

AHRC's Subject Coverage

Introduction

The Council funds high quality research and postgraduate training in a huge range of subjects from history to English literature to design and dance.

No precise definition of the subject domain of the arts and humanities is possible. There are inevitable overlaps and border territories that are shared with other award-making bodies, especially the Research Councils. Where such overlaps occur, the Council's general principle is one of liberality in defining and interpreting its domain, to an extent that it is consistent with the protection of its core subject areas (where those who are seeking funds for the support of their research have no choice but to apply to the Council). The Council will thus accept any application submitted to it that is eligible on other grounds, unless there are firm grounds for reaching the conclusion that the application falls wholly outside its domain. It will *not* reach such a decision on the grounds that the application *could* have been accepted by another body. Rather, the test is whether it would be an unacceptable extension of the Council's domain for it to accept the application in question as falling within it. Such decisions are reached on a case-by-case basis.

There is no clear boundary between the arts and humanities and many other subject areas – notably the social sciences – but a series of interfaces, and many areas of overlap. Moreover, disciplines and areas of study are continually evolving, as researchers develop new ways of approaching the study of human culture and creativity. It is not possible to define what falls within or outside the arts and humanities by reference to the methodologies used, or by simple reference to the subject of study. Rather, the Council takes into account the approach to be adopted: whether the questions or problems to be addressed, the wider context in which those questions or problems are located, as well as the methodologies to be adopted, can most plausibly be regarded as falling within the domain of the arts and humanities. In areas such as cultural and communication studies, for example, or in area studies or gender studies, the Council's general stance is that if the focus of the proposed study is on artistic or creative practices, history, languages, literatures, or on the study of texts or images, then it falls within the domain of the arts and humanities.

The AHRC does not fund pedagogical research or courses in education, the primary responsibility for which rests the ESRC. We do, however, consider applications where – so long as the primary focus of the research questions is located clearly in the arts and humanities – some aspects of the work may be related to the pedagogical application of the results of the research. As in all cases relating to subject domain, the question we shall ask in determining whether or not the application is eligible for funding is whether or not the research questions are clearly plausibly located within the domain of the arts and humanities, as distinct from any other subject areas, including education.

A Joint Statement by the AHRC and ESRC, on the handling of applications on the interfaces between the arts and humanities and the social sciences, is available on our website.

The mapping of subjects to panels

The Council has a structure of 4 peer review panels appointed to either assess or moderate proposals. Responsibility for determining the panel to which a proposal should be most appropriately directed lies with you as the applicant by indicating the primary subject classification in which the research falls using the Subject Classification Section of the proposal. Only in very exceptional cases, where there has been a clear misjudgement, will the Council direct applications to another panel, and then only in

consultation with you. It should also be stressed that the panel to which an application is directed need not be determined by the title of the department or other unit within an institution in which you will undertake your work. Rather, you should be guided by the subject matter of the application itself.

Our **Prioritisation Panel Remits** document details how the Subject Classification Section translates into our subject panels and you should look at that document in conjunction with this one in order to determine the best placed panel for your research.

Assessment Panels will operate slightly differently, therefore if you are submitting an application to the **Studentship Competition**, please refer to the studentship competition guide to confirm the map of subjects to those panels. Some changes between assessment and prioritisation panel remits include: creative writing, conservation of art and textiles, cultural geography, cultural studies and popular culture, art history, conservation of art and textiles, dictionaries and databases and journalism.

Interdisciplinarity

The Council's structure of panels is based on groups of subjects and disciplines. However, it welcomes and is committed to support work that spans the boundaries between panels. While we will only allow you to select one panel, we will allow you to select up to three classifications to identify your research area. In the case of Research schemes, this will form the basis on which specialist peer review is sought for your proposal.

The Four Subject Panels

Panel A

This panel covers studies in **history, philosophy, religious studies** and **law**.

History: The AHRC shares responsibility with the ESRC for the support of research in history. The AHRC supports work in all periods of history from ancient times to the recent past, and in all parts of the world. Similarly, the ESRC has a funding interest in the social and economic history of all periods and in all parts of the world. The AHRC is primarily responsible for:

- Biography
- Administrative, cultural diplomatic, legal, military, political and religious history
- The history of science, of medicine, and of ideas
- Historiography

Proposals to the AHRC in ancient history should normally be directed to Panel C; all other proposals should go to this panel. Proposals dealing with topics within the last thirty years should explicitly demonstrate why their focus is predominantly historical rather than contemporary and thus part of the AHRC's rather than the ESRC's subject domain. In addition it should be noted that:

- Proposals in **historical or cultural geography** that fall within the Council's domain (see under Panel B/C) and in the **history of geography** should be directed to this panel, where there is a demonstrable historical focus
- Proposals in the **history of science and medicine** and in the **history of ideas**, including a philosophical focus to the research should be directed to this panel
- Proposals in **area studies** might be appropriately directed to this panel, where the focus of the proposed work is historical. You should bear in mind that the AHRC shares with the ESRC responsibility for the support of work in area studies.

- Some of the proposals in **communication, cultural and media studies** might be directed appropriately to this panel, or Panels B or D.
- While the Council supports work in **diplomatic history** and the **history of international relations**, proposals in contemporary or near-contemporary international relations or near-contemporary political theory or analysis should normally be directed to the ESRC.

Philosophy may include all the main areas, styles of and approaches to philosophy including:

- History of philosophy including ancient, medieval, modern and recent
- Metaphysics
- Epistemology
- Logic
- Philosophy of science
- Philosophy of mind
- Philosophy of language
- Philosophy of religion
- 19th and 20th century European philosophy including phenomenology, existentialism, critical theory, hermeneutics and deconstruction
- Ethics including applied ethics
- Political and social philosophy
- Applied philosophy
- Feminist philosophy
- Aesthetics.

In addition, the following points should be noted:

- Proposals in **ancient philosophy** may be directed appropriately either to this panel or Panel C.
- Proposals in the **history of science** and the **science of ideas** should normally be directed to this panel
- Some proposals in **aesthetics** may be directed to Panel B.

Religious studies may include the study of the world's religions, specific or comparative, including their scriptures, thought, history, ethical teaching, social and cultural impact, practices and related areas. It embraces theological, textual, philosophical, sociological, anthropological and applied approaches. It is not intended to exclude any of the areas normally studied under the rubric of theology, divinity, religious studies or biblical studies.

Law may include doctrinal, theoretical, empirical, comparative or other studies of law and legal phenomena. The AHRC shares with the ESRC responsibility for studies in law. The AHRC focuses on studies where the focus is on the content or procedures of the law. The ESRC has an interest in funding socio-legal studies, which reflects a focus on the socio-economic impact of the law and the legal system. It should also be noted that the Council does not provide support in any competition for postgraduate students undertaking conversion courses in law, or for courses that aim to provide them with training for legal practice (for example, courses such as the CPE, LPC and BVC are not eligible for funding).

Panel B

This panel covers studies relating to **contemporary arts practice, theory in art, design and media, architecture, visual arts, creative writing, music, dance, drama and theatre studies**.

Visual Art and design may include:

- Painting
- Public art
- Sculpture
- Performance
- Installation
- Time-based art
- Printmaking
- Photography
- Screen productions
- Virtual reality

- Multimedia
- Digital and interactive art and design
- Graphic and communication design
- Software design for visual artefacts
- Animation
- Illustration
- Graphic and communication design
- Art and design in the landscape
- Environmental and interior design
- Theatre design
- Exhibition and events design
- Fashion
- Textiles
- Jewellery and metalwork
- Applied arts
- Craft
- Ceramics
- Glass, wood, metal and plastics
- Technology studies
- Product and furniture design
- Art and design management
- Cultural and theoretical studies, where this is principally contextual to contemporary practice and culture within art and design.
- Community Arts

The Council will also support research in **architecture** that concerns building design (but not structural or civil or other aspects of engineering).

History of architecture and design may include:

- History of architecture and design in the widest chronological and geographical framework
- Theory and aesthetics of the visual arts
- History of film, photography, and visual media

together with work in cognate fields such as cultural and gender studies, archaeology, and anthropology, where these relate to, or are grouped with, study of the visual arts.

Museology, curatorship and conservation should be directed to this panel only where the focus is on curating visual arts exhibitions. Other proposals might be directed to Panel C.

Communication, cultural and media studies constitutes an area of study for which the AHRC shares responsibility with the ESRC. It includes:

- Communication studies, including electronic communication
- Cultural studies
- Film studies
- Media studies

Study in these areas may fall within the domain of this panel, particularly where the focus is practice-based and on images. Other proposals may be appropriately addressed to Panel D. Where the focus of the proposed work is on social or economic issues, applications may be more appropriately addressed to the ESRC.

Creative writing (including foreign-language creative writing) proposals should be directed to this panel where the focus is on practice-led research into creative writing.

Music may include:

- Composition and performance (including classical, commercial and popular)
- History and criticism of music
- Ethnomusicology
- Theory and analysis, including empirical approaches (in doctoral research in these areas, digital and electronic outcomes as well as a written thesis may be possible)
- Technology and computer applications.

In addition, the following points should be noted:

- Both Master's-level courses and doctoral research in composition are eligible for funding
- Both Master's-level courses and doctoral research in performance are eligible for funding.
- Responsibility for ethnomusicology is shared with the ESRC.

Drama, dance and performing arts may include:

- Drama, theatre and performance analysis, history and practice
- Film, TV and video analysis and practice
- Dramaturgy and theatre translation
- Gender and performance
- Scenography
- New technologies and performance
- Theatre performance
- Performance documentation and reconstruction
- Live art and choreography
- Dance education and health
- Community performance
- Performance anthropology
- Drama and dance/movement therapies
- Related specialist areas

It should also be noted that:

- Responsibility for ethnochoreology and theatre anthropology is shared with ESRC

Arts management research will be supported where there is a clear focus on the requirements of the visual, media, music or performing arts. (Support for such research may also be sought from the Arts Councils.) Where the focus is on arts management within the visual or media arts, proposals should be directed to this panel. You should also bear in mind that the ESRC supports work on the socio-economic foundations and impact of the creative and cultural industries.

Panel C

This panel covers subjects relating to **art history, conservation of art and textiles, dictionaries and databases, cultural geography, archaeology, classics and ancient history and library, information and museum studies.**

Archaeology includes: archaeological theory, archaeology of human origins and prehistoric and historic societies on a world-wide basis.

This includes:

- Early civilisations of near east
- Egyptology
- Classical archaeology
- Medieval and post-medieval archaeology
- Colonial and industrial archaeology
- Landscape and environmental archaeology
- Archaeological science
- Public archaeology
- Archaeological aspects of heritage management and museum studies.

The Council shares responsibility for the funding of research in archaeology with the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), which supports primarily *science-based archaeology*. The distinction between science-based and other archaeology is not always easy to make, but where the focus of the work to be undertaken (in terms of the questions or problems to be addressed, and the context for those questions, as well as the methodologies to be employed) is primarily archaeological, applications should be directed to the AHRC; and where it is scientific, they should more appropriately be directed to NERC.

The Council does not seek to discourage proposals on the borderline of the humanities and science side of archaeology, but projects must address research issues and problems of substantive archaeological significance. If a proposal focuses on an archaeological question (for example about trade, cultural history or identity, that can be answered with science, then it falls within the remit of the AHRC. The AHRC will not, however, normally support projects that are primarily concerned with technical or scientific questions which have an application within archaeology.

The Council will use its discretion and does not seek to discourage proposals on the borderline of the humanities and science side of archaeology, but follows the following guidelines:

- The AHRC will not normally accept proposals from students who have applied for Master's courses that are explicitly supported by NERC studentship awards
- If you are seeking funding for an MSc programme, you should use the Institutional Support Statement section of the form to demonstrate that the programme in question contains a significant proportion of structured work in the humanities, emphasising the archaeological context in which scientific techniques are to be applied. For doctoral awards, projects must address research issues and problems of a substantive archaeological question (for example, about trade, cultural history or identity) that can be answered with science, in order to fall within the remit of the AHRC. The AHRC will not normally support projects that are mainly concerned with technical or scientific questions that have an application within archaeology.

Applications concerning *cultural resource management* which have a clear archaeological base should be directed to this panel. But other applications may be more appropriately directed to Panels A, B or D.

Classics and Ancient History may include:

- The language, literature and thought (including ancient science and philosophy) of Greece and Rome from the earliest times to late antiquity
- Latin language and literature of the middle ages and subsequent periods
- the history, art and archaeology of Greece from the Mycenaean period to the Roman empire
- The history, art and archaeology of Rome, Italy and the Roman provinces from the pre-Roman period to the late Roman empire
- The language, literature, history, culture, art and archaeology of the Byzantine world
- Latin and Greek philology and linguistics;
- The reception of classical antiquity and the classical tradition.
- Byzantine Studies

In addition it should be noted that:

- Proposals for work in **medieval Latin** should normally be directed to this panel
- You may consider directing proposals in **ancient philosophy and religion** to Panel A.
- Proposals in **other ancient languages**, such as Sumerian, should normally be directed to this panel.
- Proposals in **Byzantine studies** may be directed to this panel or to Panels A or B
- Proposals in **Modern Greek** should be directed to Panel D.
- Proposals in the **classical tradition and its reception** should normally be directed to this panel, or perhaps Panels B or D, depending on the nature of the research.

History of art may include history of art in the widest chronological and geographical framework, together with work in cognate fields such as cultural and gender studies,

archaeology, and anthropology, where these relate to, or are grouped with, study of the visual arts

This panel also covers studies concerned with the **management of recorded knowledge, in librarianship and information science, record and archive studies, museology and information systems**. These may include:

- Information communities and the use and management of information in all forms and in all contexts
- All aspects of archive administration and records management
- Museology, museum studies, and conservation
- All aspects of information policy in the information society
- Information systems
- Systems thinking
- Systems development
- Information retrieval (including interfaces and gateways)
- Preservation and conservation of recorded information
- The information industry (including publishing).

Proposals should be directed solely to Panel C only where the research questions to be addressed, and the research imperative, are focused on the subject domain of this panel as defined above. If as part of your application you are seeking support for the development of databases, the production of catalogues and other finding aids to research resources, then it is often not appropriate for it to be directed to Panel C. Rather, you should direct it to the panel which covers the subject matter of the research resource or information in question.

Most proposals in **museology, curatorship and conservation** should be directed to this panel. Where the focus is on curating visual arts exhibitions, they may be more appropriate for Panel B. Alternatively, in some cases, Panel A may be the most appropriate panel.

Proposals in some aspects of **cultural geography** may appropriately be directed to this panel, covering matters such as:

- The iconography and interpretation of the cultural landscape
- Cultural constructions of nature and environment
- Creative and imaginative aspects of geographical thought and practice, including the arts of mapping
- Relationships between space, place and cultural identity.

Panel D

This panel covers subjects related to **journalism, media and communication studies, American studies, cultural studies and popular culture, gender and sexuality, lifewriting, literary and cultural theory, post-colonial studies, text editing and bibliography, English language and literature, linguistics and modern languages**.

English language and literature may include:

- Old and middle English language and literature
- Old Norse and Icelandic
- Renaissance literature
- 17th and 18th century literature
- Romantic literature
- Victorian literature
- 20th century literature
- American literature
- Colonial and postcolonial literature
- Comparative literature
- Women's writing
- Children's literature
- Critical and cultural theory and history

- Gender and gay studies
- Bibliography, textual criticism and history of the book
- Irish literature in English
- Scottish Literature in English and Scots
- Welsh Literature in English.

In addition, the following points should be noted:

- Proposals for studies in the **history of the English language**, and **stylistics and discourse analysis**, should be directed to this panel.
- Studies of **speech and pragmatics, lexis and grammar** may also be directed to this panel.
- Proposals in critical theory and cultural or communication studies may be appropriately directed to this panel, especially where the focus of the study is on the interpretation or analysis of texts in English. You should also bear in mind that the AHRC shares with the ESRC responsibility for the support of work in communications, cultural and media studies.
- Proposals in **creative writing** in English should be addressed to Panel B.
- Proposals in **publishing studies** fall within the domain of Panel C, rather than this panel, at both doctoral and Master's level.

Language-based areas studies: This panel also covers areas of work within language-based subject areas, including:

- Middle Eastern and African studies
- Asian studies
- European studies
- Celtic studies
- French
- German, Dutch and Scandinavian languages
- Italian
- Russian, Slavonic and East European languages
- Iberian and Latin American languages
- Linguistics.

The work undertaken may include studies in language and literature; critical and cultural theory; creative writing; cultural studies; gender studies; media studies; philosophy; and historical studies. In social, political, cultural and historical studies, there are overlaps with the responsibilities of the ESRC. In addition, the following point should also be noted:

- Proposals in **modern Greek** studies will be treated as falling within this panel's domain.
- Proposals to undertake courses in **interpreting and translation** should be directed to this panel.

Proposals to this panel must, however, include a significant proportion of work on texts, documents or archives or fieldwork in a language other than English; you must also demonstrate competence in that language at an appropriate level. In social, political, cultural and historical studies there are overlaps with the responsibilities of the ESRC.

Journalism and publishing studies includes all forms of journalism such as broadcast journalism, newspaper journalism, periodical journalism, and includes journalism transmitted through new media (multimedia and online journalism) and Master's level courses, and doctoral research in publishing studies.

Proposals in **communication, cultural, media and gender studies** may all within the Council's domain, especially where the focus of the proposed study is on the study of texts or images, but you should bear in mind that the ESRC also supports work in communications, cultural, media and gender studies. Many proposals in these areas of

study that fall within the Council's domain may be directed to other panels, such as Panels A or B.

In some cases, proposals could be directed to Panel A. The Council does not, however, accept proposals that are clearly anthropological in nature.

Proposals in **area studies**, including **American and post-colonial studies** will generally fall within the Council's domain where the focus of the proposed study is on artistic or creative activities, history, languages, literatures, or thoughts and beliefs, but you should bear in mind that the ESRC also supports work in area studies. Many area studies proposals that fall within the Council's domain may also be directed to other panels, including Panels A or B.

The AHRC shares with the ESRC responsibility for the support of research in **linguistics**. The AHRC focuses on the support where research questions bear on the structure, history, theory, description and application of language and languages, including pragmatics and corpus studies, and such matters as translation and lexicography. Proposals for such studies of the English language may be directed to this panel or to Panel B in the case of creative writing. All studies of the **history of English, stylistics or discourse analysis** should be directed to this panel. The ESRC focuses on support for areas of applied linguistics, computational linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and interdisciplinary social science research involving linguistics.