

## 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.

Ideology:

Ideology plays a hugely important role both in the way ordinary people see the world (e.g. political and religious worldviews) and in the way arts and humanities research is conducted, with many theoretical perspectives shaping the nature of research (e.g. Marxism, Postmodernism). A research theme of 'ideology' could encompass, for example: examinations of the historical development of particular ideologies and how they are expressed in literature; critiques and defences of particular ideologies (both within and across disciplines); and examination of the nature and effects of ideology in general.

Normativity in empirical and practical inquiry:

A great deal of work in and beyond the humanities is about standard setting, and not about empirical claims. Its aim is not to discover what is true of aspects of the world, but to justify normative claims and standards by which we should judge aspects of inquiry or practice. For example, archaeologists, historians, art historians and textual scholars discuss the norms by which we judge authentication, attribution and provenance. Philosophers explore the ethical and epistemic norms by which we judge ethical claims and knowledge claims. Linguistic and cultural studies investigate the norms that are central to, and often constitutive of, ways of speaking and communicating. A 'strategic theme' along these lines would serve to draw attention to a form of enquiry that is distinctive of the arts and humanities, thus highlighting the unique role that these disciplines play in advancing our understanding of the world and our place in it.

Conceptual innovation:

The modern period has seen unprecedented conceptual and technological development. The technological developments are plain for all to see; but our conceptual schemes have also been transformed in myriad ways, both gradual and revolutionary, affecting not just the further development of science and technology but also penetrating non-scientific discourse and activities (new ways of thinking about history, or literature, or religion; new forms of expression in musical, dramatic and literary genres; etc.). A theme supporting research into both particular conceptual innovations and the nature and value of conceptual innovation more generally would serve to highlight this important but neglected aspect of the progress of human thought.

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.

Science and religion:

Apparent conflicts between science and religion play a major role in public debate and have important social consequences; for example, the teaching of creationism in faith schools, religious objections to medical interventions (e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses refusing blood transfusions for their children), and the religious dimension to policy debates about, for example, abortion and stem cell research. A research theme in this area would both be timely and cut across several research councils, in particular the ESRC and the MRC.

Love, friendship and the ethics of care:

Many political and economic policies focus on competition and assume that the factors driving choice are self-interest and the desire to get more for oneself. Yet much of what we most value in our personal, emotional, artistic, cultural, religious and family life is premised on a completely different set of values: affection, care, sharing, equality, compassion and self-sacrifice. The divergence between the ethic of care and the ethic of competition has also featured as a gender issue, and there is a sense that the exclusive focus on competitive motivation leaves out half the human population, the more feminine side of human psychology, whose emotional motivations lie more in caring than in getting. Our intellectual and political lives would benefit immensely from bringing these aspects of human culture to the fore. There is important work in philosophy on love and friendship, ethics, virtue ethics, and the emotions. There is important work in literature on the portrayal of love and suffering in drama, prose and poetry. It is a significant theme in film, and in opera; there is also scope for looking at co-operation as it manifests itself in musical and artistic performance, dance, drama. And there is work in theology on the notion of love, both as a model for God's caring relation to his people and for the relation between believers.

Across councils, this work would enable the arts and humanities immensely to enhance the understanding of issues that matter crucially in the social sciences (both for issues of social welfare, and also in anthropological work on the difference in cultural attitudes towards the weak and the suffering). In the health sciences, there is interesting evidence that choral singing improves autism, depression, Alzheimers and other mental health problems; and there is an increasing awareness that it is important for health professionals to have a well-developed emotional life, and that recovery is aided by patients' sensing that they are objects of care. It would also be of interest to economic theory, and also to education, promoting research emotional and cultural education.

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
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

The fact that the sciences are often the subject-matter of research in A&H disciplines could perhaps be exploited (e.g. history of science, technology and medicine; philosophy of science).

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:

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:

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:

We appreciate the work the AHRC has done to articulate and promote a broad understanding of 'impact'. However, we think there is a major problem with the assumption that the impact of research and the transfer of knowledge apply only to the results of the research, as opposed to the more general intellectual habits and ways of conceptualising the world and our place in it that A&H research promotes. A couple of examples from Philosophy:

First, the very existence of many disciplines, theoretical frameworks and technological innovations would not exist were it not for prior philosophical enquiry (psychology, welfare economics, and the invention of the computer, for example). The demand for impact at the level of outputs of particular research projects does not capture the role that philosophical research plays in such advances, since the impact normally develops over decades or even centuries, and cannot be predicted in advance.

Second, a good deal of the more immediate impact of philosophical research within the wider community is transmitted through teaching, popular philosophy books, discussions on Radio 4, etc. Such impact is rarely a matter of disseminating particular 'results' of cutting-edge research. Rather, the impact consists in encouraging the wider community to engage in philosophical ways of thinking. The extraordinary popularity of, say, Jostein Gaarder's book, *Sophie's World*, which is reputed to have sold over 20 million copies worldwide, and other popular philosophy books is not due to their transmission of a set of philosophical discoveries. Rather, it is due to the fact that such books prompt their readers to engage in the practice of philosophy: to challenge their own assumptions, ask questions it hadn't occurred to them to ask, and to think about how one might go about answering them.

The practice of philosophical research is of course a necessary condition for such outcomes; without new research, there would be no new questions to ask or new ways of thinking to popularise. So, again, while philosophical research taken as a whole has enormous public impact, such impact cannot be reduced to the dissemination of results of particular projects.

**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:

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:

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

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

**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:

Organisation:	Benefits:
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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:

**Other Comments**

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

1. We are concerned that the current wording of the 'core areas' of AHRC-funded research (pp.6-7 of the consultation document) excludes a large proportion of philosophical research; we have written to Shearer West separately to suggest an alternative wording for the 'History, Thought and Systems of Belief' area.

2. We appreciate the political reasons why the AHRC needs to earmark funding for 'strategic themes'. However, we would like to register our view that the quality of A&H research is best preserved and enhanced by funding the best research wherever it is to be found, and that this is in tension with current AHRC policy. We urge the AHRC to ensure that the funding earmarked for strategic themes is not allowed to increase, effectively decreasing funding for

high-quality research that falls outside the scope of the strategic themes.

### 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:

British Philosophical Association Executive Committee

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?

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

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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

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

Please return this form to: [fdfeedback@ahrc.ac.uk](mailto:fdfeedback@ahrc.ac.uk)

Or alternatively post to:

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