

## Steering Group's Response to the International Panel's Report

The Review Steering Group accepts the report as a robust qualitative assessment of UK Social Anthropology research, and thanks the Panel for its excellent work

The Group welcomes the Panel's very positive assessment, and it endorses particularly the following conclusions:

**1. UK research is of high quality.** The Group agrees that the UK is one of the intellectual heartlands of Anthropology, and that this reflects the outstanding expertise and lively pluralism of UK departments, scholars and practitioners.

**2. UK is a world leader in many research areas.** The Group supports the Panel's caveat that the list of leading areas in the report is not exhaustive, and notes that the discipline is in very good shape considering its size and level of funding.

**3. UK Social Anthropology makes an enormous contribution beyond the academy.** The Group welcomes the Panel's endorsement of the important impact being made by Anthropologists in areas such as human rights work, asylum, and in development policy and aid strategies.

The Group has discussed the Panel's very helpful and constructive recommendations and comments on these as follows:

**4. There is a need for stronger postgraduate support.** The Group agrees that the focus should be on students at the margins of funding. Funders have undertaken to evaluate studentship quotas over time, and have expressed their willingness to listen to strong cases for targeted support. The group suggested that a scheme targeted on anthropology's interface with professional practice (in areas such as social development, education, public policy, and management) would be especially valuable.

**5. Greater encouragement of imaginative and promising research proposals is required.** The Group agrees that Anthropologists should be encouraged to submit more innovative and riskier research proposals. The funders emphasise that funding for such research already exists, and the ESRC's Chief Executive Ian Diamond will contact each Social Anthropology department to reiterate this.

**6. Funding Strategies that promote multi-sited research strategies need to be encouraged.** The Group feels that this is not a major issue, and may reflect a lack of awareness about funding opportunities.

**7. There is a need for extended support for postdoctoral fellows.** The Group acknowledges the value of existing postdoctoral fellowships, but is uncertain whether extending their length will add significant value, bearing in mind that this would lead to a reduction in the number of awards available. The funders emphasise that postdoctoral fellowships are awarded through an open competition, and more applications are to be encouraged.

**8. The need to develop practitioner fellowships and international collaboration.** The Group endorses this view and highlights the need for greater flexibility and interaction between academic and practitioner groups. We also welcome the panel's

recognition of recent efforts to strengthen collaborative research and pedagogy through programs that bring intellectuals from non-Western traditions to the UK, seeing further development of such programs as an important way of realizing anthropology's ability to promote more universal forms of knowledge production.

**9. *There is a need for better recognition and awareness of impact generated by the discipline.*** The Group strongly endorses this point. The Social Anthropology community must do more to identify the knowledge transfer activities that it engages in, and the contribution it makes to society. The Learned Societies agree that impacts should be recognised and documented, and funders indicate that some support might be available to facilitate this. The Group also notes the need to tackle stereotyped images of anthropology and the lack of knowledge of anthropology among school students and teachers: a deficiency that the RAI's campaign to establish a comprehensive programme of education in anthropology at pre-university level (including an anthropology A-level) is addressing.

**10. *Linguistic anthropology is a striking gap in the UK's portfolio*** – Although the Group generally accepts this assessment, it does not regard it as an overriding priority. Any development in this area should arise organically from developments within the UK research community, building on the existing strengths in the anthropological study of language, which does have a long history in this country.

The Group was also very appreciative of the International Panel's very careful attention to the methodology of qualitative assessment, and for the valuable reflections that the report provided on the basis of the experience of other countries with regard to the limitations of certain types of metrics-based approaches in comparison with the comparative international peer review process embodied in this evaluation.

The Group has instituted a smaller core of members, including the funders, learned societies, and representatives of the discipline which will meet regularly to ensure that the recommendations and actions highlighted above are carried forward.

Professor John Gledhill (Steering Group Chairman)  
on behalf of the Steering Group