

# Social Sciences Division: Innovative, interdisciplinary Research Incubator themes

## Call for Proposals 2015-16

### 1. Purpose of the call

The Division's [research strategy](#) aims to build on Oxford's multiple disciplinary strengths and improve our collaborative research capacity in order to encourage the development of new, cutting edge research themes and to enhance our success with interdisciplinary and multi-partner research funding awards.

The Division wants to promote the distinctiveness and diversity of social sciences research and of social scientific methods, theories and perspectives to funders, policy-makers and wider public audiences. As a result, we want to identify and invest in innovative interdisciplinary Incubator Research themes as a focus for strengthening collaborative networking and bid development for large-scale research programmes.

To this end, the division is **seeking new proposals for research initiatives in innovative, curiosity-driven research areas** led by academics with permanent appointments in the Social Sciences Division interested in **driving the development of interdisciplinary research collaborations** with colleagues outside their own department at Oxford and in other universities.

Funding of up to **£50,000 over two years** for networking and development activities will be provided for up to two proposals.

### 2. Scope

In discussion with Heads of Department, an initial set of potential areas for Incubator themes was identified. These reflect the intellectually distinctive concerns and perspectives of the social sciences at Oxford, areas of research strength across more than one department in the Division, and the thematic opportunities and agendas of funding bodies and cross-divisional initiatives. The Division's aim is to ensure that the intellectual challenges and research opportunities of these themes are explored extensively and that Oxford's capacity to address them effectively is developed into more competitive, interdisciplinary research applications to external funders. The intention is to ensure that a spread of different departments and/or disciplines have a stake in at least one theme. However, this is not an exhaustive or exclusive list and we welcome proposals in other innovative interdisciplinary areas.

**Indicative Themes:** In the first Incubator call, we funded two proposals under the themes 'Borders and Displacements' and 'Inequality and Wellbeing'. So, for this call we particularly encourage research proposals in the following themes (see Annex on page 4 for an outline description of each theme):

- Uncertainty and risk
- Resources and livelihoods
- Human rights and freedoms
- Connectivity and belonging
- Expertise and knowledge

If you have any questions about research themes, please contact the Division's Senior Research Facilitator, Dr Sharron Pleydell-Pearce ([sharron.pleydell-pearce@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sharron.pleydell-pearce@socsci.ox.ac.uk)).

### 3. Requirements

- Themes require strong academic leadership. Applications are therefore invited to be led by established academic or research staff members who hold a permanent or long-term (five years plus) research post in the Social Sciences Division (this includes University Lecturers who are still in their five-year probationary period). Please be aware of your department or faculty's policies; if you

are not eligible to apply for research funding as a Principal Investigator in your own name, you are not eligible to submit an application to this scheme.

- Principal Investigators must have a publications record of 'internationally excellent' or 'world leading' research and demonstrate prior experience of research leadership and securing external research funding.
- Applications are encouraged to be multi/inter-disciplinary in nature, and must include a series of named Co-Investigators and/or collaborators in three or more Oxford departments (collaboration outside the Social Sciences Division is encouraged).
- Co-Investigators must be established academic or research staff members who hold a permanent or long-term (five years plus) research post (this includes University Lecturers who are still in their five-year probationary period).
- Collaborators can include academic and research staff on permanent or fixed-term contracts.
- Applications should explain how their proposed collaboration will engage with researchers at all career stages and from other institutions.
- Applications must be approved by the Head of Department of the Principal Investigator. If more than one proposal is submitted by their department, Heads of Department will be asked to rank applications in order of priority.
- Applications must also be approved by the Head of Department of any Co-Investigators.
- Applications should ideally focus on one or more of the Indicative Themes listed above, but applications in other innovative, interdisciplinary themes are also welcome.
- Funded research incubator themes will be supported for up to two years from October 2016, subject to review by the division's Planning and Resources Committee at the end of the first year. The second year of funding will be contingent on receipt of a report on the theme's activities in October 2017.

#### **4. Eligible costs**

Up to £50,000 in total will be awarded to each theme for:

- Research development activities (up to £15,000 per year for 2 years), including team meetings, networking and showcasing (e.g. travel, subsistence, venue hire costs for seminars/workshops).
- Research and/or administrative assistance for the theme leader (up to £10,000 per year for 2 years).

Funded themes will also receive facilitative support for their networking activities and external funding applications from the division's Senior Research Facilitator, Dr Sharron Pleydell-Pearce.

#### **5. Expected outputs and outcomes**

Theme leaders will be expected to:

- Devise a clear plan for applying for external research or development funding by the end of the first year of funding (to be outlined in the annual report), in order to sustain the programme of research activities beyond the two-year divisional incubator funding.
- Define a clear programme of research activities (e.g. workshops, seminar series), at least one of which must be a divisional Research Forum. *[A Research Forum is intended to be a day or half-day event to stimulate discussion around the research theme to an audience including the Head of Division or Associate Head of Division (Research) and departmental Directors of Research, along with other academic colleagues interested in the theme. It would involve co-investigators and collaborators and would take place in the first year of the theme.]*
- Participate in the biannual divisional Research Showcase/Festival. *[This is a one-day event designed to showcase excellent research and impact from across the division to interested external partners or organisations (including funders), raise the profile of Oxford Social Sciences, and ensure that Oxford takes a lead in various research-related agenda.]*
- Work closely with the division's Research & Impact Team to develop activities and follow-on funding applications.

- Provide an annual report to the division's Planning and Resources Committee in October each year and maintain regular contact with the division's Senior Research Facilitator about the theme's activities. Please note that the second year of incubator theme funding is contingent upon approval of this report by the divisional Planning and Resources Committee.
- Submit at least one draft collaborative, interdisciplinary funding application for divisional comment and input by the end of June of the second year (2018), which is aimed at an appropriate external funding body. It is not a requirement that an external bid be submitted to the funder by the end of June of the second year, but it is expected that themes will seek to obtain continuation funding for further activities both during the course of their two years of funding and beyond.
- Encourage further engagement from researchers across Oxford and in other HEIs.
- Provide material for divisional communications (internal and external).

## 6. How to apply and support provided for applications

A selection panel convened by the Associate Head of Division (Research) will select the top two applications.

- 1) **Briefings about the five Incubator themes: HT2, HT3 (venue to be confirmed).** The divisional Senior Research Facilitator will run workshops with prospective applicants, separately for each theme, to enable thematic development and wide engagement across the division. All those interested in applying or learning more about each theme are welcome to attend. Please contact Sharron Pleydell-Pearce ([sharron.pleydell-pearce@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sharron.pleydell-pearce@socsci.ox.ac.uk)) for more information, or complete the doodle poll for each theme.
- 2) **Deadline for full proposals: 12:00 noon, Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016.** Please use the application form provided with these guidance notes.
- 3) **Decisions communicated to applicants: Early June 2016,** for projects to commence October 2016.

This competition will take place annually. The application process will be repeated in early MT 2017 for a new set of themes commencing in October 2018.

## 7. Assessment criteria

Applications will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- Excellence and innovative nature of the research questions and approach.
- 'Internationally excellent' or 'world leading' research track record of the Principal Investigator.
- Theme proposals must be multi/interdisciplinary (stimulating research across disciplinary, conceptual, theoretical or methodological boundaries)
- Collaboration across departments, disciplines and methods.
- Breadth of involvement from colleagues across the division and from other divisions in the University
- Evidence of engagement with researchers at all career stages and other academic institutions.
- Potential for long-term sustainability of the research theme beyond the divisional funding.
- External engagement with non-academic stakeholders identified.

All applications must meet the Requirements set out in section 3 above.

## 8. Contacts

- For all queries about research themes and support in developing your proposal, please contact Dr Sharron Pleydell-Pearce ([sharron.pleydell-pearce@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sharron.pleydell-pearce@socsci.ox.ac.uk); tel: 14882).

## **Annex: Illustrative Descriptors of Priority Areas for Incubator Themes**

**Uncertainty and risk** – Examining how environmental, scientific, financial, or legal uncertainties affect organisational, collective, and individual experiences of and approaches to managing risk.

**Resources and livelihoods** – Considering how the increased technological and institutional mediation of the relationship between basic natural resources (e.g. energy, water, and food) and household livelihoods affects the sustainability of resource management.

**Human rights and freedoms** – Assessing the ways and circumstances in which human rights affect the freedoms experienced by individuals and to which people aspire

**Connectivity and belonging** – Exploring the relationship between the new scales and forms of social connectivity made possible by digital technologies and people's changing sense of identity and belonging.

**Expertise and knowledge** – Examining how and why some knowledge claims are invested with greater authority than others, and what the consequences of this are for the relationship between experts and non-experts in determining how individuals, organisations and communities conduct themselves.