

Feedback on 'Future Directions' Consultation

The outcomes of this consultation will assist us in developing detailed delivery plans for future Spending Reviews. If you could please complete this questionnaire to provide feedback on the AHRC's 'Future Directions', it would be extremely valuable. Any information you provide will be treated confidentially.

Taking a More Strategic Approach to Research

Q1 One aim of this consultation is to develop a new approach to AHRC-generated research themes.

Please outline any broad research themes WITHIN the arts and humanities which should be considered a priority for AHRC funding. Please briefly explain why these themes are important areas for further development.

There are two themes which recur in the responses CCUE has received from English departments. The first is digital/internet culture, and the ways in which it is reshaping the social, cultural and political landscape. The issue of how to manage the digital archive is related to this.

The second theme is that of changes in contemporary print culture, particularly in relation to the effects of the collapse of the Net Book agreement.

Please outline any broad research themes across other subject disciplines which should be considered a priority for AHRC funding. Please briefly explain why these themes are important areas for further development.

Our colleagues consider that the most important theme (and the area in which the arts and humanities can probably have the greatest impact) is the relationship between the arts and sciences. This is an extremely complex field which has not received the attention or investment which it deserves. A good place to start might be with recent exchanges between the 'human' sciences (such as medicine, psychology and anthropology) and the arts and humanities, as they attempt to reconfigure our understanding of what it means to be human.

However, this is also the place to make the point that CCUE members remain concerned about the extremely heavy weighting which the AHRC gives to 'themed' research as opposed to individual research (85% of the budget according to the consultation document). We would like to see much more money put into the new fellowship scheme, in order that it can have the same beneficial effect as the Research Leave scheme.

Q2 How far do you agree with the following statement? "Arts and humanities perspectives should play a more central role in shaping RCUK Programmes"

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree
nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

Q3 Please provide details on the further ways in which AHRC could achieve a more central and influential role in Cross-Council Programmes:

Through closer engagement with existing interdisciplinary centres in HEIs, which will be able to advise and suggest potential cross-council initiatives.

Q4 Is there a need for the AHRC to provide capital funding for new national research facilities / infrastructure?

Yes

No

Don't Know

If 'Yes', please list the types of national facilities you think the AHRC should consider funding:

Another recurring theme is the need EITHER to establish a National Research Centre for the humanities OR to expand the remit of the existing Institute for Advanced Study at London University. It is felt that this would considerably raise the profile of the arts and humanities, especially if it were a truly national organisation.

Q5 How much do you agree with the following statement? "The AHRC should further enhance its support for researchers to help them realise the impact from their research"

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree
nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

Q6 Should the AHRC develop its brokerage role to support academics in realising the full range of impacts from their research?

Yes

No

Don't Know

If 'Yes', please give examples of the ways in which the AHRC could act in a brokerage role to support links with potential users and beneficiaries of AHRC-funded research:

We welcome the AHRC's broad interpretation of 'knowledge transfer' in the Future Directions document, which makes it clear that arts and humanities research will be valued not only as a means to a utilitarian end, but in terms of the contribution which it makes to the well-being and self-understanding of a wide and diverse range of individuals and communities. It is important that this definition of the meaning of knowledge transfer is fully understood and that it is reflected in funding decisions. We would hope that any extension of the AHRC's 'brokerage' role would encompass advocacy of such an understanding, to government and in the media. The importance of the media in garnering support for our work should not be under-estimated.

Q7 Are there other ways in which the AHRC could help embed knowledge transfer more fully in the research it funds or enhance the impact of AHRC-funded research?

Yes

No

Don't Know

If 'Yes', please give examples of the ways in which the AHRC could help to embed knowledge transfer and/or enhance the impact of AHRC-funded researchers:

See Question 4 above. The arts and humanities would have more influence and impact if researchers had a National Academy which would raise our profile. Such an institution could also bring together key research resources and facilities.

Sustaining People

Q8 How much do you agree that further support from AHRC is needed for early career researchers?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree
nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

Q9 Are there any further ways that the AHRC could use the new AHRC fellowship scheme or other funding schemes to support early career researchers more effectively?

Yes

No

Don't Know

If 'Yes', please provide details on the further ways the new AHRC fellowship scheme or other funding schemes could be used to support early career researchers:

We welcome the support given to early-career researchers in the new fellowship scheme, and there is general agreement that early-career researchers are now well-supported by the AHRC.

However, there is another area in which more could be done, that of post-doctoral fellowships. Postdoctoral posts are becoming increasingly common and they act as a staging post on the route to a permanent job. However, the funding arrangements for these posts are often complex and may not be robust. It is suggested that this is an area which the AHRC should consider carefully.

Q10 How far do you agree with the statement that the AHRC should further improve its support for the development and training of postgraduates?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree
nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

- Q11 What are the key training needs of postgraduate students in your field? For each example, please provide details of any further ways in which the AHRC could support these needs:

There is general agreement that the training and support offered to AHRC funded students is excellent, and the contribution which AHRC funding makes to the wider postgraduate culture is very much appreciated.

Colleagues remain extremely concerned, however, about the small percentage of postgraduate research which is funded by the AHRC. We appreciate that budgetary pressures can only increase, but feel that of all the areas discussed in this consultation, that of postgraduate research funding is the most important. An increase in the number of studentships is the best investment we can make for the future health of research.

- Q12 What do you see as potentially vulnerable or emerging subject areas in which the AHRC should support postgraduate research and training?

Languages remain vulnerable.
Digital/internet culture is an important emerging area.

- Q13 What do you see as areas of national importance in which the AHRC should support postgraduate research and training?

See Qu. 1

Partnerships and Networks

- Q14 Please list any organisations you feel the AHRC should have strong partnerships with. For each organisation, please describe why a close relationship would be particularly beneficial:

<p>Organisation: Council for College and University English (CCUE)</p> <p>English Association</p> <p>British Academy</p>	<p>Benefits: CCUE is the democratically elected and accountable body which speaks for all affiliated English Departments and is frequently consulted by government on all issues related to research and teaching in HEIs. The English Association speaks for the subject at all educational levels and publishes a number of authoritative guides to the state of research in the discipline.</p>
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Q15 Do you think the AHRC should do more to develop strong international collaborations for UK arts and humanities researchers?

Yes

No

Don't Know

If 'Yes' please provide details of any further ways the AHRC should facilitate international research collaboration:

Further partner agreements like those with Germany and Israel.

Other Comments

Q16 Do you have any further comments regarding future directions of the AHRC?

Among the suggestions made to CCUE are these:

1. A good investment of AHRC funds would be in media training for academics who want to engage with the general public. It would also be extremely helpful if the AHRC could act as a 'broker' with the media, e.g. the BBC. At present, access to media outlets is heavily dependent on informal contacts, which are not available to many.

2. The definition of collaborative research in the Future Directions document is generally helpful, and takes us back to the point made in Qu 9. Could more support be made available for research assistants/assistance? This would be immensely helpful both to established researchers and to those making their way from the PhD to a first full-time post.

Context Information

Please provide the following information which will help us place your comments in context. These details will be used solely for the purpose of analysing responses to this consultation. You do not have to provide this information.

Q17 Are the answers to this questionnaire an individual or collective response?

Individual

Collective

If this is a collective response and you are happy to do so, please provide details of who else has been consulted or contributed to your response:

Heads of English Departments affiliated to CCUE

Q18 If you are happy to do so, please provide the names of any subject groups, Learned Societies or other groups of which you are a member?

Chair, Council for College and University English
Fellow of the English Association

Q19 If you are happy to do so, please provide the name of your Academic Institution:

University of Southampton

Q20 Which of the following best indicates your position at your institution?

- Research Student
Research Assistant
Research Associate
Lecturer
Senior Lecturer
Principal Lecturer/Reader
Professor

Please indicate whether you would be happy for us to contact you individually as a follow up to this consultation

If so, please provide your details below

Name: Clare Hanson
Address: Humanities
University of Southampton
SO17 1BF

Post Code:
Tel number 023 8059 2470 Email: c.hanson@soton.ac.uk

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your thoughts and comments are much appreciated.

Please return this form to: fdfeedback@ahrc.ac.uk

Or alternatively post to:

Miss Rebecca Borrill
Evaluation Division
AHRC
Whitefriars
Lewins Mead
Bristol
BS1 2AE

If you have any queries, please contact Rebecca Borrill:

Email: r.borrill@ahrc.ac.uk Tel: 0117 987 6556