

## **Key Recommendations**

Throughout the implementation of the new competitions this document will be updated with key recommendations made by the AHRC's Postgraduate Committee. All recommendations are subject to change as work relating to the processes of the new competition will be ongoing until autumn.

### **1. New Competitions**

In light of the recommendations of the Postgraduate Working Group (full details of which can be found at [http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/university\\_staff/postgraduate.asp](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/university_staff/postgraduate.asp)) the AHRC is introducing two new postgraduate funding competitions as of autumn 2009. These competitions are the Block Grant Partnerships (BGP) Competition and the AHRC Studentship Competition. The BGP Competition will entail institutions submitting bids for five years worth of award allocations and will run every fourth year of the five year cycle. The AHRC Studentship Competition will provide students with the opportunity to submit an individual bid for an award at a non-BGP institution and will be run in a similar way to the current Open Competition.

### **2. Capping of the 2008 Open Competition**

All HEIs submitting applications to the 2008 Open Competition will be subject to a limit on how many applications can be submitted. This number will be calculated using the average number of awards offered to HEIs between 2003 and 2007 Open Competitions, the limit being that average +150%. All HEIs will be notified of their exact cap in late November/ early December 2007.

### **3. Eligibility for applying to the BGP Competition**

The BGP Competition will have a threshold to establish an institution's eligibility for applying through the competition. This threshold will relate to the average number of awards offered to an HEI in the 2003-07 Open Competitions, but will not take into account awards gained through the CDA or project Studentship Competitions. The exact number for the threshold is yet to be decided upon although it is likely to be around 8 or more awards offered per annum. HEIs who have achieved less than the threshold number of awards may be able to access the BGP Competition through a collaborative partnership with another HEI, providing there is a solid basis for the partnership (see 10.). All other HEIs will be able to apply for studentship awards through the Studentship Competition.

The AHRC will also determine a minimum number of awards that an HEI can bid for per each year of the BGP term. Again this figure has yet to be decided upon, but will be communicated to institutions when the competition is launched.

### **4. Allocation of funding to the BGP and AHRC Studentship Competitions**

There will be an approximate 80/20% funding split between the BGP/Studentship Competition.

### **5. Limiting the Number of Awards HEIs can apply for in the BGP Competition**

All HEIs applying through the BGP Competition will be given an indicative upper limit of how many awards they can apply for, using their previous average number of awards offered as a baseline (data from 2003-07 Open Competition across all schemes). Assessors will be able to lower the number of Studentships awarded dependent on the strength of bid submitted.

**6. Limiting the number of awards HEIs can apply for in the AHRC Studentship Competition.**

HEIs that are applying in the AHRC Studentship Competition will be subject to a limitation on the number of awards they can apply for. The mechanism for the capping system has yet to be decided.

**7. Maintaining Subject Spread and Spread of Awards**

The AHRC will provide all HEIs bidding in the BGP Competition with historic data detailing their previous subject and scheme spread of awards. This will be offered only as guidance and will not be intended as a quota system for the application to adhere to.

**8. The BGP assessment process**

HEIs will be asked to provide qualitative and quantitative data relating to Strategy and Vision, Training and Environment, Spread of Studentships, Management and Monitoring and, where appropriate, data relating to Collaborative bids. Information will be required for each subject included in the bid, in order to facilitate decisions regarding allocation of awards by the Postgraduate committee.

The final allocation of awards will take into account peer review of applications by academics and the HEI's strategic plan.

**9. Allocation of monies to successful BGP applicants**

Money will be allocated to HEIs with Block Grants based on the individual students they nominate and nationally set rates. So, for example, if a BGP HEI with 20 Studentships per year nominated 15 full-time full-award, 2 part-time full-award and 3 full-time fees-only students in their first year that is the exact money the AHRC will release. All payment, as from October 2007, will be made directly to HEIs at the same intervals as currently apply (i.e. quarterly for maintenance, bi-annually for fees and annually for Research Training Funds).

**10. Collaborative Bids**

HEIs who have achieved less than the set BGP threshold number of awards per year will be able to access the BGP Competition in collaboration with one or more other HEIs if their total number of average awards achieved is equal to or above the threshold number. Collaborative bids are to be made at institutional rather than departmental or subject level.

The AHRC will require collaborative bids to be submitted based on a solid academic rationale and will not make awards to HEIs who are collaborating solely to meet with the competition's threshold requirements. A history of a collaborative relationship, or a clearly defined and considered long-term strategic plan for collaborating HEIs are examples of acceptable reasons for submitting a collaborative bid.