

BGP2 Frequently Asked Questions

Version Tracker

Version	Additions/Amendments
1.2 (Jan 2012)	Amendments to questions: Q51. (previously Q.38) question reworded and expanded, Q.69 (previously Q.48), Q.71 (previously Q.50) Additional questions: 11, 17, 21, 31, 32, 33, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 75, 77

This frequently asked questions document is intended for staff in Research Organisations (ROs) that are submitting a BGP2 Expressions of Interest (EoI) proposal in 2012. It accompanies the BGP2 Expressions of Interest Guide for Applicants, and will act as a 'live' document, with further questions added as the application timetable progresses. Those successful at the EoI stage will be invited to submit a full proposal; further questions relevant to this stage will be added at a later date.

The AHRC is aware that ROs preparing BGP2 Type A bids are calculating the number of studentships they plan to request in relation to the minimum (40) and maximum (60) thresholds per annum, and that, in some cases, wider consortium arrangements are being shaped by these numeric factors. ROs should consider carefully the methods by which such figures are calculated and justified.

- The current BGP1 and BGP:CB schemes allocate both Master's level and doctoral studentships, whereas BGP2 will focus on capacity for supporting doctoral studentships at the level requested in the proposals. Current BGP award allocations should be read in that context.
- BGP2 studentship requests should not be based in any automatic way on BGP1 or BGP:CB allocations, but nor should they be totally divorced from them, as track record (where one exists) is part of the evidence to support the case for BGP2 studentships.
- That said, where there is no track record, but substantial development in doctoral research provision has occurred since the current BGP allocations, ROs should cite evidence for their capacity to support the requested number of doctoral studentships, and balance carefully any developmental and longer-standing elements in their proposal.

The AHRC recognises that the postgraduate research landscape is a dynamic and changing one and that ROs experience growth and decline across different disciplines over such block funding lifetimes. However, the aspirations of BGP2 applications need to be formulated within a sound, and well-evidenced, framework.

General

1. What is BGP2?

BGP stands for 'Block Grant Partnerships' – grants that the AHRC makes to ROs to support studentships. It is the principal means by which we support postgraduate research (currently PhDs and Master's). BGP2 is the second phase, due to begin in 2014, funding five cohorts of PG students starting each year from 2014 to 2018.

BGP2 will award an amount of money for doctoral study through two different routes (**Type A** and **Type B**). In a change to the first round of the BGP (2009-13) and BGP:CB (2011-13), there is an Expression of Interest stage prior to full application.

2. What is the connection between BGP, BGP: CB and BGP2?

BGP2 is an open competition, and the call is open to all UK-based Research Organisations (ROs) directly funded by HEFCE, DEL, HEFCW and SFC, regardless of how much AHRC funding they have received in the past. BGP2 will be replacing BGP and BGP:CB, and builds on the earlier phases of BGP (2009-14) and BGP: Capacity Building (2011-2014) funding, ensuring that the AHRC is able to continue its support of research in those centres where training and facilities are of the highest quality and where there is a critical mass of students to support a strong and vibrant postgraduate culture.

3. Why are we informing the community of this now, with three years to go until 2014?

Unlike BGP and BGP: CB, there is an 'Expressions of Interest (EoI)' stage to our BGP2 application process. The call for the EoI stage was announced on 31 August 2011, with the closing date for proposals on 27 February 2012. We can be available to give advice and guidance to successful ROs/consortia on developing their final proposals, due in Jan 2013. The proposed changes to our main postgraduate funding mechanism are far-reaching and will require ROs to make extensive preparations, which need to begin early. This will also allow the AHRC to announce the successful BGP2 proposals in October 2013, giving ROs a full year to prepare for the start of their BGP2 awards in October 2014 and to recruit students.

4. Are BGPs the only way the AHRC supports postgraduate studies?

No - the AHRC funds postgraduate research through a number of mechanisms: BGP (currently BGP round 1 and BGP: Capacity Building), Collaborative Doctoral Awards, project-based studentships, the Language-Based and Area Studies (LBAS) centres and other small schemes. There will also be a small number of PhDs attached to the new KE (Knowledge Exchange) hubs. These will continue to run independently of BGP2.

5. What are we looking for in BGP2 applications?

Successful BGP2 applications will have a strong emphasis on high quality, innovative research training tailored to the needs of Arts and Humanities subjects and the needs and experience of individual students, in addition to high quality doctoral supervision. The awards will reflect the ROs' strategic direction for supporting research training, building on and enhancing the ROs' existing training.

6. Why are there two types of BGP2 funding available?

The two types of BGP2 funding have been developed to ensure that support is available to reflect the different needs of the full range of Arts and Humanities disciplines. In specific specialist areas (*some* Modern Languages; Creative & Performing Arts (particularly Design); Heritage) that would benefit from a more targeted approach, institutions are asked to work together as a consortium to demonstrate excellence and critical mass under **Type B** proposals. **Type A** proposals will offer the opportunity for a more broadly-based proposal from either a single RO or a consortium, demonstrating excellence and critical mass in disciplines across all of the AHRC's four subject panel areas (A: History and Thought, B: Creative and Performing Arts, C: Cultures and Heritage, D: Languages and Literature).

The specialist Type B subjects listed above will not necessarily be funded exclusively through Type B proposals, and may form a part of Type A bids, where appropriate.

7. Why are we asking ROs to develop consortia? Why is this necessary?

A key principle of our Delivery Plan published at the end of 2010 was to award 'longer and larger grants to proven centres of excellence in a number of HEIs, and promote consortia arrangements to support talent across the board and develop critical mass.' BGP2 has been designed to accord with that overarching principle, in order to ensure that our limited funds are used in the most efficient manner possible and deliver value for money. In the current funding environment, we feel that inviting ROs to consider working in collaboration to share expertise and resources is the best way to ensure we can remain committed to funding the excellent postgraduate work in the Arts and Humanities, which is widely dispersed across different institutions throughout the UK.

We also hope this will enable the AHRC to establish closer and more productive working relationships with the ROs involved than is currently possible.

8. What will a consortium look like?

Consortia will be a logical grouping of ROs that can deliver the BGP2 objectives successfully, providing a high-quality environment for their postgraduate students in the Arts and Humanities. Consortia may be, but do not have to be, geographically focussed, and in some cases, for example where there is a particular disciplinary focus to a specialist consortium, the local ROs may not be the best or most appropriate partners for form a consortium. Whatever the case, the Expression of Interest will need to provide a clear rationale for the make-up of the consortium and explain how any challenges (e.g. of distance between partner ROs) will be addressed. A key issue for the BGP2 panel will be what can the consortium partners achieve together that they could not achieve separately or with other partners?

Subject consortia are particularly relevant for Type B proposals, for example for specialist non-European languages, where there are a relatively small number of places across the UK where such subjects can be studied at PG level. Regardless of the type of consortia, students will remain registered at individual ROs within their consortium, but member ROs will pool their resources for research training and other supplementary activities.

It is important that consortia are partnerships of equals, and we do not wish to see one RO imposing its governance and rules on another. If the consortium wishes to bring in partners who aren't direct recipients of funding, we would welcome that, although it is for the ROs involved to decide on what basis this will happen.

9. What are the benefits of developing consortia for ROs?

Many ROs have tremendous strengths in key disciplinary areas within the arts and humanities. Consortia provide an opportunity for ROs to build on these strengths, to pool resources, to develop capacity across the arts and humanities as a whole, and achieve more together than they could in isolation. Consortia provide a means by which the AHRC can develop closer and more meaningful relationships with ROs to support disciplinary capability and capacity building.

10. How should we decide who our consortium partners should be?

There are a variety of things an RO could think about in developing its consortia, including developing existing links with other ROs or working within an existing consortia. Particularly for Type B proposals, it might be useful to consult with the

relevant Subject Associations. It is important to achieve a balance between forming partnerships with ROs who can maintain useful links, and those that it is geographically practical to work with, while also demonstrating a realistic rationale for the ROs to work together. This rationale, the plans for managing the BGP2 awards received, and the benefits for the student cohorts of a consortium should be described in the EoI bid.

11. What size of consortium is the AHRC expecting?

The AHRC has no expectation concerning an ideal number of consortium members. Decisions in the creation of consortia should be based on:

- a strong academic rationale for the members involved within the strategy and vision for the bid;
- an appropriate infrastructure to support the students;
- an appropriate management structure to support the size and operational effectiveness of the consortium.

12. I have a strong consortium ready, but between us we would seek a number of studentship that exceeds the Type A upper limit of 60 new studentships a year. Is the cap going to be reconsidered?

A small number of institutions have indicated to us that the consortia they would ideally like to form would exceed the cap of 60 studentships per year. In order to ensure all EoI applications are able to compete under equal terms, we will not be reconsidering the cap for Type A or Type B proposals. We do, however, wish to encourage institutions to consider whether they might submit a consortium proposal that is expressly linked to another consortium. There is of course no guarantee that both consortia in such a pair of linked proposals would be successful, but the purpose of this is to indicate to the panel where there are clear connections and synergies across bids, for example taking the form of shared research training provision with institutions that are part of a separate consortium, in addition to the shared strengths evidence across the primary consortium in which an RO is engaged. This might be the case, in particular, where a Type A consortium has good connections with a Type B specialist consortium, for example. (N.B. please refer to the BGP2 EoI Guide for Applicants for a new section regarding this issue).

13. We would like to form a consortium with ROs that are not within our geographical area. Is this permitted?

There is no expectation that consortiums will only be formed by ROs in the same geographical area. Indeed, proximity to each other will not be viewed as a strong enough rationale for submitting a consortium bid.

Some bids may need to be geographically diverse in order to achieve an effective critical mass, although this depends on the aims of the consortium. The Cohort Development Funding may be used to bring together the geographically dispersed students to build them into an effective cohort and ensure they are not isolated.

Consortium bids must be made at an institutional level and must have a strong academic basis, as well as demonstrating that the necessary infrastructure will be in place to support the students. When you detail your strategy and how the consortium will work, you will need to address how any geographical distances and any other challenges will be handled.

14. My RO is isolated from others, geographically-speaking. What are my options?

Consortia should not necessarily be developed on a purely geographical basis. You should liaise with the ROs that you feel strategically could develop a strong consortium bid that meets the aims and objectives of the scheme, and which could offer a high quality postgraduate environment for the relevant students.

15. What about ROs in the same consortium who both have strong departments in the same subject?

A subject could feature in all ROs within a consortium or just one, depending on the relative strengths. Each RO should play to its strengths. The panel will look at the overarching landscape presented in the EoI and not on the basis of quotas to individual ROs. If, for example, there are two ROs in a consortium with very strong law departments, both those departments could receive law studentships through the BGP2. Alternatively, if Law was stronger in one of the ROs in a consortium, just that one RO could receive Law studentships. A subject may be included in the bid and be available at all ROs, but the AHRC awards may only be allocated to a subset of the ROs on the basis of their strength in that subject.

16. Each member of a consortium will have its own arts and humanities strategy. How should they approach this for the EoI?

A combined strategy for the consortium as a whole should be presented, but each RO will need to provide a statement about their commitment to it. The bid as a whole should be prepared by the consortium; the only part that is RO-specific are the statements of institutional support.

17. Can we go above the numbers cap if we make a good case?

The caps for Type A and Type B bids stated in the Guide should not be exceeded. If you feel strongly that you could provide sustainable levels of support for studentships higher than the cap, you can explain this in the narrative, but the figures presented in the tables in the Expression of Interest must not exceed 60 studentships for Type A and 10 for Type B. The panel will reserve the right to recommend reductions in Expression of Interest (EoI) bids that do not demonstrate sufficient evidence of being able to support and sustain the number of studentships requested, whether the number sought exceeds the cap or not.

18. What is the maximum number of ROs permitted in a consortium?

The AHRC has not set a maximum as the number of partners will depend on each consortium's context. The key is to make a strong case in the EoI for the number you would like to involve, taking into account the manageability of the consortium versus the benefits of including a greater number of ROs.

19. Can we include consortium members that are outside the UK?

No, this is not permissible, but it is important to include information about any international connections and opportunities that exist within the ROs involved, particularly with respect to any plans for student development activities in an international setting.

20. We don't receive funding directly from HEFCE, SFC, HEFCW, DELNI, however, we do have postgraduate students who are matriculated by a directly funded RO. Can we be part of a consortium, and if so, what part can we play?

Originally, we indicated that only all those directly funded UK ROs would be eligible to apply for BGP2. However, we recognise that there are institutions with postgraduate students that have validation arrangements with directly funded ROs, but that do not receive direct funding themselves. These institutions can be members of consortium bids and receive funding for studentships, however, they cannot lead a bid.

(N.B. please refer to the BGP2 EoI Guide for Applicants for a new section regarding this issue).

21. What kind of governance/management structure should we have?

It is for the consortium partners to decide their management/governance structure, bearing in mind that it should be appropriate to supporting the students and the subject spread contained within the bid. The bid will need to demonstrate the ways in which the structure will benefit and enhance student development, training and experience. While one organisation will act as the Co-ordinating RO, the additional cost and administrative work involved could be spread between the other ROs involved in the consortium. Equally, this role may be rotated between the partners.

22. The co-ordinating RO will face a higher administrative burden than the others; will this be recompensed in some way?

After careful consideration it was decided that administration funding would not be allocated as part of the BGP2 awards as we wanted to maximise the funding available directly for student support. The decision to take on the role of the co-ordinating RO is a part of the institutional commitment and contribution to the award. Given that the workload and costs to the non-co-ordinating ROs will be less, the additional work and costs involved could be spread between the other ROs in the consortium. While the BGP2 funding will be paid to the Coordinating RO for the life of the BGP2 grant, an RO may choose a governance structure that will rotate the co-ordinating RO role. The logistics of this, along with any proposals to share the funding of the administration, should be demonstrated in the bid.

23. Is the upper limit of students for Type A and Type B proposals set in stone?

A balance needed to be struck between ensuring the limits were high enough to ensure an appropriate critical mass per award, versus enabling the funding to reach far enough. The upper limits set are intended to be fixed at these levels. If, following the EoI stage, it becomes clear that these numbers are not appropriate then we will reassess the position, but this is not our intention at this stage.

24. Given the political climate, will the AHRC be able to commit to supporting the RO at the level it agrees at the outset?

We have carried out extensive financial modelling and believe that we will be able to maintain the level of support we award through the BGP2 grants. As was the case with BGP1, the funding available may be subject to change due to the fact that the duration of the award spans more than one Spending Review period.

25. What if, as a Type A, we are asking for fewer than 40 studentships?

You must request a minimum of 40 studentships per year as a Type A proposal. Any less than this will be ineligible. In order to achieve the necessary threshold you may need to negotiate with other ROs to increase the size of your consortium, or to join a different consortium.

26. Should Type B bids be based around a subject, or a specific topic?

We don't want to be prescriptive. If an RO has a specific topic that will still be relevant in 5 years' time as a basis for postgraduate study, and will work and be feasible for the lifetime of the BGP2, this could form a bid. Type B awards will provide focussed support for a specialist area that might lose visibility if part of a Type A proposal, so a balance should be struck between too broad and too narrow a focus. We're open to discussing options with ROs.

27. How do we decide whether to join a consortium that will offer us the most studentships or one that is smaller but may be stronger?

The panel will be looking for evidence of a clear strategy for each proposal, the highest quality of supervision and broader support for postgraduates, and effective and innovative approaches to the broader training opportunities offered. ROs are advised to make their decisions on the basis of what consortium is most likely to enable them to meet these three criteria to the highest possible standard.

28. Is Type B only for specialist institutions?

No, Type B is open to all institutions. If there is the relevant subject expertise within non-specialist institutions, they may be involved in a Type B bid. It is envisaged that specialist institutions, such as music conservatoires, would be well suited to a Type B application, but such institutions could also partner in Type A consortia to add breadth of subject spread. It is up to the RO to decide.

29. How will the number of Type A awards given be decided?

The number of awards made will depend on the value of the most highly rated proposals, given the amount of funding available. The primary consideration for the peer review panel will be to ensure funding is awarded to the highest quality proposals that meet the aims of the scheme most effectively, and to ensure that all Arts and Humanities disciplines are appropriately represented across the BGP2 funding landscape.

30. How do Type B bids indicate the different strengths between ROs if the difference is very fine-grained? For example, in a Type B proposal focussing on Design, how should subtle differences within the subject be identified?

You should detail this information in your proposal narrative under the relevant sections. This will form part of your case and strategy for forming the consortium and combining different strengths and expertise should be part of the rationale for the bid.

31. What amount/type of leveraging/match funding does the AHRC expect from consortium members?

The AHRC is not prescriptive about the amount of funding consortium members could provide. This is an area in which ROs can demonstrate their degree of commitment to the BGP2 by providing, for example, matched-funding, facilities for the consortium, or extra monies to the Cohort Development Fund (CDF) or Students Development Fund (SDF). The actual provision is a decision for the consortium members.

32. Would support at Master's level be classed as matched funding?

Match funding could be provided at Master's level. There is full information about how the SDF could be used for Master's funding in the Guide. In the EoI proposal, you should provide as much information about how you wish to approach this as you are able at this stage. There will be time between EoI and full proposal stage to develop the plans more fully.

33. What is the difference between the Student Development Fund (SDF), the Cohort Development Fund CDF and Research Training Support Grant (RTSG)?

The Student Development Fund (SDF) is meant to support students individually, and can include things like international internships, internships in businesses, Master's funding, language training, etc.

The Cohort Development Fund (CDF) is meant to support the cohort of students in larger research training activities, for example, for travel between ROs in the consortium to enable collaborative activity.

The Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) is the same as for BGP1 and is intended for funding individual students to travel to overseas conferences, or undertake study visits. Please see the Guide for further information on the SDF and the CDF.

34. Do these changes mean a reduction in the number of doctoral students funded by the AHRC?

The overall number of doctoral students funded by the AHRC will be smaller in BGP2 compared to BGP1 and BGP: CB. Through the combined BGP1 and BGP Capacity-Building Routes we currently fund around 620 new doctoral students each year, along with around 80 new CDAs (Collaborative Doctoral Awards) per year, between 20 and 40 new project studentships and a few additional studentships through other smaller schemes. As a result of reductions in the level of funding the AHRC receives, and a decision by the Council to keep postgraduate funding to around one-third of its total budget, BGP2 will provide approximately 450 new doctoral awards each year from 2014. CDAs and project studentships will continue to be provided through separate routes. The BGP2 allocation to ROs will take the form of a sum of money equivalent to this total number of FTE studentships. The actual number of students to whom ROs may allocate BGP2 funding could be increased, for example as a result of co-funding from the RO or an external source, or if some students are eligible for fees-only funding.

We currently fund about 600 new Master's students each year through the BGP1 and BGP Capacity-Building schemes. In line with other Research Councils, there will be no provision for stand-alone Master's funding in BGP2. The Student Development Funding allows provision for some Master's support but it will not be possible to match current levels. All Master's level study supported under BGP2 should be intended to lead to doctoral study.

35. Does this mean the AHRC is less interested in funding postgraduate research than previously?

Absolutely not. The AHRC is committed to nurturing the next generation of Arts and Humanities researchers. We will ensure that levels of funding for PG support remain at around a third of our total expenditure. But in the context of a reduction in our overall budget following the 2010 Spending Review, we have to make sure there is sufficient budget to support all of our research programmes, including Knowledge Exchange and international activities.

36. Is there any way of increasing the number of BGP2 studentships at our RO?

Yes - In order to make the most of your funding allocation under BGP2, you can use the AHRC awards to part-fund studentships. Under this arrangement, the student must receive a minimum of 50% funding from the AHRC grant. The RO, its research partners, or another body must provide the other 50% of the studentship costs. If you do part-fund, the remaining portion of the award must be sourced from other funds; the student must not be expected to find the remaining funds from his/her own resources. A number of ROs used their success in the BGP1 and BGP: CB to secure further funding from their institution, thereby increasing their capacity for postgraduate support. Co-funding is one way in which ROs can demonstrate their commitment to the BGP2.

In addition, if any of the highest quality students that you wish to support happen to be EU students, hence only eligible for fees, the remaining funds can be used to support additional studentships. Please note that EU students should not be favoured over UK students in order free up funds and all awards should be made based on a fair and open competition.

37. How are the objectives around training provision supported by the proposals?

Student research training and transferable skills development are a vital part of the BGP2 proposals. The BGP2 grant makes provision for an additional 6 months of funding (Student Development Funding) per student, which creates flexibility for the ROs to deploy the funding in the most appropriate and strategic manner. Students could, for example, be supported to spend time abroad, in the business sector, or in a non-HE environment, or to undertake specialist, doctoral-level training in research skills central to their research project. This funding could also be used to provide some students with Master's support if necessary. Not every student will need to make use of this funding, hence the RO should use the total funds available to support the most appropriate activities for those students that require it. Some students may require 12 months funding for a Master's degree, others may require a few months for an overseas placement while others require no additional funding.

Also, additional costs towards student travel and subsistence specific to cohort activities as opposed to general travel and subsistence, and cohort development costs may be included in the BGP application up to a maximum of 5% of the total studentship costs applied for (Cohort Development Funding).

The Student Development Funding and Cohort Development Funding can be used for either subject-specific or generic training and activities.

38. Why is the AHRC moving away from Master's provision?

There will be some provision for Master's through the Student Development Funding, but only where a Master's course leads to doctoral studies. This development is in line with the activities of other Research Councils and is a commitment made in our Delivery Plan. Previously, the AHRC was supporting only about 5% of UK Arts and Humanities Master's students.

The AHRC still believe that Master's training (or equivalent experience in the absence of a Master's degree) is an important pre-requisite for doctoral study, and the withdrawal of Master's level funding should not be seen as an indication that we no longer think PhD students should have a Master's (or equivalent experience). How an RO chooses to distribute its funding among the various mechanisms will depend on the subjects involved, but we do not wish to see all of the money awarded for Student Development Funding being used for Master's students, since there will be students who require additional training at doctoral level for which Student Development Funding should be provided.

39. How does the BGP system enable innovative student-led research proposals?

The importance of maintaining student choice in terms of their individual projects is a requirement of the BGP2 scheme, and remains core to the AHRC's support of postgraduate research. ROs are expected to advertise their AHRC studentships in such a way that does not restrict student choice or the principle of enabling student-driven projects. It should not recruit students to pre-determined topics.

Discipline/Subject Coverage

40. Won't smaller departments and subjects or disciplines inevitably suffer under the BGP2 Competition?

ROs are expected to provide a robust argument for their proposed allocation of awards and to have a strong rationale for all subjects included in. This is particularly the case under **Type A** proposals, where ROs must demonstrate excellence and critical mass in disciplines across the AHRC's four subject panel areas. A balance of smaller and larger subjects and disciplines is expected in order to form a well composed Type A bid. The scheme has designed with the intention of reflecting the widely dispersed nature of research excellence in the Arts and Humanities.

In addition, **Type B** awards have been specifically designed to focus on support for some of these smaller subject areas.

41. If we want to include new subject areas not previously supported by the AHRC, how do we demonstrate track record? What evidence will be required?

Information should be provided about how the RO(s) are developing, or have developed, the new subject area. You should demonstrate the creation of an environment which could support a high quality student experience. This might include information about, for example, the appointment of new academic members of staff in the field, and the development of the areas through other funding routes. You will need to demonstrate a strong foundation for provision and demand, as well as growth or potential for growth.

42. Are the numbers indicative or fixed? For example, how flexible can we be about the allocation of studentships across disciplines if there are changes over the duration of the BGP2 programme?

The AHRC expects that the best students who apply in a given year will receive the studentships on a competitive assessment basis. If this means diverging from the profile as set out in the bid, this is fine. We would not like to see a subject receiving no studentships, or another dominating, but ultimately, the AHRC will allow some flexibility once the BGP2 awards have been made. We are hoping to work more closely with award holders in future, so would expect to be made aware of any changes in the landscape as part of the ongoing dialogue.

43. Will there be flexibility to change the subject profile as new subjects might be developed over the course of the BGP2 programme?

If the situation arises in which an RO or a consortium wishes to offer studentships under a subject that diverges significantly from its original bid, or which brings in a new subject area altogether, the Coordinating RO should discuss this with the AHRC.

44. Is there flexibility to change the subject profile between the EoI and full application stage?

Yes. For Type A bids, there is flexibility for the bid to evolve between EoI and full application stage as discussions between the members of the consortium develop. Also, the panel may make recommendations which include alterations to the subject profile. We would not expect a significant departure from the original bid, but neither does it need to remain static.

45. The classification system includes subjects which appear to be within the remit of other Research Councils. Does this mean an extension of the AHRC's disciplinary remit?

The AHRC's disciplinary remit has not changed. The subject classification provided in the Guide is that used across the research councils, and may include a change in wording from previous classification when describing some subjects. This does not mean an extension or alteration of the AHRC's subject remit. We would still expect any projects funded under these subject areas to fall within the AHRC's remit.

46. How should we bid for small subject areas that may only receive a studentship once every few years? Is it possible to bid for these at panel level rather than subject level?

You need to bid for the subjects under their subject classification, as provided in the Guide, so we can look at the subject spread, in totality, across all the bids in a consistent way. It is permissible to request only a small number of studentships under a certain area over the course of the BGP2 award. It will be for the consortium to decide when to award these. For example, if there were no applications of high enough quality to merit the award of a studentship in years one and two, it would make sense to award the student(s) in a particular subject in later years instead, when the quality of applications is better.

When completing the tables in the EoI proposal, you might include one studentship in each of French, German, Italian, Russian and Hispanic Studies, indicating these subjects by shading in the boxes, and explain that there will be 5 studentships allocated across those subjects highlighted, but the actual number per year may vary depending on quality.

47. Do you expect to see a 25% split of subjects across the four panel areas? If not, what would be an acceptable split?

You should not approach your bid in this manner. The ROs within the consortium should play to their strengths, and only bid for subjects in which they can provide high quality student training and experience. We would not like to see more than 60% of studentships in a Type A consortium under any one of the four panel areas and all panels need to be represented in a meaningful way. The AHRC will be mindful that the subjects it covers are fairly represented across the successful proposals as a whole.

48. How do you define 'Modern Languages', and will Interpreting and Translation Studies still be supported?

Type B awards are concerned with the visibility of certain disciplines within the arts and humanities landscape. Evidence suggests that major modern European languages such as French will retain visibility without being offered targeted support under the Type B awards, whereas other language areas may not. It is for the RO to make a case for what they wish to request as a Type B award, and the panel will consider this in the context of all proposals for Type B funding received, as well as the presence or otherwise of languages in Type A proposals. Interpreting and Translation Studies have primarily received Master's level support only from the AHRC in the past, so again it is up to the ROs concerned to consider whether they have a strong case to request doctoral funding, and if so, in what context that might be.

49. Are Celtic Languages, Dutch and Yiddish considered to be 'Modern Languages'?

Again, the AHRC is open-minded on whether such language areas are part of Type A or Type B proposals. The onus is on ROs to justify the reasoning behind the proposals they submit, bearing in mind that competition is likely to be fierce for Type B awards. You are welcome to contact us to discuss the various options.

50. How does the AHRC view the granularity of Type B subjects, e.g. Film Studies as opposed to Television Studies. What about including subjects we believe will be of significance in the future, or disciplinary areas beyond AHRC's remit, for example, materials science and social sciences?

Although we do not wish to fund subjects that could receive funding from elsewhere, we do not want to be too rigid and prescriptive. You should make the case for whatever you believe forms the strongest case in your EoI. One of the purposes of the EoI stage is to enable the AHRC and the panel to see what the requirements are in the arts and humanities postgraduate landscape.

With regards to disciplinary areas not within the AHRC's remit, or emerging A&H areas, please make your case for requesting support in the area in the EoI within the wider context of the institution. We will need to look at this on a case by case basis. It is important to ensure that the proposal is coherent and sufficiently sizeable to meet the scheme thresholds. Please bear in mind that you can part-fund studentships from other sources, including from other Research Councils for those studentships that are interdisciplinary in nature.

51. How should we handle a broad subject area, such as Cultural Studies, or Creative and Performing Arts, which encompass a range of subjects and might fit into a Type A and/or Type B?

Many subject areas, such as Cultural Studies, Digital Humanities, and Creative and Performing Arts, including Music and Fine Art, could come under either Type A or Type B. The question to ask is, where in your consortium would the subject best sit – i.e., would it benefit from the kind of focussed support provided by a Type B, or would it be better suited to the larger, more interdisciplinary landscape of a Type A? When working on an application ROs and subject areas should consider: will a Type B consortium in your subject be the best place students working in this field in the UK to study?

52. The focus on Design poses a challenge for those ROs with strengths in Art and Design. Is it possible to put in Type B bids in both headings, or are they seen as separate?

It is possible for an RO to be part of a Type B bid which focuses on the Design aspect within the RO, while also being a part of a Type A bid which incorporates the Art, and other aspects, for example. Equally, a broader Visual Arts Type B proposal could include Design among other subjects. The key issue is in forming a consortium of a meaningful size that will meet the scheme's criteria to the highest standards.

53. Does the AHRC envisage ROs stripping out the Heritage aspects of wider-based subjects, such as History and Conservation courses in order to include them under a Type B proposal?

Not necessarily. It is possible to include Heritage under either a Type A or Type B bid, depending what is appropriate for your students and your RO. The value of a Type B proposal is in giving the subjects included under it more visibility that might be lost under a Type A. ROs need to decide what works best for that subject within their RO.

54. Won't the fact that the AHRC are awarding an amount of money instead of a number of studentships lead to a loss of a national overview of health of disciplines?

The Expression of Interest does ask for estimated student numbers in the AHRC's subject areas in order to calculate the amount of funding needed. The Full Proposal will also ask for this kind of data, so the AHRC will still be able to have a view of the health of Arts and Humanities disciplines funded through BGP2.

Through closer engagement with the BGP2 award holders, the AHRC will be able to maintain a better overview of the health of disciplines than has previously been possible. Although an amount of money will be awarded rather than a number of studentships, proposals will still indicate the estimated number of students to be supported in subject areas. We will also know numbers of students because the RO will enter student details into the Student Details Portal.

55. What role does interdisciplinarity play under BGP2?

The AHRC is keen to support research that is interdisciplinary in nature. We do not wish to be rigid, it is possible to blur the edges within BGP2 bids with regard to subject areas, but ROs need to make the best case for offering interdisciplinary subjects that include areas that do not fall under the AHRC's subject remit. In doing so, we need to ensure support for core AHRC subjects.

It would be helpful to demonstrate how any interdisciplinary support would be used to benefit students within the core of AHRC subjects, e.g. cross-disciplinary training.

56. How rigidly do we need to stick to the subject classifications provided in the guide?

You do need to stick to the classifications provided so we can look at subject spread in totality across all the bids in a consistent way. You must select subjects for which you are bidding, however, you can describe your subject coverage in another way within your case for support if this is helpful in outlining your strategy. We accept that these may change, but we need to be able to monitor the subject coverage across our disciplines. In funded applications, we want to ensure a form of open competition, so, for example, if you plan on giving 5 History studentships across the consortium, but there aren't 5 students who are appropriate, you can award elsewhere across the consortium.

57. If we are already running a collaborative programme, will you fund it?

We need to know why you want funding for the existing programme and what the contributions from the RO will be, as well as what the RO can do with the AHRC funding that it isn't already doing.

Student Recruitment and Student Experience

58. What's the difference between 'cohort development funding' and 'student development funding'?

'Cohort development funding' is an additional cost that may be included in the application of up to 5% of the total studentship costs applied for, to cover costs such as student travel and subsistence costs between consortium partners for joint training or supervision, or for student training activities and conferences.

'Student development funding' is the combined fund provided by the extra 0.5 years' worth of funding for each studentship awarded, paid at doctoral rates, and intended for use in developing the students on the grant. It may be used in a variety of ways to support the development of students, from funding a student to undertake a Master's course, intended to lead to doctoral study, or funding a student to undertake a secondment, spend time overseas or in a work placement in order to develop specialist skills relating to their doctoral study. It does not allow ROs to support a greater number of students for 3 years only, but must be used to support training where it is needed.

At the EoI stage, you need to outline your strategy for allocating this funding. It is expected that these will be activities that you aren't already doing, or can't do at the moment. You should think creatively and innovatively about how the money could be used. At final proposal stage, we will be looking for a more detailed plan and evidence that these plans can be delivered. We have just issued a Skills Development Call, which will give BGP and BGP:CB ROs the chance to pilot these kinds of programmes. If an RO is unsuccessful or is not able to apply under the Skills Development Call, this will not negatively affect their BGP2 bid.

59. How do we manage student recruitment/allocation across disciplines and partners within the consortium?

It is for the consortium to devise the most appropriate methodology for recruiting students, and to agree the most appropriate management of this process. Any methodology must abide by the AHRC's guidance and terms and conditions. When recruiting students to BGP studentships, all students across the consortium should be considered in competition with one another: studentships should not be ring-fenced or pre-allocated to certain ROs or areas within the consortium. Studentships should be advertised in the subject areas within the bid, but there should be flexibility in the actual allocation to ensure the highest quality students are supported. Studentships should be offered to the best students across the consortium, regardless of the RO at which they will be registered, and with no expectation that an individual RO will receive a pre-determined number of studentships in a particular year.

60. Do the students 'belong' to the consortium or individual ROs or both?

Once the AHRC studentships have been allocated to individual students each year, students will be registered with a specific RO within the consortium. AHRC-funded students will also be part of the wider cohort of students that form the consortium. Consortium members should discuss and agree their approach to issues such as joint supervision and shared IP right where appropriate.

61. Is joint supervision of students a pre-requisite?

Joint supervision is not a prerequisite, but we would encourage consortia to consider this opportunity where appropriate and where it is feasible. ROs within the consortium should provide information in their bid as to how this will be managed.

62. How should we go about advertising and recruiting Master's students?

Expressions of Interest will need to identify the subjects that will use the Student Development Funding to support Master's study and make a case for why these subjects require Master's support in addition to doctoral support. Master's awards should be advertised in the way that other AHRC awards are advertised.

ROs will be allowed to advertise Master's in a 1+3 model in BGP2. However, the following points should be kept in mind:

- As stated above, Expressions of Interest will need to make a strategic case for the targeted areas in which they wish to offer the 1+3 model, demonstrating why these particular subject areas require this kind of support.
- In the recruitment process, the student must demonstrate the intention to proceed to doctoral study. If after their Master's study the student decides doctoral study is not the best option for them, this is considered to be a valid outcome and not a reason to penalise an RO in any way.
- However, a student who is offered a Master's degree as part of a 1+3 arrangement is in no way obligated to remain at that same RO for doctoral study following the completion of his or her Master's award. A student may wish to transfer to another institution for doctoral studies, and this must not be discouraged, particularly if it is in the best interest of the student. If a student leaves following the Master's award, the student will need to enter into

competition for funding at their new RO, and will not be guaranteed doctoral funding. The original RO may then offer the 3 years of funding to another student.

- It should be noted that a 2+2 model is also a possibility if the consortium agrees that there is a strategic case for Master's funding in these subjects and on this basis.

The decision to fund Master's level study from the SDF must be balanced against using the funding for other activities. The AHRC does not expect to see the SDF used only to fund Master's.

63. Can we support overseas student exchange programmes with the funding?

Yes. If this is appropriate to the development of the student, this would be an acceptable way of using the Student Development Funding.

64. Can we fully fund EU students?

No. ROs must abide by the conditions set out by the AHRC with regard to eligibility. EU students are only eligible for fees-only funding. There are no changes to the AHRC's student eligibility criteria for BGP2.

65. Is the AHRC open to 'alternative' Doctoral arrangements e.g with databases/digital outputs? What about 'professional doctorates'?

Individual ROs supporting research students will have specific guidelines related to the required format for a doctoral thesis, or a programme of research leading to the award of a doctoral qualification.

Professional doctorates will need to contain a sufficiently substantial research element to constitute an eligible research degree programme for AHRC funding.

66. What is the relationship with Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs) and could CDAs be built into the proposal?

The CDA (Collaborative Doctoral Awards) scheme runs independently of the BGP programme, and CDA studentships should not be incorporated into the BGP2 proposal. However, if there are CDA students at the partner ROs within a successful BGP2 consortium, they should be permitted to partake of any research training opportunities made available to the BGP studentship holders. Also, if the consortium includes a non-HE partner, then this partner can be involved in CDA awards in addition to the BGP. CDAs and BGP2 studentships are designed to be different in nature, so the involvement of the partner organisation will be different for each type of studentship. The BGP2 is not an opportunity for those students unsuccessful in gaining a CDA to undertake the CDA using BGP2 funding.

67. In the EoI documentation, other non-HE partners are downplayed, however, they play a significant role in areas such as Heritage.

Non-HE partners do not feature as heavily in the EoI documentation because they can't hold studentship funding in their own right. However, there are many cases (Heritage bids, for example) where a proposal would be enhanced by the involvement of non-HE partners, so please provide information of any non-HE involvement in the narrative areas of the proposal. Some ROs may already have such arrangements in place, if so,

we would like to see details of how this makes their bid distinct and innovative. The CDA scheme will still be available to support joint programmes, but ROs can use their experience of non-HE partnerships and links in their BGP2 bid, and perhaps build in some ideas for further development at final proposal stage. It is up to ROs to decide what is most appropriate for their bid.

68. How do we cost a proposal that includes London and non-London institutions?

If your consortium includes both London and non-London institutions among its membership, in your EoI proposal, please include two tables showing the minimum and maximum costings you anticipate. These should be realistic in terms of number of awards that could go to London ROs. We will treat these figures as indicative, not binding, at the EoI stage. The AHRC will provide more detailed guidance as to how these figures should be demonstrated at full proposal stage.

Assessment

69. How much involvement will the AHRC have in the post-EoI stage?

The EoI panel will provide feedback and may make suggestions for areas in which a bid could be strengthened. The AHRC will communicate this on behalf of the EoI panel. Suggestions for changes will not be compulsory. The AHRC will not at any stage be intervening in the formation of new consortia, but will be available at post-EoI stage for advice and guidance as shortlisted applicants develop full applications.

70. Unlike BGP1, there is no reference to historical funding levels in the BGP2 proposals.

Evidence of ability to deliver is important under BGP2, and track record is one way to demonstrate this. Lack of track record won't necessarily disadvantage a bid because strength could have built up recently, for example through the BGP: CB awards, or outside AHRC funding. We recognise that there have been changes in Arts and Humanities disciplines over the past five to ten years, and we are keen that BGP2 can be responsive to these changes as appropriate.

It is important that RO express their strengths in their EoI proposal, whether this is through track record, or by any other mechanisms.

71. What importance will be given to metrics such as completion rates?

Completion rate data, and RAE outcomes are not a requirement for the EoI stage. The narrative concerning critical mass and ability to support students is more important as evidence of the strength of your bid.

At the EoI stage, there are no plans to provide any metrics or additional data to the panel. We will not provide additional data or information to the panel without informing ROs. Any metrics that applicants want to provide in support of their case should be included within the EoI.

We are currently reviewing the type of metrics and additional information which will be required at full proposal stage. Applicants are therefore reminded that no claims should be made in the EoI that cannot be supported with evidence if required at a later stage in the process.

72. Will metrics be asked for in the final stage of the process?

There will be a requirement to include some data in the final proposal stage, and details for this are under development. It is important that you don't make claims in your EoI that you can't back up.

73. IROs may be inundated with people seeking partnerships. How will this be managed?

It is up to the IROs to manage this and choose what proposal or proposals to be involved with.

74. How close is the ESRC's DTC to the AHRC BGP2?

We recognise that some ROs have been through the ESRC's DTC process and are now looking at working with the same partners for an AHRC BGP2 bid, although this will vary. We do not view achieving an ESRC DTC as a benefit in the context of BGP2; it will not be a factor in the assessment process, and we will not privilege those BGP2 applications from collaborations that already have a DTC. Different subject disciplines have different requirements.

75. Who will be on the EoI Moderating Panel? Will the membership include subject experts?

The EoI Moderating panel will consist of members of the AHRC's Peer Review College, including senior members from across the HE community who have experience of working at a strategic level within the HE sector. While the members will include a broad representation from the AHRC's disciplinary remit, there will not be a representative from all subject areas. Proposals will be assessed according to the published criteria. The panel will not be assessing the bids at a subject level.

76. Will special training be given to the BGP2 assessment panels?

We will be convening a panel of people at a senior level who have experience of running large collaborations, or of assessing them, and will ensure they have they receive appropriate training and guidance. We will be drawing on the existing experience of the PRC, but we also have the scope to approach people who are not formal members of the college, if we feel the peer review process would benefit from their expertise.

Post Award

77. Will the AHRC take any action to ensure subject/ discipline/ geographical coverage?

The quality of provision is the first and foremost aspect of the proposals that will be considered by the panel. The panel and the AHRC will need to ensure a good representation of subjects across our disciplinary remit goes forward to full proposal stage. While the AHRC would be disappointed to see no awards made across areas of the UK, the panel will not consider geographical spread in making recommendations on proposals.

78. How will the AHRC be able to ensure fair internal allocation of awards?

ROs are expected to indicate in their application how many studentships they intend to support in each subject area, and, particularly for **Type A** proposals, we will require a strong rationale for all subject areas that are included. You will need to outline the consortium's strategy for allocating awards between the partners. We expect this to be a fair and open process which will ensure the best students are supported. We would not expect to see a pre-allocation per RO. As always, ROs are expected to comply with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education code of practice and with the guidelines on recruitment published by the AHRC. We will be continuing to monitor ROs to ensure they allocate awards fairly and in line with their proposal, and will also monitor student records through the Student Data Portal.

79. How will the AHRC monitor the allocation of awards?

The AHRC will undertake monitoring of the BGPs to ensure that the studentships are awarded in a fair, open and transparent manner, which is in line with the initial BGP proposal. The AHRC will not, however, intervene in any discussion between departments or ROs on award allocation, or become involved in discussions with students; that is for ROs to manage.

80. Recruitment of students by ROs could result in a decrease in quality of award holders and may encourage organisations to favour applicants from within their own departments.

It is unlikely that organisations will want to recruit anyone other than the highest quality students. The AHRC issues guidance on recruitment. All organisations are expected to advertise their available studentships nationally to ensure transparency and fairness in the recruitment process. Recruitment is one of the areas that the AHRC will continue to monitor.

81. Does the AHRC still require doctoral students to have a Master's degree, or equivalent experience?

The AHRC still requires students to hold a Master's degree, or equivalent experience, before undertaking a doctoral degree. This is because we believe it is vital that supervisors are confident a student is ready to work at doctoral level before allowing him or her to begin their PhD. We will accept applications that include alternative methods of providing Master's- level training, e.g. the integrated doctoral route. Any RO wishing to pursue this will need to make a case in the application. It will be up to the Panel to decide whether they consider the alternative a good way of providing training and a sensible use of the SDF.

82. What about the changes in levels of fees between now and 2014?

We don't know what the future postgraduate fee levels will be at this point. The Research Councils have collectively agreed current levels of contribution to tuition fees, and we will need to see what happens in the future. We can only work with what we currently know, hence in your proposals you should use the current figures available.

83. If a doctoral student undertakes a period of internship, or similar, will the submission date for that student be extended accordingly?

Students still need to submit within the normal timeframe, i.e. three years, plus one year for writing up. If the 0.5 element of the funding is used to cover extended

activities, this does not enable an extension of the submission date to become 3.5 years + 1 year. In other words, they may undertake a AHRC-funded 6 month placement, but would still need to submit 4 years from the start of their study. If the placement is not AHRC funded, and the studentship is suspended, then both the end date and the submission data can be moved.

84. How will submission rate sanctions be applied within the context of a consortium?

The AHRC will continue to monitor individual ROs. If an RO within a consortium is to be sanctioned, we would allow the consortium to re-distribute the awards amongst the other partners. This is likely to happen only in exceptional cases, though, since it is normally possible for us to work constructively with ROs where submission rates give cause for concern.