

**Questions from the AHRC Subject Association Meeting  
1 May 2008  
Glaziers Hall  
London SE1**

**BGP**

- 1. There is a fear that smaller, specialist departments will miss out due to BGPs. Can the AHRC reassure them they won't be disadvantaged?**

*The AHRC's new system for supporting postgraduate research and training, which comprises the new Block Grant Partnership scheme and the new open studentship competition, is designed with the continued support for the health and sustainability of the range of arts and humanities disciplines as a key aim; it is also designed to enable the AHRC to continue to provide support for endangered and emerging subject areas.*

*The BGP scheme should not be seen as excluding the possibility of support or capacity building in small or specialist departments or subject areas, and the BGP assessors will be looking for robust justification from any institution that excludes from its BGP bid any arts and humanities departments or disciplines that have previously attracted AHRC funding. By facilitating longer-term planning in institutions, the BGP scheme is designed to encourage investment in capacity building in smaller departments and disciplines: this can still be considered a strategic approach to supporting postgraduate research and training, even if the numbers involved are small.*

*For institutions that are not eligible for BGP funding, there will be scope to apply for support through the new open studentship scheme. The AHRC will monitor closely the subject spread of awards allocated through the BGP scheme and the new studentship scheme, and will take steps to ensure no subject area suffers unduly.*

- 2. To what extent should BGPs be linked to 'strategy'? How will the AHRC address / monitor unintended outcomes?**

*BGPs are designed to facilitate long term engagement between organisations and the strategic aims of the AHRC, including the goals and principles of the new mechanism. The AHRC does not wish to prescribe or limit an organisation's strategy in any way but organisations are expected to engage with the AHRC's strategy as outlined in its Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan where this is appropriate. Institutions should highlight in their proposals where their strategy aligns or where it specifically meets the strategic aims and goals of the AHRC. The AHRC recognises that an organisation's strategy will not necessarily cover all aspects of the AHRC's strategy. Institutions are reminded that the AHRC's Strategic Aims include the support and promotion of world-class postgraduate training designed to equip graduates for research and other professional careers, and the health of arts and humanities disciplines. There is no expectation that BGP bids must be aligned with the*

*themes of the AHRC's strategic programmes where this is not appropriate. We are putting together a monitoring programme for the BGPs to assess outcomes.*

**3. Introduction of BGPs has been difficult for HEIs as they are being told what to bid for and this is limiting. They are also creating infighting across departments.**

*In November 2007 the AHRC wrote to all VCs and Registries informing them of the subject spread of the awards achieved by their institution in the AHRC open competitions from 2003 to 2007. This information was provided as a guide, but there is no expectation that institutions should necessarily adhere exactly to their previous pattern of awards when submitting a BGP proposal. The AHRC has no additional funds to allocate through the BGP scheme compared to previous years, so there is little scope for any individual institution to bid for a large increase in awards without disadvantaging other institutions; and the AHRC wishes to maintain a fair degree of stability in the spread of awards in this first round of BGPs, to minimise disruption to institutions and postgraduate students.*

*It is up to departments collectively to agree where their strengths lie in their provision for postgraduate research and training in the arts and humanities; to agree their plans for supporting and developing this over the period of the BGP award; and to agree where any capacity building might occur. The prospect of being eligible to receive a five-year award for a number of AHRC postgraduate students should help raise the profile of arts and humanities postgraduate research and training within institutions, and may enable some leverage to unlock further funds.*

## **PG**

**1. What is the vision or values underpinning postgraduate funding for the AHRC?**

*The AHRC's strategic aims set out its ambitions for its postgraduate funding. The overall vision for AHRC postgraduate funding is to promote and support world-class postgraduate training designed to equip graduates for research or other professional careers (Strategic Aim 2). The aims of the two new schemes for allocating postgraduate funding, the BGP scheme and the new, smaller studentship competition, are:*

- *To provide two competitions of equal status to support the diverse needs of the sector*
- *To continue to promote and support a strategy for producing world-class postgraduates*
- *To continue to sustain and promote high-quality research and training*
- *To continue to maintain the health and sustainability of arts and humanities disciplines*
- *To extend and enhance opportunities for interdisciplinary research and training, where appropriate*

- *To ensure resource-effective distribution of funding*
- *To provide support to both endangered and emergent subjects*
- *To enhance and encourage interaction with the cultural, heritage and creative industries, where appropriate*
- *Through the BGP scheme, to facilitate long-term strategic planning and flexibility in arts and humanities postgraduate research and training*
- *Through the new studentship competition, to support pockets of excellence in institutions that do not hold BGP funding, and to allow for capacity building.*

**2. What is the AHRC's response to the House of Commons IUS report criticising the cuts in PG funding?**

*The AHRC cannot comment on the House of Commons IUS Report except in the context of the Government's response that is being prepared. We are, however, able to comment on CSR decisions we took in line with what we said at the Subject Associations Event on 1st May 2008 (for which see the Chief Executive's speech on our website). In essence, the Council of the AHRC decided to reduce postgraduate numbers in order to be able to fund strategic programmes (especially those that are Cross-Council in nature), but only to a point where our postgraduate funding would be at a higher level than the other Councils. The decision was taken to weight this reduction more heavily in 2008-09, in order to preserve the maximum possible funding available for allocating in the following two years for the CSR2007 period to the start of the BGP scheme. The AHRC welcomes applications for doctoral awards within strategic and responsive mode research grants and funds additional postgraduate places in the form of Collaborative Doctoral Awards; these are additional to those we fund from the postgraduate budget.*

**3. How does the AHRC propose to restore vitality in PG study?**

*The AHRC disputes that PG study has lost its 'vitality'; indeed we submit that under the new BGP and Open Competition system its vitality will be greatly enhanced.*

**4. Did the AHRC articulate the distinction of arts and humanities PG and why it needs more funding? It is the only source of funding for the sector (compared to science which gets industry funding).**

*The AHRC cannot comment on the House of Commons IUS Report except in the context of the Government's response that is being prepared. We are, however, able to comment on CSR decisions we took in line with what we said at the Subject Associations Event on 1st May 2008, namely, that during the CSR process we did argue for strong support for postgraduate provision.*

**Outputs**

- 1. Does the AHRC make assumptions about where QR funding goes? Why does the AHRC think monographs will 'happen anyway'?**

*At present a quantified assessment of the uses to which QR are put by HEIs is not available. But, in relation to England (and we believe the situation is similar in relation to the Devolved Administrations), our understanding accords with how HEFCE (see their website) explains the situation in broad terms as follows:*

*HEFCE provides funding to support the research infrastructure, including the salaries of permanent academic staff, premises, libraries and central computing costs. These funds are spent at institutions' discretion.*

*Our funding aims to provide institutions with:*

- a base from which to undertake research commissioned by other funding sources*
- flexibility to react to emerging priorities and new fields of enquiry*
- facilities to train new researchers*
- capacity to undertake ground-breaking basic research which is often the foundation of strategic and applied work funded by other sponsors.*

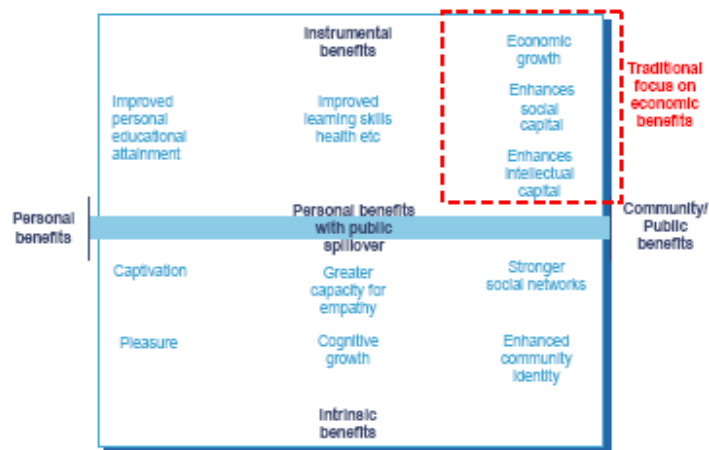
*We assume that in many UK HEIs QR supports the cost of institutional research leave. The AHRC further assumes that monographs will happen on QR since 9000 of them were submitted by arts and humanities researchers in the 2001 RAE (where we only funded a couple of hundred) and we have no reason to believe that researchers would fail to produce monographs (as they did before 2001) simply because they were not in receipt of AHRC funding, since most HEIs (especially research intensive ones) will continue to make research leave available to their staff.*

## **2. What does impact mean? Some good examples please! How can the community help to shape the definition?**

*What does impact mean?*

*Impact is an effect upon, or change in, an individual, a community, the development of policy, or the creation of a new product or service. The AHRC has adopted a broad definition of impact, to include cultural, social and economic elements. This is reflected in our impact framework:*

**Framework for understanding the impacts of the Arts and Humanities Research**



For further information, see the AHRC Impact Strategy:  
[http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/AHRC\\_impact\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/AHRC_impact_strategy.pdf)

### Examples

Some examples of impacts derived from arts and humanities research can be found on our website at:  
[http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/about/ke/evaluation/impact/impact\\_case\\_studies.asp](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/about/ke/evaluation/impact/impact_case_studies.asp)

These case studies include cultural, social and economic impacts, and are derived from a diverse range of subjects, including art and design, archaeology, theology, architecture and law. How can the Community help?

The AHRC would welcome dialogue with the arts and humanities academic community on impact, whether this is in refining way in which impact is articulated, or in the development of impact case studies.

Contact: Lisa Hill, Head of Evaluation ([l.hill@ahrc.ac.uk](mailto:l.hill@ahrc.ac.uk))

### 3. Is the AHRC going to stipulate the outputs of arts and humanities research in the future?

The AHRC has no desire or intention to stipulate the type of outputs researchers produce. As you will see from looking at the research grant application form, it is possible for applicants to specify any number of a wide variety of types of outputs, from monographs to websites to exhibitions (there is even a category called 'other' to allow for categories of output not on the list). It is up to the applicant to decide what type of output(s) is most appropriate for the research they have done.

### 4. Why does the AHRC think that because only 17% of outputs submitted to the 2001 RAE were monographs that this reflects their worthiness?

*This question is based on a misunderstanding of what was said during the Subject Associations event on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008. The AHRC does not see any relation between the number of monographs in RAE 2001 and their worth or value. Indeed we place a high value on monographs as an arts and humanities research output. We were rather drawing attention to the fact that 9002 arts and humanities outputs in RAE 2001 taking the form of monographs (when we had only funded a couple of hundred of them) suggested that our researchers would continue to produce them in large numbers whether the AHRC was funding their production or not. This was the foundation for our main point: that we could not therefore safely rely on single-author monographs to demonstrate our distinctive funding role in the larger research landscape.*

## **Equal Opportunities**

- 1. We are concerned about post-92 HEIs being disadvantaged (can't apply for research leave in own HEI, lack of experience in applying) and not being eligible for BGPs; we are also concerned about regional disparities.**

*We understand the point being made here is that the infrastructures and support systems of different HEIs differ, and that some HEIs may find that they do not know how to improve their present circumstance. With our new regionally-focused team structures in the AHRC, it will be easier for us to gain a fuller knowledge of particular regional and institutional needs and work with you to consider ways forward. It is worth noting that the AHRC already provides support to over 80 HEIs in the UK.*

- 2. Can the AHRC set aside a ring-fenced sum to enable smaller departments / specialist areas to benefit from awards?**

*Although the AHRC funds on the basis of research excellence determined by peer-review, it does provide ring-fenced support for some specialist areas (e.g. creative and performing arts, language-based area studies) and for certain types of researcher (e. g. early career). It has no plans at present to provide such support for 'smaller departments'.*

- 3. Should the AHRC undertake a demographic review, identify subject areas that have problems now and are likely to in the future?**

*The AHRC, along with the other Research Councils, already pays close attention to the demographics of the various disciplines that it covers. Each year all seven Research Councils make a submission to DIUS on health of disciplines that includes such demographic data. One aspect of our consideration of the applications for the Block Grant Partnerships will be to ensure that the health of our various disciplines is protected in the allocation of BGPs.*

## **Interactions with the community**

- 1. What is distinctive about what the AHRC is offering the academic community?**

*As we explained at the Subject Associations Day on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008, we consider that the distinctiveness of the AHRC within the larger arts and humanities research landscape in the UK, our 'unique selling point', lies in our being the only funder of major collaborative research (some of it in strategic areas) with high social, cultural and economic impacts. Nevertheless, we will continue to maintain our Vision and Strategy commitment to support individual researchers, including by funding their production of monographs, either within the context of a collaborative grant, or in programmes adapted to research by individuals that nevertheless contributes to our distinctive niche in the research-funding environment.*

## **2. How does the AHRC see its role as an advocate for arts and humanities research?**

*The fourth of our four Strategic Aims is 'To raise the profile of arts and humanities research and to be an effective advocate for its social, cultural and economic significance.' The five Strategic Objectives that fall under this Aim put flesh on how we see this role:*

- 1. Improve understanding by stakeholders (especially the UK government and the media) of the positive value of research and postgraduate training in the arts and humanities.*
- 2. Play a leading role in the development of arts and humanities research worldwide.*
- 3. Promote and support activities that foster engagement by the public with arts and humanities research.*
- 4. Maintain our excellent reputation and high quality of service to stakeholders during a period of major organisational change.*
- 5. Evaluate our programmes and activities in order to increase their effectiveness.*

*This year we have a particular means to achieve these objectives in the form of our Impact Task Force, chaired by AHRC Chairman, Sir Alan Wilson, that will build upon the large amount of work we have put into understanding the impact of arts and humanities research (as in our Impact Strategy) and generate new evidence and more effective means of communicating it to stakeholders.*

## **3. How does the AHRC plan to have continuing dialogue with the diverse arts and humanities community and a large number of subject associations?**

*The new Director of Research has recently taken up her post and has made it the number one priority of her action plan to address issues of dialogue and communication with the academic community. For example, already there are plans in place to visit a series of HEIs over the next few months to hold seminars to develop themes for the next comprehensive spending review and continue the debate about support for individual researchers. The new AHRC team structure will also allow groups of AHRC staff to focus and specialise in particular subject areas and to build links with the subject associations, attend their conferences, and ensure that consultations take account of subject-specific needs. This process of carefully planned and concentrated dialogue, that builds on the regional events we have been*

holding around the UK this year, began with our well-attended Subject Associations event on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 (see the AHRC website for presentations from that event).

#### **4. How are AHRC taking in to account the changing landscape and nature of academic culture, work and practice?**

*The AHRC keeps its finger on the pulse of the developments in academic culture, work and practice close engagement with a wide range of researchers, from the most senior to those starting their careers. We have very experienced academics on our Research, Postgraduate and Knowledge and Evaluation Committees who regularly report to us on phenomena and challenges that emerge from the diverse work of those Committees. The AHRC also keeps in touch with some employer needs in the creative industries through its work with the companies in this sector in its KT activities.*

### **Relationship with DIUS**

#### **1. Can the AHRC be bolder about articulating the value of research in non-economic terms?**

*The AHRC is required to demonstrate the economic impact of research to DIUS. However, alongside demonstrations of economic value, the AHRC is also keen to demonstrate a range of economic and social impacts to tell the full story of the value of arts and humanities research. The arts and humanities create social and economic benefits directly and indirectly through improvements in social and intellectual capital, social networking, community identity, learning and skills and quality of life.*

*The AHRC Impact Strategy outlines the range of benefits to be gained from arts and humanities research, and the AHRC's approach to demonstrating these benefits: [http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/AHRC\\_impact\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/AHRC_impact_strategy.pdf)*

*The AHRC has commissioned a series of case studies to investigate the impact of arts and humanities research. Across the series as a whole, impact has been defined in its broadest sense to include economic, social and cultural elements.*

*One strand of this case study work has mainly focused on the social impact of arts and humanities research, with *Social Impact of Artist Exhibitions: Two Case Studies* ([http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/Social\\_Impact\\_Exhibitions\\_Web.pdf](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/Social_Impact_Exhibitions_Web.pdf)) appearing in 2007 and *At Home in Renaissance Italy – An Impact Case Study* ([http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/AHRC\\_Renaissance\\_Italy.pdf](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/AHRC_Renaissance_Italy.pdf)) in 2008. The *At Home in Renaissance Italy* study also contains a consideration of the economic benefits arising from this major exhibition, which was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum.*

#### **2. What voice does the AHRC have re: bibliometrics? What is the AHRC's direction in lobbying to make sure that it won't just be bibliometrics used to judge research?**

*The AHRC has communicated the limitations of citations and journal impact analysis as a tool for assessing the quality of arts and humanities research most strongly to DIUS.*

Further, in June 2006, the Chief Executives of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) jointly established an expert group to explore the use of metrics in the assessment of arts and humanities research. The report is available on the AHRC's website at: [http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/4\\_98606.pdf](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/images/4_98606.pdf)

**3. How can the arts and humanities community influence the future direction of the AHRC, given the recent disquiet in regard to the strategic plan?**

*As stated above, it is a priority of the AHRC to build up dialogue with the academic community by creating networks of contacts and regular communication. Given the size and diversity of our academic community (comprising 25% of UK researchers), there will never be absolute agreement on all issues. However, we accept that we need to improve our processes of consultation and dialogue, which we are currently working to improve.*

**4. Does RCUK adequately represent AHRC in discussions with DIUS?**

*The AHRC is one the seven Research Councils that together form the partnership that is Research Councils UK. It is not a case of RCUK 'representing' the AHRC in discussions with DIUS; rather, we are equal partners in joint discussions we have with DIUS and joint submissions we make to DIUS (or other agencies) on important matters. RCUK is a very effective organisation in which the seven Research Councils work together in a fruitful and harmonious way.*

## **KT and Evaluation**

**1. How can KT work in meaningful ways?**

*The core of KT involves researchers working with non-academic partners and thus using their knowledge to produce demonstrable differences to society in terms of cultural, social and economic improvement. In this context, KT will always be meaningful.*

**2. What are the terms of reference for the Impact Task Force and what is the anticipated 'impact' of the report in the development of AHRC policies and programmes?**

*The key aim for the Task Force is to make a case to government for the value of arts and humanities research, and within that context to demonstrate the distinctive role of AHRC funded research. This will be achieved through a range of activities, some in collaboration with NESTA. The activities will include commissioning researchers to produce a number of essays on the value of arts and humanities research.*

*The findings and outcomes of the Task Force activities will be used to inform the AHRC's submission to the next Spending Review.*

**3. Can you elaborate on KT funding opportunities?**

*The essence of KT (and this is a view shared by all the Research Councils) is that researchers work with non-academic partners at all stages of a research project, including at its inception, since this will allow fresh light to be shed on the research questions, and throughout, thus leading to the production of demonstrable differences in non-academic contexts. In this way, every research grant has the capacity for KT. At present, indeed, some 50% of our network awards have non-academic partners. KT will also figure in international research collaborations, such as HERA ('Humanities in the European Research Area). However, the AHRC also has designated KT programmes, of which the most significant are Knowledge Transfer Fellowships and Knowledge Catalyst (see our website for details).*

**4. What is the rationale for existing KT partners? Are they indicative of what the AHRC is looking for? How can the research community tap in to this resource?**

*A KT partner is any person, organisation or company in the non-academic arena with whom a researcher can forge a relationship. They are as broad as the imagination of researchers can reach. Assistance is close at hand from the Knowledge Transfer offices in each HEI, and we are always only a phone call away. But the AHRC is working with some larger partners (such as the BBC and the TSB) for specific purposes and where we can produce large impacts.*

**5. How can small or non-commercial organisations participate in KT - i.e. charities)? Their social impact may be out of proportion to their funding.**

*Charities are very promising partners for KT activities (see the previous answer). They can be partners either in relation to research grants or the specific KT programmes we run. We assume that many researchers will identify them as good partners.*

**6. AHRC wants to create impact and monographs have a higher impact both on disciplines, community and the economy than journal articles. It therefore seems illogical not to support their production. Could the AHRC respond?**

*It is a misinterpretation of what was said on 1st May 2008 to suggest the AHRC will not support the production of monographs. The AHRC will not cease its support for the development of monographs (see earlier answer). Monographs can and will continue to be written as part of AHRC grants. The AHRC is currently reviewing how best to support individual research (which is a commitment in our Strategy) in line with our distinctive role in the wider research funding landscape and the most effective use of public money.*

**Strategic vs. Responsive funding**

**1. Where does the impetus for cross-Council strategic programmes come from?**

*The impetus comes from a variety of sources: (a) consultation with the community (as in 2004-05); (b) discussions by Council in the light of our changing environment; (c) work with the other Research Councils to generate Cross-Council programmes*

*that respond to demonstrated areas of national and international need (that could be articulated in the form of UK governmental priorities); and (d) unexpected opportunities, as with the House of Lords report that recommended the AHRC take a leading role in relation to heritage science.*

**2. What is the strategy for enhancing research opportunities in emergent areas?**

*Each year the AHRC (like the other Councils) surveys the health of disciplines within its remit, and this includes areas of emerging strength as well as areas under threat. We have no specific mechanism for addressing emergent areas, but we are able to respond where necessary within existing programmes and mechanisms. For example, we would expect proponents of an emerging area to apply for network funding from the AHRC at the earliest opportunity and such a network could form the spring-board for larger applications later.*

**3. If the vital strategic programmes which are to be prioritized over postgraduate and research leave are ultimately derived from the Government, how will academic freedom and diversity in the arts and humanities be safeguarded?**

*See answer 1 above. Strategic programmes derive from a variety of sources and government priorities related to demonstrated areas of national and international need is only one such source. There is no threat to academic freedom and diversity in the arts and humanities in this context. Our strategic programmes are very broad and allow academic freedom and diversity to flourish; in addition, Government is entirely happy that a large proportion of our research funding goes to curiosity-driven, responsive mode research. In 2008-09 we plan to devote 73% of our research budget of £60 M to responsive mode applications.*

**4. How are strategic areas developed?**

*See answer immediately above.*

**5. What can we expect the balance to be between responsive and strategic programmes?**

*The majority of our research budget is allocated to what are currently referred to as 'responsive mode' schemes, and there is no question that the AHRC will not continue to support blue skies research, as do all the other Research Councils. In 2008-09 we plan to devote 73% of our research budget of £60 M to responsive mode research.*

**6. Why is it necessary to generate themes for strategic funding from the top down?**

*This question is based on a misconception of the process; see the answer to 4 above.*

**7. Is it the intention to rebalance between responsive mode and strategic, in favour of strategic?**

*In many ways the distinction between 'strategic' and 'responsive' is not helpful. 'Responsive' funding can come through our strategic programmes, and vice versa. This was an issue our Council raised at their away day on 14 February 2008, and*

*they have charged staff at the AHRC with reviewing how we both articulate and process funding opportunities to take account of this blurring of boundaries. We would also like to explore, with the research community, how we might focus on particular disciplines, and curiosity-driven research within them, through targeted mini-programmes.*

**8. Have you costed the benefit of strategic programmes over the impact of scholarly research in general (e.g. publications, conferences etc.)?**

*A simple comparison of the benefits of 'strategic' research with other (e.g. 'responsive') research would be unlikely to yield useful results given the differing objectives and very wide spectrum of research activities, research communities and benefits involved with AHRC's current 'strategic' programmes and with its various other funding routes. 'Strategic' research, like all other research funded by AHRC is subject to peer review and expected to be of the highest research quality leading to scholarly and other research outputs which will make a significant contribution to advancing research in the relevant field(s). However, the wider economic, social and cultural benefits of the research will vary widely not only between different strategic initiatives but will also vary - in a similar way to research funded under 'responsive' schemes - between different individual projects and activities. In addition, the benefits may emerge over a range of timescales, be of very different types and not all be easily subject to monetary or comparative evaluation. It is still too early to fully assess the broader impacts of most of AHRC's strategic programmes but the AHRC will continue to track the outputs and impacts from its strategic research, as with other forms of research, and to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of its different funding schemes, including in due course the new strategic programmes. Nevertheless, we already have many case studies of research under both 'strategic' and 'responsive' funding routes which have made significant contributions to moving forward scholarly research and have led to important wider economic, social and cultural impacts.*

**Collaboration**

- 1. As the AHRC is not the only funder of collaborative research, and it has not been the case of our research in the past, how can it now be considered pivotal / a USP?**

*Although there are a small number of collaborative schemes supported by the Leverhulme and British Academy, the AHRC is the only UK grant-awarding body that offers a significant number of collaborative awards on a big scale. This is certainly a unique selling point of the AHRC, and it is one of the activities that define us as a Council.*

- 2. How does the AHRC intend to approach cross-Council bids, especially re AHRC-ESRC crossover in 'education' where there are clear benefits to the 'Royal Charter Objects' of the Council?**

*The AHRC has frequent dialogue with the other Research Councils over research areas of common interest and keeps its joint statement with ESRC on subject coverage*

([http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/about/subject\\_coverage/joint\\_ahrc\\_esrc\\_statement\\_on\\_subject\\_coverage.asp](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/about/subject_coverage/joint_ahrc_esrc_statement_on_subject_coverage.asp)) under review. In terms of educational research this states that "ESRC is the primary funding body for educational research across all subjects, including the arts and humanities. AHRC supports research where the imperative for the research questions resides in the arts and humanities, but there may be an educational element. Examples include research into the history of education, children's literature, creative art and performance in (but not for) educational environments, religious teaching and scholarship, and the role of education in librarianship and museums practice".

The AHRC, along with all RCUK partners, welcomes applications through its responsive mode schemes which cross the remits of more than one Research Council. Such applications are handled in accordance with the 2006 Cross-Council Funding Agreement (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/prcremits.htm>). The agreement aims to:

- i. Ensure that the Councils' structures provide no discouragement to research at the interface between disciplines.
- ii. Ensure that there are no gaps between Councils' remits and that interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research is effectively supported by the Councils, either independently or in partnership.
- iii. Ensure that peer review is fair, appropriate and avoids 'double jeopardy' for projects that straddle disciplinary and Council remits.
- iv. Minimise consideration by applicants of Council remits.

Under the agreement responsive-mode research grant applications that extend beyond a single Research Council's remit will be assessed by peer reviewers from across the relevant domains, thereby ensuring fair and rigorous assessment. Beyond this stage, decisions will be made through a single Council's peer review process, but any significant element residing within another Council's remit will be funded by the Council(s) concerned. This will avoid the 'double jeopardy' of additional review, whilst ensuring that funding allocations reflect Research Councils' different missions, imperatives and approaches.

In addition, the Councils work closely together in developing strategic research initiatives to address key challenges which cut across their remits, establishing common peer review and funding arrangements that are tailored to the needs of each programme

### **3. We have concerns about the levels of expertise in the Peer Review College, especially in relation to assessing inter-disciplinary applications**

We appreciate these concerns. The AHRC review of decision making structures includes an undertaking to review the composition of the peer review college, enhance the training of peer review colleges and vet more fully the peer review reports that are returned.

## **International**

### **1. Does international mean outside EU?**

No, international includes the EU.

**2. If the emphasis is on collaborations, what funding is available for collaboration with non-European partners?**

*Our priority areas for international collaboration (where we have a pro-active strategy and where RCUK has offices) are Europe, the USA, China and India. But we are open to, and respond positively to approaches made by any country. Thus the AHRC currently has Memoranda of Understanding with the main research funding agencies in South Korea, Taiwan and the Humanities Institutes of Japan. The only ring-fenced funding we currently have is in relation to Humanities in the European Research Area.*

**3. We have concerns about the focus on UK quality of life, ignoring historical/cultural links in our international strategies (i.e. Latin America) in favour of a narrow Government definition of countries of economic importance**

*Such concerns are unfounded. While we do have a specific interest in Europe, the USA, China and India, which are significant far beyond their economic importance, the Government has shown no interest whatever in having us build international relationships on the basis of economic significance. What countries we build relationships with is up to us. The only occasion where the government has encouraged specific activity was in relation to strategically important languages and we have responded by co-funding with HEFCE, the ESRC and the SFC a number of language-based area studies centres.*

**4. What potential is there for disciplines that have an international (but non-European) dimension?**

*We have specific interests in the USA (where the AHRC has an innovative agreement with the National Science Foundation), China and India, we have Memoranda of Understanding with the countries just mentioned and we will positively consider proposals to work with the funding agencies of any country that approaches us.*

**Miscellaneous**

**1. Can the AHRC say what is happening with success rates after this year, and in to the future?**

*We monitor success rates carefully, but since success is a dependent on demand as well as supply (and some HEIs may choose themselves to limit the number of applications to Research Councils) it is not possible to predict them with any real precision. As far as the supply side is concerned, if the academic community continues to work closely with us in relation to research, postgraduate provision and knowledge transfer within our distinctive context and distinctive focus, our chances of maintaining high levels of funding from government will be increased*

**2. What are the envisaged impacts of the RAE? In particular on QR?**

*As noted above, in 2007 the AHRC and HEFCE jointly convened a small group of experts to explore a replacement for the RAE that would be suitable for arts and humanities research. The report by that group is on the AHRC website. It recommended a mixture of light-touch peer review and metrics. HEFCE has just conducted a consultation on its proposed Research Excellence Framework and has allowed a further year to consider the process. It is difficult to say more at this stage, other than that HEFCE is aware of the AHRC's strong interest in working with them to ensure that the arts and humanities research community and its distinct practices and culture are fully represented in the process to find a system to replace the RAE.*

**3. What is happening with the work of the AHDS and resource enhancement?**

*In relation to the AHDS the Council has decided to move away from the centralised funding system that characterised our previous approach and to let HEIs become more active. But most of the distinctive AHDS units will continue and we are working to ensure that a repository is provided where an institutional one is not available. As to Resource Enhancement, we are very willing to fund resource enhancement projects (for example, through the digitisation of resources) as long as they are part of a research project that will have research outcomes. The AHRC is also active, however, in other areas, such as the E-Science initiative.*