



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

# Guide for Block Grant Partnership Award Holders

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## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	4
ARTS AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT .....	5
MAIN AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW FUNDING MECHANISM .....	5
MAIN AIMS OF THE BLOCK GRANT PARTNERSHIPS .....	6
RESEARCH COUNCILS' EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT .....	6
GLOSSARY .....	7
SECTION 1: THE SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE .....	8
SECTION 2: INITIATING THE AWARD .....	10
<i>How are BGP awards offered?.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>When should the BGP begin? .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>What happens to our continuing AHRC award holders? .....</i>	<i>10</i>
SECTION 3: THE ROLE OF THE BGP COORDINATOR AND MANAGEMENT OF THE BGP .....	11
The BGP coordinator .....	11
<i>What responsibilities does the BGP coordinator have? .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>How do the responsibilities of the RO and the coordinator differ? .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Whom should we appoint as BGP coordinator?.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Can we appoint multiple BGP coordinators?.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Can we change our BGP coordinator? .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>How can we share best practice with other BGP coordinators? .....</i>	<i>12</i>
Research Organisations' management of the BGP award .....	12
<i>Who should manage collaborative BGP awards?.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>How should training be incorporated? .....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>What is the RO's role in the administration of individual studentships?.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Who will the AHRC contact regarding the BGP award? .....</i>	<i>13</i>
SECTION 4: ADVERTISEMENT AND RECRUITMENT OF STUDENTSHIPS ...	14
<i>What are the eligibility requirements for nominated students?.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>When should we advertise studentships? .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>How should we advertise studentships? .....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>What is the timetable and process for nominations to studentships?.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Who can be nominated to a studentship?.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>What happens once nominations have been received by the AHRC? .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Is the RO eligible for other AHRC competitions once it has a BGP? .....</i>	<i>15</i>
SECTION 5: CHANGES, SUSPENSIONS AND TERMINATIONS OF AWARDS .....	17
Principles .....	17
Student recruitment.....	17

<i>What if we can't recruit suitable students for particular studentships?.....</i>	17
<i>What if a student does not start their course of programme of study?.....</i>	18
Permanent changes to the profile of awards within a BGP .....	18
<i>What should we do if we want to change our BGP profile permanently?.....</i>	18
<i>What is the deadline for requesting changes to our BGP profile? .....</i>	18
<i>Can we change our courses or programmes of study? .....</i>	18
Student requests .....	19
<i>Can a student transfer from their original RO?.....</i>	19
<i>Can Master's students transfer courses within our RO? .....</i>	19
Suspensions to the BGP.....	19
<i>Can we suspend our BGP award? .....</i>	19
<i>Can the AHRC suspend our BGP award?.....</i>	19
Termination of studentships within a BGP.....	20
<i>What happens if student wishes to terminate their studentship? .....</i>	20
Termination of a BGP award .....	20
SECTION 6: DURATION AND CONTINUATION OF AWARDS.....	21
Duration of the BGP .....	21
<i>How long does the BGP last? .....</i>	21
Continuation of the BGP .....	21
<i>Can we continue the BGP after the five-year award has ended?.....</i>	21
Continuation, registration, and problems relating to studentships within a BGP .....	21
SECTION 7: MONITORING .....	22
<i>What monitoring of the BGP award will the AHRC undertake?.....</i>	22
<i>What recruitment and nomination monitoring will the AHRC undertake?....</i>	22
<i>How will the AHRC treat transferred students in relation to the monitoring of BGP's? .....</i>	23
<i>Submission rate surveys and sanctions.....</i>	23
SECTION 8: PAYMENT OF AWARDS .....	24
<i>How much is the BGP worth?.....</i>	24
<i>How much are individual studentships worth?.....</i>	24
<i>What funds are available to students who have already started their study? .....</i>	24
<i>Who receives payments for awards?.....</i>	24
<i>Can we incorporate the BGP into a wider funding strategy?.....</i>	24
SECTION 9: RESEARCH TRAINING FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS .....	25

## INTRODUCTION

I would like to offer our warm congratulations on your successful application to the Block Grant Partnership competition. We hope that over the coming years the award will enable both you and the AHRC to support world-class postgraduate training and achieve the strategic aims of the competition.

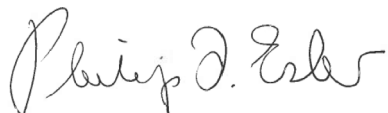
The BGP awards are genuine partnerships. Every year, the AHRC will be organising a BGP coordinators' meeting with the aim of developing the relationship between our organisations and developing the BGP so it delivers what is needed.

At a time when there is great uncertainty for graduates, we are very pleased to be making such a substantial commitment to strategic postgraduate funding via the BGP competition. The awards will fund around 1100 students per year in the arts and humanities for the next five years, contributing not only to continuing excellence in academia but also providing skills and experience that is relevant in a wider arena. Each year approximately 200 students at other organisations will be supported by the Studentship Competition.

It continues to be a critical part of our mission to support through our postgraduate awards the development of highly qualified people who will achieve high levels of knowledge, understanding, skills and competences that will be employed in a wide range of careers. In an increasingly complex and competitive world, it is vitally important that people are given the opportunity to develop in this way for their own sakes and in order to maximise their contribution to the life of the nation.

This guide is intended to provide what we hope will be a useful manual for the administration of your BGP award. Rather than repeating here all the policies and procedures that are contained in our other guides we have, where applicable, provided you with references to these other documents. I would advise you to familiarise yourself with these as well. Of course, our staff are always on hand to provide you with any advice or clarification you may require.

We are constantly reviewing our guidance material and we would welcome your views on both the content and the format of the guide such that we can make it as helpful and useful as possible. This guide is available online at <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/FundingOpportunities/Pages/BGP.aspx>

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Philip D. Esler'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Philip' being the most prominent part.

Professor Philip Esler  
Chief Executive, Arts & Humanities Research Council

## ARTS AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

The Arts and Humanities Research Council has an overarching vision to be a recognised world-leader in advancing arts and humanities research through 4 strategic aims:

- To promote and support the production of world-class research in the arts and humanities
- To promote and support world-class postgraduate training designed to equip graduates for research or other professional careers
- To strengthen the impact of arts and humanities research by encouraging researchers to disseminate and transfer knowledge to other non-academic contexts where it will make a difference
- To raise the profile of arts and humanities research and to be an effective advocate for its social, cultural and economic significance.

## MAIN AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW FUNDING MECHANISM

The AHRC has introduced two new competitions which will take effect for students commencing in the 2009 academic year. These are the Block Grant Partnership (BGP) Competition (which is the subject of this Guide) and the Studentship Competition. The aims and principles of these new funding mechanisms are as follows:

- To provide two competitions of equal status to support the diverse needs of the sector
- To continue to promote and support a strategy for producing world-class postgraduates
- To continue to sustain and promote high-quality research and training
- To continue to maintain the health and sustainability of arts and humanities disciplines
- To extend and enhance opportunities for interdisciplinary research and training
- To ensure effective distribution of funding
- To provide support to both endangered and emerging subjects
- To enhance and encourage interaction with the cultural, heritage and creative industries

## MAIN AIMS OF THE BLOCK GRANT PARTNERSHIPS

The Block Grant Partnership competition aims to:

- Facilitate long-term strategic planning in arts and humanities disciplines
- Fund Doctoral, Research Preparation Master's and Professional Preparation Master's studentships
- Enable an organisation to support an annual allocation of at least eight studentship awards over a five year period
- Enable the organisation to deliver its postgraduate research and training strategy for the arts and humanities
- Gain an overview of the overall UK strategy for arts and humanities through regular reporting
- Allow some flexibility in allocation of studentship awards and move away from the assessment of individual studentship proposals

## RESEARCH COUNCILS' EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

The Research Councils aim to develop as organisations that value the diversity of their staff and stakeholders, enabling all to realise their full potential by valuing the contribution of everyone and recognising and harnessing the benefits that differences can bring.

The UK Research Councils are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations across and between the defined equalities groups in all of their relevant functions.

Accordingly no eligible job applicant, funding applicant, employee or external stakeholder including members of the public should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of: gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, race, colour, nationality, ethnicity or national origins, religion or similar philosophical belief, spent criminal conviction, age or disability.

The AHRC has also published a Single Equality Scheme which is available to download from our website [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk).

<b>Glossary</b>	
Block Grant Partnership (BGP) award	An award to a Research Organisation for a specific number of studentships in specific subject areas and schemes for five cohorts of students.
Cohort	All students who began their studentships in a given academic year.
Collaborative BGP	A BGP awarded to two or more Research Organisations working in partnership with one another.
Competition	The route through which an AHRC studentship is obtained (e.g. BGP, Studentship Competition, Collaborative Doctoral Awards, Research Grants with Project Studentships attached).
Fees	The funds required by an RO for a student to register for a higher degree (up to a maximum set annually by the Research Councils).
Maintenance grant	The funds assigned by the AHRC to students to cover their maintenance while undertaking a course of research training leading to the award of a postgraduate degree.
Research Organisation (RO)	The organisation to which a BGP is awarded. The RO takes responsibility for the management of the BGP and of the studentships within the BGP in accordance to the terms and conditions, and is accountable for the funds provided. May also be referred to as 'Organisation', a 'Higher Education Institution' ('HEI'), or an 'Institution'.
Scheme	There are three AHRC studentship schemes. These are the Doctoral Awards Scheme, the Research Preparation Master's Scheme, and the Professional Preparation Master's Scheme.
Student	Postgraduates who are supported through the BGP.
Studentship award	An award to an individual studentship within a BGP to enable the student to undertake a specified postgraduate qualification.
Studentship Competition	An annual competition open to ROs which do not hold a BGP, which enables the RO to apply for studentship awards.

## SECTION 1: THE SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE

1. This guide is intended to give further guidance on the administration of the BGP award and the individual studentship awards within it. It will cover the BGP coordinator and RO's responsibilities, advertisement and recruitment, changes to the BGP, duration, continuation, monitoring, payments, and Research Training.
2. You will be notified of any changes to our rules, regulations, or procedures and these will apply to all BGP award holders.
3. Where this guide refers to 'an RO', it refers to all the ROs involved in collaborative BGP award.
4. This guide is also available to download from our postgraduate scheme pages on our website at [www.ahrc.ac.uk](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk).
5. This guide outlines what changes the RO may request to the BGP award and to the studentships within that award. We reserve the right to refuse any such a request either on the basis of the particular circumstances of the request or in relation to our policies and overall strategy for BGP awards, which may vary over the lifetime of the award.
6. This guide is not exhaustive and does not give full details of all the processes involved in the setting up, running, or monitoring of a BGP or its constituent studentships. For full details about the processes referred to in this guide, you should refer to the following documents:

### Block Grant Partnerships offer letter and summary of outcomes

This document sets out the full details of your RO's profile of awards for each year of the BGP.

### BGP Terms and Conditions

This document sets out the BGP's terms and conditions. Receipt of a BGP award is dependent on adherence to these terms.

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/terms-and-conditions/block-grant-partnerships-bgp-terms- and-conditions/>

### Guide to Student Recruitment and Nomination

This document sets out the AHRC's requirements for the advertisement of studentships and the subsequent process for nominating students and will be updated regularly. <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/ahrc-postgraduate-studentships-recruitment-and-nomination/>

### Guide to Student Eligibility

This document sets out the AHRC's requirements for student eligibility, including such criteria as residency, subject domain, academic, and scheme eligibility rules and will be updated regularly.

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/ahrc-postgraduate-studentships-guide-to-student-eligibility/>



Guide for Postgraduate Award Holders in the Arts and Humanities

This document sets out the AHRC's policies and procedures with regard to studentships awarded under all of its postgraduate competitions, including the BGP and will be updated annually.

Submission Rate Survey policy

This webpage sets out the AHRC's policies for its annual Submission Rate Survey. The policy is revised annually.

## SECTION 2: INITIATING THE AWARD

How are BGP awards offered?

7. If successful, the RO will receive a letter offering a BGP award. The award will consist of a certain number of Doctoral, Research Preparation Master's and Professional Preparation Master's studentships allocated by subject and by academic year. We will specify in the offer letter the scheme, subject area and academic year in which these awards must be made.
8. The RO must accept the offer of the award formally. In doing so, the RO agrees to abide by the terms and conditions of the award. The award is initiated once it has been formally accepted by the RO. The RO will then need to nominate eligible students to take up the studentships offered, adhering to their BGP profile.

When should the BGP begin?

9. The BGP award must commence in the year in which it was awarded, i.e. we expect the first cohort of studentships to start in October 2009. We cannot agree to a delayed start date.

What happens to our continuing AHRC award holders?

10. The RO may already be supporting AHRC-funded students who commenced their awards prior to the BGP being awarded and whose awards continue beyond October 2009. These students may hold Doctoral, Research Preparation Master's, Professional Preparation Master's, Collaborative Doctoral, or Project Studentship awards. These studentships will fall outside of the BGP. The AHRC expects these studentships to be managed according to the terms and conditions of their award and independently of the BGP.
11. Studentships which fall outside of the BGP will not form part of any reporting on the BGP award. However, for bulk AHRC processes all studentships (whether part of the BGP or not) will be monitored together. These processes include the annual Submission Rate Survey, Registration and Finance Listings, Annual Report Listings, final reports, and the annual DSA reconciliation process.

### SECTION 3: THE ROLE OF THE BGP COORDINATOR AND MANAGEMENT OF THE BGP

#### The BGP coordinator

What responsibilities does the BGP coordinator have?

12. The BGP coordinator is the individual within the RO appointed to lead the BGP. The coordinator is responsible for ensuring the delivery of the strategy described in the BGP application and any subsequent changes to it requested by the AHRC. The coordinator is also responsible for providing any information or reports on the BGP that the AHRC requires.
13. It is the BGP coordinator's responsibility to monitor the nominations to ensure that the profile of students who are put forward for the BGP studentships matches the portfolio of schemes and subjects that have been awarded under the BGP.
14. All communication regarding the BGP will be with the BGP coordinator.

How do the responsibilities of the RO and the coordinator differ?

15. Throughout this Guide we make reference to the 'RO's responsibility'. The RO may choose to delegate these responsibilities to the BGP coordinator or to a team of people with the role of managing the BGP. The AHRC does not require the BGP management to be organised in any particular way but it must be clear to anyone involved in the BGP within the RO how the award is managed and the appropriate lines of communication and authorisation.

Whom should we appoint as BGP coordinator?

16. The RO must appoint a BGP coordinator to lead the BGP award. The RO must decide which member of staff they wish to fulfil this role but it is likely that it would need to be a senior academic or administrator who has the relevant authority within the RO. In many cases, this will be the person named on the BGP proposal. For a collaborative BGP, the BGP coordinator must be based at the lead RO.

Can we appoint multiple BGP coordinators?

17. The AHRC requires a single contact to act as the BGP coordinator. While the BGP coordinator will be the AHRC's point of contact regarding the award, the RO may wish to have a team of people managing the award.

Can we change our BGP coordinator?

18. If the RO wishes to appoint a new coordinator once the award has started, it must provide the AHRC with the new coordinator's contact details. The coordinator will lead the award, but since the BGP award is made to the RO, if the coordinator should leave the RO, a new one must be appointed.
19. The RO may change the BGP coordinator on a temporary basis, for example if the coordinator is on sabbatical or takes an extended period of leave. The RO should contact the AHRC and provide contact details for the replacement and state when they expect the previous coordinator to return. ROs should have processes to cover short-term absences.

How can we share best practice with other BGP coordinators?

20. The AHRC will endeavour to run a BGP coordinators' meeting annually, which will allow ROs to share their experiences of managing their BGP awards.

#### Research Organisations' management of the BGP award

21. It is the RO's responsibility to ensure that students are nominated correctly and the aims and objectives of the BGP award are met. It may appoint an individual (which may be the BGP coordinator) or a team of people to manage the award and coordinate the day-to-day running of the BGP and the studentships awarded through it.
22. The RO must ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable deadlines for nominations or documentation required by the AHRC to be met and for any problems to be dealt with in a timely manner. It is expected that the BGP coordinator will be responsible for providing all reports on the BGP award that are requested by the AHRC.

Who should manage collaborative BGP awards?

23. For BGP awards made on a collaborative basis, i.e. where the BGP is a collaboration between two or more ROs, the award will be accepted by all organisations in the collaboration, and all organisations must adhere to the terms and conditions. The AHRC recommends that each collaborating Organisation has a signed agreement in place which sets out expectations and responsibilities for each partner and covers areas such as:
  - Specific objectives, obligations, and responsibilities of each partner
  - Provision of resources
  - How awards will be allocated between the Organisations
  - How decisions will be made
  - How any disputes will be resolved
  - Issues of ethics or confidentiality
  - Ownership of research results and intellectual property
  - Outcome of studentships
  - Supervision and training
  - Monitoring and review
  - Financial contributions (if applicable)
24. The AHRC may request a signed copy of any such agreement for its records.

How should training be incorporated?

25. The RO must have a mechanism for liaison between the BGP coordinator and the training coordinator (or equivalent) at the RO to ensure that the BGP's training strategy is delivered.

What is the RO's role in the administration of individual studentships?

26. The AHRC will contact their main registry (or equivalent) contact at the RO regarding issues with individual studentships (e.g. for suspensions or study visits).

27. Where the day-to-day running of studentships held within the BGP award is administered by another department within the RO (the student registry or graduate office, for example), it is the RO's responsibility to ensure that there is adequate communication between that department and the BGP coordinator, and that the coordinator is aware of any students' issues which may impact on their management of the BGP.

Who will the AHRC contact regarding the BGP award?

28. All correspondence from the AHRC about the BGP award and the nominations to studentship places will be with the BGP coordinator. The coordinator must ensure that the AHRC is informed immediately of any problems arising regarding the BGP or nominations to it.

## SECTION 4: ADVERTISEMENT AND RECRUITMENT OF STUDENTSHIPS

What are the eligibility requirements for nominated students?

Students can be nominated for full and fees only awards, and part-time or full time studentship awards. Every student, their course of study, and the RO at which they are studying must meet the eligibility criteria set out in the Guide to Student Eligibility. ROs must ensure that students meet these criteria before offering them the chance to be nominated to a studentship. The Guide can be found here:

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/ahrc-postgraduate-studentships-guide-to-student-eligibility/>

When should we advertise studentships?

29. Once an RO has formally accepted a BGP award, it can begin advertising for students to fill the constituent studentship places for the following academic year.

How should we advertise studentships?

30. Studentships should be advertised according to the scheme (i.e. doctoral, Research Preparation Master's, Professional Preparation Master's) and subject area profile awarded through the BGP for that academic year. The RO should invite applications in broad subject areas when advertising the studentships it has available. The advertising and recruitment must ensure that the subject area spread within the BGP is maintained but must not restrict student choice. It must also maintain the level of innovation fostered in the AHRC's previous postgraduate open competition. It should allow Master's students the opportunity to select the most appropriate course, providing the course or topic fits within the profile. It should also allow doctoral students the opportunity to develop and propose research projects of their choice which fall within the subject area profile allocated through the BGP.
31. The RO should ensure that interdisciplinary projects are not disadvantaged, by being flexible in its approach to recruiting students to particular subject areas. For example, a doctoral student undertaking a project which includes aspects of history, English and philosophy could be recruited to a studentship allocated to the history subject area. Similarly, awards should not be limited to departments. For example, a studentship from the music subject area allocation may be undertaken in the history department, if this is where the appropriate supervisory experience exists. The AHRC will ask ROs to provide information on interdisciplinary research supported through the BGP.
32. The AHRC has no expectation about the allocation of studentships to individual departments, schools or faculties. The student should be located in the department (or equivalent) that is most appropriate for their course or programme of study. The AHRC will not intervene in any dispute within an RO regarding the allocation of awards.
33. The Guide to Student Recruitment and Nomination contains all the requirements governing the appointment of students to studentship places. <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/ahrc-postgraduate-studentships-recruitment-and-nomination/>

What is the timetable and process for nominations to studentships?

34. The advertising and nominating process will take place on an annual basis. The timetable for nominations can be found in the Guide to Student Recruitment and Nomination.
35. Nominations must be completed and submitted on the Research Councils' Joint Electronic Submission (JeS) system: [www.je-s.rcuk.ac.uk](http://www.je-s.rcuk.ac.uk). If help is required using this system, please contact the JeS Helpdesk on [JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk) or +44(0)1793 444164.

Who can be nominated to a studentship?

36. Only eligible students who have been offered and accepted for a BGP studentship by the RO should be nominated to the AHRC.
37. Students who have been offered more than one BGP studentship will need to choose which one to accept before their nomination form is submitted to the AHRC.
38. Students can only apply for an AHRC studentship in one of the AHRC's competitions. They cannot, for example, be put forward for a BGP nomination and enter the Studentship Competition. If the AHRC receives more than one nomination form or competition application form for the same student, it reserves the right to reject all nominations and/or applications for that student.

What happens once nominations have been received by the AHRC?

39. The nomination will be validated by the AHRC, and the type of studentship given to the student will be in accordance with:
  - The type of studentship, i.e. doctoral, Research Preparation Master's, Professional Preparation Master's
  - The student's residency status, i.e. whether the student is eligible for a full award or a fees-only award
  - The student's attendance mode, i.e. whether the student is studying full-time or part-time
40. The AHRC reserves the right to request further information from the BGP coordinator or to decline a nomination if the student and/or course of study do not meet the published eligibility criteria or BGP studentship profile, or if the recruitment process appears to have been unfair.
41. The AHRC will formally confirm the acceptance or decline of the nominated student to the student and to the RO.
42. In being nominated to a studentship, the student and RO accept the terms and conditions of the studentship award.

Is the RO eligible for other AHRC competitions once it has a BGP?

43. ROs which hold a BGP may not apply for awards within the annual Studentship Competition. They may, however, be eligible through other AHRC competitions, for example the Collaborative Doctoral Awards (CDAs), and academics within an RO which holds a BGP may be able to

apply for project studentships (attached to Research Grants). Details of these can be found on our website.



## SECTION 5: CHANGES, SUSPENSIONS AND TERMINATIONS OF AWARDS

### Principles

44. The AHRC recognises that over the five cohorts within the award there may be instances where the RO will have a reason to request changes to their BGP award. Such changes may be associated with:

- problems with the recruitment to studentships
- individual students wishing to transfer institution
- the overall profile of the award (for example, as a result of institutional strategic developments resulting from the 2008 RAE).

In each instance the RO will be required to provide good evidence in support of any change to the original BGP award. The starting point in any such instance should be that the BGP coordinator contacts the AHRC to discuss the change. Our guiding principle is to fund the best students in the most suitable environments and we will ensure that funds allocated through the BGP competition meet the aims of the competition and that support for full subject coverage across all BGP awards is maintained. The AHRC also recognises that there must also be flexibility within the competition to meet the needs of its community. The AHRC will seek to build ongoing relationships with BGP award holders throughout the lifetime of the awards to deliver this.

### Student recruitment

What if we can't recruit suitable students for particular studentships?

45. The AHRC wishes to maintain the BGP's studentship profile. However, where the RO is unable to find a candidate of a suitable standard for a particular studentship, then it should contact the AHRC to discuss possible options. Depending on the particular circumstances it may not always be possible to allow you to recruit to an alternative studentship.
46. The AHRC may be able to approve a studentship being vired to another subject area within the BGP award. The coordinator will need to provide strategic reasons why the BGP should support a student in the proposed area rather than the area awarded. Any adjustment within a given subject area will need to be compensated for in that subject in the next year. For example, if the RO has been given two English and two history doctoral awards per year but is unable to fit suitable history students it may request to make three English and one history in 2009 and then recruit to three history and one English in 2010.
47. The AHRC will pay particular attention to requests for virement in cases where the studentship is in a subject area identified in the RO's strategy as endangered or emergent. The RO will need to provide a compelling case for virement and must also address the issue of how this area will be approached in future years to avoid further recruitment difficulties.
48. Please note that we cannot authorise awards being moved between schemes. For example, if the BGP has been offered five doctoral award, six Research Preparation Master's awards and eight Professional Preparation Master's awards we expect the RO to nominate students to these places accordingly. We are unable to agree to one of the Research Preparation Master's studentships being offered to a doctoral student, for example.

What if a student does not start their course of programme of study?

49. If a nominated student fails to start their course or programme of study, the RO may have the opportunity to find a replacement student. In this case, the RO should inform the AHRC that a student will not be taking up their place. If a new student must be nominated, the AHRC will inform the BGP coordinator of the new nomination deadline on JeS. We appreciate that this may delay the start date beyond 1 October but we cannot approve a start date later than 1 January of that academic year. In the case of Master's students, a delayed start date may not be feasible. All eligibility criteria must still be adhered to.
50. It is possible that there are no suitable candidates for a studentship and the RO may choose to re-advertise the studentship. If there is already a shortlist of candidates for the studentship in the relevant subject area based on that year's BGP selection process, ROs may nominate these candidates.

#### Permanent changes to the profile of awards within a BGP

What should we do if we want to change our BGP profile permanently?

51. The BGP was awarded on the basis of the case made in the proposal as to the support and resources which would be provided by the RO. The offer of award was made on this basis plus any additional requirements outlined in the offer letter. BGP coordinators must inform us immediately if there are changes within the RO which will impact on the support that can be provided through the BGP. Such a change might, for example, be key staff leaving the RO so that the BGP can no longer offer supervision in particular subject areas, or if facilities or resources are no longer available. The BGP coordinator should contact the AHRC to inform us of the changes outlining the impact on delivery of the BGP strategy and stating what action the RO proposes to take in mitigation.
52. In cases where changes to resources mean that the subject can no longer be provided, the BGP coordinator may make a case to reallocate awards to a different subject area. The coordinator must state clearly the strategic importance of such a proposal to the RO and the AHRC.
53. Starting from a position of stability, we will be responsive to significant changes in strategic direction supported by evidence. For example, we recognise that the 2008 RAE may affect institutional strategy over time. We do, however, reserve the right to decline such a proposal and reduce the number of awards within the BGP in subsequent years.

What is the deadline for requesting changes to our BGP profile?

54. Any changes that are requested for the permanent alteration of the profile of the BGP award should be made in writing to the AHRC by 31<sup>st</sup> October each year, and if any such changes are agreed these will take effect from the next cohort of students. All requests will be considered together, and will include academic judgement of the request.

Can we change our courses or programmes of study?

55. You should notify us of any significant change that is proposed to a taught course or programme of study providing reasons for the change, stating

which of the BGP supported students will be affected and in what way they will be affected. Please frame this notification with reference to your original bid. The students must gain the same level of qualification as that specified in their nomination.

### Student requests

Can a student transfer from their original RO?

56. The studentship is part of the BGP award so we would not expect a student to transfer to another RO. However, if such a situation arises, for example if the student's supervisor moves to another RO, the original RO will need to consider whether it wishes to support the transfer of the studentship award. This should take account of what is appropriate in relation to the BGP and the RO's strategy whilst also taking into account the needs of the individual student.
57. Although studentships within the BGP are made to individual students they are part of the BGP and the RO has responsibility for their management. This includes the right to decline an award moving to another RO if there are strong reasons for declining. In making such decisions, the AHRC will expect the RO to give due consideration to the needs of the student.
58. If the transfer of the studentship is agreed by the RO (and the receiving RO), that studentship will be moved from the BGP to the new RO and will not be replaced by the AHRC. Bear in mind that, even if the RO supports the transfer, the AHRC might not necessarily agree to it. The transfer will only affect that particular studentship and has no impact on any future studentship allocation under the BGP.
59. The BGP coordinator will need to be aware of any transfers of students. Details of how to request a transfer can be found in the Guide for Postgraduate Award Holders in the Arts and Humanities.

Can Master's students transfer courses within our RO?

60. A student with a Master's award may only transfer courses within their original RO if the course they wish to transfer to is within the subject area to which they were originally nominated and the transfer fits the BGP strategy in that subject area. The BGP coordinator should decide whether or not to agree to the transfer and inform the AHRC.

### Suspensions to the BGP

Can we suspend our BGP award?

61. The RO may not request a suspension to the BGP award. Once it has been initiated, students must be recruited to the BGP studentship profile awarded. This will normally be an annual recruitment exercise. If the RO experiences difficulties in running the BGP it should work with the AHRC to reach a satisfactory arrangement for continuing the award.

Can the AHRC suspend our BGP award?

62. The AHRC reserves the right to suspend the BGP if either the RO or any of the parties involved fails to meet the terms and conditions of the award. In practice, a suspension will mean that the RO cannot recruit to the BGP

for a given period. The RO will be expected to continue to provide full support for the students that are already in place. The AHRC will continue to support the individual students supported through the BGP.

#### Termination of studentships within a BGP

What happens if student wishes to terminate their studentship?

63. If a student terminates their studentship after they have commenced study, we will be unable to approve a replacement student at any time.

#### Termination of a BGP award

64. We will consider terminating a BGP only as a last resort. The AHRC will work with ROs during the term of the award to ensure that the BGP delivers its objectives and any problems are identified and addressed at an early stage. The BGP coordinator should contact us at the earliest opportunity if issues arise which will impact on the successful running of the BGP. In particular, we must be informed if a change in circumstances means that the BGP may no longer meet the terms on which the award was made and accepted.
65. The AHRC reserves the right to terminate the BGP if the terms and conditions are broken or if progress is deemed to be unsatisfactory and the problems cannot be rectified. We reserve the right to terminate collaborative BGP awards if the agreement between the parties is broken and the collaboration cannot continue.
66. In extreme circumstances, the RO may request to terminate the BGP award if it finds it can no longer deliver the proposed strategy. The BGP coordinator must alert the AHRC to this possibility at the earliest possible stage so that the AHRC and the RO can discuss and agree a way forward. The RO (or ROs, if it is a collaborative award) must continue to support all the students who already hold studentships under the BGP.
67. If a BGP is terminated, we will endeavour to honour the individual studentships made within the BGP, e.g. we will continue to fund the students up to the specified end date of their studentship providing they continue to meet our terms and conditions. The RO must undertake to provide full support to students who have already been recruited to the BGP for the full term of their studentship. In the case of doctoral students, support must be provided up to submission of the student's thesis. The AHRC will ask the RO to specify, in writing, how this support will be provided.
68. If the BGP award is terminated, the AHRC will inform the RO of its eligibility to apply for further studentships.

## SECTION 6: DURATION AND CONTINUATION OF AWARDS

### Duration of the BGP

How long does the BGP last?

69. There are several aspects to the duration of the BGP. There will be five student cohorts awarded through the BGP, one cohort for each of five consecutive years. The RO's obligations to students funded through the BGP will continue beyond the five cohort years, however, and the RO must provide supervision and management for the students until their final submission date (or the end of their course for Master's students). For reporting purposes, the students funded in all of the five cohorts will be counted within the BGP. The AHRC's financial commitment will continue only for as long as the students are studying, and will not cover any writing-up period.
70. The RO will be expected to manage all BGP students for the full term of their studentship according to the BGP terms and conditions.

### Continuation of the BGP

Can we continue the BGP after the five-year award has ended?

71. There will be no guarantee of continued funding for the BGP. As such, the RO must have in place a strategy to ensure that students supported in the later years of the BGP get the same level of support as those who finished their course of study within the first five years of the BGP.
72. We will publish new details about the future of the BGP competition when these are available. During the intervening period the AHRC will be reviewing the first round of the competition to evaluate if the aims of the BGP and the new funding allocation have been met.

### Continuation, registration, and problems relating to studentships within a BGP

73. Procedures for the following issues that might arise with individual studentships are addressed within the Guide for Postgraduate Award Holders in the Arts and Humanities:
- What happens to students offered doctoral awards conditional on gaining their Master's degree?
  - What happens to students offered doctoral awards conditional on upgrading to doctoral status?
  - Can our Master's scheme award holders upgrade to doctoral status?
  - What registration requirements must students meet?
  - What is expected of Master's students that finish their award?
  - What happens if a student experiences health or other difficulties?
  - What are the annual reporting requirements for BGP students?
74. We will ask ROs to confirm the satisfactory progress of all their AHRC students on an annual basis in order to confirm continuation of the studentships. This bulk process will include studentships within the BGP award, there is no separate process. This applies to doctoral students and Master's students who are registered for more than one year.

## SECTION 7: MONITORING

75. ROs will be expected to provide information on the role of the BGP in the following:
- Sustaining high quality research and training
  - Facilitating long-term strategic planning for postgraduate training
  - Contributing to AHRC strategic objectives
  - Meeting the requirements set out in the AHRC's Research Training Framework
  - Facilitating interdisciplinary research training
  - Providing knowledge transfer skills training
  - Promoting the dissemination of postgraduate research
  - Integrating institutional postgraduate, knowledge transfer and research strategies
  - Meeting the strategy set out by the RO in their original BGP application
76. ROs will also be asked to comment upon the administrative aspects of the BGP award, including:
- Virements
  - Changes in supervision arrangements
  - Subject-specific training opportunities available to students
  - Management of the BGP award
  - Mechanisms for monitoring student recruitment, supervision and progress
  - Role and responsibilities of the BGP coordinator
77. ROs in receipt of collaborative BGP awards will also be asked to comment on the administrative aspects of the collaboration.

What monitoring of the BGP award will the AHRC undertake?

78. Continuation of the BGP within the first five cohorts will be subject to the AHRC receiving, as a minimum, a mid-term report which is assessed as satisfactory. The AHRC reserves the right to request more frequent reports if it considers that there are grounds for concern.
79. We will monitor progress of the BGP and progress of studentships supported within the BGP. After the BGP award comes to an end, we will seek information about whether the award has achieved its aims and objectives. We will also request final reports from individual students supported through the BGP.
80. The AHRC may also engage informally with ROs, e.g. through visits to the RO. Any paperwork we require in advance of these visits will be kept to a minimum but we will expect to meet with the BGP coordinator and any management team that has been put in place, supervisors, course leaders and training leaders involved in the BGP, and students supported through the BGP. The AHRC will provide full details of what will be expected before the visit.

What recruitment and nomination monitoring will the AHRC undertake?

81. We will monitor the profile of nominated students closely to ensure students of a high quality are being nominated to places, and that an open and fair student recruitment and selection process has taken place. We will also be monitoring that there has been no dramatic change in the

balance of full and fees-only awards, and full-time and part-time award holders and that our eligibility rules have been adhered to.

How will the AHRC treat transferred students in relation to the monitoring of BGPs?

82. We will inform you of the reporting requirements for students that transfer either into or out of your institution once the transfer has been agreed.

#### Submission rate surveys and sanctions

83. The Submission Rate Survey is an annual survey that calculates the rate of submission of doctoral students who have held AHRC postgraduate awards. The census date of the survey is 30 September each year. We collect information from ROs on the submission and completion rates of award holders who took up awards four, five or six years previously. Please refer to AHRC Submission Rate Survey Guidance document for full details of our current policy and procedures.
84. The Council's monitoring of submission rates is intended to encourage the timely completion of a thesis; as of the 2008 submission rate survey exercise, sanctions will be applied at an institutional level only. While individual departments will no longer be subject to sanctions, the AHRC will continue to collect submission data at a departmental level and will communicate any concerns it has regarding an individual department's submission rate accordingly.
85. The percentage threshold for submissions at an institutional level will change throughout the course of the BGP award. It is important that the RO refers to the most current version of the 'AHRC Submission Rate Survey Guidance' document available from the AHRC website.
86. If the RO is sanctioned during the term of the BGP it will not be eligible to recruit doctoral students during the two-year period of the sanction and its allocation of doctoral students for that period will be withdrawn. Doctoral students who are already supported by the BGP will not be affected. The allocation of Master's awards during this period will not be affected.

## SECTION 8: PAYMENT OF AWARDS

How much is the BGP worth?

87. The BGP award does not constitute a cash value and instead comprises a certain number of studentships. The funding that is provided through the BGP will depend on the students who are nominated to fill the studentship places on the BGP, for example, whether they are studying full-time or part-time, and whether they are eligible for full or fees-only awards.

How much are individual studentships worth?

88. The postgraduate award rates and allowances are reviewed each year and are published on our website.

What funds are available to students who have already started their study?

89. If the RO requests funding for the remainder of a student's course, the AHRC cannot allocate any additional funds to the RO to cover the previous unfunded period. If the student is already studying at the RO, they must have gained the BGP studentship in a fair and open competition with other applicants for that studentship.

Who receives payments for awards?

90. All payments will be made to the RO. For collaborative awards, payments will be made to the RO at which each student is registered.

Can we incorporate the BGP into a wider funding strategy?

91. BGPs are designed to facilitate long-term strategic planning within the RO. The AHRC expects that some ROs will seek to build on the foundation provided by the BGP by looking at additional methods for strengthening their provision. The RO may decide to invest in or consolidate their own studentships or scholarships in the relevant areas to form a more cohesive package for postgraduate training and funding for the arts and humanities across the RO. Alternatively, it may use the stability provided by the BGP to pursue additional investment in these areas from the RO or other sources.



## SECTION 9: RESEARCH TRAINING FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

92. As part of the case for support for BGP funding, the RO will have outlined its strategy for supporting research training. The RO will be expected to ensure that support is provided in line with this strategy and in line with any feedback the RO might have received during the assessment process. If the RO proposes significant modification to its training strategy, for example, if it is no longer intending to deliver a particular course or training programme, the AHRC must be informed immediately. The AHRC reserves the right to request additional information if it is concerned that the revised training strategy will not meet the standard offered in the BGP proposal or the standard of training required for a BGP.

The RO and the BGP coordinator should refer to the AHRC's Research Training Framework when considering the training and skills development of students funded through the BGP.

93. The framework is a means of enabling ROs to reassure the AHRC that the doctoral students we fund are well supported and that they receive appropriate and relevant preparation and training. The framework is flexible and takes a 'needs-based' approach covering both general, transferable skills and subject-specific research skills. The aim is to help the students supported through the BGP to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary both to complete a high-quality doctoral thesis and to move on to their future career.
94. In order to help departments and institutions meet the requirements of the framework, the AHRC allocates an annual research training fund (RTF) for our doctoral award holders. This applies to all doctoral award holders including part-time and fees-only students.
95. The AHRC's research training funding is to be used entirely for generic skills training; the AHRC does not contribute dedicated funding towards the subject-specific element of the framework. This is in line with the training funding provided by the other Research Councils. Full details on the research training payments and how they should be used can be found on the FAQ sheet produced by RCUK:  
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/rescareer/rcdu/training.htm>
96. Our Collaborative Research Training scheme does provide pump-priming funds to support the provision of subject-specific research training which enables institutions to offer such training to groups of students where it is not possible or cost-effective to provide the training in just one department or institution:  
<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/funding/opportunities/current/>
97. The AHRC is committed to supporting ROs in the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers in conjunction with Vitae, RCUK and other stakeholders. We hope that the strategic funding of awards through the BGP and our continuing relationships with BGP award holders will provide opportunities to work with our community to help embed the principles within this document.

We welcome suggestions and ideas to help us to improve our procedures. If you have any suggestions or questions, please contact Jill Mustard or Lucy Parnall at the following address:

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