



## **Evaluation in AHRC**

### **Rationale**

1. The purpose of evaluation is:
  - to assess the extent to which AHRC programmes and schemes are delivering their aims and objectives;
  - to gather metrics that represent the nature, scope and volume of research in the arts and humanities;
  - to assess the impact of arts and humanities research on all stakeholders, both academic and non-academic;
  - to assess the contribution that the AHRC is making to the quality and health of the arts and humanities research base; and
  - to ensure that the necessary quantitative and qualitative data and evidence are available for internal reporting to the Council and for external reporting to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS).
2. The AHRC's evaluation activities therefore focus on the scope, impact and quality of work funded by the Council. Within this broader framework panellists play an important role in:
  - monitoring the processes and outcomes of competitions; and
  - monitoring individual awards, both during the period of the award and at its conclusion.

### **Monitoring**

3. The Director of Research oversees competition results within individual programmes. The Advisory Board and Council consider the wider national context to ensure that a balance in funding is retained, and that consistent and rigorous standards are applied across all programmes and schemes.
4. Although monitoring activities are undertaken by individual programme divisions, the Advisory Board has oversight of monitoring policies. Awards may be monitored whilst they are underway and also at the end of the award. This process varies across the three programmes but all feature self assessment reports.

5. All research award-holders must submit a final report and interim reports (where appropriate). For certain schemes assessment of these reports is undertaken by members of the Peer Review College, or sometimes by members of Strategic Programme panels, and is based on qualitative assessments of the conduct and delivery of the project. For higher value schemes, where an initial assessment is graded 'Unsatisfactory', a second tier of assessment will be sought from a member of the PRC Large Collaboration group. They will provide a final grade based on the information provided including the initial assessment. A penalties policy is in place for projects allocated an 'Unsatisfactory' grade where the conduct and delivery has not been considered satisfactory.
6. Additionally, for some schemes, where final reports have been assessed as 'Satisfactory', assessors will also be asked to provide an indicative assessment of the quality and potential importance/value of the project based on the information provided in the report. The grades that may be allocated are Satisfactory, Good or Outstanding. Information aggregated from these reports will enable the Council to demonstrate the quality and value of AHRC-funded research.

### **Scheme and Strategic-level Evaluation**

7. The Council also seeks both internally and through the commissioning of academic reviewers, to evaluate the success of its funding schemes, its support for specific subject areas or disciplines, and the success of its strategic investments, such as strategic programmes. The Council has agreed a policy of separation of powers between AHRC grant-awarding bodies and the subsequent evaluation of schemes of awards. Hence, whilst Peer Review College members may on occasion be invited to give their expert opinions on specific issues, they will not be eligible to undertake any evaluation review.
8. A schedule is in place for the evaluation of the Council's research schemes; a number of recommendations have been implemented from scheme reviews completed so far, including substantial changes to the way Council makes provision for resource enhancement.
9. The Council is also implementing a number of evaluation and monitoring activities relating to its strategic investments (strategic programmes and research centres) and knowledge transfer schemes.

## **Impact and Quality Evaluation**

10. The range of activities described above is complemented by further work undertaken by the Executive, including:
  - exploratory work on student career tracking through maintaining post-award contact with doctoral students;
  - collection of benchmarking data from organisations such as HESA, Research Councils, Funding Councils, Universities UK, European Union and other national funding bodies;
  - exploratory work to develop quantitative and qualitative indicators of UK research excellence in the arts and humanities;
  - impact case studies to understand the social, cultural and economic impacts of arts and humanities research activities; and
  - four impact fellowships and five impact workshops exploring new methodologies for assessing the impact of arts and humanities research.

## **Contacts**

11. For queries about overall policy and strategy for evaluation, please contact Laura Lugg, Head of Evaluation. Queries relating to the monitoring of awards for specific schemes should be directed to the appropriate officer in the Research Programme Division.