



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

## **Definition of research (all schemes except Research Networking and Follow-on Funding)**

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The AHRC's definition of research is primarily concerned with the definition of research processes, rather than outputs. This definition is built around three key features and your application must fully address all of these in order to be considered eligible for support:

- it must define a series of research questions, issues or problems that will be addressed in the course of the research. It must also define its aims and objectives in terms of seeking to enhance knowledge and understanding relating to the questions, issues or problems to be addressed
- it must specify a research context for the questions, issues or problems to be addressed. You must specify why it is important that these particular questions, issues or problems should be addressed; what other research is being or has been conducted in this area; and what particular contribution this project will make to the advancement of creativity, insights, knowledge and understanding in this area
- it must specify the research methods for addressing and answering the research questions, issues or problems. You must state how, in the course of the research project, you will seek to answer the questions, address the issues or solve the problems. You should also explain the rationale for your chosen research methods and why you think they provide the most appropriate means by which to address the research questions, issues or problems.

Creative output can be produced, or practice undertaken, as an integral part of a research process as defined above. The AHRC would expect, however, this practice to be accompanied by some form of documentation of the research process, as well as some form of textual analysis or explanation to support its position and as a record of your critical reflection. Equally, creativity or practice may involve no such process at all, in which case they would be ineligible for funding from the AHRC. For guidance concerning research in the creative and performing arts where practice is integral to the research, please see the additional advice below.

The AHRC's primary concern is to ensure that the research it funds addresses clearly-articulated research questions, issues or problems, set in a clear context of other research in that area, and using appropriate research methods and/or approaches.

The precise nature of the research questions, issues or problems, approaches to the research and outputs of the work may vary considerably, embracing basic, strategic and applied research. The research questions, issues, problems, methods and/or approaches may range from intellectual questions that require critical, historical or theoretical investigation, to practical issues or problems that require other approaches such as testing, prototyping, experimental development and evaluation. The outputs of the research may include, for example, monographs, editions or articles; electronic data, including sound or images; performances, films or broadcasts; or exhibitions. Teaching materials may also be an appropriate outcome from a research project provided that it fulfils the definition above.

The research should be conceived as broadly as possible and so consideration should also be given to the outcomes of, and audiences for, the research. The outcomes of the research may only benefit other researchers and influence future research, but consideration must be given to potential opportunities for the transfer of knowledge into new contexts where the research could have an impact.

### **Practice-led research**

If you are applying for funding to support a practice-led research project, please read the following advice for framing your proposal.

For your research to be considered as practice-led, your own practice must be an integral part of the proposed programme of research, and the creative and/or performative aspects of the research must be made explicit. Interdisciplinary proposals are welcomed, including those which fall within subjects traditionally defined as humanities as long as the main focus of the research is practice-led.

The research carried out should bring about enhancements in knowledge and understanding in the discipline, or in related disciplinary areas. This requirement excludes research to provide content. For example, if a film-maker wanted to make a film about refugees, the research questions should be about the process of making the film, not about the experience of the refugees. Work that results purely from the creative or professional development of an artist, however distinguished, is unlikely to fulfil the requirements of research.