

*sempre* :

Society for Education, Music  
and Psychology Research



## **Invitations to bid for an evaluation of the perceived significance of small research grants in the music education and music psychology research community**

SEMPRE wishes to commission research into the benefits of small research grants (i.e., of awards of £10,000 or less) to the music education and music psychology research community.

It seeks proposals from active researchers who would be willing to undertake a detailed survey of UK-based researchers in music-related topics to establish clearly documented evidence, including case studies, of whether or not small grants offer significant and lasting impact on research careers and research outcomes.

The research should be completed within the calendar year 2011, including a written interim report that will be considered by the SEMPRES Committee at its mid-year meeting in May 2011 and a final report at its December meeting.

Up to £5,000 is available to cover salary costs (which could include teaching replacement or buy-out for full-time academic staff) and an additional £1000 is available for direct research costs.

Expressions of interest should contain: (i) a specification of how the research would be carried out, including detail of the constituencies to be approached (such as NAHMHE (National Association of Heads of Music in Higher Education), RSM, Heads of Research in all the Conservatoires and award holders [past/present] of small research grants); (ii) a timetable (bearing in mind the reporting needs for May and December); and (iii) a budget. Such expressions should be sent to Professor Graham Welch (SEMPRES Chair) by email at [g.welch@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:g.welch@ioe.ac.uk), no later than 31 January 2011.

In addition, applicants should indicate their experience and qualifications for undertaking a project such as this by including an overview cv.

It is expected that the outcomes will be announced in early February 2011 and that the research will commence later that month.

24 December 2010

## Annex

The background to the research is that academies such as the British Academy are being required by the Government to phase out their small grants schemes. This is likely to impact on the charitable sector (including organisations such as SEMPRES) that also make small grants available for research.

According to a letter sent from Sir Adam Roberts, President of the British Academy, to its Fellows in November 2010

"We have received clear messages about the government's vision for the dual support system of research funding, whereby research councils supply strategic and large-scale project funding; academies supply support for individuals (principally through fellowships) and international leadership; and universities receive QR and FEC funding for flexible institutionally-driven support. Neither the academies nor the research councils are expected to be running national application schemes for small grants: these are to be supported by researchers' own institutions, through QR funding. This applies to all academies and research councils, and is also connected with saving administrative costs: small awards schemes are indeed more expensive to deliver. What all this means is that we had no choice but to agree to phase out progressively our BIS-funded small research grants (SRG) scheme and move this funding into higher levels of support for our various fellowship schemes".

SEMPRES Committee members have no evidence that Universities will find it easy to offer comprehensive small grant schemes, given the many pressures on research QR funding from the Government. The shift in central policy also implies that individuals in less well rated institutions (in terms of the outcomes of the previous Research Assessment Exercise [RAE] and the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework [REF]) may be discriminated against, since they will have proportionately less access to QR funding and so less chance of bidding successfully for any such funds which are allocated via institutions.

The likely consequence could be a significant reduction in the number of small grant awards made across the system by universities, with increased pressure on charities to address the shortfall. SEMPRES has provided awards totaling £146,000 since 2007, but one third of this total (£53,000) have been awarded in 2010 in response to an increasing number of applications for small grants and research travel support from the UK and across the world. If this increase is representative of a major shift across the higher education sector towards such demand, then it is likely to have policy implications for the enactment of SEMPRES's award programme.

This research project is designed to discover and document the potential and actual impact of small grants on the development of the research culture for music (widely defined) and to inform SEMPRES's internal policy development, as well as to provide the sector with evidence in its wider policy debate on research funding.

*The SEMPRES Committee, December 2010*