



# ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

## Breaking new ground in research and practice in Iraq

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### Abstract

The last few years have seen a substantial increase in discussions about how we decolonise archaeology in SW Asia. However, developing more equitable partnerships between high, and low-and-middle income countries is still seen as a bonus to our projects, not a fundamental practice. On the other hand, capacity-building projects are often designed, and even funded separately, and rarely have the expectation of producing 'world-class research' in the same way.

The universities of Al Qadisiya (Iraq) and Durham (UK) have recently initiated a project in and around the site of Tell Ramihiah, near Diwaniyah, which is based on co-creation and co-production, not just collaboration, and strives for equal access to skill-building from beginning to end. The priorities of the project are driven by the research interests and training needs of both partners. However, attempting to prioritise both research and capacity-building is not without its challenges in the face of existing funding structures, and systemic barriers.

This paper will highlight those challenges, present some of the outcomes of our recent work, and importantly, argue that there IS something to be found, not only in tackling new sites and landscapes, but also in changing our practices and questioning the traditional research agenda.

### Keywords

equitable collaboration, Iraq, capacity building, Sasanian, Early Islamic

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