

**Institution: SOAS**

**Unit of Assessment: 33 Theology and Religious Studies**

**a. Overview**

The Department of the Study of Religions (SOR) at SOAS prioritises research on the major religious traditions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, continents that make up three quarters of humanity. A particular strength of the Department is the range of religious traditions covered, which is unrivalled in UK higher education. Staff work from an empathetic, non-confessional understanding that comes from their deep familiarity with, and experience of, the lived and historical aspects of religious traditions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Research in the SOR embraces the following fields, both in their interrelations and as specialist areas: Ancient Indian Religions and Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese Religions, Christianity in Asia and Africa, Gender Studies, Islam in South Asia and Africa, Jainism, Japanese Religions, Judaism, Languages and Religions of Tibet and Central Asia, Theory in the Study of Religions, Zoroastrianism. In addition, the Department is responsible for four Research Centres. The Department currently has an establishment of 18 academic staff: 6 lecturers, 2 senior lecturers, 4 readers and 6 professors. In addition, since 2008 the Department has hosted 6 postdoctoral research fellows, 23 associated research scholars, visiting scholars (25 overall since 2008), and 40 research students studying in MPhil and PhD programmes. Research is supported by a unified Faculty Academic Support Office and a School-wide Research Office.

**b. Research strategy**

In 2008, our strategy was ‘to consolidate existing strengths and develop new areas of research capacity through external funding’. This has resulted in the endowment of posts, the development of new subject areas, and an increase in the level of external research income per staff fte. The current strategy has adjusted direction within the broad intentions of 2008, and sets out both aims for the SOAS Centennial (2016), and a framework for planning over the next REF cycle. In particular, whilst the Department continues to focus on endowing permanent posts and supporting individual research, it also aims to enhance collaboration, within the discipline, within SOAS, and beyond.

A nationally unrivalled range of regional specialisms and languages is represented in research areas at SOAS in general and the Department in particular. SOR is embedded in an institutional context of multi-disciplinary expertise in Asia and Africa which is conducive to a natural collaboration across traditional disciplinary boundaries. The Department gives visible expression to multi-disciplinarity by regular interaction with other departments in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (History, Anthropology, School of Arts) and with Area Studies in the Faculty of Languages and Cultures (in particular the Departments of the Near Middle East, South Asia, South East Asia, China and Inner Asia, and Africa). High quality research is combined with intellectual collaboration across boundaries, thus fulfilling our mission towards the individual religious traditions, the academy and society.

The Department’s lively research culture radiates internationally through publications and research cooperation with other institutions at home and overseas. Staff regularly organise and are invited to cutting-edge international conferences and workshops at home and overseas, edit and contribute to international journals and edited volumes, provide consultancy to major public bodies, and contribute to leading research evaluation panels. This culture is sustained by research seminars, high profile lecture series, workshops and conferences organised by departmental staff members, often working through one of the designated Research Centres. A rich array of leading international scholars, including Professors Michael Pye, Olle Qvarnstrom, François de Blois, Samuel Lieu, David Wasserstein, Guy Stroumsa, and their involvement in seminars, colloquia, workshops illustrates the international standing of the Department. The SOR Research Seminar, meeting four times per term with distinguished invited speakers, focuses on specific themes and provides a forum to nurture collaboration and engagement with new developments. The Centres – of Buddhist Studies, World Christianities, Jaina Studies and Japanese Religions – represent research clusters that focus on distinctive areas of research and some are unique world-wide. They host weekly, monthly and annual seminars with distinguished international and national speakers and at least one international conference or workshop annually. Major annual events hosted by the

Department include the Numata Visiting Lectureship in Buddhist Studies and the Idea of Iran conference. In addition, we organise two distinguished endowed annual lectures: the Kutar Memorial Lecture in Zoroastrianism and the Louis H. Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion. The latter is a lecture series in which an invited eminent international speaker delivers and subsequently publishes four lectures and seminars. In October 2013 the Department has organised a major exhibition and international conference on Zoroastrianism in the SOAS Brunei Gallery.

#### **Achievement of strategic aims in relation to the RAE 2008 submission.**

Whilst maintaining its commitment to its strengths in existing research areas, the department gives highest priority to permanent endowed posts as the most enduring way to build a long-term research community. The Department has an long-standing record of fundraising for endowed posts, having succeeded in two new posts (Buddhism, Zoroastrianism). Its future aims include achieving a second endowed post in Buddhism, and to secure a post in Hinduism. Since the 2008 RAE submission, the Department has been able to increase the endowment of a Chair in Zoroastrianism, which is now firmly established with £2.3 million, and is the only endowed post for this religion world-wide. It has consolidated its leading position in Buddhist Studies through the endowment of the Kirayama lectureship (Agon Shu Foundation). In addition, the Society for the Advancement of Buddhist Understanding (Bukkyo dendo Kyokai) has pledged a further £600,000 to add to the existing Numata endowment which currently stands at approximately £1.4 million. This fund will support the post of Numata Reader in Japanese Buddhism, to be held by Dr Lucia Dolce.

The Department has developed new and consolidated existing areas of research capacity through external funding not only for endowed posts (Buddhist Studies, Zoroastrianism) but also for post-doctoral fellowships (Chinese religions, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Tibetan religion, Eastern Christianity). Since 2008 the Department's has had 33 PhD graduations, academic staff have taken principal organisational responsibility for 45 international conferences, colloquia and workshops, and raised £1.7 million in research funding.

#### **Strategic aims for the research cycle ahead**

The Department's first strategic aim is to enhance collaboration, both within the discipline and across disciplines, at SOAS and beyond. One of the research areas currently being developed is Religion and Digital Humanities built upon the interdisciplinary and collaborative projects of Pagel on a searchable electronic version of the Tibetan Buddhist canon and of Hintze on the Digital Yasna, applying XML format technologies to Zoroastrian manuscript studies. The departmental research cluster on Zoroastrianism is further strengthened by the work of Stewart on Zoroastrian communities in Iran. Stewart's work on oral cultures and traditions in Iran in turn connects with that of Zene on oral traditions in Sardinia. A further departmental collaborative research focus is on Central Asian religions and languages (projects by Hunter, Sims-Williams, Pagel, Palumbo), on East Asian Buddhism (various international projects by Dolce), and on magical papyri and artefacts (Hunter). Hunter and Sims-Williams are involved in a collaborative AHRC-funded project on the Christian library from Turfan in the Berlin Turfan Collection, now in its second phase. Hartung collaborates with international scholars on *Überweg – Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* and with research initiatives on "History of Concepts" in New Delhi (South Asia), Beirut and Bonn. Haustein works with scholars from various disciplines at the universities of Amsterdam, Birmingham, Heidelberg, and Uppsala in leading the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism. Tournier is involved in a major project on "Buddhism and Social Justice" carried on at the University of Leiden and sponsored by the Dutch National Research Fund (NWO, VICI Project).

The second strategic aim is to further the many individual research projects of departmental staff, including Barrett: Chinese knowledge of the wider world; Dolce: Buddhist Ritual Embryology, supported by a two-year British Academy-Leverhulme grant; Flügel: Jaina Rituals of Death and Stūpa Construction (AHRC Fellowship 2011), Jaina Mendicant Traditions; Gifford: African Christianity, Development and Modernity; Hartung: Tradition-building processes in the early modern Muslim Persianate world; Haustein: Transformations and Representations of Islam in German-East Africa; Hezser: Communication between Rabbis in Palestine and Babylonia in Late Antiquity; Jewish Art in Late Antiquity; Jewish Medical Ethics; Hintze: a major research survey Avestan; facsimile editions of Avestan manuscripts; Hunter: Dialogue and Interface in Syriac Christianity

(OUP); Religious Minorities of the Modern Middle East (I.B. Tauris); Pagel: Dynamics between Buddhist Monks and Merchants in Ancient India; Palumbo: Court Buddhism in Han China; Proferes: Indian medical texts; Sims-Williams: Chronology of the Bactrian documents (with François de Blois); Christian Sogdian texts; Sogdian grammar; Tournier: Mahāsāṃghika schools and their Scriptures; Hierarchs in South Asian Buddhism; Zene: Gift-giving in central Sardinia.

### **c. People, including:**

#### **i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

Staffing strategy is guided by the principle of striking an even balance between preserving and expanding the Department's outstanding coverage of different religious traditions and developing specific subject areas. Two members of staff retired (Skorupski, Gifford), but both remain research active and retain their affiliation with the Department as Research Professor (Gifford) and Emeritus Professor (Skorupski). In the assessment period two moved on (Crosby, Cabrita). Vacancies which have arisen in the assessment period have been filled promptly: Cabrita (Religions in Africa) replaced Gifford (2010), Tournier (Buddhism) replaced Skorupski and Crosby (2013), and Haustein (Religions in Africa) replaced Cabrita (2013). Via these appointments, the Department has been able to maintain a strong degree of continuity in the strength, breadth, and coherence of its overall research profile. The Department places great emphasis on the support and development of all new appointees. Early career staff undergo a probation period of 3 years, attend induction and training courses, have lighter teaching and administration loads, are given trained mentors and are entitled to two terms research leave at the end of the probation period. An annual probationary review scheme entails a full review of research goals and opportunities. As part of the Staff Review and Development Scheme, staff produce an annual portfolio of activity for review by the Head of Department supported by senior colleagues. The appraisal enables the HoD to advise on support appropriately, on research priorities and on research/teaching/administration balance. In addition, SOAS runs a wide-ranging Staff Development programme which is available to academic staff. Research achievement is the central criterion for promotion to Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor, involving rigorous external assessment. During the review period, Hartung, Hunter and Proferes have been promoted to Senior Lecturer, Dolce, Flügel, Pagel and Zene to Reader and Hintze to Professor. Research is supported by sabbatical arrangements. SOAS policy allows research leave entitlement of 1 term's sabbatical for every 12 terms of teaching accrued. Staff also apply for external funding for additional research leave with particularly onerous administrative loads, such as service as HoD or Associate Dean, usually recompensed with more extended periods of sabbatical leave. The Faculty of Arts and Humanities provides a research allowance of £750 p.a. for each academic for research expenses and conference attendance. This is further supported by the Faculty Research Panel grants awarded on a competitive basis for individual research projects, conferences, workshops, and applications for external research grants.

The Department has hosted 6 postdoctoral fellows: 3 funded by the British Academy (Daily 2009–10, mentor: Barrett; Halkias 2009–12, mentor: Skorupski; Goldman 2012–15, mentor: Hintze); 1 by a Rubicon Grant (€147,197) of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (van Klinken 2011–13, mentor: Hawthorne). 2 fellows work as team members of externally funded research projects: Garrett (AHRC, PI and mentor: Pagel), Krümpelmann (Leverhulme, PI and mentor: Flügel). Postdoctoral researchers are members of the Department and participate fully in its research activities. Postdoctoral fellows receive office space, a SOAS e-mail address, access to the SOAS library, computing facilities, IT support, and career development support. A mentor system ensures that postdoctoral researchers benefit from the advice of more experienced researchers.

#### **ii. Research students**

Research students are central to the Department's research culture. SOR staff are responsible for supervising on average around 40 research students p.a. Academic staff are dedicated to the recruitment and training of new researchers and their integration into the wider research culture at SOAS. The Department attracts on average 10–11 new research students each year, about 25% of whom are non-EU. Many students progress into research via the departmental MA programme. M.Phil./Ph.D admissions are overseen by the Research Admissions Tutor and undergo a rigorous vetting procedure and are provided with supervisory support monitored by the recently established Doctoral School (see below). Scholarships and other awards are distributed through a competitive

application process with respect to financial need and/or academic merit. SOAS has a wide range of PhD scholarships, including the SOAS Doctoral Scholarships (Faculty of Arts & Humanities), SOAS Research Scholarships, Felix Scholarships (Indian and Non-Indian), Kamran Djam Scholarships (in Persian Language and Literature and Iranian History), Ouseley Memorial Scholarship (for research requiring the use of any Middle Eastern or Asian language), Meiji jingu Japanese Studies Research Scholarship, Tsuda bursary (for writing up year in Japanese studies), CSJR bursary (in Japanese Religions), and the Jordan Travel grant. The Department has a strong record of winning AHRC studentships for MPhil/PhD students, including the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award which involves joint supervision with the British Museum – an area we are planning to develop further. Additional external awards are provided by the University of London, the ESRC, DFID and other external organisations.

Research provision for Postgraduates is overseen by the Departmental Research Tutor, the Faculty Research Committee and the School's Associate Dean for Research. Since autumn 2012, research students belong to the new SOAS Doctoral School which is overseen by a Head and an Administrator who work closely with the Research Student Association and the Associate Deans for Research of the three Faculties to link up services for research students. The Doctoral School has a designated building exclusively for research students which provides a venue with desks, computer work stations and printers. The building additionally has meeting rooms, as well as a common room, lockers, showers and bicycle storage.

The SOR follows the guidelines of the SOAS Code of Practice for Research Degrees with each MPhil/PhD student allocated a supervisory committee consisting of the first and main supervisor and two further supervisors. The role of the second and third supervisor is to enhance or augment the supervision of the student by contributing additional guidance and expertise, to participate in decisions relating to the student's transfer from MPhil to PhD, and to act on behalf of the main supervisor during unforeseen periods of absence. All first year research students are registered for MPhil status. During the first year students develop their specific research projects and plans. Individual supervisions, the obligatory departmental research writing workshop, and generic core writing courses help students prepare their upgrade submission materials which have to be submitted by the submission deadline. In May/June of Year 1 of the research degree, MPhil/PhD students undergo an in-depth first year appraisal (upgrade viva).

Training opportunities for MPhil/PhD students are provided by SOAS and at other institutions of the University of London. The SOR Research Tutor organises and runs a training programme for Year 1 students. Students returning from fieldwork (Year 2) or writing-up (Year 3) attend an advanced PhD seminar chaired by the HoD to discuss their work in progress. SOAS also runs a Graduate Development Programme for postgraduate students which provides full training in research methods, communication skills, networking, team-working, and career development. It offers language training, courses on supervision small group teaching, and a range of Faculty-specific courses. The Academic Development Directorate (ADD) offers generic skills workshops for postgraduate students to supplement and build upon the core research skills, including one-to-one tutorials by PhD students for students at the stage of writing up. Senior PhD students are encouraged to gain teaching experience as Teaching Assistants (TA) on Year 1 undergraduate courses. Research students are also helped with career development, including preparing a CV, job applications, and presenting and publishing papers, during Year 4 of writing-up. Further research activities in which research students are also involved include conference and workshop organisation (e.g. Lobetti and Lomi have co-organized many of the research events at SOAS and abroad for the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions). In the review period, 25 graduate students of 9 members of staff published edited collections, monographs or peer-reviewed articles.

Former research students have secured post-doctoral positions, including British Academy post-doctoral fellowships (Daily, Goldman, Halkias), Visiting Research Fellowships (Corazza at King's College London), and post-doctoral research positions (Doney at Munich University 2011–2014; Lomi: Shinjo Ito Fellowship in Japanese Buddhism, Berkeley University, Licha: Researcher at the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Waseda University, appointed in 2012). At least 10 of the department's recent PhD graduates have gained academic positions in institutions world-wide, including Ethiopia (Ralph Lee at Holy Trinity Theological College, Addis Ababa); Ireland (James Kapalo at Cork 2009); Japan (Fumi Ouchi, Associate Professor in 2008 and Full Professor in 2012 at Miyagi gakuin, Japan); UK (Jan Westerhoff at Durham 2008, Oxford 2013; Arash Zeini at St Andrews 2013; Paul François Tremlett at The Open University, Ornella Corazza at the University

of Hertfordshire 2009); and USA (Emily Welty at Pace University, New York; Ligeia Lugli at Berkeley, California 2012; James Kimball at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (sic) in 2012).

#### **d. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

Total external research income of the Department in the period was ca. £1.7 million. Sources included: AHRC (Dolce, Flügel, Hunter: £555,805 2008–11; Hunter, Sims-Williams: £531,158 2012–15, Pagel: £542,000 2012–15), British Academy (Hezser, Hintze); Leverhulme (Flügel: £254,000), British Association for South Asian Studies (Pagel); British Institute of Persian Studies (Stewart); German Ministry of Education and Research: Käte Hamburger Fellowship (Dolce, Hartung); Istituto Superiore Regionale Etnografico (Zene); Fellowship Max Weber Kolleg (Flügel). In addition to income reported to HESA, the School used a combination of funding drawn from bequests, endowments and donations of other types to support research expenditure in this unit in respect of Chairs, fellowships, events, conferences, publications and special journal issues. The total over the period amounted to £279,000.

SOAS has a resource base for the study of Asia and Africa almost without parallel. Its spacious Library is one of the world's most important libraries for the study of Africa, Asia and the Middle East and attracts researchers internationally. The Library houses over 1.2 million volumes at the SOAS campus at Russell Square in Central London, together with significant archival holdings, special collections and a growing network of electronic resources. SOR has an allocated subject librarian who ensures coordination of acquisitions. Researchers at SOAS can also access the Senate House library, the nearby British Library and other facilities. The SOAS campus also accommodates individual staff and administrative offices, teaching rooms with superb audio-visual facilities, computer and printing facilities for use by scholars, staff and student common rooms, conference facilities and congenial meeting spaces. Staff are provided with computer and printing facilities, general and specialist software, access to photocopiers, fax machines and secretarial assistance of the Academic Support Office.

SOR is home to four important research centres. In 2013 these Centres were upgraded to Faculty Centres, and each runs a vigorous programme of activities. Centre chairs provide annual reports to the HoD and Dean. Staff are also affiliated with centres in other departments and are involved in the running of School Centres, such as the Centre for Iranian Studies, the Japan Research Centre, and the Centre for Jewish Studies located in the Near and Middle East Department, for which Hezser co-organises a lecture series. The SOAS South Asia Institute and the China Institute (both established in 2013) provide a new focus for research in these regions. The Centre of Buddhist Studies, chaired by Tournier, promotes academic research and publications in Buddhist Studies, an MA programme and postgraduate research. It hosts a regular seminar series under the name of The Buddhist Forum, the annual Numata Lectures, and national and international workshops and conferences. The Chair maintains national and international contacts and collaboration with institutions and centres involved in Buddhist Studies. The Centre of Jaina Studies (CoJS), chaired by Flügel, promotes the study of Jaina religion and culture by providing an international interdisciplinary platform for academic research, teaching and publication. Activities of the Centre include the promotion of research projects, including postgraduate research at SOAS, dissemination of new research through the Centre's publications and website, an online journal (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/research/publications/journals/ijjs/>) and annual newsletter (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/jainastudies/newsletter/>), the international annual Jaina Studies Workshop, public lectures, including The Annual Jaina Lecture, exchange programmes, courses on Jainism, and outreach networking with individuals and institutions with interest in Jaina Studies. The Centre of World Christianities (formerly Eastern and Orthodox Christianity), chaired by Hunter, contributes to the teaching and research of Christianity in Africa and Asia, with particular focus on the 'Endangered Christianities' of the Middle East, as well as Haustein's interest in Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Africa. It facilitates dialogue with Iraqi clergy, organises public lectures, seminars and exhibitions, as well as the annual Christianity in Iraq Seminar Day that commenced in 2004 and is sponsored by British funding bodies ([www.easternchristianity.com](http://www.easternchristianity.com)). This range of activities attracts an audience from international academia, the Eastern and Orthodox Christian diaspora as well as the British public. The Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions (CSJR), chaired by Dolce, was founded in 1999 by a donation from the International Shinto Foundation. The Centre promotes the academic study of Japanese religions past and present in all their diversity

and dynamism via a very rich programme of regular guest lectures by leading scholars in the field, postgraduate discussion group, outreach events, as well as international workshops and conferences, some of which have produced important publications in English and Japanese. It publishes a glossy newsletter (<http://www.soas.ac.uk/csjr/newsletter/>) which has been described as an international medium of information in the field. The Centre also offers a postgraduate student bursary in Japanese religion on a competitive basis. All activities of the Centre are funded by external grants from Japanese and British bodies.

The Department and the School are supported by technical and support staff, advanced IT equipment resources, a designated Computer Helpdesk and the SOAS Research Office which facilitates research grant applications. The AHRC, the Leverhulme Trust and European Research Council regularly host seminars at SOAS. The HoD represents the department's research strategy and needs at the Faculty Board and the Faculty Management Group, implementing policies to support research management, including planning staff research leave and teaching cover. The SOR Research Tutor has responsibility for postgraduate research matters and is a member of the Faculty Research Committee (FRC) which covers practical and policy issues. HoD and Research Tutor are supported by the Associate Dean of Research (ADR) who is a member of the Dean's Faculty Management Group and ex officio of the SOAS Research Committee.

#### **e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base**

SOR members participate widely in national and international networks and collaborative relationships with other disciplines (44 in total). These include Hawthorne's 'Interdisciplinary Innovations in the Study of Religion and Gender', with Barnard College NY, and various European Universities, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) 2012–15; Hunter's two AHRC projects (2008–11 and 2012-15, the latter with Sims-Williams) on Christian Turfan documents and, with the Universities of Sydney and Oxford, an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded project on magical papyri and artefacts. Dolce's "Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan during the Portuguese Presence", funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, 2012–15; "Relationships and Transformations in East Asian Buddhism", funded by the Japanese Ministry of Culture, 2012-14; British Council Research Cooperation award on healing rituals in Japan, 2008–10; Sims-Williams's "Manichaean Texts in Chinese", with Macquarie University (Sydney), funded by the ARC; "The Cultural History of the Western Himalaya from the 8th Century", with various Austrian partners; edition of Sogdian texts recently discovered in China, with Renmin University, Beijing.

SOR members are also engaged in organising conferences which illustrate collaborations, including "Rabbinic Literature and Material Culture", co-organised by Hezser with Prof. Peter Schaefer, Princeton University, Nov. 2008; Hunter's 8th Conference of the International Association of Manichaean Studies, SOAS Sept. 2013; Pagel's Awake in the World: Tibetan Buddhist Meditation in the 21st Century, Sept. 2013, SOAS, with 670 participants; Sims-Williams's Bactrian chronology workshop, Cambridge 2008 (final conference of an AHRC-funded project); an annual symposium The Idea of Iran, organised by Stewart jointly with Dr Vesta Sarkhosh-Curtis (British Museum) in 2008, 2009, 2010, with Prof. Edmund Herzig (Oriental Institute, Oxford) in 2011, 2012, 2013; and an Exhibition at SOAS Oct.–Dec. 2013 The Everlasting Flame: Zoroastrianism in History and Imagination, organised by Stewart with Hintze, and involving collaboration with the British Museum, the British Library and many other institutions world-wide, fundraising (£400,000), publication of an exhibition catalogue and an international conference (Oct. 2013).

Memberships of Research Councils, research advisory panels, or research strategy review boards include UK research council panels: AHRC, AHRC/ESRC (Hunter, Pagel); EU and overseas research council panels: ERC, DFG, DAAD, Australia, Austria, UAI Brussels (Hezser, Hunter, Sims-Williams); overseas university review boards in Leiden, Florida, Italy ANVUR (Barrett, Flügel, Hintze); university appointments committees in Potsdam, Liège (Hezser, Hintze); promotion/tenure committees at Harvard, Columbia, USC, Toronto, Michigan (Dolce, Hintze); research advisory boards in Brazil (Hintze); UK representative, Union Académique Internationale, Brussels (Sims-Williams).

Staff have served in leading positions in professional subject associations or learned societies, both nationally and internationally, including Executive Committee member (formerly Chair), Universities' China Committee in London, 2008 (Barrett); Council member, Nihon bukkyô

sôgô kenkyû gakkai (Association for the Interdisciplinary Study of Japanese Buddhism) (2004 onwards) and SOAS representative at the European Consortium for Asian Field Study (ECAAF), 2007 onwards (Dolce); Vice-President, Union Académique Internationale 2010– (Sims-Williams); President Societas Iranologica Europaea 2011–2015 (Hintze); President of Mandaean Crisis International (Hunter); Chairman (Sims-Williams) and Secretary (Hintze) of the Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum; Chairman (Sims-Williams) and Treasurer (Hintze) of the Ancient India and Iran Trust, Cambridge; Secretary of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Lausanne 2011–2015 (Pagel); Member of the Advisory Board of the Commissio Sinica, Pontificia Università Antonianum, Rome, 2013– (Palumbo); Member of Advisory Committee for the project “Turfanforschung”, Berlin (Sims-Williams); Secretary of the British Institute of Persian Studies (British Academy) and Member of the Academic Council of Iran Heritage Foundation (Stewart).

Editorial positions held by staff include book series at Brill (Dolce: Encyclopaedia of Buddhism), Harrassowitz (Flügel: Jaina Studies), Brepols (Hunter: Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum; Series Syriaca; Sims-Williams: Dictionary of Manichaean Texts), Bulletin of SOAS (Proferes, Pagel); OUP (Hezser: The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine, 2010), Reichert (Sims-Williams: Beiträge zur Iranistik), Routledge (Barrett: Daoist Studies; Flügel: Advances in Jaina Studies); Japanese Journal of Religious Studies (Dolce); Nihon bukkyo sogo kenkyu (Dolce); Journal of Religion and Gender (Hawthorne). Staff served as external examiner for doctorates at 25 different universities in Europe, the US, Africa and Australia and have reviewed for 45 journals, 14 publishers and 20 funding bodies.

Consultancies undertaken by staff include Hunter in 10 asylum legal cases and expert advice to the Home Office on the Mandaeans of Iraq; Hartung in legal appeal cases on behalf of Irwin Mitchell Solicitors; interview with BBC Radio 4 on the Tablighi Jama'at London bomb plot; three interviews on Suicide and Martyrdom in Islam to Centre of Research Communication at the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics", University of Münster, Germany; Pagel for “The Seven Wonders of the Buddhist World”, BBC (2.9.2011); consultancy for “Traditions of Meditation in India”, Schwarzer Panther Film, Horb am Neckar, Nordstetten, Germany, 2012; Sims-Williams on inscriptions for the al-Sabah collection (Kuwait) and for auction houses including Christie's and Bonham's; planning of a major international exhibition on the Sogdians, Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington DC. Examples of collaborations with industry, commerce, third sector or other users of research include appearances in radio and television, including, among many others, BBC Radio 4 In Our Time (Barrett, Dolce, Hintze), BBC World Service (Dolce, Sims-Williams), and BBC Radio 3 (Hawthorne).

Scholarly honours, awards or fellowships received since 2008 include a Festschrift (Sims-Williams), Prizes (Flügel: International Pravartinī Pārvaṭī Jain Award 2010, Ambala; Haustein: Ruprecht-Karls-Prize of the University of Heidelberg; John Templeton Award for Theological Promise, both in 2011; Sims-Williams: Book of the Year Prize” of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2009; Tournier: Prize “Jeunes chercheurs”, Treilles Foundation, 2011), fellowship elections (Barrett: Leverhulme Senior Fellowship of the British Academy; Flügel: AHRC Fellowship 2011, Max Weber Center, University of Erfurt 2012; Sims-Williams: Senior Fellow, Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York, 2010; Hon. Member of the American Oriental Society, 2011; Academia Europaea, 2012; Tournier: Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Postdoctoral Fellowship, 2008; Gonda Foundation Fellowship, 2009).

Major invited keynote or prestigious lectures, too many to list individually, include Gifford: ‘Pentecostalism in Africa’, Vienna Institute for International Dialogue 4.5.2010; Hawthorne: ‘Is there a (M)other in the Text?’ Berkeley, 20.6.2010; Hezser: 2008 British Academy, London: “Material Culture and Daily Life”; Hintze: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome: In Ricordo di Gherardo Gnoli, 14.3.2013; Palumbo: “Handai Fojiao de chuanru wenti” (in Chinese, on the introduction of Buddhism in China), Beijing University 23.9.2010; “Knowledge of Buddhism in Early China”, Wolfson College, Oxford 17.5.2011; Sims-Williams: “Differential object marking in Bactrian”, Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 2009.

Research student training activities beyond SOAS include research student training networks in Japan (Dolce), University of Ghent, and Erfurt (Flügel), Trinity College, Dublin (Hezser); Oxford (Hintze), Cambridge (Hunter), Monash University, Australia (Hintze); UCL (Hunter, Palumbo, Zene); École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris (Tournier).