existing PhD studies are producing valuable work which should be contributing to African and international debates. Doctoral training typically provides for three years of study;⁴⁶ as one returned scholar commented, ‘time for “alternative” thinking’ during this period is limited, and the demands of a thesis often mean that there is seldom the chance for a doctoral student to develop journal articles. The time to do this is usually once the thesis is complete, yet this is exactly when access to resources and time dry up. Similarly, UK PhD supervisors frequently note that there are often interesting articles to be developed from a student’s work, but that it is unlikely that these will be achieved when they return home. Working something into publishable form may take many months, and negotiating the submission and peer review process even longer. Where time is limited this becomes almost impossible. Early career researchers need support and advice in negotiating the peer review and publishing chain successfully, to ensure that their work makes it through to the scholarly community.

⁴⁶ While many students do take longer to complete, scholarships are typically capped at three years

Increasingly, they also need support to understand how to communicate it beyond the academic world too. Early career scholars need to be supported to develop platforms for public engagement and discussion in their research, and departments and research networks can do much to support this through encouragement to write for newspapers and non-scholarly publications, online and offline – and recognition of this work – and by hosting public discussions of research.

Designing new research

- 3.5 While good doctoral training ought to include training in research design and grant-writing, this is not always the case, and a PhD rarely allows significant time to put this into practice outside of the doctoral study itself. Defining a research agenda, identifying researchable questions, designing a larger programme of research and accessing external funding are likely to require significant and on-going guidance. The ability to put together a future programme of research, and secure funding for it, will play an important part in determining whether early career researchers can establish active research profiles, and resist being drawn into doing additional teaching or consultancy.

Modest funding to seed their own research

- 3.6 To move forward from their doctoral work, researchers need to be able to extend their research or to explore new areas. This need not be expensive, but to do so they do need to access modest funding to support basic fieldwork and other costs, or to recruit local postgraduate assistants. An early career researcher may not compete favourably for internal or external research grants against more established colleagues, and a stream of funding specifically aimed at early career researchers is likely to be important to ensure that they have genuine access to the initial funding that they need to establish themselves.

Developing their ability to supervise future doctorates

- 3.7 Sustaining research and strengthening local capacity to do this requires better doctoral training within African universities, to ensure the sustained development of high quality researchers. Junior academics have an important role to play here as direct supervisors and as departmental colleagues. But early career researchers cannot automatically assume this role simply having completed their own doctoral training. Supervising well is a skill, and learning how to do this will require additional support and guidance from more experienced colleagues. Becoming involved as apprentices or co-supervisors, and mentoring in the arts of supervision, will be important, and will help African universities to expand their own doctoral capacity.

A supportive institutional context

- 3.8 For researchers to thrive and succeed, and for the five elements of support suggested above to be of greatest benefit, researchers need to work within an institutional environment which is supportive of their needs and ambitions. Policies and processes are needed which establish early career support as a strategic concern across the institution, and create the necessary structures to plan and monitor this, but most importantly, and perhaps the most difficult to achieve, a culture of research and collegiality needs to be fostered and encouraged within departments. At the heart of this, and all of the five areas listed, is good mentoring.

Bridging the early career gap

- 3.9 At present, outside of infrequent conference travel (where this is even possible), the only opportunity that many junior academics have to take time to do significant research or writing is often through a mid-career fellowship of some description, or through participation in a larger, and often Northern-led, research project. Such fellowships, while invaluable, unfortunately arrive too late for many researchers; by the time that such opportunities are open to them they may have lost all enthusiasm for research, have been unable

to publish from their PhD, and undertaken little new research. Many aspiring and promising researchers are simply lost. Fellowships tend to be relatively ad-hoc and unplanned in terms of their timing and their fit with African needs, creating islands in a career rather than opportunities around which longer term development can be more effectively structured. They are also few and far between. Similarly, research grants or opportunities for collaboration with colleagues abroad often lie out of reach, accessible only to the few who have established a decent profile for themselves. The challenge is to bridge the gap between PhD and mid-career more effectively, to ensure research momentum is not lost post-PhD, to ensure that PhD research is capitalised on to provide a firm foundation for future work, and to harness the value and potential which existing relationships can offer.

- 3.10 Strengthening research requires an emphasis at the level of institutions, and within individual departments. In some areas resources need to be re-allocated, and policies adjusted to provide greater support and incentives. Changing attitudes and departmental cultures will take time, however, and will in part only be achieved as a new generation rises through the ranks. While much must necessarily be tackled and achieved locally, African universities will continue to need some degree of external support. There are clear opportunities to support research through collaboration between African universities and between African universities and those overseas. There is considerable existing activity, but there is also room for more, and for more innovative mechanisms to deliver this. Not only can this help to address existing training and capacity needs, but in a time of ever greater international mobility and collaboration in higher education it will ensure that African researchers are included in international networks of research and scholarship. Here we discuss why such collaboration between UK and African universities might be beneficial, but the case will undoubtedly fit other contexts.

¹ British Academy/ACU, 2009

4. Shared benefits and mutual interests: opportunities for collaboration

- 4.1 Research in general is increasingly international and increasingly collaborative. Contemporary research has been described as being characterised by self-organising networks, driven by the interests of researchers, doing the research that they want to do, and finding the partners to do this with.⁴⁷
- 4.2 A recent report by the Royal Society, exploring international scientific investigation in the natural sciences, argues that research is now globally distributed and connected to an extent not previously seen before, with a ‘multipolar scientific world’ developing, and with research also flourishing beyond the obvious international hubs as a growing number of countries recognise the importance of research in addressing local needs.⁴⁸ Over a third of articles published in international journals were jointly authored by researchers from different countries, compared to 25% some 15 years ago, and these rates are even higher when looking exclusively at African research.⁴⁹

The underrepresentation of African research

- 4.3 But as is regularly noted, Africa is very much underrepresented in international research: figures for scientific publishing indicate that just 1.1% of articles in ‘international’ academic publications come from Africa, with almost half of these published by South Africa.⁵⁰ Looking at social science and humanities data, Mouton notes that while the total production of papers included in ISI indexes has grown twofold over the two decades to 2007, South Africa dominates, and only the top 17 universities were able to produce more than 20 papers a year in ISI journals.⁵¹ African output has grown, but at low levels in relation to the rest of the world, and African scholars are still massively underrepresented in the international research community. Looking at African humanities and social sciences, Frenken, Hoekman and Hardeman, show that while collaboration may be growing as a ‘mode’ of research globally, Africa is relatively underrepresented. They calculate that while North America generated 11,359 co-produced papers between 2004 and 2008, and Western Europe 10,168, Africa generated a tenth of this – 1,051 papers – placing it seventh out of nine regions.⁵² Funding to enable mobility – which often gives rise to this collaborative work – is often a limiting factor for African researchers.

Mutually beneficial collaboration

- 4.4 It is our starting premise in this paper that research collaboration offers clear advantages to both African and UK researchers and their respective universities. Contrary to the common framing of collaboration or partnership as a one-directional endeavour, where expertise and capacity from the north are used to improve and strengthen research in the south, we feel that there are valuable learning and scholarship opportunities for both sides. For this to be the case, however, research questions must be jointly conceived and collaboration based on shared and equitable leadership, intellectual as much as practical. Despite a genuine wish to achieve this, funding modalities, expectations and practical constraints mean that it is rarely easy, as recent reflections from an UK–Africa education research partnership have shown,⁵³ but it should nevertheless be the standard to which collaborative arrangements aim. Critical to achieving this is for needs, interests, and ambitions to be set out clearly and openly on both sides. Below we attempt to set out the motivations and logic which we feel are likely to drive the involvement of African and UK based researchers and their institutions. We devote greater space here to exploring the UK universities’ interests and motivations, on the basis that we have already attempted to capture African needs and ambitions through *The Nairobi Report*, and because if the bulk of funding is to come from the UK, explaining the rationale for this is important.

⁴⁷ Wagner, 2008

⁴⁸ The Royal Society 2011, p.46

⁴⁹ Ibid p.47; figures are drawn from Elsevier’s Scopus database and include social sciences and humanities, although these represent a relatively small proportion of papers (around 8.95% it reports).

⁵⁰ UNESCO, 2010, p.283. Figures are for 2008 drawn from Thomson Reuters’ Web of Science (using its Science Citation Index Expanded); they therefore do not include publications in the humanities and social sciences, but give some sense of academic outputs across the continent.

⁵¹ Mouton, 2010, p.63. Figures are for 1987 to 2007, for the social sciences and humanities and drawn from Thomson Reuters’ data.

⁵² Frenken et al, 2010

Collaboration in the interests of African universities

- 4.5 African universities face many challenges, most of which have been well documented elsewhere. In a continent of many hundred universities of differing sizes, resources, aims and research interests, we recognise that generalising about the needs and interests of African universities can be unhelpful. *The Nairobi Report* and other studies⁵⁴ have already documented some of these needs and the challenges in addressing them: our purpose here is to understand what African universities might stand to gain from further support at the early career level, and some of the general conditions of such support.

Strengthening local research, shaping international thinking

- 4.6 Scholarly publishing is a common proxy measurement for a country or region's participation in the international research community, and as the figures quoted above illustrate, African scholars are still massively underrepresented. Without question, African countries need to increase their participation in international research, while the world at large needs to learn from African research and scholarship. African scholars need to be shaping international intellectual debates and scientific endeavours, not simply consuming paradigms and theories developed outside.⁵⁵ Investment in African HE and research has grown in recent years, coming particularly from international donor agencies and foundations. This has made a significant contribution to individuals and institutions, but demand massively outstrips supply.
- 4.7 African universities are caught between the need to address local concerns – educating large numbers of undergraduate students, and tackling local research questions – at the same time as developing faculty that can compete and collaborate internationally, that can undertake high quality research and produce internationally recognised publications, and that can deliver strong postgraduate training to prepare the next generation of academics and research leaders. Academics want to participate and collaborate internationally, to update their skills and knowledge, and to bring this back for the benefit of students and colleagues at home. Their institutions need them to do this, but cannot afford to lose them for a sustained period. Where teaching and research require investments beyond the scope of an individual institution, universities need to be able to collaborate with institutions elsewhere in their region, and internationally, to build critical mass, and to share access to resources and facilities. Quality and reputation will therefore be built both by local improvements (to curricula, resources, facilities and staff capacity), and through the profile, access and learning that international collaboration brings.

Brain drain to brain circulation

- 4.8 The brain drain is an oft debated issue, particularly the detrimental effects that the loss of highly educated scholars from Africa entails for the continent's research and teaching capacity. The impacts are considerable, and researchers regularly narrate stories of colleagues sent abroad to study never to return home. In today's world, however, the mobility of the highly skilled is inescapable. Research careers, as professional careers more broadly, are rarely tied to a single location. African countries are unlikely to be able to do much to prevent their best academics from moving abroad if they wish to (and if they secure the opportunities to do so), but they may also stand to gain from this movement too. Success in research is, more and more, about connections to peers and research groups elsewhere.⁵⁶ A researcher based abroad may offer valuable links for peers at home, and may also help to channel research opportunities and research knowledge home through collaborative grant applications and through participating in research initiatives at home institutions. Encouraging and enabling researchers to participate in global networks and scholarly communities may also help to retain them at home, offering opportunities to remain internationally engaged without needing to migrate abroad. Ultimately African universities need to be able to attract internationally mobile academics, just as northern universities attract their own research talent.

⁵³ Barrett et al, 2011. For a good practice guide to partnerships, see Wanni et al 2010

⁵⁴ See for example: Tetey, 2010; Wight, 2008; Whitworth et al, 2008; Nuyens, 2005, Lansang, 2004; Kabiru et al, 2010. Many of these studies relate to health research, where discussions of research capacity strengthening and programmes to support it are well developed, and where there has been a greater tendency to publish reflections on these issues.

⁵⁵ Chapter 5 of UNESCO's 2010 World Social Science Report provides some interesting discussion on hegemonies and counter-hegemonies in social science research.

⁵⁶ Wagner, 2008

Identifying where the potential lies

- 4.9 It is important to understand from the outset where the potential for collaboration lies – in terms of existing capacity and local interests, needs and ambitions. There are a myriad of existing programmes supporting capacity building, student and staff mobility and collaboration between institutions internationally and regionally. Some of these address undergraduate teaching needs, some research and postgraduate training, and some universities' social and civic activity. Not all universities have ambitions, in their initial stages, to undertake significant research, and many will concentrate predominantly on undergraduate teaching, with some taught master's programmes. Research universities also have very different existing profiles. Some are broad multi-faculty institutions, while some are smaller and focused on a number of specific disciplinary areas. For some research activity is predominantly at the level of postgraduate training; within these master's as opposed to doctoral training may predominate. Those with firm doctoral foundations may be able to support higher level research engagement and the attraction of more substantial external research funding.
- 4.10 A programme whose ambition is to support early career postdoctoral research is therefore only likely to be of real value, and to be successful, within those universities which have already established good doctoral programmes, and where there is a clear commitment to strengthening these. This is both to ensure a basic level of research and postgraduate through-put, and to ensure that support to an early career researcher might in turn help to strengthen local doctoral capacity. Where a substantive doctoral programme has not yet been developed there may be greater value in using collaborative mechanisms to support split-site PhD training, where doctoral candidates benefit from joint supervision and a period spent at a UK or other foreign institution.

Collaboration in the interests of UK universities

- 4.11 While the benefits to African researchers might seem most obvious, in the form of access to training and research funding and to international scholarly platforms, there are clear benefits to and a strong case for the UK's involvement too. The multiple dimensions of interdependence between countries and regions means that the economies and societies of the OECD countries – and their educational systems – cannot afford to isolate themselves from those of Africa. As a recent European University Association (EUA) white paper argues, international HE cooperation is firmly in the interest of both Africa and Europe – as the report puts it, 'Europe needs Africa and Africa needs Europe'.⁵⁷ International research, as has been suggested above, is built more and more on networks of dispersed individuals, coming together and collaborating in spite of, or often because of, their different physical locations and nationalities. The figures quoted in section 5.1 show that the UK already undertakes a substantial amount of research on 'development' issues – much focused on Africa – and has a range of existing collaborative initiatives.

Retaining and strengthening links

- 4.12 The UK's research interests are increasingly global. Its universities have large numbers of international students, and a considerable number of international staff. The UK's competitiveness, and the quality and strength of its higher education system, depend on its international outlook. This presents very real advantages to the UK in sustaining contact with international students – and particularly research students – who return to universities in their home countries. Returned scholars or visiting researchers provide the seeds of future academic networks, and the potential to construct collaborative research projects. As the many links between UK and overseas universities acknowledge – from memoranda of understanding for staff exchange and student mobility to more established teaching and research partnerships – there is also much for the UK to gain from stronger collaborations with foreign universities.

⁵⁷ EUA, 2010

- 4.13 The motives for and advantages to this vary, but working with the best researchers wherever in the world they are, addressing research to critical global issues, giving their own students a genuinely international outlook, and contributing to society internationally as well as locally are all driving factors. There is also a growing concern that internationalisation must be about more than short term links or inflows of foreign students. As greater resources are invested in international activity, as universities seek not simply to raise their profile but to strengthen their international presence, the concern to make it sustainable, and to develop genuine long-term partnerships, cemented at institutional level, is growing.⁵⁸
- 4.14 Not surprisingly, given their rapidly growing economies and higher education sectors, East Asia and the Middle East tend to receive greatest attention in UK international strategies, with teaching partnerships, joint research facilities, and in some cases substantial branch campuses growing apace. Links with academic institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa are, of course, of a very different nature. In many cases engagement is driven by concerns of international societal responsibility and a spirit of academic collegiality. There is much less potential for shared funding, and the business case for investment is very different. But genuine internationalisation requires a proper engagement with African universities too which extends beyond philanthropy, carefully addresses needs, does so on the basis of partnership and fully values the reverse contributions and expertise of African scholars within the relationship. Put simply, UK research has much to learn and gain from African intellectual, scientific and scholarly inquiry. Our conversations with UK universities and specifically with deputy and pro vice chancellors holding research and international portfolios have confirmed a genuine wish to become more deeply involved.

Strengthening UK research

- 4.15 The UK's research strengths and profile depend on its academics being internationally connected and this includes the ability to work with African colleagues. As commentators and UK Africanists have suggested anecdotally, the UK's understanding of Africa is in serious danger of being significantly eroded, both as an academic specialism and in terms of its diplomatic expertise. If the vitality of the UK research community is to be sustained and grown, it needs a constant flow of new ideas and new thinking. African countries have been underrepresented in the international research community for many years, but their scholars, thinkers and scientists are and will increasingly become a critical source of such ideas, as the continent's populations and economies grow, and as we seek to understand shifting social and cultural forces.
- 4.16 In the humanities and social sciences specifically, it is evident that African scholarship must achieve a greater position in international debates, if paradigms and theoretical approaches are not to be dominated by European and American thinking. Yet there is little chance of the UK producing high quality research on and in Africa if it does not forge strong and long-term partnerships with African researchers and their institutions. To do so it must accept the need to support capacity development activities as an integral part of this research.
- 4.17 High quality research will also not be realised overnight, and will only be achieved on the basis of much longer term collaboration. Where universities are keen to work more deeply with African institutions they must do so on the basis of a longer term commitment. It is important that collaboration is not seen simply as a means to gather data remotely, get greater access to field sites, or is viewed as a mechanism to get cheap academic labour.

Internationalisation in UK higher education

- 4.18 In recent years a range of new funding mechanisms for collaborative research or for teaching and other partnerships has enabled the continuation and expansion of long-standing links, and the development of new links, in many cases in universities with no or little prior tradition in working with Africa.

⁵⁸ IAU, 2005

Internationalisation strategies also embrace social commitments, reflecting the concerns of staff and students and by a genuine will to support capacity and training in African universities. In many instances, longer term links have been established at institutional or departmental level, with core institutional funding, or more commonly enabled through external programmes such as those funded by the UK research councils, the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Wellcome Trust, and including schemes such as the British Academy's own partnership scheme, or the DFID-funded Development Partnerships in Higher Education (DePHE) (see below). But in reality much collaborative activity is built on links between particular individuals: they may seek external funding to support established relationships, but much is firmly below the radar, sustained by personal commitments and academics' willingness to devote the additional time, rather than any form of funding or official link.

Sustaining strong relationships

- 4.19 For returned doctoral students, the relationships they have with former supervisors and colleagues offer an obvious starting point. Many junior researchers and their former supervisors maintain contact, and UK academics often put considerable time into supporting their former students as they try to publish and establish their own research projects. This was confirmed by the responses of former scholars and supervisors. However, as these comments confirmed, such support is often relatively informal and ad-hoc. Joint publications are pursued in some instances, and supervisors endeavour to pass on useful information on funding and other opportunities. One spoke of having a personal policy of supporting each former student to co-publish at least one article, with the former student as first author. On occasion it had been possible to generate funded research projects in collaboration with former students, but examples of this were relatively few.
- 4.20 While there may be interest on both sides in extending a relationship developed through a PhD, to co-publish findings or to collaborate in new work, in practice it may be difficult to do so. Time is limited on both sides and there is unlikely to be much chance of further visits unless as part of a funded research project, which is itself likely to be extremely difficult to secure. Where opportunities for continued contact did exist, these were typically through larger continuing research grants; the relatively lower funding for African research is likely to mean that it is easier to maintain contact with former students from other regions. Yet, the basic problem of time notwithstanding, there is ever greater potential for communication and collaboration offered by email, the ability to share document drafts and data, low cost internet voice calling and video-conferencing. New tools for online collaboration and data-sharing and the increasing availability of high speed connections offer ever greater potential. Face to face contact is still unbeatable, and is still the ultimate goal, but much more can now be feasibly achieved between visits and meetings, extending the possibilities of collaboration on both sides.

Research assessment in the UK

- 4.21 Any proposal for international collaboration needs to take account of the way research in the UK is rewarded and funded and the way this shapes the interests of academics. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)'s 2011 strategic statement 'Opportunity, choice and excellence in higher education' explains: 'international cooperation cannot be defined solely in terms of financial opportunity or commercial diplomacy. Higher education institutions are also strongly committed to playing their part in tackling the big challenges facing the world... We need to understand the complex social and economic impact of these and other global and national issues'.⁵⁹
- 4.22 The research assessment process is increasingly influencing the way in which UK universities undertake research, and the areas they undertake it in. The new Research Excellence Framework (REF), completing in 2014, succeeds the former Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) which concluded its four rounds in

⁵⁹ HEFCE, 2011

2008. Assessments of the quality of submissions from institutions will be made against three criteria – outputs, impact, and environment – and will be used in the future by the four UK funding bodies to award funding to institutions. Co-authored work can be submitted in the normal way, so staff working with African partners would not be disadvantaged and by ‘unlocking’ collaborative work which might otherwise remain unpublished a modest increase in publications might even be achieved. Research quality has been the primary focus of previous rounds of research assessment; while retaining this paramount focus on quality, the REF will also ‘provide new incentives to enhance the social and economic impact of research’ and will place ‘strong emphasis on the vibrancy and professionalism of the research environment’.⁶⁰

- 4.23 While research outputs still account for the bulk of the assessment – 65% overall – the research environment will account for 15% and the impact of research for 20% of the overall score. The former will assess the ‘vitality and sustainability’ of the environment in which research is conducted, ‘including its contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the wider discipline or research base’ while the latter will assess the “reach and significance” of impacts on the economy, society and/or culture’.⁶¹ It is likely that, as a result, universities will be concerned to understand the extent to which their international and collaborative research activities will receive credit within this process.
- 4.24 It would be foolish to suggest that collaborative work with African colleagues is likely to help departments to directly improve their scores under either the impact or environment measures of the REF. Nevertheless, interactions with overseas colleagues and the flow of international researchers into any department or unit will undoubtedly make for a more vibrant research environment and in so doing help to increase the ‘vitality’ of its research. Where a significant focus of a department’s or unit’s work is Africa, the direct involvement of African colleagues, and particularly through extended stays rather than brief conference visits, would seem to be essential.

⁶⁰ HEFCE, 2011, p.9

⁶¹ HEFCE, 2011b, p.6

5. What UK funders and universities are already doing

Research and research training in, on and for Africa

5.1 Every year a significant number of African students and scholars come to train at UK institutions. In 2009–2010 academic year, 22,340 African postgraduates were registered in the UK, 18,660 from Sub-Saharan countries. 2,355 of these were research degree candidates⁶² (accounting for around 6% of international research degree students or 2% of all UK registered research degree students),⁶³ and 2,195 of these were from Commonwealth African countries.⁶⁴ UK funders – government and private – also sponsor a number of research programmes which directly or indirectly support African researchers, often through partnership with UK academics. While funding streams do exist for humanities and social sciences, the bulk of UK funding for Africa-related research is perhaps unsurprisingly directed to work in natural sciences, engineering and technology; where humanities and social sciences are included in Africa-related funding streams, support is predominantly available for research on issues related directly to development and poverty reduction. This is perhaps inevitable given the UK government's commitment to work to reduce poverty in the region, and given the many developmental issues, from health systems to conflict and social inclusion, which urgently require greater scientific – social as well as natural – investigation. Consequently, and as the review below suggests, there is relatively less funding available to support work in and on Africa which does not pursue explicit international development questions and objectives.

UK government and the research councils

5.2 Although not focused solely on Africa, the UK research councils (RCUK) spend around £330 million a year on research considered relevant to development.⁶⁵ Of particular significance in the social sciences is the ESRC's joint scheme with DFID, established with a budget of £13 million in 2005, to fund research on development and poverty alleviation; 32 of the 83 awards made to date have involved research on or in Africa, most involving a number of African research partners, and a new round was announced in July 2010. More recently the £40 million seven-year Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA) programme has been established, funded jointly by the ESRC, NERC and DFID, and providing multi-year grants of between £500,000 and £4million.

5.3 Through its bilateral programme DFID spent £146 million on research in 2009/10 in support of the Millennium Development Goals. £19.5 million of this spend was under its Africa bilateral programme; by comparison the Asia bilateral programme received £6.3 million.⁶⁶ Amongst its research spending, DFID has funded and continues to fund a number of Research Programme Consortia – five-year research programmes involving multiple universities and research institutes. It also contributes to multilateral research funding initiatives such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) or the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), and supports research trials and product development initiatives in health and agriculture.⁶⁷ DFID has also provided funding for a series of partnerships between higher education institutions internationally on the MDGs (although with less focus on basic research) through the Development Partnerships in Higher Education (DelpHE) scheme.⁶⁸

5.4 While much of DFID's funding is directed towards research in the natural sciences, technology and medicine,⁶⁹ a growing appreciation of the social, political and cultural dimensions of its work is also generating greater investments in the social sciences. Its 2009/10 report lists some 15 major multi-year and multi-institution social sciences 'research programme consortia', usually led by UK institutions but

⁶² According to HESA's definition, 'Higher degree (research) includes doctorate (incorporating New Route PhD) and masters degrees studied primarily through research'. Separate PhD figures are not available.

⁶³ Figures from Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2011, Table 8, excluding Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia. All African students total 3,860. All PhD figures include full and part time students

⁶⁴ *ibid*

⁶⁵ Universities UK, 2010; see also the UK Collaborative on Development Sciences, a cross-government and cross-research council platform: www.ukcds.org.uk

⁶⁶ National Audit Office, 2010: p.103; this includes funding provided through its assistance to multilateral bodies, NGOs, technical cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and other bilateral or financial aid.

⁶⁷ See DFID, 2010

⁶⁸ The last round of funding has been awarded under DelpHE, but after a positive review a new form of the scheme is anticipated

⁶⁹ See for example DFID (2010a) for a report on its research spend in 2009/10

⁷⁰ DFID, 2010, p.82. It is difficult to measure the level of DFID support for social science and humanities research because spending is reported according to DFID's thematic priorities rather than academic disciplines.

⁷¹ www.pasgr.org

including African partners. 10% of its total research spend went to research on ‘governance, conflict and social development’ in 2009/10, and 5% on ‘growth’; education is included with the 32% allocated to ‘human development’ which was predominantly health research.⁷⁰ In 2010 DFID provided funding to establish the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research, a major research training and capacity building initiative in the social sciences, and based in Nairobi.⁷¹

- 5.5 DFID also provides funding to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK (CSC). In 2008-2009, 58% of DFID-funded PhD award-holders studying in the UK through CSC awards were African academics and students, a total of 189 awards. 71 of these awards – 38% – went to those working in the humanities and social sciences.⁷² Also worth noting are the additional institutional links created through the Commission’s split-site scheme, where doctoral students registered at home can spend up to 12 months at a UK institution during their PhD.
- 5.6 While most of the UK government’s investment has been via DFID, the now Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has also provided funding in previous years to support partnerships between UK and African higher education institutions. From 2006 until 2010 it provided funding for a unit hosted at the ACU to promote partnerships activity, which spent time mapping and learning from existing collaborations and developed from this a guide to the principles of good partnership.⁷³

The UK national academies

- 5.7 The UK national academies support African research in a number of ways.⁷⁴ The British Academy’s UK-Africa Academic Partnership scheme and International Partnerships scheme (now reframed as the International Partnership and Mobility scheme) have supported 22 joint research projects between academics in UK and African universities since 2006.⁷⁵ The Academy’s sponsored research centre in Kenya, the British Institute of Eastern Africa, also provides support to East African based academics, and has, for example, instigated a two year research fellowship for East African researchers from post-master’s to doctoral level.⁷⁶ In the natural sciences, the Royal Society’s Leverhulme-Royal Society Africa Award supports partnerships between experienced researchers in the UK and Tanzania and Ghana with funding of up to £150,000 over three years.⁷⁷ It has also been involved in work to support the development of national science academies in Africa.⁷⁸
- 5.8 While not explicitly targeting African – or indeed developing country – academics, relevant as an example of an established mechanism explicitly targeted at early career researchers is the Newton International Fellowship Scheme.⁷⁹ A joint initiative between The Royal Society and The British Academy,⁸⁰ this scheme covers both natural sciences and the humanities and social sciences, and aims to ‘build a global pool of research leaders and encourage long-term international collaboration with the UK’. Around 40 two-year fellowships are offered each year, with a grant of up to £34,000 per annum and a contribution towards overheads. Fellows are also eligible for follow-up funding of up to £6,000 each year for up to 10 years following the completion of the fellowship in order to support the continuation of links and collaboration with UK peers and institutions once they have left the UK.
- 5.9 The UK’s learned and professional societies also have a number of smaller programmes.⁸¹ The African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK) writing workshops are noted below, while additional support, provided by ASAUK and many other research groups and networks, comes in the modest but important provision of funding for African researchers to participate in UK conferences.

⁷² Figures provided by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the UK; see www.dfid.gov.uk/cscuk for further details.

⁷³ Africa Unit, 2010

⁷⁴ See, for example, the British Academy’s ‘Working with Africa: Human and Social Science Research in Action’ (2011) www.britac.ac.uk/intl/Working_with_Africa.cfm

⁷⁵ www.britac.ac.uk/intl/

⁷⁶ www.biea.ac.uk

⁷⁷ <http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/leverhulme-africa/>

⁷⁸ The Royal Academy of Engineering also operates the Africa-UK Engineering for Development Partnership which aims to strengthen the capacity of the African engineering profession and promote mutually beneficial links between engineers in Africa and the UK.

⁷⁹ www.newtonfellowships.org

⁸⁰ Originally also involving the Royal Academy of Engineering, which continues to provide follow-on funding for those Fellows it appointed between 2008 and 2010.

⁸¹ www.ukcds.org.uk/page-Overview_of_Capacity_Building_Activities-149.html

Initiatives in health research

- 5.10 A considerable degree of UK research activity in Africa, and associated capacity support and training, has been in the field of health, including both clinical and social science, and much of the UK's 'experience base' in research capacity is found in this field. The two major centres of tropical health research (the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine) have a long history of involvement, as do numerous other health and medical faculties across the country, and UK-based funders such as the Wellcome Trust, DFID and the Medical Research Council have played a key role. While a relatively small proportion of this activity has been in the social sciences, it nevertheless merits attention for the insights and experiences that health approaches can offer to initiatives in other disciplinary areas. Early career work in particular is supported explicitly, or implicitly, by a range of initiatives, but two UK-based examples are worth noting.
- 5.11 The Wellcome Trust supports a number of research and capacity building initiatives in health, and including social aspects. Particularly notable is its African Institutions Initiative, a £30 million initiative through which seven African-led health research consortia, spanning 18 African countries, are engaged in programmes of research training, grant schemes and infrastructure support.⁸² This has been particularly important for its focus on institutional funding, providing core support to African institutions. One such programme is the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) initiative in population and public health which has a particular focus on doctoral and postdoctoral research training. A collaborative doctoral training programme provides PhD Fellowships to cohorts of junior academic staff across 13 African universities and research institutes, with fellows brought together annually through a series of residential Joint Advanced Seminars to develop key research methods and related skills, and to foster peer and intergenerational networks. CARTA also provides supervisory training for more senior academics.⁸³
- 5.12 The Gates Malaria Partnership (GMP), which ran from 2001 until 2006, supported 33 doctoral studentships at four European institutions, 23 of whom were based at the London and Liverpool schools of tropical medicine (LSHTM and LSTM). Significant, in terms of early career support, was its Professional Development Programme, run from Liverpool, designed to support doctoral graduates in the five years after completion of their PhD, and with access to an award of £2,800. Students were also eligible to apply for a 2-3 year re-entry grant of up to £100,000, to enable them to establish themselves in an approved home institution, with continued support from their European PhD host.⁸⁴ Although the GMP has now ended, its capacity building work continues in the form of the Gates and Wellcome funded Malaria Capacity Development Consortium (MCDC).⁸⁵ Personal Development Planning and early career support have received particular attention within MCDC, with a continuation of the Gates re-entry grants for doctoral graduates, and support – through a dedicated professional development advisor – to develop a structured personal development plan to assist graduates during and beyond their PhD studies. The programme is supported by an online 'community' website serving as a dedicated space for members to access resources and guidance during their studies and in the early stages of their subsequent research careers. A mentoring scheme for postdoctoral fellows has also been established, with 28 fellows matched with mentors, and with web-based support via the MCDC Community website.

Support for authorship

- 5.13 Embedded in many research programmes is some degree of support to assist junior researchers to get their work accepted for publication in appropriate journals. Much of this activity is relatively invisible, but an important, if relatively modest example in the humanities and social sciences is the programme of writing workshops initiated by the African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK). These have taken place in Kenya, South Africa and the UK to date, with more planned elsewhere, offering small groups of scholars the chance to discuss papers currently in production, and to get targeted and critical advice from experienced

⁸² www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/International/WTX055734.htm

⁸³ www.cart africa.org; see also Ezeh et al, 2010

⁸⁴ Gates Malaria Partnership, 2006

⁸⁵ www.mcdconsortium.org

⁸⁶ www.authoraid.info; for a review of the programme see Hanley, 2010

journal editors. Another approach to writing and editorial support, covering all academic fields, is INASP's AuthorAID programme, an online platform to link willing mentors with early career researchers, in addition to providing a range of resources and standalone advice.⁸⁶

Researcher development in UK higher education

- 5.14 While not targeting African research or capacity strengthening, the UK's wider activity in researcher development is worth noting, since it demonstrates the wider concern for early career development, and the experience and resources that the UK might feasibly draw on in any further support to African academics and students. Since the Roberts Review in 2002 there has been a considerable investment in researcher training and development in the UK, encompassing postgraduate and early career researchers.⁸⁷ The UK government response to the Review included a new stream of funding, specifically for researcher development, amounting to some £20 million per annum between 2003 and 2010, and delivered via the research councils (the so called 'Roberts Money'), and universities and research institutes have received a proportion of this funding according to the number of students and staff in receipt of Research Council funds. In parallel, the Review led to the establishment of new national structures specifically tasked with supporting research institutions to embed career development into their research training – UK GRAD, launched in 2003, focused on PhD researchers, and was superseded in 2008 by Vitae, with an expanded remit to work with all research staff and students.⁸⁸ Other national research training initiatives have also been established, including the Researcher Development Initiative for the social sciences and national centres for research methods.⁸⁹
- 5.15 The Roberts funding and associated researcher development initiatives have resulted in much stronger provision of researcher training and support within UK institutions and have also helped to stimulate changes in doctoral and postdoctoral programmes.⁹⁰ Researcher training programmes supported with Roberts' money have encompassed research skills (including conference presentations, writing, IP, management, grants, data handling, etc.) as well as broader career and employment related skills (including communication, data analysis, working with the public and media, planning, time management, recruitment processes, CVs and applications, interview skills, etc.). The ring-fenced funding and national level initiatives have ensured that researcher development has received considerable attention within universities, and while the dedicated funding stream has now ended, many universities have already integrated activities into their own researcher development units. An example is the University of Bath which established a Researcher Development Unit (RDU) to coordinate and strengthen its activity in this area, and which has now been integrated into the activities of the University's Academic Staff Development team.
- 5.16 At the national level, Vitae has launched the Researcher Development Framework (RDF),⁹¹ setting out a structure for planning and monitoring the development of research skills in UK institutions, and articulating the range of knowledge, behaviours and attributes that successful researchers are felt to need. It is designed to assist researchers to understand and manage their own career development, and to assist their institutions and supervisors to structure their support more effectively. It also serves as a cross-institutional framework to assist universities to coordinate researcher development activity, bringing together academics, training and support units, human resources and senior managers.

Examples of institutional activity

- 5.17 Our discussions have revealed a strong commitment to supporting African research at an institutional level in the UK, and universities' interest in growing their research engagement with Africa. It should be emphasised that this study did not intend to map all relevant UK activity – a difficult task in any event – but rather to record some of the varied activity which was brought to our attention.⁹²

⁸⁷ Roberts, 2002

⁸⁸ RCUK, 2010

⁸⁹ Eg National Centre for Research Methods (ESRC-funded) www.ncrm.ac.uk

⁹⁰ RCUK, 2010

⁹¹ Vitae, 2010

⁹² See Annex 1 for a list of those universities who responded; the ACU's membership includes 127 institutions in the UK

- 5.18 Higher level strategic engagement with African research and higher education was strongly evidenced by keen responses from vice chancellors and their deputies to our invitation to contribute to this study, and where visits were made universities typically brought together a number of senior figures to discuss these issues. Several institutions were in the process of formalising their approach through new university level strategies. University College London, for example, is in the process of developing its Africa strategy and has established a pro-provost position to coordinate its research and other engagement with Africa and to offer advice to individual faculties. The same was true of Liverpool, where an Africa strategy was in development. In the humanities and social sciences, the several historic UK centres of African studies – Edinburgh, Birmingham, Leeds, Oxford, Cambridge, London, Coventry and the Open University – are of course particularly important for their flows of African academics and students, and the research and scholarly activity which revolve around them. There are also emerging hubs of activity outside of these traditional centres, with centres in Bradford, for example, and looser networks of Africanists in places such as Warwick and Durham, while Edinburgh’s centre is joined by a new Global Development Academy at the university. King’s College has recently established a new Africa Leadership Centre, run jointly with the University of Nairobi, to further work around peace and conflict. As indicated earlier, this study was not concerned with postgraduate activity – within which there are a considerable links with African universities, as suggested by the figures for UK registered PhD students cited above – but many universities are active here, and many have chosen to concentrate their efforts around postgraduate training, often at master’s level.

Fellowships

- 5.19 The Cambridge/Africa Collaborative Research Programme at the University’s Centre of African Studies is a good example of a way in which a traditional fellowship scheme has been designed to provide more structured support to postdoctoral researchers, although it is not intended for those in the immediate early-career phase of their careers. Each year around five fellows spend six months in Cambridge, working on a shared theme, and culminating in a joint conference convened at one of their own institutions. Smaller in scope – supporting two to three fellows a year, for ten weeks each – but explicitly aimed at early career scholars, is the Cadbury Fellowship Scheme at the University of Birmingham’s Centre of West African Studies. The Open University’s International Development Centre also runs an annual 12-week Visiting African Research Fellows scheme, supporting four researchers each year. The University of Oxford Research Network on Government in Africa (OReNGA) supports around two fellows a year for a ten week period, while the Centre for the Study of African Economies operates a two month Visiting Scholars Programme in collaboration with the AERC in Nairobi, although neither is explicitly designed to meet the needs of immediately post-PhD researchers.
- 5.20 The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) has the well-established Leventis Research Co-operation Programme, which is designed to support Nigerian scholars to spend three months developing their research interests in collaboration with counterparts in London; its focus on early career research is evident in its suggestion that it would provide a valuable opportunity to work a PhD thesis into publishable form. In addition, the Governance for Development in Africa initiative at SOAS runs a programme of annual residential schools in Africa, targeting policymakers, academics, researchers or civil society representatives. Although not targeting African students explicitly, the University of Warwick’s Institute of Advanced Study offers a number of Junior Research Fellowships for scholars within three years of their PhD completion, but who have not yet held a permanent academic post, and who wish to undertake a piece of research. It also has an Early Career Fellowship programme to support doctoral graduates on a part-time basis in their transition from PhD to postdoctoral career, with the intention that this supports them to develop work for publication, put together research proposals and present their existing work at conferences.

Collaborative research and capacity strengthening

- 5.21 The University of St Andrews' Africa-focused activity is concentrated on South Africa and Malawi. Working with South African universities it has embarked on a programme of jointly awarded PhDs in physics, chemistry and biology, with around 10-12 doctoral students taking part so far. As with other split-site programmes, the aim has been to increase the international exposure of young scientists and give them access to additional research environments and resources, whilst enabling them to remain in South Africa for most of their studies. Notable, however, is that the resulting degree is jointly awarded. While this activity is at PhD rather than postdoctoral level, it illustrates both the existing interest in such forms of partnership, and their potential, and there might be potential to develop similar arrangements at early career level. In Malawi, recognising the constraints on doctoral training capacity within the University of Malawi and a limited current demand for postdoctoral work, St Andrews' focus has instead been on supporting research training at MRes and first year PhD levels, expanding from a successful partnership with the College of Medicine to work with the other federal colleges. Other universities have also begun to, or are seeking to, grow their split-site activity; the universities of Salford and Nottingham both noted this, with the latter doing so under its 'Developing Solutions' initiative, and felt that this would be a valuable foundation for early career support, as well as early career links themselves offering the potential to grow split site activity.
- 5.22 In the area of health, the activity of the London and Liverpool Schools of Tropical Medicine has already been noted above, with both hosting a number of DFID and Wellcome funded collaborative research programmes, a number of which include support for early career staff. Liverpool also has particularly strong links with Malawi through the Malawi-Liverpool Wellcome Trust clinical research programme. In addition to its African studies centre, Leeds' major activity in African research is built around the Africa College, a research partnership on food security and human health with African research institutes, principally based in the faculties of biological sciences, environment and medicine and health, and which includes aspects of research capacity building. One example worth noting, for what it may suggest of appropriate mechanisms of support, is the 'Research Without Boundaries' group of postdoctoral and postgraduate researchers. This was intended to encourage interaction and peer support between junior African and UK scientists and was to be principally achieved via an online forum. The forum was not as successful as had been hoped, and suffered from insufficient time available to develop discussions from the UK side, and a reluctance or inability of African researchers to access and use it as a day to day platform for support.⁹³ While online platforms are attractive, they still require the dedicated time of convenors much like any forum does, and often experience relatively low take-up. While useful tools within broader activities, in themselves they are not sufficient: some work well and some do not, and they are perhaps best conceived as a supplement to face to face mentoring.

Where are the gaps?

- 5.23 This brief sketch of the UK's activity and funding in the linked areas of research, capacity strengthening and research training, demonstrates a range of work emanating from the UK. It suggests that much of the UK's current activity has a strong international development and poverty-reduction focus; a considerable proportion is targeted at the natural sciences, engineering and technology fields. These are undoubtedly critical areas for Africa, and areas where UK support can make important contributions; what it does suggest, however, is a gap in support for humanities and social science work, and the African scholars who are engaged in this. Academics whose work falls within disciplines such as economics, anthropology, geography or politics, or development studies itself, may find sources of funding from DFID or the ESRC, for example, to tackle questions of health or economic growth, or governance. Those exploring themes in the humanities, or social science questions, which are less problem- or solution-oriented, are more likely to

⁹³ Email from the coordinator at the University of Leeds

struggle to access sizeable funding, both to support their own work, and to enable them to collaborate with colleagues and students in Africa. This matters both for the vibrancy of these disciplines and because any effort to support African prosperity depends fundamentally on a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of societies and cultures. In addition, while there are a number of ‘non-development’ orientated fellowships for humanities and social sciences work hosted by UK institutions, the numbers accessible to, or awarded to, African researchers are relatively small; much activity within individual universities naturally follows the research priorities of the major funders.

- 5.24 Much of the UK’s support to African early career researchers, where it exists, is embedded within broader research programmes, and is thus often hard to spot; in many instances it would seem to take place in a less structured or less deliberate way, an additional objective, or in some cases incidental outcome, where the central objective is research. This is neither surprising, nor necessarily a bad thing, since learning and mentoring are likely to be more effective when undertaken as part of an actual piece of research. The disadvantage, perhaps, is that where capacity strengthening activities are secondary, they are more easily overlooked in the drive to achieve research goals, the potential of such opportunities may not be realised, and there may not be explicit budget lines to support early career scholars, even at a relatively modest level. Much work around capacity building in research has emphasised that capacity building must be an explicit activity – anecdotal evidence in addition to recent reviews suggests that shorter-term projects often have relatively little impact on longer term research capacity, that ‘bolt-on’ approaches, where capacity strengthening is added to a research project plan separately, are often less successful, and that capacity strengthening and research outcomes are not always as mutually compatible or straightforward as many assume.⁹⁴
- 5.25 The relatively dispersed nature of UK activity – often a few awards annually within each scheme – also works to reduce the overall visibility of UK contributions to African research strengthening, and potentially reduces its overall impact. Finding a means of framing this better and raising its visibility would be valuable, and might also help to lever additional funding by establishing a clear sense of the foundations on which new support could be built, enabling greater synergy between activity across institutions, and enabling gaps to be more effectively identified and addressed. While a flattening of this diverse activity would not be desirable (or indeed possible given that it emanates from specific institutional commitments and interest) it could certainly be more effectively harnessed through some form of common framework.

⁹⁴ See DFID 2010b for a review of approaches; for a recent reflection on ‘doing’ capacity building in research partnerships see Barrett et al, 2011

6 How further support might be provided

- 6.1 There are a number of ways in which further support for African early career researchers might be provided by UK institutions and UK research funders, and all might be valuably incorporated into new mechanisms of support. Conventionally there have been two approaches: support delivered through additional time spent in the UK, and support delivered by UK academics within specific African countries. We consider here a number of possible approaches; there will undoubtedly be others, or other configurations or combinations of the modes suggested here. Given the emphasis in this paper on needing to recognise the interests of both constituencies, in each case the potential advantage or disadvantage to African universities and scholars is considered, as well as the potential to support UK links with Africa.

Seven possible modes of early career support

Extension of the PhD scholarship

- 6.2 Existing PhD scholarships undertaken in the UK could be extended to allow scholars the extra time and space they need to transform their thesis, or sections of it, into a form suitable for publication. This might be valuable in providing modest additional time and resource to capitalise more fully on PhD foundations. However, this would pose a number of problems. It does not adequately address one of the central problems identified here (the need to ensure researchers can re-embed themselves at home), and while it would offer valuable support, would effectively defer the problem until a later date. Scholarship funders are unlikely to be able to expand their current pot of money, and extended scholarships are likely to mean an overall reduction in the number of candidates who could be supported. New funders are arguably less likely to wish to 'pick up' other funders' scholars. A PhD extension for postdoctoral work would also mean the responsibility for re-integrating returning scholars and supporting their early career development would be removed from African universities. Further, if there is the possibility of an extension to a PhD award, scholars are in practice likely to expand to fill this and a thesis might simply take 39 rather than 36 months to complete, leaving no additional time for publishing.

3-6 month postdoctoral fellowships

- 6.3 Three to six month postdoctoral fellowships would be a more familiar mechanism of early career support, and fellowships could be undertaken either in UK universities, or in other well-resourced universities in the region (e.g. South Africa). Similar schemes are offered by a number of UK universities and centres of African studies. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)'s Re-invitation Programme enables former award holders to apply to spend additional periods of between one and three months at any German research institution.⁹⁵ The advantage of additional postdoctoral fellowships tenable in African institutions would be that it might feasibly support greater regional research development, although this would not offer direct opportunities to foster greater collaboration with the UK. However, while a 3-6 month postdoctoral fellowship would be valuable it would take researchers out of their home institutions for an extended period at just the point when they need to be able to (re)establish themselves within their departments. It is also likely to be a less attractive option to African vice chancellors and department heads, who will be reluctant to lose teaching staff. It would also result in a one-off form of support which might provide initial assistance but no formal mechanism to continue this.

Regional research summer schools

- 6.4 Regional research summer schools would enable further training, support and guidance to be provided in a researcher's home country or region, potentially strengthening the delivery of Africa-based support. They would ensure that researchers had some space following their PhD, and could be run for a number of

⁹⁵ www.daad.de/deutschland/foerderung/stipendiendatenbank/00462.en.html?detailid=38&fachrichtung=3&land=25&status=2&seite=1

weeks. An existing model is found in the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)'s 'joint facility for electives' (although focused at PhD level training).⁹⁶ They might help to foster horizontal peer networks amongst researchers (from which future research partnerships might develop) and would address concerns with the 'brain drain' of talent back to UK or other institutions. A six week residential programme in Africa might feasibly be cheaper to run than funding for the same period of time to be spent in the UK. Such a model is unlikely to allow support to be individually tailored, however, which may be desirable at early career level, and would not provide additional access to facilities and resources through a better equipped institution. While valuable in its own right, the lack of opportunity to spend time in another department, and to work closely with peers and experienced academics is less likely to foster strong research links.

Capacity building and training via collaborative research projects

- 6.5 Researchers could be supported to participate in larger research programmes such as those supported under the current frameworks of the ESRC-DFID, DFID Research Programme Consortia and Wellcome Trust schemes, amongst others. These can offer an important means of embedding training, mentoring and other support within the doing of real research, particularly where they are designed in such a way as to bring senior and junior colleagues together. However, while extremely valuable opportunities to undertake a sustained programme of research and training, such schemes require considerable funding, making them relatively few and far between. The extent to which capacity building and training can be successfully delivered through a project whose primary purpose is the production of high quality research outputs is also the subject of some debate.⁹⁷ There may also be basic barriers to entry to junior researchers making participation in the design and development of such projects difficult. This might be addressed by providing grants to senior researchers which mandated or incentivised them to bring junior colleagues into their work, and encouraged them to give emerging researchers genuine intellectual input to conceptualisation – a form of early career support which addressed the disconnect between senior and junior ranks. Nevertheless, such an approach might not create the necessary 'early career space' to enable a scholar to begin to design their own research agenda and to publish prior work.

Distance support and mentoring

- 6.6 Researchers could be supported on a remote basis, using email, document sharing and collaborative work spaces to enable mentors to offer advice and junior researchers to access support without leaving their home universities. This would allow many more researchers to be supported in a relatively low cost way without the need for airfares or accommodation costs to be met. This already takes place in many instances, although it is rarely formalised. Email, collaborative work spaces or file sharing facilities, cheap internet voice calling, and the potential for video-conferencing, and even online seminars significantly enhance possibilities. An example of an existing initiative in which UK academics could participate is AuthorAID noted above. While such distance mentoring is extremely valuable it does depend heavily on the (often unpaid and unrecognised) time of mentors, and does not address the significant pressures on time that an African researcher is likely to face: if a researcher is physically on campus throughout they are unlikely to receive any reduction in other duties. While some approaches appear to be quite successful (such as AuthorAID⁹⁸) not all distance support – especially that delivered online – works, particularly where sufficient time for the human convenors and coordinators of such networks and groups is lacking, as the Leeds example suggests. By contrast, the AuthorAID programme is much more substantial, with several professional coordinators and trainers and substantial investment of funding and platform development. Distance support should certainly not be seen as a cheaper, lighter alternative, and ought to form part of a package of support, which includes face to face contact.

Reintegration grants or seed funding

- 6.7 A competitive grants scheme for returning scholars or early career researchers might be established to provide the basic seed funding needed to extend their research activity or explore new areas. It might be

⁹⁶ www.aercafrica.org/programmes/training_cppjfe.asp

⁹⁷ Barrett et al, 2011

⁹⁸ Hanley, 2010

spent on article submission fees, where these were required, on employing a junior research assistant or basic field work and data collection. The WHO TDR initiative⁹⁹ has in the past offered such grants to its returning fellows, as does MCDC (see above). The USHEPiA initiative, led by the University of Cape Town, provided small grants of around £7,000 over three years. Such support has been extremely valuable in ‘kick starting’ careers, helping to set up a returning researcher with essentials, or offering some funding to establish a programme of work, and would be valuable in the future, but on its own it is unlikely to address the range of needs outlined above, particularly the key need for mentoring.

Engaging senior academics

- 6.8 Inescapable in the discussions leading to this paper, and in wider conversations around early career support, is the need to involve senior academic colleagues in the process, and to provide the necessary incentives to this. Peers and mentors overseas or outside of a scholar’s home institution can offer valuable support, but if early career support is to lead to a genuine strengthening of research cultures and practice in home departments, intergenerational connections are needed too. Senior academics need to feel part of, and not bypassed by, these links, and many need space to reinvigorate their own research too. Where these relationships are already fractured, a junior researcher who is offered greater advantages than senior colleagues may find they have little support at home, and this may act to disincentivise or undermine local mentorship. The modes of support laid out above are likely to achieve greater success if they conceptualise research as a collaborative endeavour inter-generationally as well as inter-institutionally; offering some form of associated grant to the home department, or to a home mentor, perhaps to enable them to initiate new research, or attend an overseas conference, could be one way of securing this. One example, suggested above, would be the research grant where the senior researcher is required to explicitly work with a junior colleague. Similarly, finding a way to create a three way link, between an early career scholar and mentors at home and abroad, may help not only to improve prospects for the mentee, but also foster new research partnerships between experienced academics and their respective departments.
- 6.9 All of the mechanisms outlined above do, and would, make valuable contributions to early career development, however, our discussions to date have suggested that in isolation none of these would fully address the set of problems and interests identified in this paper. These interlinked needs include training, mentorship and institutional links to foster future research, all of which need to meet the aims and interests of both African and UK institutions if they are to be valued and sustainable, create the foundations for future research collaboration, and ensure that scholars are fully re-embedded within their home institutions. Any response would need to incorporate elements of all of these – or at least of as many as is feasibly possible – in order to address the complex and interlinked nature of early career scholars’ needs.

The role of South Africa

- 6.10 The primary purpose of this paper was to explore opportunities for Africa-UK collaboration as a means of supporting early career researchers in Africa. However, the models discussed above are by no means limited to collaboration between UK and African universities. Indeed, a strong message of *The Nairobi Report* was the importance of supporting intra-African research links as a means of revitalising research on the continent. The humanities and social sciences are also receiving greater attention in South Africa at present, with a Consensus Panel on the Humanities established by the Academy of Science of South Africa, and a ministry-commissioned working group tasked with defining a Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences, both indicating the importance attached to a proper conversation on ensuring a bright future for the disciplines in the country. With a number of strong research universities South Africa would offer a natural continental hub, enabling researchers to draw on the research strengths – both facilities and expertise – of another university, with greater resources than those available at their own institution, without their having to leave the continent.

⁹⁹ <http://apps.who.int/tdr/>

- 6.11 In the run up to the Witwatersrand workshop, Higher Education South Africa (HESA) circulated a request to universities that they provide information on their own internal initiatives to develop the capacity of newly qualified PhD graduates.¹⁰⁰ The 13 institutions responding indicated a range of early career support – although recognising the country’s particular needs, much of it is targeted at increasing the doctoral population, rather than the provision of postdoctoral support. A number of universities have research training provision for doctoral and postdoctoral staff, in the form of writing workshops and seminars on career planning, research methods, grant proposal writing and supervisory training. The University of the Free State’s ‘Vice-Chancellor’s Prestige Scholars’ Programme’ targets an initial 25 recent PhD graduates, aiming to offer an accelerated pathway to an academic career through intensive local and international mentorship, research support and academic training. The University of Stellenbosch’s Consolidoc programme includes writing for publication, as part of consolidating the research outputs from their PhDs, and writing up their results for peer-reviewed publication. Stellenbosch’s African Doctoral Academy, and the emerging Partnership for Africa’s Next Generation of Academics (PANGeA) – a network of the universities of Botswana, Dar es Salaam, Makerere, Malawi and Stellenbosch to foster collaborative research, methodology training, and joint doctoral programmes – may also offer a valuable base on which to build early career support.

¹⁰⁰ Higher Education South Africa, 2011

7. Conclusion: some ways forward

- 7.1 In any drive to strengthen and revitalise African research the importance of the early career cannot be overemphasised. With an ageing professoriate, insufficient numbers of doctoral-level staff, and a real ‘next generation’ gap of African researchers, the need to increase support for African research training is considerable. Enabling junior academics to transition more effectively from their PhD and to establish themselves in the first stages of their postdoctoral careers is critical if investments in – and the potential of – research training are to be realised and if departmental cultures of inquiry are to be reinvigorated. At the heart of this is the need to encourage greater mentoring by senior academics of their junior colleagues. While much must necessarily be tackled and achieved locally, African universities will continue to need some degree of external support, both to assist local initiatives, and to ensure that researchers are well connected to peers abroad.
- 7.2 There are clear opportunities for research to be supported through innovative forms of collaboration between African universities and those in the UK and elsewhere. These are also likely to offer real benefits not just to the African researcher and institution, but also to their overseas colleagues and host institutions. For their part, the UK universities consulted as part of this study have expressed a strong wish to be more closely involved in African research, and to build on their existing activities in this area. There are a number of initiatives already underway or planned: the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission has plans to pilot a new mechanism of immediately post-PhD fellowship support, and a Commonwealth Summer School took place in Cameroon in July 2011, for example. The British Academy’s new Partnership and Mobility Scheme would also allow provision for early career mobility within the project partnerships funded through it, and applicants might be explicitly encouraged to think of this in their proposals.
- 7.3 *The Nairobi Report* set out a framework of some 22 recommendations on what might be done to rebuild and sustain the African research base, particularly, but not exclusively, in the humanities and social sciences. Seven of these related to early career research, spanning doctoral training, supervision and mentoring, and postdoctoral research. Building on these, section six of the present paper suggests a number of ways in which research at the early career, postdoctoral level might be more effectively enabled and harnessed, and how this might in turn help to catalyse wider change.
- 7.4 By suggesting new modes of support we do not intend a criticism of the existing collection of initiatives: existing scholarship and partnerships schemes have without doubt made very valuable contributions to research in African universities, and to supporting the engagement of UK researchers in Africa. Rather our intention is to suggest ways in which these might be strengthened, and remodelled to fit HE environments which have changed significantly since many of these schemes were first designed, and to make the most of the potential which greater mobility and new technologies offer. There are a number of guiding principles – extensions to the frameworks of *The Nairobi Report* – which may be worthy of future emphasis.

Continuing to map the humanities and social sciences landscape

- 7.5 The fragmentary and dispersed nature of much of what is known about what the UK is doing, and what support already exists, is one of the first barriers to successfully delivering new support. We suggest that the results of this survey of institutional activity be, as far as possible, captured in on-going efforts to map the UK’s humanities and social science relationship with Africa. The Africa Desk would offer a useful home for this, and indeed has already embarked on an attempt to capture some of this dispersed activity in its pages.¹⁰¹ Colleagues and departments across the country not represented here might then be encouraged to share further examples of their own activity, no matter how modest. This resource might also be used to

¹⁰¹Established by the British Academy and the African Studies Association of the UK, the Africa Desk aims to provide a central hub for information on Africanist research, to give greater visibility to the activities of the UK Africanist community and to encourage and support collaboration between African and UK scholars in the humanities and social sciences: www.africadesk.ac.uk

capture details for African scholars of networks, groups and associations, formal and informal, across the range of humanities and social science disciplines, in which they might wish to become involved or which they might wish to join. This might conceivably enhance connections and information sharing and unlock some of the smaller, less visible sources of support which already exist.¹⁰²

Convening the community to re-assess its future support

- 7.6 This paper has attempted to both capture some of the existing activity in the UK, and to propose ways in which early career support might be improved more broadly. It is intended to continue a conversation begun with *The Nairobi Report*, the process leading up to it, and the events which have followed. Given the emphasis in this paper on what the UK can do, it seems sensible to suggest that meetings be convened to debate these ideas further, involving funders, UK institutions and others with an interest, to see if new initiatives can be designed, existing activity framed or linked better to strengthen support, and new funding generated. Given the wider interests of funders and universities, because they are more likely to be engaged on their own terms, and because interdisciplinary work is increasingly favoured, we suggest that this be done on an ‘all-disciplines’ basis. The Academy, working with its partner bodies, could play an important convening role here.

Encouraging the recognition of early career research needs

- 7.7 As this paper has illustrated, one of the ways in which early career scholars are or could be mentored is through their involvement in wider research activities. The next generation issue is well recognised by many research programmes and their funders, but is often implicitly rather than explicitly addressed. Encouraging dedicated provision within these for the types of early career support laid out above, and stipulating this within guidelines to encourage applicants to address them in their proposals might help to structure this more effectively.

Making the most of existing doctoral training and scholarship schemes

- 7.8 Existing doctoral training provided by UK funders and universities in conjunction is of critical importance, but it is clear that more could be done to ensure that the potential of this support – in which considerable sums of money and time are invested – is most effectively realised. Providers of scholarships – funding agencies and the institutions which deliver doctoral programmes – should be encouraged to explore ways in which they can not only retain contact with alumni, but offer continued mentoring where this is appropriate. Extending PhD scholarships, while attractive in some dimensions, is unlikely to address the challenges of reintegration as we have indicated, and we therefore feel continued support should be conceived as something delivered as far as possible ‘in situ’ – perhaps including reintegration grants where these are possible – and with brief periods (conferences, workshops and short scholarly visits for example) out of home institutions.
- 7.9 Given that much of this mentoring activity already takes place in an informal way, and more formal (and funded) programmes are only part of the picture, it may be that above all greater recognition is required for this aspect of academic work in the policies and international strategies of institutions more broadly and in staff review or appraisal systems where these exist, so that it is correctly understood as part of a university’s wider contributions to African scholarship. Small, competitive internal funds might also be allocated to enable PhD supervisors to bring their former students, or those of colleagues, back for short periods to write or compose new research proposals. Universities and scholarship agencies might also offer greater central support by enabling alumni to access, online where possible, some of their research development materials, and by providing platforms, virtual and physical – through websites and summer schools for example – to offer resources and guidance to early career scholars, from senior academics, publishers and funders, as well as their peers. Where existing initiatives are in place – such as AuthorAID and the ASUK’s

¹⁰²An exercise in assessing the landscape of the UK’s links with African higher education institutions was led by the Africa Unit, which was funded by the now Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and based at the ACU between 2006 and 2010. However, this did not specifically gather information on humanities and social science activities.

writing workshops – efforts should be made to promote these, encourage greater participation (of senior academics as mentors, as well as junior academics as mentees) and to secure further support to extend their coverage.

Considering new types of fellowship

- 7.10 While the value of existing fellowships is celebrated here, this paper also suggests that new forms of fellowship need to be conceived, which do not take scholars out of their institutions for too long, which emphasise early career rather than established, mid-career support, and which provide opportunities for sustained relationships to develop. One such approach might be a fellowship split over several years, with shorter periods spent in the UK (or indeed elsewhere) on an annual, 18-month or biennial basis according to need and workloads. The objectives of such a scheme would be specifically to foster collaborative relationships between researchers, their mentors and their departments in both institutions, and to provide regular time and space for writing and new project development, whilst enabling junior academics to remain fully part of their home institutions. Given the importance of future Africa-UK research links, the possibilities of such a scheme, and how it might be established, could form one strand of discussion at the meeting suggested above.

Developing new summer schools and networked initiatives

- 7.11 The paper has indicated some existing examples of UK-led summer schools, enabling researchers to come together for a more intense period of debate, discussion and training, and providing for an interaction and the creation of new peer relationships and networks. Such activity provides an invaluable means of contributing to the development of scholarship within Africa, rather than always in the UK. Such events might also be used to increase junior UK researchers' opportunities to engage with African peers in the region, and in so doing to ensure the vitality of the UK's next generation.

Taking care not to forget senior academics and taking an intergenerational approach

- 7.12 A recurrent message throughout this paper, through discussions, and through much of the literature, is the need to ensure senior academics are not overlooked and are firmly brought into the process. All those considering how to support early career researchers must therefore pay due attention to the intergeneration relationships within research and on African campuses; where possible provision should be made within programmes to secure their involvement, but where this is not possible it will be important to 'do no harm', and avoid sundering or straining already fragile local relationships between researchers.

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All links checked December 2011

Annex: Consultations

This study has been developed out of the joint British Academy / Association of Commonwealth Universities Nairobi consultation between 2007 and 2009. It therefore builds firmly on the views and needs articulated by a group of African researchers and university leaders. Discussions took place from October 2010 to January 2011 in the UK, and in February 2011 in South Africa.

UK universities

Vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors or pro vice chancellors were consulted at:

Lancaster University
 Liverpool John Moores University
 University of Bath
 University of Liverpool
 University of Manchester
 University of Nottingham
 University of Hull
 University of Salford
 School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)
 University of St Andrews
 University College London (UCL)

Individual responses were also received from academics at the universities of Aberdeen, Bangor, Bradford, Durham, East Anglia, Edinburgh, Greenwich, Leeds, Newcastle, Northumbria, Oxford, Reading, the Institute of Development Studies, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Royal Veterinary College, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Members of the University of Warwick's Sub-Saharan Africa Research Network also provided valuable input through a seminar at the Institute of Advanced Study.

Other UK HE/research agencies

Universities UK
 1994 Group
 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
 Higher Education Funding Council
 Economic and Social Research Council
 UK Collaborative on Development Sciences

South Africa workshop

A workshop held on 16 February 2011 at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg was attended by representatives from:

University of Johannesburg
 University of Cape Town
 University of Limpopo
 University of the North West
 University of Pretoria
 University of South Africa (UNISA)
 University of Venda
 Central University of Technology
 Eduardo Mondlane University (Mozambique)
 University of Botswana
 Africa Institute of South Africa,
 Higher Education South Africa,
 Academy of Science of South Africa
 Partnership for African Social and Governance Research
 National Research Foundation (South Africa)
 Carnegie Corporation of New York

