The Oxford–Poland Hub: Mission Statement

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Purpose

The *Oxford–Poland Hub* will serve as a bridge between the University of Oxford and Polish academia, culture and society. Its mission is to foster sustained scholarly collaboration, mutual understanding, and cultural exchange between the two communities, with special focus on the Humanities, Social Sciences, Museums and Libraries. By promoting research partnerships with, and enhancing awareness of, Poland across Oxford and the wider city, the Hub will embed Poland more firmly within Oxford's intellectual and cultural life while enabling Oxford researchers to engage with Poland's dynamic academic and funding landscape. Ultimately, the Hub will open a gateway to wider engagement between Oxford and Central and Eastern Europe.

Objectives

1. To establish an institutional platform supporting and coordinating research collaborations, academic visits, and knowledge exchange between the University of Oxford and Polish institutions, principally universities, research institutions, and academic agencies such as NAWA (Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange) and FNP (Foundation for Polish Science).
2. To strengthen international and interdisciplinary collaboration and boost research excellence on both sides.
3. To promote cross-cultural engagement and awareness of Polish culture, language and society at the University of Oxford.
4. To enrich the University's local engagement, including through collaboration with the Polish diaspora in Oxford (esp. The Oxford Polish Association).

Outcomes

- A vibrant and enduring network linking Oxford scholars with counterparts in Poland across multiple disciplines.
- A strengthening of the scientific excellence of Polish research in the Humanities and the Social Sciences through greater embeddedness in international academic networks via Oxford.

- Greater visibility of Oxford scholarship in Polish academic circles and an expansion of opportunities for Oxford researchers to participate in Polish and European funding programmes by facilitating partnerships and information sharing.
- An increased presence of Polish culture, history, and language at Oxford and the city of Oxford through working closely with TORCH and the Humanities Cultural Programme.

Outputs

- A website serving as an information hub for collaborative opportunities, funding calls, and events accessible in Poland to Oxford scholars and at Oxford to those based in Poland.
- Competitive small grants supporting joint research projects, academic visits, and workshops, selected through open calls and robust quality evaluation.
- A programme of public lectures, conferences, and cultural events, including an inaugural symposium and cultural performance.
- Publications and joint funding applications resulting from Hub-supported partnerships.

Opportunities

The Oxford–Poland Hub will open new strategic avenues for Oxford scholars to collaborate with leading Polish universities and research centres, develop transnational research consortia, and tap into complementary sources of research funding. It will position Oxford as a preferred partner within Poland's expanding research ecosystem and facilitate participation in bilateral and European funding initiatives. Deepening institutional connections with Poland will also generate opportunities to establish endowed DPhil scholarships, visiting professorships and new academic chairs in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. In the longer term, the Hub will consolidate Oxford's standing as a centre of European intellectual exchange and cultural diplomacy.

Oxford-Poland Hub: Description of Activities

The Oxford–Poland Hub will implement a coordinated programme of research, mobility, cultural, and capacity-building activities designed to establish a durable institutional platform for collaboration between the University of Oxford (Humanities and Social Sciences Divisions, and the Gardens, Libraries and Museums [GLAM]) and Polish academia, culture, and society. The Hub's activities are structured to combine bottom-up academic initiative with light-touch strategic coordination, promoting both scholarly excellence and long-term sustainability.

1. Promotion, Visibility, and Communication Infrastructure

In its initial phase, the Hub will focus on establishing a strong and recognisable institutional presence at Oxford and in Poland. This will include the development of a consistent visual identity (branding), a comprehensive set of webpages serving as the Hub's primary information and communication platform, and a social media presence on key academic channels such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Bluesky, and Instagram, through accounts that are already well-established. We also plan to create a dedicated mailing list for subscribers, as well as liaising with University and divisional Communication officers to promote specific programmes and events as appropriate.

Developing a brand identity for the Oxford-Poland Hub, within The Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities (TORCH), will build recognition and trust, foster loyalty amongst Hub members and collaborators, and ultimately increase engagement with the Hub and its activities. As a programme of the University of Oxford, the Hub will also benefit from integrating the Oxford brand identity, within the University's policies and procedures, to demonstrate visually the reputational, academic and intellectual ambition of the Hub. Bilingual brand guidelines will be produced to ensure that brand assets (logos, key messaging, photography, etc.) of the Oxford-Poland Hub are used correctly at all times.

The website and newsletter will function as a bilingual (English-language primary) 'bank of information' on collaborative and funding opportunities between Oxford and Poland. It will disseminate information about Hub-funded activities, open calls for grants, events, and partner institutions, while also signposting relevant external funding opportunities for research in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, particularly those offered by NAWA and other Polish and European agencies. In order to increase the visibility of Polish research, culture, and language within Oxford's academic and cultural ecosystem, the platform will also provide information about Polish language courses offered by the Oxford University Language Centre and other relevant educational and cultural initiatives. By consolidating information that is currently fragmented across institutions, the Hub will significantly lower entry barriers for researchers seeking to engage in Polish–UK collaboration and increase the visibility of Poland within Oxford's academic and cultural life. It will also enhance links between the University and the Polish diaspora via close collaboration with the Oxford Polish Association (OPA Oxford Polish Association – Polska spolecznosc w Oxford).

A website analytics tool, will be used to monitor and analyse use. Further development of the website in subsequent years will respond to emerging needs and usage patterns, ensuring that the platform remains fit for purpose as the Hub grows.

Using social media channels for the Hub will enable the development of an online community of key stakeholders, and act as a tool through which to promote Hub activities, grant calls, events and other opportunities to a broad audience, with direct links to relevant content on the website.

2. Academic, Cultural, and Public Events

A core strand of the Hub's activity will be a programme of academic, cultural, and public events hosted primarily at the University of Oxford. These events will serve as key instruments for fostering intellectual exchange, showcasing Polish scholarship and culture, and embedding Poland more firmly within Oxford's academic and civic life, as well as, indirectly, Oxford in Polish academic life.

The Hub will support **bottom-up initiatives** through open, competitive calls for funding to organise academic talks, seminars, and cultural events at the University of Oxford (Humanities and Social Sciences Divisions and GLAM) and its constituent colleges. These may include lectures by academics from Poland, representatives of Polish cultural institutions, or figures from public life, as well as performances and exhibitions engaging wider audiences. Proposals will be assessed by the Hub's Academic Board according to transparent criteria focused on academic quality, relevance to the Hub's mission, and potential for sustained collaboration.

In parallel, the Hub's Academic Directors will organise a small number of **strategic, centrally coordinated events**, including an inaugural symposium and subsequent flagship events combining scholarly discussion with cultural programming. These events will serve both as intellectual focal points and as opportunities to engage senior stakeholders from Oxford, Polish partner institutions, funding bodies, and the Polish diaspora.

Where necessary, activities will also include travel by the Directors or the hosting of official visitors to support relationship-building, institutional coordination, and representation of the Hub in Poland and the UK.

When possible, and appropriate, events will be recorded and/or livestreamed to enable wider audience engagement with the topic, and the Hub. The website will act as a repository for event recordings, and act as an archival resource for researchers.

3. Competitive Research and Mobility Grants

At the heart of the Hub's activities will be a structured programme of **competitive small grants** designed to stimulate new collaborations, support early-stage research, and facilitate academic mobility between Oxford and Poland. These grants will be awarded through open calls and subject to rigorous academic evaluation. The calls will be open to Oxford-based academics (active in the disciplines of the Humanities Division, Social Sciences Division and GLAM) at all career stages from postdoctoral level onwards.

Three complementary funding schemes will be offered:

- **Project grants** will support the development of new or innovative joint research projects involving at least one Oxford-based and one Poland-based researcher. Funding may be used for early-phase idea development, feasibility studies, pilot research, and the preparation of larger external grant applications. These grants are explicitly designed to catalyse longer-term collaborations and enhance the international competitiveness of Polish and Oxford research in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

- **Visit grants** will fund short-term research visits in either direction between Oxford and Polish institutions. These visits will enable activities such as co-authoring publications, developing joint grant proposals, delivering lectures or seminars, mentoring early-career researchers, and participating in conferences or workshops. Grant holders will be encouraged to contribute actively to the host institution's intellectual life during their stay.
- **Workshop grants** will support the organisation of intensive, typically multi-day academic workshops involving researchers from Poland and Oxford, and where appropriate, additional international participants. By leveraging Oxford's global academic networks, these workshops will enhance the international visibility and embeddedness of Polish scholars, foster interdisciplinary exchange, and provide a high-impact setting for the development of new research agendas and consortia.

Together, these grant schemes will create a coherent pipeline from initial contact and mobility to sustained collaboration and larger-scale research funding.

4. Skills Development and Support for Early-Career Researchers

In its second year, the Hub will introduce targeted support for **early-career researchers (ECRs)** from Poland, with a focus on skills development and professionalisation. This will include bursaries enabling Polish ECRs to participate in existing summer/spring schools or training programmes at Oxford. Regulations for these bursaries and an application procedure will have to be worked out in partnership with existing Oxford-based programmes during the first year of the Hub's activity.

These activities will complement the Hub's research and mobility grants by strengthening human capital, enhancing familiarity with international research environments, and supporting the next generation of scholars engaged in Oxford-Poland collaboration.

5. Governance, Management, and Sustainability

Effective delivery of the Hub's activities will be ensured through a lean but robust governance and management structure. Day-to-day coordination will be provided by a dedicated Administrator responsible for communications and publicity, liaising with academic departments and Polish institutions, organisation of calls and events, and support for the Academic Board and Directors.

Academic leadership will be provided by the Academic Director and Deputy Director, whose time will be partially costed to ensure sustained strategic oversight, active engagement in network-building, and the stimulation of new collaborations across disciplines.

Institutional overheads will contribute to the provision of essential support services, including digital infrastructure, financial and legal administration, research facilitation, and access to Oxford's libraries, museums, and cultural venues. This integrated support will allow the Hub to operate efficiently while being fully embedded within the University's academic and administrative structures.