



**Berlin University  
Alliance**

# The Oxford-Berlin *Research Partnership*



The Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership is a collaboration between the University of Oxford, the four institutions of the Berlin University Alliance (BUA): Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, and Berlin Research 50 (BR50), a consortium of leading non-university research institutes.



# Why *Oxford* and *Berlin*?

Established in the aftermath of Brexit in 2017, the partnership recognises the importance of Anglo-German research cooperation and provides opportunities for researchers at all career stages to collaborate across disciplines and address major global challenges from a European perspective.



Partnering with Oxford enables researchers from BUA to collaborate with one of the world's highest-ranked universities. This has been especially important in the context of the Universities of Excellence funding competition, enabling BUA to highlight a strong and successful international partnership. Oxford brings to the Partnership its world-leading research, innovation ecosystem, Bodleian Library collections, and an inspirational environment for hosting established and early-career researchers.

Berlin is a key European hub for science, innovation, research and culture knowledge, with BUA at its core and as its driving force. Partnering with Berlin provides Oxford researchers access to a range of new collaborators, collections, data, and funding.

In addition to being home to the four leading institutions that make up BUA, it has an array of museums, galleries, and archives, such as the Humboldt Forum, the Museum für Naturkunde, and the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (SPK), as well as the specialist research institutes that make up BR50, e.g., the Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin, Max-Delbrück-Centrum or Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin. Berlin's academic and cultural institutions work closely with a range of governmental and foundation funders to support research activities. Berlin also offers a large urban environment, conducive to original research in fields such as the arts and medical science.



# Mission Statement

At a time of shifting geopolitical complexities and global challenges, the Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership is committed to fostering collaborative and interdisciplinary research that transcends borders and promotes our shared values of truth, free speech, and open debate.

By uniting the strengths of the University of Oxford and the Berlin University Alliance and utilising the close bilateral partnership of the UK and German governments, we will focus our research on finding solutions to global challenges from a European perspective, such as the global threat to democracy, ageing societies, and sustainable energy transition. Through close collaboration in the arts and humanities, social sciences, medical sciences, and STEM fields,

our partnership pushes the boundaries of knowledge, nurtures talent, and develops impactful solutions that contribute to a more prosperous, resilient and equitable global society. By upholding and defending our shared values, the Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership will ensure its joint research is conducted with integrity, transparency, and respect for diverse perspectives.



# Strategic Objectives

## 1

### Facilitate research collaboration between academics in the Oxford and Berlin universities and research institutions

- The Partnership will focus on a series of targeted high-priority thematic clusters that address global challenges, have senior academic leadership in both Oxford and Berlin, and have the potential to attract significant external funding. The initial themes will be:
  - Democratic Resilience;
  - Ageing Societies
  - Energy Systems
  - Digital Scholarship.
- Our thematic priority areas will be interdisciplinary, open-ended, and evolve over time. There will be no restriction on the number of themes.
- We will also aim to consolidate existing activities in areas such as social cohesion, global health, and responsible innovation.
- The theme of democratic resilience has added relevance in the light of BUA's ambition to establish a centre or programme to work with Central and Eastern Europe in its second funding phase (2027-33). The partnership will seek to identify possible links between these two initiatives.
- We will also prioritise a series of 'emerging themes', in areas such as climate, in which we encourage early-stage dialogue and debate through our annual symposium, Einstein Fellowships, or student engagement. These themes will also provide space for 'blue-skies' research and allow activities to be developed at a researcher level.
- The Partnership will seek opportunities to support visiting researchers from Berlin to spend time in Oxford. Relatedly, the Partnership will seek to leverage further fellowship opportunities, e.g., the Bodleian Fellowships and build on existing Stiftung Charité and Wissenschaftskolleg fellowships.

## 2

### Support knowledge exchange and public engagement

- An annual Oxford-Berlin symposium consisting of a three-day series of events, rotating between Oxford and Berlin, and, comprising
  - a) dedicated thematic workshops,
  - b) the main 'showcase' symposium,
  - c) governance meetings.
- The Oxford-Berlin lecture series will be reimagined to encourage greater reciprocity. This includes exploring mechanisms for equitable contributions from both sides, ensuring a truly collaborative and impactful exchange of ideas.
- The Partnership will also work together on other high-profile events, including the Falling Walls Science Summit and the Berlin Science Week.

## 3

### Create opportunities for early career researchers and doctoral students

- The Partnership will continue to provide funding to early career researchers through its dedicated seed fund scheme.
- We will seek funding for Doctoral Training Centres, open to doctoral candidates from all partner institutes.

# Underpinning *Activities*

A series of underpinning activities will help the Partnership realise its mission statement and achieve its strategic objectives.

## Mobility

We will create opportunities for student, ECR, and faculty mobility.

We will particularly focus on doctoral students who can work on projects of up to 3 months in collaboration with PIs working around thematic clusters.

## Innovation

We will explore ways to commercialise research in the context of the UK-Germany bilateral commitment to innovation, and seek opportunities to deepen knowledge infrastructures.

## Culture

We are committed to deepening the collaboration between museums, libraries, and archives recognising the wealth of opportunity in Oxford and Berlin.

## Professional Services

We will share best practice on how to support delivery of world-leading research, education and innovation services.

This will include digital education provision, doctoral training support, research security, and environmental sustainability policies.

# Delivery

The Partnership's secretariat (the BUA and Oxford's Global Engagement teams) plays a key facilitation role which is based on three elements: **matching, connecting, and funding.**

*Matching* involves carrying out comprehensive mapping using data analytics and AI to identify researchers on both sides of the partnership with overlapping research interests, with the potential to work together and build successful collaboration.

*Connecting* involves supporting exchange, mobility, and discussion among Oxford and Berlin-based researchers with overlapping interests. This may take place through symposia, workshops, seed funding, or visiting fellowships, for example.

*Funding* involves identifying and supporting a viable pathway to external funding in support of collaborative research.

We will also seek to increase the involvement of the six BUA/Oxford Einstein Visiting Fellows currently in Berlin as they are a vital bridge between Berlin and Oxford, bringing together their research groups in both cities and enriching the landscape in Berlin.



# Case Studies

Since its creation, the Partnership has provided flexible seed funding to over 1,300 faculty, doctoral students, and early career researchers across all disciplines; supported a wide range of Visiting Fellowships and Professorships, organised a range of joint lectures and symposia and contributed to externally-funded collaborative research programmes in a range of areas, including population and demography research, organ research, and energy systems.



## Tarik *Abou Chadi*

The Einstein Visiting Fellowship has been an essential component of my research and outreach work in the past two years. With my research group in Berlin, I am able to study changing dimensions of political conflict in Europe and how they create different support coalitions for political parties. Within the project, I have developed a larger framework that I want to use for a European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant application this year.



**The network within the Oxford-BUA exchange has been incredibly helpful in establishing the Centre for Democratic Resilience that we have just launched at Oxford in collaboration with Berlin-based partners.**

### Tarik Abou Chadi

Professor in European Union and Comparative European Politics at the Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford and Einstein BUA/Oxford Visiting Fellow at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin



## Evelina *Bazaeva*

I wouldn't have been able to identify and work on critical unpublished material for my thesis without the support of the Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership. Nor would I have gained insight from renowned scholars and PhD students, enhanced my research skills, produced written output for my thesis and boosted my academic profile without this opportunity.

**This project is a remarkable springboard for an academic career, which allows one to fully immerse oneself in research while expanding and nurturing networks and one's presence as an academic researcher.**

**Evelina Bazaeva**  
PhD candidate in British  
Culture and Literature,  
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

## Francesco *Giusti*

The Oxford-Berlin Research Partnership's seed funding scheme is ideal for researchers who wish to explore new directions in research, test their feasibility or scalability, and gauge the initial response from the research community. It also fills a gap often faced by researchers as funding schemes often forget the importance of this exploratory and networking phase, which is crucial to writing successful applications for large research grants.



**Francesco Giusti**  
Research Fellow, Faculty of  
Medieval and Modern Languages,  
University of Oxford



**The research I was able to carry out thanks to the Partnership's funding, and the international research network it has created, has enabled me to apply for funding from the German Research Foundation (DFG) and has laid the foundations for an application for a European Research Council (ERC) Synergy Grant.**

Oxford Berlin  
*Research Partnership*

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