<u>Goldsmiths, University of London – Our response to the AHRC's *Strategic Delivery Plan*</u>

AHRC's future priorities

1. *What in your view should AHRC's priorities be?*

It is important that the AHRC continues to develop its work on, with and for the cultural, creative and digital industries. It is important for the AHRC to recognise the strengths of its contributions to the economy and society. But it is also important that the AHRC does not lose its distinctiveness in terms of the contribution from its range of disciplines (from ancient to modern languages to history to theology to English and comparative literatures and more). These disciplines contribute broadly to enquiries on the nature of civilisation and civilisations. The AHRC is able to offer a perspective distinct from the other research councils and this is important for the depth of knowledge going forward. It is important that the AHRC doesn't become solely captured by ideas of the cultural and the creative, but is also, in a deeper sense, oriented to the civilisational. The knowledge produced through the various funding schemes and programmes of the AHRC allow us to respond properly to questions such as: who are we, where have we come from, how are we human, how do we and how have we lived, how are we the same or different from others?

2. *Are there emerging themes which are not dealt with by the AHRC and should be?*

Emerging and developing themes to be considered include:

- New forms and mediations of cultural experience (developing the ISCF *Audiences of the Future* challenge, but taking this forward in the context of sound, touch and taste, across collective, cultural and physiological forms)
- Old and new forms of creativity. What do we mean by creative labour? How have we done it? And how might we do it in the future (i.e. in the context of social media, AI, AR, VR, robotics)?
- How and in what ways does everyday culture provide the basis for measures and metrics?
- Practice as research (including, *inter alia*, the development of post-textual codifications of knowledge, new forms of demonstration of evidence, and different ways of collaborating)

3. *To what extent should AHRC be seeking to direct arts and humanities research (e.g. in the form of themed funding calls, or by funding leadership awards in specific subject areas)?*

The AHRC should provide leadership for particular research themes and investments. It should have a duty to invest in areas that will serve the country for future years. And part of this role will be to fund and promote academic leadership in a manner such that these roles can be exemplary and impactful. That said, any leadership from the AHRC should be on the basis of full and ongoing consultation with the wider academic and arts and humanities communities. Any programmatic funding should not diminish responsive mode funding. The lone-scholar model of research has been important in arts and humanities research; it is

important not to lose this model and to invest appropriately. There needs to be a balance of funding modes and schemes.

> 4. *In what ways should AHRC be engaging future generations of researchers (graduate students, early career researchers...) in the work of the AHRC, for example, in relation to horizon scanning and strategy development?*

Appropriate funding and leadership schemes are important. Graduate and early career researchers are important for bringing fresh insight across the disciplines, not least regarding novel ways of researching and organising research. Peer review colleges should include a percentage of early career researchers. AHRC boards should include early career researchers and graduate students. Schemes such as the *New Generation Thinkers* programme are welcome innovations for the AHRC.

The value and importance of arts and humanities research

> 5. *In what ways should AHRC be making the case to UKRI/government/the taxpayer for the future of arts and humanities research? (And how, if at all, should we be making it differently for different audiences?) We would welcome succinct examples from your institutions/subject associations which could help us make this case forcefully.*

UKRI, UK government and the taxpayer are different constituencies of people and imply different modes of address and engagement. Underlying these different audiences is the 'general public', which provides a central point of reference for UK government and the taxpayer. Although financial efficiency is certainly a measure of good value, it would only be one aspect of understanding and appreciation for members of the general public. Cultural taste and cultural value undoubtedly surpass a baseline financial evaluation. Enjoyment of a film, a visit to a museum, appreciation of striking architecture may include an element of cost, but all our research shows that these experiences constitute much more than this.

That said, at Goldsmiths, there is range of exciting research that is impactful. For example, our *Forensic Architecture* research centre has been nominated for the Turner Prize and it produces impactful interventions exposing state crimes across the globe. And the AHRC funded GlobalGrace project is developing, among other things, creative arts-based frameworks for those suffering gender-based trauma in Bangladesh, the Philippines, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil.

The role of the AHRC should be to articulate, and make the case for, the different types of research value (economic, social and cultural) produced across the different forms of research funding. The AHRC has a role to speak for all arts and humanities research, not only that which is directly funded by it. Moreover, research councils and Research England need to work across UKRI to communicate to government and the public the balance and different values across research grant funding and formula funding (i.e. through REF).

6. *In what ways should AHRC place a greater emphasis on the relationship between research and practice?*

Understanding of the relationship between 'research' and 'practice' is still in its early stages. As we understand better how people and organisations both create knowledge and use knowledge, it becomes clearer that 'practice' (however difficult it may be to define) is centrally important. In the context of our growing use of social media and of the development of an 'internet of things', knowledge is articulated and utilised through increasingly novel and varied media and mediums. In young people we see a marked shift from books to screen media. The importance of the arts and creative disciplines in presenting and disclosing the world and what it means suggest that a greater focus on 'practice' is one way to better understand our possible future. The AHRC is without doubt best placed to lead on this.

We should perhaps add that Goldsmiths has been keen to develop and support the work of the Practice Research Advisory Group which works across various organisations in the UK. It has recently received funding to consider the technological infrastructure that is needed to support a 'web or arts'. One of the difficulties surrounding practice research is how to present, curate and preserve research and knowledge that is often artefactual or not easily presentable in containable form.

7. *In what ways should AHRC place a greater emphasis on the relationship between research and teaching?*

For most working in universities, our students constitute our most immediate and most significant audience. Increasingly we can't simply think of teaching in terms of it being research-led, but need to think about the range of research-teaching synergies (i.e. teaching through research practice, involving students in research and knowledge exchange projects (for example at Goldsmiths students working on creative computing and design projects with industry partners), as well a relaying second-hand the knowledge from research investigation). The AHRC potentially has much to offer pedagogic practice and our understanding of the relation between research and teaching. Practice- based disciplines, such as art or design, through studio-based learning and research, offer fruitful laboratories for exploring this relationship.

8. *What can AHRC do to increase diversity within its funding portfolio (in relation e.g. to diversity of project focus, researcher or institution)?*

The AHRC has a responsibility to fund innovative and excellent research, but it also has a responsibility to address any lack of inclusion with regard to particular demographics. The AHRC, given its cultural remit, is well-placed to lead on an inclusionary agenda.

Responding to a changing landscape

> 9. *How fundamentally is the emphasis on collaboration with non-academic partners and interdisciplinarity changing the research landscape? What are the opportunities/challenges here?*

The shift in the research funding environment is dramatic. There are significant positivities regarding the increasing emphasis on greater collaboration with non-academic partners (whether through public engagement activity or direct research collaboration). But sometimes the speed at which both research teams and non-academic partners are expected to put together proposals and develop a working relationship is unrealistic, not least in a context where non-academic partners may be unaware of research funding demands (e.g.in terms of the nature of a research proposal, how to cost projects, etc). Going forward it would be helpful for the AHRC to consider both a longer developmental process as well as a quick process. In addition, the AHRC needs to be aware of the difficulties of mediating different historic and present interests and languages between academic researchers and industry partners. The inclusion of Innovate UK into UKRI and its working alongside AHRC is certainly positive. But we need to be aware of the different agendas and concerns going forward.

> 10. *How can we work together to find a common voice, particularly when we have to react quickly to new funding opportunities?*

In the context of rapid fire funding opportunities, it is important for the AHRC to maintain a regular and consistent relationship with its various constituencies. Regularised fora – whether in person or virtual – provide ongoing lines of communication downward and across the sector, but also upward regarding innovation and best practice.

> 11. *How, if at all, should AHRC change the way in which it makes awards (e.g. scale of opportunity, funding mechanisms, assessment procedures)?*

The current range of funding programmes and processes seems appropriate. But more, and at scale, investment for international academic and non-academic collaboration would provide fruitful opportunity.

AHRC's role in supporting communication, engagement and impact

> 12. *What should AHRC's role be (if any) in supporting public communication of research?*

It is imperative that the research councils assist in the public communication of excellent research. They play a role, not only in insisting on relevant impact, public engagement and communication activity regarding particular grant awards, but also in helping to articulate the successes of different research projects with regard to particular thematics and challenges.

13. *What should AHRC's role be (if any) in supporting wider public engagement with research?*

See above.

14. *In what ways should AHRC be supporting the development of research impact?*

See above.