

## Frequently Asked Questions

Although full guidance material on the revised scheme will be issued in late October, some information is provided below to enable institutions and potential applicants to start to plan for the opening of the revised scheme in January 2012.

### **Why is the AHRC changing its Fellowships scheme?**

As outlined in our Delivery Plan, AHRC has reviewed its Fellowships scheme to ensure that it complements and adds distinctive value to other provision (e.g. the fellowships schemes of other funders such as the British Academy) and does not duplicate support for research leave / time / sabbaticals through QR allocations. In particular, given constraints on our funding, we wish to maximise the contribution that the scheme makes to our key strategic objectives, for example in terms of funding research of exceptional scope and importance, enhancing national capability in strategically important areas, developing research leadership, supporting early career researchers and encouraging appropriate research collaborations.

We are also consolidating support previously provided through our separate Knowledge Transfer Fellowships scheme into a single Fellowships scheme to ensure that it can provide seamless provision for a wide range of research and knowledge exchange activities. Recent research commissioned by the AHRC<sup>1</sup> has revealed high levels of connectivity between arts and humanities researchers and broader society but that a lack of time is the most frequently cited constraint on outreach activities beyond the HE sector. We wish to enable the revised Fellowships scheme to provide more time for arts and humanities researchers who wish to extend their involvement in such outreach activities.

The proposed changes have been discussed by AHRC's Council and Advisory Board in the light of broader consultation which has included an Extraordinary Subject Association meeting; two Strategic Peer Reviewer workshops; and a series of institutional visits. Broader consultation across RCUK on approaches to fellowships and discussions with representatives from the British Academy, Royal Society and Wellcome have also fed into the development of the scheme to ensure complementary provision.

### **How is the scheme changing?**

The revised Fellowships scheme is designed to develop and promote visionary individuals who set research agendas, lead research communities, provide intellectual leadership in their own disciplines and beyond, have a transformative impact on their subject area and also act as advocates for the value and benefit of arts and humanities research beyond academia. In most cases we would expect the influence of the Fellow's research leadership to extend beyond the UK to wider international research communities. In some, but not all cases, leadership may also be related to knowledge exchange and engagement or collaboration beyond the HEI sector. In the case of Fellowships for early career researchers, the scheme is designed to build the capacity of the leaders of the future and

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<sup>1</sup> Hidden Connections: Knowledge exchange between the arts and humanities and the private, public and third sectors: Alan Hughes, Michael Kitson and Jocelyn Probert (with Anna Bullock and Isobel Miller) (2011) Centre for Business Research, University of Cambridge

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/About/Publications/Documents/hiddenconnectionsCBRreport.pdf>

equip individuals who have outstanding potential to develop the range of qualities they require to lead research agendas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Fellows' leadership will be expected to be built upon research which meets the highest international standards. In many cases this will be based on individual research activities and it may be appropriate for the majority of the Fellowship to be spent undertaking individual research. However, all Fellowships will be expected to include a substantial programme of activities which support the development of the Fellow's leadership role. These activities will require engagement or collaboration with others. It will be for applicants to propose a programme of leadership activities which is appropriate for their specific circumstances, research context and Fellowship research plans. For example this might involve:

- research networking or other activities aimed at inspiring other researchers;
- knowledge exchange;
- international collaborations;
- public engagement activities;
- interdisciplinary engagement;
- shadowing, placements or visiting roles;
- supervision of a research assistant or other ways of supporting the development of other researchers;
- working with others to produce collaborative outputs (co-authored/ edited publications, performances, exhibitions, etc).

In some cases these activities may be focused on leadership within specific research communities. In other cases this may also involve broader engagement, including - where appropriate - outside the HEI sector. Whilst encouraged where appropriate, engagement outside the HEI sector is not a requirement for all Fellowships. However, we do expect that the Fellows will be willing to act as advocates for the value and benefit of arts and humanities research to publics beyond academia should appropriate opportunities arise during the Fellowship.

### **What are the changes for the Early Career route?**

The revised scheme is designed to complement other post-doctoral fellowships schemes (e.g. British Academy) by supporting the next phase in a research career in which early career researchers are moving on to the next big project beyond their doctoral (or equivalent) and immediate post-doctoral research. It is not intended for postdoctoral applicants to produce publications arising directly from, or closely related to, their Ph.D. (or equivalent first major research activity). We expect applicants under the early career route to have at least two years post-doctoral (or equivalent) experience at the time of applying and to have authored significant research publications and other outputs as appropriate (these could be based on their doctoral or post-doctoral research).

The revised definition of an early career researcher under the Fellowships scheme is:

A researcher who is within eight years of the award of their PhD or equivalent professional training; or within six years of their first academic appointment (i.e. a paid contract of employment, either full-time or part-time, which lists research and/or teaching as the primary function). In addition, the researcher must have at least two years of post-doctoral experience in an academic/research environment or have an equivalent level of professional/practice experience of direct relevance to the proposed

research. They must also have a track record of research publications and/or other research outputs as appropriate. These durations should exclude any period of career break, e.g. for family care or health reasons. Fellowship applications must be for a distinctive new research project and not for the completion or extension of research conducted for a PhD.

We will continue to expect mentoring arrangements to be incorporated into early career Fellowship applications and will be looking to ensure that these arrangements, along with other support provided by the Research Organisation, support Fellows in developing their leadership capabilities. We will be looking for evidence of support from the Research Organisation for the career and leadership development of the Fellow before, during and after the period of the Fellowship. For this reason we would expect the Fellow to have a contractual relationship with the Research Organisation which is in place prior to the date of application and extends beyond the period of the Fellowship and for this not to be dependent on the outcomes of the proposal.

As a part of the Fellowship programme for early career researchers we are keen to encourage them to pursue opportunities to gain experience outside their core disciplines, outside Higher Education and/or outside the UK. Part of the time funded under the Fellowship may be spent in gaining such broader experience in contexts relevant to the proposed research. In addition, we are looking to provide additional opportunities for early career Fellows, for example, by extending opportunities under our international placements schemes. We are also considering the potential for AHRC to support some training and development activities for early career researchers to supplement that provided by institutions.

### **What support is required from the host institution?**

We consider the Fellowships to be a partnership with Research Organisations to support the development and maintenance of the UK's research leadership capability in the arts and humanities. The Fellowships scheme is intended to complement institutional support for the development of research careers and for identifying outstanding researchers and supporting them as research leaders or leaders of the future. We therefore expect institutions to play a key role in selecting suitable candidates for the Fellowships and to see substantial evidence that the institution has supported and will support their career and leadership development **before, during and after** the proposed Fellowship funding period. This support could come in a variety of forms depending on the career stage and the nature of the Fellow's research but could include, for example, various combinations of:

- allocation of a place on a leadership development programme or other training and development support aimed at developing their leadership capabilities;
- significant additional support for research time/ sabbaticals to enable the Fellow to enhance their research leadership;
- awarding of institutional research development funding to support development of the applicant's world-leading research profile;
- allocation of funded studentships for supervision by the Fellow (these will be studentships funded from other sources, including AHRC BGPs if appropriate, as studentship funding cannot be sought under the Fellowship);
- clustering of research groups or development of departmental / institutional research strategies in relation to the applicant's research area;

- supporting knowledge exchange activities involving the applicant or providing a platform for the Fellow to take part in high profile public engagement activities;
- nominations for high profile prizes, awards or positions in the field.

These are just examples, it will be for Research Organisations to make a convincing case for how they have identified the applicant as a research leader (or potential future research leader) who will receive specific support from the Research Organisation and how that support has been provided and will be provided in the future.

The provision of institutional support will be an important assessment criterion under the revised scheme. Poorly supported applications may not be accepted under the scheme and any that are accepted as merely meeting minimum requirements are unlikely to be funded.

In view of the above requirements for institutional support, we would expect the proposed Fellow to have a contractual relationship with the Research Organisation which is in place prior to the date of application and extends beyond the period of the Fellowship and for this not to be dependent on the outcomes of the proposal.

### **Will the AHRC be introducing demand management measures for Fellowships**

Given the prestigious nature of the revised Fellowships and the more substantial and flexible funding that they provide, we expect the Fellowships to be highly sought-after. Funding is likely to be highly selective and competitive. We therefore wish to ensure that only those applicants who meet the high expectations of the scheme, have the necessary strong institutional support and have a realistic chance of success, spend the significant amount of time required to prepare an application. Both Research Organisations and individual applicants will have an important role in ensuring that only applications that meet the required revised aims and remit of the scheme are submitted.

### ***What will this mean for Research Organisations?***

At this stage we do not propose to impose limits on the numbers of applications that Research Organisations may submit under the scheme. However, we will keep this under close review and may decide selectively to impose restrictions on the numbers of applications from some Research Organisations. In particular we will monitor the scheme for evidence that there has been insufficient selectivity by a Research Organisation in putting forward applications (e.g. in terms of the numbers of applications submitted which fail to achieve fundable grades or from candidates who clearly do not meet the leadership expectations of the scheme) and/or where proposals have been submitted with inadequate levels or evidence of support from the Research Organisation for the leadership development of the proposed Fellows. Where this is the case we will contact the Research Organisation concerned to discuss the issues. If we do not receive sufficient reassurances about processes, we may not accept further applications from the Research Organisation until adequate assurances are received or we may impose restrictions on the number of applications that the Research Organisation can submit.

For Research Organisations we expect that the following measures will be put in place:

- Arrangements for identifying research leaders, or potential future research leaders, within their institutions who might be suitable candidates to apply under the scheme
- Processes for agreeing an appropriate package of support for the career and leadership development for applicants and for securing senior institutional confirmation of this support as a part of the Research Organisation's processes for approving submissions under the scheme;
- Internal sift, support and quality assurance processes to ensure that only proposals of the highest quality are submitted to the scheme from outstanding candidates who meet the expectations of the scheme.
- Systems for monitoring that the institutional support committed to in the application is delivered and that evidence on this could be provided to the AHRC if requested.

The above measures should be sensitive to issues of career stage and equal opportunities, particularly the different expectations for the early career route or outstanding candidates with less traditional academic career pathways. They should also take into account the Council's desire to support innovative, potentially transformative, research and should not disadvantage higher risk proposals where these offer potentially high rewards, are well planned and come from candidates who meet the leadership expectations of the scheme.

#### ***What will this mean for Individual Applicants?***

For individuals considering applying under the scheme it will be essential that they discuss their interest in applying with senior managers within their institution at an early stage before starting detailed work on their application, to ensure that they meet the criteria and that the necessary institutional support for their application is in place.

#### ***Will there be limits on the number of applications I can submit?***

There will also be some restrictions on the numbers of applications that an individual may submit to the scheme. In particular:

- Applicants may not have more than one application under consideration under the scheme at any one time.
- Applicants whose proposals are not successful will not be permitted to resubmit the same, or a substantially similar, application to the scheme unless resubmission is specifically invited by the AHRC.
- Unsuccessful applicants will not be allowed to submit a new application under the scheme within one year of the announcement of the outcome of their application (the only application permitted from unsuccessful candidates within this year would be a resubmission specifically invited by AHRC).
- Funded Fellows will not be permitted to submit new applications under the scheme until at least one year after the end date of their Fellowship. However they will be able to apply during this period under other schemes including AHRC's follow-on funding scheme.

During the transition period, the above restrictions under the revised scheme will also apply to applicants who have had unsuccessful or funded Fellowships applications within the time-periods outlined above under the current AHRC Fellowships scheme.