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1. The UK is a world leader in arts and humanities research. Over the next five years the AHRC will enhance our global distinction by focusing on excellence of achievement, extending opportunity and building capacity through partnerships.

2. The AHRC will develop responsive mode funding alongside targeted initiatives.

3. The AHRC will support cross-Council, cross-organisational and cross-disciplinary research to address complex problems and potentially transformative interdisciplinary work.

4. The AHRC will help to sustain subsequent generations of researchers by funding postgraduate research and supporting excellent provision of postgraduate and early-career training and skills. The AHRC will maintain oversight of national capability and monitor the overall health of the arts and humanities.

5. The AHRC will further increase the impact of arts and humanities research on cultural life and the UK’s creative economy thereby stimulating economic and public benefit.

6. The AHRC will enhance its contribution in policy development and public engagement, making explicit the contribution of arts and humanities research to the understanding of national life in an international framework. It will vigorously champion the importance of arts and humanities research, including identifying and showcasing excellent achievements.

7. The AHRC will enhance the UK’s reputation in arts and humanities research by increasing openings for international research and co-development with agencies operating overseas.

8. The AHRC will take an overview of arts and humanities research and, with other agencies, articulate its needs and contribute to its evolution.

9. The AHRC will take significant steps to enhance the role of its Peer Review College, promote intellectual leadership and, through a new initiative ‘The AHRC Commons’, engage researchers in the formative development of its activities.
The UK is a world leader in arts and humanities research. Over the next five years the AHRC will enhance our global distinction by focusing on excellence of achievement, extending opportunity and building capacity through partnerships.
What we do

Arts and humanities research changes the ways in which we see the world – the past world, the present world and the world of the future. It enhances understanding of our times, our capacities and our inheritance.

It explores forms of identity, behaviour and expression, and seeks out new ways of knowing what it means to be human in different societies and across the centuries. It helps us to learn from the wealth of a complex and contested history, transmitting the flow of ideas, ambitions and achievements to this and future generations. It promotes an understanding of cultural difference and diversity. It nurtures creative and analytical talents. It brings this knowledge to public use, and makes the human world a richer place in which to live. Knowledge of our development, self-reflection and critical scrutiny of our traditions, values and core beliefs are essential to a democratic community. The arts and humanities is a large, dynamic and diverse body of disciplines and activities. They range from practice-based work through to scholarly enquiry into history and culture. What they have in common, however, is a distinctive approach to ways of thinking about the conceptual, creative and historical basis of the human world.

Arts and humanities research, generated from the passions and skills of individual researchers, is a good in itself. It is also part of a wider cultural ecosystem, engaging vigorously in the UK’s creative, educational and cultural sectors, which are among the most vibrant and extensive in the world. Much of the work the AHRC supports feeds into this creative economy – in design, the creative arts, and the museums, libraries, galleries, publication, heritage and performing arts sectors. It is
The AHRC is a distinctive organisation globally. Approaching its tenth anniversary in 2015, the AHRC can take pride in its contribution to the UK’s spectacular research achievements in the disciplines it represents.

a central aim that, over and beyond the life of this plan, the AHRC will deepen and expand the way in which the people, skills and research we support interacts with public life to bring cultural, intellectual and economic benefits to the UK and the wider world of which we are increasingly and inextricably a part.

At the same time, in many contexts, arts and humanities research is conducted alongside teaching and informs that teaching directly and indirectly. In higher education especially, teaching is enriched by research and in turn enriches it. The transaction between good research and good teaching is a key strength of the arts and humanities in the UK. Though the remit of the AHRC is research-only, we recognise the crucial importance of teaching to research development, its dissemination and the infrastructure of academic departments. In postgraduate work, of course, the supervision of successful projects and the development of appropriate skills for students involve teaching relationships.

The AHRC is a distinctive organisation globally. Approaching its tenth anniversary in 2015, the AHRC can take pride in its contribution to the UK’s spectacular research achievements in the disciplines it represents, as well as the leading role it plays in promoting postgraduate study, supporting interdisciplinary work and large-scale research, enhancing public engagement, and developing partnerships with world-leading academic and non-academic organisations.

The AHRC’s funding complements other resources in the UK’s system of support for research. Diversity of research funding in the UK is a major strength. Quality-Related (QR) funds – obtained by universities and colleges through institutional research assessment – provide the major source of support for arts and humanities research and its underpinning infrastructure such as libraries.1 Based on performance, the QR block grant is awarded without specifying the research to be undertaken.

1At the time of writing QR represents around 81 percent of government support for the arts and humanities. Other agencies – which include the British Academy and major charities – also provide a range and variety of funding.
The research councils have a different role. The AHRC’s purpose is to:

• fund excellent research projects not fully supported from other sources, including those of field-defining or transformative potential and deploying interdisciplinary and thematic approaches
• take an overview of research in the arts and humanities in order to support new areas and important but vulnerable disciplines
• provide opportunities for outstanding researchers at key stages of their careers to develop intellectual leadership in their own disciplines and beyond
• support postgraduate research to ensure that capability across the disciplines is maintained and the best possible training is provided
• enable the exchange of knowledge to deliver civic, cultural and economic benefits
• on behalf of the UK, develop international opportunities to further arts and humanities research.

KEY FACTS

The AHRC has more than 50 disciplines within its remit.

Since receiving its Royal Charter in 2005, the AHRC has made a total of more than £700 million of funding available for arts and humanities research.²

The AHRC’s Delivery Plan 2011-15 commits us to spend 72 percent of research funding in responsive mode schemes and 24 percent on targeted programmes, including International and Knowledge Exchange activities.³

Since 2005, more than 16,400 research outputs have been published as a result of AHRC funding.⁴

The RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) 2008 revealed the scale of the arts and humanities research base, with 14,000 active researchers, representing 27 percent of researchers in the UK. Across all disciplines, arts and humanities researchers achieved the highest proportion of top-rated 4* work, defined as ‘world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour’.⁵

The latest available statistics suggest that there are 17,000 academic staff within the arts and humanities who are involved in research either wholly or coupled with teaching duties in UK institutions.⁶

Of all disciplines in the UK, the humanities produce the largest world share of published articles at nearly 11 percent.⁷

According to independent analysis commissioned from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for the AHRC’s publication Leading the World: The Economic Impact of UK Arts and Humanities Research (2009):

• the immediate benefit generated by a £1 investment in arts and humanities research is £10⁹
• the long-term benefit of a £1 investment in arts and humanities research is £15-20¹⁰
• the annual value generated by overseas students studying the arts and humanities in the UK is £1.3 billion.¹¹

²AHRC Annual Reports and Accounts 2005/06-2011/12.
⁵RAE 2008: http://rae.ac.uk/results/outstore/RAEOutcomeFull.pdf
⁶HESA, 2012
⁸PricewaterhouseCoopers, Economic impact case studies of arts and humanities research, 2007.
New Challenges

The modern research environment is global and fast-moving. New intellectual directions emerge quickly; new technologies offer new opportunities; insights from one discipline have ramifications for others; researchers travel and communicate more and their ideas converge and diverge creatively. Several powerful trends are observable:

• research is increasingly a world wide enterprise with closer collaboration enabled by highly mobile researchers, swift communications and the rapid exchange of results
• the international environment is highly competitive, requiring careful responses from the UK to retain its world-leading authority and an awareness that national research is inextricably international in both subject matter and use
• at a time of great pressure on public finances, and when the UK Government continues to invest substantially, researchers are increasingly asked that the benefits of that investment be realised and made specific
• as the ‘knowledge economy’ advances, more organisations – public and private – are part of the creation of knowledge and more people are interested in its outcomes; as a corollary there is increasing demand for the freer circulation of ideas through, for example, open access to publications
• norms of knowledge are changing with greater appreciation that complex problems require multi-disciplinary and multi-agent responses.

In this environment, the AHRC has an important advocacy and leadership role for all of its disciplines based on the belief that over the next decade or so:

• knowledge will increasingly be produced between a range of bodies and not just within universities and colleges
• multiple agencies will support research including those working across national, regional and administrative boundaries
• older divisions between disciplines and between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ work will diminish; complex knowledge will demand different ways of working, and funding agencies will need to consider how this is best enabled
• there will be continuing need to bring arts and humanities researchers together to influence the context in which they work; to build consortia, cross-disciplinary networks and multi-funder partnerships; and to support individual researchers to forge stronger relationships with academics overseas
• new or enhanced skills and competencies will be needed in, for example, languages and cross-cultural knowledge, the potential of innovative technologies, data analysis and the research emerging from creative practice. These will need to developed alongside traditional disciplinary expertise.
The international environment is highly competitive, requiring careful responses from the UK to retain its world-leading authority and an awareness that national research is inextricably international in both subject matter and use.
In testing times, we think hard about the range of what we offer and efficient ways of doing it. Our headline priorities are as follows:

1. Research
   1.1. To support the best ideas and projects emerging from researchers.
   1.2. To enable larger projects, including facilitating collaboration and interdisciplinarity.
   1.3. To bring scholars together to address new research questions and agendas in themes and strategic initiatives.
   1.4. To develop both the assessment and formative role of peer reviewers to ensure that funding is directed toward research of the highest quality and greatest ambition.

2. People
   2.1. To develop postgraduate support to provide the strongest possible foundation for capacity, quality and creativity.
   2.2. To support researchers through skills development, networks and projects.
   2.3. To promote intellectual leadership through fellowships and large and thematic projects.
   2.4. To develop our engagement with the research community through the measures highlighted under ‘AHRC Commons’ and, in tandem, to enhance the role of the AHRC Peer Review College as outlined below.

3. Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange
   3.1. To extend our contribution to the UK’s creative economy through Knowledge Exchange and other means.
   3.2. To deepen engagement with public, private and third sector partners to enlarge the contribution to the arts, public engagement and policy formation nationally and internationally.
We will deepen engagement with public, private and third sector partners to enlarge the contribution to the arts, public engagement and policy formation nationally and internationally.

4. International

4.1. To support and strengthen international research in the arts and humanities through strategic partnerships.

4.2. To increase researcher mobility through schemes such as International Placement.

4.3. To increase researcher participation in co-funded international programmes.

5. Advocacy and Leadership

5.1. To provide opportunities for individuals, representative bodies and users of arts and humanities research to address issues of common interest and concern.

5.2. To share often dispersed information and exchange new insights and ideas.

5.3. To develop better ways of explaining and evidencing the value and importance of research in the arts and humanities.
6. Savings and Efficiency

6.1. To provide efficient and effective use of resource developing the widest possible range of achievements and benefits from the research we support.

6.2. The AHRC is mindful of constraints on public spending, which are likely to operate for the foreseeable future. Throughout the period covered by the Strategy, we will continually assess the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of operations and change modes of working if necessary.

6.3. We will promote savings from integration of ‘back-office’ operations across the research councils and shared services to release as much money as possible for research and training.

6.4. With the other Research Councils, we will work with Research Organisations to ensure appropriate savings are made in indirect costs and to streamline the process of application to avoid the work-load burden all-round.

6.5. In the development of research, we will make effective use of digital media in support of, for example, the Peer Review College and in general communications; we will use evaluation to identify further opportunities to improve process; and we will establish national mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of best practice and (where appropriate) resources.

6.6. Through AHRC Council, we will periodically review the Strategy to determine its continuing relevance and the effectiveness of its implementation.
The majority of the AHRC’s research funding – currently over 70 percent – is awarded in responsive mode through schemes such as research grants, networks and fellowships. 

A responsive provision ensures funding reflects the commitments, long-developed expertise and existing knowledge of researchers; it can also sponsor the fluent development of cutting-edge work quickly and organically.

At the same time, there is a strong case for funding thematic and project-based work that takes a wider perspective, develops cross-disciplinary and cross-cutting enquiry and draws on the energies and multiple perspectives of groups stimulating challenge and exchange. On larger projects, it distributes workload to achieve ends more rapidly and can provide important career development for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers. It can also encourage research in areas that may, for various reasons, need additional support or stimulus. In addition, the AHRC funds a small amount of Commissioned Research on particular projects of a scoping or developmental kind, and will continue to do so.

All decisions about funding are determined by peer review. The AHRC recognises that research produced by individuals and that produced collaboratively have equal value. Both modes produce excellent work in different ways.

**Variety of projects**

Project funding is an essential part of the AHRC’s overall portfolio. At their core, the projects support ask original questions, spur new thinking and generate fresh evidence and understanding. There is tremendous diversity in these projects: they are undertaken by established scholars and early-career researchers. Many advance discipline-specific capabilities and skills, while others are interdisciplinary, promoting new methods of enquiry or defining new objects of knowledge. Others involve partnerships extending beyond national boundaries and outside academia.

The AHRC will continue to support larger-scale research collaborations in the arts and humanities, involving multiple researchers and institutions and provide for interdisciplinary research. We will also develop further opportunities to fund projects jointly with other organisations, such as funders of the arts across the UK, the British Academy, charities, NESTA, the TSB and the other Research Councils. We look forward to working with an increasing number of non-academic partners, and to expanding follow-on funding to realise wider cultural, economic and social benefits.

**Thematic research**

Of a different nature are the AHRC-funded strategic themes and programmes. These build new communities of researchers and new kinds of research leadership whether through programme directors or Theme Leadership Fellows.

Theme-based research encourages award holders to stand back from their immediate expertise to ask research questions that cannot be tackled by single disciplines alone. By bringing award holders together in ways they had not necessarily expected or planned, the AHRC’s themes set research in a wider context, enabling the pursuit of broader objectives. The AHRC’s existing thematic research areas, together with its leadership of the cross-Council programme ‘Connected Communities’, and contributions to other RCUK cross-Council themes in the digital economy, environmental change, health and wellbeing and global security, demonstrate the capacity...
By bringing award holders together in ways they had not necessarily expected or planned, the AHRC’s themes set research in a wider context, enabling the pursuit of broader objectives.

AHRC Themes
Following consultation with the research community through the ‘Future Directions for Arts and Humanities Research’ in 2009, the AHRC developed four broad research themes. The 2010 ‘Delivery Plan’ restated our commitment to these, and 2012 has seen the appointment of four ‘Theme Leadership Fellows’ to provide overall direction.

Care for the Future affords an opportunity for researchers to generate new understanding of the relationship between the past and the future and how we transmit and question our heritage.

Digital Transformations investigates the potential of digital technologies to transform research in the arts and humanities. It addresses crucial topics such as intellectual property, cultural memory and identity, and communication and creativity in the digital age.

Science in Culture explores cross-disciplinary dialogues in the relationship between sciences and the arts and humanities.

Translating Cultures explores understanding and communication across cultures, looking at the role of translation, in its broadest sense, in the transmission of languages, values, beliefs, histories and narratives.

Connected Communities is a cross-Council programme led by the AHRC working with EPSRC, ESRC, MRC and NERC and a range of external partners. Arts and humanities researchers lead on areas related to creativity, sustainability, historical experiences and the cultural and belief frameworks through which communities self-identify and interact.

of the arts and humanities to provide new ways of thinking about major topics of general importance.

Over the next period we will consult again with the research community on our approach to thematic work. Continuing to support existing themes and longer-range topics, and to ensure that distinctive arts and humanities perspectives inform cross-Council challenges, we will also wish to fund shorter duration research in new and potentially adventurous areas. With researchers and the Peer Review College, we will devise mechanisms to identify new ‘Horizon Questions’, which may require an element of speculation or risk-taking. We will fund pilot research or scoping studies on emerging, topical or provocative issues, which may shape the research of the future. These topics will be identified through consultation.

In developing its thematic research, the AHRC will work with other Research Councils and funding agencies and provide the means for researchers to progress from smaller to larger projects, for example via early career or research networking schemes. This will develop collaborative interaction and encourage innovative approaches.

Over the lifetime of this Strategy, the AHRC will:

• enhance existing schemes, such as Research Grants and Networks, to stimulate new approaches to key topics and methodologies
• maintain our commitment to responsive mode and researcher-led projects that are ambitious, dynamic and field defining
• facilitate greater interdisciplinary engagements across our schemes
• use our thematic programmes to stimulate and support cross-cutting research in key areas
• continue to lead on Connected Communities and work closely with other Research Councils on cross-council and multidisciplinary activity in key areas such as design, digital and heritage.

Funding quality and identifying ambition: peer review
Enhancing the UK’s exceptional strength in arts and humanities research requires robust, effective and constructive peer review. This will remain the essential route to funding decisions, organised through the Peer Review College (PRC) whose role, over the lifetime of this strategy, will be enlarged.
The College draws on the expertise of many hundreds of researchers across all fields who are elected through institutional nomination. It makes funding recommendations based on the value, originality and potential of grant applications. This will not change. The PRC will remain the cornerstone of decision making, and continue to provide the AHRC with the knowledge and judgement it needs. We will therefore enhance the training of, and interaction between, College members on both a regional and disciplinary basis.

We will also use peer reviewers more frequently in an advisory and consultative capacity. Peer review as a process needs to evolve in new research environments. Challenge-based, interdisciplinary and highly collaborative research will in some cases need to be reviewed via means that supplement expert review by individuals. This will be especially relevant in the case of longer and larger grants such as the Knowledge Exchange Hubs, block-grant postgraduate funding, and successor schemes.

Through the PRC we will ensure the allocation of funding is selective, forward looking and ambitious. It will need to be processed efficiently from the point of view of both applicants and administrators. In this context, we will consider extending the currently limited use of ‘expressions of interest’ as part of a two-stage application process. We will also work with HEIs to spread good practice in terms of HEI’s internal mentoring and development of the strongest possible applications.

Strong and reliable peer review is essential to inform the best funding decisions in highly competitive situations and to sustain confidence in the process. We will monitor the process regularly to ensure its operations are of the highest possible quality.

Over the lifetime of this Strategy, the AHRC will:

- ensure Peer Review maintains high standards and appropriate methods to inform decision-making
- enhance peer reviewer training and opportunities for the AHRC to identify emergent and innovative research at an early stage
- create a greater depth of engagement across the Peer Review College to increase its formative advice to the Council and increase interaction and sharing of good practice
- consider new models of research review (including assessment panels, moderation panels, interviews, outline proposals) and funding (such as developmental awards, pilot phases) to provide the appropriate methods for assessing projects whatever their nature and scale
- review current arrangements for the process of application and award to minimise administrative and other burdens and ensure the effective and efficient use of resources.

**KEY FACTS**

The AHRC’s Peer Review College was launched in 2004 and currently has over 1,500 members.

More than 2,500 peer reviews were undertaken in the year 2011-12.

A Strategic Reviewer Group within the College was established in 2011, which advises AHRC on major schemes such as BG2, the review of programmes such as Fellowships, and overall delivery. Their role will be expanded 2013-18.
Our biggest intellectual resource is the individual researchers we support from postgraduate students to Principal Investigators on the largest of AHRC grants. The AHRC is committed to excellent research through the people we fund. Our most important investment will continue to be the support of individual researchers and their development.

Postgraduate research
As the UK’s largest funder of postgraduate study in the arts and humanities, the AHRC will continue to fund the development of the next generation of arts and humanities researchers. This will be provided mainly, but not exclusively, through the next phase of the Block Grant Partnership (BGP), which will fund five new cohorts of students from 2014 to 2018. Focusing on collaboration and critical mass, these partnerships will ensure that the next generation of researchers develop the skills and experience necessary to succeed in doctoral research and have a wide range of opportunities to develop their skills within and outside the academy. BGP2’s collaborative pooling of training will provide a strong foundation for developing capacity, quality and creativity in doctoral support and stimulate connections across organisations. The new BGP will not fund stand-alone masters awards, but will enable institutions to support candidates at masters-level in their progress to doctoral study.

In addition, the AHRC’s Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships and Collaborative Doctoral Awards schemes will be enhanced, offering doctoral students opportunities to develop distinctive, partnered research in a range of environments within and outside academic institutions.

Early-career researchers
We remain committed to supporting early-career researchers in the challenges they face in the changing research environment in higher education. The AHRC is a signatory to the ‘Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers’, and over the coming period, the AHRC, working with HEIs, will take a lead in identifying and promoting best practice in researcher development in the arts and humanities and in stimulating the spread of innovation. We will continue to prioritise the career development of early-career researchers through dedicated elements in our major schemes and through specific calls and opportunities.

We are also mindful of new opportunities in the creative and cultural sectors or the many other areas in which arts and humanities researchers excel. The emphasis, for example, on public engagement, co-production of knowledge in partnerships beyond the university, international collaboration and other developments opens horizons and provides fresh stimulus and opportunity as well as making new
The AHRC is committed to excellent research through the people we fund. Our most important investment will continue to be the support of individual researchers and their development.

demands. We intend to extend awareness of these and ensure this is part of AHRC training and skills development.

Research leadership: the Fellowships scheme

Changes in the modern research environment affect researchers at all stages. The Fellowships scheme responds to the need for designated time to pursue innovative projects or ones of exceptional scale, significance and complexity. In addition, the scheme provides opportunities to develop the potential of outstanding individuals at all points in their careers with the capacity to provide intellectual leadership, transform their subject areas or become champions for the value of arts and humanities research.

Connections and capabilities

Utilising the flexibility of the core schemes – Fellowships, Networks, Research Grants – researchers at all levels will be able to build their capabilities incrementally over multiple projects.

The doctoral training partnerships funded through BGP2 will promote a coordinated approach to recruiting the best students and maintaining future research capabilities across the arts and humanities disciplines. Connections between BGP2 consortia will be enabled through a national coordinating body to share best practice and generic and subject-specific training.

We will work with the British Academy and other funders to achieve an overview of the health of disciplines, and using the variety of mechanisms above, we will ensure that the UK retains expertise in key areas that might be vulnerable and seek to strengthen capabilities in emerging areas.

Similarly, as the number of Fellowship award-holders increases, the AHRC will provide opportunities for Fellows to interact and exchange ideas within a broad framework for building leadership capability in the arts and humanities. The AHRC’s existing Theme Leadership Fellows, and the networks they initiate, will be integrated with this.

Through the Fellowships Network, the PRC and the disciplinary communities themselves, and by tracking trends under responsive mode, we will identify areas of important emerging research to make funding as timely and appropriate as possible.

Over the lifetime of this Strategy, the AHRC will:

• enhance postgraduate provision in fewer but larger Block Grant Partnership awards to provide overall subject spread and specialist areas of expertise and training

• maintain the commitment to allocate at least one third of the AHRC’s programme spend to support postgraduate researchers – the largest single part of our budget
Changes in the modern research environment affect researchers at all stages. The Fellowships scheme responds to the need for designated time to pursue innovative projects or ones of exceptional scale, significance and complexity.

- enlarge the Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme through a new Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships route
- work with research organisations on the flexible and effective use of AHRC funding to deliver the highest quality training for postgraduates
- increase training, mentoring and other opportunities for early-career researchers
- ensure the Fellowships scheme (in addition to supporting major projects) offers researchers at all career stages opportunities to develop leadership and communication skills to develop and promote arts and humanities research
- bring leading researchers together to share intellectual agendas, develop new priorities and work collectively in a global context.

**KEY FACTS**

In the seven years since becoming a Research Council in 2005, the AHRC has funded 5,325 doctoral students.\(^{12}\)

Since the scheme began in 2004/05, the AHRC has funded 500 Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs).\(^{13}\) These are doctorates that students undertake at both an HEI and a collaborating organisation. Since 2008, 24 percent have been with Independent Research Organisations such as major libraries, galleries and archives; 23 percent with local or public authorities; 21 percent with charities; and 15 percent with the commercial sector.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{12}\) AHRC Annual Reports and Accounts 2005/06-2011/12.
\(^{13}\) AHRC Annual Reports and Accounts 2004/05-2011/12.
\(^{14}\) AHRC Research Performance and Economic Impact Report 2012, p 27.
The AHRC plays a fundamental role in facilitating arts and humanities researchers’ engagement with public, private and third sector partners.

For example, the Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy have enlisted the support of many businesses and other organisations and, in turn, contribute to knowledge-driven growth and public provision. (For the AHRC, the Creative Economy includes organisations in both the public and private sectors.) As a flagship programme, the Hubs represent one element of arts and humanities partnership working, drawing on work with museums, galleries and other Independent Research Organisations, the TSB and schemes such as the Collaborative Doctoral Awards and KT Fellowships.

Research is a powerful driver of growth in the economy, and engaging with academic researchers is an important factor in business innovation. There is great demand among the UK’s creative and cultural sector – from international companies and major cultural institutions to small arts organisations and creative micro-businesses – to take advantage of the deep understanding and innovative thinking of arts and humanities researchers. The AHRC will enhance opportunities to translate the knowledge and expertise offered by arts and humanities research, thereby forging inspiring and challenging relationships with new and diverse audiences, markets and organisations.

Alongside this, arts and humanities research makes major contributions to artistic and cultural provision in the UK and this is vital for the nation’s intellectual life, social policy, the health and well-being of communities and individuals, the innovative nature of its businesses, and its capacity to attract international organisations to the UK and inward investment. The AHRC’s partner ‘Independent Research Organisations’ (IROs) – consisting of major national institutions in the museums, libraries and galleries sectors – are crucial to this process and will continue to be so. Meanwhile, the AHRC will further develop international collaborations with overseas agencies to the same ends.

Such partnerships can take the form of specific collaborations when people work collaboratively on a single project. But there are also more sustained partnerships between the AHRC and outside organisations that generate continuing, mutually beneficial and maturing exchange, such as those with major museums and galleries or with the BBC. With this in mind, we will look to nurture a relatively small number of major organisational partnerships on an evolving and long-term basis. In addition we will support partnership networks thought the KE Hubs, follow-on funds and other Knowledge Exchange activities including collaborations with the TSB such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, to facilitate connections, creative dialogue and research exchange. We will work with other agencies to understand more about the ways in which such exchange and dialogue enhances the quality of research and the performance of businesses in the creative, cultural and heritage sectors and beyond.

The AHRC ‘Delivery Plan 2011-15’ set a target – already exceeded – for the number of sustainable partnerships the AHRC would support. Maximising the value of these relationships, as well as those emerging from responsive mode schemes, will be a key task. The effective involvement of researchers, through the Peer Review College and other means, will be essential in identifying and assessing the added value that partnerships bring.

We are aware that the skills and opportunities crucial to developing productive partnerships are relatively new and unevenly spread across the sector. We will be considering ways in which we can enhance these. This will include, for example, further schemes to stimulate and support partnership working and additional initiatives across the range of the arts and humanities disciplines along the lines of the AHRC-BBC Radio 3 ‘New Generation Thinkers’ competition.
The AHRC ‘Delivery Plan 2011-15’ set a target – already exceeded – for the number of sustainable partnerships the AHRC would support. Maximising the value of these relationships, as well as those emerging from responsive mode schemes, will be a key task.

KEY FACTS

Between 2012 and 2016 the AHRC will fund four Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy, totalling £16m of investment.

Nearly a third of academics from the arts and humanities are engaged with private sector businesses as part of their research and knowledge exchange activities, and close to half of academics from the creative arts and media are engaged with the private sector.15

Since 2005 the AHRC has funded 2,766 projects that included project partners. Of 1,116 named project partners, 918 were identified as non-academic.16

Around two-fifths of arts and humanities academics have connections to a wider public through external engagement activities, and nearly half interact with the third sector – more than any other group of disciplines.17

Of the ten top visitor attractions in the UK, seven are Independent Research Organisations of the AHRC. These organisations attracted 28.5 million visitors in 2011.18

The New Generation Thinkers partnership with BBC Radio 3 first ran in 2011 with over 1,100 applications from early career researchers. In 18 months, the NGTs have made more than 30 broadcasts for the BBC based on their research, communicating with a worldwide audience.

15 Hidden Connections. CBR, 2011.
16 AHRC internal analysis.
17 Hidden Connections. CBR, 2011.
18 Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA), 2012: www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=423
Arts and humanities research makes an enormous contribution to the life of the nation, tapping into a long tradition of engagement with key ideas that have shaped the contemporary world.

Questions of human rights, trust, complex ethical issues, belief systems in a pluralistic democracy and other core aspects of civil society have benefited from the creative, critical and cultural awareness of arts and humanities researchers and practitioners. Understanding history and culture supports learning, stimulates innovation and creativity, enhances the potential of the UK’s growing and uniquely productive creative economy, and makes life worth living.

Our contribution extends from direct involvement in public policy debates to direct enhancement of provision. The AHRC funds research that feeds directly into the exhibitions we visit, the music we listen to, the books we read, the texts we see performed on stage and the designs that shape the world around us. Both the UK’s and the wider global culture derive major benefit from the intellectual and creative energies of AHRC award holders and their projects. These contribute to the UK’s standing and authority in the world, bringing artistic, diplomatic and business benefits.

Through a recently launched project on ‘Cultural Value’ we will provide research-based analysis of the ways in which the value of culture is derived and understood, and we will develop a comparative study of the UK’s strength in this area. Alongside work with Whitehall departments and devolved governments in areas such as cultural policy and communities, the AHRC’s newly initiated partnership with the Institute for Government will ensure that researchers have opportunities to grasp better the complexities of public policy making and the role of the arts and humanities within it. In addition, the AHRC will further increase its work with organisations such as the UK-wide arts funding bodies, broadcasters and the museums, galleries and libraries sector to promote public understanding and appreciation of the arts, culture and heritage.

Over the lifetime of this Strategy, the AHRC will:

- build upon the development of the KE Hubs for the Creative Economy by supporting their legacy after 2016
- develop new schemes to generate partnerships where mutual benefits to researcher and partner organisations are clearly identified
- continue to give priority to enhancing partnership working in design, heritage, the exploitation of digital technologies and the museum, galleries and performing arts sectors
- increase the opportunities for all researchers to develop their work in collaboration with professional peers inside and outside HE and convey their findings to wider public audiences
- build on the success of the follow-on funding scheme, capitalising on the commercial potential of the excellent research that underpins these projects
- develop the impact of arts and humanities research on public policy and the quality of public life
- lead the analysis of the cultural value of the arts and humanities and its contribution to public and economic good.
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The AHRC funds research that feeds directly into the exhibitions we visit, the music we listen to, the films we view, the books we read, the texts we see performed on stage and the designs that shape the world around us.
UK-based researchers have an international reputation for excellence and innovation in the arts and humanities. Increasingly, they draw on international connections, experiences and collaborations to enrich their work. The popularity of UK researchers as project partners under schemes such as Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) and UK participation in European Joint Programme Initiatives continues to grow. International activity, alongside Knowledge Exchange and partnership working, should be seen as a key feature of all our funding calls and the opportunities we provide to researchers. Inevitably, arts and humanities research has engaged with cultures and histories beyond these shores and will continue to do so with increasing attention to complex connections and differences.

We will continue to provide openings for excellent early-career researchers, including doctoral candidates, to undertake international placements with major international partners, including the Library of Congress, the Huntington Library, the National Institutes for the Humanities in Japan and Sarai in Delhi. Exposure to international research at a formative stage can lead to longer-term relationships, exchanges of ideas and co-development of projects. The Research Networking Scheme will further contribute to the development of these possibilities.

Working with RCUK colleagues in Brussels, China, India and the USA, and through bilateral arrangements with major agencies overseas (such as the British Council), the AHRC will stimulate international collaboration at all career stages to enhance arts and humanities researchers’ access to resources, schemes and initiatives.

The prestige of the UK in arts and humanities research, as well as its distinctive presence internationally as a funder, enables the AHRC to broker opportunities for UK researchers internationally. Over the next period, the AHRC will place UK researchers at the heart of a network of international organisations and sustain its leading presence in European funding programmes. The HERA network, and the AHRC’s influence in its policies and programmes, will remain central to the UK’s aspirations. Meanwhile, we will continue to enhance co-funding arrangements and other opportunities in other parts of the world.

The AHRC will encourage and support international engagement where it promises to maximise the quality of research, enhance the skills of UK researchers and deliver impact. We will work with researchers to understand their priorities in an international context, and engage with other humanities funders and strategic organisations to align with UK priorities. For the first time, we will allow internationally-based Co-investigators to be funded on AHRC awards.

Responding to ideas and opportunities with the greatest potential, rather than focusing exclusively on specific geographic areas, the AHRC will capture opportunities for its researchers as they arise. Many of these emerge from the interrelated networks of researchers themselves and we will undertake regular analysis of these engagements and their potential to support further work.

Over the lifetime of this Strategy, the AHRC will:

• continue to raise the high international profile of UK arts and humanities research through collaborations with multiple international agencies
• ensure international leadership in supporting the role of arts and humanities research in global challenges, funding opportunities and intellectual engagements
• develop further relationships under the International Placement Scheme to facilitate greater international mobility for UK researchers
• enhance awareness of the international possibilities for researchers across our funding portfolio
• increase consultation and engagement with researchers to identify further international opportunities
• focus resource on developing success in international funding competitions.
The AHRC will encourage and support international engagement where it promises to maximise the quality of research, enhance the skills of UK researchers and deliver impact.

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**KEY FACTS**

HERA: of €16.5m pooled from European and individual national funders, UK researchers had access to €15.5m from 2010. UK researchers were included in 18 of the 19 funded projects, leading 11 of them. ¹⁹

The AHRC currently supports international placements opportunities in India, Japan and the USA and will extend these.

Since 2005 the International Placement Scheme has enabled 128 early-career researchers to undertake research at prestigious institutions abroad.

¹⁹ See www.heranet.info
The UK’s Research Councils are but one part of the national provision of research support and, in the arts and humanities networks between individuals and agencies, are crucial to the study of the human world of culture, history, ideas and the artefacts of its development.

The community of arts and humanities researchers is the largest of all disciplinary groups in the UK with an impressive power and authority internationally. The key question is: how might these achievements be enhanced through greater dialogue and better interaction? Research, though built on the work of individuals, is a collective endeavour. Hence it is essential to provide an assembly for the research community to debate, realise possibilities and influence development.

In addition to the enhancement of the Peer Review College described earlier, and the networks of common interest generated by, for example, major investments in creative economy research or the centres for Language-Based Area Studies, the AHRC will launch new initiatives to achieve these ends. Under the collective title of ‘AHRC Commons’, we will launch a number of cognate initiatives designed to stimulate these interactions. These will include:

- **AHRC Reach**: this will include fora based on regional HEIs, an international forum to include two-yearly ‘summit’ events, and a continuation of the current programme of small group opinion-gathering discussions based on individual disciplines or topics.

- **AHRC New Generations**: a forum for early-career researchers (including postgraduates).

- **AHRC Exchanges**: an information network using the AHRC’s newly-developed website to exchange and collate information, and an ‘Ideas Box’ to crowd-source ideas.

The ‘AHRC Commons’ will be aimed at gathering together arts and humanities researchers alongside cognate bodies and international peers to develop joint initiatives, connect dispersed undertakings, provide for a discussion and build a shared case for the importance of arts and humanities research to national and international life.