

## Review of Research Support

The Grants Committee spent much of its time in the early part of this year considering the responses to its consultation on the scope of research support, and preparing a full report.

As a result of the changes that have taken place following the establishment of the AHRB, the Academy's role can now be seen more distinctly as complementing the funding available nationally through the AHRB for the humanities, and the ESRC for the social sciences. Given the new arrangements (which came into full effect in April 1999), it was decided that it would be timely to seek the views of the academic community on how the Academy should organise its support so as to maximise the benefits to scholars.

Under the aegis of the Grants Committee, a detailed consultation paper was prepared, setting out the current scope and purposes of the small grants and conference schemes, and inviting comment on any modifications that should be made. A series of questions was devised, seeking views on what were the needs and wishes of the academic body.

During the autumn of 1999, 109 subject associations were consulted. Separately, a cohort of 240 previous award holders were surveyed. By the deadline of 31 January 2000, 54 subject associations had submitted replies, and 165 award holders, representing an overall response rate of more than 60%.

In March 2000, the Academy's Grants Committee considered the results. Its principal conclusions were that there was ample evidence to show that the small grants scheme was perceived as meeting a real need, and its scope and purposes were generally on the right lines. A few modifications were required, principal amongst which was the clear preference that research funds should be reserved for primary research, with publication-related costs coming second by some distance. The Academy has therefore decided to adjust its regulations so that publication costs can no longer be covered by research funds. There was little support for the suggestion that small grants might be used to finance short periods of teaching relief, given that other resources already existed to fund this element (AHRB, ESRC, and HEIs all have

responsibility for funding research leave), and that there were already severe pressures on scarce funds available for the direct costs of research. The Academy has concluded that this option should not be pursued.

Opinion had been sought through the consultation exercise on whether the level of small grants should be raised, and comments invited on whether there were particular types of activity that were not adequately accommodated under the present arrangements for research support nationally. The respondents were overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining the £5,000 ceiling for small grants, and emphatically endorsed the policy of distributing awards to as many individual scholars as possible. However, there was also a body of opinion that was strongly in favour of allowing support up to the £20,000 mark, particularly for pilot/field studies that were unlikely to attract funding elsewhere. Separately, representations from the archaeological community had been made directly to the Academy's Council putting the case for the urgent need for additional support for fieldwork projects, the fundamental research base of the discipline.

Accepting the case that there was a gap in the current provision of funding nationally, which needed to be remedied, the Academy decided to introduce a new scheme for Larger Research Grants, to support pilot projects, field studies, and, to a limited degree, extensions to existing research activity. The upper limit will be £20,000 and grants may be held for three years. The first competition will be held in 2000–01, and the Academy has allocated a budget of £500,000 for the first year. New money has been forthcoming from the DfEE for the purpose. The Academy will review the scheme after its first year, and consider whether additional funds can be devoted to this programme.

It was evident from the responses received that the Academy's support for individual research activity was seen as a vital contribution to the pattern of research activity nationwide. Typical comments that summarised the general opinion amongst those surveyed were that *'Small grants are important out of all proportion to their size in fostering original research'*; and *'The British Academy's small grants scheme is vital, and complementary to the larger and more collaborative ESRC/AHRB schemes'*.

Copies of the Report on the review of research support may be requested from the Academy (email [e.ollard@britac.ac.uk](mailto:e.ollard@britac.ac.uk)), or it may be viewed on the Academy's web site at [www.britac.ac.uk](http://www.britac.ac.uk).

## Statistics on Awards, 1996–2000

The following statistics, taken from the *Report*, relate to awards made by the British Academy, for small research grants (up to £5,000) during the four year period 1996–2000. The figures for each year relate to the financial year, which runs from 1 April to 31 March. Where success rates are quoted, they have been calculated as a percentage of awards made against applications received, within each category.

### Awards by subject area

	1996–97	1997–98	1998–99	1999–2000	1996–2000		
Subject	Awards	Awards	Awards	Awards	Awards	% of awards	% success
African Studies	0	1	1	1	3	0.2	100.0
Ancient History	2	2	3	4	11	0.9	55.0
American Studies	0	1	5	3	9	0.7	81.8
Anthropology	9	11	9	20	49	3.8	76.6
Archaeology	21	13	23	74	131	10.2	65.8
Celtic	0	0	0	1	1	0.1	50.0
Classics	2	2	2	7	13	1.0	86.7
Comparative Literature	0	1	0	1	2	0.2	100.0
Communications	0	0	0	1	1	0.1	16.7
Cultural Studies	1	5	3	2	11	0.9	50.0
Dance	0	1	0	0	1	0.1	25.0
Demography	2	2	2	1	7	0.5	87.5
Drama	10	3	3	2	18	1.4	66.7
Economics	4	10	8	7	29	2.2	63.0
Early Modern History	12	16	18	23	69	5.3	67.6
English	16	23	34	37	110	8.5	69.2
Film Studies	2	6	5	3	16	1.2	55.2
French	11	7	21	25	64	5.0	68.1
Human Geography	12	9	7	16	44	3.4	62.0
German	6	9	12	7	34	2.6	79.1
History of Art	15	15	17	18	65	5.0	59.1
Hispanic Languages	3	4	7	6	20	1.6	74.1
History of Science	3	2	1	1	7	0.5	77.8
History of Ideas	2	1	2	1	6	0.5	60.0
Italian	2	3	1	9	15	1.2	71.4
Law	7	4	6	10	27	2.1	56.3
Linguistics	2	1	5	7	15	1.2	68.2
Medieval History	7	9	13	19	48	3.7	76.2
Modern History	35	31	45	73	180	14.0	63.6
Music	10	16	9	11	46	3.6	71.9
Oriental Studies	2	4	5	4	15	1.2	83.3
Other Languages	1	2	5	3	11	0.9	68.8
Philosophy	3	2	2	1	8	0.6	53.3
Politics	7	13	15	21	56	4.3	60.9
Psychology	2	1	4	16	23	1.8	82.1
Russian and Slavonic Language	6	2	1	5	14	1.1	66.7
Socio-legal Studies	1	2	1	3	7	0.5	63.6
Socio-linguistics	7	3	2	6	18	1.4	90.0
Sociology	5	3	12	17	37	2.9	58.7
Theology	16	5	13	15	49	3.8	77.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1290</b>		<b>66.8</b>

*Profile of award holders*

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	1996-2000		
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>% of awards</i>	<i>% success</i>
Male	174	164	217	320	875	67.8	65.6
Female	72	81	101	161	415	32.2	69.5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1290</b>		<b>66.8</b>
<b>Age</b>							
under 30	13	15	13	24	65	5.0	64.4
30-40	74	72	105	157	408	31.6	67.5
41-50	56	71	78	104	309	24.0	64.0
over 50	91	86	107	187	471	36.5	68.6
unknown	12	1	15	9	37	2.9	66.1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1290</b>		<b>66.8</b>
<b>Institution</b>							
Oxford	12	13	13	37	75	5.8	81.5
Cambridge	10	17	3	24	54	4.2	80.6
London	33	26	47	63	169	13.1	71.9
<i>Sub-total triangle</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>298</i>		<i>75.6</i>
Old universities (exc triangle)	138	138	184	270	730	56.6	69.1
New universities	21	18	31	36	106	8.2	51.2
Colleges of HE	1	1	3	4	9	0.7	50.0
Museums/Galleries	1	2	1	1	5	0.4	83.3
Independent	30	30	36	46	142	11.0	56.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1290</b>		<b>66.8</b>
<b>National base (universities)</b>							
England	184	168	224	350	926	71.8	68.6
Scotland	22	24	38	51	135	10.5	69.6
Wales	9	15	10	25	59	4.6	64.1
Northern Ireland	1	6	11	8	26	2.0	60.5
Unaffiliated	30	32	35	47	114	11.2	56.9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1290</b>		<b>66.8</b>

*Awards by discipline*

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	1996-2000		
<b>Awards by number</b>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>% of awards</i>	<i>% success</i>
Humanities	192	191	259	362	1004	77.8	66.5
Social Science	54	54	59	119	286	22.2	67.8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>1290</b>		<b>66.8</b>
<b>Awards by value</b>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>% of awards</i>	<i>% success</i>
Humanities	£417,155	£410,944	£621,330	£1,025,585	£2,475,014	73.8	63.0
Social Science	£136,210	£138,972	£172,299	£431,412	£878,893	26.2	61.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£553,365</b>	<b>£549,916</b>	<b>£793,629</b>	<b>£1,456,997</b>	<b>£3,353,907</b>		<b>62.4</b>