

AHRC Review of Postgraduate Funding I

Emma Carey

Associate Director of Programmes

AHRC



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Background to the Review

- 2001/02 review of Postgraduate funding
- 2003/04 Doctoral Working Group
- November 2005 PG Committee
 - current competition unsustainable
- December 2005 Council
 - endorsed views of PG Committee
- February 2006 PG Committee
 - agreed terms of reference for the Working Group
- June 2006 Council
 - endorsed terms of reference for the Working Group

Working Group

Professor Rachel Cooper (chair), Lancaster
(Design)

Professor Graeme Barker, Cambridge
(Archaeology)

Professor Robert Harris, Dundee (History)

Professor Tony McEneaney, Director of Research
AHRC

Professor Lyn Pykett, Aberystwyth (English)

Professor Carole-Ann Upton, Ulster (Drama)

Dr Emma Wakelin, Associate Director of
Programmes AHRC

Mr Keith White, King's College London (School of
Humanities Administrative Officer)

Terms of reference

- Consider current competition strengths and weaknesses, including Ringfencing
- Consider other possible funding mechanisms, including those of the other Research Councils
- Consider the extent to which the AHRC should stimulate strategic planning within HEIs and increase its own strategic focus
- Take into account issues of equal opportunity, mobility and student choice

Review Process

- Regular meetings to consider a wide range of evidence: March – Sept 2006
- Consultation event for the community: June 2006
- Final report published for consultation with the community: Oct 2006
- Final recommendations sent to PG Committee: Nov 2006
- PG Committee considered the recommendations along with more detailed supporting evidence: Feb 2007
- PG Committee approved the recommendations: Feb 2007
- Council approved the recommendations of PG Committee: March 2007

Goals of the new system

- Promote and support a strategy for producing world-class postgraduates
- Sustain and promote high-quality research and training
- Maintain health and sustainability of arts and humanities disciplines
- Encourage HEIs to integrate their PG programmes with their research and knowledge transfer strategies

Goals of the new system

- Ensure that the AHRC funds excellent postgraduates
- Enhance interaction with the cultural, heritage and creative sectors
- Extend and enhance opportunities for interdisciplinary research and training
- Ensure distribution of funding is resource effective for HEIs and the AHRC

New schemes

- Block Grant Partnerships (BGPs)
 - Doctoral
 - Research Preparation Master's
 - Professional Preparation Master's
- AHRC Studentship Competition
 - Doctoral
 - Research Preparation Master's
 - Professional Preparation Master's

AHRC Review of Postgraduate Funding II

Professor Felicity Riddy
University of York
Convenor, PG Committee



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The national context

The AHRC will announce a 5-year plan for PG studentships, including

- Total number of awards available
- Distribution between Doctoral and the two Master's schemes
- Subject spread, including provision for emerging and endangered subjects

Agreed principles

- The BGP and AHRC Studentship Competitions will be of equal status
- In changing to the new system the AHRC will aim to avoid causing disruption across the sector, while introducing some flexibility
- Not all HEIs will enter the BGP competition

2003-06: pattern of awards

- The average total no. of awards p.a. was 1556
- 40 HEIs received an average of 10 awards or more p.a. (82% of total)
- 67 HEIs received an average of 1-9 awards p.a.
- 52 HEIs received 0 awards

BGP eligibility

- The smallest BGPs will probably be 10 awards per annum
- HEIs with an annual average of a certain number of awards will be eligible to apply for a BGP
 - Currently set at 8, but may be revisited
- It is possible that some applicants for BGPs will be unsuccessful

Both competitions: numbers

- Around 20% awards annually will be reserved for the AHRC Studentship competition
- HEIs competing for BGPs will be given indicative upper limits for their applications, using their previous records as a baseline

BGP applications will include:

- The HEI's strategy for arts and humanities research
- Numbers of studentships sought over 5 years, by level, type and subject of study, within the given upper limits
- Evidence that the HEI is a good place for study in the relevant subject areas

BGP assessment process

Applications will be assessed against published criteria that ensure

- that HEIs' bids for studentships are linked to their research strategies
- that HEIs can provide excellent supervision, research environments and training

BGP assessment process

- The final allocations will take into account
 - Peer review by subject specialists
 - The AHRC's 5-year plan for PG studentships
- The process will include a right of reply
- Successful HEIs will have to show they select excellent candidates

2006: quality of applicants

- Of 5,856 applicants in 2006, 3080 had 1st class hons UG degrees
- Of 1,490 awards in 2006, 1207 went to students with 1st class hons UG degrees
- 1873 applicants with 1st class hons UG degrees did not get awards

AHRC Studentship Competition

- The Studentship scheme aims to provide funding for 'pockets of excellence'
- Only open to HEIs who don't hold a BGP
- Numbers of applications from each HEI will be capped to ensure a much higher success rate

AHRC Studentship Competition: application process

- Three schemes – RM, PM & Doctoral
- HEIs will submit applications on behalf of individual students
- Applications will include
 - student's academic record
 - proposed area of study
 - references
 - institutional statement

AHRC Studentship Competition: assessment process

- Applications will be assessed by subject specialists
- '4 Ps' – Person, Project, Place and Preparation – will remain the essential assessment criteria

Post award: both competitions

- Payments will be made to HEIs based on studentship numbers and nationally set rates
- Requests will be approved as usual for
 - additional funds (e.g. Disabled Student's Allowance, Study Visits etc)
 - exceptions (e.g. suspensions, transfers, extensions etc)
- AHRC will monitor students as now through research reports

Post award: BGP

- AHRC will monitor BGPs at a project level through research reports
- HEIs will have some flexibility, in consultation with the AHRC, in reallocating studentships between subject areas
- 2nd BGP competition will be run in year 4 of the first BGP round

Implementation Timetable

Autumn 2007	1 st call for BGPs (application forms and guidance notes available)
May 2008	2008 PG Competition deadline
September / October 2008	1 st BGP deadline
Early 2009	BGP outcomes announced
May / June 2009	2009 AHRC Studentship Competition deadline
October 2009	All BGP and 'new' Open Competition students start