

## Research Subject Coverage

### Introduction

1 The Council funds high quality research and postgraduate training in a huge range of subjects from history and English literature to design and dance.

2 No precise definition of the subject domain of the arts and humanities is possible. There are inevitable overlaps and border territories that are shared with other award-making bodies, especially the Research Councils. Where such overlaps occur, the Council's general principle is one of liberality in defining and interpreting its domain, to an extent that is consistent with the protection of its core subject areas (where those who are seeking funds for the support of their research have no choice but to apply to the Council). The Council will thus accept any application submitted to it that is eligible on other grounds, unless there are firm grounds for reaching the conclusion that the application falls wholly outside its domain. It will *not* reach such a decision on the grounds that the application *could* have been accepted by another body. Rather, the test is whether it would be an unacceptable extension of the Council's domain for it to accept the application in question as falling within it. Such decisions are reached on a case by case basis.

3 There is no clear-cut boundary between the arts and humanities and many other subject areas - notably the social sciences - but a series of interfaces, and many areas of overlap. Moreover, disciplines and areas of study are continually evolving, as researchers develop new ways of approaching the study of human culture and creativity. It is not possible to define what falls within or outside the arts and humanities by reference to the methodologies used, or by simple reference to the subject matter of the study. Rather, the Council takes into account the approach that is to be adopted: whether the research questions or problems to be addressed, the wider context in which those questions or problems are located, as well as the methodologies to be adopted, can most plausibly be regarded as falling within the domain of the arts and humanities. In areas such as cultural and communications studies, for example, or in area studies or gender studies, the Council's general stance is that if the focus of the proposed study is on artistic or creative practices, history, languages, literatures, or on the study of texts or images, then it falls within the domain of the arts and humanities.

4 The AHRC does not fund pedagogical research, the primary responsibility for which rests with the ESRC. We do, however, consider applications where - so long as the primary focus of the research questions is located clearly in the arts and humanities - some aspects of the work may be related to the pedagogical application of the results of the research. As in all cases relating to subject domain, the question we shall ask in determining whether or not the application

is eligible for funding is whether or not the research questions are plausibly located within the domain of the arts and humanities, as distinct from any other subject areas, including education.

5 A Joint Statement by the AHRC and the ESRC, on the handling of applications on the interfaces between the arts and humanities and the social sciences, is available on our website.

### **The mapping of subjects to panels**

6 The Council has a structure of eight peer review panels appointed to assess applications. Responsibility for determining the panel(s) to which an application should most appropriately be directed lies with you as the applicant. Only in very exceptional cases, where there has been a clear misjudgement, will the Council direct applications to another panel, and then only in consultation with you. It should also be stressed that the panel to which an application is directed need not be determined by the title of the department or other unit within an institution in which you will undertake your work. Rather, you should be guided by the subject matter of the application itself. Some work that is located in a language department, for example, might well be suitable for submission to the Council's history panel.

### **Interdisciplinarity**

7 The Council's structure of panels is based on subjects and disciplines that are in some cases grouped together. But it welcomes and is committed to support work that spans the boundaries between panels. You should normally select one panel, or two panels if your application crosses such boundaries.

### **Issues relating to specific subject areas**

8 The guidance below draws on the definitions of subjects devised for the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise, along with further advice prepared by the Council.

#### **Panel 1: Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology**

*Classics and Ancient History* may include: the language, literature and thought (including ancient science and philosophy) of Greece and Rome from the earliest times to late antiquity; Latin language and literature of the middle ages and subsequent periods; the history, art and archaeology of Greece from the Mycenaean period to the Roman empire; the history, art and archaeology of Rome, Italy and the Roman provinces from the pre-Roman period to the late Roman empire; the language, literature, history, culture, art and archaeology of

the Byzantine world; the literature, language, history and culture of Greece from the medieval period to the present; Latin and Greek philology and linguistics; the reception of classical antiquity and the classical tradition. In addition, it should be noted that:

- applications for work in *medieval Latin* should normally be directed to this panel
- applications in *ancient philosophy and religion* may also be directed to Panel 8 (Philosophy, Religious Studies and Law)
- applications in *other ancient languages*, such as Sumerian, should normally be directed to this panel
- applications in *Byzantine studies* may be directed to this panel, or to Panels 2 (Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory) or 4 (Medieval and Modern History) or any combination of them
- applications in *modern Greek* should be directed to Panel 5 (Modern Languages and Linguistics)
- applications in the *classical tradition and its reception*, should normally be directed to this panel, perhaps in association with another panel such as 2 (Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory), 3 (English Language and Literature) or 4 (Medieval and Modern History).

*Archaeology* includes: archaeological theory; archaeology of human origins; prehistoric and historic societies on a world-wide basis. This includes early civilisations of near east; Egyptology; classical archaeology; medieval and post-medieval archaeology; colonial and industrial archaeology. Also included are landscape and environmental archaeology; archaeological science; public archaeology; and archaeological aspects of heritage management and museum studies.

The Council shares responsibility for the funding of research in archaeology with the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), which supports primarily *science-based archaeology*. The distinction between science-based and other archaeology is not always easy to make, but where the focus of the work to be undertaken (in terms of the questions or problems to be addressed, and the context for those questions, as well as the methodologies to be employed) is primarily archaeological, applications should be directed to the Council; and where it is scientific, they should more appropriately be directed to the NERC. For example, if a proposal focuses on an archaeological question (for example about trade, cultural history or identity), that can be answered with science, then it falls within the remit of the AHRC. The AHRC will not, however, normally support projects that are primarily concerned with technical or scientific questions which have an application within archaeology.

Applications concerning *cultural resource management* which have a clear archaeological base should be directed to this panel. But other applications may

be more appropriately directed to other panels, normally Panel 6 (Librarianship, Information and Museum Studies), but also possibly Panels 2 (Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory) or 4 (Medieval and Modern History).

## **Panel 2: Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory**

**This panel covers studies relating to contemporary practice, history or theory in art, design and media.**

*Art and design* may include: painting; public art; sculpture; performance; installation; time-based art; printmaking; photography; screen productions; virtual reality; multimedia; digital and interactive art and design; software design for visual artefacts; animation; illustration; graphic and communication design; art and design in the landscape; environmental and interior design; theatre design; exhibition and events design; fashion; textiles; jewellery and metalwork; ceramics; glass; automotive design; product and furniture design; art and design management; cultural, theoretical and historical studies (where this is principally contextual to contemporary practice and culture within art and design). The Council will also support research in *architecture* that concerns building design (but not structural or civil or other aspects of engineering).

- *Arts management research* will be supported where there is a clear focus on the requirements of the visual or media arts. (Support for such research may also be sought from the Arts Councils.) Alternatively, where the focus is on arts management within Music and Performing Arts, applications may be more appropriately directed to Panel 7 (Music and Performing Arts). You should also bear in mind that the ESRC supports work on the socio-economic foundations and impact of the creative and cultural industries.

*History of art, architecture and design* may include history of art, architecture, and design, in the widest chronological and geographical framework; theory and aesthetics of the visual arts; history of film, photography, and visual media; together with work in cognate fields such as cultural and gender studies, archaeology, and anthropology, where these relate to, or are grouped with, study of the visual arts. In addition, it should be noted that:

- applications in *museology, curatorship and conservation* should be directed to this panel only where the focus is on curating visual arts exhibitions. Other applications should normally be directed to Panel 6 (Librarianship, Information and Museum Studies), except where the focus is archaeological, when they might be more appropriate for Panel 1 (Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology)

- applications in some aspects of *cultural geography* may be appropriately directed to this panel, covering matters such as the iconography and interpretation of the cultural landscape; cultural constructions of nature and environment; creative and imaginative aspects of geographical thought and practice, including the arts of mapping; relationships between space, place and cultural identity. In some cases, applications could be directed to Panel 4 (Medieval and Modern History). The Council does not, however, accept applications that are clearly anthropological in nature.

*Communication, cultural and media studies* constitutes an area of study for which the AHRC shares responsibility with the ESRC. It includes: communication studies; cultural studies; film studies; and media studies. Study in these areas may fall within the domain of this panel, particularly where the focus is practice-based and on images. Other applications may be appropriately addressed to Panel 3 (English Language and Literature), Panel 5 (Modern Languages and Linguistics) or Panel 7 (Music and Performing Arts). Where the focus of the proposed work is on social or economic issues, applications may be more appropriately addressed to the ESRC.

### **Panel 3: English Language and Literature**

*English language and literature* may include old and middle English language and literature; Old Norse and Icelandic; renaissance literature; 17th and 18th century literature; romantic literature; Victorian literature; 20th century literature; American literature; colonial and postcolonial literature; comparative literature; women's writing; creative writing; children's literature; critical and cultural theory and history; gender and gay studies; bibliography, textual criticism and history of the book; Irish literature in English; Scottish Literature in English and Scots; and Welsh Literature in English. In addition, the following points should be noted:

- applications for studies in the *history of the English language*, and *stylistics and discourse analysis*, should be directed to this panel. Other English language studies, including studies of speech and pragmatics, lexis and grammar, may be directed to this panel or to panel 5 (Modern Languages and Linguistics) as appropriate
- applications in *critical theory and cultural or communications studies* may be appropriately directed to this panel, especially where the focus of the study is on the interpretation or analysis of texts in English. You should also bear in mind that the AHRC shares with the ESRC responsibility for the support of work in communications, cultural and media studies
- applications in *creative writing* in English should be directed to this panel.

## Panel 4: Medieval and Modern History

The AHRC shares responsibility with the [ESRC](#) for the support of research in history. The AHRC supports work in all periods of history from ancient times to the recent past, and in all parts of the world. Similarly, the ESRC has a funding interest in the social and economic history of all periods and in all parts of the world. The AHRC is primarily responsible for biography; administrative, cultural, diplomatic, legal, military, political and religious history; the history of science, of medicine, and of ideas; and historiography. Applications to the AHRC in ancient history should normally be directed to Panel 1 (Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology); all other applications to Panel 4. Applications dealing with topics within the last thirty years should explicitly demonstrate why their focus is predominantly historical rather than contemporary, and thus part of the AHRC's rather than the ESRC's subject domain. In addition it should be noted that:

- applications in *historical or cultural geography* that fall within the Council's domain (see under Panel 2) and in the *history of geography* should be directed to this panel, where there is a demonstrable historical focus
- applications in the *history of science* and in the *history of ideas* should be directed to this panel, except where the philosophical focus of the proposed study is so dominant that it would be more appropriate to direct it to Panel 8 (Philosophy, Religious Studies and Law)
- applications in *area studies* might be appropriately directed to this panel, where the focus of the proposed work is historical, or to this panel along with another one when there is a historical component to it. You should bear in mind that the AHRC shares with the ESRC responsibility for the support of work in area studies
- some applications in *communication, cultural and media studies* might be directed appropriately to this panel, perhaps in association with other panels, such as 2 (Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory), 3 (English Language and Literature) or 5 (Modern Languages and Linguistics).

## Panel 5: Modern Languages and Linguistics

This panel covers areas of work within subject areas, including: Middle Eastern and African studies; Asian studies; European studies; Celtic studies; French; German, Dutch and Scandinavian languages; Italian; Russian, Slavonic and East European languages; Iberian and Latin American languages; and linguistics. The work to be undertaken may include studies in language and literature; critical and cultural theory; creative writing; cultural studies; gender studies; media studies; philosophy; and historical studies. In social, political, cultural and historical studies, there are overlaps with the responsibilities of the ESRC.

- applications in *communication, cultural, media and gender studies* may fall within the Council's domain, especially where the focus of the proposed study is on the study of texts or images; but you should bear in mind that the ESRC also supports work in communications, cultural, media and gender studies. Many applications in these areas of study that fall within the Council's domain may also be directed to other panels, such as 2 (Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory), 4 (Medieval and Modern History) and 7 (Music and Performing Arts) as well as to Panel 5
- applications in *area studies* will generally fall within the Council's domain where the focus of the proposed study is on artistic or creative activities, history, languages, literatures, or thoughts and beliefs; but you should bear in mind that the ESRC also supports work in area studies. Many area studies applications that fall within the Council's domain may also be directed to other panels (including 2, 4 and 7) as well as to Panel 5
- applications in *modern Greek* studies will be treated as falling within this panel's domain

*Linguistics*: the AHRC shares with the ESRC responsibility for the support of research in linguistics. The AHRC focuses on support where research questions bear on the structure, history, theory, description and application of language and languages, including pragmatics and corpus studies, and such matters as translation and lexicography. Applications for such studies of the English language may be directed to this panel or to Panel 3 (English Language and Literature) but all studies of the history of English, stylistics or discourse analysis should be directed to Panel 3. The ESRC focuses on support for areas of applied linguistics, computational linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and interdisciplinary social science research involving linguistics.

### **Panel 6: Librarianship, Information and Museum Studies**

This panel covers studies concerned with the management of recorded knowledge, in librarianship and information science, record and archive studies, museology and information systems. These may include: information communities and the use and management of information in all forms and in all contexts; all aspects of archive administration and records management; museology, museum studies, and conservation; all aspects of information policy in the information society; information systems; systems thinking; systems development; information retrieval (including interfaces and gateways); preservation and conservation of recorded information; and the information industry (including publishing).

Applications should be directed solely to Panel 6 only where the research questions to be addressed, and the research imperative, are focussed on the

subject domain of this panel as defined above. If as part of your application you are seeking support for the development of databases, the production of catalogues and other finding aids to research resources then it is often not appropriate for it to be directed to Panel 6. Rather, you should direct it to the panel which covers the subject matter of the research resource or information in question (or to such a panel and Panel 6 in tandem).

Most applications in *museology, curatorship and conservation* should be directed to this panel. Where the focus is archaeological, they may be more appropriate for Panel 1 (Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology); where the focus is on curating visual arts exhibitions, they may be more appropriate for Panel 2 (Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory). Alternatively, in some cases, Panel 4 (Medieval and Modern History) may be the most appropriate panel.

### **Panel 7: Music and Performing Arts**

*Music* may include: composition and performance (including classical, commercial and popular); history and criticism of music; ethnomusicology; theory and analysis, including empirical approaches; technology and computer applications. Responsibility for ethnomusicology is shared with the ESRC.

*Drama, dance and performing arts* may include drama, theatre, dance and performance analysis; drama, theatre, dance and performance history; drama, theatre, dance and performance practice; film, TV and video analysis; film, TV and video practice; dramaturgy and theatre translation; gender and performance; scenography; new technologies and performance; theatre performance; performance documentation and reconstruction; live art; choreography; performance and health; community performance; performance anthropology; drama and dance/movement therapies; and related specialist areas. Responsibility for *ethnochoreology and theatre anthropology* is shared with the ESRC.

*Arts management research* will be supported where there is a clear focus on the requirements of the musical or performing arts. (Support for such research may also be sought from the Arts Councils.) Alternatively, where the focus is on arts management within the visual or media arts, applications may be more appropriately directed to Panel 2 (Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory). You should also bear in mind that the ESRC supports work on the socio-economic foundations and impact of the creative and cultural industries.

### **Panel 8: Philosophy, Religious Studies and Law**

*Philosophy* may include all the main areas, styles of and approaches to philosophy including: history of philosophy including ancient, medieval, modern and recent; metaphysics; epistemology; logic; philosophy of science; philosophy of mind; philosophy of language; philosophy of religion; 19th and 20th century European philosophy including phenomenology, existentialism, critical theory, hermeneutics and deconstruction; ethics including applied ethics; political and social philosophy; applied philosophy; feminist philosophy; aesthetics. In addition, the following points should be noted:

- applications in *ancient philosophy* may be directed appropriately either to this panel or to Panel 1 (Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology), or both
- applications in the *history of science* and the *history of ideas* should normally be directed to Panel 4 (Medieval and Modern History), except where the philosophical focus of the study is so dominant that it is more appropriate to this panel
- some applications in *aesthetics* may be directed also to Panel 2 (Visual Arts and Media: practice, history, theory).

*Religious studies* may include the study of the world's religions, specific or comparative, including their scriptures, thought, history, ethical teaching, social and cultural impact, practices and related areas. It embraces theological, textual, philosophical, sociological, anthropological and applied approaches. It is not intended to exclude any of the areas normally studied under the rubric of theology, divinity, religious studies or biblical studies.

*Law* may include doctrinal, theoretical, empirical, comparative or other studies of law and legal phenomena. The AHRC shares with the ESRC responsibility for studies in law. The AHRC focuses on studies where the focus is on the content or procedures of the law. The ESRC has an interest in funding socio-legal studies, which reflect a focus on the socio-economic impact of the law and the legal system.