



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

## AHRC support for *Practice-led* research through our Research Grants - practice-led and applied route (RGPLA)

### What we are committed to

The AHRC is committed to supporting and encouraging research where practice as an approach is integral, through building capacity and capability in the creative and performing arts to help sustain and enhance the research base.

By 'creative and performing arts' the AHRC is referring to subject areas concerned with practice-based visual arts, music and performing arts, and practice-led creative writing. This list is not exhaustive but could include applicants who are visual artists; architects; those working in the applied arts; fashion; curatorial practice or film, video and/or other multi-media; performers; musicians; choreographers; scenographers; theatre or film directors; designers, and creative writers and poets.

### What are this route's aims?

Be sure to read all the full scheme details in our [Research Funding Guide](#).

The aims of the Research Grants practice led and applied route are:

- to support practice-led and applied research activity of the highest quality conducted by individual scholars across all areas of the arts and humanities
- to enable a scholar to pursue well-defined small-scale projects, or parts of larger projects, that are likely to bring advances in insights, knowledge or understanding of interest and value both to the research community and to a wider public
- to maximise the value of research outcomes by promoting their dissemination and, where appropriate, to facilitate the knowledge transfer of those outcomes, both to the research community and to other contexts where they will make a difference.

Research applications in all arts and humanities disciplines will be accepted but only those that are intended to support research that is either **practice-led or applied** in its approach (or a combination of both). Applications may be submitted for projects up to a total full economic cost of £40,000 and lasting up to a maximum of 12 months.

### Practice-led – what kind of research do we support through this scheme?

The Research Grants practice-led and applied route (RGPLA) provides funding for research where practice is an integral component and/or where it theorises contemporary practice in order to then inform your own individual practice.

## **How your proposal should relate your practice to your research**

You must explain clearly how your practice is an integral part of the whole research process, and not just an outcome of your application. Your practice must, therefore, be an integral part of the proposed programme of research, and the creative and/or performative aspects of the research must be made explicit in relation to its research questions, issues or problems, its outputs and outcomes and crucially its research methods or approaches.

The research questions or problems, the outputs and – most importantly – the research methods, must involve a significant focus on your practice as distinct from history or theory. A project that is purely historical or theoretical, with no element of your practice embedded in the research process or a project that does not theorise contemporary practice, is not eligible for this scheme. Your proposal should also place the proposed research in the context of not only your practice, but also in the wider field.

The proposed work must have a clear research focus, in line with the AHRC's definition of research, which can be found above. This will distinguish it from an idea that is purely a development of your professional practice (and which might be more appropriate for support from an arts funding body concerned with the creative output only). Creative outputs can be produced, or practice undertaken, as an integral part of a research process. However, if that creativity or practice does not involve research as per our definition, it also would be ineligible for funding from us.

### **Critical reflection: a key criterion**

We expect all of our research projects to have some form of documentation of the research process, which usually takes the form of textual analysis or explanation to support the research's position and to demonstrate critical reflection.

Documentation and critical reflection must be an integral part of the project and should be carried out during the award period (although we do not expect every output to have been completed by the end of the award).

Some of these outputs can go beyond more traditional academic outputs and can include, for example: journals, diaries, documentary film, audio files, web blogs, an essay in an exhibition catalogue, documentation posted on a website or dissemination via CDs or DVDs. Interviews by others with you reflecting on processes and outcomes will be considered.

Although such outputs described above are acceptable, you should consider them as tools or mechanisms from which research processes are developed. Therefore by themselves they will probably not meet the requirements of critical reflection, which is expected to be aimed at a scholarly audience, be easily accessible to other researchers and be in a form that has some permanency. Such outputs *must to a substantial degree be based on your own critical reflection of the creative process rather than an interpretation of that reflection by others.*

### **Enhancing knowledge and understanding**

The proposed work should aim, *through your practice*, to illuminate or bring about new knowledge and understanding *in your discipline or in related disciplinary areas*. You must make it clear how your practice will contribute to answering the research questions you have set. Research which forms an integral part of the creative process in developing a work of art in whatever form or media as part of an artist's professional development, but which does not aim to lead to advances in scholarly knowledge in the discipline, is unlikely to be considered eligible.

## **Theorising contemporary practice**

If you are submitting a proposal that aims to theorise contemporary practice in order to inform your own individual practice, you are advised that unless you specify explicitly what practice you are currently engaged with and how the research programme will inform your own practice, your proposal is unlikely to succeed and may be considered ineligible.

## **It's not about content**

This route excludes research to provide content. For example, if you wished to write a novel about refugees, the research questions should be about the process of writing the novel, not about the experience of the refugees. Work that results purely from the creative or professional development of an artist, however distinguished, is unlikely to fulfil the requirements of the research definition above. There are grounds for presenting some of this practice as part of a process of research, but not all of it and you will want to make it clear how your work will develop your research methodology.

## **Creative Writing**

If the focus of your research is creative writing, your research should bring about enhancements in knowledge and understanding in the discipline, or in related disciplinary areas.

If it would ordinarily be identified as work of a literary-critical or literary-historical nature, your project will not be eligible for support under RGPLA, as it is likely to fall under the remit of the British Academy's Small Research Grants scheme. Historical and theoretical approaches to humanities research for less than £20,000 FEC are also supported by [the British Academy](#).

## **Interdisciplinarity**

Interdisciplinary proposals are welcomed, including those which fall within subjects traditionally defined as humanities as long as the main focus of the research is practice-led or applied.

Collaborations with others may well form the basis of an interdisciplinary research programme. This may be particularly relevant where a creative practice-led researcher wishes to work with non arts and humanities based academics or non-HEI based partners. Please feel free to contact us regarding potential interdisciplinary proposals if you unsure whether they fall within the AHRC's subject domain or whether meet the criteria for this scheme.

## Funding guide

The [AHRC Funding Guide](#) provides an overview of the different routes of the Research Grants Scheme. It details the eligibility criteria, assessment criteria, information on how to apply, application deadlines, eligible dates and terms and conditions of awards. You must ensure that you meet all of the eligibility criteria before submitting an application to any of our schemes, so be sure to read the Funding Guide before applying, as the information in that document is really useful.

Prior to preparing a proposal for this scheme we would strongly advise you to read Section 1: *Funding Opportunities* of the AHRC Funding Guide. This provides further details regarding the AHRC's definition of practice-led research.

## Fellowships award holders

If you hold a Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts which was awarded after April 2006, you may apply to the Research Grants schemes in order to support project costs within your programme of research.

If you are an AHRC Fellowship award holder, in order to apply for further funding from us, your new application must identify a clearly defined project under the umbrella of your Fellowship. Although you are seeking funding for project costs to support your Fellowship, the practice-led proposal will be assessed on the same basis as any other proposal to the practice-led route. For this reason the Case for Support should not just reiterate the information in your original Fellowship proposal, but should clearly state the aims and objectives, methodology, outputs, etc. of the project supported by the *RGPLA application*.

You will need to define the dates of the RGPLA project and outline the particular research that will be carried out in that timeframe; there will also need to be some form of output/dissemination at the end of *that project* (i.e. it will not be sufficient to say that the output will occur at the end of the Fellowship if that end date is later). In addition, the dates of the RGPLA project must fall within the timeframe of the Fellowship.

You must also ensure that the project outlined in the proposal meets the AHRC's definition of research and is practice-led. You should be aware that if the proposal does not articulate a clearly defined research project in this way it could be assessed as 'unsuccessful' and you would not be able to resubmit that particular project for consideration. You are therefore advised to discuss your proposal with the Research Office at your institution, and also to discuss any queries you may have with Council staff.

## Tips

*Practice Making Sense - a guide to writing research proposals*, Feb 2006

This event was aimed particularly at practice-led researchers based in creative and performing arts departments who have little or no experience of applying for research funding, and offered practical tips on preparing a research proposal. Links to the presentations which were given at this event can be found on the [Research Grants – practice-led and applied](#) page on our website for more information.

## Contacts and Links

Please feel free to contact us on any matter relating to the criteria for this scheme, your eligibility to apply and for any help or advice you might wish to have on preparing a proposal, we are very happy to be of assistance.

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