



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

AHRC Annual Delivery Report 2008-09

June 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2008-09 the AHRC continued to address pressing national and international concerns by shaping public policy on threats to global security, contributing to the conservation of the UK's cultural assets, developing capacity and skills in the creative industries and promoting better design and planning for older people. This was achieved through introducing and developing AHRC strategic programmes and contributing to cross-council programmes.

The AHRC sustained the research base in 2008-09 through reconfiguration of its funding for postgraduate students, by running the first Block Grant Partnerships (BGP) scheme, and for individual researchers, by introducing a new Research Fellowships scheme. Support for PhD students working outside academia continued with through the Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDA) scheme.

The AHRC continued in 2008-09 to drive a step change in the economic, social and cultural impact in the arts and humanities through the publication of the AHRC Impact Task Force Report, furthering the understanding and assessment of the impact of arts and humanities research, and the development of several strategic partnerships: the AHRC supported innovative co-sponsored funding schemes with BT and BBC and the partnership with TSB was developed through co-funding research and working together on future funding initiatives.

The AHRC encouraged international collaboration in the arts and humanities in 2008-09 by co-funding research with the German Research Foundation (DFG) and providing PhD students with opportunity to carry out research at the US Library of Congress or National Institutes for the Humanities (NIHU), Japan.

The AHRC strengthened relations with the research community by running a comprehensive consultation exercise in 2008-09. The AHRC also successfully managed and implemented several inter-related changes to management structures and processes in 2008/09 in order to deliver improved effectiveness, efficiency and service. The management structure was streamlined to fit better with the AHRC's post-SSC focus, decision-making bodies were consolidated to facilitate joined-up discussion, the Programmes division was reorganised to engage more directly with the research community and the peer-review system was overhauled to make it more efficient and flexible. In addition, work continued on the AHRC's proposed move to Swindon and the SSC project.

RECENT SUCCESSES

Strategic Research Priorities

In 2008-09 the AHRC continued to introduce and develop strategic programmes that contribute to emerging areas of research and pressing national and international concerns.

Understanding about the causes of current threats to global security gained from research funded under the AHRC and ESRC **Religion and Society** programme continued to shape public policy in 2008-09. Programme Director, Professor Linda Woodhead, provided briefings to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Department for International Development, the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission over the course of 2008-09. Projects funded as part of this programme examine a range of topics with policy implications, including partnerships to challenge religiously endorsed violence, religious education in the UK, the history of religious division in Ireland, the role of the state in a multi-faith society, and public policy in a multi-faith society. Awards for collaborative doctoral studentships and large research grants were made in 2008-09, and applications for networks and workshops awards and small research grants were assessed.

The AHRC and EPSRC **Science and Heritage** programme continued in 2008-09 to build a new discipline at the interface between arts, humanities, science and technology. Research funded under the programme adds value to the UK's key cultural assets through improved conservation techniques and enhanced interpretation. Collaborative doctoral awards and research clusters were funded in 2008-09 and a call was announced for outline proposals for interdisciplinary research grants.

The AHRC **Beyond Text** programme, under which awards began to be made in 2008-09, aims to create a collaborative, multi-disciplinary research community working with those outside Higher Education on issues relating to communication, sensory perception, orality and material culture. Awards for collaborative doctoral studentships, networks, workshops and large research grants were announced in 2008-09 and there was a call for small research grants applications.

The involvement of the AHRC with strategic cross-council programmes in 2008-09 ensured the contribution of arts and humanities research in addressing national and international issues.

A call was announced in 2008-09 for large, multidisciplinary research centres aiming to build capacity and skills under the **Digital Economy** programme, which focussed on engagement with the creative industries as well as transport and healthcare. In December 2008 an innovative and multidisciplinary 5-day sandpit event 'Design in the Digital World: Ideas Factory' was held to explore future developments in the Digital Economy and its impact on design processes.

Under the **Global Uncertainties** programme, applications were received in response a joint call with ESRC for Fellowships researching how ideas and beliefs of individuals, communities and nation states relate to global security. Six of the fourteen applications recommended for funding in 2008-09 were within the arts and humanities.

The fourth call for research proposals in the **New Dynamics of Ageing** programme was announced in 2008-09. A significant proportion of applications received included arts and humanities content with the potential to influence public policy and result in better design and planning for older people.

Sustaining the Research Base

In order to build the future capacity and maintain the sustainability of the arts and humanities research base, AHRC postgraduate funding was restructured in 2008-09. Research organisations applied to the **Block Grant Partnerships** scheme in September 2008 for awards starting in 2009-10. Successful organisations will receive funding for a yearly allocation of postgraduate students for the next five years, facilitating better engagement with their long-term strategic aims. A smaller open competition, for students at institutions without a BGP award, will continue to be run.

The AHRC also continued to run its **Collaborative Doctoral Awards** scheme in 2008-09, encouraging collaboration and partnerships between higher education institutions and non-academic organisations and businesses. This scheme provides opportunities for doctoral students to gain first hand experience of work outside an academic environment and enhances the employment-related skills and training a research student gains during the course of their award.

In 2008-09 the AHRC continued to support **responsive-mode research**, through the Research Grants, Fellowships in the Creative and Performing Arts and Research Leave schemes, which underpins and complements the research funded through the strategic programmes.

A working group was established in 2008-09 to consider the best approach for AHRC in supporting individual researchers. Its recommendations led to the Research Leave scheme being replaced with a new **Research Fellowships** scheme, providing funding for periods of research leave including the costs of communication and dissemination activities to maximise the impact of the research outcomes.

Economic, Social and Cultural Impact

The AHRC developed several strategic partnerships with other stakeholders in 2008-09 to drive a step change in the economic, social and cultural impact of the arts and humanities.

The work of the AHRC **Impact Task Force** continued in 2008-09, developing the understanding and assessment of the impact of arts and humanities research. A report of the group's findings was finalised in 2008-09 and recently published.

The AHRC also co-authored a report with NESTA on **arts and humanities research and innovation**, considering the ways in which this research contributes to the national innovation system and the successful exploitation of new ideas. The publication was launched in 2008-09 at the AHRC 'Arts, Humanities and Innovation seminar' which stimulated debate in this important policy area.

Five of the eight partnerships formed as part of the AHRC/BBC Knowledge Exchange Programme, between members of the arts and humanities research community and BBC Future Media and Technology staff, received further **AHRC/BBC Knowledge Infusion** funding in 2008-09 allowing them to develop and integrate their research within the BBC.

Collaborative developmental work between the AHRC and BT continued throughout year against a background of financial restructuring and staff changes at BT. This resulted in a call being announced in 2008-09 for proposals under a new **AHRC/BT Research Networking** scheme designed to bring together arts and humanities researchers, BT researchers and other stakeholders and partners with an interest in digital heritage to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaborative research.

The AHRC developed its partnership with the **Technology Strategy Board (TSB)** in 2008-09 by co-funding several projects with an arts and humanities element under the TSB Collaborative Research and Development competition and leading a steering group for the development of the TSB Creative Industries Technology and Innovation Network

(CITIN). The AHRC provided advice and expertise to the TSB in 2008-09 to aid the development of a new funding initiative, based on the AHRC Knowledge Catalyst scheme, to encourage SMEs to become involved in knowledge exchange. Initial groundwork took place in 2008-09 between the AHRC and the TSB on engaging with key technology areas outside the creative industries and involving a wider range of arts and humanities disciplines.

In addition to these new approaches the AHRC continued to deliver its existing **Knowledge Transfer schemes**. Projects in the Knowledge Catalyst, Knowledge Transfer Fellowship and Knowledge Transfer Partnership schemes began their research in 2008-09 with such diverse partners as Philips Electronics, Interflora, Victoria and Albert Museum, British Film Institute, Meteorological Office and Lothian and Borders Police. In addition, groundwork for an evaluation of the Knowledge Catalyst scheme began in 2008-09.

In common with other Research Councils, the AHRC reconfigured its application processes towards the end of 2008-09 to include **impact summaries and plans**. These additions to research proposals encourage applicants to consider potential pathways to economic and societal impact and to demonstrate the value of their research.

International

The AHRC made progress in 2008-09 in supporting high-quality international collaborations between arts and humanities researchers from the UK and abroad.

Work was undertaken in 2008-09 to draft a revised **International Strategy** aiming to enhance the quality of funded research through ensuring that opportunities for international collaboration are embedded in AHRC programmes. This has now been published on the AHRC website.

The agreement previously reached with the **Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft** (DFG – the German Research Foundation) on a framework for funding collaborations between German-based and UK-based humanities researchers led to the first call for proposals and the first awards made in 2008-09.

Support was maintained for the **Library of Congress** scholarship scheme, offering the chance for AHRC or ESRC funded doctoral students and junior researchers to access the collection in the US, and a review of this funding mechanism is now underway. A similar

scheme was introduced providing the opportunity for AHRC funded PhD students to undertake short-term placements with the ***National Institutes for the Humanities*** (NIHU), Japan.

PROGRESS IN MANAGEMENT

During the summer of 2008 AHRC senior staff consulted colleagues in the academic community, through institutional and subject association visits as well as one-off events, to elicit views on the Council's evolving strategy and future plans. This dialogue culminated in the 'Future Directions' consultation, where key questions affecting the AHRC and its core mission were put to the research community.

The AHRC successfully managed and implemented several inter-related changes to management structures and processes in 2008/09 in order to deliver improved effectiveness, efficiency and service. These were overseen by the 'Forging Our Futures' initiative in order to ensure a connected approach to decision-making.

The four AHRC directorates (Programmes, Knowledge and Evaluation, Finance and Planning, Corporate Affairs) were reduced to three (Programmes, Policy and Public Affairs, Resources) over the course of 2008-09. This structure will better reflect the changed focus of the AHRC following the introduction of the Shared Service Centre (SSC) and prepares the organisation for the resulting staff losses.

Several AHRC committees (Postgraduate, Research, Knowledge Transfer and Evaluation) finished at end of 2008-09 to be replaced by a single Advisory Board from 2009-10, allowing for joined-up discussion of all aspects of the AHRC's funding schemes.

The Extended Management Team, designed to develop a wider involvement in decision-making, policy formation and internal communications and to complement the work of the Senior Management Team (SMT), first met in June 2008 and will continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

Research and Postgraduate division were amalgamated and restructured in 2008-09. The resulting Programmes division, now containing four subject teams with each with a regional focus and covering an area of the AHRC remit, is designed to be more outward facing and to improve engagement with the academic community.

The size of the peer-review college was increased over 2008-09 and members were categorised to reflect the requirements for assessing applications, not just those within the various subject areas, but also those with international, non-academic, technical or Knowledge Transfer elements. The eight previous subject-based panels were stood down and panels are now convened as required with appropriate members of the college, allowing for more efficient, flexible, specialised decision-making. To increase efficiency further, applications are now sifted in-office, based on initial peer-review

assessments from individual college members, and panels are only required to review those of the highest-quality.

The AHRC's involvement in 2008-09 with the creation of the RCUK Shared Service Centre (SSC), work on the relocation of the AHRC offices to Swindon and 'Value for Money' savings are detailed under the *Efficiency Programme* section.

PROGRESS TO DATE

All the targets and milestones set out in the 2008-09 Delivery Plan Scorecard were met, including those described in the *Recent Successes* section, apart from following:

Amber status

The announcement of awards in ESRC-run New Dynamics of Ageing programme, after a two stage selection process for the fourth call, was delayed slightly. This was due in December 2008 but happened in early 2009-10.

The publication of the Impact Task Force Report was finalised in 2008-09 but publication, originally due in early 2009-10 to tie-in with the AHRC subject associations meeting, was delayed due to election purdah.

Red status

Due to setbacks in the SSC project, the go-live date for AHRC HR, Finance and IS systems was postponed. Originally due in the third quarter of 2008-09, this is now planned to happen in stages over the course of 2009-10.

For similar reasons the TUPE transfer of AHRC Grants staff was also delayed. This was originally planned for late 2008-09 and discussion or currently ongoing to agree a new target date.

FUTURE PROGRESS

The AHRC will lead the creation of a new cross-council programme in 2009-10, Connected Communities, which will support collaborative research on the development of vibrant, cohesive and sustainable communities. Two initial planning workshops have already been held involving local government stakeholders and academic experts.

The continuing AHRC contribution to the Digital Economy cross-council programme will ensure that creative approaches in the arts and humanities are applied in the creative industries. A scoping workshop has already been held with EPSRC and the British Library and a call has been made for participants for a sandpit, 'Designing Effective Space'. Funding for successful projects resulting from this meeting will begin later in the year.

The AHRC aims to influence public policymaking with a greater understanding from the arts and humanities of the causes of threats to global security by releasing funding in 2009-10 for both small and large grants under the Religion and Society programme. The AHRC will also continue its involvement with the cross-council Global Uncertainties programme in 2009-10 by reviewing potential new areas where arts and humanities research can make a contribution and organising, with the ESRC, networking activities for the Fellows funded through the programme.

In 2009-10 the AHRC aims to bring key insights from conservation, design and other disciplines to climate change planning through involvement with the Living With Environmental Change (LWEC) programme. This year has already seen an innovative joint approach by two AHRC strategic programmes, Landscape and Environment in conjunction with Science and Heritage, to deliver a consultation workshop identifying key areas of the LWEC remit where arts and humanities research is needed.

The Science and Heritage programme will be awarding funding for post-doctoral fellowships and interdisciplinary research grants in 2009-10. This research will enhance understanding of, and allow capitalisation on, the UK's cultural assets. The AHRC will also evaluate the impact of its previous funding in this area by reviewing awards made to the British Museum in its new status as an Independent Research Organisation (IRO) and developing case studies detailing the impact of awards made to museums and galleries.

The delivery of the AHRC's existing Knowledge Transfer programmes, a new jointly funded scheme with BT and the Creative Industries Technology and Innovation Network, co-funded with the TSB, will continue to stimulate innovation in the knowledge economy

in 2009-10. In addition, the results of the AHRC's collaboration with the BBC has already been disseminated to a wider audience through an event showcasing the funded projects, and a focus group to be convened later in the year will evaluate the impact of the partnership and explore how it could be sustained. Further AHRC influence in the knowledge economy will be built through partnership with the TSB and the development of relationships with the devolved administrations. Joint workshops with the TSB, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) are planned for 2009-10.

The AHRC will be undertaking various activities in 2009-10 to demonstrate the value of arts and humanities research to the formation of policy. Three clearly defined opportunities where arts and humanities research can demonstrably add value to public policy will be finalised in consultation with a wide range of policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders. A series of policy briefings will also be published and the AHRC will join with the ESRC in launching a policy placement fellowships scheme, placing researchers in government departments and agencies.

In addition to the Impact Task Force Report which has recently been published, a review of the impact of research across the arts and humanities is being undertaken by the AHRC and will be delivered by the end of 2009-10.

Internationally, the AHRC is involved with the launch of two HERA programmes in 2009-10 providing opportunities for researchers to collaborate across countries and across disciplines. 'Humanities as a Source of Creativity and Innovation' will explore how the values and processes of the arts and humanities might contribute to cultural, social and economic innovation and 'Cultural Dynamics: Inheritance and Identity' will look at the way in which cultural exchanges and dynamics cross between social strata, between countries, and between media.

The AHRC will seek to maintain its leadership role in engaging the arts and humanities community in 2009-10 by analysing the results of the 'Future Directions' consultation and using the findings to inform planning and strategy.

EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

The creation of the RCUK SSC suffered setbacks in 2008-09 and the AHRC's involvement, co-ordinated to fit with the wider project plans and the business requirements of the other councils, required re-planning.

The TUPE transfer of HR, Finance and IS (Phase 1) staff to RCUK SSC Ltd went ahead as planned in April 2008. However, Phase 1 systems, initially planned to go live 2008-09, are now due to be rolled out over the course of 2009-10. The TUPE transfer of Grants processing staff, also scheduled for 2008-09, was postponed and a new target date has not yet been agreed.

Work was also undertaken in 2008-09 on the design of the AHRC 'retained function': the structure and responsibilities of staff remaining in the council following transfer to SSC.

A business case for the relocation of the AHRC offices to Swindon was prepared and agreed by council in 2008-09. It was agreed that this was to go ahead at the earliest opportunity in order to take advantage of reductions in rent and travel costs, shared resources with other Research Councils based in Swindon and a closer partnership with the SSC.

Value for Money savings in 2008-09 totalled £6.448m against a target of £5.920m. Savings on administration costs were £0.017m (target £0.05m), reprioritisation of spend was £5.851m (target £5.6m) and co-funding of research was £0.58m (target £0.27m).

SCIENCE IN SOCIETY

The RCUK Science in Society programme has, so far, been focussed on addressing the public's attitude to, and engagement with, the sciences, rather than the arts or humanities. However, the AHRC continues to be involved with this work and has been the advocate for greater awareness in the programme of the role of arts and humanities research in society. Recognition of this can be seen in the recent decision to rename the programme 'Public Engagement with Research'.

Wider public engagement with, and public understanding of, arts and humanities research is achieved through the activities of the individual projects supported by the AHRC. For example, AHRC funded research underpinned the recent Shah 'Abbas exhibition at the British Museum, providing the public with an opportunity to explore the influence of one of the formative figures in the creation of modern Iran. Also, many

AHRC doctoral award-holders take part in the Researchers in Residence scheme, visiting schools throughout the UK to raise motivation, aspirations and stimulate interest in current research.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

AHRC DEL Outturn 2008-09

Actual 2008-09 £000

RESOURCE DEL - NEAR CASH	
Pay costs	4,278
Current expenditure on goods and services	3,203
Current grants (UK)	114,973
Grants from other bodies	-12,677
Pay related income	-155
Income for goods and services	-62

RESOURCE DEL - NON CASH	
Cost of capital charges	187
Movement in provisions	-6
Depreciation on tangibles	129
Amortisation on intangibles	1

DEL CAPITAL	
Additions - other assets	398

TOTAL DEL EXPENDITURE	110,269
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