

Proposal to introduce new research themes

Information for members



What is the proposal?

We are proposing to introduce a new research theme framework, as a way of bringing together and organising our membership. We hope that the thematic framework will stimulate new, cross-disciplinary collaborations and funding applications. The research themes will be areas of particular focus, but we will continue to support research and activities in other areas as well.

- Three themes initially, maybe more later.
- Three cross-cutting contextual challenges.
- Themes are open to members at all levels of seniority and in all disciplines.
- Each theme led by a committee who will receive a budget to carry out activities.
- Themes will intersect with Cambridge Reproduction funding schemes, events and other activities.

Previous research themes and networks

As a Strategic Research Initiative (SRI), we adopted three research themes:

- **Maternal mortality**
- **Inheritance, development and environment**
- **Routes to parenthood**

Our recent upgrade to Interdisciplinary Research Centre (IRC) is an opportunity to revise these themes to fit members' interests more closely.

Over the last 6 years, we have also supported a number of grassroots special interest networks through collaborative events and funding, e.g.:

- Cambridge Lactation Network
- Reproductive Justice Research Network
- Cambridge Femtech Society

These networks represent clear clusters of interest, which we have recognised in our proposal for new research themes.

What about the School research themes?

The Schools also have research themes and priorities (see right). Our research themes are intended to complement and resonate with the School themes, not to replace them.

The School themes are intended to support collaboration within a single School. Our research themes will bring researchers together across Schools.

- [Arts and Humanities](#)
- [Biological Sciences](#)
- Clinical Medicine (website currently unavailable)
- [Humanities and Social Sciences](#)
- [Physical Sciences](#)
- [Technology](#)

What about other interdisciplinary initiatives?

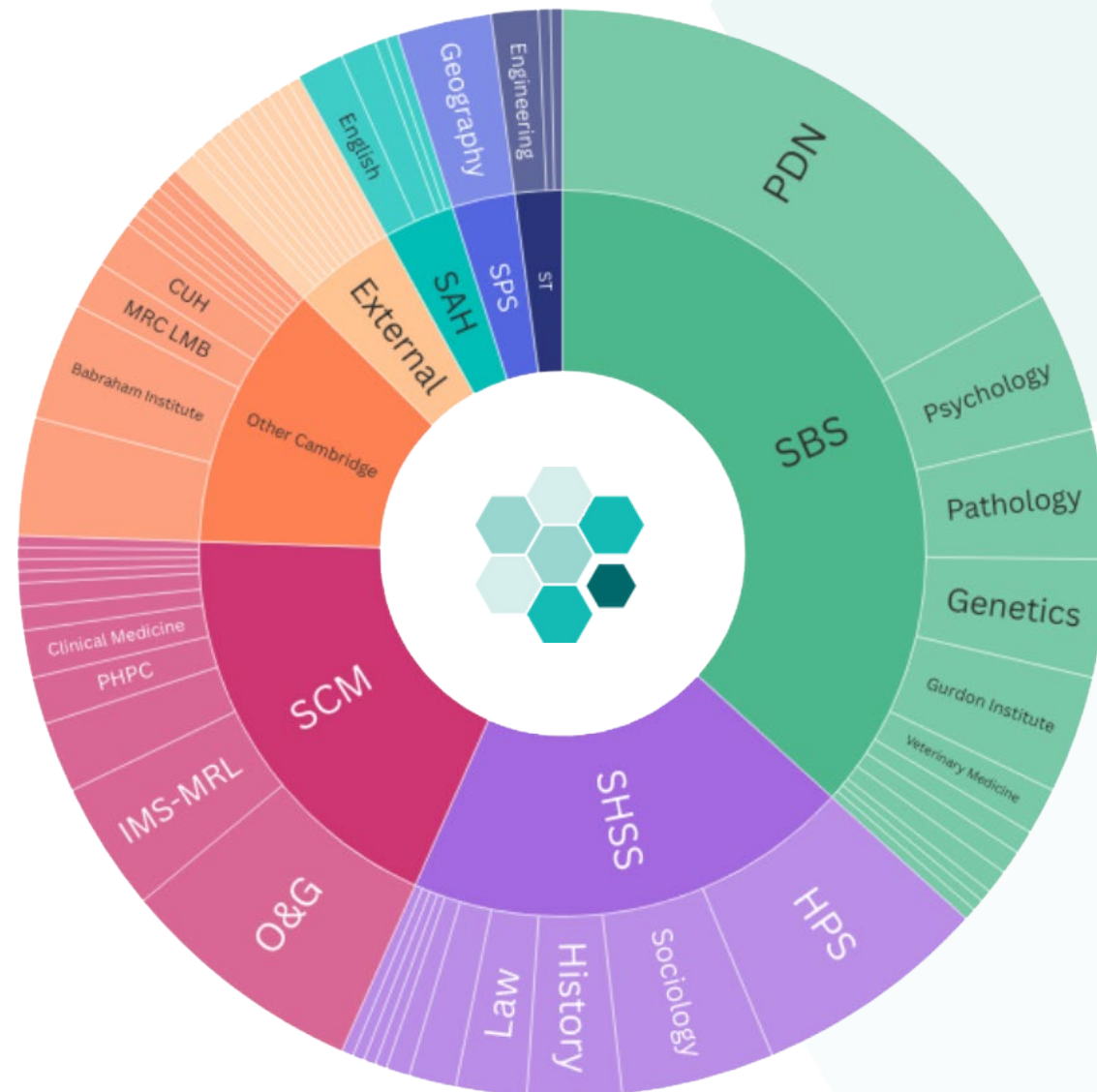
The University supports a number of other interdisciplinary initiatives, including other [IRCs](#) and [SRIs](#), institutes such as [CRASSH](#) and the [Loke Centre](#), and 'flagship' initiatives like [Cambridge Zero](#) and [ai@cam](#). Our research themes will provide an excellent opportunity for more strategic collaboration with these other initiatives.



Proposed thematic areas

In November 2024, we reviewed the Cambridge Reproduction [membership](#) to identify where the main clusters of researchers were.

We have members in all six Schools, and at the Babraham and Wellcome Sanger Institutes. It is important that any proposed research themes are broad enough to span these departments and institutions.



Proposed thematic areas

By looking at members' interests, and building on the previous Cambridge Reproduction research themes, we have identified three potential thematic areas.

These three areas are broad enough to encompass a range of disciplines, approaches and interests. They include researchers at all levels of seniority, across many Schools and departments.

Our proposed new research themes are:

- Individuals, families and populations
- Health & wellbeing across generations
- Past, present and future of reproduction

Proposed thematic areas

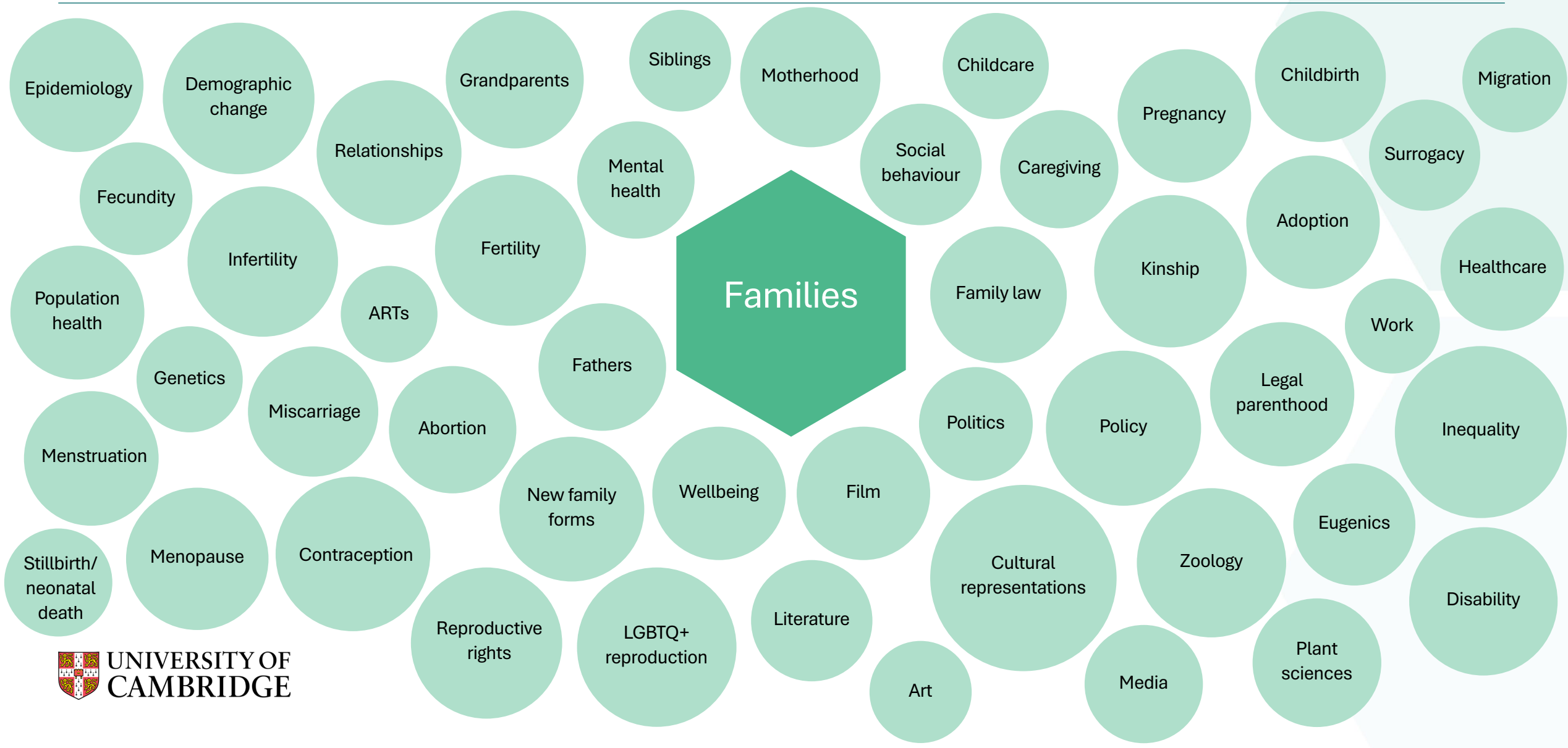
This proposal is just a starting point. The themes will evolve to complement the interests and priorities of the Cambridge Reproduction network. They will be reviewed regularly, and may be replaced or added to as needed.

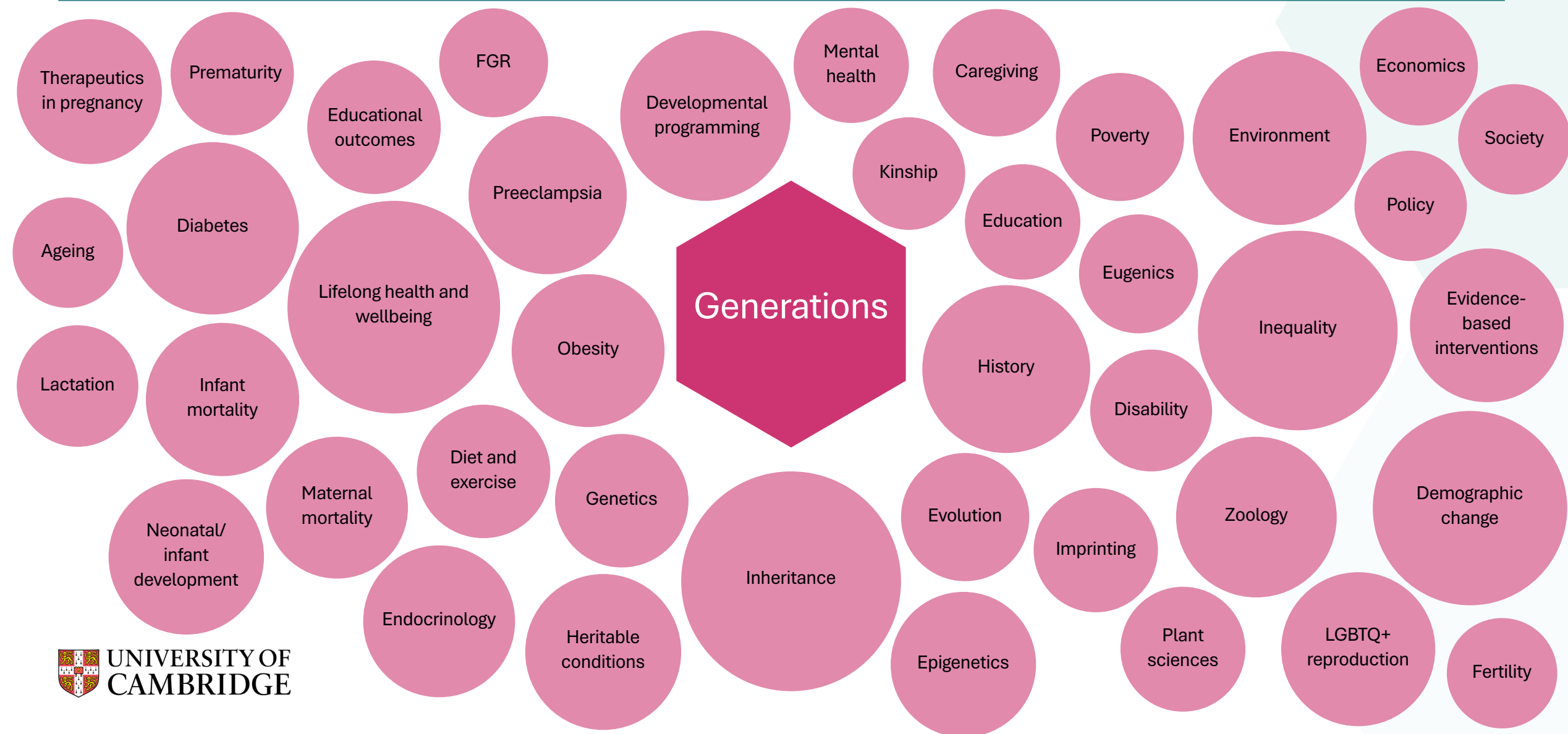
We hope that all members will find that their research fits into one or more of these thematic areas.

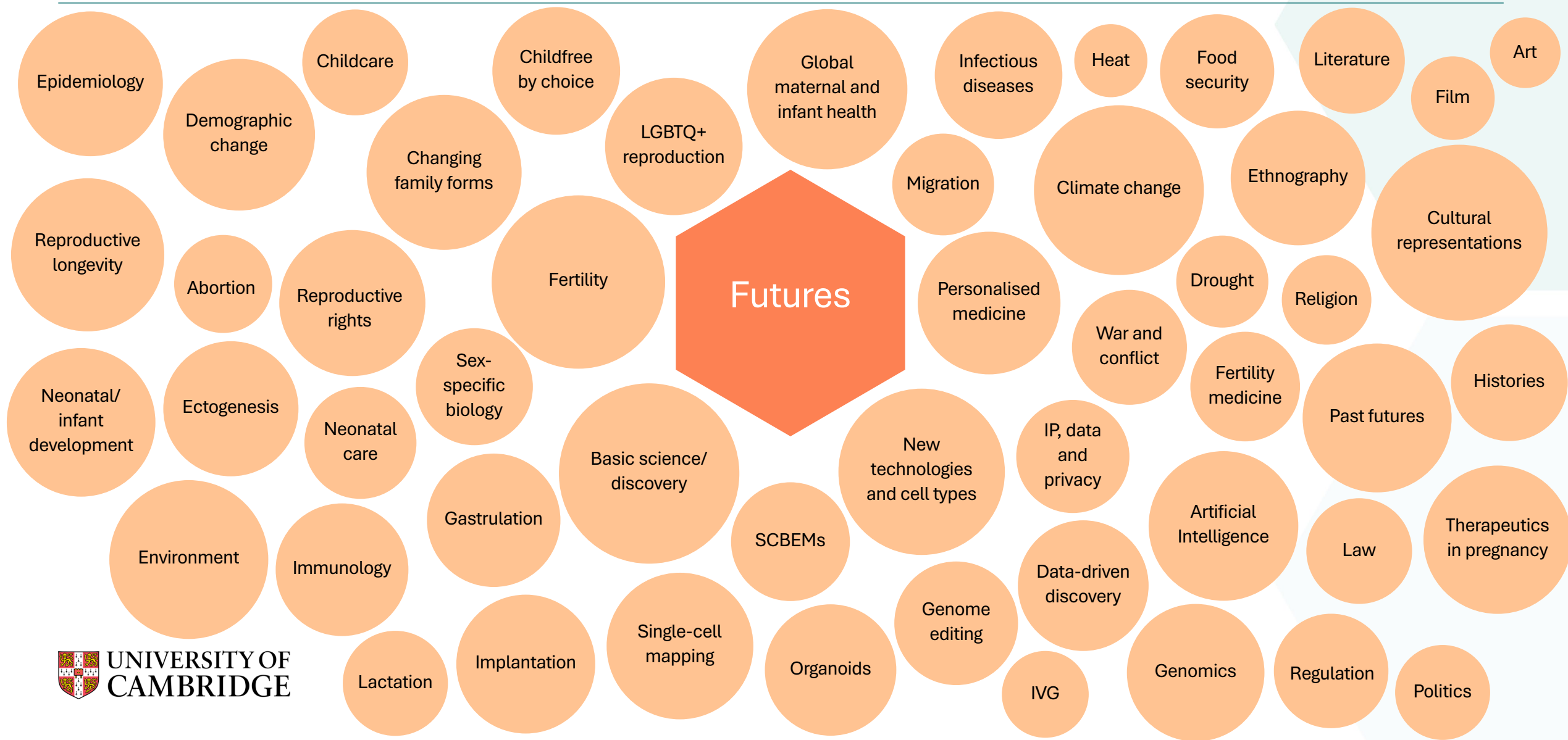
The following pages suggest some of the topics and interests that could fall within each research theme.

These ‘bubbles’ are not intended to be comprehensive. We encourage members to identify and share other areas of interest that fit within these themes.

Please note: the size of the bubbles does not indicate how ‘important’ each topic is!

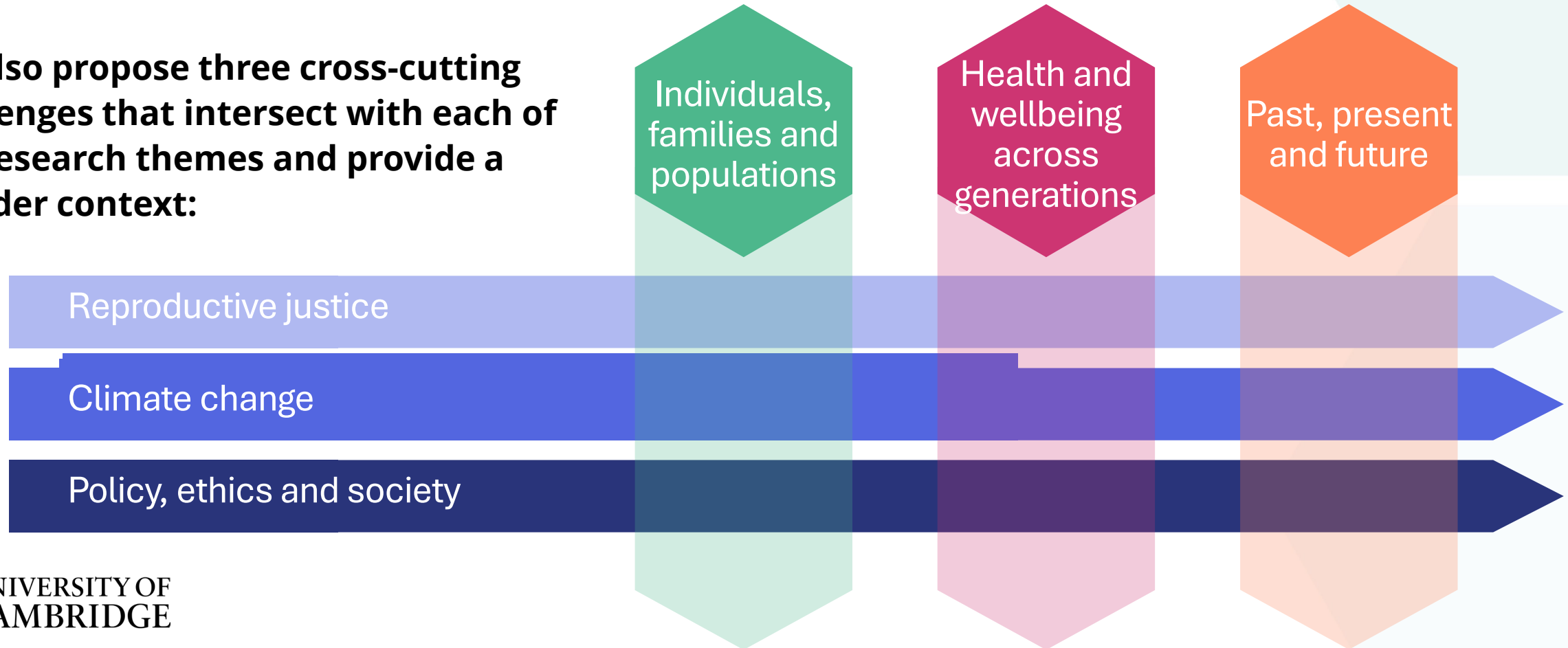




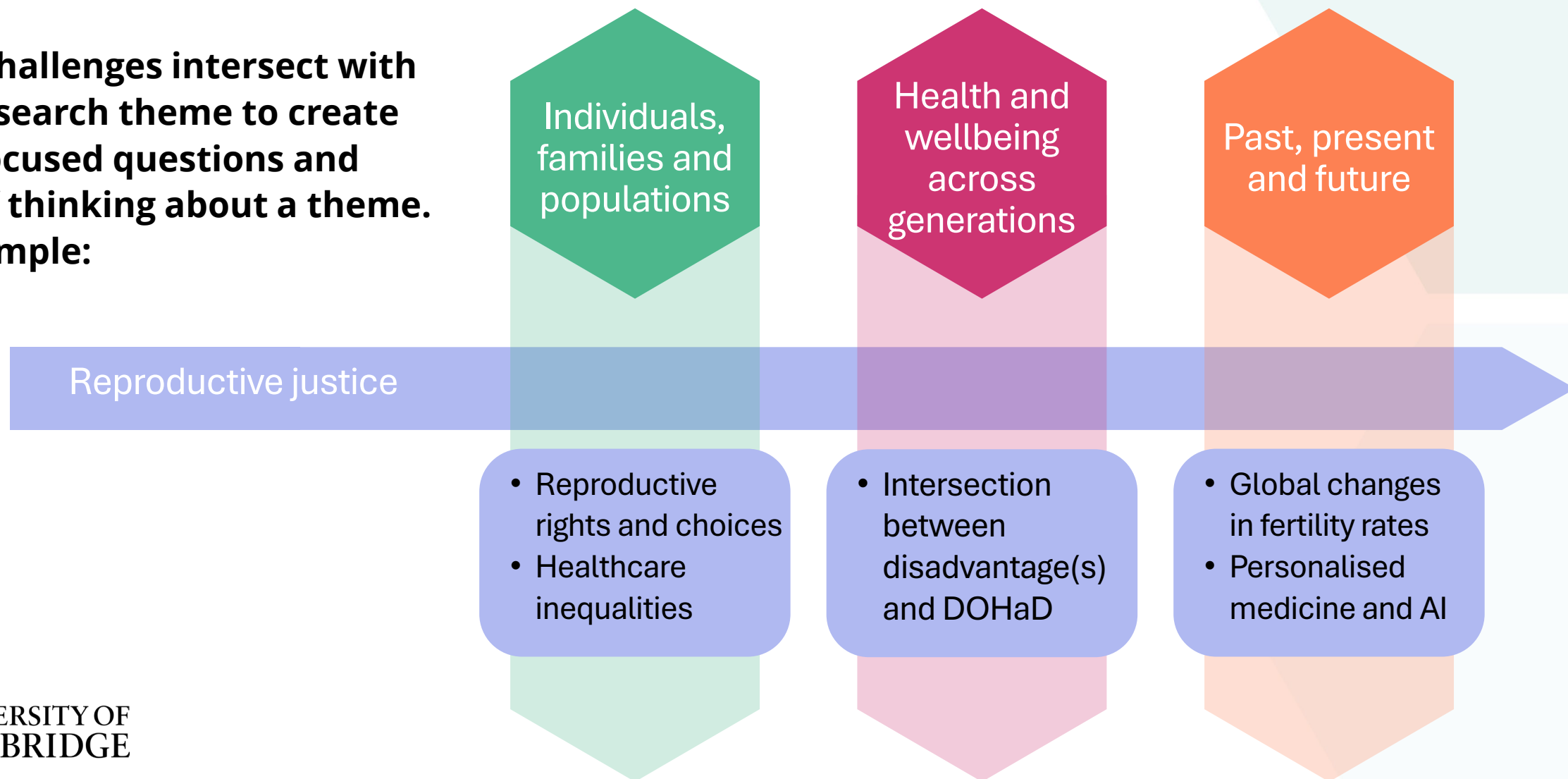


Cross-cutting contextual challenges

We also propose three cross-cutting challenges that intersect with each of the research themes and provide a broader context:



These challenges intersect with each research theme to create more focused questions and ways of thinking about a theme. For example:



Themes + challenges = urgent societal questions

Putting the broad themes and the contextual challenges together helps to identify questions that address urgent societal challenges – for example:

- What does climate change mean for reproduction and fertility?
- What does the future of reproduction look like?
- How can we develop better models of pregnancy and early development?
- What can we learn from the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to reproduction?
- How can we develop more safe and effective therapeutics for pregnancy?
- What is reproduction? What do we see differently through a reproductive lens?
- How can we reduce inequities in maternal health and reproductive rights?
- How can we ensure new technologies are used safely and ethically?
- How do we ensure the health of future generations?

Consultation of membership

This document outlines a proposal for a new thematic framework for Cambridge Reproduction – but we need input from our network to make sure that the framework meets the needs of our members as closely as possible. We are particularly interested to hear how/whether your research fits within the proposed themes, and how we can refine them to be more useful.

This consultation will have three stages:

- Proposal shared with members
- Survey of members
- 1:1 interviews with individual researchers at all career stages

These activities will happen throughout Lent Term 2025 and early Easter Term, with the aim of launching our new thematic framework in Easter Term 2025.

How can you get involved?

We welcome questions and feedback about this proposal.

Please contact Christina Rozeik at coordinator@repro.cam.ac.uk to discuss the research themes.

Thank you!

Ways to get involved:

- Complete the [feedback questionnaire](#)
- [Book a 1:1 interview](#) with Christina to give additional feedback and discuss your research in more detail
- [Express an interest](#) in joining a research theme committee