Work Book AHRC Funding Application Exercise

Research training event Jewish Studies, Manchester, Wed 27 June 2018

Introduction: Nature of the exercise, purpose of this document, instructions

The AHRC mock application we are going to work on in three groups gives you an opportunity to familiarise yourself with the basic ideas of research funding applications, key concepts used by the AHRC and other funders with which you need to engage, some of the key parts of such an application, and basic research planning strategies, using your chosen topic as an example.

In your group you will be expected to produce the rough outline of a 3-5 year research project related to one of the topics below. Using the categories and forms identified below, you will be learn how to explain the academic rationale, plan the practicalities, and produce a draft budget that puts a cost on the project, according to the AHRC rules. You will receive guidance from an experienced researcher for this, and a model for the financial aspect. All projects will include at least one post-doctoral research associate (PDRA). Imagine that person to be you. This exercise is life-like in the following respect: increasingly, early career researchers after the doctorate assist established research academics in designing and preparing a large grant application in which they themselves **are the named research associate**. This means that, if the application is successful, the PDRA position does not need to be advertised and they can be employed on it without any further selection process. This is what this exercise will help you do if you should have such an opportunity. In other words, think of the PDRA you write into your mock research project as your avatar in the research funding game: this could be you. However, it is crucial to avoid the impression that the research to be done is limited in some way so as to allow the appointment of a particular person with a particular specialism.

You will meet as a group on Wednesday morning for several hours in order to prepare your application. You will receive guidance from an experienced researcher (Daniel, Philip or Alex), plus roaming input from research support staff with expertise on finance and other practical matters. In order to be able to prepare even a rough project idea in the time frame, you need to come prepared. **This is the reason for asking you to work through this documentation very carefully before the training workshop begins.** This document is meant to collect all the key information in one place. Please work through this document, and consult the AHRC Guidance document, as instructed below. We expect it will take you at least three hours to do so.

Please note: A very considerable proportion of the benefit of this exercise results from your attempt – doubtlessly frustrating to some extent – to understand the way in which the funder wishes you to frame your project idea from the instructions, and then receive further guidance on ways to understand these instructions in the group work. We therefore recommend strongly that you invest the preparation time necessary. Other funders may use other framings, but none of them are intuitive; learning how to apply one (and the most important one for humanities research) will help you to apply others as well (e.g. post-doctoral fellowship applications). It is understood that you are NOT an expert in one of the above questions, so do not worry about the *accuracy* of your answers. But it is important to understand that even for an expert, drafting such an application is quite often an **exercise in imagination.**

The three topics are (you will have registered for one of them):

- 1 Disputes and Dialogue: A Comparative Study of Eastern and Western European Church Attitudes towards Jewish-Christian Relations, anti-Semitism, and Israel– Mentor: Daniel Langton

- 2 The Role of Hebrew Printing in the Early Modern European Reception of Jewish Culture – Mentor: Philip Alexander

- 3 Academic and Traditional Constructions of Inconsistencies in the Hebrew Bible, Qur'an and Vedic Scriptures – Mentor: Alex Samely

During the group work sessions we will concentrate on drafting key parts of the application for each of these topics. You will be given specific tasks to prepare the group work before the training event begins, and specific input (on finance) during the group work session itself.

Watch out for the   sign in the following pages. It indicates a task you need to do in preparation of the group session. Please bring your notes concerning these tasks to the event. Please note: certain tasks in this booklet relate to paragraphs not in the order in which you read them here. In order to make this clear, the **tasks are numbered in the sequence in which you need to do them,** not in the sequence in which you encounter them in the booklet.

1. The AHRC Application Requirements

One of the first things to realise is that the application is bitty. Academic, intellectual, and practical information is being asked of you in a variety of formats and distributed over distinct documents that are not necessarily intuitively related. Information and advice about how to produce these various parts of the application is also scattered. Most of it is in a very long AHRC Guidance document, which is also available from the Northern Partners training event website, and certain parts of which you are expected to read before we meet (see below).

The **first** thing to note is that

(a) some of the questions that require short compositions or mere lists that are pasted directly into a box on a screen online, in a system called Je-S: https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/JeS2WebLoginSite/Home.aspx ;

(b) while others are more extended compositions that require being written in Word and uploaded to the same system as attachments. The various rubrics and documents are listed below.

The **second** thing to note is that the AHRC (and all UK research councils) use "full economic costing", which expects the University to budget for research projects in such a way that a fixed amount of running costs are covered. This means that, of the upper limit of £1million pounds for a large research project, only about two-thirds are available to cover

researcher salaries or other research expenses: the rest will be running costs. This is important to understand when budgeting, but even more importantly, it is the reason these grants are attractive to University management: they make a contribution to the actual running costs of a University.

Third, the AHRC has a definition of research which is important to reflect upon. It stresses processes, as well as outcomes.

Task 1: Please consult the AHRC's definition of research now, pp. 9-10 in the AHRC Guidance (version 4.2, Feb 2018).

2. The parts of an AHRC application:

A. Free-standing documents, to be attached to the online application in Je-S

1. Case for Support – THIS IS THE CENTRAL DOCUMENT (7 PAGES MAX, see below for its headings). This will be a centre piece of your preparation and the group exercise; see below.
2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Publication Lists
4. Visual Evidence (optional)
5. Data Management Plan (if applicable)*
6. Justification of Resources (2 pages)
7. Pathways to Impact (2 pages)

B. Je-S online text boxes (with word limits):

1. **Objectives:** List the main objectives of the proposed research in order of priority (**4000 characters**)
   Guidance: The objectives of the proposed project should be listed in order of priority and should be those that the Investigators would wish the Council to use as the basis for evaluation of work upon completion of any grant awarded.

2. **Summary:** Describe the proposed research in simple terms in a way that could be publicised to a general audience [up to 4000 chars]. Note that this summary may be published on the AHRC's website in the event that a grant is awarded
   The Summary is used for:
   a. Sending to potential Peer reviewers to determine whether the proposal is within their field of expertise
   b. To publicise the Councils research programmes to a variety of readers eg Opinion-formers and policy makers, the general public and the wider research community.
   c. Explain in plain English:
      The context of the research.
      Its aims and objectives.
      Its potential applications and benefits.

Task 7 (Do this task after working through the tasks for the case for support, below.): Draft three *non-specialist* (simple) sentences on (a) context, (b) aims and objectives, and (c) potential applications and benefits.

3. **Outputs:** tick box list
    Select the main outputs of the Research (here is a typical selection already ticked)

    - ☑ Book (single authored)
    - ☑ Book (co-authored)
    - ☐ Book (edited)
    - ☑ Book (chapter)
    - ☐ Critical edition
    - ☑ Journal article (refereed)
    - ☑ Journal article (non-refereed)
    - ☑ Conference paper
    - ☐ Catalogue
    - ☑ Datasets
    - ☐ Database
    - ☐ Software
    - ☑ Website
    - ☐ Performance, film or recording
    - ☐ Exhibition or installation
    - ☐ Artefact, work of art
    - ☐ Composition or score
    - ☐ Piece of creative writing
    - ☐ Interactive website
    - ☐ Case Study Material
    - ☐ Teaching Material
    - ☐ Expertise gained through the application of research in a non-academic environment
    - ☐ Other (please specify)

4. **Academic Beneficiaries,:** Describe who will benefit from the research **(up to 4000 chars)**
    Please summarise how your proposed research will contribute to knowledge, both within the UK and globally.
    Academic Beneficiaries (4000 characters max) should address the following questions

- how the research will benefit other researchers in the field
- identify whether there are any academic beneficiaries in other disciplines and, if so, how they will benefit and what will be done to ensure that they benefit

What other researchers, both within the UK and elsewhere are likely to be interested in or to benefit from the proposed research.

Please look broadly beyond narrow research field. RCUK recognises that in generating new knowledge, a cross-disciplinary or single-disciplinary approach may be the most appropriate. Applicants are asked to clearly state their chosen approach and provide justification for that choice.

List any academic beneficiaries from the research and give details of how they will benefit and how the results of the proposed research will be disseminated. Specific beneficiaries might be:

- researchers in the investigator's immediate professional circle, carrying out similar or related research
- researchers in other disciplines
- researchers in other academic institutions (in the UK and/or international)

Also describe the relevance of the research to beneficiaries:

- identify the potential academic impact of the proposed work
- show how the research will benefit other researchers (this might include methodological or theoretical advances)
- identify whether the research will produce data or materials of benefit to other researchers, and explain how these will be stored, maintained and made available
- explain any collaboration with other researchers and their role in the project

Task 8: As penultimate task, try to jot down two benefits from the research proposed for (a) researchers with the same specialism, (b) researchers in the wider field into which the project falls, and (c) other disciplines. Please note: these are not pre-determined groups: you are expected to think about possible groups and possible benefits in a creative manner.

5. **Impact Summary (4000 Chars)**
   Note: If the proposed research is funded the Impact Summary will be published on publicly available sites to demonstrate potential impact of Research Council funded research. Please ensure confidential information is not included in this Summary.
   - · The Impact Summary should answer the two questions:
   - · Who might benefit from this research?
   - · How might they benefit from this research?

   Further information on Impact policies and expectations is available on the UKRI website at: https://www.ukri.org/innovation/

Task 9: As final task, think how whatever results (or methods) your projects may have could be used for active engagement with

lay groups, civic society stakeholders, politicians, public administrators, commercial interests, etc. Try to think of at least one such impact possibility with one group on which the impact might be exerted. (This will have to be different from general audience education, that is, "knowledge transfer", or "audience engagement, unless it happens on a large scale, and also from education within a University context).

6.   **Resource Summary: Budget (RC = Research Council, i.e. AHRC).**
Explanation: Full economic cost: all associated costs, including running costs of the University; RC contribution: Research Council Contribution to all costs, at 80% (it is not in fact 100%).
You will be given sample figures to use during the workshop.

Summary fund heading	Fund heading	Full economic cost	RC contribution	% RC contribution
Directly Incurred	Staff	0.00	0.00	80
	Travel & Subsistence	0.00	0.00	80
	Other Costs	0.00	0.00	80
	Sub-total	**0.00**	**0.00**	
Directly Allocated	Investigators	0.00	0.00	80
	Estates Costs	0.00	0.00	80
	Other Directly Allocated	0.00	0.00	80
	Sub-total	**0.00**	**0.00**	
Indirect Costs	Indirect Costs	0.00	0.00	80
Exceptions	Staff	0.00	0.00	100
	Other Costs	0.00	0.00	100
	Sub-total	**0.00**	**0.00**	
	Total	**0.00**	**0.00**	

3. The main document: prescribed headings for the 7-page Case for Support Headings
for large research grants. The more detailed explanations are from the Guidance document.

b. Research questions or problems

You should describe clearly the research questions, issues or problems that you intend to address. What are the issues that you will be exploring in the course of your research?

Task 2: Draft some creative answers to each of these research questions/problem possibilities (unless you ARE an expert in the field into which your chosen project theme falls). Pretending to know what you are talking about, *formulate precisely* **what you consider to be the aims to be (maximum 3), and what you consider the objectives to be (maximum 5). Here a precise form of words is required: delimiting the task clearly is crucial. Pretend to be competent to provide that delimitation.**

c. Research context

You should describe the research context for your project/programme of work. Why is it important that these questions or issues are explored?

What other research is being or has been conducted in this area? What contribution will your project make to improving, enhancing, or developing creativity, insights, knowledge or understanding in your chosen area of study? To whom will the outcomes of your research be of particular interest?

Task 3: Even if this is not your field, try to make a reasonable guess as to which disciplines may have contributed to the study of this question earlier, and by what methods, and how one might improve on them. Try to think of at least 3 different disciplinary contexts/angles/approaches.

d. Research methods

What research methods will you be using to address the questions or issues that you have set yourself, or solve the problems you have identified, or to explore

the matters you intend to investigate? Why have you chosen these methods? Why are they the best way to answer the research questions or problems you have identified? What will be your role? If there are other people involved, what will their roles be and why are they the appropriate people to be involved?

In describing your research methods it is not sufficient to state, for example, that you intend to visit a particular archive, or an exhibition abroad. You must provide adequate details of sources to be consulted, and you should state briefly what kinds of material you will be consulting, why they are relevant to your programme of research, and how you will interrogate them. Depending on the approach you are using throughout your research, you may also need to explain clearly the creative and/or performative aspects of the work, explain how you will develop a new process, product or tool, or provide details of who you have consulted or will be involved in the process of research.

Under the Research Methods heading you should also outline how any copyright or intellectual property issues relating to the project and the production of any technical outputs will be addressed.

Task 4: Try to think of at least 3 different steps, phases or methodologies to be used for the research envisaged.

f. Technical Summary

All proposals must complete this section, regardless of whether there will be digital outputs.

If digital outputs or digital technologies are essential to the planned research outcomes of your proposal, then you should:-

a) use this section to provide a brief description of the project's proposed digital outputs and/or digital technologies.

AND

b) complete a Technical Plan [NOW called: Data Management Plan] and add this as an attachment to your proposal (for more information see *Technical Plan,* Section 4.2.9.5 above)

If your application does involve digital outputs or digital technologies, but you believe that the inclusion of a Technical Plan [aka Data Management Plan] is not warranted, you should use this section to explain and justify this, for instance on the grounds that the digital output or technologies are not essential to the planned research outcomes. If your only proposed digital output or

technology consists in web-pages containing information about the project, you should say so in this section. In this last case you do not need to complete a Technical Plan.

If your application does not involve digital outputs or digital technologies you should use this section to state that this is the case. You should note that for present purposes digital technologies do not include conventional software such as word processing packages and ICT activities such as email, which do not require any explanation or justification in this context.

g. Project management

How will the project be managed? What will be the roles of the members of staff involved (including you and, if applicable, any Co-Investigator(s), any research assistants)? What is the timetable for the project? Does it include appropriate milestones and is it realistic? When will the outputs of the project be completed? How will you ensure that they meet the needs of your audience? Can the costs be justified? How will you ensure good value for money?

The project management section should also include the management of the technical aspects of the projects, if applicable, and should be coordinated with the information in the Technical Plan (= Data Management Plan; Section 4.2.9.5 in the AHRC Guidance doc). It should be clear what the milestones for the completion of this element and the work should be incorporated into the timetable for the whole project. The project management of the technical aspects of the project should include an assessment of risk in relation to the complexity and delivery of the project.

If a postdoctoral researcher is to be employed, you should state clearly the nature of the work they will be undertaking and describe clearly the working relationships that are envisaged between all the members of the research team. You should describe fully the arrangements for supervising and managing the research assistant. If the researcher is unknown you should state the skills and qualifications sought. Similarly, if the project involves a visit to or a secondment from a member of staff from another organisation, you must state clearly what work they will pursue and describe the working relationships envisaged with other members of the team.

In terms of supporting the research staff funded on the project, you should clearly outline the development opportunities which the project will make available. These should include opportunities both in relation to research expertise, and wider opportunities, for example, in connection with the activities proposed in the Pathways to Impact statement.

The AHRC is one of the signatories of the RCUK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. More information about the Concordat and what it entails can be found here:
http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/efficiency/concordats/

Task 5: Reflect on different ways of doing the project with different staff: Is it multi-disciplinary? Does it require the collaboration of two or more experts across different specialisms/disciplines? What should the Principal Investigator's expertise be? How many, if any, Co-Investigators should there be? How many post-doctoral research associates (PDRAs) are required (working at 100%), employed for how long, with what specialist training (doctorate)? Think of yourself as occupying such a position (your avatar in a different specialism). Make a rough estimate of the overall duration of the project (anything between 2 and 4 years is likely to be within the budget, if there is one PI, one Co-I and one or two PDRAs). Try to think of the research team from the angle of the objectives, the methodologies, and the planned outputs. What is a realistic mix of expertises, and time commitment from everybody concerned. Make some rough estimates as to salary costs (without trying to guess "full economic costing" – you will get information on the latter during the workshop).

h. Dissemination

Information under this heading should build on the details given in the Academic Beneficiaries and Impact Summary sections of the Je-S form.

Please provide examples of the kinds of outputs you propose to produce during the award and their proposed focus. Please explain further how the research will benefit other researchers in the field and – where relevant – academic beneficiaries in other disciplines.

How do you propose to maximise the value of the proposed research outputs? You should cross refer here to the separate attachment, 'Pathways to Impact'.

Task 6: Think of or research at least three regular subject associations with annual congresses at which the research could be presented; think of or research at least three international journals in the relevant fields to which articles could be submitted. Make a very rough estimate of how many (a) monographs, (b) articles, (c) other outputs there might be (depends directly on how many researchers are involved for what time).

Relevant AHRC Guidance document: http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/research-funding-guide/   (Version 2.4 / Feb 2018)