



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

## **Arts and Humanities Research Landscape**

## Arts and Humanities Research Landscape

*The purpose of this document is to set out the significance of arts and humanities research in the UK, to elucidate the context for that research and to describe the AHRC's distinctive role in contributing to the UK research base. It should be read as a background and context for the 'Future Directions'*

*<http://ahrcinternalweb/About/Policy/Pages/FutureDirections.aspx> which outlines the AHRC's vision for the future.*

### I. The Significance of Arts and Humanities Research

Human beings are intensely reflective and curious about themselves, about who they are and where they come from, about how to live in the world, and about the nature and origins of the culture they have created for themselves. The immensity of such reflexivity and curiosity in the UK emerges in the many millions of people each year who read newspaper and magazine articles and books, who listen to or watch radio or TV shows, who learn a new language, who visit collections and exhibitions, who undertake artistic or musical activity, who attend performances, who visit buildings or sites of historic significance. According to the Office for National Statistics 'Social Trends' (2008), 53% of adults in England participated in an arts activity in 2005-6 and 46% of those participated at least once a week.

Arts and humanities research represents the self-conscious and professional dimension of our reflexivity and curiosity in these areas. It is the deliberate and dedicated activity that generates, compiles, analyses, synthesises and propagates our deepest insights into who we are, where we have come from and the cultural expressions we have crafted for ourselves. While arts and humanities research makes a vital contribution to innovation, creativity and the success of many major sectors of the UK economy (such as creative industries and tourism) and informs public policy (for example in key areas such as law and social cohesion), it also plays a much more fundamental role in underpinning the quality of life and hence the wellbeing of society. The UK government has begun to recognise that national

wellbeing is not solely the result of the GDP, and the Office for National Statistics, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and many regional governments are considering the significance of human and cultural capital to the wellbeing of the nation (e.g. see Paul Allin [ONS], 'Measuring Societal Wellbeing', *Economic and Labour Market Review*, 2007).

The work supported by the AHRC in the range of disciplines under its remit represents distinctive modes of knowledge, methods and outputs and engages with a range of stakeholders in both the HEI and non-HEI sectors to maintain the UK's international reputation for research in arts and humanities, and to enhance the impact of that research for the quality of life of the UK.

The AHRC definition of research is consonant with that of the HEFCE Research Assessment Exercise, which tests the quality and impact of UK research. The latter specifies that research is 'original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce, industry, and to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances, artefacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and process, including design and construction.'

Within this context, arts and humanities research generates new knowledge, products and interpretations, and also engages in debate and development of ideas about an archive of knowledge that has been accumulated over centuries. Therefore the processes of questioning, pondering, debating, challenging and innovating adopted by arts and humanities researchers are as significant as the products of research, and all build incrementally on centuries of scholarly research. Arts and humanities research offers a profound engagement with ideas, beliefs, values and cultural institutions, and propagates the deepest insights into who we are, where we come from and how we express ourselves.

The disciplines supported by the AHRC use methods that vary from an abstract form of thinking about fundamental human problems (e.g. Philosophy) to the study of archives and published texts (e.g. History), to laboratory based discovery (e.g. some

branches of Archaeology), to creative work that is informed by research (e.g. Creative Writing). Research in the arts and humanities can be both individual and collaborative, but often has elements of both. Collaboration can have a number of meanings within an arts and humanities context, but ultimately collaboration is a purposeful interaction between or among researchers that makes a discernible positive contribution to the final research outputs. Academics collaborate through workshops, networks and conferences; mutual peer review; discussion and engagement with postgraduates, postdoctoral research assistants, members of the public, public and private bodies, and colleagues throughout the world; as well as through co-authorship, editorship, and to a lesser extent, working together in laboratories. Arts and humanities research is distinctive in that within collaborative contexts, the individual researcher continues to have a prominent role to play in providing the framework for research, undertaking research in libraries and archives, and writing the often extensive results of research investigations. Even in large collaborative projects, the Principal Investigator is likely to have a significant contribution to make in the generation, as well as the management, of research.

Although each of the disciplines within the arts and humanities landscape has a distinctive history, institutional basis, and method of working, interdisciplinarity is common across most of the arts and humanities. This can take the form of the cross-fertilisation of ideas and evidence between different disciplinary areas, or disciplinary specialists working side by side on a common problem. The emerging concept of 'post-disciplinarity', which focuses on research questions, rather than the disciplines themselves, is not yet a common framework within arts and humanities research, where disciplinary areas maintain authoritative identities. Nevertheless, a number of the disciplines within the arts and humanities are intrinsically interdisciplinary (e.g. Cultural Studies; American Studies; Language-based Area Studies; Economic History).

Arts and humanities researchers can also be distinguished by the multiplicity of outputs that present their research discoveries. While academic journals are an important part of disseminating new ideas, monographs remain a dominant form of communicating research in some humanities disciplines. In recent years, and as evidenced by the 2008 RAE, the nature of research outputs in arts and humanities research has been changing, with more varied and sometimes experimental formats

becoming increasingly common, These can include exhibitions, performances, DVDs, websites, databases, conferences, workshops and policy papers. However, the outputs of research in the arts and humanities are often lengthy, and are based on significant amounts of archival or library work or creative exploration. They therefore usually require a major time resource to complete to the highest quality.

Arts and Humanities researchers work with a range of users and beneficiaries, both within and outside the academic community. In addition to the significance of arts and humanities research for the scholars who benefit from it, arts and humanities researchers also engage purposefully with other public organisations (e.g. museums, libraries, archives, the Film and Design Councils, the Technology Strategy Board (TSB); religious institutions; the BBC and other broadcasters, police and hospital services); private sector organisations (e.g. BT and small and medium enterprises [SMEs] in the creative industries); government departments (e.g. Ministry of Justice, Foreign Office); international organisations (e.g. United Nations, European Commission); charities and the voluntary sector; devolved administrations; and wider public audiences, who are engaged through a wide range of activities such as community-level initiatives, publications, workshops, television, radio, exhibitions, performances, the internet and other forms of public media dissemination.

Through the exposure of roughly 600,000 undergraduates and postgraduates annually to research-led teaching in arts and humanities, arts and humanities researchers are responsible for cultivating high level skills in the next generation of scholars and employees. These skills are valued not only by the academic community, but by employers in the public sector, in business, and in the third sector. This range of generic skills includes lateral and innovative thinking, a capacity to communicate complex ideas clearly both orally and in writing, the ability to manage large and complex projects, a facility for rational argument, the skill of collecting and analysing evidence, and an aptitude for team working.

## **II. The Role of the AHRC**

As one of the UK's seven research councils, the Arts and Humanities Research Council is the second largest source of funding (after the Higher Education Funding Councils) for the broad, vibrant and diverse range of academic disciplines that makes

up the arts and humanities. The existence of the AHRC has brought unprecedented additional funds to promote research in the arts and humanities. These funds have supported the highest quality research, whether based within specific disciplines, collaborative, interdisciplinary or individual; training and development for postgraduates; knowledge transfer; and research initiatives within creative and performing arts. AHRC-funded research by academics, research assistants and postgraduates has resulted in monographs, journal articles, websites, databases, exhibitions, conferences, workshops, networks, DVDs and performances, which have set new research agendas as well as engaging with non-academic stakeholders, contributing to public policy and providing opportunities for knowledge exchange and partnership working with a variety of public, private and third sector organisations.

The AHRC is the second youngest research council, having been founded in April 2005, with its origins in the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which was formed in 1998. During the first three years of its existence, the AHRC's evolution from a Research Board, overseeing funding mechanisms, to a Research Council designed, as other Councils, to support the highest quality of innovative and strategic research, has coincided with its first Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in December 2007. With the financial settlement in place until 2011, and with an extensive process of operational and organisational change nearly complete, the AHRC is now in a position to undertake the next steps in its evolution as a Research Council. This document sets out the contexts, vision and achievements of the AHRC, and it looks ahead to the future development and delivery of its strategy.

### **III. Contexts**

The institutional, national and international contexts within which the AHRC functions provide a platform for its current operation and future development.

Research funding for arts and humanities in the UK derives from several major sources: QR funding, which is linked with RAE assessment and is administered through HEFCE and other funding councils; the AHRC; the British Academy; and charities such as the Leverhulme and the Wellcome Trust. In the arts and humanities, the balance of funding between QR, from all UK funding councils, and the AHRC is 85.8% QR funding, 14.2% AHRC funding. Within the subject remits of

other Research Councils the proportion of QR varies from 35% to 65%. In providing just under 15% of dual support funding for arts and humanities research, the AHRC supplies a significantly lower proportion of funding than that provided within other disciplinary areas supported by Research Councils.

The AHRC currently administers 2.8% of the science budget, while 27% (i.e. 14,060 FTE academics) of the total staff submitted in RAE 2008 were within the arts and humanities. The AHRC's reach encompasses a broad variety of disciplines which are located within a range of universities (from ancient ones to post-92), specialist institutions (such as conservatoires), and independent research organisations (such as museums). The 2008 RAE has revealed that in relation to science and social science disciplines, outstanding research in arts and humanities disciplines is widely dispersed across a range of types of institutions and departments.

During its first three years of operation, the AHRC categorised its disciplinary scope as follows:

Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology

Visual Arts and Media

English Language and Literature

Medieval and Modern History

Modern Languages and Linguistics

Librarianship, Information and Museum Studies

Music and Performing Arts

Philosophy, Law and Religious Studies

Within each of these categories is a number of other disciplinary areas (e.g. Visual Arts and Media includes Design, Cultural Studies and History of Art; Performing Arts represents Drama and Dance). Area Studies disciplines such as American Studies or Asian Studies, and disciplines that can have more than one departmental home, such as Film Studies, also fall under the AHRC remit, as well as disciplines that cross Research Council boundaries, such as Law, Geography, Linguistics, Politics and Anthropology. In addition, the AHRC supports the research of Independent Research Organisations (IROs), which include some UK museums, archives and libraries. The AHRC therefore includes long-established humanities disciplines, such as Classics and

Philosophy; practice-oriented disciplines, such as Fine Art; and emerging disciplines such as Visual Anthropology, Environmental History and Heritage Science.

The AHRC has played a growing role in an international research context where there is mounting support for collaborative and interdisciplinary work in the arts and humanities. The Universities UK Research report on 'International Research Collaboration: Opportunities for the UK Higher Education Sector' (April 2008) identifies the strong growth in international research collaboration in the UK which is supported by the Research Councils. The purposes of these collaborations are to foster 'the competitiveness and sustainability of the domestic research system; domestic economic growth; a commitment to work together on common problems...and a commitment to internationalisation and a global citizenry more generally'. The AHRC has played an increasing leadership role in this global research landscape.

Although the AHRC is one of the newest research councils, and the smallest in terms of income, it has a disproportionately large influence, given the size and scope of its academic community, its relationships with non-HEI sector and international partnerships.

#### **IV. AHRC Vision, Strategy and Achievements**

Since its foundation in 2005, the AHRC has developed a vision and strategy, and has an impressive range of achievements to underpin these.

##### **Objectives and Strategy of the AHRC**

The Royal Charter of Incorporation of 2005 specified the objectives of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, as follows:

- to promote and support by any means high-quality basic, strategic and applied research and related postgraduate training in the arts and humanities
- to advance knowledge and understanding of the arts and humanities (including promoting and supporting the exploitation of research outcomes)

and research relating to cultural aspects of the different parts of Our United Kingdom)

- to provide trained personnel who meet the needs of their users and beneficiaries
- and thereby to contribute to the economic competitiveness of Our United Kingdom and effectiveness of public services and policy, and to enhance the quality of life and creative output of the nation;

and in relation to the activities as engaged in by the Council and in such manner as the Council may see fit to:

- generate public awareness;
- communicate research outcomes;
- encourage public engagement and dialogue;
- disseminate knowledge; and
- provide advice.

In response to its mission as laid out in the Royal Charter, the AHRC developed a vision and strategy statement which was published in 2006. The AHRC's vision has been to be 'a recognised world leader in advancing arts and humanities research', and it has worked to achieve this vision through the following strategic aims:

- To promote and support the production of world-class research in the arts and humanities
- To promote and support world-class postgraduate training designed to equip graduates for research or other professional careers
- To strengthen the impact of arts and humanities research by encouraging researchers to disseminate and transfer knowledge to other contexts where it makes a difference
- To raise the profile of arts and humanities research and to be an effective advocate for its social, cultural and economic significance.

## **The Distinctive Achievements of the AHRC**

In support of its vision and strategy the AHRC has contributed to the quality and innovation of UK higher education research in a number of ways: by encouraging research across disciplinary, Council and national boundaries in order to contribute to the developing body of knowledge, interpretation and innovation in arts and humanities; by providing brokerage between academic research and non-academic partners in the public and private sector for the benefit of quality of life, local communities, public policy and industry; by fostering public engagement with the outcomes of research; and by training the next generation of scholars to maintain the capacity for delivering research-led teaching to future generations.

From its inception, the AHRC has been involved in crossing disciplinary boundaries and tackling large research questions in partnership with both other research councils and with international organisations. The AHRC has achieved this aim in a variety of ways.

First of all, it has funded 19 research centres which have developed inter-institutional collaborations to provide new insights into contemporary challenges such as intellectual property; endangered fields such as textile conservation; creative practices such as musical performance; and areas of both academic and public interest, such as Surrealism and Renaissance court culture.

Second, cross-disciplinary collaboration both within and outside the AHRC subject domain has been characteristic of the Council's work since the beginning. The AHRC 'Art and Science' grants opened up a dialogue between two arenas of academic research that have hitherto appeared to be separated. The capacity of humanities researchers, creative practitioners and researchers in STEM subjects to work together to learn from each others' methodologies, insights and discoveries has enriched the research landscape and provided a platform for future collaboration. This dialogue has developed through the AHRC's active involvement in key cross-Council research themes of strategic importance, such as 'Religion and Society' (with the ESRC) and 'Design for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 'Digital Economy'' and 'Science and Heritage' (with the EPSRC).

The AHRC has also developed its own interdisciplinary themes, including 'Landscape and Environment', 'Diasporas, Migration and Identities' and 'Beyond Text', each of which encourages a dialogue across academic disciplines to address areas of contemporary challenge.

Finally, the AHRC has also provided opportunities for crossing national boundaries in establishing partnerships with international organisations, leading to co-funded schemes, such as those with Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) in Germany. The AHRC has been a pioneer in pressing for the avoidance of 'double jeopardy' in international peer review.

In addition to its important work in providing academics with opportunities to work beyond disciplinary and national boundaries, the AHRC also plays an active brokerage role in enabling the development of new partnerships between the HEI and non-HEI sectors for the purposes of knowledge exchange. The AHRC operates a number of schemes which are designed to broker new relationships between academics and the creative, cultural and industrial sectors for the benefit of all parties. These schemes include Knowledge Transfer Fellowships and Catalyst Schemes (both of which are unique to the AHRC), Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Research Networks and Workshops, Museums and Galleries, Collaborative Doctoral Awards and Creative and Performing Arts Fellowships. Other influential relationships include the AHRC/BBC Knowledge Exchange Programme (unique to the AHRC), the AHRC's involvement in emerging government policy regarding Creative Industries through its work with the DCMS Creative Economy Programme, and the AHRC's work with the Technology Strategy Board supporting collaborations with the creative industries. A pilot dissemination scheme was a first step in integrating public engagement into the academic work of research grant holders.

The AHRC has pioneered a broad definition of 'knowledge transfer' that extends beyond its former connotations of industrial partnerships to embrace the public and voluntary sectors and creative industries.

While boundary crossing and brokerage are distinctive aspects of the AHRC's work, the AHRC also has a fundamental role to play in sustaining the research base for

future generations as well as upholding capacity in areas of current and future strategic importance. The highly successful Masters and Doctoral students trained and supported by the AHRC are creating the next generation of scholars, with enhanced skills of team-based and project working, and many postgraduates supported by the AHRC have also gone on to significant careers in the public and private sectors. The AHRC has begun to attend to the life cycle of researchers by giving special attention to early career researchers in its research leave and large grants schemes. The AHRC's support of ring-fenced doctoral awards recognised the dearth of new blood in areas of strategic importance and supported the renewal of those areas through student support. The AHRC has contributed to building capacity in other ways as well: in supporting endangered languages through its contribution to the 5 language-based area studies networks (co-funded with the ESRC, the Scottish Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council); its support for resource enhancement to ensure access to research about valuable cultural artefacts; its maintenance of specialist postgraduate training networks; and its support of the Arts and Humanities Data Service and the ICT expert network, to address infrastructure needs. The AHRC has also been a world leader in supporting the development of the emerging area of practice-led research, through ring-fenced grants for researchers working in this area.

In comparison with other funding bodies, such as the British Academy and the Leverhulme, the AHRC is the only UK organisation that offers funding for:

- collaborative research grants up to £1 million
- speculative projects
- research grants for early career researchers
- strategic programmes
- discrete KT schemes
- research projects in the creative and performing arts
- postgraduate students
- specialist research training for postgraduate students

In the short time of its existence, these unique contributions of the AHRC have resulted in changes in academic behaviour within the arts and humanities community, including a more widespread propensity to seek grant support for large,

collaborative projects; an enhancement of the quality of postgraduate training and skills; the development of early career researchers; a wider acceptance of knowledge transfer as part of the research agenda; and the consolidation and development of a research culture within the creative and performing arts.

## **V. Developing the Strategy**

With these successes to build upon, the AHRC is now in a position to move forward with confidence, to consolidate its identity and to take on a greater leadership role in world-leading arts and humanities research with impact. The core elements of our emerging strategy are:

- development of new strategic research priorities
- maintenance of the skills and intellectual qualities needed to sustain the UK's global academic competitiveness.
- brokering of partnerships with other sectors

The AHRC can achieve these ambitions by:

- (1) taking a more strategic approach to research
- (2) clarifying the important role of the individual researcher within collaborative, strategic and interdisciplinary research contexts
- (3) adopting a more visible role in cross-Council initiatives
- (4) creating more stable partnerships
- (5) attending carefully to the full career life cycle of researchers
- (6) integrating the potential for knowledge exchange more thoroughly into existing programmes
- (7) exploring the facilities needs for arts and humanities researchers
- (8) articulating more effectively the impact of research on the quality of life, public policy and the economic health of the UK

(1) The AHRC has been undertaking an examination of its programmes and strategic priorities, from its engagement with cross-Council themes, to the role of individual research. As part of its future planning, the AHRC is considering what mechanisms it might adopt to encourage the academic community to formulate their own strategic

research questions, so that AHRC strategy is informed by the most innovative curiosity-driven research.

(2) A highly significant strand of the AHRC's investigation of its priorities is a consideration of the distinctive hands-on role of arts and humanities researchers in the research process itself (not just in the management of projects), and the need to provide time for researchers to produce the highest quality work. The consultation on support for the individual researcher identified a need to provide a more flexible scheme to provide the focused time needed for research, which has been realised by the new Fellowship scheme that will be launched in September 2009.

(3) The AHRC is currently considering the ways in which it can play a decisive role in both tackling Treasury challenges and persuading Treasury of the fundamental contribution arts and humanities research can make to the economy. While all the Cabinet Office Future Strategic Challenges (2008) provide themes to which the arts and humanities research community can contribute, the AHRC has also identified the absence of any attention to 'culture' in these, and will be pressing for considered and focused attention on research in the area of culture as of monumental significance to the UK's international reputation, cultural industries and maintenance of its quality of life. The AHRC will undertake a leadership role in a proposed cross-Council programme on 'Connected Communities'.

(4) The AHRC is building its relationships with stakeholders to ensure more effective knowledge exchange and impact of research within and beyond the higher education sector. To this end, the AHRC is beginning to prioritise its stakeholder engagement strategy and to create formal partnerships with co-funders nationally and internationally. International partnerships are especially important here, as the AHRC will need to consider how far it wishes to internationalise further its research programmes, and by what mechanisms. The AHRC has begun to develop concordats with government departments to ensure a better flow of resource to influence and shape public policy. Relationships with higher education institutions are being consolidated through the block grant partnership scheme, which will open up a dialogue between the AHRC and participating HEIs about the future strategy for capacity building and emerging or endangered research areas in the arts and humanities. The AHRC is also considering a campaign to improve public

understanding of the arts and humanities, equivalent to the high profile 'Science in Society' project.

(5) An important area of development for the AHRC is in its greater attention to the full life cycle of the academic. This consideration is underpinned by the RCUK Concordat for Early Career Researchers (2008), which expresses the need for training not only at postgraduate level, but at postdoctoral level and through the early stages of an academic career. The AHRC's consultation on support for individual research included a consideration of how the AHRC might better support researchers at this stage in their development, and much work still needs to be done on considering training and development needs for postdoctoral researchers.

(6) A significant strategic area for the AHRC is a more effective integration of knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange within all of its programmes, where appropriate. During the first phase of its development, the AHRC was in the vanguard of expanding the definition of knowledge transfer, by separating this area from other parts of AHRC activity. Having established a firm foundation for KT activities, the AHRC has identified that it now needs to ensure better integration of KT into its current schemes and develop strategies for broadening the disciplines that engage with KT. The AHRC will need to consider how to make best use of the Research Exchange Network that has been created through its KT funding, as well as its growing partnerships with HEI R&D offices, regional development agencies, the DCMS and others to ensure knowledge exchange is potentially available to all of its activities. However, the AHRC will continue to support discrete KT activities, such as its partnership with the BBC and its developing relationship with the TSB.

(7) A new area of consideration for the AHRC during this spending review period is its potential involvement with RCUK Large Facilities funding. The AHRC has never previously bid for funds under this scheme. The changing technological context within which arts and humanities research operates has increased the need for costly facilities in areas such as design, archaeology, architecture and in some art practice. A consideration of what our large facilities needs might be in this changing landscape should be one of the AHRC's priorities.

(8) Finally, the AHRC is focusing sharp attention on the best ways of articulating and demonstrating the economic impact of the research it supports. To create a framework for this, the AHRC's Impact Task Force, has developed a methodology, a portfolio of evidence and an innovation narrative to express the ways in which arts and humanities research contribute to quality of life, public policy and other areas of the UK's economic health.

## **VI. Structures underpinning the Strategy**

These strategies have been underpinned by internal changes within the AHRC (and within RCUK more generally), which are designed to enable the AHRC to be more flexible, to encourage working across boundaries, to respond more readily to changing needs both in the academic community and beyond, to integrate the knowledge transfer and international dimensions into all its work, and to attend to the economic impact of the research it supports. These changes include a harmonisation of research council process through the Shared Services Centre at Swindon; an internal restructuring; an integration of both the KT and International Teams into the programmes division; and changes in the decision-making structures for awarding grants.

The new decision-making structure will allow a more appropriate engagement with stakeholders; a more effective incorporation of programmes, KT and international strategies; an improvement of the peer review college through their greater involvement in the assessment of grants; greater transparency and consistency in decision-making; and reduction of real or perceived barriers to interdisciplinary research.

The new decision-making system involves several key changes. The first of these is the creation of an Advisory Board, reporting to Council, which will advise Council on strategies for research, training, knowledge transfer, economic impact, evaluation, and international engagement that reflect AHRC's Charter, and the most important national, European and global needs and challenges facing arts and humanities research. The Advisory Board will provide academic input on key operational areas involving our full range of schemes, and having a single board will allow a more

holistic consideration of research, postgraduate training and knowledge transfer activities than was possible with the separate committee structure of the past.

For large grants in responsive mode, there will now be four panels replacing the current eight panel structure, with the possibility for greater flexibility when necessary in constituting the disciplinary balance on panels. These new panels encompass four broad interdisciplinary areas that reflect the new internal reorganisation of the AHRC.

The new system will enable a greater proportion of the peer review college to be directly involved in panels, and this in itself will enhance the experience and quality of the peer review college. To achieve this, an intensive series of peer review college training sessions (including mock panels) began in the autumn of 2008 and will continue throughout 2009. It is envisaged that up to 60 members of the peer review college may be involved in panels in any given year, assessing research and KT applications, as well as postgraduate awards (e.g. block grant partnership bids). The AHRC has tightened up its procedures for selecting peer review college members and for assessing the needs of the peer review college and the performance of college members. It is also proposed that an annual general meeting of peer review college members could be held, to refresh the members' training, update the group on AHRC policy, troubleshoot arising issues, and, over time, build a common sense of purpose.

The greater flexibility in this system has enabled the AHRC to eliminate deadlines for large research grants and for the new Fellowship scheme. This will allow for grant applications to be submitted when they are ready and when the research is most urgent, rather than in response to artificial deadlines.

The new internal structures echo the AHRC's external stakeholder engagement, as they are designed to mirror major research areas in the arts and humanities, and the rapidly growing development of knowledge transfer and internationalisation activity within research intensive universities.

## VII. Evaluation and Economic Impact Assessment

The AHRC's restructuring and refocusing is designed to ensure the most effective means of achieving its Royal Charter aim to ensure that the research it funds contributes to 'economic impact'. 'Economic impact' here is considered in its broadest sense (which is also commensurate with HM Treasury Green Book definition), which includes improving the quality of life in the UK, contributing positively to public policy, enhancing higher level skills of the workforce, and building capacity for future research development in strategic areas. In order to ensure these aims are achieved, the AHRC's policies, programmes and projects are subject to comprehensive evaluation and assessment.

The AHRC has been working to understand, articulate and measure the impacts of arts and humanities research since 2004. The United Kingdom is leading the way in its contribution to methods of articulating economic impact in the arts and humanities. The work within the AHRC has contributed to this by focusing upon the need to understand the myriad ways in which impact is generated across the diverse subjects within the art and humanities. This includes the manner in which research impacts relate to distinctive arts and humanities research practices and the processes of knowledge transfer and public engagement in the arts and humanities, some of which are unique to these subjects. The methods for identifying these impact factors have included: impact case studies; Impact Fellowships; a postgraduate career tracking study; an impact assessment of research with museums and galleries (in collaboration with the British Museum); and a project on 'Understanding Knowledge Transfer as an Impact Delivery Mechanism'.

The AHRC has undertaken to make a step change in its articulation of economic impact by setting up an 'Impact Task Force' in January 2008, in order to develop a methodology for assessing economic impact in the arts and humanities (particularly the quality of life and policy dimensions) and considering the role of arts and humanities research in the national innovation system (the latter is a joint project with NESTA). In developing its economic impact baseline, the AHRC initially focussed upon four main areas: delivering benefits to businesses; delivering people to the labour market; delivering economic impact through exhibitions; and innovation in the Public Sector. The Impact Task Force is extending this work to

highlight the impacts of world class research, quality of life and innovation in the arts and humanities.

In addition to its work on economic impact, the AHRC continues to ensure that it uses evaluation to examine the outturn of a policy, programme or project against what was expected, to ensure that 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.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

At two AHRC Council away days held in 2008, the Council agreed a number of high level issues for the AHRC to consider as it enters its next phase of development:

- The AHRC should reaffirm its goals, vision and impact to make a clear and unambiguous case to all its stakeholders
- The description of desired impact should take account of public policy goals, but go beyond them to affirm the value of arts and humanities research in the creation of a civilised society. The AHRC should take forward a 'think tank' approach to developing and disseminating ideas about this
- The AHRC should be seen to take the lead on at least one programme of cross-Council work
- The AHRC should sharpen up its distinctiveness in relation to HEFCE-funded research in particular through its focus on capacity-building, collaborative approaches and post-doctoral and early career work
- The AHRC should develop a communication strategy focused on the arts and humanities research community in particular, but extending to other stakeholders. One theme of this communication should be the development of a framework of strategic programmes whose themes could be developed in collaboration with the community and other stakeholders

With these contexts in mind, the AHRC's 'Future Directions' is designed to ensure that it can build upon its past achievements to enhance its leadership role within the UK's arts and humanities research landscape.

Professor Shearer West  
Director of Research

## Arts and Humanities Research Landscape - Annex

**Table 1 Number of students in Higher Education by Subject\***

	Architecture building & planning	Law	Mass communications & documentation	Languages	Historical & philosophical studies	Creative arts & design	<b>Arts and Humanities total</b>	Combined subjects
Student FPE	60,525	90,845	47,935	139,715	103,215	160,525	<b>602,760</b>	117,245

*\*Data is taken from HESA 2006/07 student record: Full Person Equivalent (FPE), all years of study, all domiciles, by JACS subject area*

**Table 2: Dual Support System Expenditure on research 2006/07**

	Research Council Subject Domain							
	AHRC	BBSRC	EPSRC	ESRC	MRC	NERC	STFC	Total non-A&H
Research Council expenditure (£000)	45,365	306,349	422,577	99,824	175,938	82,853	78,991	1,166,532
QR from Funding Councils (£000)	273,685	142,549	325,793	189,523	377,815	46,278	61,416	1,143,374
% of QR to total funding	85.8	31.8	43.5	65.5	68.2	35.8	43.7	49.5

Funding for research is also provided by other bodies, in addition to Research Councils and UK Funding Councils. Table 3 provides a wider picture of arts and humanities funding in the UK.

**Table 3: Research Funding by Source 2006/07**

	Arts and Humanities	% of total	Outside Arts and Humanities	% of total
QR from Funding Councils* (£)	273,685,319	66.0	1,143,373,797	26.3
OSI Research Councils† (£)	60,929,000	14.7	1,079,747,000	24.8
UK-based charities† (£)	19,963,000	4.8	745,469,000	17.1
UK cent govt/local auth, health & hosp authorities† (£)	28,056,000	6.8	567,960,000	13.1
UK industry, commerce, public corps† (£)	10,167,000	2.5	278,937,000	6.4
EU government† (£)	9,447,000	2.3	246,767,000	5.7
EU other† (£)	2,071,000	0.5	43,722,000	1.0
Other overseas† (£)	4,711,000	1.1	193,505,000	4.4
Other sources† (£)	5,359,000	1.3	50,262,000	1.2
Total funding† (£)	414,388,319	—	4,349,742,797	—

\*Mainstream QR from HEFCE, SFC, HEFCW and NI. PGR RDG supervision element removed where possible.  
†HESA finance record: research grant income by source and cost centre.

It is worth noting that the figure for OSI Research Councils is greater than the £45,365,000 AHRC expenditure on research (see Table 2) which suggests that an additional £15,000,000 was provided by other research councils in arts and humanities cost-centres.

**Table 4: Category A FTE staff submitted in RAE 2008 by Research Council subject area**

Research Council subject area	Category A FTE staff
AHRC	14,060.4
BBSRC	3,949.8
EPSRC	10,214.1
STFC	842.8
ESRC	12,062.4
MRC	8,480.0
NERC	2,299.4
No RC	500.4
Outside A&H	38348.8

