

## The Royal Historical Society's submission to the Arts and Humanities Research Council consultation exercise on the next phase of the AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership Scheme (DTP2) to recruit students from October 2019.

For the document to which this responds, see:

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/calls/ahrc-doctoral-training-developing-the-next-phase/>

### AHRC DTP Phase 2 - Survey Introduction

AHRC are currently developing the next phase of AHRC Doctoral Training Partnerships, which will recruit students from October 2019. In order to develop DTP Phase 2, we are particularly keen to receive feedback on a number of key areas through the following survey questions. Feedback and views are welcome from all interested parties. Many thanks for your input. Please note that the deadline for responses is 30 November 2015, when the survey will close.

### Leverage and co-funding

The universities involved in AHRC's current DTPs and CDTs committed more than £67m alongside the AHRC's £170m investment. However, there was considerable variation in the commitments made. In the next phase of commissioning the AHRC expect all DTPs to commit to providing 50:50 match-funding against the AHRC studentship funding

### Q2. Is 50:50 match-funding the appropriate level required as part of any bid to the DTP call?

Yes / **No** / Possibly / Don't Know

### Comments

*We understand that the proposal to make an explicit and high level of demand on HEIs to match fund AHRC support reflects a laudable intention to maximise the impact of AHRC funding in terms of the numbers of studentships supported (especially in light of the proposal to fund 4 years rather than three). We also welcome the clear guidance as to the level of support which is expected rather than promoting a bidding war. But there is nevertheless a case for arguing that this is an unrealistic and unwelcome demand at this level.*

- 1) *Existing levels of match-funding already impose considerable burdens on HEIs, especially when one also factors in other additional costs incurred in the day-to-day running of centres: match-funding should not be understood as the only or best measure of HEIs' commitment to DTPs.*
- 2) *Where are the funds to do this to come from? In most Arts and Humanities faculties/schools the main source of income is undergraduate fees: if they divert more of these funds for subsidy of PGR funding at a time when HEIs are under increasing pressure to explain where UG fees go, and to increase the level of attention given to UG provision in the context of the TEF, it may be both politically difficult and potentially inappropriate to reallocate resource in the way that would be required by this policy, involving a trade-off between quality in one area and quantity in another.*
- 3) *The policy is potentially in tension with the aspirations articulated elsewhere to avoid overconcentration of access to AHRC funding (p. 6), with which we are wholly in accord. It is*

*hard to avoid the conclusion that this model would significantly limit the number of HEIs willing or able to participate in DTPs. In some cases institutions might be concerned about the implications in the context of budgeting decisions in what is likely to be an otherwise austere funding climate: potentially such match funding will have to compete for resource with other equally important institutional priorities at PGR level such as international studentships and hardship funds; other scholarship schemes more in accord with institutional strategies than AHRC studentships where there are specific requirements involved; widening participation strategies; other RCUK models operating elsewhere in the institution, in which Arts and Humanities may look a poor relation. At a more basic level, the burdens may in themselves be enough to exclude HEIs other than the most research intensive from participation, and may well be perceived as a threshold designed to achieve a policy of research concentration without having to articulate it. If that is the intention, then it would be better to make it explicit and consult on that proposal. Our own view is that any such further concentration would be undesirable.*

- 4) *The attempt to leverage maximum funding out of institutions also assumes that it is a good thing both for the national network and for institutions to commit maximum resources to the AHRC's distinctive mission and 'strategic priorities'. We would argue, to the contrary, that in the interests of pluralism and the network's 'arm's length' from RCUK, institutions should be encouraged to develop their own strategies in parallel with and complementary to the AHRC's. The higher the leveraging, the more 'efficiency' for public expenditure, but also the less pluralism and the closer alignment between HEIs and government.*

*In responding to this question, we have focused narrowly on the specific issue raised. However, we believe it is only possible to assess properly the impact of the various issues and proposals raised in this document holistically, and we will return to our understanding of the potential implications of this proposal when set alongside others in our 'Comments' at the end of this survey.*

### **Collaboration between Universities**

Currently almost all the DTPs and CDTs are collaborative in nature and it was a requirement of the CDT strand that bids be collaborative. Given the breadth of AHRC's subject remit, and the perceived benefits of collaborative delivery in terms of training within the existing DTPs and CDTs, our expectation is that all proposals to the next round of DTPs will need to be collaborative between HEIs.

**Q3. Are there any significant obstacles to all bids being multi-university collaborations in the next call? Please provide comments in the text box below.**

Yes / No / Possibly / Don't Know

### **Comments**

*We believe that it is probably desirable that all DTPs formed in response to the next call should be multi-university. We say this for the following reasons:*

- 1) *If it is proposed to reduce the number of DTPs awarded it is essential that the widest possible range of HEIs be included within the DTPs in order not to have a detrimental impact on funding distribution. To have DTPs consisting of single HEIs, especially if the cap on studentships is removed and given the fundraising capacities of those institutions most likely to make such an application, would produce an unacceptable concentration of funding.*

- 2) *For most HEIs, there are real benefits from geographically and academically appropriate institutional collaboration in addressing many of the aims of the AHRC DTP scheme when it comes to widening the experience of PGRs.*

*This said, we have reservations about the implication of reducing the number of DTPs in the context of the multi-university model if, as indicated in some places in the document, the expectation is that the number of participants in any one DTP is to grow.*

*One aim of the model of DTP and the degree of concentration of funding in BPG2 was the benefit of bringing together a critical mass of PGR students who would benefit from the presence of their peers and the range of expertise in the DTP community of scholarship. While we had and continue to have concerns about some of the impact of this concentration, in and of itself this was a clear benefit from the scheme. We are less clear whether the benefit is still as obvious if a DTP community expands beyond the point at which it can be a 'real' community as opposed to an intermittently 'imagined' one.*

*Our experience in talking to the many fellows of our learned society who have been involved in DTPs or work within the institutions which hold them indicates that multi-university collaborations are hard work if they are to be effective. They take time to inaugurate and bed in, and require a large amount of commitment and resource from both institutions and individuals to make them realise the benefits identified. It is likely that where BGP3 consortia grow out of BGP2 collaborations there will be the opportunity to refine and enhance the collaborations. However, if there is both wholesale reconfiguration and also expansion, the challenges to realising the benefits may become insurmountable, and the debit side of the arrangement become more evident especially where configurations are both new and larger.*

*Once consortia become too large, it not only makes meaningful collaboration difficult to achieve. The transaction costs involved in bringing the collaborators together also become more significant and burdensome, something that is clearly perceived by both supervisors and PGRs themselves in some cases already, a perception that would become more important if the benefits seemed less clear.*

*If there is not an increase in the number of studentships in the context of larger consortia, moreover, the investment of staff both as supervisors and management of departments and faculties on whom the success of the DTP depends will be diminished as the cost/benefit analysis of involvement in terms of the chances of obtaining funding for 'their own' students diminishes accordingly. We think the current number of DTPs already produces some such effects; it is hard to conceive that 10 would represent an improvement since they will inevitably have to cover more geographical space (a real impediment to actual sharing of resource). A different approach might be to encourage increased collaboration between DTPs on specific themes (as envisaged elsewhere in the document) while maintaining the number of consortia at current levels.*

### **Numbers of studentships**

*We understand that the previous cap on the maximum number of studentships (which was set at 60 p.a.) may have inhibited some consortia from forming at the size they would wish. In the next round, we are proposing to have a no cap in place – though bids will need to match-fund the number they request (see question 3). The previous call also set a minimum number of studentships which could be bid for (40 p.a.), in order to ensure that consortia formed of appropriate size. We propose to retain the minimum bid at 40 p.a.*

**Q4. Do you agree with the removal of the cap on the number of studentships that can be requested (previously 60 p.a.)? Please provide comments in the text box below.**

Yes / No / Possibly / Don't Know

#### **Comments**

*It is very hard to answer this question without a clearer sense of the configurations that might result from the AHRC's proposal to reduce the number of consortia and increase the number of partners. If there were to be a significant expansion -- for example, for the sake of argument, a new 'London-focused' configuration involving a concentration of research intensive HEIs in the capital -- it would be hard to deny the case for an expanded provision (in London given the scale already allocated to LAHP). If, on the other hand, the imperative of regional distribution were to make this a non-starter, or make it a driver to limit the collaboration between London HEIs, then there might be a stronger case for retaining the current cap. It also seems crucially to depend on another unknown, the actual total number of studentships on offer. Were this not to be maintained or increase, then the risks of the policy driving concentration of the kind explicitly eschewed on p. 6 would seem to argue against the removal of the cap.*

*As in our earlier responses, once more we thus see the difficulty of answering this question in isolation. In so far as we can speculate, in the current funding climate across the state and state-sponsored activity, and the likely problems in HEI finances in coming years, it might seem most reasonable to assume that funds for awards will at best remain at current levels, or decrease. In this scenario we would regret any arrangement which saw fewer, larger DTPs seek a higher proportion of the available funding both in terms of its impact on HEIs and on potential PGRs.*

**Q5. In the previous call, the minimum capacity of a bid was 40 studentships p.a. for DTPs. Is this level still appropriate? Please provide comments in the text box below.**

Yes / No / Possibly / Don't Know

#### **Comments**

*This seems an acceptable minimum, given the administrative challenges of co-ordinating a DTP. It should clearly be related to the strength of the bid – it would be unfortunate if an outstanding application that came close to this figure were to lose out to a weaker one just over the threshold, especially in the context of the end of the CDT scheme.*

#### **Specialist Subject Networks**

We will not be inviting bids for CDTs in the next round. We will, however, keep open the possibility of using the CDT model as a means of supporting emerging multi-disciplinary research training as required. We will seek to continue support for specialist research training networks by inviting successful DTPs in this round to propose subject networks where there would be value in supporting a network of students nationally, for example, because the students and specialist supervisory expertise is geographically spread across multiple DTPs and CDPs. AHRC will provide additional funding for this purpose following the completion of the DTP call.

**Q6. Are there additional factors we should consider in relation to the introduction of specialist subject networks across DTPs? Please provide details in the comments box below.**

**Comments**

*We can see the arguments for introducing specialist subject networks to support certain aspects of research training where this appears the most efficient and effective way of doing so. One can imagine circumstances where it would be clear that either a new CDT-style or the new subject network model would be most appropriate depending on the disciplines involved, and that it might help counteract some undesirable consequences of a move to a different DTP configuration.*

*The section of the paper to which this question pertains, however, does pose further questions concerning the type of activity to be supported which it would have been helpful to have addressed before assessing the value of these initiatives. Many colleagues in our discipline would want to know what types of research activity are likely to be supported in this way, and how they will be selected. From the document there is clear reference to themes which are not 'exclusively ... AHRC, or focussed on AHRC specific themes/priorities', and 'multi-disciplinary research training', and elsewhere 'specialist' expertise and training which is geographically dispersed. It is also stated that there will be a different approach (unspecified) to supporting 'the health and strength of disciplines' to be included in AHRC plans for the next spending review.*

*Within our discipline, there would be clear support for initiatives that helped support research in vulnerable but important areas which the configuration of DTPs did not of itself reinforce. The document, however, seems to suggest that any such support for 'vulnerable' areas is to be addressed not within the context of the DTP scheme but in other AHRC policies. It is hard to see, however, that the kind of input into doctoral training and renewal of the profession that must be central to such support could be delivered outside the context of AHRC provision under the headings in this document. (Moreover, one might argue that the fact that it is clearly effectively conceded that the DTP model itself does not necessarily guarantee effective support to the full range of strategic disciplines without the need for additional and inevitably complex administrative and project structures disrupting the DTP architecture indicates a serious shortcoming in the DTP model as proposed.)*

*Given this, we want to articulate a degree of nervousness about the emphasis on emergent areas rather than vulnerable ones in this document, and the stress on the identification of themes which cross traditional research council boundaries. The foundation of strong interdisciplinarity is strong disciplines, and it may well be that vulnerable areas may be those which most effectively underpin cross theme working (eg language skills). We would be unhappy if in practice the approach outlined here were in implementation to involve a diminution of resources available for existing strengths.*

**External Funding**

*Given the increasing emphasis we are placing on the doctorate as valuable to the world beyond academic research we would expect the next phase of DTPs to engage more directly with organisations outside of the academic sector as part of their collaborative and partnership arrangements. This might include, for example, more direct representation of employers and research users on DTP steering and advisory bodies, and more direct engagement of non-academic partners in developing and delivering training and development opportunities. We would like to invite views on whether we should also set targets for attracting external sources of funding for PhDs (e.g. to co-fund PhD studentships with AHRC funding).*

**Q7. Should targets be set for leveraging external sources of funding for studentships (i.e. for jointly funded PhDs with non-HE funding sources)? Please provide comments in the text box below.**

Yes / **No** / Possibly / Don't Know

### Comments

*There are potentially very serious implications for the future health of Arts and Humanities research in this element in proposal. We certainly accept that there has in the past been insufficient emphasis on the clear evidence that doctorates in disciplines such as History possess value outside the academic sector as a training. They can also directly contribute to the missions of non-academic institutions, including but not exclusively in the heritage and archive/museum sectors. We believe the current round of DTPs already show that this has been taken on board to a significant degree.*

*However, the core mission of the AHRC must remain to support the very best of Arts and Humanities Research in a context which is partly determined by a probability of diminishing resource. While in this context it may look initially attractive to provide a mechanism to lever additional funding and engagement from outside the sector to support such research, and no doubt in doing to generate a politically useful evidence of societal engagement to present to funding masters, any significant extension of this kind carries real risks to the ability of the DTPs to deliver the best research in many of its core disciplines, which in many cases will not be appropriate to a partnership context.*

- We take the view that such arrangements inevitably influence the nature of research to be undertaken within disciplines in ways that undermine the ability of the very best young researchers to identify and pursue exciting and innovative research agendas which best express their academic personality and offer the platform for a lifetime of future research activity driven by core academic values, not least academic freedom. It is the strength of research of this kind over the years which has sustained the outstanding reputation of British historical research on the international stage.*
- We already detect widespread concern in our disciplinary community that the range of different drivers that operate within the competition for student funding in the multi-disciplinary and partnership context of DTPs and CDAs has led to excellent applicants unable to find funding if their research is seen as insufficiently aligned with current strategic priorities; at the same time, less able applicants have been funded for what many see as weaker projects where a partner is available. The evidence to which colleagues point in this regard is inevitably anecdotal and subjective; but in this paper the AHRC itself reports that the CDA scheme has been unable to attract suitably 'high quality proposals'. We are clear that some excellent PhDs have been completed in the context of partnerships, but there have also been cases where the intellectual agendas of the project have proved inadequate to support high quality work, and nervousness on this and other fronts reinforces the understandable reluctance of the most able students to pursue a project devised by someone else.*
- Partnerships with UK partners are unlikely to sustain some of the most important and vulnerable areas of doctoral work which our discipline must support to sustain its current international standing, notably that concerned with the study of history of territories and jurisdictions beyond the UK.*
- There is no evidence that many of the potential partners for such activity in disciplines such as History and many other A&H disciplines are likely to have the ability to offer significant funding to support such initiatives in the medium term given the constraints they themselves are likely to be operating under as dependent on public funding. In the recent autumn statement, national museums have been given a flat cash settlement; local/regional museums and cultural institutions have not. Combined with other factors, this means any*

*proposal of this kind carries a potentially serious regional bias which would further advantage HEIs in London and the south-east in ways in tension with the stated aim of avoiding over-concentration.*

- *Nor is there evidence that the availability of external funds for specific projects is a good indicator of the value of those projects to society. As above, leveraging external funds may be more efficient for public expenditure, but it is not necessarily conducive to pluralism or academic freedom or other social goals. If it were, we might be asking candidates instead to leverage their own funding – which would do obvious damage to other social goals such as social mobility and widening participation, though it would be equally or more efficient for public expenditure.*
- *The transaction costs to be incurred by HEIs in attempting to generate such funding and partnerships could be considerable, and sustaining relations with non-academic partners raises very significant QA and support issues, with partners often vulnerable to changes of circumstance which may affect their ability to deliver their side of any arrangements.*

### **Studentship Allocation**

As in previous rounds, applicants will bid for a specific number of studentships, and use this figure in order to agree their co-funding commitments. AHRC decisions over the allocation of funding between successful bids (in terms of their quality) will be informed by metrics, to help arrive at an equity and appropriate allocation. We are intending to use:

- the number of research active staff FTEs in arts and humanities disciplines within the consortia;
- the number of doctoral completions (as reported to HESA) across the consortia in these subject classifications for the three years 15-16 to 17-18;
- the volume of AHRC funded research grant activity totalled across the DTP.

The allocation to successful proposals will draw on this data alongside prioritisation of proposals based on quality grades determined by peer review. Are there any other metrics which AHRC should use to help inform the allocation of funding between successful bids?

**Q8. How should the allocation of studentships across high-quality proposals be decided? Are there other metrics which could help provide AHRC with a means of allocation between successful bids? Please provide details in the comments box below.**

### **Comments**

*The use of metrics for this kind of decision will inevitably invite gaming, and inevitably the metrics employed will be proxies for research excellence rather than transparent and unchallengeable measures of it (for grounds for this claim, see James Wilsdon's important study of The Metric Tide).*

*One obvious consequence of metricization of this kind when combined with proposals to reduce the number of DTPs while removing caps on studentships is that it would encourage large research-intensive HEIs to join together to maximise the number of scholarships allocated. Again, this would seem to sit uncomfortably with the claim not to be seeking research concentration and reinforcing existing patterns of activity.*

*The specific metrics adopted are also problematic. Completion data may reflect a range of factors, not least an ability to attract the wealthiest self-supporting students in Humanities disciplines where many self-funded students are under severe financial pressures; simply being part of a DTP which has been able to allocate funding to students over 15-16 to 17-18 will advantage existing DTP members in this respect. There is no necessary correlation between attracting AHRC research grant funding in*

*terms of quantity and the range of excellent research in an HEI, especially in a discipline like ours where there is still a high proportion of outstanding 'lone-scholar' research. Indeed one could not implausibly claim that high success rates here might have a depressive effect on the proportion of leading researchers available to provide high-quality research supervision.*

*In light of these considerations we still regard peer review of the quality of an application and evidence regarding the research environment as a more nuanced and appropriate basis for the decisions to be taken in this regard; although metrics might be provided to help inform such decisions, they should not be allocated a decisive role.*

### **Unit of funding per student**

We are proposing to move from a 3.5 year average duration for funding purposes, to a 4 year FTE ('full-time equivalent') period. The move to using a 4 year FTE unit of funding as standard reflects our expectation that most studentships will be nearer to 4 years in duration, in order to allow for ambitious research projects with time for additional development opportunities. We would expect a flexible approach to be used, however, as in the current arrangement, where extensions to an originally agreed studentship period can be made when students take up further development opportunities, such as placement time in a non-academic organisation; public engagement and KE opportunities; international engagement, etc.

**Q9. Are there any significant obstacles to the standard duration of funding being increased to 4 years, but with thesis submission required within the funded period of the studentship, rather than within a further 'writing up period'? Please provide comments in the text box below.**

Yes / No / Possibly / Don't Know

### **Comments**

*We welcome the commitment to allow DTPs flexibility to deploy funds to include the award of 4-year PhD funding on a 1+3 model. But we regret the overall lack of attention in this document to the issue of the funding of Masters studentships and the impact this has on the pre-doctoral training available, and producing levels of debt which may be a disincentive to able candidates seeking to prepare themselves for doctoral study.*

*There has been a widespread view among history academics that it can be unrealistic to expect that high-quality and internationally competitive research dissertations can easily be delivered in three years, especially given the demands for the incorporation of other formal training activities within that frame. It might be anticipated that in light of this our answer to this question would have been 'no'.*

*In practice, however, this policy would have a number of unwelcome repercussions. First, if the AHRC in practice establishes the normative standard for UK Humanities PhD training, it would potentially have a very significant impact on the many research students who are not AHRC funded. Have the equalities impacts of this policy been properly considered?*

*One current value in an 'unfunded' writing up period is the flexibility it allows, and this may still have value in the context of a 4-year funded period. Might there not be a case for a greater degree of flexibility (while still retaining very clear incentives for prompt submission) to enable UK funded students to compete more effectively in an increasingly internationalized academic job market where their peers from North America and elsewhere may have had the benefit of a significantly longer time frame which allows more opportunity to publish before submission? One consideration, for*

*example, might be the need of some but not all History PGR to acquire ab ignitio language skills in order best to address their intellectual agenda.*

*We are also concerned that in the framing of these suggestions here the emphasis on the extension of the period funded is tied to further opportunities for non-disciplinary training rather than disciplinary apprenticeship/the need to allow for proper completion of research in an unpredictable context.*

### **Cohort Development Fund (CDF)**

The CDF was included in DTPs and CDTs as an additional 5% funding based on the studentship allocation. Its focus was development of the cohort of studentships within the DTP/CDT through events, training sessions, workshops and other activities that would bring the consortium's cohort together as part of a collective arts and humanities skills development. We are proposing to continue this element of funding in the current call.

### **Q10. Do you agree that the 'Cohort Development Funding' (CDF) element of the awards be maintained?**

Yes / No / **Possibly** / Don't Know

#### **Comments**

*It is clear that in some DTPs that the CDF element is regarded as essential to supporting the collective life of the PGR community in its training, and that in this sense they would regard it as underpinning one of the key benefits that we perceive to flow from the DTP model of PGR funding distribution. Nevertheless, the evidence for this is pretty anecdotal, and may well vary between HEIs depending on pre-existing provision and cohort size. We would feel nervous about offering a decisive judgement on this question in the absence of independent evaluations of the impact of the current provisions. And the views of HEIs and the AHRC may also not map onto that of the subject communities, who may feel that not all the provisions made are really necessary or appropriate, especially given time pressures on PGRs. Any investigation should attempt to capture these perspectives from academics and students as well as institutional ones.*

*In addition, the AHRC has never been clear about the relationship of its funded cohort to other PhD students. CDF programmes may serve happily to bind a consortium's cohort, and may even provide leadership in PG training across the board, but they also necessarily divide AHRC-funded students from other PhD students and have the potential to create severe rifts within postgraduate communities.*

### **Q11. Is the current CDF level (additional 5% of the studentship funding allocation) appropriate?**

Yes / No / **Possibly** / Don't Know

#### **Comments**

*See our previous answer. But we would be reluctant to see any increase to the CDF level without a very clear case being made for the benefits expected to flow and demonstration of the value of existing provision; there is a risk of money being spent on high profile and externally facing activity which would of only limited relevance to some of the cohort. We feel this all the more strongly given the likelihood of an unfavourable financial climate overall, in which resource would need to be diverted from diminishing pots.*

## Any Other Comments

*As indicated above, it is important to address the policy holistically as well as offering verdicts on the specific points raised for consultation in an unrelated context. We are concerned about the overall combined impact of the various changes outlined in the proposal in some key respects.*

*Despite the implicit commitment not to promote funding concentration, we cannot see how the combined effect of the various initiatives/drivers outlined in the proposal would not lead to such an outcome, risking a homogenization of the UK research base and significant impacts on the research culture which extends far beyond that funded by AHRC. The proposals for match funding from HEI resources, the removal of caps, the explicit commitment to lower the number of DTPs and removal of other elements of support and the use of metrics being considered would all to our mind lead to this kind of effect. We think it is highly likely that the end result would be a reduction in the number and range of institutions at which AHRC funding could be held. Given the strength and depth of research excellence in our discipline across the HE sector, we cannot but deplore the prospect of additional concentration, and indeed still have significant concerns about the current degree of concentration. On p. 18 of the Nurse Review of UK Research Councils it is noted that ‘Doctoral training programmes if too inflexibly applied can prevent graduate students being supervised by quality researchers who are not part of such programmes. Mechanisms should be in place to prevent this unfortunate outcome, by maintaining diversity in the support available for graduate students.’ We wholly endorse this sentiment as particularly applicable to our own discipline, where there many excellent centres of disciplinary research across all areas of the UK HE sector already excluded from BGP2, a phenomenon which further concentration could only exacerbate in a way inimical to sustaining the outstanding national research culture in our discipline.*

- We take the view that in the context of the wider financial climate, and in particular that likely to surround the public sector in coming years, there are particular risks attached to the models of studentship being proposed here. The proposal of matching funding will come at a time of increased pressure on HEI budgets and increasingly difficult politics around virement from UG to PG education. The dependence on external funders poses significant risks given the profile of A&H partnerships in many disciplines, and certainly in our own. Faced by a choice between more vulnerable studentships dependent on external collaborators’ priorities, and fewer secure ones which could be unproblematically be allocated to the best projects available, we would vote for the latter.*
- We also worry that in a context of diminishing resource there are real risks to the core disciplinary training programme in History if too much emphasis is placed on partnerships outside HE, and on non-academic training. There is some evidence to suggest that such studentships are less likely to serve the highest quality scholarship than those whose topic is determined solely on academic grounds, while it is arguable whether the level of attention paid to non-academic training really needs to increase beyond current levels. The effect would be to reduce UK HEIs’ ability to attract PhD students (with their own funding) from around the world. We would not support the ring-fencing of CDA awards for similar reasons.*
- The wider implications of a change to the period of the standard AHRC funding for a studentship for the UK PGR and research community as a whole are insufficiently considered, and there is a risk of a two-tier system becoming even more apparent than it already is both within and between HEIs. There should be an equality and impact assessment of the proposals to address these concerns.*
- We regret the lack of attention to M-level throughout.*

- *We think there is as yet no robust basis for evaluating the value of key aspects of current BGP arrangements which need to be made public for meaningful discussion going forward. One example of this is the lack of appraisal of the workings of geographically dispersed consortia and the transactions costs involved, only likely to be more pronounced in a smaller group of consortia. We are concerned about the lack of attention to vulnerable as opposed to emerging disciplinary allocations.*
- *Although not specifically related to any of the questions raised here, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight a concern which might nonetheless be addressed in the context of the discussion of flexibility of timeframe and the push towards more non-academic training, as well as the allocation of resource between more or more generously funded studentships. Many history PhDs require extensive periods of off-campus and indeed overseas fieldwork/archival work, often outside the student's place of residence (something that is much less the case in most other AHRC disciplines). The bulk of the best projects cannot be done through the exploitation of digitally available resources. Two implications follow. First, this inevitably makes much PGR research in History more expensive. Institutions already pick up some of the additional cost for this essential activity (another argument against making them take up more fund-raising duties on behalf of the AHRC), and our own learned society also supports such activity. These sums are not infinitely expandable. Secondly, too prescriptive a requirement for continual and non-academic training across the landscape of a PhD career may come into conflict with the need for an extended period of overseas work.*