

Full Details of the Revised Fellowships Scheme

Aims and Objectives of the Revised Fellowships Scheme

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 to publics beyond academia. In the case of Fellows funded under the early career route, the scheme is designed to build the capacity of the leaders of the future and equip individuals who have outstanding potential to develop the range of qualities they require to lead research agendas in the 21st century.

The Fellowships scheme has the following aims:

- To provide time for focused individual research as well as collaborative activities, such as supporting the development of other researchers in the field, working with researchers in other disciplines, international collaborations or activities beyond HEI (e.g. with cultural, creative, public, private or voluntary sectors or public engagement activities);
- To support research projects which have a transformative impact on their subject area and beyond, and/or are of exceptional scope and importance, which cannot effectively be supported through routine provision of sabbatical or other forms of research leave funded through QR, and which are of wide benefit to the research community;
- To develop capacity for research leadership in the arts and humanities through support and development of knowledge and skills in areas such as: intellectual leadership; horizon scanning, creativity and innovation; development of capacity in emerging research areas, methods or approaches; interdisciplinary facilitation; developing cross-institutional research; international collaboration; project management; inspiring other researchers; development of key skills in the communication of research; knowledge exchange and engagement with non-academic partners or wider publics;
- To sustain research in areas which may currently be under-supported for a variety of reasons;
- To support AHRC in delivering its strategic priorities and national capability needs.

And for Fellowships funded through the early career route specifically, the following additional aims apply:

- To develop the talents of early career researchers in a crucial phase of their careers as they establish themselves and develop beyond doctoral and immediate post-doctoral work;
- To enable Fellows to produce high quality innovative research that moves significantly beyond their doctoral research;
- If appropriate, to enable Fellows under the early career route to undertake project and people management through supervision of a research assistant.

Key Features of the Revised Scheme

- An outstanding project that is world-leading in terms of its scholarship, originality quality, scope and importance and has transformational potential should be at the heart of the Fellowship proposal.
- The Fellowships scheme will remain open to outstanding research proposals on any topic and within any subject and discipline covered by the AHRC's remit.
- Fellowships will continue to support concentrated time for individual research activities. However, in addition, part of the Fellowship period should include time spent working with others to demonstrate leadership or leadership potential, through, for example: 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). The extended duration of Fellowships and flexibility in time commitments is intended to facilitate such activities to be undertaken in addition to the provision for concentrated time for individual research activities. Fellows might be involved in one or a number of these or other similar activities.
- There will be an early career route within the scheme aimed at supporting the development of future research leaders. We will still expect mentoring and other institutional support for Fellows applying under the early career route and, as at present, we will aim for a higher success rate under this route, subject to the quality of applications received. However, we have amended the eligibility for this route to clarify the levels of prior experience expected and the expectation that the Fellowship will involve a focus on a new phase of a research career which marks a distinct step beyond the completion of the applicant's doctoral and immediate post-doctoral research.
- The revised scheme will be provide for longer periods of funding and more support for research leadership, collaborative and knowledge exchange activities. Applications will be for between £50,000 and £250,000 fEC and will be for periods of between 6 and 18 months (or 6-24 months for applications from early career researchers).
- The Fellowships will be expected to involve a much stronger partnership with institutions in supporting the career and leadership development of Fellows. Institutions will be expected to be highly selective in the applications they put forward and provide evidence of their commitment to the career and leadership development of the Fellow *before, during and after* the proposed Fellowship.
- Although the AHRC will maintain the current budget for the Fellowships scheme, funding for the Fellowships will become more selective than at present due to the larger average size of awards. We therefore anticipate that fewer, more prestigious, Fellowships will be awarded.

- We will continue to use highlight notices and other measures to encourage applications in strategic areas identified in our Delivery Plan and may make additional awards to support Fellowships in strategically important areas. Initially the highlight notices for AHRC's four Themes and Connected Communities will be extended under the revised scheme. Fellows applying under the highlight notice will be expected to play a significant leadership role within the relevant Theme.
- Peer review will remain the basis for assessing the quality and significance of Fellowship applications. Additional assessment criteria will be added to reflect the expectations for inclusion of leadership development activities and stronger institutional support. Whilst the peer review process will be similar to the current scheme, one change will be to move from the current four subject panel system to a single moderating panel for the Fellowships. This single moderating panel will prioritise Fellowship applications across all subject areas within AHRC's remit. As with current moderating panels, it will have a non-standing membership drawn from our Peer Review College. More frequent panel meetings may be held depending on patterns of demand. The four subject panel structure will continue to operate for our Research Grants scheme.
- The previous focus on 'completion' is being removed and much greater flexibility introduced to support research at different stages of development, provided that the Fellowship will lead to substantial research outputs. Knowledge exchange activities may also be included as the scheme will incorporate some of the provision previously provided through AHRC's Knowledge Transfer Fellowships scheme.
- There will be greater flexibility in terms of a Fellow's time commitment which may vary over the period of the Fellowship. The Fellowship period will be expected to be managed so that for longer awards, Fellows are only removed fully from their department for a proportion of the time. Fellows will be able to commit 100% of their time to a Fellowship for a maximum of 12 months. Fellowships over 12 months in duration will be expected to include some part-time buy-out by AHRC to ensure that a percentage of the Fellow's time is spent at their Research Organisation and that they are actively engaged the research culture of the department.
- There will also be more flexibility in the types of activities that can be funded under a Fellowship to include, for example, a period of research or technical assistance for part of the Fellowship (but not postgraduate studentships), networking or knowledge exchange activities.
- Demand management measures will be introduced to ensure that the number of applications reflects the more selective and competitive nature of the scheme.
- Fellows will be expected to work more closely with the AHRC, through for example attending events for Fellows, supporting relevant AHRC events, participating in training and development activities, contributing to peer review, etc.