IMMIGRATION, JUSTICE AND SOCIETY

POLITEIA

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FUNDING HUMANITIES RESEARCH

JOHN MARENBON

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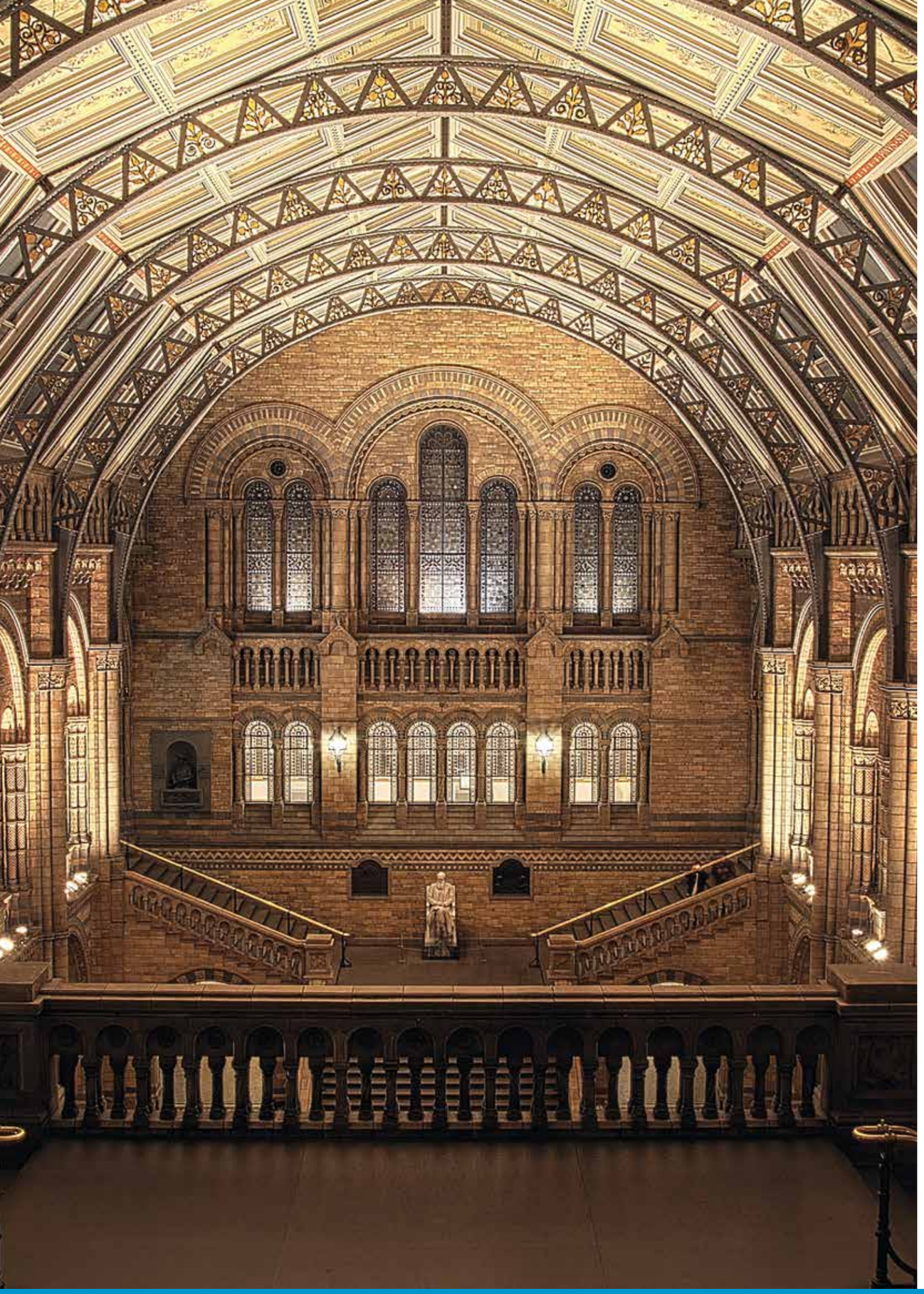
TABLE OF FIGURES



1

INTRODUCTION

Over the last forty years, there has been a change of worlds in funding research in the arts and humanities ('AH research').[1] AH research. In the Old World, there was little direct funding or assessment of AH research. Individual academics pursued their scholarly and intellectual work in combination with their teaching, with few checks or incentives, beyond professional esteem and the desire for knowledge itself. In the New World, AH research is funded directly, on the model of the natural sciences, and it is subject to frequent assessment; and the connection between it and teaching has been reduced.[2] Although they might seem to bring gains for AH research, these changes endanger it. Good AH research does not consist of projects aimed at answering a specific question or providing a given set of information which can be set out in advance and divided among a group. It is an open-ended activity, uncertain in its aims, which needs to be carried out by an individual, over the course of years and decades; and it is intrinsically tied to another activity, that of teaching. AH research needs to be based on people – university teachers – not projects. Too much, inappropriate assessment should be abandoned, because it distorts or destroys what it sets out to measure, and the public money for AH research projects should be used, instead, to support full university jobs, involving teaching and research.

The first part of this analysis – the three following chapters – set out the contrast between the Old World and the New. The second part begins by explaining what makes AH research valuable and goes on to examine critically the two most striking features of the New World: the rise of assessment and of directly funded research projects in AH. The final chapter suggests some practical policy proposals for AH funding in the UK, and also points out the implications of the arguments here for the whole range of subjects other than AH, including the natural sciences, and for other countries.

1 On the term 'AH' and 'AH research', see Appendix 5.

2 In the UK, direct government funding of arts and humanities research accounts for less than 2.5% of the science budget, and for less than 0.025% of annual public spending Cf. The Allocation of Research Funding. The Science Budget is c. £5 billion per year (£1.5 billion of which is for capital spending and special funds. The funding council for AH, the AHRC, receives 0.1 billion of this, and the British Academy (which also covers social sciences) receives £27 million. Total central government spending in the UK for 2018 is set to be £638 billion. [References are by short-title: details of publications will be found in the Bibliography.

2

THE OLD WORLD

Everyone knows that British universities have changed strikingly over the last forty years. Most strikingly, the participation rate for undergraduates has increased more than fourfold, from 12% in 1979 to almost 50% in 2016, and the system has moved from one where much or all the costs of the elite who went to university were paid for by public money to one where funding of today's vast cohorts of undergraduates is mostly by loans, repayable by the students.[3] Few, however, are aware that the organization of AH research has changed perhaps even drastically than the universities where most of it takes place.

Indeed, many senior AH academics in the 1970s would even have been surprised to hear the word 'research' applied to their work. They thought of themselves as scholars and teachers, not as researchers; or, more precisely, as (for instance) classicists or historians or philosophers (which is not to say that they did not believe that such disciplines could valuably be combined). They took it for granted that their calling involved doing classics or history or philosophy at an advanced level, and teaching it at a variety of levels. And they would have been as surprised to be told that their activity of writing books and articles needed funding, beyond perhaps a little subsidy for buying books, or for the cost of travel to visit archives and speak at conferences. Rather than this or that research project being funded, or their being funded to engage in some agreed piece of research, they took it for granted that they were being paid to be academics. And the job of an academic was one that had some well-defined elements, such as the duty to teach for a certain number of hours and conduct examinations; some more varying administrative demands (such as committee work, and taking a turn as departmental secretary), along with unwritten obligations to the wider academic community (refereeing, assessing, writing references), and also an open-ended commitment to scholarship, which might issue, to a greater or lesser extent, in public lectures, conference papers, book chapters, articles and monographs. In retrospect, these arrangements might be represented as involving the funding of research, but the funding was indirect and not tied to outcomes in individual cases.

For the academics not only of that older generation, but even those who were studying as undergraduates and postgraduates in the 1970s, the process of training and finding employment was straightforward. After a three-year (or occasionally four-year) first degree, they would do a PhD, which was supposed to take three years, but sometimes overran: by this time, doctorates – which had, earlier, been scorned in some English AH circles – were everywhere a prerequisite for an academic career. A few, especially talented young scholars had the chance to continue their doctoral work and go beyond it by winning a fellowship (what are now known as 'jrfs' = 'junior research fellowships') at an Oxford or Cambridge college, but these lasted, at most, for four years. The usual path was to go from a PhD to a lectureship. To say this path was straightforward is not to imply that it was always easy. Even in the late 1970s, aspirant AH academics looked back jealously to a recent but bygone time when permanent teaching jobs were there almost for the taking. In the new, straitened circumstances of AH in the 1980s universities, many with doctorates had to search, wait or emigrate for a job. But the system was simple. You became a

3 For a convenient summary of statistics on university participation, see the parliamentary briefing paper at www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn02630.pdf . The change in student funding is a complex one, because the loans are coming to resemble more and more a graduate tax, since it is becoming probable that most people will not have paid them back in full before they are written off after 30 years, and the government still funds teaching in the more expensive subjects (and, arguably, universities use teaching fees for low-cost courses to cross-subsidize high-cost ones (see below Chapter 6 and Appendix 4).

university lecturer or a teaching fellow of an Oxbridge college and followed a more or less rounded career as an academic – teacher, administrator, writer; or you failed to become one and left the country or found some other sort of employment.

Aside from a handful of permanent research fellowships at All Souls' and a very few at some other Oxbridge colleges, there were no AH research posts senior to the jrfs. Jobs were given, as now, mainly on the basis of candidates' research –their PhD (or its draft) or their publications; although teaching need was always a necessary condition. But, once installed in a teaching job, academics might be forgiven for thinking that, from the official point of view, their research no longer mattered. Their duties were to do a set amount of teaching, as well as some administrative chores, which were hard to avoid, because for everyone who dodged them, the burden on their colleagues increased. So far as speaking at conferences and writing were concerned, there were no stipulations. In some cases, no one in the employing institution would even have an idea whether a given younger academic had written a plethora of books and articles over the last decade or nothing at all.

This position was made possible by the lack of career structure in academic life. There was, certainly, a hierarchy, with professors better paid and, outside Oxford and Cambridge at least, enjoying a higher status and more authority than mere lecturers. And professorial appointments would usually be based on the candidates' records of publication. But professorial posts were, in general, limited to established chairs. The best universities had far more eminent academics than chairs, and many of these renowned scholars chose to stay where they were, beginning, continuing and ending their careers as lecturers, rather than take a professorship at an inferior institution. Such men and women did receive some external reward, in the form of recognition in their area, much of it unspoken, sometimes made concrete in the form of honorary degrees, academy fellowships and invitations to give special lectures. But what drew most of them, to give up days and nights, weekends and holidays to reading, thinking and writing about their chosen area was, simply, their interest in it: not a mindless curiosity, as with an antiquarian or an amateur genealogist, but an interest which gives shape to, and is given shape by, the discipline – that, for instance, of history or philosophy – which had been inculcated in them.

Almost every academic, then and now, has felt this drive; otherwise, they would have chosen some other better-paid, less intellectually arduous and more highly-esteemed employment. But not all continue to feel it. As a result, every department in the 70s and 80s had its non-producers: men and (less frequently) women who fulfilled their teaching obligations and, often, more than their fair share of administrative duties; who usually kept abreast of their fields and contemplated or began scholarly work but never or rarely brought it to completion, finishing their careers with perhaps a book based on their thesis and a handful of mediocre articles to show for forty years in academe. In the Old World, these university teachers were almost indistinguishable from their colleagues, lacking a few extra letters perhaps after their names, and the international esteem of specialists, but equally respected and equally paid in their own institutions.

3

THE NEW WORLD

It was part of the casualness of Old World arrangements that bright, intellectually (or at least academically) inclined undergraduates simply drifted into AH research, starting a doctorate straight after graduation on whatever topic enthused them. There was hardly any training for research. In the New World, by contrast, the formation of researchers, in AH as in every other field, is taken very seriously and has become strictly formalized. After their first degrees, a further qualification (one-year long only, for the most part, in the UK) is needed, at Masters level (MA/MPhil). The courses are usually described as 'taught', although there is often not very much teaching. The aim of these courses is to bring undergraduates to a point where they have sufficient training to begin a PhD, although the training is supposed to continue through and even after the doctorate.

The profile of students taking MA-level courses is different in AH from that in many other areas. In those areas, Masters level courses are usually taken as a final qualification by young people wanting to distinguish themselves from the mass, roughly half their age group, who have first degrees. These courses often have a practical, vocational bent, especially in the social sciences. But in the main AH subjects, most Masters students are aiming to work for a doctorate and their constant preoccupation is over whether and where they will be able to do so. If they are in a prestigious department, many will want to remain there, but the department will squeeze some, even occasionally all, of them out, because they have fewer places for PhDs than at Masters level and they also have PhD applicants from elsewhere.

Study for the doctorate itself is perhaps the area of AH research that has changed least in the New World. Most students have three years to pursue their work in an open-ended way – no one minds if the title and topic of a dissertation shift in the course of the work;

indeed, it is an encouraging sign if they do.[4] Funding – unlike the new arrangements for undergraduates – is usually as it was earlier, provided for the students, though the range of providers is wider. There is little in the way of formal teaching, except for periodic encounters with a supervisor, more or less conscientious, more or less expert on the particular area of the thesis. True, there are more checks, more forms to be filled out than before, and sinisterly-named documents such as 'Chapter B11' of the The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2014) and the Characteristics Statement. Doctoral Degree (September 2015) attempt to formulate set rules and criteria in an area where everything needs to be determined by custom, through experience and with regard to the case in question. Happily, few PhD supervisors know of the existence of these publications, or would trouble to read them if they did.

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By contrast, for those who have gained their doctorates the New World is very different from the Old. One of its defining features are the post-doctoral researchers, 'post-docs' – familiar from science departments in the past but rare in AH. Rather than a smoother or rougher transition into a permanent teaching job, in a few cases delayed by a jrf, the normal AH career now has a post-doc stage, which may well last for ten or more years, dedicated to pure research. The relentless rise of the post-doc is nicely illustrated by figures from the University of Cambridge, where even the colleges, slow-moving institutions by any standards, are now changing their structures to embrace this new development. 35% of Cambridge's total staff are 'contract research workers', the biggest of any of its categories and more than twice the size of its academic staff, who account for just 15% of the total.[5] In the decade between 2006 and 2016, the numbers of such contract researchers (mostly post-docs) rose by 58%, whereas the number of academic staff increased by just 8% (see Figure 8). These figures do not separate AH from social and natural sciences, but part of the rise must be explained by the addition, in increasing numbers, of AH post-docs.

AH post-docs take a variety of forms.[6] Traditional jrfs – often not technically post-docs, because they are won by candidates who have yet to complete their doctorates – are the only posts which are, usually and in the main part, person-directed. Although most jrf competitions will ask candidates to provide a plan of future research, the main criterion for choosing the successful ones is their achievement in their field so far, and in the most prestigious and best-run of these contests attention will be focused on the dissertation or chapter they have submitted. A well-thought-out research plan might help at the margins, but in any case a jrf would not be bound to follow it. Jrfs are obliged simply to carry out academic research, developing their work as they are led by its own dynamic of question and answer, of fresh problems and possibilities arising from each problem solved.

To these person-centred posts, already well-established in the Old World, there have been added posts, in some respects similar, not attached to Oxford or Cambridge colleges but to university departments throughout the country, funded by the British Academy or the Leverhulme Foundation. The similarity lies in their aiming at a similar range of applicants, though rather more senior – some people go on from jrfs to one of these posts, and that they support an individual's research, rather than a group. But there is an important difference. These awards are project-directed. Although they each go to an individual scholar, the award is for him or her to undertake a specific piece of research, and the description of this research project is the main basis for deciding if someone should be 'funded'. (Note the language: it is not, as with a jrf, a competition, which the best wins; it is a project, and it has to be determined whether it is fundable and then, given the resources available, whether it is actually to be funded.) For the British Academy postdoctoral fellowship (PDF), for instance, candidates are not asked to submit their PhD theses until the second round, from which the great majority of candidates have already been eliminated. Certainly, the CV and references will play a part in making the decision, but even the candidates' own chosen referees are asked to address themselves to the merits of the proposed research project.

Many of the post-doc places in AH, however, are now not for individually-funded projects but belong to group projects, on the model of the natural sciences. The nature of these projects is discussed extensively in Chapter 7. The question to be considered here is just: how does their existence contribute to the changed character of the New World? First, it helps to explain the rise of the post-doc in AH: post-doctoral scholars who are employed solely to do research. The main labour of the project will be undertaken by research assistants, usually post-docs, who will be appointed to work on a particular segment of the plan. (There might, especially in European-funded projects, also be one or more PhD students, whose theses will be co-ordinated with the plan.) Other post-docs are also employed by research projects, but in a grander capacity. In a group project, the team of researchers will be assembled under a leader, the 'Principal Investigator' (PI). Both the AHRC, through its Early Career Research Grants, and the ERC, through its Starting and Consolidator Grants, give post-docs themselves, usually after at least one previous postdoctoral position, a chance to be PIs, bidding for a grant and then leading a team to carry out their project. Indeed, over three quarters of the ERC's AH grants are at the starter (2-7 years from PhD) or consolidator level (7-12 years from PhD) (see Appendix 2).

The research projects also explain another characteristic phenomenon of the New World: that many of the academics hired and paid by their universities to teach are not teaching.

Often, a senior scholar is the PI. He or she will have a teaching post, but will have all or some of their teaching bought out by the research grant (and often covered by a short-term appointment). There may also be other academics with teaching posts associated with the project, who have a proportion of their teaching bought out, along with some who act as consultants or advisors and give their work and time freely.

Finally, another characteristic feature of the New World is also explained by directly-funded AH research projects: the rise of the temporary contract. As mentioned, the teaching commitments of senior PIs are often bought out and given to temporary staff. There are also now various schemes of project-directed individual funding for established teaching staff. These awards usually operate by paying the department for replacement teaching – often by temporary staff. Maternity leave and invitations to teach abroad also generate a need for extra teaching for a year or two.

The experience of the temporary lecturer is almost a mirror image of that of the research assistant. The job consists almost entirely of teaching (including administration, examining, admissions, pastoral work), and some posts are even limited to the nine teaching months of the year, with the long vacation excluded. If these drones of the New Academic World are to do research, they cannot expect to be paid for it!

The New World is also characterized by another rise, indeed almost a fresh phenomenon: the rise of assessment. In the Old World, academics were frequently engaged in the assessment of their students. They did indeed also assess one another, but only for some particular purpose: choosing a new member of the department, accepting an article for publication, conferring a distinction. But now generalized assessment has become endemic to academic life, whether it is of energy-efficiency-consciousness (have faculty members been turning off the lights and wearing an extra pullover so as to save on heating?) to gender equality (departments strive eagerly for an Athena Swan award. But in two areas the new passion for assessment affects the lives of academics particularly. One is the assessment of research carried out by government agencies regularly and on which funding decisions are based: it is now called the REF. It is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 (with information also in Appendix 3). Its effect has been to channel some academics' research into forms they would not have chosen, and to burden everyone with extra bureaucracy.

Another important form of assessment is that involved in moving up the career ladder at a university. Whereas forty years ago, most jobs were at the same level (lecturer), with the promotions to professorships – limited to established chairs – a rarity, now many universities offer personal promotion (in Cambridge, for instance, to Senior Lecturer, Reader, and Professor; in Oxford, which has adopted the US nomenclature, from Assistant to Associate Professor, and then to Full Professor), based mainly on an academic's publications. This sort of assessment is also discussed in Chapter 6.

4 The exceptions are those students doing a PhD as part of a research project, in which case they will have to investigate a theme not of their own choosing, in a restricted way, because their work is simply part of a wider project. The AHRC seems now to have restricted these studentships to a few fields, but they remain a feature of many of the European-funded projects.

5 Income and expenditure (University of Cambridge).

6 See Appendix 2 for a guide to the most important sources of funds for AH research and some of the most common grants.

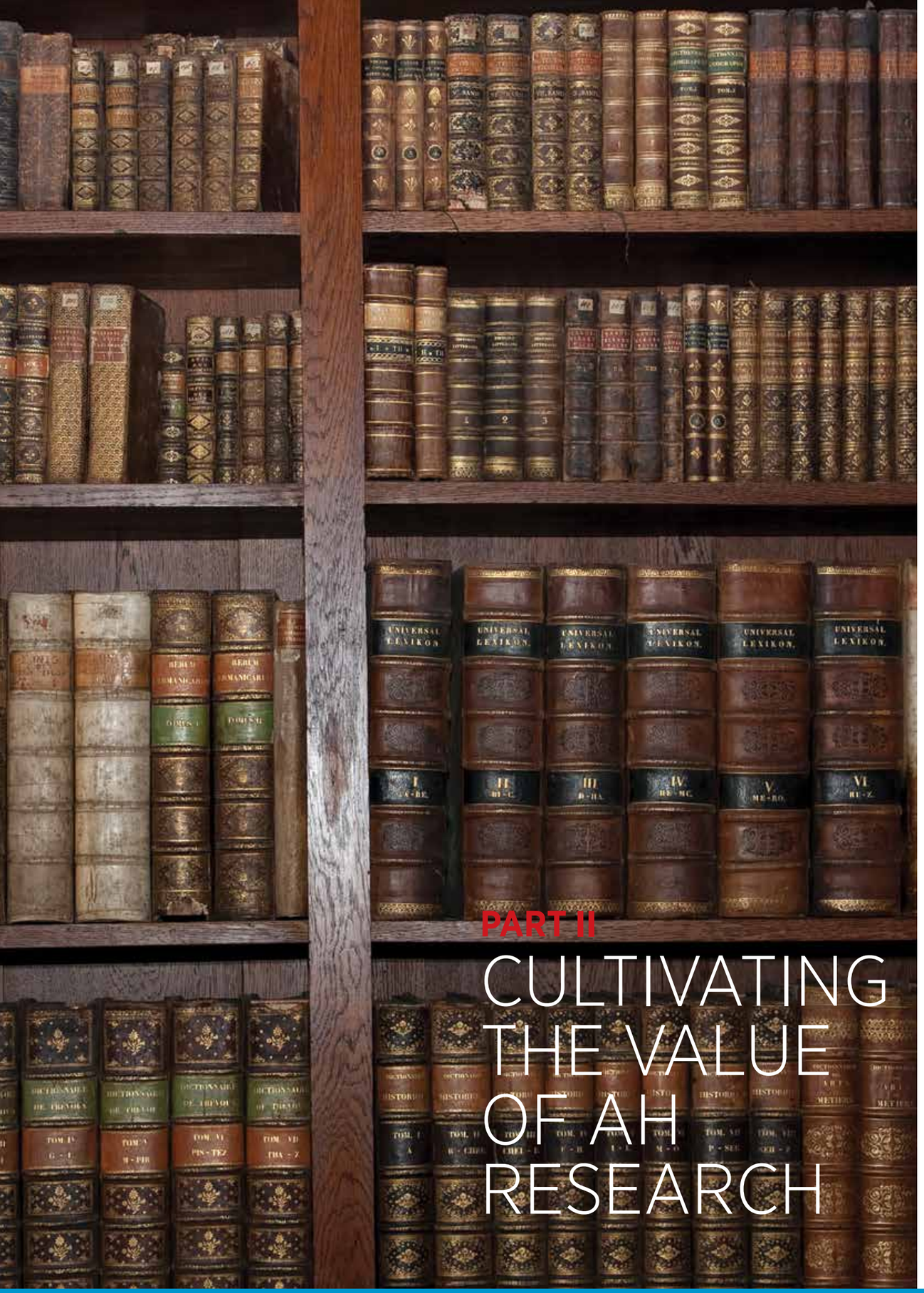
4

A GOLDEN AGE?

It is easy to see why many young AH academics might say that we are living now, in the UK, in a Golden Age for research in their fields. No doubt they would express some envy for the more stable conditions of employment in the past, and alarm about those of their number forced to move from one short-term teaching post to another, with hardly any time for research. But a winner in the system will have plenty about which to be glad. Who in the British system thirty years ago would have dreamed of being given fifteen years at the beginning of their career to establish themselves as 'a world-leading researcher' (as the jargon goes), with no cares except to pursue their scholarly work, individually or in a group; ample funds for travel and research materials, and to organize international conferences and invite specialists from anywhere in the world to lecture to them and collaborate in their research? Yet this is the life enjoyed by the rising star, who progresses from a PhD (3-4 years) to, say, an Oxford or Cambridge jrf (3-4 years), to a British Academy PDF (3 years), with perhaps a couple of years as a research assistant on a project abroad before winning an ERC Consolidator Grant to set up and run an entire research group (5 years). Moreover, the prestige of an award like the Consolidator Grant, and the money it brings with it, will make it easy for this now risen star to find a university that, in return for being made the location of the research group's work, will promise the PI a permanent position, probably at professorial level. Even without the financial weight of a big-group research grant, these younger scholars who have had ample time for research and so have built up an impressive list of publications will find that the REF gives their research work a definite monetary value, so that universities will offer them posts – sometimes even nominal ones, with few duties – just so as to be able to include them in its REF return.

Older AH scholars too have plenty to gladden them. Not only are there now greater prospects than before of their being able to add an extra grant-funded year to their regular research leave. There is also the chance of leading a research group to investigate some part of the field the scholar has been cultivating, and to be relieved of some or all normal teaching duties. Even those who do not stand to benefit directly might feel grateful for what is happening, as they see minute areas of their own specialisms, nooks and crannies of the intellectual world too deeply hidden, they would have imagined, to feel the warmth of public beneficence, singled out for reward by the state's or the EU's arm's-length agencies. Who would have thought that bakers in Bruges, shop assistants in Sunderland and street cleaners in Saarbrucken would be working to subsidize the study of ninth-century logic in Armenia or the commentators on Proclus of the fifteenth century? But so they do.

Despite such alluring appearances, however, now is not the Golden Age for AH research. Perhaps there never was such an age, but the Old World was, at least, a Silver Age, or an Age of Bronze so highly burnished that it shone like gold. To see why, the first step will be to explain what makes AH research valuable, and how it should be paid for; and the next steps to look in detail at the two features that most sharply distinguish the New World from the Old World in AH: the mania for assessment, and the direct funding of research projects.



PART II

CULTIVATING THE VALUE OF AH RESEARCH

5

WHY IS AH RESEARCH VALUABLE AND WHO SHOULD PAY FOR IT?

AH RESEARCH AND THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE FOR ITS OWN SAKE

The AHRC's pamphlet *Arts and Humanities Research Landscape* opens by remarking that

> human beings are intensely reflective and curious about themselves, about who they are and where they come from, about how to live in the world, and about the nature and origins of the culture they have created for themselves.

It then links this observation to noting how

> many millions of people each year ... read newspaper and magazine articles and books ... listen to or watch radio or TV shows ... learn a new language ...visit collections and exhibitions ... undertake artistic or musical activity ... attend performances ... visit buildings or sites of historic significance and to the statistic that (in 2008) 53% of adults in England participated in an arts activity in 2005-6 and 46% of those participated at least once a week.

And it continues: -

> Arts and humanities research represents the self-conscious and professional dimension of our reflexivity and curiosity in these areas. It is the deliberate and dedicated activity that generates, compiles, analyses, synthesises and propagates our deepest insights into who we are, where we have come from and the cultural expressions we have crafted for ourselves. While arts and humanities research makes a vital contribution to innovation, creativity and the success of many major sectors of the UK economy (such as creative industries and tourism) and informs public policy (for example in key areas such as law and social cohesion), it also plays a much more fundamental role in underpinning the quality of life and hence the wellbeing of society The UK government has begun to recognise that national wellbeing is not solely the result of the GDP, and the Office for National Statistics, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and many regional governments are considering the significance of human and cultural capital to the wellbeing of the nation. (pp. 2-3)

The AHRC is right to see the instrumental value of AH research (its contribution to many major sectors of the UK economy and to the formation of public policy, and the cultivation of generic skills[7]) as secondary to another sort value, which is non-instrumental. But is it well-advised to use the language of well-being to identify and explain this value? AH research, it suggests, only incidentally increases the well-being of the UK through making it economically stronger; its main function is to increase people's well-being directly by preserving and increasing 'human and cultural capital'. Behind the AHRC's approach lies an adapted utilitarianism. The aim of good government,

7 Arts and Humanities Research Landscape, 5: '... lateral and innovative thinking, a capacity to communicate complex ideas clearly both orally and in writing, the ability to manage large and complex projects, a facility for rational argument, the skill of collecting and analysing evidence, and an aptitude for team working.'

it implies, is the maximization of well-being. This aim is different from the maximization of utility or pleasure, because the term 'well-being' suggests not, like 'pleasure', a simple quality that can be measured in units and aggregated, but a variety of states and activities. Still, this approach does not allow for AH research, nor indeed any particular activity, to have genuinely intrinsic value. Everything must be measured by the well-being it produces. Well-being alone is held to be intrinsically valuable.

The underlying assumptions made by the AHRC about the importance of well-being and the responsibility of governments to promote it are widely shared, and so its comments may well be publicly persuasive and politically effective. Yet it is doubtful whether, within this framework of well-being, the value of AH research, and thence public expenditure on it, can really be justified. The AHRC writes of the many people in ordinary life, outside academe, engaged for long hours in various sorts of intellectual and cultural activities. In order to make this description plausible, it embraces a very broad notion of such activities, which includes watching television and reading magazines. But what are the links between AH research and much of this broadly-defined activity and the well-being it produces? Between, for instance, this research and watching a television soap opera or reading Playboy? No doubt there *are* links between certain areas of the general public's intellectual and cultural activity and AH research: for example, reading biographies, or sophisticated newspaper or periodical articles on, say, international politics in its historical setting, or indeed looking at a television programme on such a theme. The links consist in the fact that the writers or programme makers will themselves have read, directly or through popularizations, the results of AH research. But these sorts of activities are limited to a small sector of the public. Most television programmes and newspaper articles have no obvious links with AH research, nor do most concerts or visits to the theatre (except where classic plays, or specially reconstructed authentic stage settings are involved).

Moreover, if the well-being framework is to provide a justification for spending money on AH research, then it is necessary to show that spending the money on it will do more to promote well-being in the country in general than spending it in some other way. It seems, however, very unlikely that this could be shown. Rather, the obvious position would seem to be that, if public well-being as a whole is in question, then it would be better to use the money given to the AH research budget to reduce the television licence fee, or to lower the VAT on fast food, or to build more playgrounds (this list could be extended almost indefinitely).

To this point the defender of the AHRC's position could respond that well-being is not to be measured by the fulfilment of desires. A person might have very limited desires, which could be completely fulfilled by having adequate food, shelter, sleep and time for relaxation. Such a person, though, would not have a high degree of well-being. For that, he or she would need to have, and to have to some extent fulfilled, a far wider selection of the rich range of desires possible for humans. He or she would need, for instance, to enjoy deep love and friendship and other social relations, to experience the satisfaction of accomplishing difficult tasks, to appreciate the beauty of the sunset. Moreover, he or she would need to engage in intellectual reflection about the world and oneself. And here, the defender would say, is the link with AH research, in which such reflection is undertaken in the most intensive and sophisticated way.

There are, however, two powerful objections to this response. First, suppose we accept its main point, that well-being is measured by some conception of human flourishing, not by the fulfilment of the desires people happen to have, and that government should aim to increase people's well-being. Even then, why suppose that the practice of an activity at a very sophisticated level by a few people will somehow contribute to the way in which all other people flourish through that activity? It may well be that taking vigorous exercise is part of human flourishing, and so that I am contributing to my well-being by taking a gentle run from time to time. But why would anyone think that this aspect of my well-being is increased by the fact that there are professional athletes who can run three times as fast as I can? Indeed, the more aware I am of their superior proficiency, probably the less I shall be inclined to put on my running shoes. Similarly, if the pub philosopher, whose rambling disquisitions on the meaning of life add to his well-being, takes the time to read books that transmit the ideas of today's outstanding academic philosophers, is he not likely to end up a shadow of his former ebullient, argumentative self, reluctant to trust his own reasoning and embarrassed to voice it, staring gloomily and thoughtlessly into his beer?

Second, the conception of government and its role that underlies this response should be rejected. The response implies that it is for government to decide how people should best lead their lives: the desires they happen to have are not enough; they must be trained to have a set of government-approved desires, which they will then be helped to fulfil. Is this paternalistic society one we should desire (however close it is, alas, to the one we live in!)? There seems, moreover, to be an incoherence in the position which advocates it. At the basis of the position is the liberal view that political authority derives from people individually and equally, and that the only justification for restrictions on the freedom of adults is to allow everybody to exercise their freedom of choice as much as possible. It is for this reason that an open concept such as well-being is chosen as an aim, because there is a sense in which everyone desires their own well-being. But these theorists want to break the connection between fulfilment of actual desires and well-being and insist that they, or the government, know in what people's well-being consists, whilst the people themselves are ignorant of it, desiring what they should not and failing to desire what they should. Perhaps these theorists are right, and they do have superior knowledge. But, if so, they need to explain how, and why their judgement is trustworthy, and on what basis it can found political authority, since they will have rejected its commonly-accepted liberal basis.

The AHRC does well to talk of 'cultural capital', but, for the reasons explained, spoils its case when it presents its value solely in terms of its effect on well-being. If public spending on AH research is to be defended, the defence needs to be in terms of the value in itself of the cultural capital of a nation, as something that it is one of the government's primary duties to enhance if possible and at least to pass on undiminished to future generations. Conservatives need no special pleading to accept the idea of national, cultural capital as valuable in itself, even if they do not usually use such terminology. And, although they might never have thought of AH research – of advanced work in history, philosophy or literary studies, for instance – as part of it, they will quickly see that it fits into that intellectual and aesthetic region of cultural capital, which embraces museums and galleries, a thriving musical culture, the liturgy, historic townscapes and the scenic beauty of cultivated nature.

It seems, then, unlikely that a good argument for the general value (beyond the particular pleasure given to those directly engaged in it) and the public funding of AH research can be made on the basis of the broadly liberal approach to political thinking that is taken for granted by most intellectuals in the West (unless they are attracted to Marxism or its derivatives). A good argument *can* be made on conservative principles, but very few of those who want especially to make the argument – those who are engaged in AH research, or involved in its organization or promotion – accept these principles. And even conservatives have to acknowledge that, in the intellectual world, today these principles are so rusty from neglect that they are unready for use, and the language in which they must be expressed sounds so archaic and strange to everyone now, that we stutter and stumble as we try to use it, not just from unfamiliarity, but from the fear that we shall be regarded with the silent mockery reserved for the guest who turns up to a fancy-dress ball in town-clothes.

AH research is, then, valuable and it ought to be publicly funded. But the sort of argument that might be widely convincing is flawed, and the simple and powerful argument for this position is likely to be rejected by most participants in the discussion, because they reject its premises. Fortunately, however, the consequences of this argumentative impasse are much less serious than they might appear. What has been discussed so far is the separate value and funding of AH research. In practice, it matters little whether or not AH research is shown to be valuable in itself or deserving of separate funding, because, in the British tradition at least, it has been and should remain inextricably linked with university teaching.

AH RESEARCH AND UNIVERSITY TEACHING

Universities have always been wide-ranging institutions, encompassing all sorts of teaching and study – useful disciplines, such as law, medicine and (arguably) theology; useless ones, such as metaphysics, music (and more recently) history and literature. British universities today demonstrate this diversity. Much of the study is directed towards practical purposes and problems and the provision of technical training, which will allow students to take up roles in industry, administration, business or the professions. One ingredient in this mixture has been, from the beginning, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake: that is to say, pursuing enquiry in such a

way that 'the open-ended quest for understanding has primacy over any application or intermediate outcome.'[8] It should not be equated with the useless disciplines, since useful ones can also be pursued in this spirit: even a practical subject such as Law can be studied for its own sake, as in Jurisprudence or Legal History, whilst in Mathematics results reached from purely theoretical motives have sometimes turned out to have remarkable real-world uses.[9] Purists are inclined to see this pursuit of knowledge for its own sake as the essential activity of a university. But it is truer to the tradition of universities, as they have grown up in Europe since the central Middle Ages and all over the world during the last two centuries, to see this activity, seeking knowledge for itself, which had been followed for many centuries before the universities (think of Aristotle!), as being one of the essential elements in a varied mixture.

There are two sides to this open-ended seeking of knowledge in the universities, though they are not really two separate activities, but two aspects of the same one. For the students, it is a type of learning, quite unlike how have been taught in school or how they would be taught a vocational skill or given a professional training; a learning that forms their intellectual character and brings a widening and deepening of their possibilities for living; that might well improve their skill at whatever occupation they take up, but is valuable more for what it makes them than for what it enables them to do or gain. It is not, mainly, an assimilative type of learning, but an active one, for which they need the stimulation, guidance and correction of teachers, who themselves are engaged in this practice, open-endedly seeking after knowledge in their discipline – that is to say, engaging in research in it. Only dedicated researchers, who know the supreme joy of seeking knowledge for its own and never finding it, can act as their instructors. If students are to gain the deep benefits which only a university education can offer (and many courses at many universities do not offer), of learning to learn for the sake of learning and to know, and be ignorant, for the sake of knowledge, there must be teachers for them who are not just teachers, but dedicated researchers.

To be a good AH university teacher (the same applies to some other areas too, in the natural sciences and mathematics), a person must be devoted to research and be given the time to engage in it. This is indeed why the traditional arrangements for academic employment – still followed in many universities – provided for lengthy vacations, sabbatical terms and limited teaching hours even in term (what I call 'normal research': see Chapter 6). But is teaching merely a necessary duty, required of some because otherwise the good of this special type of learning would not be available, but of no benefit to the teachers themselves? Not at all. The desire for knowledge for its own sake is intrinsically related to imparting that knowledge, learning to teaching. To desire to know for its own sake is, as has been argued, to desire to know open-endedly, so that every acquisition of knowledge is tentative and subject to correction. Although experienced scholars learn to correct themselves, even for them the process of testing the beliefs they have gained, scrutinizing, changing and rejecting them, requires dialogue. That dialogue can be with other specialists, or more distantly with either a wide or narrow public through publication; but teaching undergraduate students face to face, either in small seminars or in groups of one or two, provides a special and irreplaceable opportunity. Here scholars have the chance to test their ideas on clever people who have not yet been dulled into accepting the common assumptions of specialists. They are required to range through the whole field in which their specialist research is situated, so seeing their detailed arguments in context. They benefit from the contact of mind with mind and, unimpeded by the wish to impress their fellow specialists and win academic battles, they are induced to put themselves entirely at the service of that spirit of unfettered and purposeless enquiry which they are helping their students to acquire.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

From the arguments above, it is now possible to answer the two questions posed by the chapter title.

AH research is valuable directly to a nation because it adds to its cultural capital, and it is also directly valuable to those who pursue it, because it brings them a supreme delight. It is valuable indirectly to undergraduate students of these subjects, since only those who engage in it can teach them how to engage in an open-ended pursuit of knowledge, which will form their intellectual characters and help them to live well.

In principle, AH research should be paid for by public funds because its contribution to the nation's cultural capital is a public good. In practice, however, it does not need to be paid for in this way, or only to a small extent, because paying for the tuition of AH students means paying for teachers who can devote a good deal of their time to research, since this is a prerequisite for their effectiveness as teachers.

The next two chapters will examine two forms of direct funding of AH research, which characterize the New World. Both of them, it will be argued, are damaging – and in the case of the first (the funding supposedly provided by QR after assessment in the REF), the funding does not even reach the AH departments.

8 Cf. Collini, What are Universities For?, 55.

9 Cf. ibid., 55-57.

6

SHOULD AH RESEARCH BE ASSESSED?

Few AH academics welcomed the introduction to UK universities of regular research assessment – the Research Assessment Exercise, grandiloquently renamed in its most recent iteration (2014) the 'Research Excellence Framework' (REF). But most ordinary members of the profession have come to accept it as a fact of life, and they concentrate their efforts on ensuring that it least continues to be based on peer review – the reading and assessment of work by fellow subjects-specialists, rather than bibliometric data. Grandee position holders in the academic world tend to be more positive about the need for the system of assessment and its merits, which they use to justify its complication and expense. After the 2014 REF, the government commissioned Lord Stern to review the system, and his report reflects this attitude. Behind the government's request for a review were worries that the system had become too expensive. Stern, however, defends the need for the REF in order to distribute quality-related research funding (QR), and identifies other benefits it brings.[10] At the same time, he argues for retaining it in much its present elaborate form, with a few changes of detail.

It may, indeed, be that there are good reasons to retain the REF something akin to its present form for the social sciences – Lord Stern's own area; he is an economist – and for natural sciences. But for AH the case is different. Of the three fields considered – Environment (15%), Outputs (60%) and Impact (25%) (percentages as announced for next REF in 2021)[11] – only for Environment (strategy, resources and infrastructure that support research), where universities themselves provide the information on what they offer, is the assessment appropriate. The assessment of impact, in the special sense given to this term in the REF, is utterly inappropriate to AH research, and the assessment of 'outputs', it will be argued below, is based on a caricature of proper peer review.

But, it will be asked, how is QR to be distributed for AH without an assessment of research? Moreover, it will be objected that, however AH QR is distributed, the academics who benefit from funding for their research need to be made accountable, and so in any case, for this reason alone, a system of assessment is necessary. To these points there is, however, a simple answer, which will be justified in the penultimate part of this chapter: AH academics do not in fact benefit at all from QR funding, because they are more than completely funded by the tuition fees paid by their students. They therefore need not be assessed in order to enable a distribution of funds that do not reach them, nor to be made accountable for sums they never receive.

THE ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT IN AH

AH research clearly has impact in the normal sense of the word, not just inside but also beyond academe. As it was argued in Chapter 5, although it is hard to see its effects on a very wide range of people, it certainly has them on a narrower, but not insignificant group. But for the purposes of the REF, 'impact' has a special, unwonted meaning. It means 'any effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.' And this effect, change or benefit

10 Building on Success, Paras 3, 10-22. For QR and its place in research and university funding, see Appendix 1.

11 Full details of the structure of the REF and planned future developments are given in Appendix 3.

must be one for which precise evidence can be given. The criterion was clearly designed so as to measure the sort of benefits that many types of research in the natural sciences (and, to some extent, in the social sciences) can have. Most obviously, impact in this sense can measure how, for example, the study of genes leads to the development of a new medication, which can be shown to have successfully treated patients; or how engineering research leads to the manufacture of quieter or more fuel-efficient and less polluting jet engines. Impact is assessed in the REF by means of case studies – the number being determined by how many academics are entered into the REF by a department. AH departments have exercised themselves to provide case studies which show that their research has impact in the sense demanded by the REF.[12] Three of the most usual routes are to pick an item of research that has had a demonstrable influence on political policy debate, or to document a collaboration with some non-university organization (an art gallery, for example, or a theatre), or to find a department member who has reached a wide public with a popularizing book – though it is not enough to quote sales figures or excellent reviews: there need to be explicit notes of appreciation from the general public, which can be included in the submission.

There is no denying the ingenuity of departments in constructing these case studies, but what good purpose do they serve? It is an open question whether it is a good thing that political policy is informed by academic discussion. The answer given tends to follow a person's general political views: conservatives are suspicious of the value of such interventions or

12 The impact case studies for the 2014 REF can be found at http://impact.ref.ac.uk/CaseStudies/

even regard them as likely to be harmful (this would be my own view); those who are more sanguine about human progress tend to see academics as its vanguard and so to welcome their interventions. Since universities are supposed to observe a corporate political neutrality, so as to leave individuals within them free to follow their own political views, it is wrong that official policy should encourage links between academe and the formation of policy, when it is only from one particular political perspective that they seem valuable. As for connections between university departments and non-academic organizations, they may or may not be a good use of the academics' time. If such collaborations grow up naturally, they might well turn out to be fruitful, but that is far less likely where they are devised and followed through in order to provide a case study.

By contrast, writing popularizing works is a central activity for academics, an impersonal sort of teaching. Only some academics have the inclination and talent for this activity, but they certainly should be encouraged. For although even the most specialized academic discussion will ultimately affect a wider public, popularization makes the publicly stimulating effect of research available more speedily, directly and vividly. The problem is that impact case studies must, by their very nature, be limited to the extreme sort of such popularization, where a book sells to a very wide audience or where (as in the case of Peter Adamson's admirable 'Philosophy without any Gaps' podcasts– used by KCL for one of its impact studies) new technology achieves a far wider dissemination, and explicit audience reaction, than conventional print. Most popularization of AH is less extreme. It consists of writing books not at the highest level of specialization that reach a mostly but probably not wholly academic audience – books that are appreciated, valued and learnt from, but do not usually evoke letters of appreciation or testimony that reading them has changed a person's life, although cumulatively the reading of such books not only changes lives, including those of many who do not actually read the books themselves, but helps to make those lives worth living. Such ordinary popularization is neither obvious enough nor sufficiently well-documented in its effects to be the subject of an impact case study. But since it is not regarded, either, as specialized research, the effect of the REF is not to nurture but to discourage it. So 'impact' tends to have the effect of, on the whole, reducing the real impact of AH research.

THE ASSESSMENT OF OUTPUTS

By 'outputs' are meant, in almost all cases for AH academics, publications: journal articles, book chapters and monographs. If research is to be assessed at all, then it is through these products that it will be properly judged. Moreover, the method of assessment used in the REF seems to be impeccable. Members of specialist panels have the task of reading the publications submitted and, using their expert knowledge, of grading them. At first sight, then, there is little room for complaint about this aspect of the REF. A little investigation, however, shows that what takes place is very far from a competent and careful assessment of each academic submitted, and of each department. It is hardly more than the appearance of peer reviewing.

The proper assessment of academics' publications in the REF is undermined by three main factors: the specification and limitation of the number of publications to be submitted; insufficiently specialized panel members and assessors; and the crude system of scoring.

In the last REF and the previous research assessment exercises each academic assessed had to submit four publications; except that a piece that was unusually long – for example, a complete book rather than an article – could be counted as two. In the next REF, the limit will be 5 publications, but no more than an average of 2.5 for a department as a whole. A frequent complaint from AH academics about the rules is that they have been devised with the natural sciences in mind. Scientists usually publish the important results of their researches as articles; when they write full-length books, these are usually textbooks, designed for students, summarizing and bringing together standard information. In AH, it is different. Even in a subject such as philosophy, where journal articles are greatly esteemed, the most substantial contributions are made by monographs; and in history and literary studies, articles still play a very subsidiary role. But, under the present system, a whole book – perhaps of 600 or 700 pages – can at most carry the weight in assessment of two articles, where the normal length for an article is about 20 – 30 pages. The REF thus tends to discourage AH academics from writing monographs, and the quality of their research suffers as a result, since in most areas of AH it is only in a full-length that the results of thought and investigation can receive an adequate expression and that bold new ideas can be developed. Fortunately, the majority of AH academics resist this pressure, but the cost is that the REF does not assess them fairly. The change in rules for the next REF does not offer any solution to this problem. It should be added that, in many areas of AH, the most valuable sort of work is the edition (and possibly translation) of texts. Even for those figures whose work exists in fine editions and translations – for example, for Virgil, or Plato, or Shakespeare, or Kant – there is always more work to be done. But for a writer such as Avicenna, for whom there are few reliable editions or translations, a good edition of a major work, with parallel translation and commentary would be worth twenty monographs and twenty thousand articles. But the REF provides no way of valuing such contributions, because they do not fit its inappropriate canons for what constitutes research.

Putting aside the REF's academically damaging bias away from monographs and editions, there remains an even more serious objection to fixing the number of publications to be submitted, whether it is a fixed figure for each academic, as until now, or a maximum per person and an average for the department, as is proposed for 2021. Someone who has written four outstanding articles in seven years may well be less estimable than someone who over the same period has written two very good, but slightly less outstanding monographs, thirty articles and book-chapters at the same level and say twenty other assorted pieces. Maybe the cumulative effect of all these pieces in establishing a theory or thoroughly exploring an area is far greater than the sum of the various individual publications' effects. Or, maybe, by contrast, the diversity of topics treated shows an unusually wide-ranging, multi-talented individual. At the other extreme, what about the academic who, in the seven years, has written just one short article – but it is a piece of work that has transformed its whole area? The quality of an academic's work can be justly measured only over the whole range of his or her academic writing (and, indeed, over a whole career).

The panel members for the REF 2014 make an impressive group: a carefully balanced selection of some of the most respected specialists in their particular fields.[13] And there is every reason to believe that mostly they did their work conscientiously and carefully, within the limits imposed by the task. These limits were, indeed, severe. There were altogether slightly fewer than 800 academic members and assessors and over 190, 000 research outputs to be assessed – that is to say well over 200 for each panel member or assessor. Supposing that, in AH, each academic assessed submitted on average one book and three articles, then every panel member or assessor would have had about 80,000 pages to read. In each of the roughly 40 weeks they had to do their assessing (since the final results were published 13 months after the submission deadline), each one of them will have had to read 2000 pages, or roughly the length of an ordinary book every day – and this on top of their ordinary teaching, research and everyday lives.

The almost unbearable weight of reading, which must have made careful, considered judgement almost impossible for all but the superhuman, was not the only consequence of the tiny size of the panels. A panel of, for example, 25 (plus 14 assessors) for History, or 15 (plus 5 assessors) for Classics cannot contain the range of specialisms needed to judge all the submissions. The number on the History panel is only about two thirds that of the full teaching members of the University of Cambridge History Faculty. Teaching posts are usually given in different areas of history, so as to maximize coverage of the whole field. But there are many areas of history covered in one or more other UK university that are not covered at Cambridge, and so it is probable that there were even more gaps in the specialist coverage that the REF History Panel could provide – and the position would be even worse for Classics, an even broader subject than History (encompassing history, literature, linguistics, archaeology and philosophy, in Latin and Greek, over more than a millennium), with a total panel only half the size.

Compare this process of peer review with the one that takes place in the regular course of academic life, when an article is reviewed for publication. The editor will have a database of hundreds of different specialists in every aspect of the subject from which to choose the reviewers. The reviewers will then either accept the invitation, because they believe they have the expertise to carry it out, or suggest colleagues who are better fitted to do so. No doubt the reviewers will be busy, as academics usually are; but it is most

13 For details about the 2014 REF, see http://www.ref.ac.uk/2014/

unlikely that they will have another 9 articles to review that day, and the same number every day, for months to come. Almost always, at least two reviews will be invited. The reviewers cannot just provide a score or a recommendation. They are required to justify their judgement in detail. If the two reviews disagree, then the editor will usually commission a third. Even so, the process of acceptance for journals is by no means always fair or discerning. But little harm is done if a mediocre article is published in a good journal – indeed, good journals would be thin if they were limited to genuinely excellent work. And when an article that deserves to be published is turned down by one journal, the author can send it to another, where there will be a fresh choice of referees. By contrast, in the REF, the necessarily hurried judgement by a single academic, quite probably totally ignorant of the area of the piece being judged, given without any explanation or justification, is final.

To make matters even worse, the judgements – more likely, misjudgements – reached by these unfortunate experts must be expressed in a system of scoring almost incredible in its crudity. There are just four grades. A piece of work may be '(4*) world-leading', '(3*) internationally excellent', '(2*) recognised internationally' and '(1*) recognised nationally'. The labels do little credit to their inventors, since they manage to combine vagueness bordering on the meaningless or the redundant with the type of self-advertisement practised by the sort of hotels that call their cheapest accommodation 'superior de luxe rooms'.[14] But leave aside the content of the labels, and consider how they are used. The REF assessors rated 30% of the pieces submitted to them as 4*, 46% as 3*, 20% as 2* and just 3% as 1*. That is to say, the assessors really just have, for each piece submitted, to put a tick in one of three boxes: is the submission average (in which case it receives 3*), good (better than average) in which case it receives 4*, or poor (worse than average), in which case it receives 2*? In theory, there is a lower category – 1*, or trash – but in fact almost no work receives that score and, in any case, there is no difference in the financial outcome between awarding 2* or 1*, since work at neither level attracts funding. These three categories are not final judgements reached on the basis of more discriminating gradings, which are summed up and then compared to thresholds. The only grading from the beginning is this fourfold (or, in practice, threefold) one. But such a grading cannot be fair, because it cannot distinguish between a truly remarkable publication (something in the top 5%) and an ordinarily good one (something in the top 30%); or between a fairly good piece of work (in the top 40%, say) and one that is only slightly better than bad (something than which 70% of work is better). Summing up results that are misleading because the marking scheme obliterates any but the grossest distinctions will only perpetuate the inaccuracy.

The faults exposed here in the REF's system of assessing publications are not ones that can be corrected without making the system intolerably complicated and costly. It should have been obvious from the beginning that a genuine peer-review of the research of all the UK's academics at the same time would be practically impossible: not only would the expense be unacceptable, but it would occupy so much time that, if the process were repeated every seven years, research would quickly come to an entire stop, buried under the burden of assessing it.

WHY THERE IS NO NEED FOR A REF IN AH

The faults discerned here in the REF are not confined to AH, although they may be less gross in other fields. But the solution proposed is a radical one that fits AH alone: AH should be excluded from all future REFs.

It will immediately be objected that this solution fails on both moral and practical grounds. How can it be morally right for AH academics to receive money for their research unless their research is assessed? There must be accountability for public money. Moreover, practically, how can the distribution of QR money to different AH departments be decided, unless there is a REF-like assessment?

Both of these objections, however, assume that AH research is in fact funded from QR. The assumption is, indeed, a natural one, since certain sums are attributed to AH departments in virtue of their REF scores and form part of the total QR received by the universities. But these sums are unhypothecated. It is for the universities to use them as they will. If

14 There are some supposedly more precise criteria given for grading (Research Excellence Framework 2014,8-9). So, to achieve 4*, a piece has to be: 'A primary or essential point of reference, or profound influence; instrumental in developing new thinking, practices, paradigms, policies or audiences; a major expansion of the range and depth of the research and its application; outstandingly novel, innovative and/or creative.' Very, very few publications fulfil these criteria, if they are taken seriously. Since, in fact, 30% of everything submitted was graded 4*, the panels must have ignored the plain meaning of their own published criteria.

(1) AH academics are entirely paid to pursue their lives of teaching and normal research by the tuition fees received from their students, and

(2) There is no way in which, besides being paid for normal research, they receive money from their universities for research

then

(3) Research in AH is not funded by QR.

(By 'normal research' is meant the time for research traditionally enjoyed by AH academics within their teaching careers – extensive vacations (between 20 and 30 weeks of the year) where most of their time can be given to research, one sabbatical term, semester or year in every seven, and commitments in term-time not so extensive as to make all research work impossible then.)

(3) follows from (1) and (2) as a matter of logical consequence. It is impossible that, if (1) and (2) are true, then (3) is false. Are (1) and (2) true?

(2) certainly seems to be generally the case. AH academics receive extra money for research (usually in the form of being bought out of their teaching, and in money to arrange conferences and meetings) from research grants, but not from their universities. There may be some exceptions, where universities grant AH academics extra sabbaticals, or support a research centre in or partly in AH (as, in Cambridge, with CRASSH, the Centre for Research in the the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities), or make grants available for academic travel. To take this into account, allow for a '10% Rule', by which we suppose that 10% of the total undergraduate tuition fees are used to pay for this extra research provision.

In Appendix 4, a couple of sample calculations are given, one of them starting from first principles, the other using the University of Cambridge Philosophy Faculty at present as an example. They converge on a figure of approximately £4000 a year as the cost of providing teaching for an AH undergraduate, consistent with his or her teachers being able to undertake normal research. This is, of course, not the total cost of keeping a student at university: keeping up the whole university as an establishment – maintaining the buildings, facilities and administration – adds a great deal to the expense. According to the association that represents universities in Britain, Universities UK, 55.7% of universities' total income is spent on teaching and research (in all subjects), with the remaining 44.3% being divided between administration, grounds and buildings, conferences, libraries, staff and student facilities, and financial support for students and outreach.[15] From this, it would follow that the real cost of keeping a student at university is roughly 20/11 (1.82) x the cost of teaching him or her, consistent with normal research. This multiplier is probably too high for AH undergraduates, since their footprint in terms of facilities and buildings is far lighter than that of natural or social science students. Still, let it be accepted unreduced, for the sake of the argument. If so, it seems that the total cost of each AH undergraduate, consistent with AH academics undertaking normal research is roughly £4000 x 1.82 = £7,280. The standard undergraduate tuition fee (a maximum, but it has become universal) is £9250. Allowing for the 10% rule, that leaves £8325 per undergraduate. But a proportion of undergraduates are paying, not the home and EU fees, but much higher overseas fees (in Cambridge, they are £15,700). If even 10% of all the undergraduates are paying this fee, then the average undergraduate fee is £ [(9,250 x9) + 15,700] /10 = £9895, which, given the 10% Rule, gives a figure of £8905. It seems, then, that the cost of providing teaching for AH students consistent with their teachers engaging in normal research not only does not use any QR funding, but it absorbs only about 80% of the money actually received by the universities from these universities from the AH students in fees. The whole of the QR funding attributable to AH, and the remaining 20% of the tuition fees, are used to cross-subsidize other activities – more expensive courses in natural and social sciences, bloated university administration and, of course, the big corporation executive salaries paid out to Vice Chancellors.

The figures given above have been calculated, for the sake of simplicity, as if AH academics spent all their teaching time on undergraduates alone. In fact,

15 See http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/facts-and-stats/Pages/university-spending-explained.aspx

they do not merely teach undergraduates, but also in most universities graduates, at MPhil and PhD level. If this graduate teaching is taken into account, the extent to which AH fees are used to subsidize non-AH students and academics becomes even more evident. Suppose that graduates account for 25% of the total students in a department (as is the case in the sample department, University of Cambridge Philosophy, used in Appendix 4). These 25% of students will produce more than 25% of the overall fees, because there will usually be a higher proportion of overseas students, paying a higher rate of fees, and, although in some places PhD home/EU fees are slightly lower than undergraduate ones, MPhil fees are usually higher. But these 25% of students certainly do not usually account for 25% of the teaching time of AH academics. PhD students are usually given very little teaching indeed – just a few hours each year. Moreover, this teaching is often directly related to their teachers' own research. Many AH MPhil courses are limited to a weekly seminar (often one where students present their work, and so little preparation is needed from the convenors) and a far smaller number of individual supervisions than would normally be given to a Cambridge undergraduate. By taking into account graduate teaching and fees, therefore, the gap between the funds received from, and the cost of teaching, each student in AH will be seen to be bigger than the 20% already given.

It is at any rate clear that, with a considerable margin for error, that (1) (AH academics are entirely paid to pursue their lives of teaching and normal research by the tuition fees received from their students) is true. Since allowance has already been made (the 10% Rule) for (2) (There is no way in which, besides being paid for normal research, AH academics receive money from their universities for research), then it follows that (3): Research in AH is not funded by QR.

But, if research in AH is not funded by QR, then the arguments for the need to assess it collapse. And since, as has been shown, the way AH research is assessed merely gives the appearance of providing proper judgement, and, for all the diligence, intelligence and good intentions of all involved in it, ends by being an exercise in bad faith, there is a simple solution. Remove AH from the REF! And if this leads to the change or collapse of REF altogether, so much the better.

EPILOGUE: ANOTHER TYPE OF ASSESSMENT

The REF is not the only form of assessment that has come to characterize the new world of AH. Academics are affected as much or perhaps more by the assessments involved in the newly-introduced career structure within universities, where it has become normal to progress through various academic grades (e.g. lecturer, senior lecturer, reader and professor), but only once the case has been made, through assessment, for 'personal promotion'.

There is some cause to regret the passing of the more egalitarian Old World of academe. The lack of pressure to produce work in quantity or of the sort that will be esteemed in peer-review gave some the freedom they needed to develop bold new ways of thinking or work out their ideas slowly and carefully. But the personal assessment demanded by a framework for promotion is rigorous, reliable and appropriate by comparison with the REF, although there are individual cases of injustice. For a start, in these assessments, it is the whole person – the academic in question and his or her work through a career – who is judged, and there is no reason why teaching cannot be considered along with and in connection with research. Moreover, these assessments are usually made by carefully chosen experts in the area, and a range of opinions about a candidate is collated and discussed. And the choice of whether to apply for promotion, and when, is for the individual academic.

7

SHOULD AH RESEARCH BE DIRECTLY FUNDED?

Few AH academics, even the grandees who go along with it happily, would mourn the passing of the REF. Their attitude to the other most striking development for them in the New World, the rise of direct funding for research projects in AH, is in most cases very different. In whatever area of work, practitioners usually welcome new or increased funding, and AH specialists are no exception, especially since the new funding in this case enables them to spend their time on what most interests them, their research. And younger academics are likely to be grateful to the foundations that have given them the chance to devote years to their research and, if they have now at last migrated to teaching jobs, offer the prospect of further long periods of unbroken research as their careers progress. Only those young academics caught up in a cycle of low-paid, temporary teaching jobs, which leave them no time for their own research, or those early middle-aged academics who find there are still no proper jobs for them, are likely to regard the new arrangements with scepticism or even bitterness.

This chapter will be urging an unexpected and unpopular answer to a question that, therefore, most AH academics would not even want to raise. Should there be *direct* funding of AH research? The word 'direct' is emphasized, because it is the crux of the question. AH research is valuable, immeasurably so, as Chapter 5 has argued. It therefore needs to be funded. But AH research is also, as the same chapter argued, inextricably linked to teaching and, in the British tradition, that is to university teaching. It has also been argued that it is essential to the character of university teaching in AH that it is conducted by those who are intensively engaged in research at a high level. For this reason, it is right that AH university teachers have conditions of work and remuneration that allow them to pursue normal research, as part of their teaching careers. Direct funding of AH research goes further and provides money for particular projects, usually done by more than one person. It will be argued here that most of this money is ill-spent, because the type of research it funds, project-driven and conducted by groups, is ill-suited to AH. Moreover, this sort of research funding loosens the ties between teaching and research in AH that are vital to both. This point is so important that it should be discussed at the beginning, and the opportunity taken to consider the damage also done to AH teaching by the REF.

THE DAMAGE DONE TO AH TEACHING BY THE REF AND BY DIRECT RESEARCH FUNDING

It does not require much imagination to see how the quality of AH teaching, and the intimacy of its relation to research, are damaged by both the REF and the rise of direct research funding in the area. REF is an assessment of research, not teaching. Departments are under pressure to do well in it, because there is a direct connection between their scores and the funding received by their universities – even if, in fact, the particular department does not see anything of the increased funding it wins. This pressure is felt by the academics who make up the departments: they are supposed to put their efforts into maximizing their research performance, as measured by the REF. But they have finite time and energy, and so this increased concentration on research will be at the expense of their teaching, for it is always flexible how much time and effort an individual puts into teaching, even if the number of contact hours must remain fixed, whereas administrative tasks are much harder to condense.[16] Furthermore, a research profile that will score highly makes a lecturer or professor attractive to hire, especially if the REF is imminent; and so considerations about whether such a candidate is committed to teaching and is proficient at it become secondary. Indeed, there are cases where a department will hire a lecturer simply to boost their REF rating and without wanting him or her to teach at all.

It may be objected that the government has now, in its slow-moving wisdom, recognized this problem and set about solving it. No longer will the Research Excellence Framework stand in lonely splendour, like Adam fresh from God's creating hand. HEFCE has created for it a helpmate, the Teaching Excellence Framework, so as to ensure that teaching in UK universities, just like research there, is excellent. If the REF pulls academics too much towards research, the TEF will tug them in the opposite direction, and so they will end by following the middle path, like it or not.

The problem is that excellence, or even competence, in teaching is even more difficult to measure than in research – and especially so far as AH teaching at university level is concerned. The benefits of good teaching are manifested over a whole lifetime, and in ways so diverse and subtle that even their beneficiaries may not be aware of their origins. The TEF is even less likely to provide a measure of good teaching than the REF does of good research, and will almost certainly lower standards of teaching by exerting pressure on academics to emphasize those aspects of teaching which it measures, at the expense of a rounded, subject and person-based approach. Worse, by separating teaching and research in its exercises, the government's model of assessment will tend to pull the two apart. There is good reason, moreover, to fear that this process will be exacerbated by the combination of the TEF and the move in the REF to allow some members of a department to submit five times as many publications as others. Heads of department, anxious to succeed in both assessments, will be inclined to divide their staff into those who will take the burden of providing high-scoring research outputs, and those who ensure that TEF's teaching demands are satisfied.

The effect of direct research funding in AH has already been to encourage a division on these lines between the teachers and the researchers. The variety of funding, for individuals and groups, from the government, the EU and charities, is outlined in Appendix 3. Individuals may be funded for a project and come to be based in a department for the duration of their award; or those who already have teaching jobs in a department might have their teaching bought out by an individual award. Group projects may be based in a department, perhaps led by one of its existing members, whose teaching will have been wholly or partly bought out by the award. Many of these awards are given according to what is called Full Economic Costing (FEC): in addition to the cost of paying the salaries and expenses of the research project, the funding agency contributes perhaps 40% more, to pay the full infrastructure and administrative costs associated with the research project.[17]

The results are easy to see. Many AH departments now contain a cadre of pure researchers, who are members because they are funded individually for research, or belong to, or lead, a research group based there. They are joined by lecturers and professors who have teaching jobs in the department, but who have had their teaching bought out by a research grant (or, in some cases, partly bought out). It might be thought that these academics, who have arranged not to do the teaching which they were hired to give, would be unpopular in their departments, especially with the heads of department, who have to find other teachers to substitute for them. On the contrary, their success in winning grants makes them into local heroes, because winning grants is considered to be an achievement by a department, helping to boost its REF rating and often, because of FEC, bringing extra money to the university.

When a department member's teaching is bought out, the funding agency usually provides money to pay a replacement member of staff. Such replacement jobs are not usually very attractive, although sometimes the posts exercise more drawing power than they deserve, because of the prestige of the university, perhaps coupled with the hope, usually vain, that a temporary post there will provide a short cut to a permanent one. In general, then, the posts will be taken by young academics unable to win research funding and unsuccessful in competing for permanent (or tenure-track) jobs, or else by people who leave hardly having begun because they have obtained a research post or a proper teaching job elsewhere. One effect, then, of the rise of direct funding of AH research is a constant change-over of staff, with the most prestigious members of a department probably not doing teaching, or much of it, for long stretches of their employment. Another is that large parts of the teaching, and the highly responsible tasks that go with it, such as admissions, organizing courses and examining are handed over to temporary early career academics who would be unlikely to obtain a post in the department were a permanent one advertised, and who are detached from the world of research, not because they wish to be, but because the teaching, organizational and administrative tasks transferred to them prevent them from working much on their own projects.

GROUP PROJECTS IN AH PRODUCE BAD RESEARCH AND WASTE MONEY

It is always wrong in AH for research to be project-based. Of course, a scholar needs to have some idea of what he is seeking to find out and think about. Does he want to deepen our understanding of Shakespearian tragedy? Does she hope to resolve the problem of material constitution, or expose the social structure of the army of Attila the Hun? But these questions are about as precise as sensible initial research questions can be, and even at this broad level they may often change as work progresses. AH academics should not be aiming to discover this or that, to fill in such and such a blank in the map of knowledge, as if there were such a map, but rather to write something that will be interesting, an article or, preferably, a book, that will contribute to, or even help to shape, the discourse within a discipline or a combination of them. The author begins by discerning some sort of shape, but almost without shape;

16 This statement needs qualification. Administrative tasks can almost always be done much more quickly than usual, less thoroughly but, therefore, usually better. But a careful and conscientious administrator cannot work more quickly than usual: a different sort of person is needed. Those who might administer quickly and well are generally regarded as bad administrators and rarely given a position of responsibility. Those academics who, because they are considered good administrators – although in fact they are very bad ones, fussing over details and painstakingly following rules and procedures that would better be ignored – are burdened with more than their share of this work, and given their temperament, it takes a great deal of their time, which they are unable to cut back; and so, if more time is needed for research, it is their teaching that suffers.

17 It should be noted that FEC is another way in which money paid because of AH is reassigned to other purposes in universities. In many areas research projects do indeed generate significant costs for the university, but the marginal cost of an AH research project is usually near to zero.

gradually, it starts to take on a specific form; slowly, as if, with infinite pain and effort one were sharpening the focus and increasing the magnification, the details and their interrelations start to become evident, though even at this stage it is likely that some bits of the structure will not stay sharp, or will regroup themselves, or vanish without explanation, and new, foreign objects intrude, requiring further struggle until the whole structure is captured in coherent paragraphs.

But what research proposal that respected these, the real conditions of research, would pass even the preliminary stages of vetting? A talent for fiction (fictional autobiography, directed to the future) is a prerequisite for the author of any successful proposal. But, often, where funding is individual, though project-based, the fictional nature of the proposals is understood by the grant-awarders. To the extent that the application is judged on the basis of the proposal, this document is taken as providing a sample of the candidate's ability to think about possibilities and to show familiarity with the area to be studied, rather than a plan of what he or she will actually do. It is a different matter, however, with group proposals. Here the rationale of having a group, each with particular specialist abilities, is tied to a plan of work. Candidates for this sort of funding usually have to submit a very precise project description and a timetable, indicating exactly what they will have accomplished at each milestone within their funding period. There could be no safer way of ensuring that the research will be dull information gathering, a superior sort of box ticking.

It is not only the project-directed nature of research groups that is inimical to good AH research. The simple fact that they are groups is equally problematic. AH research should be done by individuals, or occasionally by two or three people collaborating intimately on terms of equality. From time to time, it can be valuable to bring together different specialists, each contributing a talk or paper on a different aspect of the same theme. But AH research is not the sort of activity that either needs to be conducted by groups (as much research in experimental science has to be: many different people are needed to be working on an experiment at the same time), or even can be, except in a diminished form. The reason is that good AH research requires a complete flexibility with regard to material and its interpretations that can only exist within a single mind.

Moreover, the set time-scale of projects is an impediment to research. Sometimes, a path of enquiry comes rapidly to an end, and it should not be pointlessly prolonged because five years' funding has already been bestowed on it. But, even more often, an investigation refuses to be confined within its original limits, and it requires decades of enquiry, or a lifetime.

Finally, it might seem that the direct funding of AH research at least has the benefit of keeping a number of promising young scholars in academic employment. But a good deal of the funding is not used directly for salary costs. A large proportion of it is creamed off by universities to pay for Full Economic Costs, although these are largely a fiction for AH researchers. Another part of it will be used to pay for a special administrator for each project, to deal with the many bureaucratic complications the official bodies impose on the administration of the grant. Then there will be conferences – valuable perhaps, but not when endlessly multiplied and elaborated, and organized not because there is a real need for them, but to satisfy the demands of the funding agencies and embellish that grant-holder's CV. Rather than keeping the body and soul of struggling young academics together, these big research grants end up, at least in part, helping to swell the university bureaucracy and the balance sheets of budget airlines and cheap hotels.

8

CONCLUSION
POLICY PROPOSALS AND WIDER IMPLICATIONS

POLICY PROPOSALS

Some specific policy proposals follow from the arguments made in the last two chapters: -

- **AH subjects should no longer be assessed in the REF.**

As shown, the assessment is completely unreliable and damaging to research in the area. An adequate system would be impossibly expensive and burdensome. Since AH subjects do not in reality receive the QR funds they win, there is no reason to require that they are assessed for them. The same total QR funds should continue to be distributed to universities on the basis of their performance in the areas which are in fact funded by them, although the exclusion of AH from the REF should prompt a rethinking and simplification of the whole system.

- **The AHRC should be closed down and the money now directed to it turned into a fund to encourage universities to give full, tenure-track teaching jobs (allowing normal research) to AH academics within three years of their PhD.**

The group projects promoted by the AHRC have been shown to be damaging to research rather than beneficial to it. But the removal of the funding it gives would be likely to create, at least in the short and medium term, an employment crisis for young AH academics, which the proposed fund would remove. Charities such as the Leverhulme Trust should be encouraged to support AH research by funding people, not projects and in such a way as to strengthen, not attack, the relationship between teaching and research. As for EU funds, it is not for Britain to decide how they are spent. There may be a question about whether, when it leaves the EU, the UK should try to remain a part of a successor scheme to Horizon 2020. There may well be very good reason from the point of view of the natural sciences, which absorb most of the funds, to do so, and in that case its AH funding would continue to be open to those wanting to be based at UK universities. But (see below) the EU would be well advised to remove AH funding from its schemes.

- **The British Academy should continue to give individual research funding as at present, but it should not pay Full Economic Costs, but a much lower extra sum, calculated to reflect the real marginal costs of AH academics.**

Although research funding beyond that which allows for normal research in AH is not strictly necessary, it can help enhance work in the area and so contribute to what, as has been argued, is an important good. The individual research supported by the British Academy does not raise the objections made to the group-based research funded by the AHRC. The British Academy should, however, try to base its funding decisions more directly on the overall excellence and promise of the applicants, rather than the details of the projects proposed. Similarly, the few charitable institutions (including colleges) which offer individual research fellowships in AH should be encouraged to continue to do so.

- **All institutions enjoying the title and privileges of being a university should be required to ensure that AH academics are**

employed by them in such a way that they can conduct normal research as discussed above. All AH academics should be entitled to paid sabbatical leave.

- **The government should accept that it has an ultimate responsibility to ensure that the amount received per capita for AH students is at a level that allows academics to be employed in such a way that they can carry out normal research, and that a proportion of this money is not redirected towards other subjects. At the moment, the undergraduate fee in principle provides this level of funding. If fee levels were to fall, then government support would be necessary and right, since this research is a public good.**

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

BEYOND AH

The discussion in the chapters above has been just about research in AH, and one of the complaints has been that government funding has imposed on it the inappropriate model of research in the natural sciences. Yet to some extent the model used by the government for research in the natural sciences is inappropriate for the natural sciences themselves for exactly the same reasons as it is inappropriate for AH. The increasing emphasis on impact, defined in a narrow way, is as damaging to intellectually adventurous research in Physics or Physiology as to research in Classics or Philosophy, and it carries the added peril of cutting off, through its short-sightedness, not just important theoretical advances but the unforeseen practical benefits they often bring. Too close a focus on a pre-determined project is no less stultifying to the spirit of enquiry in the natural sciences thanin AH, and, although group work is necessary in many areas outside AH, there are other areas in the natural and social sciences where the best work is done, as in AH, by individuals working freely on their own. A rethinking of what AH research is funded, and how, would have lessons for research funding in general.

BEYOND THE UK

This analysis examines funding of AH research in the UK, and looks beyond its shores only so as to take in the various EU funding schemes at present open to academics at universities here. Different nations have different traditions of higher study, and there is great value in preserving these differences. It does not, therefore, follow that what is best for AH research in the UK is best for, say, Germany or France. Still, the criticisms made here of directly funded group research projects in AH are quite general. It is hard to see how this method could ever be appropriate for funding AH research, and so the EU would be well advised not to continue to use it. And, indeed, countries other than the UK have an extra reason to steer away from this sort of funding. One of the effects of instituting research groups in AH has been to efface national differences in approaches to research. These groups very frequently contain researchers from a wide variety of countries, and are often based in a country (the UK is especially popular) which is not the original home of many or any of those involved. The common language is usually English, and the central European grant-giving bodies encourage this Anglicization of discourse in higher study. The result is that much that is most distinctive and best in the different national schools of scholarship is being lost, and that French, German, Italian and Spanish are disappearing as languages of scholarship, to be replaced by an International English, which is really no language at all, a denatured, mechanical idiom which makes subtlety of thought impossible. Paradoxically, then, if the countries of the European continent are receptive to the changes proposed here for AH research in the UK, one of the effects would be to protect themselves from the overwhelming Anglophone influence within the world of academe.

APPENDIX 1
SOURCES AND DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH FUNDING IN UK UNIVERSITIES

The UK government operates a dual funding system for research. Funding is given for particular projects (usually undertaken by groups, but sometimes by individuals) through the seven Research Councils;[18] and through the QR ('quality-related research funding') element of the block grant given to universities periodically by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the other regional funding councils (HEFCS). Funds for research are also received from non-government bodies: charities (such as the Leverhulme Foundation), the European Union and business.

The amount received by any given university from the Research Councils (and from non-government sources) depends entirely on the success of its staff in having their proposals accepted. The level of QR funding is determined by the performance of the university in the most recent research assessment (since 2014 the 'REF': see Appendix 3). The quality of research in a department as a whole is ranked on a scale from 4 ('world-leading') to 1 ('recognised nationally'). HEFCS distributes the funds according to a formula based on: - the volume of staff entered into the REF; the REF score, where a 4 counts for 4, a 3 for 1 and 2 or 1 for zero; and a cost-related multiplier to take account of the relative expense of different types of research (1.6 for high-cost laboratory and clinical subjects, 1.3 for intermediate subjects and 1 for others).[19]

Research funding of all types accounts for 23% of UK universities' annual income, and 15% of this sum comes from public money (2015-16 figures).[20] Of this roughly one third comes as the QR element of the block grant, and two thirds from the research councils. The profile of university funding as a whole in the UK has been changed by the raising of undergraduate tuition fees to a level where they are considered to pay for all those courses that are not especially expensive. Much less public money now goes to universities for teaching, since they are able to collect it from student fees. As a result, research now takes a much greater proportion of public funding than previously (see figures 2-3).

The system is the same across all subjects, including therefore AH. But there is an important difference in practice between AH and the others in practice. The AHRC distributes only about 4% of the total research council spending. But, since QR is based mainly on volume of staff, and AH accounts for roughly 10% of university academic staff, more research funding for AH comes, notionally, from HEFCS through the block grant than in other areas, even allowing for the fact that most AH subjects are 'others' in terms of expense and so the cost-related multiplier for their grant is just 1.

These, therefore, are the ways in which universities receive research funding. But they do not correspond in any straightforward way to how these funds are allocated within the universities. It might be thought that if money is won for a given research project then it is used to pay for that project – indeed, that it would be fraudulent to use the funds for other purposes. But most, though not all, individual and group projected-directed funding provides so-called 'full economic costs' (FEC) for those employed – a contribution of up to about 40% of their salary to cover the supposed costs (in infrastructure, facilities, equipment) of their doing research at the university. This money is taken into the university's general finances; there is not usually any mechanism to direct it towards the project in question or to the department in which it is taking place.

Project-based funding net of these costs will, however, be used directly by the project concerned. By contrast, although the amount of QR is determined by the performance of individual departments in the REF, the universities receive their block grant as a whole, and it is for them to decide how to distribute it. In some, departments are made to suffer or benefit financially in a way that depends directly on their performance in the REF and so their part in raising or lowering the amount of QR; in others, the connection is less direct and perhaps very weak.

18 The seven Research Councils will, as set out in the Higher Education and Research Bill 2017, be merged into a single body, called 'UK Research and Innovation'.

19 This is a simplification of the system, since a division is also made between the three constituent elements of the REF rating, outputs, environment and impact: see How We Fund Research.

20 See Figure 5.

APPENDIX 2
FUNDING BODIES AND FUNDING
(FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH IN AH)

(A) THE FUNDING BODIES

AH research in the UK receives direct funding from various sources. Some are UK-based and focussed:-

- The **Arts and Humanities Research Council** (AHRC) is an arms' length institution, totally funded by public money, founded in 2008 to replace the Arts and Humanities Research Board, which had been instituted in 1998 by the British Academy and the university funding bodies and was legally recognized as an independent entity in 2001.

- The **British Academy** was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century to play the same role for AH as the Royal Society had done since the seventeenth century for the natural sciences. Its original, and still a central, function is to be a society for senior scholars, now over the whole range of social sciences as well as AH. The Academy has a small endowment and works with educational charities, but its main role in funding is as a distributor – drawing on the expertise of its fellows – of public money for research.

- The **Leverhulme Foundation** has been a private educational charity for nearly a century, providing grants, especially for research, over all subject-areas except medicine, of about £80 million a year, exclusively for work in UK institutions.

Other funding bodies are European or international: -

- The **European Research Council** (ERC) was established by the European Commission in 2007. It is funded as part of Horizon 2020, receiving £13 billion over seven years, and funding research over the whole range of subjects; 17% of its funds go to AH and social sciences. Although an EU body, the ERC's funding is open to researchers of all nationalities working either in EU countries or any of 16 other countries linked to Horizon (for example, Norway, Switzerland, Israel, Turkey and the Ukraine).

- **Humanities in the European Research Area** (HERA) is a partnership between 24 European Humanities Research Councils across Europe and the European Commission. It offers substantial grants for projects on a set theme, open to researchers based in countries which have joined the particular call in question (usually many EU nations and some others).

- The **Templeton Foundation** is a US trust, founded in 1987, with an annual budget of nearly £140 million, which gives money to research projects worldwide. Projects are required to fit the foundation's special themes, and these include areas of philosophy and theology.

(B) PERSON-DIRECTED FUNDING

None of the bodies listed under (**A**) gives purely person-directed funding. But jrfs in Oxbridge colleges can be considered wholly or largely person-directed, since, although most competitions will require the applicants to specify a research project, success depends predominantly on the candidate's work and record.

(C) PROJECT-DIRECTED INDIVIDUAL FUNDING

- **Post-Doctoral Fellowships (British Academy):** Around 40 or more 3-year awards, in AH and social sciences, based primarily on evaluation of a research proposal: they are 'to enable outstanding early career researchers to complete a major research project at a UK Host Institution'

- **Leverhulme Early Career Fellowships:** 50%-funded awards, in all subjects based primarily on evaluation of a research proposal.

- **Mid-Career Fellowships (British Academy):** Around 40, year, or half-year, awards, in AH and social sciences, based on evaluation of a research proposal and CV, aiming to 'provide an individual researcher with relief from teaching and administration to undertake a research project, and in particular to promote public understanding and engagement with the humanities and social sciences'

- **BA/Leverhulme Senior Research Fellowships**: About 8 one-year-long awards, in AH and social sciences: 'to enable the completion of a major research project - usually a career defining work. These awards are designed for individuals who need relief from a long burden of teaching and administration in order to bring an existing research project to fruition.'

- **Leverhulme Foundation Research Fellowships/ Major Research Fellowships**: Up to 3 years (for a Major Research Fellowship) of replacement teaching costs. 86 were given in the humanities in 2017, awarded on basis of research record and research proposal.

- **Wolfson Research Fellowships**: 4 three-year awards, given every four years funded by the Wolfson Foundation, and usually giving three years' research leave 'to a small number of the UK's most outstanding established scholars to enable them to concentrate on a significant research programme.'

(D) PROJECT-DIRECTED GROUP FUNDING

- **AHRC Research Grants:** Between 100 and 200 grants a year (2013/14 – 15/16) of up to one million pounds for group projects, lasting up to five years. These grants 'are intended to support well-defined research projects enabling individual researchers to collaborate with, and bring benefits to, other individuals and organisations through the conduct of research. This scheme is not intended to support individual scholarship.' An **early career** version, which has a limit of £250,000 for the funding, is available for those within 8 years of their PhD or the first six years of their first academic appointment.

- **Leverhulme Research Project Grants:** Usually 20-30 grants a year for the humanities (the scheme as a whole covers all areas, except medicine), of up to £500,000 over five years for group projects.

- **Leverhulme Research Centres:** Two calls so far, in 2014 and 2018: 1 of the 4 centres set up is in AH (philosophy), with science/mathematics links, but the Foundation says now that 'the hope is that this new round will result in bids that fold the social sciences and humanities more authentically into the mix'. Funding is up to £1 million for up to ten years for Research Centres 'that will not only conduct research of outstanding originality but also aspire to achieve a significant step-change in scholarship. The Trust's aim is to encourage new approaches that may establish or reshape a field of study and so transform our understanding of a significant contemporary topic.'

- **ERC Starter Grants:** Open to those 2-7 years from their PhD, provides support for a group project of up to 1.5 million euros over 5 years. In 2017, 109 of these grants were given in AH, of which 29 went to researchers based in the UK.

- **ERC Consolidator Grants:** Open to those with 7-12 years' experience since their PhD, provides support for a group project of up to 2 million euros over 5 years. In 2016, 69 of these grants were given in the humanities, of which 18 went to researchers based in the UK.

- **ERC Advanced Grants:** For established scholars who are 'exceptional leaders in terms of originality and significance of their research contributions' to pursue 'a ground-breaking, high-risk project', which is carried out by a group. The grants are over 5 years and up to 2.5 million euros. In 2016, 50 of these grants were made to AH, of which 11 went to researchers based in the UK.

- **HERA joint research programme grants:** HERA periodically offers grants on a set-theme in AH (for example, most recently, *Public Spaces: Culture and Integration in Europe*). The work must be done by a group involving researchers from at least 4 of the participant countries. Funding of up to 1 million euros is available for 2-3 years. About 20 awards are given on each call.

- **Templeton Foundation Grants:** Given each year for group projects which fit the foundation's themes. The sums given vary but can be very large (up to nearly $6 million). In 2017, 6 grants in the AH area were given to researchers working in the UK.

APPENDIX 3
THE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK

THE SYSTEM AS IT HAS DEVELOPED

A Research Selectivity Exercise, subsequently renamed 'Research Assessment Exercise' and most recently, with magnificent euphemism, the 'Research Excellence Framework', was first carried out in 1986, and then in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008 and 2014.[21] Another is planned for 2021. Although there have been many changes in detail, by 1996 the exercise had reached its characteristic form, and by this date it was being used, as it still is, to determine the amount of QR funding different universities receive – funding for research (see Appendix 1).

In the most recent of these exercises, in 2014, the process was the following.[22] Institutions were assessed with regard to 'Outputs' (65% of the result), 'Environment' (15%) and 'Impacts' (20%).

Outputs are for AH, in the main, publications (journal articles, monographs and chapters in books), published during a six-year assessment period. Each participating member of staff submitted 4 such outputs (they were allowed to submit fewer, but rarely did so, because the total score is thereby lowered, except where by request an 'output of extended scale and scope' is double-weighted – that is, counted as two outputs). The outputs were assessed against the criteria of 'originality, significance and rigour'. The assessments were carried out by boards of selected, established academics. AH was one out of four main panels, and had ten boards: Area Studies; Modern Languages and Linguistics; English Language and Literature; History; Classics; Philosophy; Theology and Religious Studies; Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory; Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts; Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management. Each board had roughly 15-25 main members, and could call in up to about 5 extra academic assessors where it lacked sufficient expertise.

An important feature of the system was that a department did not have to submit all its staff, not even all those with posts that required them to engage in research as well as teach. It could choose to submit as many or few as it wished. The total QR funding was then determined by the numbers submitted multiplied by a factor based on the average overall rating of the research. It was therefore to a department's benefit to exclude from the assessment members whose outputs would probably be rated significantly lower than the departmental average, since more funding would be lost by allowing the department's overall rating to be lowered by their inclusion than by the reduction in the numbers submitted.

By 'Environment' is meant the strategy, resources and infrastructure that support research. The universities submitted statistical data on research income and doctoral degrees awarded, and a description of each department's 'research strategy', its support for research staff and students; its infrastructure and facilities; and its research collaborations and wider contributions to the discipline. Using this information, the research environment was assessed according to its 'vitality and sustainability'.

The 2014 exercise introduced for the first time an assessment of impact, and its weighting is to be increased to 25% in the 2021 REF. By 'Impact' is meant 'any effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia.'. In the special sense intended in the REF, therefore, an academic book does not have impact simply by being widely read, and even if it can be shown to have had a popular readership, outside the universities, it would be considered to have had impact only if it could be shown that it in some way changed the lives of its readers. Impact was assessed through Impact Case studies (for each department, one case study + 1 for each ten members of staff), which were graded according to their the 'reach and significance'. To give two examples. King's College London submitted a case study (straddling Law, Philosophy and Politics) based on the work of Robin Blackburn's work, which it linked to changes in legislation over fixed-term parliaments and royal succession. Durham submitted the case of E. J. Lowe's formal ontology – a contribution to metaphysics, which has contributed to information systems theory.

21 For a full account, see Bence and Oppenheim, 'The Evolution'. There is useful summary of how the assessment system has developed in Building on Success, 39-45.

22 See REF 2014 and Research Excellence Framework 2014.

CHANGES TO THE SYSTEM?

In 2015, Lord Stern, then President of the British Academy, was commissioned by the government to undertake a review of the assessment system, partly because of concerns of increasing costs: the 2014 REF had cost £246 million, 133% more than that of the previous (2008) exercise. His report (Building on Success) was broadly welcomed by the Government (Next Steps), and two documents have now been published setting out the changes to be made to the 2021 REF because of its recommendations (Initial Decisions and REF 2021. Decisions on staff and outputs).

Stern's report strongly supported the value of the REF and it endorsed its main features as they had developed by 2014, including the addition of Impact as a field of assessment. The system will remain one based on peer-assessment (judgement by expert panel-members of work submitted).

The most important change, accepted by the funding councils which will run the REF from Stern's report, concerns who submits outputs and how many are submitted. In 2021 all staff whose contracts require them to engage in research will have to be submitted, but there will not be a fixed number of outputs per participating member of staff. Rather, a department will be required to submit a total number of outputs averaging at 2.5 for each participating member, with individual members being allowed to submit between 1 and 5 outputs each.

Stern also accepted the complaints that, under the 2014 system, the entire credit for a member of staff's research went to the institution where he or she was employed at the time of the REF, even if he or she had just moved there. He proposed that the work should be credited to the institution where it was actually done. In the 2021 REF a 'transitional' arrangement will be introduced that allows the work to be counted to *both* institutions.

Stern also recommended that: 'Guidance on the REF should make it clear that impact case studies should not be narrowly interpreted, need not solely focus on socio-economic impacts but should also include impact on government policy, on public engagement and understanding, on cultural life, on academic impacts outside the field, and impacts on teaching.'[23] If followed, this recommendation could considerably extend the scope of what is recognized as Impact, in a way that would give new opportunities particularly for AH departments. But it does not seem that any action is planned to put this recommendation into effect for the 2021 REF.

23 Building on Success, 36. Recommendation 7.

APPENDIX 4
THE COSTS OF TEACHING AH UNDERGRADUATES

The aim of this appendix is to provide a couple of sample calculations to support the argument in Chapter 6 that enough income is generated from the fees of their students to enable AH academics to pursue normal research along with giving as much teaching to undergraduates as at present (or more) and maintaining their present salaries.[24] Statistics given by the universities are not divided up in a way to give the information required. The first of the examples, therefore, begins from first principles, whilst the second uses information I have to hand, from my own department (Philosophy, at Cambridge). In each case, the object is to calculate what level of fee is needed from each undergraduate solely to pay for the time taken teaching him or her and the extra time for research needed if academics are to conduct normal research, assuming that their job is wholly to teach undergraduates, and engage in academic (examining, admissions) and administrative matters as at present, and to conduct their research, with the amount of teaching received by undergraduates and the level of academic salaries as at present.

Both calculations use the mean cost of employing an academic. The mean academic salary in 2015-16 was roughly £50,000 (*Times Higher Education Pay Survey 2017*). The employers must also pay 18% to the Universities Pension Scheme and 13.8% National Insurance. The mean cost of employing an academic is, therefore, roughly £67,000 per year. It is very likely that this figure is lower for academics in AH, who are usually promoted later than in the sciences and retire at a lower point on the pay scale. I shall use the figure of £65,000, although it is probably an overestimate.

EXAMPLE 1

AH undergraduates are usually taught by a number of academics, but, if we assume that their salaries will tend to balance to the AH average, then the cost is the same as if the students were taught by just one academic. How many students could that academic teach through the university year in such a way that they would have as much or more teaching as usual, and the academic would have the time to pursue normal research? The answer is between 15 and 20 (or perhaps a few more, but certainly no more than 25). A very good form of teaching is in a small to medium-sized seminar, which should not be much larger than 20 if there is to be a chance for all the members to participate. Undergraduates would be having a normal or more than normal amount of teaching if they took 2 courses of such seminars each semester and had two 90-minute sessions each week, during a 15-week semester, and in addition two hour-long tutorials in a group of 2 for each course. If there were 20 students in the group, the academic would then have to do 6 hours of seminar teaching a week and 40 hours of tutorials each semester – so a little less than 3 hours a week. 9 hours of teaching a week, over 60% of the year, is consistent with pursuing normal research. There will, indeed, be time needed for preparation and for marking work, but it should not be all that much, unless the academic is preparing new material, in which case this preparation should be of direct benefit to his or her research. There will also be time needed for all sorts of necessary administrative and para-academic activities in connection with the teaching, from writing reports and references to setting and marking examinations. And so one might expect the academic to be occupied by the non-research demands of the job for 30 hours a week during term time, but for only a few hours out of term. This leaves plenty of time for research, especially since a dedicated academic would expect (and want) to spend 60 or 70 hours a week at work. But, in keeping with present arrangements, and to give the opportunity for periods of unbroken work that are useful for finishing pieces of writing, the academic should also be given sabbaticals – that is to say, one term, semester or year in seven – to dedicate completely to research. The costs of these need to be factored into the calculation.

The annual fee needed, therefore, from each undergraduate to pay for teaching from an academic, leaving him or her sufficient leisure to conduct normal research, is £(1.17 x 65000) divided by 20, which comes to just over £3,800.

EXAMPLE 2

The amount that it costs (P) to teach all the undergraduates studying philosophy at Cambridge – there are about 150 of them – can be calculated. It can then be seen whether P is more or less than the total of undergraduate fees (U).

These figures will certainly be consistent with academic staff conducting normal research, since this is what now happens in Cambridge. In effect, there are only twenty weeks of term; about two hours per week in term of lecturing, along with 4 – 10 hours supervision (tutorials, usually individual), graduate teaching, examination and administration.

The calculation is as follows: -

P = S + E, where S is the salary cost of those employed by the university with regard to their teaching of undergraduates, and E are the extra teaching costs for the undergraduates.

S = the cost of the salaries of the lecturers and temporary lectures (except those whose teaching has been entirely bought out by a research grant), calculated at the average figure given above of £65,000 per year = Y, multiplied by the fraction of their salary deriving from undergraduate rather than graduate fees = X.

Y = 13.5 (FTE – this includes temporary lecturers) x £65,000 = 845,000

To calculate X: X = U/(U + G), where U is the total of undergraduate fees and G is the total of graduate fees.

With regard to U. Assume 10% of the undergraduates pay overseas fees, then the total undergraduate fee will be 135 x £9250 (Home and EU) = £1248750 + 15 x £15700 = £235500 (Overseas), Total: £1,484,250.

With regard to G. The graduates are made up of 29 PhD students and 20 MPhil students. Assume that 20% of them pay overseas fees, then their total fees are 23 x £8000 (PhD, Home and EU) = £184,000 + 6 x £22,000 = £132,000 (PhD, Overseas) + 16 x £11,000 = £176,000 (MPhil, Home and EU) + 4 x £24,000 = £96,000 (MPhil, Overseas). Total: £588,000

Therefore X = 1,484,250/2,072,250 = approx.0.716

24 For the idea of 'normal research', see above, p. 27.

S (Y multiplied by X) = £605020

E consists of: -

Extra lectures (paid on an hourly basis, costing roughly £100 each): 100 extra lectures = £10,000

Classes given to first-year students: £2000

Supervisions (20 a year, individually, for each of 150 students, @ £25 each) = 150 x 20 x 25 = £75,000

Therefore E = £87,000

Therefore P (i.e. S + E)= **£692,020**

The total undergraduate fees (U) = : £1,484,250. Therefore the cost of teaching the undergraduates (P = £692,020), which is consistent with their teachers undertaking normal research, is about 47% of the fees received; and the cost per undergraduate is £4,348 per annum.

Note that the sum reached by this method is very close to the sum reached starting from first principles in Example 1 (£3,800 per annum), since each figure deviates less than 7% from their mean. The convergence of the two figures, reached by entirely different methods of calculation, gives weight to their reliability.

Note also that it is not being claimed that the figure of c. £4000, which has been reached as the yearly cost of teaching an undergraduate, consistent with normal research, is the total cost of having an undergraduate at university: for that figure, which is far higher, see above, p. 27.

APPENDIX 5
'AH'

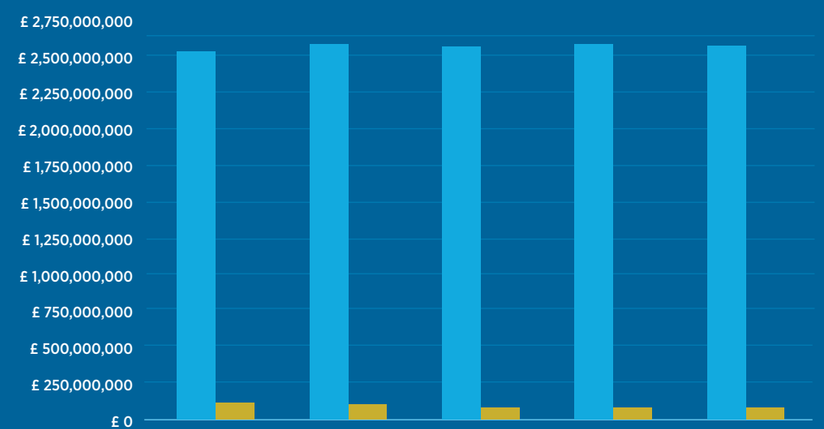
Throughout this analysis, 'AH' has been used as an abbreviation for 'Arts and Humanities', both as a noun and, somewhat ungrammatically, as an adjective ('AH research'). But what subjects fall into this category? The British Academy includes Classics, Theology, Area Studies (especially study of the Middle East, Far East and Africa), History, Languages, Literary History and Criticism, and Philosophy within AH. The AHRC follows much the same list, but it includes Law as an AH subject. As this example illustrates, the boundary between AH and the social sciences is often unclear; consider also Economics, which is classified as social science, but includes Economic History, which comes under AH, or Linguistics, usually considered AH but part of which, Sociolinguistics, is clearly a social science.

The claims made in this analysis about the special character of AH are not supposed to apply to every piece of research done in a subject officially classed as AH, since some of this research is in character far more like that in the social sciences. The claims apply, rather, to the great majority of AH research, and to almost all that is undertaken in the traditional, core AH subjects such as Classics, Philosophy, History and Literary Studies.

FIGURE 1

OVERALL RESEARCH COUNCIL SPENDING AND ALLOCATION TO AHRC (2010-15)

Source: 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding, 2011/12 to 2014/15', Department for Business Innovation and Skills, published Dec. 2010, p.17 (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf)

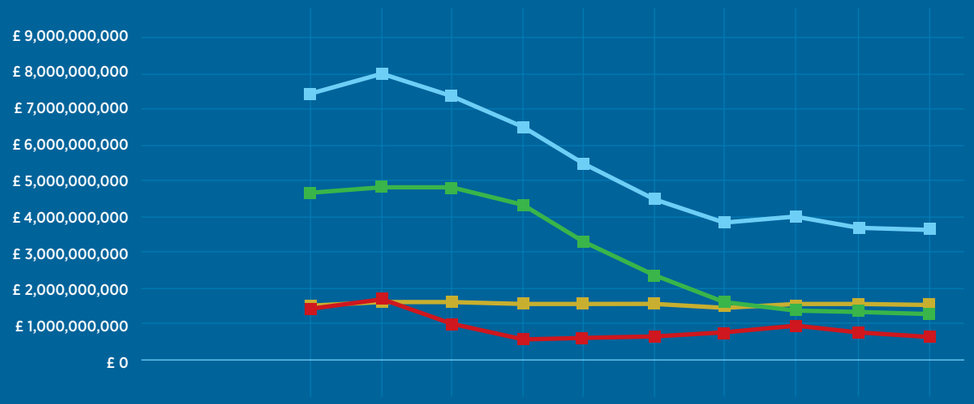


Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Research Council Overall Spending	£2,549,353,000	£2,596,196,000	£2,573,678,000	£2,586,641,000	£2,599,812,000
of which AHRC	£100,717,000	£99,881,000	£98,370,000	£98,370,000	£98,370,000

FIGURE 2

HEFCE OVERALL BUDGET AND ALLOCATIONS

Source: Higher Education Funding Council for England, Annual Funding Allocations (online archive) (www.hefce.ac.uk/funding/annallocns/1213/)

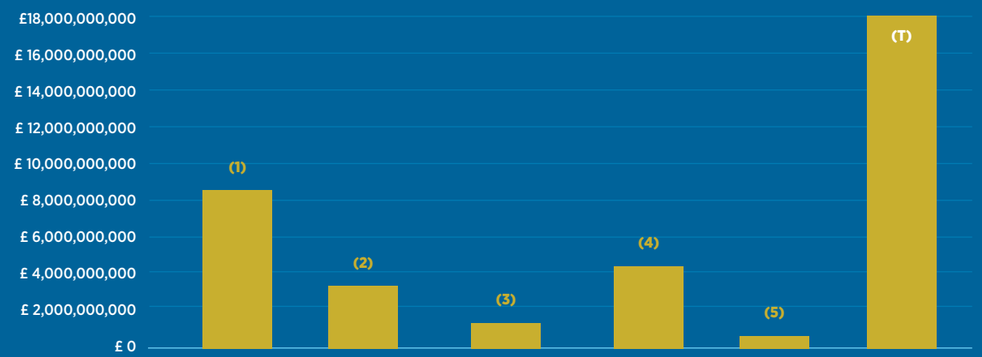


	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Total HEFCE grant available (£ million)	**£7,476**	**£7,994**	**£7,356**	**£6,507**	**£5,388**	**£4,502**	**£3,849**	**£3,971**	**£3,674**	**£3,602**
of which: Teaching	£4,632	£4,782	£4,727	£4,339	£3,231	£2,331	£1,548	£1,418	£1,360	£1,320
of which: Research	£1,460	£1,572	£1,603	£1,558	£1,558	£1,558	£1,558	£1,558	£1,578	£1,606
of which: Additional	£1,384	£1,640	£1,006	£610	£598	£613	£743	£995	£736	£676

FIGURE 3

SOURCE OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING INCOME (2014-15)

Source: 'University Funding Explained', Universities UK, July 2016, p.4 (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/university-funding-explained.pdf)

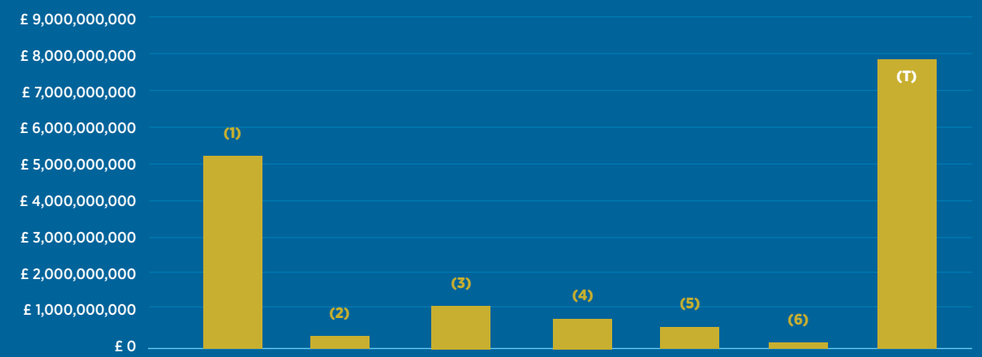


Source of funding	Income	Percentage
(1) UK & EU fees - undergraduate	£8,507,000,000	47%
(2) UK government grants	£3,258,000,000	18%
(3) UK & EU fees - postgraduate	£1,267,000,000	7%
(4) Non-EU fees	£4,163,000,000	23%
(5) Other fees and grants	£905,000,000	5%
(T) Total income	**£18,100,000,000**	

FIGURE 4

SOURCE OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH INCOME (2014-15)

Source: 'University Funding Explained', Universities UK, July 2016, p.6 (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/university-funding-explained.pdf)



Source of funding	Income	Percentage
(1) UK government	£5,214,000,000	66%
(2) UK business	£316,000,000	4%
(3) UK charities	£1,027,000,000	13%
(4) EU sources	£869,000,000	11%
(5) Non-EU sources	£395,000,000	5%
(6) Other sources	£79,000,000	1%
(T) Total	**£7,900,000,000**	

APPENDIX 6

FIGURE 5

INCOME BY SOURCE 2015-2016

Source: UUK analysis of HESA data

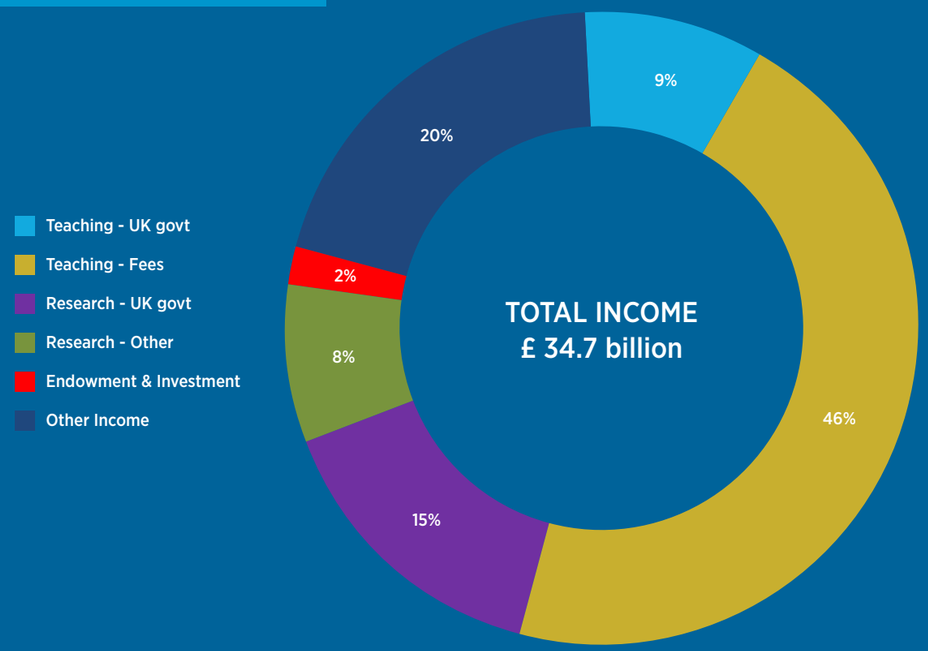
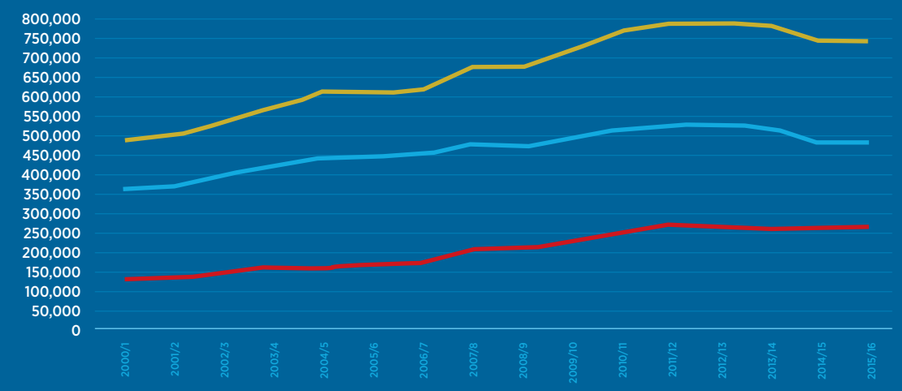


FIGURE 6

QUALIFICATIONS OBTAINED BY LEVEL 2000/01 TO 2015/16 (number of students)

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/qualifications)

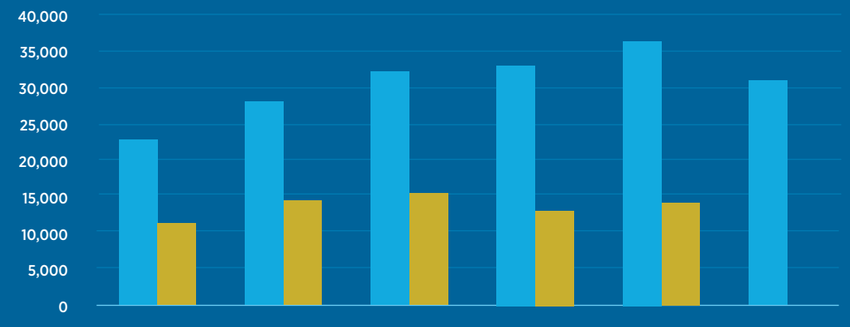


Year	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Total
2000/1	357,020	125,890	482,910
2001/2	365,575	133,360	498,935
2002/3	393,080	142,090	535,170
2003/4	412,980	157,660	570,645
2004/5	440,775	164,290	605,065
2005/6	440,410	167,065	607,475
2006/7	447,930	167,150	615,080
2007/8	474,290	202,045	676,340

Year	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Total
2008/9	470,080	204,720	674,800
2009/10	490,630	226,400	717,030
2010/11	510,895	252,255	763,150
2011/12	523,025	264,090	787,115
2012/13	526,150	262,205	788,355
2013/14	519,650	257,905	777,555
2014/15	483,405	261,600	745,005
2015/16	480,575	262,150	742,730

FIGURE 7

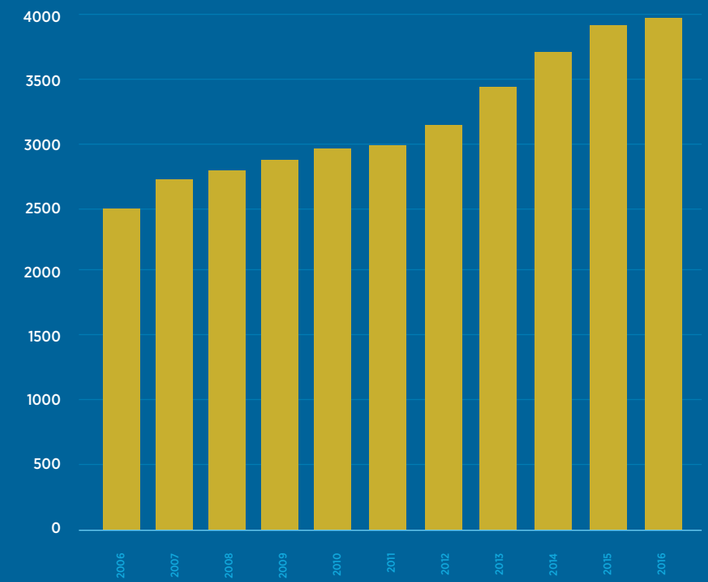
NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING POSTGRADUATE COURSES IN ARTS & HUMANITIES AND NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH COURSES IN A&H



Year	1994-5	1998-9	2002-3	2008/9	2011/12	2015/16:
Number of students taking postgraduate courses in Arts & Humanities	23,000	28,000	32,400	32,600	36,000	31,000
Number of students taking postgraduate research courses in Arts & Humanities	11,100	14,200	15,300	12,200	13,600	N/A

FIGURE 8

CAMBRIDGE - CONTRACT RESEARCH STAFF



Year	Staff
2006	2494
2007	2691
2008	2773
2009	2874
2010	2968
2011	3009
2012	3118
2013	3470
2014	3707
2015	3895
2016	3950

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- Research Funding Guide. Arts and Humanities Research Council (November 2017) http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/research-funding-guide
- The Allocation of Research Funding 2016/17to 2019/20, (BIS, 2016) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf
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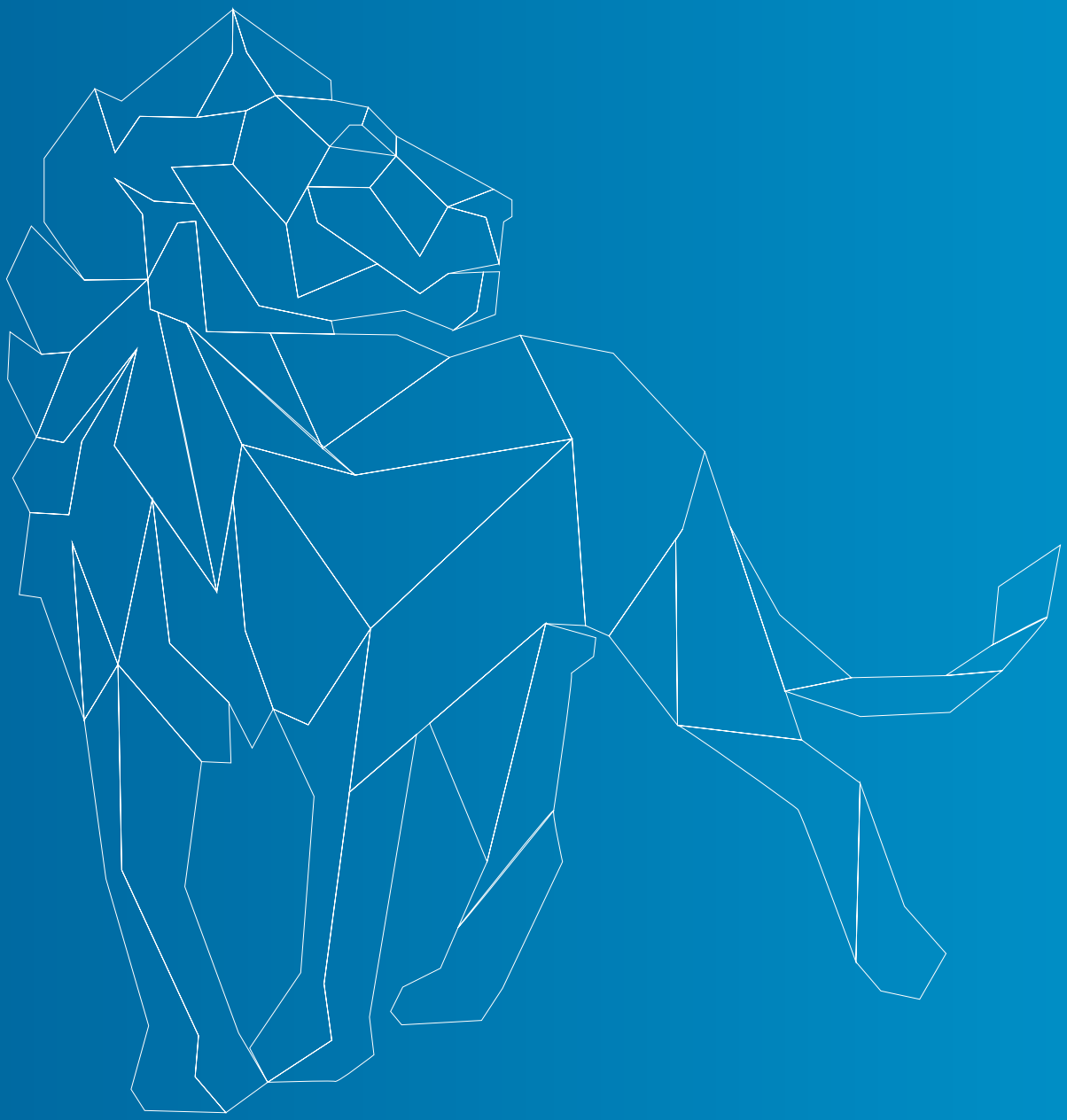
ABBREVIATIONS

AH	Arts and humanities (see Appendix 5)
AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
ERC	European Research Council
FEC	full economic costs (see Appendix 1)
FTE	full-time equivalent
HEFCS	Higher Education Funding Councils (i.e. for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (where it is a division of the Department for the Economy)
HERA	Humanities in the European Research Area
jrf	Junior Research Fellowship
PI	principal investigator (i.e. leader of a research project)
QR	quality-related research funding
REF	Research Excellence Framework



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