

The Nahrein Network: Annual Report

Year 3: 1 October 2023 – 30 September 2024

October 2024 • Paul Collins, Misha Enayat, Niyan Ibrahim, Mehiyar Kathem, Zainab Mahdi, Rozhen Mohammed-Amin, and Eleanor Robson

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Figure 1 Pictures from Nahrein Network's team trip to Iraq in February 2024

1. Introduction and overview

1.1. Remit and Research Aims

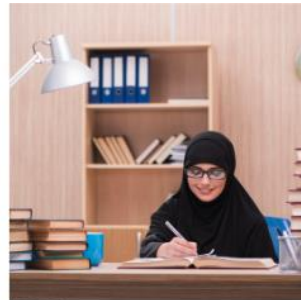
In order to foster the sustainable development of history, heritage and the humanities in post-conflict Iraq, the Network has six clearly defined research aims, each linked to one of the UN's [Sustainable Development Goals](#). All the work we conduct and fund must address at least one of them:



1 To better understand the current situation

Why, and how, have local experts and audiences been excluded from the production and consumption of knowledge about the past of Iraq and its neighbours? We aim to develop a fuller historical and political understanding of this problem.

See [UN SDG 10](#): Reduce inequalities between and within countries



2 To raise the profile of local expertise

We aim to support Iraq humanities academics and heritage professionals to engage with regional and global academic communities, as producers of research for international consumption.

See [UN SDG 17](#): Strengthen partnerships for sustainable development



3 To improve the job prospects of the region's youth

We aim to improve employability and leadership potential for humanities graduates from Iraqi universities.

See [UN SDG 4](#): Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



4 To help heritage organisations better serve local needs

We aim to enable Iraqi museums, archives, cultural heritage sites, and registered NGOs to contribute to, and diversify, local tourism and knowledge economies.

See [UN SDG 8](#): Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



5 To help post-conflict healing and reconciliation

We aim to develop the role of Iraqi history and heritage in repairing past injustices, and in building inclusive communities and a fairer, more cohesive society.

See [UN SDG 16](#): Promote peace, justice and strong institutions



6 To address Iraq's climate emergency

We aim to foster an integrated, holistic approach to heritage and the environment, in order to mitigate against the effects of impending natural disaster.

See [UN SDG 13](#): Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

1.2. Staffing

The Network is staffed at UCL by Director, Professor Eleanor Robson (20% FTE), Deputy Director Dr Mehiyar Kathem (100% FTE), project administrator Mrs Oana Borlea-Stancioi (50% FTE, to August 2024), and social media and communications officer Mrs Zainab Mahdi (50% FTE). In addition, in this reporting period it had two Co-Directors: Professor Paul Collins, Head of the Middle East Department at the British Museum (10% FTE), and Dr Rozen Mohammed-Amin of the Kurdish Institute for Strategic Studies and Scientific Research.

2. Governance and administration

2.1. Objectives for 2023–24

As noted in last year's Annual Report, we had three governance objectives this year:

- Over two years into our funding, the lack of support and general indifference from UCL are a continued source of worry and risk. There needs to be an **urgent review** of the university's capacity to support and celebrate our work and to ensure that our funds are being spent effectively.
- Separately, and more positively, we expect the **pending MoUs** with Iraqi ministries to be signed off over winter 2023–24 and are looking forward to taking up British Council Iraq's kind offer to sponsor a signing or celebration session at the British Embassy in Baghdad in early 2024.
- The current 3-year collaboration **agreement between UCL, KISSR and the British Museum** expires in September 2024. The follow-up will need to be negotiated and signed.

We report on each of them below.

2.1.1. Review of UCL support

Oana and Eleanor spent most of October and November 2023 escalating twenty separate support problems, over a dozen different departments, to the Dean of Social and Historical Sciences and the Vice-Provost for Research, Innovation and Global Engagement, with the following major outcomes:

- The 18-month hiatus in setting up StarsOrbit as our transfer agent for payments to Iraq was finally resolved in November. The first payments to devolved projects accordingly began on 1 December.
- MoU processes with Iraqi ministries were re-started after a six-month hiatus.
- The Network was assigned a new contact in UCL's philanthropy office — though only after several months delay due to maternity leave.
- The Due Diligence process for our devolved projects was streamlined.
- Apology letters were issued to the Donor and the PIs of our devolved projects, in which UCL accepted responsibility for the extreme delays the Network had faced.

However, the more systemic support reforms we requested have still not been enacted, our so-called personal contact in the Research Finance office remains largely incommunicado, and UCL's media office remains indifferent to our work.

In view of these significant ongoing operational challenges at UCL, resultant concerns expressed by the funder, and changes to Eleanor's personal circumstances, in September 2024 she sought and received agreement from the Management Committee and the donor to wind up the Network over

the coming year and close it in good order on 31 August 2025. By this time, it will have been operational for eight full years.

2.1.2. MoUs with Iraqi ministries

An MoU with the Ministry of Higher Education in the Kurdish Region of Iraq was signed in November 2023. By the end of this reporting period, an MoU with federal Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education in Baghdad had also been signed by UCL and was waiting for Iraqi signatures. A planned signing ceremony in London in autumn 2024, during an official state visit of the Iraqi Prime Minister, was called off at the last minute due to the escalation of the Israel-Gaza conflict into Lebanon.

2.1.3. Collaboration agreement

The current Co-Is collaboration agreement expired in September 2024. However, in the summer the British Museum withdrew from the Network, in large part due to Co-I Paul Collins's intensive workload at the Museum, which had been hampering his ability to contribute all year. By that time it was too late to initiate new contract negotiations with KISSR without substantial interruption to Rozhen's research income. Instead, she was offered a 12-month contract for a devolved research project in order to finalise her team's work for the Network.

2.2. Staffing changes

After achieving a Distinction and dissertation prize for her part-time MA in Social Anthropology from Goldsmiths University of London in autumn 2023, project administrator Oana began a part-time PhD in Anthropology. In June 2024, she resigned from her post at the Network in order to undertake PhD fieldwork. Since August, the Network has been serviced very ably by Dr Misha Enayat, employed through UCL's temping agency for 20 hours a week.

Co-Director Professor Paul Collins (10% FTE) found his work as Head of the Middle East Department at the British Museum increasingly time-consuming and struggled to attend meetings or otherwise participate in the Network. He resigned in July 2024. Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin of KISSR continued to serve as our other Co-Director until the end of this reporting period.

2.3. Management Committee

The Network's Management Committee meets every three months to ensure that the Nahrein Network delivers work that is of high academic quality; is appropriately governed, ethically and financially; and meets the research remit agreed with the funder. The committee includes representatives from the Network's main partners in Iraq, and academics in the field from Iraq, the UK and elsewhere.

We are very grateful to the following people who served on the Management Committee during the reporting period:

- Dr Ahmed Al-Mallak, Coventry University
- Dr Bijan Rouhani, representing the EAMENA project, University of Oxford
- Dr Shireen Younis, University of Duhok

- Dr Lanah Haddad, representing TARI, The Academic Research Institute in Iraq
- Dr Maja Kominko, expert on heritage in crisis contexts
- Mr Ben Lawton, representing British Council Iraq
- Dr Zeinab Shuker, Sam Houston State University, expert on the social impacts of the climate emergency in Iraq
- Ms Fran Sutherland, University of Bradford, expert on Iraqi higher education
- Ms Jananne Al-Ani, artist and academic, University of the Arts London (from March 2024)
- Dr Hannah Fluck, expert on climate heritage (from March 2024)

The Management Committee's Terms of Reference were given their annual review at the September meeting and minor updates were made. Dr Al-Mallak and Dr Younis renewed their terms of office; Dr Haddad stood down. We are hugely grateful for her time and engagement over the past three years.

2.4. Maintaining relationships with Iraqi stakeholders

In February 2024, Eleanor and Mehiyar undertook a trip to Iraq to visit institutions supporting new devolved research projects.

First they visited Kirkuk city to meet the President of the University of Kirkuk, in support of Dr Mustafa al Jabouri, PI of the Kirkuk Minorities project. Dr Mustafa and Dr [Dilshad Oumar Abul-Aziz](#), a former Visiting Scholar, organized a seminar on the Nahrein Network's work and activities in the country, at which Eleanor also spoke. It was chaired by the Dean of the College of Arts at the university, Dr Omar Najm Aldeen, and attended by over 80 students and researchers from the university. A visit to Kirkuk Citadel was also attended by the current dean of the College of Archaeology in Mosul University, Dr Yasamin Al-Saedy. Dr Dilshad has since secured one of our mini grants, to conduct research on the history of Kirkuk's citadel and its inhabitants.

Eleanor and Mehiyar next visited Baghdad, where they met with the Minister of Higher Education and other officials. A meeting with the new president of Baghdad University, Dr Bahaa Ibraheem, also took place at the university, where they discussed potential research collaborations. They also organised a one-day workshop in Baghdad for Nahrein Network's new funded projects, giving PIs and their teams a chance to meet and share ideas.

Moving south, Eleanor and Mehiyar visited the site of Babylon, to meet with SBAH archaeologist Ammar al Taei and Dr Haider al Mamori, of the University of Babil. Finally, in Basrah, they met with Dr Mohannad Jawad Kadhum, president of Basrah University and with current grantee and NN-BISI scholar, Dr Hamid Samir. Eleanor gave a short talk to undergraduate students at the University of Basrah, chaired by Dr Hamid Samir. They also visited the Iraqi Marshes and many cultural heritage sites around Basra.

In May 2024, Eleanor and Mehiyar attended the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage's first international conference in twenty years, held at the University of Mosul. Eleanor gave a conference presentation about the Kish project, and the Nahrein Network team met with previous NN-BISI scholars.

On the same visit, Eleanor, Mehiyar and Rozhen participated in the International Research Capacity Building Workshop, organized by the Ministry of Higher Education in Erbil. Eleanor gave a keynote talk about the Nahrein Network's goals and activities in Iraq and research collaboration. The Network's administrator Oana, and Dr Ersun Kurtulus, who assists the Nahrein Network's academic capacity building programme, also delivered presentations.



Figure 2 Nahrein Network team participates in the International Research Capacity Building Workshop, organized by the Ministry of Higher Education in Erbil

3. Devolved research

3.1. Objectives for 2023–24

In last year's Annual Report, we identified two major objectives in furthering devolved research funded by the Network:

- Once the final bureaucratic hurdles have been leapt, both at UCL and in Erbil and Baghdad, we expect the first of our **devolved research projects**, selected in 2022–23, to start in winter 2023–24. The next awarding round should also progress more smoothly, and we hope to be able to report on up to ten active research projects in our next Annual Report.
- We also hope to lower Iraqis' barriers to participation in funded research by introducing a low-resource **mini-grants scheme** in spring 2024, offering up to seven awards each year.

We report on each of these below, followed by more detailed progress reports on active devolved research projects.



Figure 3 A collection of heritage sites in Iraq documented by Nahrein Network projects

Table 1: Devolved Research Projects in Progress (see §3.2 for reports)

ID	PI	Title	Home Institution	NN Aims	Duration	Summary
25	Kamil Hasouni al Rikabi	<i>Memorialisation of Troubled Pasts: the Case of Camp Speicher</i>	Organisation for the Victims of Speicher	2, 3	6 months from 1/12/23	Develop memorialisation processes and public education materials to remember and document victims of Camp Speicher massacre
39	Mustafa Mehzen Al Jubory	<i>Minorities in Kirkuk: Community Identities and Heritage Futures</i>	University of Kirkuk	1, 2, 5	12 months from 1/12/23	Peacebuilding through integrating minorities in the social fabric of Kirkuk; preserve minorities' heritage; support efforts for cultural ownership for minorities; university curriculum on minorities history and heritage; survey of minorities in Kirkuk
40	Talib Issa and Amal Ibrahim	<i>Harnessing the Potential of Visitor Engagement at the Baghdad Cultural Centre</i>	Baghdad Cultural Centre/PETA Services	2, 3, 4	15 months from 1/04/24	Historical research and improved visitor and audience engagement to the Baghdadi Cultural Centre and historic Baghdad city centre
51	Sura Al-Maiyah	<i>Climate Change, Old Basra Traditional Architecture, and Community Resilience</i>	University of Loughborough	6	24 months from 1/05/24	Develop a toolkit for retrofitting old buildings with the use of traditional architecture to support the net zero goal

3.1.1. Research Grants Scheme

As soon as UCL entered StarsOrbit into its procurement system—the outcome of an 18-month-long saga—in November 2024 the Research Contracts team were able to start issuing contracts to the eight devolved projects which had been in development since October 2023. Four of these, worth c.£250,000, were successfully awarded and are now underway (Table 1: Devolved Research Projects in Progress and §3.2 below). The remainder did not get off the ground, for a variety of reasons. Management Committee members who also serve on the boards of other funders in Iraq tell us that a 50% post-award attrition rate is quite normal.

Table 2: Demographic overview of applicants to 2023 Research Grant Awards

EOI status	Male	Female	F%	Iraqi	UK	International	IQ%	Total
<i>Shortlisted</i>	6	4	40%	10	-	-	100%	10
<i>Longlisted</i>	18	13	42%	28	1	2	90%	31
<i>Ineligible</i>	33	13	28%	40	3	3	87%	46
TOTAL	51	26	34%	68	4	5	88%	77

In autumn 2023, we held a new round of applications, using the same protocols as in 2022, as described in §3.2 of last year's Annual Report (Table 2: Demographic overview of applicants to 2023 Research Grant Awards).

Of the ten shortlisted applications, three were still in development for funding as of September 2024. Given the decision to close the Network, these were not taken forward.

3.1.2. Mini Grants Scheme

As discussed in last year's Annual Report, in spring 2024 we ran a call for research grants of up to £5000, a figure designed to fall under the UCL due diligence threshold and therefore speed up the awarding process. (Unfortunately, that did not prove to be entirely the case, and the time from award to contract still ran into several months.)

The scheme attracted a good number and range of applicants from Iraq (Table 3: Demographic overview of applications for Mini Grants in May 2024), three of whom were offered awards. One project had been contracted by the end of the reporting period.

Table 3: Demographic overview of applications for Mini Grants in May 2024

Applications	Total	Male	Female	Academic	Non-Academic
Received	38	24	14	27	11
Shortlisted	5	3	2	3	2
Awarded	3	2	1	3	0

3.2. Progress Reports

3.2.1. Memorialisation of Troubled Pasts: The Case of Camp Speicher

Led by Sheikh Kamil (VSO) in collaboration with Prof Salah al-Jabari and Prof Mahmoud al-Qaysi, (University of Baghdad).

Sites of memory, including processes associated with memorialisation, if negotiated professionally and with a view to community-based interests, can offer an opportunity for individuals, families and groups in society to address past traumas and lingering pain. In this context, this project focuses on ways to develop professional memorialisation that represents the history of recent events in ways that are representative (and in turn democratic) and which can be developed also for the purposes of social, cultural and personal healing and recovery.

The Organization of Iraq Victims of Speicher works with 4,000 families in Iraq and is the country's only organization representing the interests of those who perished at Camp Speicher and in the fighting preceding ISIS' takeover of the site in 2014. It has offices in Nassiriyah and in Baghdad. The organisation has over the past few years created a strong network representing the interests of victims and families spanning the entirety of Iraq.

This project emerged out of a context in which Iraq and its peoples have suffered, especially since the 1980s up to the present moment, from over four decades of war and conflict, leaving its population heavily scarred and exhausted by those events and the legacies that continue to shape society. It brings together key actors and organisations in this field, working with a common goal to develop community memorialisation in Iraq.

The Victims of Speicher Organisation in collaboration with academics from the University of Baghdad have so far conducted 66 interviews and 7 surveys with members of families of those affected by the Speicher June 2014 massacres, developing trust with families and liaise with them about the purpose of this project. Interviews now cover provinces including Diwaniyah, DhiQar, Babil, Muthanna and Wasit, in addition to Baghdad. A photographic exhibition is planned towards the end of the project period, to showcase the project's outputs. A book will be published in Arabic in 2025, based on the project and its outcomes.

3.2.2. Minorities in Kirkuk: Community Identities and Heritage Futures

Led by Dr Mustafa Mehzen (University of Kirkuk).

The population of the city of Kirkuk consists of a mixture of Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and other minorities. According to recent statistics, the population of the city is 1.4 million, with about 90% of that figure being Muslim; ethnic and religious minorities representing Christians, Sabians, Kakais, Chechens, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, Jews, and others comprise the rest.

Within the context of modern Iraq, minority groups in Kirkuk are in danger of being forgotten altogether. Their memories and presence, which are millennia-old, cannot be allowed to be forgotten. This rich inheritance can only be maintained through equality and social justice.

Unfortunately, Kirkuk has been forgotten in international heritage activity, with devastating consequences for its society.

Armed conflict experienced in Kirkuk was destructive and further fragmented the cultural map of minority groups, who faced death when ISIS entered the region in June 2014. This in turn led to further devastating consequences for minorities, including marginalization, exclusion and extinction. Unless urgent measures are taken, the unique cultural identities Kirkuk once harboured will be lost.

Amongst this background of divisions and ongoing challenges, this project aims to elevate the presence of Kirkuk's minorities through an integrated set of activities that champion and celebrate their histories. The members of minorities in Kirkuk have been deprived of many of their cultural rights, and the project team feel it is their duty to raise awareness in society and the academic community of the necessity of the freedom of members belonging to minority groups to enjoy their own culture, profess their religion, practice their rituals, or use their language in communication with other members of their group.

To this end, the project team have held a number of workshops and symposiums for several of the minority groups in the city, including those in the Christian, Mandeian, Faili Kurd, and Kakai communities. The team have also coordinated two public education seminars for minorities of the Sabian and Chaldean communities respectively. The project has also produced several podcast episodes featuring interviews with members of the minority communities. At present the team is working with members of the Kakai community to attempt to quantify the number of Kakai currently residing in Kirkuk, as well as those who have emigrated from the city.

3.2.3. Harnessing the Potential of Visitor Engagement at the Baghdad Cultural Centre

Led by Mr Talib Issa (Baghdad Cultural Centre) and Ms Amal Ibrahim (PETA Cultural Services)

Baghdad's millennia-old cultural heritage is unique in Iraq. Since the 1990s, however, it has faced extreme neglect and the consequences of conflict. Despite this, a growing, mostly youth-based interest in Baghdad's heritage, evidenced by growing local tourism, has shown real promise in growing community and societal interest in the history of the city.

The Baghdadi Cultural Centre (BCC), currently only open on Fridays, likewise has become a popular destination, regularly attracting around 3000 visitors a week to its museums, libraries, children's centre, café and other facilities, and to its events. The BCC is the largest cultural centre in Iraq, with a huge diversity of amenities and supporting hundreds of events a year. While extended opening hours would be highly desirable, like much of old Baghdad, the historic building in which the BCC is located needs conservation, all of its attractions and facilities need upgrading, with its displays being improved and modernised and its reach broadened.

The project, instigated and led by the BCC under the directorship of Mr Talib Issa, aims to better understand visitor engagement in the centre, which will serve as a first step in not only increasing the centre's own capacity for visitors but also in offering support to and engagement with other cultural institutions nearby. This project uses a mixed-methods approach, combining interviews and focus groups, visitor surveys and observation, and archival and historical research, in order to

produce outputs that will help the centre to be more active and dynamic in its appeal and service to its visitors.

The team has, to date, been focused primarily on historical research on the BCC building itself, on updating the visitor offer at the centre, and on better understanding current visitor engagement. Research trips to Istanbul and Ankara uncovered a vast wealth of archival material on the centre's history, in particular its foundation and use as an Ottoman military academy. A selection of sources from this trip will be chosen to highlight in what is to become the BCC's interactive visitor hall. This hall is in the process of being designed, with the development of a new signage system, visitor curriculum, activity guide and short display videos (one of which has already been completed) currently in process. The centre's new website is live and showcases several news article and cultural pieces. Finally, the visitor engagement survey process is well underway, with pre-surveys completed and face-to-face interviews with centre employees, event organisers and visitors currently being conducted.

3.2.4. Climate Change, Old Basra Traditional Architecture, and Community Resilience

Led by Dr Sura Al-Maiyah (Loughborough University) and Prof. Hamed Samir (Basra University).

Traditional historic architecture offers inspiration for communities and professionals alike, particularly in the current era of climate emergency. Historic buildings satisfied occupants' comfort without relying on the massive use of energy-consuming solutions. In most cases, the use of local craftsmanship and construction techniques resulted in beautifully crafted and environmentally responsive buildings. Such a wealth of solutions has lost its relevance in contemporary architecture largely replaced by standardised alternatives.

This project aims at raising awareness of the importance of protecting historic residential architecture in Iraq and the value of its environmental design by co-creating a toolkit, a 'digital platform' with local architects, engineers, and residents for designing better retrofit interventions for traditional residential buildings. The platform will be both a vehicle to help residents regain trust in the peculiarity of their heritage and an instrument to pursue sustainable heritage conservation practices. It will include visualizations showing how historic houses are performing in terms of solar control and visual efficiency. It will offer a range of detailed structural and functional solutions aiming at facilitating future rehabilitation works. It will help pursue heritage conservation by respecting communities and taking into account social habits in the use of buildings.

The project focuses on Basra, Iraq's second-largest city, where some of the country's extraordinary traditional architecture is located, namely the famous *shanasheel* houses. The fluid political climate affecting the city since the early 2000s has severely damaged its historic precinct and weakened the confidence of its community in their heritage. This is common to many cities in (post-)conflict zones, which are yet to find scenarios to revive their history and heritage. The project will set a precedent for cities in conflict zones thus changing the narrative on heritage conservation in the Middle East and beyond.

Despite facing delays to some planned work due to the current unstable political climate of the region and restrictions on travel, the project team have made steady progress since commencing in

April 2024. They have made good headway on the literature review and have identified two houses on which to base two out of a total of three case studies, with permission processes currently in progress. The team has also had a conference paper accepted for delivery at the London Heritages 2025 conference. Finally, their website, LinkedIn and Instagram accounts are now all live too, where they will give updates on forthcoming community engagement events.

4. Capacity building

4.1. Objectives for 2023–24

In last year’s Annual Report, we identified the following objectives for building research capacity in Iraq in areas within our remit:

- After some experimentation, the evergreen **Joint NN-BISI Visiting Scholars scheme** will move to one annual deadline, in February, and offer slightly fewer but better funded placements. Female participation is still very low, but this appears to be a structural societal problem that deters women with dependents from solo international travel.
- The **AcademiQ** programme for developing research capacity continues to grow and improve, with a revamp of the entry-level online Academic Research Course and a second round of the Mentorship Programme led by Dr Ersun Kurtulus. A new Critical Research Skills course will come online in spring/summer 2024 to bridge the gap between the two. There will also be opportunities to develop more bespoke provision for the Ministries of Higher Education.
- The **UCL Graduate Studentship** will be offered for a third time under tighter English-language conditions. If it again fails to attract a viable candidate for admission, the Management Committee will be asked to consider closing the programme — while continuing to support Niyan Ibrahim — and to propose alternative uses of the unspent funds.

4.1.1. Joint BISI Visiting Scholars scheme

Over the winter 2023–24 we ran a call for applications to the Visiting Scholarships scheme, with our partners, the British Institute for the study of Iraq, BISI (Table 4: Demographic overview of applicants to the 2024 round of the Joint Visiting Scholarships Scheme).

<i>Applications</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Unclear</i>	<i>Academic</i>	<i>Non-Academic</i>
Received	37	27	8	2	27	10
Eligible	15	14	1	0	11	4
Awarded	5	5	0	0	3	2

Table 4: Demographic overview of applicants to the 2024 round of the Joint Visiting Scholarships Scheme

The placements awarded are shown in Table 5: Successful applicants to the 2024 Visiting Scholarships scheme.

No	Applicant	Project name	Employer	Proposed host
26	Alaa F Al Ameri	<i>Oral History Methods in Iraqi Academia from Theoretical to Practical</i>	Mustansiriyah University	Prof Graham Smith, School of History, Newcastle University

36	Hawraman Fariq Karim	<i>Memorial Sites of Halabja Genocide</i>	Salahaddin University	Dr Mehiyar Kathem, History Department, UCL
48	Bzhar Othman Ahmed	<i>The work and heritage of the Jews in Koya 1918-1948 remaining in the daily life of the city</i>	Soran University	Dr Marouf Cabi, Middle East Centre, LSE
63	Mustafa Faraj	<i>Nineveh Gates: Current Challenges and Perspectives for Sustainability</i>	SBAH Mosul	Prof Mark Altaweel, Institute of Archaeology, UCL
64	Ahmed Al Imarah	<i>Iraq's higher education cultural heritage curricula, pedagogy and teaching materials: Mapping, assessment, evaluation and knowledge exchange</i>	Kufa University	Dr Nigel Fancourt, Department of Education, Oxford University

Table 5: Successful applicants to the 2024 Visiting Scholarships scheme

Over the course of the reporting period, the following Visiting Scholars, funded in earlier rounds of the scheme, took up their placements in the UK (Table 6: Visiting Scholarship placements in 2023–24). After their return to Iraq, each Scholar submitted a report that was shared in the Network’s bimonthly Newsletter and on our blog (see §6.6 Blog).

Name	Home Institution	Project	Host	Dates
Mr Zaid Isam Khudair al-Kawaz	Independent heritage consultant	<i>The Heritage Infrastructure of the British Administration of Iraq (1916-1921). A Study of Public Works and Its Legacies</i>	Professor Eleanor Robson UCL (virtual)	November 2023–May 2024
Ms Nawar Ihsan Abdulazeez	Iraq Museum, Baghdad	<i>Marketing the Iraqi Museum through the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals</i>	Professor Paul Collins, British Museum	March–April 2024
Mr Alaa Abdul Hussain Ali Alkaabi	Iraqi National Library and Archives	<i>The Technical Changes in Libraries – A Study of Iraq’s National Library and Archives</i>	Professor Mark Jackson, Newcastle University	April – June 2024
Dr Ammar Hashim Saleh Merza	University of Mosul	<i>The Arab Heritage of Comics</i>	Professor Laurence Grove, University of Glasgow	July – August 2024
Dr Laith Hussein	University of Baghdad	<i>Tell Harmal</i> (completion of AHRC-funded placement offered in 2019)	Professor Eleanor Robson, UCL	August 2024

Table 6: Visiting Scholarship placements in 2023–24



Figure 4 Pictures of Visiting Scholars in the UK

4.1.2. **AcademiQ research capacity building programme**

Academic Research Course

This online introductory course on UCL Extend was revised and updated in autumn 2023, to deliver an improved learning experience. The course ran again in the first six months of 2024, delivered by Dr Ariane Smart, Dr Julia Molinari and Sharon Pointer. It comprised a series of eight independent learning units and three live workshops. 18 Iraq-based researchers graduated from this online course. It will run again in Academic Year 2024–25 on a much larger scale, incorporating elements of the planned Critical Research Skills course, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Academic Mentorship Programme

This year-long mentorship programme comprises online and in-country workshops, delivered by Dr Ersun Kurtulus. Two groups of learners from Iraq, mostly MA and PhD holders, benefited from the programme. The first group comprised eight social sciences researchers, while the second comprised ten linguistics and English literature researchers. Since the start of the course earlier in 2024, three online workshops have been delivered, with two sets of in-country workshops held Dohuk in June 2024. The final set of in-person workshops is planned for Basrah in November 2024.

4.1.3. **UCL Graduate Studentship**

In total the scheme offers three scholarships for 1 MA/MSc year + 3-year PhD, covering full tuition fees, maintenance, and research expenses, plus set-up costs, for programmes in History, Archaeology or Sustainable Heritage. To date we have made one successful award (see Report from the recipient of the 2022 Graduate Studentship) and have made two open offers to applicants who have not yet passed UCL's stringent English language requirements.

To be eligible, applicants must be a citizen and resident of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI); not have studied or lived in the UK before; hold a Masters degree from a recognised Iraqi/KRI university with an overall grade of "very good" (80%), or any other equivalent of a UK

2:1 undergraduate degree; meet UCL's requirements for English language competence, with a formal qualification, *before* applying.

This year we promoted the scheme with a big social media campaign plus emails to all Newsletter subscribers, support from Iraqi cultural attaché in the UK, and a Q&A webinar in November 2023 with over 100 attendees and 160 views on YouTube. Nevertheless, we received few applications, none of which was eligible (Table 7: Overview of applicants to the 2024 Graduate Studentship).

Applicants	Male	Female	Eligible
13	10	3	0

Table 7: Overview of applicants to the 2024 Graduate Studentship

Reasons for ineligibility were: lack of Masters qualification (11); lack of English (10); poor statement of interest (8); and poor fit to the applicant's chosen programme (5).

Meanwhile, in December 2023, the previous year's successful applicants, Mr Warsheen Al-Haji (MSc in Sustainable Heritage: Data Science) and Ms Wesam Youssef (MA in Ancient History) succeeded in obtaining sufficient language qualifications to be admitted to UCL's pre-sessional English programme. We therefore agreed to fund their attendance on this programme in summer 2024. Warsheen attended online from home in Iraq; Wesam attended in person. Both passed with flying colours and so we will honour our conditional offers of the MA/MSc scholarship in Academic Year 2024–25. As the Network's budget supports just three full studentships, it is now full and we will not advertise further opportunities for this scheme.

4.2. Report from the recipient of the 2022 Graduate Studentship

In autumn 2023, Mrs Niyan Ibrahim was awarded a Distinction for her MSc Built Environment: Sustainable Heritage, including an impressive mark of 80 for her dissertation. She began her PhD at UCL's Institute for Sustainable Heritage this academic year, with the title, "Exploring the Dynamic Relationships between Public Transportation and Sustainable Heritage Management". She writes:

By discussing the objectives and specific goals of my research with my supervisors, I was able to establish a well-structured plan for my first year as a research student. Over the past 12 months, I have conducted a thorough literature review, completed several modules in-person, undertaken many training courses and workshops online, and collected data. UCL Doctoral School and BSEER are providing a highly supportive environment for research students to develop their skills and knowledge. Furthermore, the generous funding from the Nahrein Network has greatly supported my plans.

Regarding the literature review, I thoroughly explored the concept of heritage values, and how they developed over time. Simultaneously, I studied principles of public transportation and its role in achieving sustainability in the wider context of built environment and heritage management. This thorough literature review has enabled me to undertake more structured work, and to locate my research in the current literature.

I started data collection in December 2023 and it is still an ongoing process. During the summer, I conducted a field trip to collect data for the pilot study in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The pilot study data will serve as a foundation for analysing the current physical, and

socio-economic conditions, conservation plans, and management efforts in the field of heritage, transportation plans, and land use pattern in the case studies.

I am now preparing for my upgrade process, where I will be able to transition from MPhil to PhD. For the upgrade report, I plan to submit a summary of my literature review, methodology, and pilot study analysis. At the same time, I am working on submitting a paper to a well-known conference and have planned other publications with my supervisors during next summer.



Figure 5 Niyah Ibrahim at UCL's library

5. Core team research and related activities

5.1. Objectives for 2023–24

In last year's Annual Report we wrote:

- **CHO** will at last be able to deliver its Digital Heritage internship programme in full. The **Kish Project** will be evaluated against its initial proposals and reformulated to fit current conditions. By the end of year 3 it should start to produce more visible and impactful outputs. The British Museum's **MEKEN project** will launch, and Mehiyar's work on the **politics of heritage** in Iraq will continue to progress.
- A piece of work on **accountability in cultural heritage projects** in Iraq is taking shape and will start in earnest in early 2024.
- We will also deliver planned advisory work for KRI on research grant funding.

The planned work on accountability in cultural heritage projects in Iraq did not progress as planned, given the pressures of other commitments, but the core team delivered on all other objectives set.

5.1.1. Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin: Cultural Heritage Organisation

During the 2023-2024 funding cycle, we focused on the delivery of the pilot Digital Heritage Internship Program (DHIP). The emerging potential and growing interests in the internship program and unforeseen challenges led us to intensify and elongate the program from its initially planned four intensive months to ten intensive months. The program, spanning from September 2023 to July 2024, brought together and trained 15 graduates (10 women and 5 men) in Sulaimani city from a total of 12 disciplines within Engineering, Design, Social Science, Arts, and Humanities, and IT. Having

more women in the program was one of our objectives for addressing the vast digital literacy gap between men and women in Iraq. In the first six months of the program, we delivered a total of 120 hours of structured training sessions (in-person or online) on a wide range of relevant technical and soft skills for successful delivery of the highly interdisciplinary capstone projects. The sessions were delivered by local and international trainers from Iraq, Iran, US, UK, and Greece and accompanied by work sessions as well as in-person and remote consultations in team or individually. We also integrated peer learning in some parts of the program. The gained knowledge and skills were applied in the team capstone projects, assigned by our CHO team. The program had a very high retention and attendance rate by the interns whose enthusiasm for the team capstone projects led to the projects' scale up and, therefore, program extension (more info about DHIP can be found in the following [blog](#)). Also, reactions to the program and capstone projects were overwhelmingly positive by the local stakeholders, the public, and media during and after the closing ceremony of the program in July 2024. The DHIP closing ceremony was attended by over 200 guests from local stakeholders and representatives of government departments, universities, NGOs (including UN WFP), and the private sector. During and soon after the closing ceremony, the capstone projects have been featured by a total of 6 media channels, with coverage from key local media such as Kurdsat TV and Channel 8. DHIP's massive success and potential led to our invitation to undertake new projects, programs, community engagement activities and school/kindergarten tours.



Figure 6 Dr. Rozhen Mohammed-Amin giving a lecture part of the Digital Heritage Internship Program

In parallel and after DHIP, our team continued with other activities. We organized or participated in a total of 10 community engagement activities, engaging 1,913 students, teachers, academics, professionals, and members of the public with our digital heritage projects. We also engaged a total of 270 CHO office visitors (including international diplomats and delegates) with our digital heritage projects and recorded their reactions for our continued research and development. We also co-organized a panel on “Immersive Technologies for Genocide Education” in collaboration with Amna Suraka National Museum, Yazda, and Upstream with the support of the US Consulate general in Erbil. In addition to the panel, we showcased Yazda’s “Nobody’s Listening” VR project and our collaborative “Feel Like Me” mobile AR project to the total 51 attendees of the event and local media.

Our CHO-KISSR-NN Co-I (Dr. Rozhen Kamal Mohammed-Amin) was invited and spoke about our experience and digital heritage projects and programs or delivered grant writing training in a total of

19 local and international events. The events included a keynote at BANE conference in the UK and three online guest lectures (one for the Smithsonian Institution and two others for the University of Arizona in the US). Rozhen also delivered a workshop on fundraising and proposal writing to the council of the University of Sulaimani as part of the Capacity Building course for decision-makers from the VIM foundation. Her invitation to and presentation at the first Inter-Provincial Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue in Erbil from Counterpart International with USAID fund generated a high enthusiasm and interest for our digital heritage projects by all the attendees from representatives of various civil societies across Iraq and its KRI and also high-level government officials such as Iraq PM Advisor for Youth Initiatives. During and after the event, we received invitations for various levels of collaborations and an RFP by an attending US NGO working in Iraq and funded by USAID.

Research-wise, in the last year, we progressed (though slowly) on some of our papers and made three submissions, including one to the journal track of the prestigious ISMAR 2024 conference with our international collaborators. Despite the mostly very positive feedback and a relatively higher average score in comparison to other submissions, our paper was eventually not accepted for the journal track with acceptance rate of 23%. We were, instead, invited to submit to the conference track of ISMAR 2024 conference. However, we decided to resubmit the paper to ACM Journal on Computing and Cultural Heritage (JOCCH), a leading journal on the application of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Cultural Heritage. Another short-notice submission by Dr. Rozhen K. Mohammed-Amin was not successful due to the less technical nature of her reflection paper on the first version of “Talk to Sarai” to a highly technical workshop in Germany she was referred to by KRG’s Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research.

In addition to doing a total of 7 interviews, we have been involved in other internal and external networking and capacity building activities and received two formal recognitions from local stakeholders. All these are detailed in our quarterly reports. Most recently (in September 2024), Rozhen was shortlisted as a finalist in the 2024 Tamayouz Excellence Award for Women in Architecture and Construction in the category of “Woman of Outstanding Achievement” along four other women from the Middle East. The nominations and finalists are evaluated and recommended by a jury panel of a group of architecture academics and professionals from Lebanon, UK, Egypt, and Jordan on the basis of outstanding contributions to architecture and the built environment across the Near East and North Africa. Rozhen’s nomination was initiated and submitted by a young local architect and Tamayouz Award National Ambassador in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq who has been observing our projects and contributions in protecting and promoting local heritage through innovative digital technologies. These projects were/are mostly funded and supported by the Nahrein Network.

5.1.2. Professor Eleanor Robson: The Forgotten City of Kish

The large archaeological site of Kish, 15 km northeast of Babylon, comprises the ruins of the greatest cities of ancient Babylonia. Since the mid 19th century, several international antiquarian and archaeological expeditions have worked there. Most of their finds were taken to museums in Paris, Istanbul, Oxford, and Chicago so it is now impossible to study them together, and few artefacts are in Iraq itself. The few archaeological and historical studies of Kish are in French and English, not Arabic. Visitors to the site today see only filled-in traces of long-ago excavation pits and the collapsing remains of mud-brick buildings, which SBAH are working hard to conserve. With this project, which

started in autumn 2021, Nahrein Network has begun to help SBAH to recover lost and dispersed knowledge of Kish and render it useful to Iraq.

The project comprises three work packages: Oracc tools and training (with UCL's Centre for Advanced Research Computing, ARC); website, conference and visitor engagement; theory and policy. The original team comprised Paul Collins, Parsa Daneshmand, and Eleanor Robson; in this reporting period it consisted of Robson, Wesam Youssef (see §4.1.3) October 2023–May 2024, and Dr Nadia AïtSaïd-Ghanem (July–September 2024).

5.1.2.1. *Delivery against objectives*

In last year's Annual Report, we planned to deliver the following objectives:

WP 1: Oracc tools for Arabophone edition and searching of cuneiform texts (with UCL ARC)

- *Public release of the new Oracc search facility*
Now available for beta-testing at <https://build-oracc.museum.upenn.edu/new/> after a complete code re-write
- *Translation of Cuneiform Revealed website into Arabic*
Wesam completed a first draft of that work in May 2024; much is available at <https://build-oracc.museum.upenn.edu/kish/cuneiform/>. The longer pages need to be split into smaller subpages, and several more need to be tagged and put online. The whole needs a professional Arabophone editor to check for accuracy and consistency, scheduled for early 2025
- *Potential collaboration with the University of Baghdad on Digital Humanities*
Initial conversations with UoB and the University of Newcastle, with a hope that event can be held in spring 2025

WP2: Website and outreach (with WY and NASG)

- *Significant further development of the Kish corpus, including incorporation of previously edited material by Stanislaw Chmielowski, Johannes Hackl and others*
It became clear early on in the reporting period that PD's work from 2021–23 needed significant editing and correction before new material could be added. NASG began that work in July 2024.
- *Development of the historical essays on the website, in collaboration with Laith Shakir for mid-20th century history*
Now scheduled for 2025
- *More active collaboration with the Field Museum's resurrection of the artefact database*
The Field Museum did not respond to communications for a long time; in the end it transpired that our main contact there had retired and without informing her successor of our work. Collaborations restarted in August 2024
- *Decision on the viability of social media campaign and/or project conference*
End-of-project event now scheduled as a workshop within the annual Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, July 2025

WP3: Theory and policy

- *Completion and submission of article on reparative history and knowledge repatriation*
Robson gave two seminar papers on the topic, in autumn 2023, to the University of Cambridge's World History Seminar and to Goodenough College, and a conference paper to

the SBAH conference in Mosul in May 2024. In spring 2024, a draft article became a book proposal for Cambridge University Press's *Elements in Critical Heritage* series. It was accepted with a manuscript submission date in December 2024 and will be published as an open-access monograph in 2025.

- *First draft of REF impact case study*

On pause since a new Director of SBAH came into post in spring 2024. However, new connections have been forged with the SBAH on-site conservation project, led by NASG, so there is still an opportunity to do this.

- *Development of long-durée historical study of date palm cultivation and sustainability in Iraq, based in part on evidence from Kish*

In spring 2024, Robson drafted a proposal for a Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowship, that would buy her out of non-NN work for two years, in academic years 2025–27. However, there was not enough time to prepare a viable submission, as the deadline coincided with the job interview that led to the offer of a research professorship. Until that in turn had to be abandoned, Robson planned to develop this project as part of her commitment to that new post. There are currently no viable means for Robson to pursue this project.

5.1.2.2. *Plans for completion by summer 2025*

With the Network closing down, and no prospect of funding for research assistance or any substantive research time of her own in the coming few years, Robson presented the following plan for completion to the Network's Management Committee in September 2024:

WP I: Oracc tools and training

To enable Iraqi and other Middle Eastern cuneiformists to use and create similar resources of their own, in their own languages

Completion date: spring 2025

Planned outputs:

- Digital Humanities workshop with University of Baghdad and Newcastle University
- New mobile-friendly interface, search tools, help videos and pages on Oracc

WP II: Kish website

To make the ancient history and cuneiform record of Kish accessible to Iraqi authorities, researchers, students and publics

Completion date: October 2025

Planned outputs:

- Oracc-hosted Arabic-English bilingual website about Kish (draft already at <https://build-oracc.museum.upenn.edu/kish>), comprising:
 - A catalogue of all published cuneiform tablets from Kish
 - An Arabic-English edition of all the cuneiform tablets from Kish now in the Ashmolean
 - Arabic-English essays on the ancient and modern history of Kish
 - Comprehensive links to relevant museum catalogues, open access publications and other online resources on Kish
- Signage and educational materials for guides' and visitors' use at Kish?

WP III: Theory, policy, advocacy

Articulate and advocate for the practice of ‘knowledge repatriation’ as a complement or alternative to artefact repatriation, in conjunction with reparative history.

Completion date: July 2025

Planned outputs:

- Robson, E., *Under contract, Knowledge Repatriation and the Written Heritage of Ancient Iraq* (Elements in Critical Heritage Studies), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, c.25,000 words. Gold open access. Under contract, submission December 2024
- End-of-conference workshop with Iraqi colleagues at RAI in Prague, July 2025

5.1.3. Professor Paul Collins: Middle East Knowledge Exchange Network (MEKEN)

The British Museum has been collaborating with the SBAH to help build capacity and knowledge exchange through training on archaeological projects, conservation techniques and site management for two decades. In addition, SBAH staff have participated in the Museum’s International Training Programme which brings individuals to the UK. In a partnership between the Nahrein Network and the British Museum, MEKEN will build on this activity by developing programmes tailored to respond to specific needs and wishes identified by Iraqi university and SBAH colleagues. The focus will be on larger numbers of participants represented by museum/office-based SBAH employees, particularly women unable to go into the field or travel abroad, as well as classroom-based university students. Over 2024 consultations with colleagues in Iraq has built a programme for a pilot year and this will be launched in November when Paul and a curatorial colleague will travel to Baghdad to engage in a series of workshops with museum managers, university students and conservation specialists.

5.1.4. Dr Mehiyar Kathem: politics of heritage in Iraq

During this period, and particularly over the summer, Mehiyar focused on completing a first draft of a book manuscript for publisher I.B. Tauris, focusing on the politics of heritage in Iraq. A draft was submitted in early October and is currently under review with the expectation that it will be published in 2025 or 2026, after revisions, editing and typesetting.

The Politics of Iraq’s Cultural Heritage since 2003

This book examines how cultural heritage has been transformed by Iraq’s post-2003 politics and state-building. The introduction and entrenchment of a political quota system and the growth of inter-group competition for power, resources and legitimacy have deeply affected Iraq’s cultural heritage. Whereas much of Iraq’s cultural heritage has been analysed in a context of armed conflict, this study offers a perspective that underlines how the country’s own political system has shaped its cultural resources. Case-studies focusing on shrines and monuments, archaeological sites, manuscripts and the government institutions presiding over their management are analysed to highlight how Iraq’s cultural heritage and by extension its past have been altered and, in many cases, undermined and neglected. By looking how politics has shaped Iraq’s cultural heritage, this book offers an insight into the future of Iraq, its society and people.

Mehiyar also delivered his MA module on New Public Histories in Conflict-Affected Contexts for the second time. All twelve students, who were taking either UCL’s MA in Public History or MA in History, achieved a grade of 70 or above (Distinction).

6. Communications, publicity and media

6.1. Social media

During 2023–24, the Nahrein Network’s social media platforms performed exceptionally well across all channels, apart from X (Table 11). Following X’s rebrand, a significant decline in user engagement, and the growing presence of harmful content on the platform, we decided to suspend our account on X. On the other hand, Facebook and Instagram saw considerable growth, with marked increases in Reach, Impressions, and Engagement.

Table 8: Increase of followers on social media platforms

Social Media Platform	October 2023	October 2024	Follower Increase	Percentage increase
X	4465	4492	27	0.6%
Facebook	2260	2720	460	20.4%
Instagram	1180	1461	281	23.8%
YouTube	145	263	118	81.4%
Threads	135	215	80	59.3%
Total			966	

6.2. Website

The Nahrein Network website is regularly edited and updated. New landing pages have been introduced, with links to: [Mini Grant Projects](#), [Research Projects in Iraq](#), [Former Team Members](#). The Research Grants page and the Visiting Scholar page remain the most visited on the Nahrein Network website (Table). Furthermore, users from Iraq account for nearly 55% of all site visitors (Table 2).

Table 9: Most visited web pages

Most Visited Pages	Views	Percentage of total visits
Visiting Scholarships	1519	10%
Research Grants	1043	7%
Home Page	1725	12%
Apply	810	6%
Total	14,834	

Table 20: Website users by country

Country	Users	Percentage of total visitors
Iraq	1716	55%

UK	882	28%
United States	95	4%
Total	3115	

6.3. Newsletter

The Nahrein Network's bi-monthly newsletter includes news, updates, and interviews with our visiting scholars and other guests. Over the past 12 months, our readership has increased by over 500 contacts, reaching 1,800. The campaigns continue to be very successful, with an increased open rate of 58% compared to our peers' performance of 38%. The click rates of 10% and the unsubscribe rate of only 0.1% are also ahead of our category peers. The majority of our readers are from Iraq, UK, and USA.

6.4. Webinars

The Nahrein Network organised one hybrid webinar, titled [Iraqi heritage between recovery and preservation](#), with Nawar Ihsan, Antiquities Restorer at the Iraq Museum and Visiting Scholar at The British Museum. We also held Q&A webinars for our Research Grants, Graduate Studentship, Mini Grants and Visiting Scholarships schemes. All our webinars are recorded and uploaded on our [YouTube page](#), which received over 1,600 views in the last year.

- [Graduate Studentship Scheme Webinar](#)
- [Visiting Scholarships Webinar](#)
- [Strengthening Iraq's Next Generation of Cultural Heritage Professionals](#)
- [Mini Grants Awards Q&A Webinar](#)



Figure 7 Nawar Ihsan during her seminar at UCL

6.5. Podcasts

The Nahrein Network podcast playlist is available on [UCL Minds](#), UCL's podcast channel, with a reach of over 531,000. During the last 12 months we uploaded four new podcasts to UCL Minds. These podcasts had almost 2000 plays between them.

- [New Technologies & Knowledge Production in Iraq: A Conversation with Mark Altaweel](#)

- [Intangible Cultural Heritage in Iraq: A Conversation with Dr Ali Naji Attiyah](#)
- [The Mandaean In Iraq: A Conversation with Dhiaa Kareem Ali](#)
- [Preserving Heritage in Iraq: A Conversation with Fatimah Al-Muqdad](#)

6.6. Blog

Over the past year, the Nahrein Network's blog has served as a dynamic platform for sharing insights related to Iraq. The blog entries have covered a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from the preservation of cultural heritage and environmental issues to interviews with Visiting Scholars and coverage of Nahrein activities and events.

- [The Digital Heritage Internship Program: From Idea to Impact](#) by Dr Rozhen Mohammed-Amin
- [Dark Heritage](#) with Dr Salah Al-Jabri, University of Baghdad
- [Iraq Museum Marketing](#) with Nawar Ihsan, The Iraq Museum
- [The Nahrein Network's recent trip to Iraq](#) by Dr Mehiyar Kathem
- [The low groundwater level in Babylon](#) by Ammar Al-Tae, SBAH Babylon
- [Intangible Heritage of Najaf](#) with Dr Ali Naji Attiyah, University of Kufa
- [The Impact of Social and Climate Changes on Iraqi Earthen Buildings](#) by Ammar Al-Tae
- [Interview with Niyan Ibrahim, Recipient of the 2022 Graduate Studentship](#)
- [Remembering the 'Camp Speicher' Atrocities](#) by Mehiyar Kathem
- [The Zindan Archaeological Site in Diyala](#) by Mehiyar Kathem
- [Ceramic Craft in the Babylon Province](#) by Ammar Al-Tae
- [Christian Cultural Heritage in Mosul](#) with Dr Abdulkareem Yaseen Ahmed, Diyala University

7. Objectives for Year 4: October 2024–September 2025

7.1. Governance

- Agree timetable, budget and communications strategy with the donor and Management Committee, for closure at the end of August 2025
- No new NNMC members to be recruited, as we have a full quorum; we will not seek to replace Paul or Rozhen as Co-Directors
- The MoU with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is due to be signed by the end of October 2024, a full two years since the process was initiated
- Evaluate success of the Network since its inception in 2017
- Support team members into their next posts

7.2. Devolved projects

- Support to completion the nine devolved research projects we have agreed to fund
- Move Rozhen to devolved funding to allow her to write up
- Agree closure plans with PIs of projects due to run past the Network's end date
- Hold concluding colloquium online or in Baghdad in spring/summer 2025

7.3. Capacity building

- With BISI, hold a final round of Visiting Scholarships in autumn 2024, with mid-November application deadline
- For AcademIQ, merge the online Academic Research Course with elements of the Critical Research Skills course in development, and run this at national scale for MoHESR. Wrap up cohorts 2–3 of the Academic Mentorship programme
- Support our three Graduate Students and ensure that they each have the financial wherewithal to complete their final year of study in 2025–26

7.4. Core research

- Wrap up Kish Project: complete monograph; employ Dr Nadia full time from February 2024, run training in spring 2025, and hold final workshop at RAI Prague in July 2025
- Politics of heritage: see Mehiyar’s monograph to publication and support him for follow-up research in Iraq

7.5. Policy and consultancy

- Continue advisory work on KRI’s new research development strategy
- Support Mehiyar to continue policy-driven research

7.6. Media, comms, finances and legacy

- Plan and deliver wrap-up events in Iraq/online and closing reports