



AHRC Delivery Plan

Introduction and Summary

1. UK research in the arts and humanities is a success. Across a broad and diverse domain – from archaeology and classics, through philosophy and religion, to the visual and performing arts – we have some of the finest researchers in the world. They make increasing contributions to the vibrancy of the economy, and address issues of central importance for the health of the UK's society in the 21st century:
 - *the knowledge economy*, of which the creative, cultural and heritage sectors are an increasingly important part, and where there is an ever-growing need for people with high levels of expertise and creativity in areas such as new media and digital arts, design, language and literature, and studies of the built environment
 - *cultural diversity*, where there is an urgent need to deepen our understanding of how social, personal and cultural identities are shaped, and the role of such dimensions as faith, ethnicity, migration, place and occupation in maintaining those identities
 - *foresight programmes*, where the role of the arts and humanities is being increasingly recognised in addressing some of the key issues in projects such as cyber trust and crime prevention; brain science, addiction and drugs; infectious diseases; and also in the development of new proposals including Africa, and land use.

2. The Arts and Humanities Research Board has also been a success and that success is one of the main reasons why it has been transformed into a new Arts and Humanities Research Council. The AHRB has won, through the rapid establishment and development of its programmes, and intensive consultation with stakeholders in the research community and beyond, a high reputation as an effective and responsive organisation. Since its establishment in 1998, it has transformed the research landscape in the arts and humanities by:
 - supporting both **individual researchers** working on their own projects (still the predominant mode of research in the arts and humanities) but also larger-scale **team-based and collaborative projects**. Most of our funding goes to the support of team-based projects, which before 1998 hardly existed in the arts and humanities, and researchers have responded enthusiastically to the new opportunities, developing new ways of working in producing high-quality outputs

- operating initially wholly **in responsive mode**, but in the last two years introducing in consultation with the research community and other stakeholders **strategic initiatives** in areas including the origins of man and language, ICT, and migration and diasporas
 - exploiting the opportunities for **cross-disciplinary** working both within the arts and humanities and beyond. We are leaders in Europe in bringing together research in the arts and in the humanities. And we are joining up research communities in areas such as design, cultural studies, and linkages between arts and humanities and medicine
 - developing programmes and incentives to encourage researchers to engage constructively with the **creative industries**, and the cultural and heritage sectors more generally, so that our research capacity and outputs are more effectively exploited to the benefit of society and the economy.
3. As the AHRB becomes the AHRC, it is essential to sustain and to build on the momentum established in all these areas, so that over the next ten years the UK arts and humanities research community develops and thrives, and fulfils its potential both in world-leading research and in its contribution to society. Our key strategic priorities are therefore:
- **to sustain and promote high-quality and innovative research across the full range of disciplines in the arts and humanities**
 - **further to develop sustainable research capacity and capability**
 - **to extend and enhance interdisciplinary work, both within the arts and humanities, and in collaboration with other disciplines**
 - **to enhance interactions across the research community and with the creative, cultural, and heritage sectors.**
4. In order to address those priorities and to maximise the vitality and contribution of the research base, it is essential both to continue the development of programmes already established over the past six years, but also to introduce further initiatives. This plan thus sets out how we propose to develop our activities over the next ten years, and what we aim to deliver as a result, under each of the key strategic priorities set out above. Key deliverables and targets are specified for the next three years and beyond.
5. Since the continuing health of the research base in the arts and humanities depends on increasing what are currently inadequate levels of funding, we have also established the following six priorities for the use of additional funding in the next stage of our development. All six of them are, we believe, of considerable importance to the development of arts and humanities research over the next ten years. We give them below in priority order.

- i. **Sustaining the momentum** that has been established in developing world-class team-based and collaborative research, enabling UK researchers to work with research leaders overseas, harnessing new technologies, and straddling different disciplines and sectors. It is vital that we continue to enhance the range of research issues that can be addressed, and the approaches used in addressing them.
- ii. **Museums and galleries.** The major UK museums are world-leaders, with collections unsurpassed in range and quality in the rest of the world. Research is fundamental to their work, to enable them effectively to preserve, present and interpret those collections to the public. But there has been no body with a specific role to support research of this kind. The AHRC will perform that role, by establishing the first-ever integrated strategy for research support in museums.
- iii. **Support for the creative industries (CIs)**, which are a vital sector of the UK economy, as well as our social and cultural life. They employ two million people, account for 8 per cent of our total GDP, and are growing fast. But they need to strengthen both their links with the research base in the HE sector and their own R&D capacity. We shall establish collaborative research programmes with the CIs, invest in innovative forms of knowledge transfer, and set up programmes to explore the linkages between creativity, innovation and productivity in the CIs.
- iv. **Capacity and capability in language-based studies in strategic areas.** The UK's global reach means that its economy and its influence in the world are increasingly dependent on relationships with the Far East, the Arab speaking world, and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Yet our traditional strengths in studies of the languages and cultures of those parts of the world are increasingly stretched and the health of key disciplines under threat. We shall, in collaboration with the Higher Education Funding Councils and the Economic and Social Research Council, establish a programme to develop research capacity and capability in these areas, by supporting postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellowships in centres of excellence.
- v. **Multidisciplinary research on identities and cultures.** The UK is one of the most diverse and multi-cultural societies in the world, with a wider and deeper network of relationships around the world than any other country. There is thus no more urgent set of questions than how cultures and identities based on ethnic, religious, linguistic and other differences are shaped and modified. UK researchers are at the forefront of such work, and are well-networked overseas. But we need to build capacity and draw together researchers from a range of disciplines to develop new intellectual approaches to advance our understanding of these key issues.
- vi. **Capacity for using grid technologies,** which present vital challenges and opportunities for arts and humanities research, in their potential for locating, accessing, and integrating the content of highly-distributed resources in text, images, and sound. Currently, such

resources are of variable quality, encoded and described to different standards and often incomplete, fuzzy and complex. The arts and humanities have not benefited from the current e-science programme but the AHRC will invest to ensure that they should now do so, to facilitate a sea-change in the nature and scale of research.

6. Each of these priorities is described further in the following sections of the plan.

Section A

Sustaining and Promoting High-Quality and Innovative Research across the Range of Disciplines in the Arts and Humanities

Supporting the UK Arts and Humanities Research Base

7. The arts and humanities research base is large and diverse, covering 24 Units of Assessment in the last RAE, with 927 departments and 12,200 researchers in the HE sector alone, representing nearly 25 per cent of all research-active staff in the sector. Of those staff, 57 per cent were in 5* or 5-rated departments. Researchers of the highest quality are widely distributed across the sector; and in 2003-04 AHRB awards were made to staff in 101 HEIs.
8. The core disciplines of the arts and humanities remain fundamental building blocks of research expertise across a range of subjects broader than that covered by any other Research Council. In the creative and performing arts in particular, new disciplinary approaches are continually evolving, and need to be nurtured. From the base of their disciplinary and subject expertise, arts and humanities researchers study a series of questions of critical importance to the future well-being of the UK's society, economy and culture.
9. Over the next ten years, in order to sustain and improve the health of this research base across the full range of disciplines we shall:
 - **sustain our support both for individual researchers and for team-based and collaborative research**
 - **continue to provide the majority of our support in responsive mode, while developing our programme of strategic initiatives**
 - **sustain and nurture both the current range of disciplines and expertise in the research base, and also new ones as they emerge, in areas such as digital and media arts.**

The Range and Diversity of the Arts and Humanities

10. We have a special responsibility, prescribed in our charter, to support research that will improve knowledge and understanding of the histories and cultures of the various parts of the UK, and so over the next ten years we shall:
 - **sustain expertise in the relevant specialist areas of study relating to all parts of the UK.**
11. We also have responsibilities to sustain a base of expertise in the histories and cultures beyond the UK, for at least three reasons.
 - The UK's history, including that of the British Empire, means that our own history and culture and those of many other parts of the world are

fundamentally intertwined, making it impossible to understand the one in isolation from a deep understanding of the other

- The UK's continuing global reach, in politics and diplomacy, in trade and many other fields, means that we have a continuing need to develop our understanding of the histories and cultures of the many parts of the world that are of importance to us
- The resources from all parts of the world in our museums and galleries, libraries and archives, are unsurpassed in range and quality. We have a responsibility to sustain and develop our knowledge and understanding of these resources, so that we can interpret them to an audience from all parts of the world.

12. In meeting these responsibilities, we shall:

- **sustain the expertise necessary to understand our own history and culture, those of other countries, the collections held in our museums and libraries, and the UK's political and economic position in the world.**

Responsive Mode Funding

13. The AHRB has operated primarily in responsive mode, but it is progressively introducing a series of strategic initiatives in areas of intellectual urgency and importance, as described in section C of this plan. The AHRC will build on all these developments in the coming years. Responsive mode funding is of critical importance, however, in ensuring that we continue to support the highest-quality and most innovative research across the full range of our disciplines, and that we sustain the high-quality expertise through which large-scale interdisciplinary programmes and issues can be addressed. We shall therefore:

- **continue to provide the majority of our funding in responsive mode across the full range of our disciplines.**

Individual Researchers

14. Individual research constitutes the predominant mode of arts and humanities research and will do so for the foreseeable future. Our research leave scheme is popular and immensely productive in enabling researchers to bring projects to completion. Over 900 publications and other outputs were produced with the help of such awards in 2003-04, and we expect similar high levels of output to be sustained in future years. The scheme operates in very effective partnership with HEIs, which provide a matching period of leave funded from their own resources. Any release of funds to higher-cost schemes would have only a very marginal effect on success rates in those schemes, and would lose the leverage over HEI resources. We shall:

- **continue to give high priority to the low-cost and high value-added support of individual researchers through the research leave scheme.**

Team-Based Research

15. The AHRB has transformed the research landscape in the arts and humanities with new funding opportunities for team-based and collaborative research that did not exist before. Three-quarters of our responsive-mode funding in 2004-05 will go to support such research. By enabling teams to be developed - commonly bringing young researchers together with more experienced colleagues, facilitating work with research leaders overseas, exploiting new technologies, and collaborating with other disciplines and sectors - our funding has extended the range of issues that can be addressed and the approaches that can be used to address them.

16. By making funding of this kind available in responsive-mode, employing rigorous peer-reviewed competitions open to all UK researchers, we have secured a culture change throughout the arts and humanities community.
 - More than half the projects supported by the AHRB involve international exchange or collaboration; and input from individuals and organisations beyond the HE sector.

 - Emphasis on the potential value of projected outputs and outcomes, and effective dissemination, has enhanced the exploitation of research, ensuring wider impact and use.

 - 70 per cent of the outputs from AHRB-funded projects have been targeted at audiences beyond academia, many exploiting new technology and media, and public exhibitions.

 - HEIs have invested in training for researchers to manage teams, exploit new technologies, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, and improve research infrastructure.

17. In order to build on these changes, we shall:
 - **continue to give priority to the funding of team-based research in both responsive and strategic modes.**

Key Challenges for the Future

18. The AHRB has achieved significant change with relatively small sums of money. Even with the increases in funding secured since 1998, the moneys available to the AHRB in 2003-04 for the support of research amounted to only c£2,400 per research-active member of staff, as compared to over £30,000 in the natural sciences and engineering, and c£4,400 in the social sciences. In 2003-04 our funding amounted to only 13 per cent of that provided to HEIs for research in the arts and humanities through the QR formula, as compared to 50 per cent in the natural sciences and engineering, and 23 per cent in the social sciences. While the leverage we can exert is considerable, our ability to maintain and enhance our influence in the longer-term will be dependent upon the level of funding we are able to make available to the arts and humanities research community.

Sustaining the Momentum of World-Class Team-Based Research

As with all the Research Councils, our responsive-mode funding provides an essential underpinning of the intellectual health of disciplines, and support for much of the most innovative research. The cultural change in the arts and humanities since 1998 has brought with it an effective platform - in the form of teams, infrastructure and intellectual momentum – from which to continue the growth of collaborative and team-based research. If this momentum is to be exploited, it must not be stifled – at the very time we become a Research Council, with all the potential that brings - by a shortage of funding to respond to the growing quality and quantity of new ideas.

- The growth of team-based research is narrowing the differential in costs between research in the arts and humanities and in other disciplines, particularly in those areas exploiting new technology. The average cost of team-based projects supported by the AHRB has risen from £151,000 in 1999-2000 to £216,000 in 2003-04, and is continuing to rise.
- High-cost team-based research is where the upward trajectory in quality and quantity is most concentrated. The number of applications for team-based research increased by 26 per cent last year alone.
- There is a growing propensity from the most research-intensive universities to apply for funding for team-based research. Applications from the top three universities rose from 75 in 2000-01 to 161 in 2003-04.

We have responded to this momentum by devoting an increasing proportion of our responsive-mode research funding to team-based research. The proportion of responsive-mode expenditure devoted to team-based research has increased from 69 per cent to 75 per cent in the last three years, and the total from £15m in 2001-02 to £23m in 2004-05.

We shall give the highest priority to sustaining the momentum for collaborative and team-based research, and thereby the progress that has been made in changing the culture and extending the boundaries of UK arts and humanities research.

An overall and proportionate increase in funding for such research is essential in order to ensure the continuing health, growth and vitality of the wide range of disciplines in the arts and humanities, further increases in the volume and variety of outputs, and improvements in the performance of the people in the research base as set out in our performance management framework and below.

Key Deliverables and Targets

19. Over the next three years we shall continue to develop our balanced portfolio of responsive-mode schemes so that:

- the proportion of the responsive-mode budget devoted to team-based research is increased by 2007-08 to 75 per cent, with the balance

spent on low-cost high-value-added support for individual researchers, including career development for younger researchers

- there is continuing support for the development of a healthy and sustainable research base in the creative and performing arts
- programme development is informed by a regular series of subject reviews.

Relevance to the Outputs Framework

20. As the research landscape evolves we should see a positive movement in the UK contribution to the global knowledge pool, in the performance of people in the research base, and in the positioning and relationships of the UK arts and humanities research base. Specifically, over the period of this plan there will be increases in the following areas:

- the proportion of the research community securing AHRC awards, and the number of PDRAs, as the volume of awards rises
- the number of projects involving partnership with researchers overseas
- the number of projects involving partnership with non-academic users both in the UK and overseas
- the number of outputs as award-holders become more productive and creative in the exploitation of their research.

Section B

Development of Sustainable Research Capacity and Capability

People

21. People are the most important resource in sustaining the health of the research base, in producing high-quality outputs, and in ensuring that research expertise and results are exploited to the benefit of the UK's society and economy. We aim to:

- **build research capacity and improve the flow of trained researchers into the research community and into a wide range of other sectors**
- **enhance capabilities in the research base, especially in leadership and management of team-based projects and in knowledge transfer.**

Postgraduate Training

22. The AHRC's postgraduate programme aims to improve the support, training and development opportunities offered to postgraduates, helping them to:

- make significant contributions to the advancement of knowledge and understanding
- develop as highly-skilled researchers ready for careers in the HE and other sectors
- develop the skills required by a knowledge-driven economy, and demonstrate the arts and humanities' contribution to the UK's cultural, social and economic well-being.

23. We are also working with employers to develop better understanding of the relationship between postgraduate study and subsequent employment in the HE sector and beyond, particularly in the creative industries, support for which the Secretary of State for Education has identified as a strategic priority.

24. We have made considerable progress over the past five years on a number of fronts, including improving four-year submission rates by 20 percentage points; shifting the balance of funding so that over 80 per cent of the postgraduate budget supports students preparing for and pursuing doctoral research; providing ring-fenced support for strategic areas identified as of national importance; and focusing our support for vocational training on areas of key importance to the arts and humanities sector. Over the next two years we shall:

- **embed research and key skills training**, with a new research training framework for doctoral students, complementing generic skills training by focusing on students' needs to develop the knowledge and skills they require as effective researchers. Such skills, rooted in

students' own disciplines, are transferable to a range of employment contexts

- ❑ **increase submission rate thresholds** so that by 2006 all departments will be required to ensure that at least 70 per cent of full-time award-holders submit their thesis within four years
- ❑ **develop collaborative training provision**, enabling groups of HEIs, regionally and nationally, to provide subject-specific training to doctoral students, where this will be a major enhancement of what could be provided by individual institutions alone
- ❑ **develop business links**, through a scheme of CASE-style collaborative doctoral awards, to be introduced in 2005. They will support collaborations between HEIs and business, public-sector and other bodies, and meet employment-related needs, particularly in the cultural and creative industries. We shall offer some 40 awards in 2005, and aim to increase this in subsequent years.

The Research Base

25. Through various mechanisms, including Fellowships schemes and the career development opportunities offered through team-based research grants, we aim to support and develop the UK's pool of trained researchers, seeking to:

- ❑ **build capability and capacity across our subject domain and ensure the sustainable renewal and growth of the arts and humanities research base**
- ❑ **stimulate more professional management and leadership of research**
- ❑ **embed knowledge transfer in the research process.**

26. Since 1998, our support has had a transforming effect in:

- ❑ establishing for the first time in the arts and humanities groups of researchers experienced in directing team-based and collaborative research projects; and
- ❑ providing career-development and other opportunities for postdoctoral researchers who are used to working in team-based projects, and thus establishing a new and vital route to promote the flow of trained people into the research base and other careers. Over 1,000 PDRAs have been funded by the AHRB.

27. Over the next five years, support for the professionalisation of research will be a key priority. We shall:

- ❑ **build on our significant leverage within HEIs to support members of the research base in developing their skills as researchers and as managers and leaders of research**

- **create a network of KT professionals working in the arts and humanities which will support entrepreneurship amongst researchers, whilst in parallel the AHRC will create more opportunities for the exploitation of research.**

Language-based Studies in Strategic Areas

Such studies are highly specialised, and require strong language skills. Each area is experiencing structural decline in numbers of staff and students, and closure of high-profile and influential programmes and departments. The small number of departments that remain rely increasingly upon staff near the end of their careers or recruited from outside the UK: one third of the academic staff in these areas are over the age of 50, and it is unlikely that there are sufficient staff in more junior grades to replace the Professors, Readers and Senior Lecturers who will retire in the next ten years. There is thus a progressive decline in the UK's capacity to investigate and understand vast and important areas of the world, and a shortage of the expert knowledge and language skills needed by Government and business.

The AHRC and the ESRC plan to establish, jointly with the Funding Councils, a programme to address these issues. It will provide concentrated support for research and postgraduate training and build sustainable capacity in centres of excellence in each of the four areas.

The joint programme will establish an interdisciplinary centre of excellence for studies in each area. The centres will encompass studies including the languages, histories, cultures, societies and economies of the relevant parts of the world. Each of the centres will act as the focus for a national programme of research training and development in its field. 7 new master's and 5 new doctoral studentships will be provided alongside three new academic posts in each centre, with the post-holder initially pursuing research and progressively adding teaching and other departmental responsibilities.

The Centres will provide leadership and a national focus for researchers and postgraduates from across the UK, and for stakeholders in Government and business. They will enhance research capacity in the four subject areas, and also contribute to long-term sustainability by leveraging strategic commitments from HEIs and other stakeholders. HEIs will provide infrastructural support and undertake to employ the staff appointed beyond the period funded by the programme. A programme of this kind is, we believe, essential to develop sustainable capacity and capability in the UK in each of the four areas; and to secure the kinds of increases in the volume of high-quality research outputs set out elsewhere in this Plan.

Ensuring equality of opportunity

28. There are complex variations in the age, sex and ethnic profiles in arts and humanities departments across the HE sector, but evaluation of our various schemes reveals no bias in allocating awards to the highest-quality researchers. We shall:

- **continue monitoring to ensure that funding opportunities are available to the whole research base, irrespective of age, sex or ethnicity**
- **foster opportunities for researchers to develop sustainable career paths**
- **play a full role in the cross-cutting activities of the RUCK Careers and Diversity Unit to support the arts and humanities research base.**

Infrastructure and Facilities

29. The AHRB's funding for team-based research, along with the impact of new technologies, has changed traditionally limited views about the infrastructure needs of the arts and humanities. A major goal for the AHRC is to try to ensure that these growing needs are satisfactorily addressed. The key requirements are for:

- more and better physical space in which to build and sustain communities of research staff and doctoral students; and to provide for materials and new equipment, studio facilities, exhibition and performance
- more and better provision of technology, along with the necessary support, for creating, accessing and manipulating primary and secondary research resources
- more and better scholarly information – both digital and hard copy - in books, manuscripts, museum collections, film archives, sound recordings and other forms. Such information is the sine qua non of much research in the arts and humanities.

Priorities for AHRC Activity and Support

30. We shall work with the research community to ensure that SRIF and other funding sources are directed appropriately to meeting these needs, and ourselves contribute to the continuing development of the scholarly information infrastructure. We shall in addition:

- **develop our ICT strategy, and build capacity in the use of ICT** for research, funding a range of developmental projects and services to complement those funded by others, and developing new capacity for grid-enabled research (see below)
- **continue to fund development of services provided by the Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS), the ICT Methods Network** and others, to preserve and provide access to digital resources; with guidance on new developments and advanced methodologies in their creation and use
- **continue our support for enriching scholarly resources and their availability** through development of the Resource Enhancement

scheme, and improve scholarly documentation and information about museum collections in the UK and overseas

- **work with other bodies** including JISC; the Museums, Libraries and Archives Commission (MLA); the Research Libraries Network (RLN); The National Archives (TNA) and others **to develop coherent national strategies and priorities for the digitisation of primary and secondary sources for research**
- work with the other Research Councils to enhance the sustainability of the research base by **requiring proposals from September 2005 to be submitted using the full economic costing (fEC) methodology** and paying 80 per cent of the full cost.

E-Science in the Arts and Humanities

The use of ICT in arts and humanities research started from a low base but with AHRB support has grown significantly in recent years. We need to enhance UK computing expertise in arts and humanities areas where we already enjoy high standing internationally; and to help researchers make more effective use of the rapidly-growing volume of digital resources for research.

Such resources embrace texts, images, and sound; are highly-distributed in the UK and across the world; vary in quality; are encoded to different standards; and are incomplete, fuzzy and complex. Grid technologies being developed under the e-science programme can provide vastly more powerful ways of finding and accessing, integrating and processing these resources.

Our aim over the next six to ten years is to build on what we have achieved in developing ICT infrastructures and establishing team-based research, by developing new capacity for grid-enabled and fully collaborative research. There has been up to now no dedicated funding for e-science in the arts and humanities, but we will develop a programme to support demonstrator projects, the development of new tools and resources, and the use of grid technologies across our subject domain. The programme will include:

- **grid-enabling of data archives** and other primary source material
- **engagement with semantic web initiatives** to support access to and analysis of diverse resources
- **development of tools** for data access, analysis and manipulation
- support for **collaborative work through the access grid**, operating through the spoken word, but also through movement, sound, and visual media
- support for the development of **new standards and procedures** for data preparation and encoding; new systems of quality control; new systems for integrated access to distributed datasets
- **building awareness and expertise** in the arts and humanities research communities.

This programme will have a transforming impact in developing expertise in the arts and humanities, in enabling researchers to develop and work with digital resources, and in facilitating collaboration not only within the arts and humanities but with researchers in other subjects and disciplines.

Key Deliverables and Targets

31. Over the next three years we shall:

- ensure that by 2006 at least 90 per cent of the postgraduate budget is devoted to supporting students preparing for and undertaking doctoral research, and that all of them receive high-quality research training
- expand by 2007 the provision of CASE-style collaborative doctoral awards in partnership with non-HE stakeholders
- establish by 2007, in partnership with the Funding Councils, new centres of excellence, which will be a national focus for language-based studies of China, Japan, the Arab world, and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union
- develop our existing ICT programme and establish in 2007 a programme to develop the use of e-science arts and humanities research
- revise our current Resource Enhancement scheme in 2006 so that it provides a more strategic approach to the development of the intellectual infrastructure *for research*.

Relevance to the Outputs Framework

32. As the research landscape evolves we should see positive movements in the UK contribution to the knowledge pool, in the supply of newly-trained people, in the performance of people in the research base, and in UK facilities and infrastructure, and specifically:

- a further increase in doctoral submission rates with the minimum threshold rate for departments rising to 70 per cent by 2006
- a rise in the numbers of doctoral students entering employment both in the HE and in other sectors, public and private
- an increase in the volume and usage of research resources in digital form.

Section C

Enhancing Interdisciplinary Work, both within the Arts and Humanities, and in Collaboration with Other Disciplines

33. Disciplines such as archaeology, history, English or music are fundamental building blocks of the arts and humanities domain, providing key foundations for intellectual activity. But as in other groups of disciplines, some of the most exciting research takes place where disciplines meet, and where subjects are newly constituted. The complex relationships between disciplines, new conceptual and theoretical approaches, and new thematic configurations of the research landscape, provide exciting opportunities for researchers. Similarly, the arts and humanities have a distinctive and powerful contribution to make to many of the research agendas led by the social and natural sciences and engineering. Thus active involvement from the arts and humanities is essential if we are to maximise the advances that will bring social and economic benefit in many fertile and high priority areas of scientific and technological research.
34. Both in responsive mode and through strategic initiatives, interdisciplinary working - and collaboration with other Research Councils and other agencies - has over the past few years become a normal part of what we do. As we become a fully-fledged research council, we shall give renewed emphasis to:
- **ensuring that we have effective procedures for supporting interdisciplinary research in responsive mode**
 - **developing and implementing interdisciplinary research programmes across the arts and humanities in areas of intellectual urgency and strategic importance**
 - **establishing and participating in similar programmes which span the arts and humanities and the sciences, in collaboration with the Research Councils and other agencies**
 - **developing our postgraduate training framework and collaborative training provision to embed interdisciplinary collaboration more fully in the experience of doctoral students.**

Strategic Initiatives

35. We have already developed a number of initiatives through which researchers in a range of disciplines are brought together to achieve strategic advance in areas of intellectual urgency where research has potential to make an impact. Such initiatives have taken a number of forms.
- Some are located mainly within the arts and humanities and are funded by the AHRC alone. Thus there are programmes on the use of ICT in the arts and humanities; on diasporas, migration and identities; and on landscape and environment.

- Some involve collaboration with other disciplines and other Research Councils, as in our partnership with the ESRC in a research programme on Cultures of Consumption; and with the EPSRC on Designing for the 21st Century.
 - Some involve collaboration with other agencies in the UK and overseas. Thus with the Arts Councils we support research spanning the creative and performing arts, and science and engineering; and also studies of the impact of the arts and humanities. And at an international level, we have worked with the European Science Foundation on programmes on the Origin of Man, Language and Languages; and on Consciousness in a Natural and Cultural Context.
36. Through our research centres scheme we are also supporting the development of collaborative and interdisciplinary work in nineteen Research Centres that are receiving funding for an initial period of five years. As a result of a recent competition two of the first group of ten Centres will receive support for a further five years to develop their roles as world-class centres of excellence, providing leadership to the UK research community in their relevant fields. The centres will thus form a principal focus for supporting and promoting interdisciplinary research.
37. It is our intention to launch a significant new interdisciplinary initiative as set out below.

Identities and Cultures

The UK is one of the most diverse and multi-cultural societies in the world, with a level of international engagement and a network of contacts that extends wider and deeper around the world than any other country. There is thus no more urgent set of questions than how cultures are modified and developed, and how identities are constructed.

Researchers in the UK are effectively networked with colleagues overseas, and they have been at the forefront of both theoretical and empirical studies of cultures and identities based on ethnic, religious, historical and linguistic differences, and of:

- the growth and decline of language communities, bilingualism, translation, language exchange, and the development of new languages;
- the construction and changing of local, regional and national identities and relationships between them, and the impact of migration and the development of diasporas;
- developments in material culture and cultural practice, and in conceptions and perceptions of difference and belonging;
- the development of life stories, the creation, transmission and location of individual and group memory, and changing patterns of

inter-generational differences; and

- the impact of technologies of communication.

UK researchers have achieved much in all these areas. But we need a cohesive programme to build on what has been achieved piecemeal so far, developing capacity, and drawing leading researchers from a wide range of disciplines to develop new intellectual approaches to enhance our understanding of these key issues.

In order to meet the objectives set out above, the AHRC will explore the potential for establishing a programme to study the key issues and to analyse the discourse used to debate them, including paradigms and terms such as acculturation, assimilation, citizenship, diaspora, heritage, history, identity, memory, multiculturalism, and nationality.

A programme of this kind would build outwards from the more focused programme that the AHRC initiated on Diasporas, Migration and Identities. But we shall build on that programme to pursue wider issues, and we shall establish close collaborative links with related initiatives in the UK and overseas:

- with the ESRC's proposed programme on religion and society; and
- with programmes being set up in other European countries such as France and the Netherlands.

During the initial stages of the work we shall work with other funders to develop networks of key researchers in relevant fields both in the UK and overseas. We shall then:

- **establish through a focused series of workshops involving both researchers and stakeholders from national and local government and from the voluntary sector, a series of priority themes and issues for research**
- **establish a networking programme in areas of key intellectual and strategic importance to build communities of researchers and to develop analytical and substantive understanding of the key ways forward.**

This networking stage would be followed, in the next spending review period, by the establishment of a programme of project-based innovative research which, alongside continuing work to embed these communities of researchers in key sub-areas of Identities and Cultures, will have a significant impact in developing the base of researchers with expertise in these areas across a wide range of disciplines and subjects. They will be actively engaged with a wide range of community groups and leaders, produce high-quality outputs, and provide key inputs into the development of public policy.

Other Initiatives for the Future

38. For the future, we shall:

- **further develop the initiatives currently in place, including for example, the design programme we are running collaboratively with the EPSRC**
 - **develop our current research centres scheme as a key mechanism to support the programme of strategic initiatives**
 - **establish in 2005-06 processes – including a new responsive-mode scheme to support interdisciplinary networks and workshops - for developing new initiatives in consultation with the research community and a wide range of stakeholders.**
39. As a result, we shall be able, after full and proper consultation, to introduce new initiatives in areas of intellectual urgency where researchers in a range of disciplines can be brought together to achieve strategic advance with the potential to make an impact on society and the economy. It would be wrong at this stage to predict what those areas might be, or where the potential for collaboration might arise; but within the arts and humanities, discussions have already been initiated in areas including:
- changes in the ways in which the different stages of life are perceived and experienced, the behaviour patterns associated with them, and the implications of those changes
 - the interactions between mind and the environment, and the ways in which intelligent activities such as reasoning, imagination and creativity often involve manipulating and responding to external structures and stimuli, requiring physical as well as mental skills.
40. Specific discussions have also been initiated with other Research Councils in areas including:
- interactions between the arts and humanities on the one hand and medicine on the other
 - development of the natural and built environment as the product of historical processes
 - regional and national security (an EPSRC priority).
41. And there is potential in other areas including:
- language and speech technologies
 - creative and performing arts' interactions with new technologies and materials
 - human-computer interactions more generally (in partnership with the EPSRC and others).

Key Deliverables and Targets

42. Over the next three years we shall:

- establish in 2005-06 the proposed networking programme on identities and cultures, collaborating closely with the ESRC
- initiate funding activities under the strategic programmes on Diasporas, Migration and Identities and Landscape and Environment.
- develop further strategic initiatives in consultation with the research community and key stakeholders, and implement new initiatives from 2007 onwards, collaborating with appropriate users and stakeholders.

Relevance to the Outputs Framework

43. As the research landscape evolves we should see positive movements in the UK contribution to the knowledge pool, in the performance of people in the research base, and in the positioning and relationships of the UK research base; and specifically:

- the volume of AHRC expenditure on strategic initiatives will rise
- the volume of interdisciplinary research being undertaken both within the arts and humanities and in collaboration with other disciplines will rise
- there will be increases in all forms of research outputs commensurate with increased levels of funding in the areas chosen.

Section D

Developing Interactions across the Research Community and with the Creative, Cultural, and Heritage Sectors

44. Engagement with partners and stakeholders is essential if the AHRC is to support the research community in meeting the PSA targets of improving the health of the research base, and better exploiting the results of research. The diversity and fragmentation of both the arts and humanities research community, and the sectors of society and the economy with which they engage, mean that effective working relationships must be developed across a broad series of fronts.

The Research Base Beyond the UK Higher Education Sector

45. Legal constraints have restricted the AHRB to funding researchers based in the HE sector. But researchers are employed in a wide range of libraries, archives, museums, galleries and other institutions beyond that sector; and the collections of such institutions constitute a significant proportion of the primary and secondary sources for research. We shall:
- ❑ **build better links between researchers in the HE and other sectors, and seek to foster cross-sectoral collaboration between institutions.**

Museums and Galleries

The major UK museums are world-leaders and make a vital contribution to the nation's cultural, educational, social and economic life. They preserve and make available to the public collections unsurpassed in range and quality in the rest of the world. Museums in England alone attract over 77 million visits a year, and the economic impact of the UK museums sector is estimated to be at least £2 billion a year.

Museums also constitute a critical part of the research base for a wide range of subjects. Research in museums themselves, and research in the HE sector which flows into museums, are of crucial importance in enabling them to present and interpret their collections to visitors, through publications, and online. Research also underpins museums' work:

- ❑ in education and learning, and inspiring creativity and innovation;
- ❑ in attracting tourists to the UK and supporting the tourist industry;
- ❑ in contributing to social inclusion, and promoting economic and social regeneration; and
- ❑ in generating social capital, civic, community and national pride, and good citizenship.

But there has been up to now no organisation whose role has been to support research of this kind. The AHRC will perform that role, and establish the first-ever integrated strategy for the direct support of research in museums. Our

investment will ensure that UK museums remain world leaders. It will also enhance, through exhibition and display, communication to a variety of audiences of the latest advances in understanding arising from recent research and scholarship.

To meet the objectives set out above, we shall establish a programme for:

- **Research to underpin permanent and temporary exhibitions and displays.** Research is an essential underpinning for both new displays of permanent collections and for temporary exhibitions. Research-led displays add to the pool of knowledge by bringing objects together and interpreting them in new ways; and communicate that new knowledge to thousands of visitors.
- **Preservation and conservation.** Museums face increasing challenges in meeting their fundamental duty to preserve their collections. Effective conservation depends on detailed historical understanding of materials and techniques, as well as of the latest scientific developments. We shall support research in conservation and preservation.
- **Cross-sectoral interaction.** Opportunities for exchange between researchers in the museum and HE sectors have been uncoordinated. We shall support the establishment of networks of researchers and curators in areas such as fashion, history of science, archaeology, or photography; and cross-sectoral exchanges and secondments.
- **Capacity-building.** There is a need to improve the supply of curators and conservators with the requisite high-level knowledge of the objects that make up museum collections. As well as supporting staff development through interaction with the HE sector, we shall support postgraduates in order to increase the supply of people with appropriate expertise.
- **Museums practice and impact.** We know little about how visitors engage with the objects and displays they see, and what they learn from them; and little in detail about the wider social, economic and cultural impact of museums. We shall support researchers from a range of disciplines in order to improve our understanding of these matters, the quality of museum displays, and strategies to enhance the impact of museums.
- **Research quality.** AHRC support will provide invigorating competition that will help drive up the quality of research. But there is also a need for a rigorous assessment of the quality of research as a whole in museums, benchmarked against the HE sector and major museums overseas. We shall support museums and galleries in the establishment of a system of rigorous but non-bureaucratic research assessment.

Such a programme will have a significant impact in developing effective partnerships between the museums and the HE sectors, enhancing the

research capacity and capability of both. It will also produce high-quality research outputs, improving our knowledge and understanding of important research resources, and the communication of that knowledge to a wide range of the public. This activity forms a central element of the AHRC's Knowledge Transfer Plan.

Relationships with Other Agencies

46. The complexity of the funding and strategic landscape in the arts and humanities has made it essential for us to develop effective working relationships with a wide range of bodies including the HE Funding Councils; Government Departments; the RDAs; the Arts Councils; the Design Council; the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, and individual museums, libraries and archives; English Heritage and parallel bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; research charities; and the other Research Councils. We shall:

- **establish concordats to formalise a number of these relationships, and in order to build a more extensive and focused set of partnership activities.**

Europe and Overseas

47. International activity in the arts and humanities has tended to be built around personal networks rather than institutional relationships. Thus there are relatively few formal collaborative arrangements, and the arts and humanities have featured relatively little in European Framework Programmes. In order to build more effective international partnerships, we shall:

- **work with partner agencies in Europe to seek an appropriate role for the arts and humanities both in Framework Programmes and in the proposed European Research Council, and to facilitate access to such opportunities**
- **support collaborative projects and programmes across Europe through the ESF and its a la carte and Eurocores programmes**
- **develop a targeted series of bilateral collaborations with agencies in European countries and elsewhere to support research in areas of mutual interest and importance.**

Knowledge Transfer

48. Our 10-year vision is for the AHRC to be recognised as the premier and innovative supporter of knowledge transfer (KT) in the arts and humanities. Our KT Plan to achieve this ambitious goal has as its starting point a broad conception of KT that encompasses:

- engagement with business, especially with the creative industries
- interactions with other sectors, including the museums, cultural and heritage sectors, as well as research that underpins public policy and the enhancement of civil society

- the provision of high-quality content for the print, film, digital and broadcasting media.
49. Our plan recognises the need to help researchers to pursue opportunities to push research out to a wide variety of audiences. It also recognises that while the demand pull for research is strong from the reading and viewing public, and through agencies such as museums, it is relatively weak from business. Our strategy is thus to create incentives to maximise KT, while seeking to remove the perceived barriers.

Supporting People and the Knowledge Flow

50. Highly-trained people are one of the principal vectors for KT, and we actively promote this flow by:
- supporting postgraduates pursuing courses to develop high-level skills for professional practice, and introducing a research training framework to help doctoral students develop a range of transferable skills to equip them for future employment
 - introducing CASE-style collaborative awards to promote partnerships between HEIs and a range of organisations in the creative, cultural, voluntary and public sectors.

Building Relationships with User Communities

51. We are seeking through a number of routes to build a better understanding of users' needs and more effective working relationships. Thus we shall:
- **build better understanding of the diversity of both the outputs and the outcomes produced from the research we fund**
 - **develop our innovative series of "sector interaction studies" to investigate the pathways through which a variety of sectors beyond HE and the research base gain access to researchers and the results of research**
 - **engage with a wide range of stakeholders and potential users in the development of our strategic research initiatives.**

Promoting Entrepreneurship and the Commercialisation of Research

52. We promote entrepreneurship and commercialisation in a number of ways, such as participating in the Research Councils Business Plan Competition, and supporting work on intellectual property through a research centre at Edinburgh. Over the next two years we shall:
- **explore the potential for the development of follow-on or proof-of-concept funding**
 - **develop our pilot scheme to stimulate innovative dissemination of research results to enhance its commercial focus.**

The Creative Industries

The creative industries (CIs) make a huge contribution to the UK economy and to its social and cultural life. They employ almost two million people and produce 8 per cent of our total GDP – a higher proportion than in any other country. They contribute £11.4 billion to the balance of trade, well ahead of construction, and twice that of the pharmaceutical sector. In areas such as design, music, animation, and intelligent textiles, the UK has demonstrated its world-class potential. And in some – such as computer games and new media – it is already a world leader.

The CIs pre-figure the way in which knowledge economies can be expected to evolve in coming years. Yet their unique characteristics make conventional models of KT hard to apply. The CIs also lack R&D capacity and their connections with the research base need to be strengthened. AHRC has a pivotal role to play in addressing these issues.

We have already taken a lead by working with the Department for Culture Media and Sport to establish a Task Group, which includes CI representatives, which will:

- help to build relationships with user communities and improve communication between HEIs, the CIs, the public sector and Government
- undertake research to develop a picture of the current interactions between the CIs and the HE sector, of works and what does not, and of the barriers to further development
- develop appropriate models to facilitate research support and KT for the CIs
- recommend ways of maximising the productive capacity uncovered through this work, producing concrete proposals as to how Government, the RDAs, the AHRC and other agencies can facilitate and support KT.

We will move this work forward with an integrated programme composed of the following elements:

- The establishment of a collaborative research programme with the CIs in order to raise awareness of and the appetite for research and high level skills amongst the CIs, with the long-term vision being that they raise their level of investment in R&D. The collaboratively funded programme will facilitate interactions between arts and humanities disciplines, technology disciplines and the CIs.
- Sponsorship of the DTI's Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme (KTP) in order to realise the full potential for partnerships that exist with the creative industries

- ❑ Notwithstanding this potential, it needs to be recognised that a KTP can be a large step for a small company engaging with a HEI for the first time (which is a typical descriptor of many SMEs in the CIs). We will therefore establish a precursor-type KTP scheme of a shorter duration that requires less financial investment on the part of the company. The scheme would act as a stepping-stone to further engagement between the CIs and HEIs.
- ❑ A research programme to address the nature of creativity. Understanding the character of creativity, the conditions which facilitate it, and the preconditions and structures needed to turn creativity into innovation are matters of urgent concern to the UK's economic success and social well-being. The research programme would help us understand how the 'innovation gap' can be filled.
- ❑ Support for a three-year fellowship to assess the economic and wider impact of the CIs. This will provide the tools to capture data on the R&D investment of the CIs, so that the long-term vision expressed above can be assessed.

Public Engagement

53. As noted elsewhere in this plan, the public engages with arts and humanities research in a variety of ways through print, broadcast and other media; through exhibitions and performances; and on occasion through direct involvement in research projects. Through all our schemes of awards we are actively encouraging researchers to engage with a wide variety of audiences, and to do so in innovative ways, for example through our dissemination scheme. We have also initiated a series of events – for example on Government and the Value of Culture, focused on the recent speech made by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport – to bring key research issues to wider attention. In developing strategic initiatives in partnership with other Research Councils, we shall also take care to ensure that the role of the arts and humanities in enabling the public to engage with issues raised by scientific research and advance are fully exploited. In taking forward all these activities we shall work closely with the RCUK Science and Society Unit.

Key Deliverables and Targets

54. Over the period of this plan we shall establish in 2006 the first-ever integrated programme for the support of research in and for museums and galleries.

- ❑ Establish in 2006 a programme of collaborative research with co-funding from the CIs.
- ❑ Establish in 2007 a small-scale precursor KTP scheme to draw small companies into engagement with arts and humanities research.
- ❑ Complete three sector interaction studies each year.

Relevance to the Outputs Framework

55. As the research landscape evolves there will be positive movements in the UK contribution to the knowledge pool, in the performance of people in the research base, in the positioning and relationships of the research base, and in the exploitation of research; and specifically:
- from 2010, there will be each year a series of major museum exhibitions or new displays of permanent collections produced with the support of research funded by the AHRC
 - international collaboration will increase through European programmes and bilateral collaborations with other countries
 - there will be measurable improvement in the international standing of UK museums, as measured by peer review, from 2009 onwards.

Section E

Administrative Issues and the Gershon Review

56. We acknowledge the challenges presented by the Gershon Review and we are committed to reducing the proportion of total expenditure that is allocated to administration over the period of this plan, although it will not be possible to achieve the benefits of the economies of scale offered by the larger Research Councils. We also acknowledge the potential for efficiencies through joint and collaborative provision with other Councils of administrative and corporate services. We are participating in the Research Administration Programme (RAP) and will offer on-line facilities to applicants for research funding from July 2005 through J-eS. From November 2004, a significant part of our recruitment of staff will be managed through the Joint Recruitment Unit at Polaris House. We are also participating in the joint Electronic Records Management programme and will implement a system selected by other councils. We are discussing with other councils the outsourcing of our payroll service, and also the provision of an HR database.
57. We have also demonstrated efficiency savings in our programme funding. These reflect in research funding the shift from almost wholly responsive mode to strategic initiatives, and in postgraduate awards a shift in the balance away from Master's programmes in favour of doctoral students.

AHRC PLANNED EXPENDITURE (£000s) 2005-06 to 2008-09

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Research – responsive modes schemes	32,041.5	38,147.2	44,866.4	52,865.2
Strategic Initiatives	4,616.6	11,200.6	14,633.9	15,352.0
Sub-Total Research	36,658.1	49,347.8	59,500.3	68,217.2
Postgraduate & Postdoctoral	33,912.1	36,825.1	39,197.6	41,873.5
FEC Interim payment	1,373.0			
Programme support	326.9	335.1	343.5	352.1
Total Programmes	72,270.1	86,508.0	99,041.5	110,442.8
Administration costs	3,618.6	3,709.1	3,801.8	3,896.8
Total Expenditure	75,888.7	90,217.1	102,843.3	114,339.6

Note: Included within the strategic initiatives figures are planned payments based on allocations to the key priority areas identified in the delivery plan – Museums & Galleries, Creative Industries, Language-based area studies, Identities & Cultures and E-Science.