

**JOINT AHRC, BA AND ESRC  
STATEMENT ON EARLY AND MID CAREER  
SUPPORT**

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### **General Observation**

On the basis of data from the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, the AHRC, BA and ESRC represent half of the active researchers and academic disciplines in the UK. The British Academy's remit covers the humanities and social sciences but not the performing and creative arts. Like the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering, the British Academy is an independent and self-governing charity.

### **Scheme Complementarity and Strategic Alignment**

Across such a wide range of disciplines it is essential to provide a range of funding opportunities, particularly but not exclusively for new researchers, in order to sustain capability and address strategic priorities. Each of the schemes described below addresses different objectives, striking an appropriate balance between supporting people and projects. In order to establish clear focus and avoid duplication, the three bodies will work together in planning and delivering their various programmes with the specific aim of ensuring each is clearly distinctive and, overall, addresses strategic and developmental needs including the provision of sufficient new capacity.

Each of the Councils and the British Academy provides early and mid-career support. The Research Councils were asked to describe in their delivery plans their proposals for 'maintaining national capability in strategic areas'. The British Academy was encouraged to focus on identifying and supporting the very best individuals through fellowship schemes, while also taking account of national priorities.

Key features of the three organisations' planned provision over the spending review period are:

The BA:

- Supporting the very best individuals at early and mid career level through fellowship schemes and on their integration into the Academy's 'intellectual family' and wider activities (annually up to 50 early career, post-doctoral fellowships over three years and up to 40 mid career fellowships up to 12 months).
- Ensuring that fellowship awards take account of, but are not wholly determined by, the need to contribute to a wide range of national and international challenges (e.g. environmental issues), to maintain capacity in vulnerable academic disciplines (e.g. languages) and to develop research skills (e.g. quantitative methods).
- Terminating its project awards (mid career and small grants) and conference grants schemes.
- Maintaining the focus on international, public and policy engagement.

The ESRC:

- Introducing new early career grants scheme with emphasis on supporting clearly defined projects for a maximum of two years.
- Terminating its current postdoctoral and mid-career fellowships schemes.

- Focus on its priority areas of economic performance; influencing behaviour; and a fair and vibrant society and on work which is likely to have significant economic and societal impact
- Focus on where ESRC can add value by building on its existing portfolio such as the secondary analysis of large-scale datasets including its portfolio of longitudinal studies; linking awards to existing ESRC investments such as research centres; and supporting work that will contribute to the existing cross-Council programmes
- Providing sufficient volume to build significant new capacity in all priority areas (up to 80 awards a year)

#### The AHRC:

- Provide sufficient volume to build significant new capacity in all priority areas (up to 80 awards per annum);
- Allocate the majority of Fellowships to areas of strategic priority and national capability (e.g. languages, digital humanities, creative economy, heritage, interdisciplinary research with science subjects) and to deliver research of exceptional scale and importance as set out in its Delivery Plan;
- As a result, make significant changes to the operation of its current Fellowship scheme including: consolidating Policy and KE Fellowships into the main scheme; and extending the duration of Fellowships to install new expectations of leadership development, mentoring, project management, collaboration, public engagement and other pathways to impact;
- Enhance the ways in which Early Career Researchers are developed to build capacity in strategic areas (e.g. languages and design which are under-represented in current provision) for future leadership and in the skills noted above.