

The British Academy

Reporting to BIS - Summary of highlights of the financial year 2013/14

INTRODUCTION

1. This report outlines key achievements during the financial year 2013/14 and should be read in conjunction with the Outputs and Outcomes report for 2013/14.

FUNDING THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

2. **Postdoctoral fellowships** support some of the most talented researchers in the humanities and social sciences (H&SS). **50** new postdoctoral fellowships were awarded in 2013/14. The quality of applications remains high.
3. The research supported through this scheme addresses major challenges facing society today and in the future. Some current examples include: the effects of weather variation on health and the healthcare sector in the UK; the extent to which the daily activities and social interactions of young people affect adult outcomes such as employment and family formation; and migrant socio-legal integration and access to justice.
4. Over **82%** of former award-holders continue to pursue academic careers, and, of those who completed their fellowships in 2013-14, **100%** remain in academic life.
5. This year, the Academy piloted a series of **40** regional networking events for early career researchers. The events were held across the UK. Topics were varied and included interdisciplinary approaches to major challenges, as well issues concerning career development. Feedback from the wider community has indicated strong endorsement of the value of such events and the Academy is being pressed to repeat the series in future years.
6. The findings of an externally commissioned evaluation of the postdoctoral fellowship scheme confirmed the high standing in which the scheme is held and the way in which it had enhanced the careers of leading researchers.
7. The Academy's **mid-career fellowships** enable more established researchers to advance their research and disseminate their research widely. **46** new fellowships were awarded in 2013/14. Topics covered include: youth unemployment; the adult consequences of being bullied in childhood; strategies to promote gender proportionality within public sector unions.
8. The Academy's **small research grants** continue to demonstrate their effectiveness and efficiency by providing relatively small sums of money that result in a large volume of both academic and non-academic outputs, allow grant holders to open up new research areas and to obtain funding from sources at home and overseas. For every **£1** invested through the Academy's small grants, an average of **over £20** is generated from other sources subsequently.
9. Analysis of the progress of the **Academy Research Projects** – some 50 important infrastructural projects for H&SS – shows that they continue to be successful in leveraging significant resources from non-public sources, including those from overseas. For every **£1** invested by the Academy in this programme (£200,000 p.a.), **more than £60** is generated from these sources – currently totaling more than **£13m**.

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS

10. The Academy's international programme promotes UK research overseas and provides leadership in developing global research links and expertise.
11. The Academy's scheme of **International Partnerships and Mobility** creates opportunities for UK H&SS researchers to work with some of the best researchers in the world. These kinds of engagements play an important part in enabling UK H&SS research to remain at the international cutting edge. The scheme focuses on strategic regions of the world for the UK, such as Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.
12. The Academy BASIS (**British Academy-Sponsored Institutes and Societies**) research organisations act as an important hub for UK H&SS research in strategic regions of the world. These institutes typically support over **3,500** UK researchers a year, enabling them to maximize research opportunities in these regions.
13. Given the global competition for excellent researchers, it is essential that the UK remains an attractive place for the brightest and best to work. The **Newton International Fellowship** scheme, delivered in partnership with the Royal Society, attracts some of the best international researchers to the UK and fosters longer-term collaborations benefiting the UK.
14. The Academy's **International Forum Series** is aimed at deepening understandings of topical international policy issues, covering topics such as challenges facing the Chinese economy and the potential of the Good Friday Agreement as an international model for conflict resolution. For example, an International Forum was held in October with Dr Wang Jianye, Chief Economist of China Eximbank, attended by a range of policy makers, practitioners and selected academics, including the Executive Director of ODI, a Director General of FCO, Chief Economists from DfID and FCO; and other officials from FCO, DFID and the Bank of England.
15. In October, the Academy also held a major international conference on *Emerging Powers Going Global*. Speakers included leading international experts, as well as representatives from government, banking, industry and commerce drawn from across the world, including from China, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, Brazil, Philippines, Africa, Thailand, India, South Africa and the USA.
16. A report on the importance of the UK's 'soft power' resources and on how best to exploit them, *The Art of Attraction: Soft Power and the UK's Role in the World*, has influenced a House of Lords Inquiry, and has also been promoted by FCO to its officials as part of an essential 'toolkit' on the issue.

STRENGTHENING POLICYMAKING

17. The challenges facing society today require expertise drawn from across the full range of the humanities, social sciences and sciences. The very best research findings in H&SS can enable the development of more efficient and effective policymaking.
18. Through its public policy programme, the Academy provides high-level expertise and advice on how they should be addressed and fosters collaboration between leading academics and policymakers. Highlights in 2013/14 include:

- As part of their ongoing work on **underwater cultural heritage**, the Academy and the Honor Frost Foundation (HFF) published a short policy briefing document on the UNESCO 2001 Convention, timed to coincide with the publication of an Impact Review of the UK ratifying the convention.
- Providing advice to the Council of Science and Technology (CST) on the social science dimensions to the issue of the **geological disposal of radioactive waste**.
- Publication of a report - a collection of opinion pieces - on **health inequalities**.
- A guide for policymakers on defined contribution **pension** schemes.
- The conclusion of a series of events and accompanying publications on the issues that will affect **Scotland and the UK**, ahead of the independence referendum.

SPEAKING FOR THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

19. The UK has a world-leading H&SS research base. This makes very significant contributions to social, economic and cultural well-being, as well as to the UK's place and reputation in the world. The focus of Academy higher education policy and advocacy work is to represent the interests of research in these disciplines, and to stress their role and value.
20. In addition to the Academy's own multimedia publication *Prospering Wisely* (see paragraph 25 below), the Academy has undertaken a programme of work in partnership with the other three national academies to make the case for the importance of **science and research for growth and innovation**, leading to the publication of *Fuelling Prosperity*.
21. The Academy's Position Statement on Postgraduate Funding (*Postgraduate Funding: the Neglected Dimension*) stressed the need to improve the funding of postgraduate study. This formed the backdrop for a range of subsequent activity including discussions with HEFCE, Research Councils and other funders/stakeholders to investigate sustainable funding solutions for the UK's postgraduate sector. These include: commissioning NUS to undertake a large-scale analysis of **student attitude to undergraduate debt** and the impact on postgraduate study intentions; in partnership with AHRC, commissioning a study on the **barriers facing early career researchers** when seeking to establish academic research careers.
22. On **open access**, the Academy has provided leadership to the humanities and social sciences academic communities, helping them to articulate ways in which this new policy should best be implemented for the benefit of H&SS research and the UK more generally. Two major reports were published in 2013/14: *Debating Open Access*, on the challenges and opportunities for the humanities and social sciences; and *Open Access Journals in Humanities and Social Sciences*, on the effect that different journal embargo policies will have on library acquisition policies, and the degree to which different disciplines are involved in non-UK publishing. The latter report has already informed HEFCE's consultation on how open access will be implemented in the next Research Assessment Framework.
23. The Academy is working closely with HEFCE to shape and inform the new arrangements for demand raising activity in modern foreign languages. It is also advising HEFCE's Strategic Group focused on vulnerable areas of importance to the UK.

BUILDING CAPACITY: LANGUAGES AND QUANTITATIVE SKILLS (L&QS)

24. This programme addresses skills shortages in two strategically important areas through strategic engagement, advocacy and promotion, and targeted capacity building.

- **Strategic Engagement.** In partnership with *The Guardian*, the Academy began an engagement campaign in 2013 to raise the profile of the importance of language learning, including the engagement of opinion formers. It will culminate in a joint white paper to be published in 2015. A new policy initiative, Born Global, was launched to gather new evidence regarding the language needs for employment, including longitudinal data investigating the relationship between the language competence of young people and their adult employment prospects. Steering Group chaired by Richard Hardie (Chair, UBS Ltd) and includes representatives from CBI and BCC. The Academy's policy report, *Lost for Words*, on the role of languages for security and diplomacy followed a year-long inquiry that included engagement with a range of stakeholders including the FCO and the Secret Intelligence Agencies. The High Level Strategy Group for Quantitative Skills, convened by the Academy, is developing a national strategy and a long-term plan of coordinated action to address the UK's QS deficit. The strategy is intended to support existing initiatives, increase the evidence base, and identify opportunities to invest in the supply chain. As part of this initiative – with the intention of signalling the value of QS to employers and students, and driving curriculum change and innovation – the Academy has been consulting stakeholders on how a national system of recognition of levels of achievement of graduates in QS in the social sciences could be established.
- **Advocacy and promotion.** Highlights here include: a month long, UK-wide Language Festival in November 2013, celebrating the UK's diverse cultural heritage; public engagement, including an online editorial series for languages.
- **Targeted capacity building and kitemarking.** Highlights include:
 - School Language Awards. As a kitemarker of excellence, these awards encourage innovative language teaching in schools across the UK.
 - Targeted bursaries in support of undergraduate training in quantitative methods

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

25. A centrepiece of the Academy's public engagement and advocacy work during 2013/14 was the creation and launch (in February) of '**Prospering Wisely**' – a multimedia publication which explores the notion of 'prosperity' in its widest sense, far beyond its purely financial meaning, and illustrated the many ways in which the humanities and social sciences actively contribute to it – for example, in helping improve people's well-being, in sustaining a healthy, open democracy and by constantly fuelling and expanding the frontiers of knowledge, innovation and human understanding, and the creation of new ideas.

26. **The British Academy Debates**, launched on the back of *Prospering Wisely* set out to demonstrate the contribution of our disciplines by showing the humanities and social sciences 'at work', demonstrating their importance and value to our everyday lives and helping to raise public understanding of the nature of some of the major challenges facing us in today's world. The series started with a series of debates held in London, Sheffield and Edinburgh exploring aspects of Ageing, and will go on to explore the challenges of Immigration (Autumn 2014) and Well-Being (Spring 2015) in different venues around the UK.
27. A particular highlight of the **public events** programme was our biennial Literature Week (May 2013), organised in conjunction with the Institute of English Studies and with media partner the *Times Literary Supplement*. It involved a lively programme of discussions and lectures, including events held in partnership with the Shakespeare's Globe, the Royal Society of Literature and the Irish Embassy. Other events highlights included Monty Python's Terry Jones participating in a discussion of the relevance of the Middle Ages to the Modern World, a panel debating Britain and the Occupations of Iraq, and lectures on 'Models, Fact and Fiction in Economics', on 'Britain and the beginning of Scotland' and on 'Can Leaders Make A Difference to Organisational Performance?'
28. **British Academy Conferences** included conferences exploring Networks of Knowledge and Communication in Antiquity and the Digital Age; reflecting on the historical and musical importance and legacy of *Desert Island Discs*; and analyzing and debating the Politics of Fiscal Squeeze.
29. **Press and communications work** has continued to strengthen the Academy's profile, and that of its disciplines, wide wider audiences, with over 1,000 news stories covered in the past year (BBC Breakfast, the Today Programme, broadsheet press, magazines and fast expanding online news sites). Expanded use of social media has improved contact with younger audiences and with the media; the number of Twitter followers has risen from 2,300 a year ago to almost 8,000 now.
30. The Academy's **publications programme** disseminates work of the highest scholarly standards in different fields of the humanities and social sciences. In 2013/14, 30 new academic titles were published and these generated a record surplus for the Academy. The open-access online *Journal of the British Academy*, launched in July, as a vehicle for disseminating outputs from our growing programme of lectures, which now span all of the Academy's main disciplines across the humanities and social sciences.