

# Evaluation Strategy 2007-2012

## Why develop an Evaluation Strategy?

1. Evaluation is central to AHRC activities, decision-making and policy development. It makes a vital contribution to strategy, advocacy and programme delivery by:

- assessing whether the AHRC's schemes and programmes provide the right support and opportunities to arts and humanities researchers and postgraduate students, allowing Council to make decisions concerning reprioritisation
- providing accurate and timely information and analysis for annual reporting to the Science and Innovation Group in the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) on the sustainability of the research base, the nature and scale of outputs generated by investment in the arts and humanities research, and their quality
- providing evidence to demonstrate and advocate the impact of investment in the arts and humanities and the potential to generate further economic, social and cultural benefits for the UK

2. There is growing pressure on government and the wider public sector to demonstrate evidence-based policy-making, accountability and value for money.

3. The Research Councils have to meet annual reporting requirements on productivity, quality and impact, which require the AHRC to develop its annual monitoring and analysis, quantitative and qualitative assessment techniques, and economic impact case studies.

4. Evaluation will play a central role in assessing progress towards meeting the objectives set out in the new Strategic Aims. The development of an Evaluation Strategy is timely in relation to the publication of the AHRC's new Strategic Aims.

5. To be effective, monitoring and evaluation must be embedded in AHRC research, postgraduate and knowledge transfer activities from the outset. There must be a strong commitment to work collaboratively, reflected in the new AHRC structure.

**Aims:**

4. The AHRC's aim is to focus its evaluation activities on high-cost and strategic investments, collaborative schemes, interdisciplinary and international engagement, and positioning the Council in terms of the quality and impact of arts and humanities research.

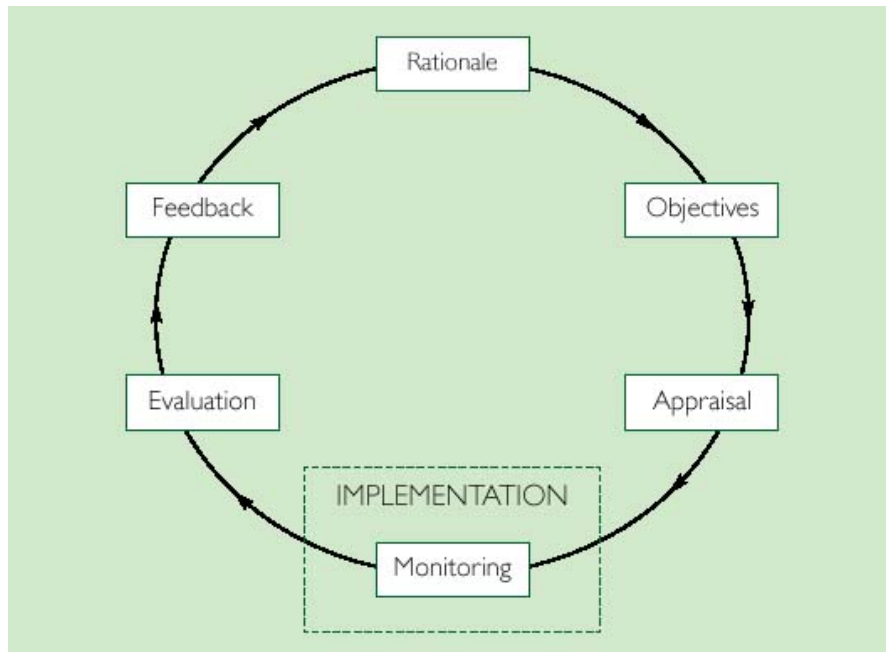
**Objectives:**

5. The purpose of Evaluation is to:

- to assess the extent to which AHRC programmes and schemes are delivering their aims and objectives, and to provide advice to Council on the outcomes of such evaluations so that strategic decisions can be made concerning reprioritisation;
- 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;
- 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 DIUS.

## Evaluation Cycle:

6. Appraisal, monitoring and evaluation form stages of a broad policy cycle, often recognised under the acronym ROAMEF (Rationale, Objectives, Appraisal, Monitoring, Evaluation, Feedback)<sup>1</sup>:



7. Assuming the rationale is agreed, it is important to set out clearly the desired outcomes and objectives of an intervention in order to identify the range of options. Where appropriate, targets should be set to help progress towards meeting objectives. Objectives and targets should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

8. Appraisals provide an assessment of whether a proposal is worthwhile, usually undertaken as a cost-benefit analysis. As options are developed it is important to review the impact of risks, uncertainties and inherent biases. This helps to ensure that the chosen option remains best value for money, even in conditions of change.

9. Once the options have been appraised and a decision has been taken it is necessary to progress to implementation. It is essential at this stage that monitoring procedures are put in place to ensure that information is collected on progress

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<sup>1</sup> The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government (HM Treasury 2003)

towards meeting objectives. Such information might include outputs, outcomes and impact.

10. Evaluation is similar to appraisal, except that it uses historic rather than forecast data. Its main purpose is to ensure that lessons are widely learned, communicated and applied when assessing new proposals.

*When any policy, programme or project is completed or has advanced to a pre-determined degree, it should undergo a comprehensive evaluation.<sup>2</sup>*

11. Evaluation examines the outcomes of a policy, programme or project against what was expected, and is designed to ensure that the lessons learned are fed back into the decision-making process. This ensures that AHRC activities are continually refined to reflect what best achieves our Strategic Aims and Objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government (HM Treasury 2003)

## **Key activities to underpin strategic decision-making:**

### *Assessing Health of Disciplines and Sustainability of the Research Base*

Annual analysis and reporting on the sustainability of the research base and on the health of individual disciplines informs RCUK reporting to the DIUS, and provides important information for decision-making within the AHRC. The AHRC can be proactive in taking action where trend data points to potential problems or opportunities.

### *Demonstrating Economic Impact*

The AHRC's Impact Strategy sets out the Council's approach to embedding and assessing the impact of arts and humanities research. Monitoring the implementation of the Strategy is a key task. The economic impact<sup>3</sup> of AHRC investments will be demonstrated through a series of further impact case study assessments.

### *Research Scheme Evaluations*

These evaluations are intended to assess whether schemes are fulfilling their aims, to highlight any problems associated with their scope and implementation and to assess wider impact and benefits.

### *Evaluating Postgraduate Provision*

The AHRC routinely collects data concerning the views of postgraduate and doctoral finishers, which helps inform postgraduate provision and related areas of policy. A key consideration in relation to the evaluation of postgraduate provision is the longitudinal tracking of students into academic and other areas of employment, and this was the subject of our 2006 career tracking survey. The completion of the first cohort of collaborative doctoral awards (2008) will provide an opportunity to explore these issues in the wider context of a non-academic collaborative partnership.

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<sup>3</sup> See the AHRC's Impact Strategy (2007)

### *Evaluation of Knowledge Transfer Schemes*

The Council's first dedicated knowledge transfer schemes were launched in 2006. Evaluation of these schemes will be important for the future development of the AHRC's approach to knowledge transfer. Continued emphasis is being placed on knowledge transfer activities both within the DIUS and across central government - it will also be essential for the Council to be able demonstrate that its knowledge transfer schemes are meeting their objectives.

### *Evaluation of Strategic Programmes*

Annual monitoring and reporting mechanisms have been put in place, while clear programme objectives/success criteria on which final programme-level evaluations will be based have been developed with individual programme directors. Evaluating the Council's first Strategic Programmes will be vital to demonstrating the value of arts and humanities research and the role of the AHRC in facilitating large collaborative projects.

### *Evaluation of Research Centres*

Annual monitoring and reporting mechanisms are in place and clear programme objectives/success criteria will be discussed and agreed with Phase II Centre Directors. It is essential that an evaluation of these substantial 10-year investments is conducted at the level of the individual Research Centre.

### *Monitoring Data and Reporting to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills*

The DIUS is provided with data on an annual basis as part of the Research Councils Performance Management Framework, this includes the AHRC's journals-based alternative to bibliometrics. Such monitoring data can also be utilised to a much greater extent for strategic decision-making.

*Case Studies of Excellence, Exemplary International and Interdisciplinary Collaboration*

To support the data collected as part of AHRC reporting under the OSI's Performance Management System to illustrate excellent research and exemplary projects with international and interdisciplinary collaboration.

*Evaluation of International Activities*

The implementation and effectiveness of the AHRC's International Strategy will be evaluated through reviews of specific schemes, such as the Research Networks and Workshops Scheme and monitoring international collaboration in the responsive mode.

## Reviews Workplan:

## ANNEX I

2007 Science Arts Fellowships Scheme Evaluation

Project-Based Doctoral Studentships

PG Research Training Schemes

Dissemination Scheme Evaluation

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2008 Research Networks and Workshops Scheme Evaluation

Knowledge Catalyst Initial Scheme Evaluation

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2009 Collaborative Doctoral Awards Initial Scheme Evaluation

Knowledge Transfer Fellowships Initial Scheme Evaluation

Evaluation of Cultures of Consumption Programme (light touch)

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2010 Evaluation of ICT in Arts and Humanities Programme (light touch)

Research Grants Scheme Evaluation

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2011 Follow-up Postgraduate Career Pathways Study

Evaluation of Diasporas, Migration and Identities Programme

Evaluation of Designing for the 21st Century Programme

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2012 Evaluation of Landscape and Environment Programme

Evaluation of Evolution of Cultural Diversity Research Centre

Evaluation of Irish and Scottish Studies Research Centre

Review of Block Grant Partnership funding