

The Leverhulme Trust in 2002

Report of the Year

Introduction

The Trust has translated its basic task, namely that of awarding 'scholarships for education and research', into a variety of specific activities. These can be best represented in terms of the different categories of award. In terms of **research support**, there are four main patterns of award, namely, **projects, fellowships, networks** and **prizes**. Awards are additionally made for **education**. The later paragraphs of this section outline the progress made within the different groups during the year. The 'Awards-in-Focus' section of the Report provides examples of the different types of award, indicating the style and character of work undertaken. The overall level of activity is shown in the following table:

	2001	2002
Total Expenditure	£25.2M	£26.7M
Direct Awards		
Number of Outline Applications	800	817
Number of grants awarded	172	170
Financial commitment	£22.5M	£21.9M
RAAC		
Number of applications	903	957
Number of grants awarded	269	233
Financial commitment	£3.9M	£4.0M

Figure 2

Portfolio of grants active in 2002 (N=920)

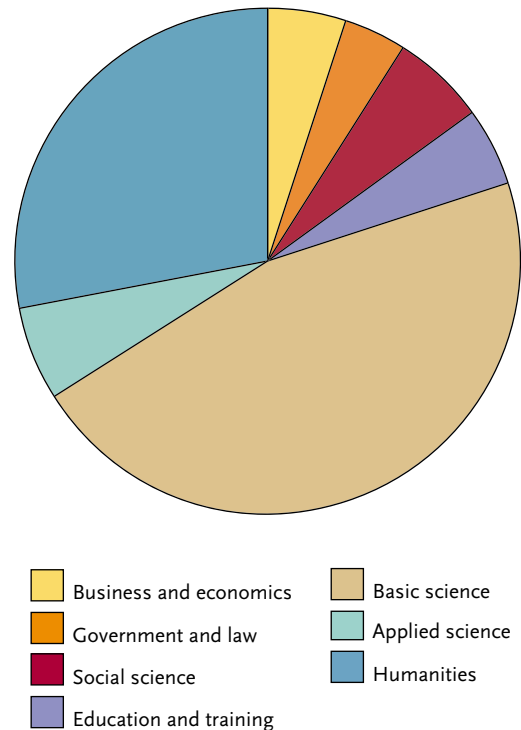


Figure 1

Percentage financial commitments to awards in 2002

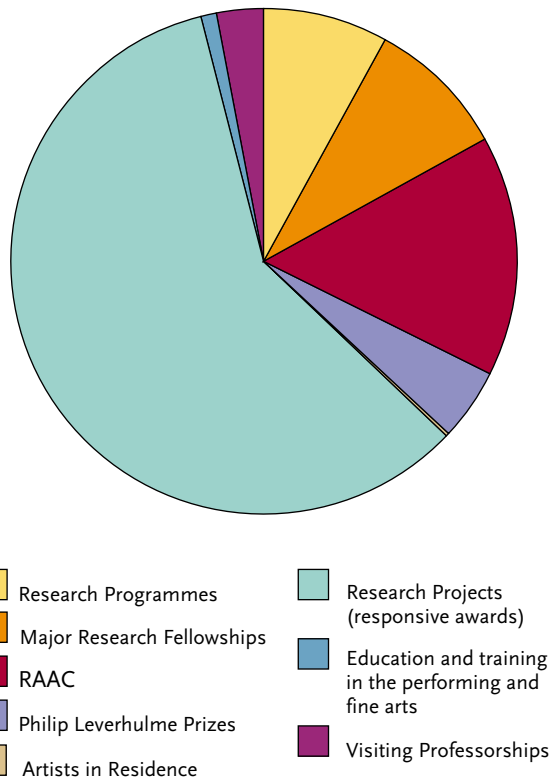


Figure 3

Research projects in science awarded in 2002

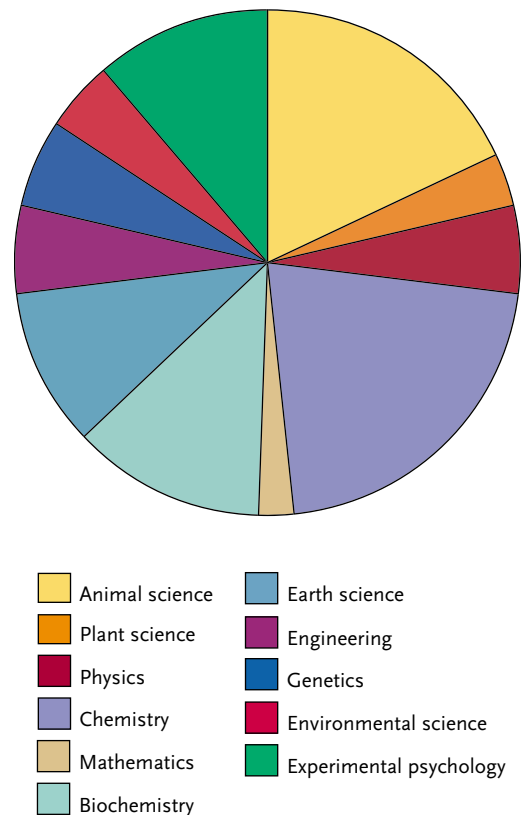
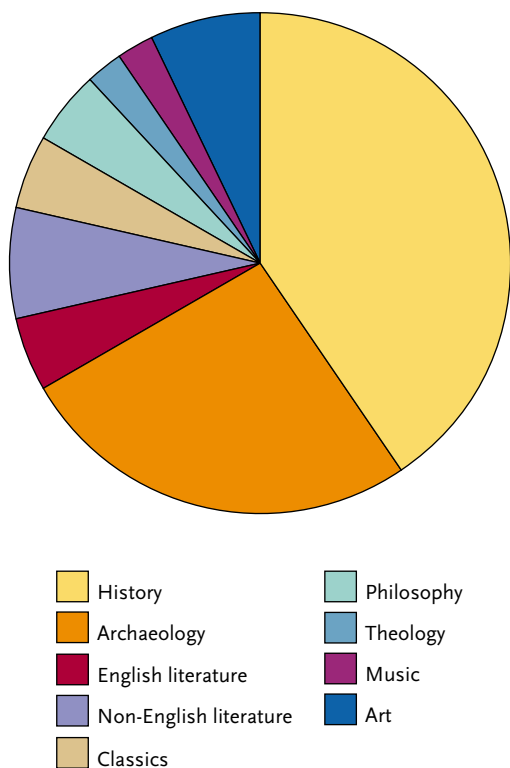


Figure 4

Research projects in the humanities awarded in 2002



Here it will be seen that the allocations are made by two paths, namely, first, by direct decision of the Trustees at three meetings during the year and, secondly, by the Research Awards Advisory Committee (RAAC) acting on behalf of the Trustees.

Projects

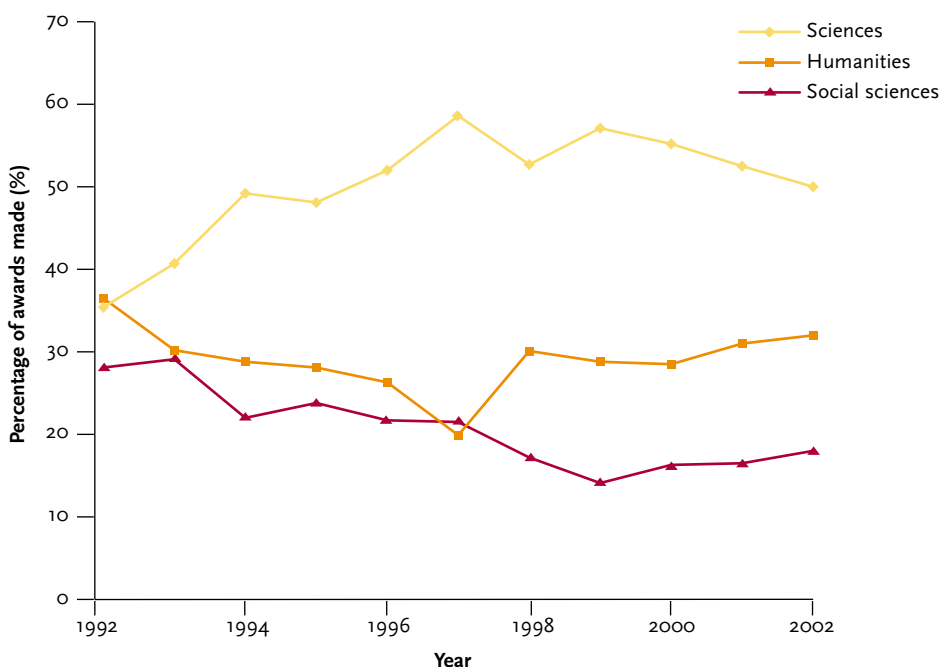
Grants for research projects are made in two major categories, responsive awards, i.e., where the choice of topic and research design lie entirely with the applicant, and programme awards, where the research community is invited to send proposals built around themes put forward by the Trustees. Most awards in the first category are for less than £250,000; the programme awards are for sums of up to £1,250,000.

A statistical review of the responsive awards is given later in this section in terms both of the disciplinary range of the proposals put to the Trustees and in terms of the success rates enjoyed by these proposals. It is fair to say, however, that the responsive award portfolio continues to be a reassuring indicator of the vitality of the research community; proposals of genuine vision and imagination are linked to authoritative and purposeful research design. The listing of successful awards is confirmation of the range of interests represented within the portfolio.

The themes proposed by the Trustees for the programme awards in 2002 were two, namely, *The Behaviour of Large, Complex Systems* and *The Movement of Peoples in the Modern World*. The response was encouraging with 69 and 39 bids being received for the two themes respectively. The Trustees were appreciative of the peer review advice which formed such

Figure 5

Evolution of portfolio of research awards



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an important part of the selection process; they were also alert to the care and imagination shown by applicants in what was recognised to be a demanding competition. In particular, they applauded the range of disciplines and viewpoints stimulated by the first theme, drawing the conclusion that a lightly defined topic could bring benefit in allowing ample space for the creativity of applicants. Encouraged by the ability of such programme awards to bring genuine impact to the study of significant themes, the Trustees have selected two topics for the next round of the programme (*The Changing Character of War* and *The Nature of Evidence*).

Fellowships

The majority of Fellowships are awarded by the RAAC and information on the year's operations is accordingly given in the section of the report covering that Committee's activity. Statistical summaries of the fellowship schemes are also given later in this section.

One fellowship scheme within the direct care of the Trustees is that of the Major Research Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences. These awards provide typically two or three years of teaching replacement so that the award holders can conduct a piece of intensive and concentrated research around a theme of their choosing. The opportunity provided for research initiative was widely appreciated by applicants and the competition was notable for its scale, its quality, and most strikingly for its demonstration of original and creative thinking across a rich array of subject areas. 27 awards were made in response to 171 applications. Networks

Networks

The Trustees have continued to place weight upon the value of building links between research groups as a means of ensuring progress where the interaction of different viewpoints is an important contributor to success. Thus *Interchange Awards* are included in the listing given later in the report. These awards allow research scholars in different locations to work together by providing travel funds and support for workshops and some research assistance. Separate listings are also given for the *Visiting Professorships* where visits to the UK are made by international scholars of such standing that their ability to strengthen the work of UK groups is evident. 30 awards were made during the year.

A scheme with analogous ambitions, namely, the building of links, but where the distance between the disciplines is more dramatic, is that of *Artists in Residence*. The 11 awards made during the year indicate that this relatively new scheme has already provided a splendid array of interactions.

Prizes

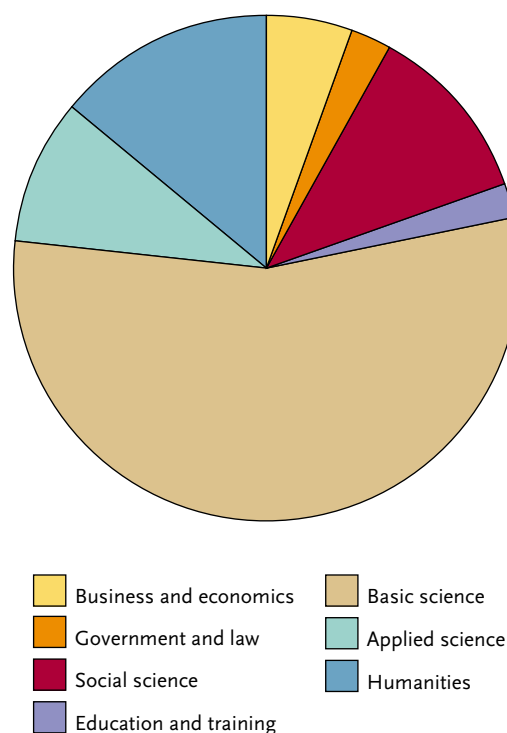
The Philip Leverhulme Prizes seek to recognise younger research colleagues (typically less than 36 years of age) whose research contribution has already led to their recognition at the international level. 124 nominations were received for 24 awards across five disciplines. The listing given in the later section of the report shows the value of such awards not only for the individuals concerned (each prize-winner receives £50,000) but also for the recognition accorded to their disciplines.

Education

The Trust has continued to make direct awards to colleges and academies for the most part for the support of students undertaking graduate level professional training in the fine and performing arts. There is no doubt that the contribution of the Trust to the flexible and sensitive provision of such training is deeply appreciated; it is consequently a concern to ensure that the portfolio of receiving institutions can remain attuned to current requirements and opportunities.

Figure 6a

Applications for funding received in 2002



Symposium

The Trustees initiated a competition during the year for the holding of a conference in 2004. The choice of topic for the conference and the organisational design (and responsibility) would lie with the applicants. The significance of the meeting for progress in the chosen topic and its ability to engage the wider audience were seen as criteria appropriate to the selection among applicants. 86 bids were received; following short-listing and interviews a grant was made for a Symposium on *The Resurgent City*.

Balance of Activity

a) Types of activity

The Trustees undertake a strategic review of the work of the Trust on an annual basis. The review considers the Trust's portfolio to be divided into the following categories:

- Research Projects
- Research Programmes
- Major Research Fellowships
- Visiting Professorships
- Education Grants
- Artists in Residence
- Philip Leverhulme Prizes
- Symposium
- RAAC Awards

In the absence of any redirection resulting from a decision of trustees, the expectation is that in a standard year some £25M of resources are allocated to these schemes. An indication of the proportion of the spend for 2002 undertaken within each category is shown in Figure 1.

The RAAC Awards, involving some £4M from within the £25M, comprise the following activities:

- Research Fellowships
- Study Abroad Studentships
- Study Abroad Fellowships
- Special Research Fellowships
- Emeritus Fellowships

b) Balance between Disciplines: Projects

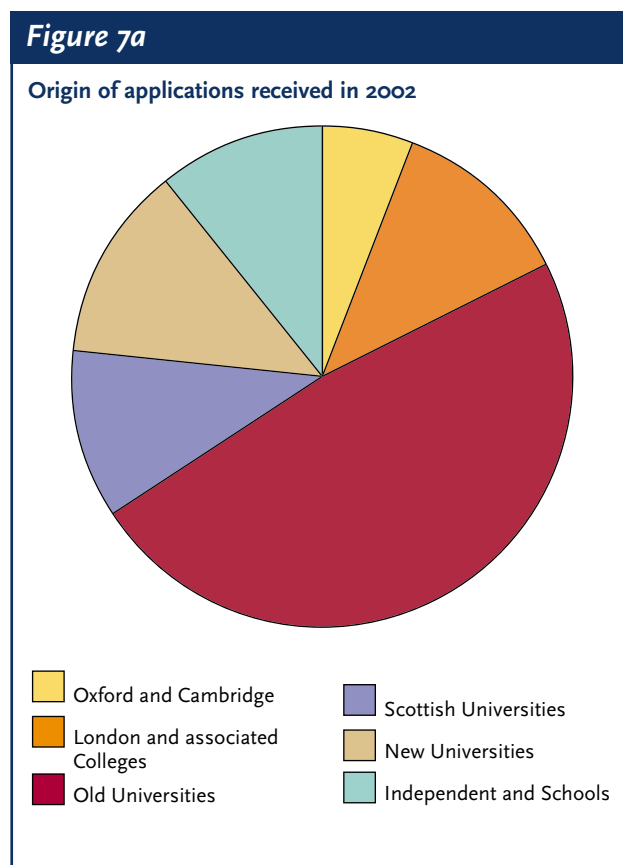
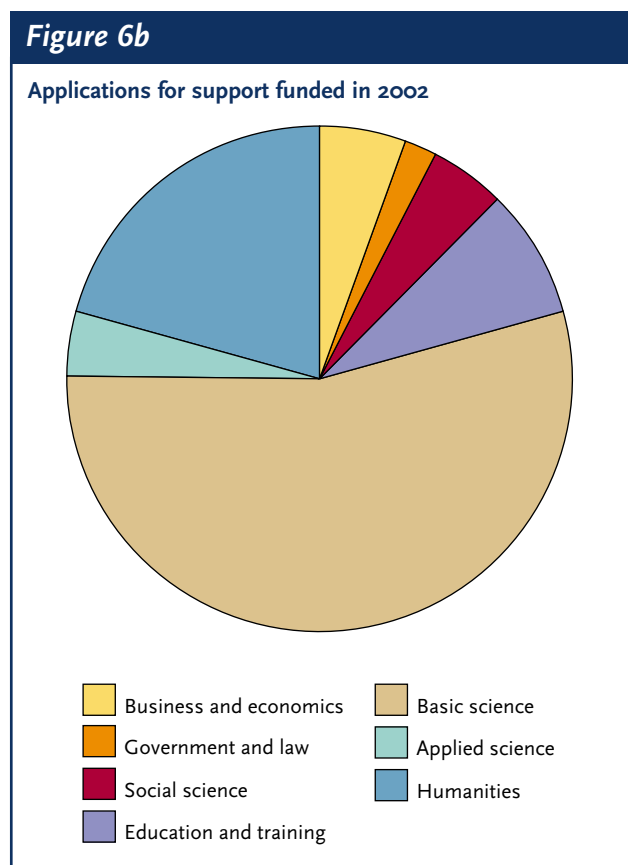
It is a major aspect of the Trust that the processing of applications is unaffected by the nature of the discipline(s) touched upon in a proposal. The selection of peer reviewers is of course determined by the nature of the subject but the eventual decision to support or not to support is taken by a

process which remains the same for all themes. It is accordingly somewhat paradoxical to attempt a division between subject areas. This is, however, undertaken since it is one of the most convenient methods to present the *post hoc* character of the portfolio.

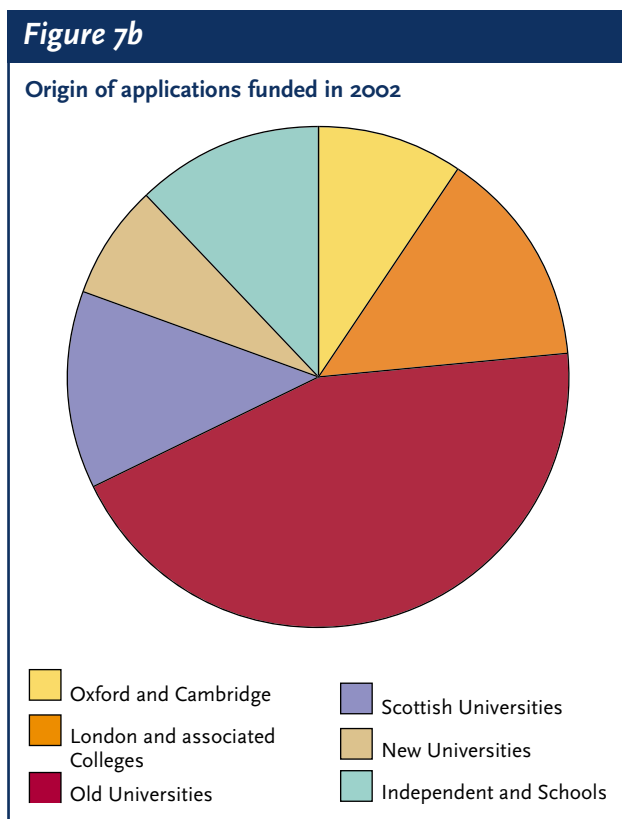
The Trustees decide upon awards at their meetings held three times each year. The new awards are added to the database of active grants. At the same time, grants that have run their course are continually being removed from the active category. There is thus a continuous turnover of grants and awards. It may be helpful to give an indication of the composition of the **portfolio of active project grants** present on the database at the end of 2002, when there were 920 active grants.

In Figure 2 we show, for grants active at the end of 2002, the distribution (by number) over the subject areas: business and economics; government and law; social science; education (including bursaries for professional training and development in the arts); basic science; applied science; and the humanities. Within the basic sciences, the largest numbers of grants awarded in 2002 were in chemistry and animal science (see Figure 3). The grants in the humanities awarded during the year, Figure 4, show the continued predominance of history and archaeology.

In Figure 5 we show the evolution of our support in the major subject areas: all science (basic sciences and applied sciences); all humanities; and all social sciences (business and economics, government and law, social sciences and education). Figure 5 suggests that the trend in the last decade towards science and away from social sciences and humanities may have passed its peak. Since the majority of the awards



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represented in Figure 5 are responsive in character, i.e., they are proposals where the choice of topic has been made by the applicant, this evolution in support reflects the changing behaviour of the applicant community in the UK rather than any change in policy at the Leverhulme Trust. This is supported by comparison of Figures 6a and 6b where the disciplinary distribution of applications (Figure 6a) is found to be similar to that of awards (Figure 6b).

Similar comment can be made in respect to the types of institution from which proposals are received. Certain data are presented for applications and for awards in the compendium Figures 7a and 7b. The figures have weaknesses - not least the mixing of categories and the consequent omission of important groups as separately identifiable entities. They do, however, confirm the presence of the Trust across the full range of institutions and indicate further a comparability between the distributions of applications and awards.

c) Success Rates

The success rates for responsive grants within any given year are difficult to present simply because of the nature of the reviewing system. Applicants initially send an outline application, which may be submitted at any time during the year. If this outline application is successful, the applicant is invited to submit a full application for one of the three annual dates set for such submission. Depending on the applicant, there can be a period of up to a year between the invitation to submit a full application and the actual submission of that application. This procedure means that statistics presenting the numbers of research project grants awarded or the numbers of full applications received in any one year are likely to include a number of projects for which the outline applications were made in the previous year.

With this caveat in mind, we can review the success rates for those putting proposals to the Trust. If the success rate in the outline step for the year is multiplied by the success rate in the final award step during the year, then an estimate of the overall success rate can be made. This is done for the three broad categories of discipline in Figure 8. Here the most striking aspect is the clear fall in success rate over the past three years. Since the Trust has been able to make available a relatively constant level of resource over that period, the clear indication is of a rising level of application. This has been a major factor behind the attempt made during the year to identify more closely the character of the Trust so that applicants are only encouraged to put to the Trust those of their applications which are indeed best suited to its objectives. This aspect is discussed below.

d) RAAC Awards

The work of the RAAC is presented more fully in the chapter comprising the report of its chairman, Professor Keith Gull; it is reviewed briefly here in terms of the set of factors considered for the directly awarded grants.

The distribution of activity between the different forms of support is shown in Figure 9 where the predominant role (in number terms) of the Research Fellowships can be seen. The distribution between disciplines is shown in Figure 10; the coverage is wide but dominated first by awards in the humanities and secondly by awards in the basic sciences.

Figure 11 shows finally the success rates for 2002 and for the two preceding years in the different schemes of the Committee. These vary substantially, being low for the Early Career Fellowships in which post-doctoral research workers can seek funds for their own salary in conjunction with matching funds from their institution and relatively high for senior research colleagues seeking support for overseas study leave. The results for two of the directly awarded schemes, the Major Research Fellowships and the Philip Leverhulme Prizes, are also given in the figure to allow comparison.

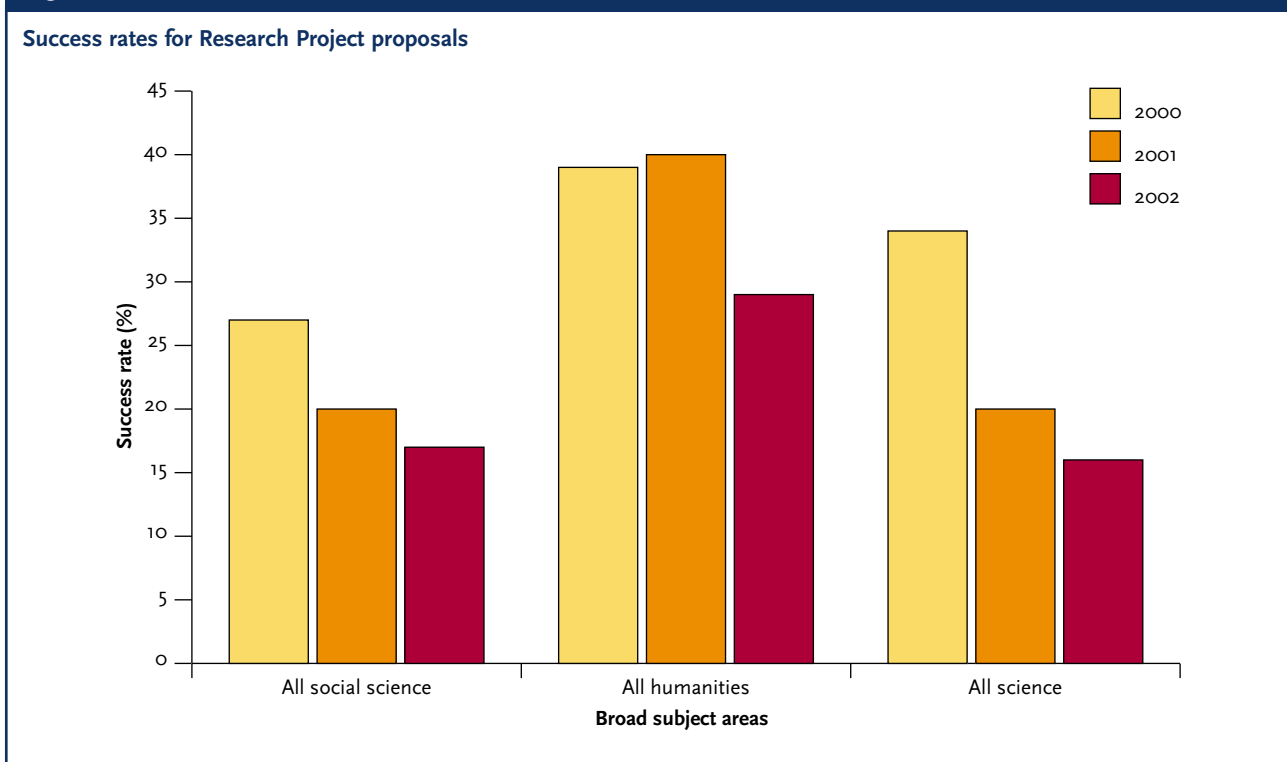
Concluding Remarks

The range of activities and awards covered in the above paragraphs are offered as indications of the wish of the Trustees to ensure that the Trust can make a constructive, imaginative and purposeful contribution to the health of research and education in the UK and more widely. This role is one which has been consistently followed since the establishment of the Trust in 1933.

The world of research is, however, a very different place in 2003 from that of 1933. The dramatic growth in the volume of research conducted, the central role of research in affairs of state, the setting in place of a public system of research support agencies, – these all make it necessary on a continuing basis to define the ways in which the Trust can best play its part.

Some of these ways are intrinsic to the work of the Trust. Thus emphasis is placed on **responsive support**, i.e., where the choice of topic lies with the applicant. The door is open to **all disciplines** (but with the quiet note to those working in medicine, social policy and school education that they should recognise that specialist agencies exist for those topics). The

Figure 8



flexibility of operation acknowledges that, in activity as demanding as research, the **problem itself must set the rules**. These all make the Trust an attractive partner for those seeking support for their research ambitions. A consequence is a growing level of application and a falling probability of success.

This presents a difficulty. Everything is to be gained if success rates can be held at the level where applicant, reviewer and, indeed, Trustee retain confidence in the effectiveness and value of the evaluation process. Since there is the wish to avoid arbitrary rules as a mechanism for the selection of eligible proposals, it becomes important **to identify the character of proposal which is best suited to the Trust**. Applicants can then review, in the light of their intentions, the source of potential funding best suited to their research ambition.

The Trustees have given thought to this issue during the year and have sought to define more sharply the criteria by which they believe applications to the Trust should be judged. They recognise at the same time the dangers of generalisation and the need to avoid dogmatic statement.

A major issue as has been noted is **the suitability of the research for the support of the Leverhulme Trust**, i.e., the factors which make the proposed work more suited to this Trust than to alternative sponsors, either public or private. In seeking to define criteria, there are those recognised by all research support agencies:

- the originality of the work, i.e., the extent to which the proposal moves beyond the incremental development of a single discipline;
- the significance of the work for future activity in the immediate subject area, i.e., the extent to which future work will be 'enabled';

- the significance of the work for other subject areas, i.e., its ability to excite those working in other disciplines;
- the merit of the proposed methods, researchers and institution for the intended work.

In addition, there are criteria which are more specific to the traditional contribution of the Trust. These include:

- the extent to which the research is the reflection of one individual's vision or aspiration;
- the assessment and taking of appropriate risk in setting research objectives;
- the extent to which the proposal represents a refreshing departure from the established working patterns either of the individual or of the discipline;
- the extent to which the research design transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries (or, perhaps more pragmatically, the traditional boundaries between other funding agencies).

The Trust appreciates fully the dangers of generalisation in matters as complex as the support of research. It accordingly seeks to leave space for exceptions while honouring these criteria. Applicants are now accordingly being invited specifically to indicate **why they believe the Trust to be the correct recipient for their bid**.

The intent is to ensure that the Trust can continue to play the most creative and supportive role for researchers in the universities. This will be best achieved if the limited resources of the Trust can be devoted to the character of work where, within the context of the present-day university world, its support is most needed.

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The ambition of the First Viscount Leverhulme was to provide support to gifted individuals whose research or training would be of benefit to the wider community, the term benefit being

interpreted in the widest sense. It is hoped that this report can confirm the determination of the Trustees to respect this ambition.

Figure 9

Distribution of RAAC awards in 2002

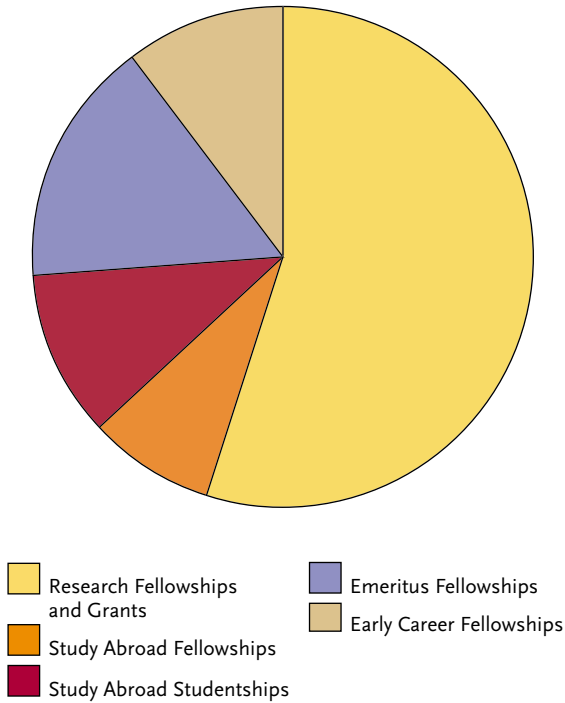


Figure 10

Subject areas of RAAC awards made in 2002

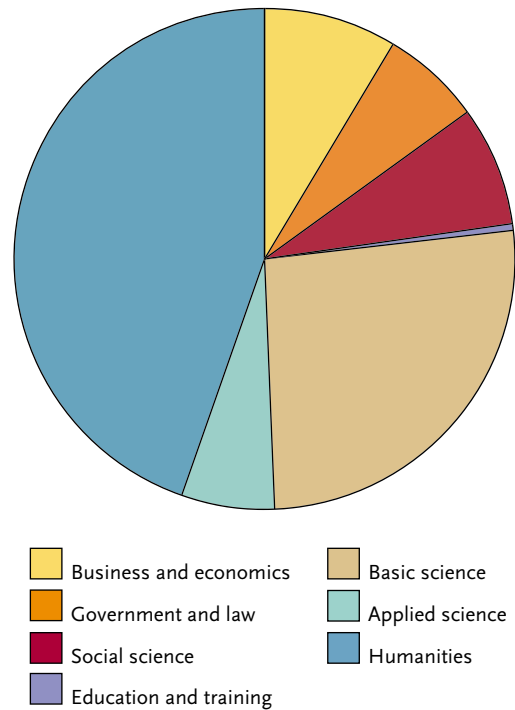


Figure 11

Success rates for various awards

