

New Funding Initiative for Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences

Sharon Witherspoon
Director, Nuffield Foundation



Quantitative Methods Launch

Chris Millward, HEFCE

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Professor Paul Boyle, Chief Executive, ESRC



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The Nuffield Foundation

- Endowed charitable trust, annual spend £11 million
- General objective:

**‘the advancement of social well-being,
particularly by means of scientific
research’**

Main Areas of Activity

- **Social research and social policy**
- **Education**
- **Science** (mainly new capacity and science and maths education)
- **Unusual in linking longer-term capacity-building to our substantive areas of interest**

Context of concern over QM skills

- ESRC demographic review & MacInnes report on QM skills
- ‘Market failure’ to produce QM skills at school (*Is the UK an outlier?* and *Mathematics in A level assessments* reports)
- Quality of applications before us
- Shared sense that emerging problems require more QM (and that different disciplines bring different perspectives to the fore)
- **NOT anti-qualitative: not epistemological statement**

Life course and institutional perspective:

- Low QM **entry skills** among undergraduates in disciplines other than economics or psychology
- Failure of institutions to compete for in-take skills
- Relative lack of stratification between HEIs (in disciplines other than economics and psychology) in QM skills
- Student “choice” in current system and producer interests lead to market failure

Addressing this requires:

- Breaking into cycle at undergraduate level, but over time earlier, wider, deeper changes needed
- Active stimulation of student demand
- Life course and developmental perspective: suite of training needed, not one module
- Embedded in substantive and conceptual problems
- Practical experience (useful for training and career choice)

NEW QM INITIATIVE

- **£15.5 million over 5 years:** experiment to create additional undergraduate training and capacity in QM skills – up to £350k per centre per year
- Nuffield, ESRC and HEFCE funding, so that up to 15 or so centres can be funded across UK.
- Ambition is a step change – in institutional practices, not just creation of a cadre of students over a period

Basic Framework

- **Centre based approach** to yield critical mass
- **Experimental approach:** learning, evaluation and modification of plans
- **Permissive approach:** new ideas welcome
- **Evolutionary approach:** recognise need to gear up (recruitment of students and staff and development of courses, activities)

5-year programme to comprise:

- **Network of QM Centres:**
 - Recruitment and training of students in cumulative fashion
 - New curriculum, training (partly with new staff) to embed Quantitative Methods at undergraduate level
 - Attract students to careers using QM

- **Supporting Programme:**
 - Exchange of ideas between funded centres
 - Dissemination of materials and lessons about improving practice to other HEIs
 - Policy papers and evaluation

Who can apply?

- Department or group of departments engaged in **undergraduate teaching** within a **single** UK HEI
- Consortia of departments across HEIs only in close physical proximity
- Each HEI may submit **only one** application
- Institutions and HEIs that do not provide undergraduate education **cannot** apply directly
 - but can provide work-experience, internships, short courses, be involved in the development of course materials etc.
 - may also be involved with more than one Centre (and in time to wider network).

Centre Co-ordinator:

- Each Centre must have a named Co-ordinator :
 - must hold a permanent post in teaching and/or research in the lead department
 - will be responsible for the application and future implementation and reporting.
 - In the case of multi-department or multi HEI proposals, there must also be a named person responsible within each department, holding a permanent post in teaching and/or research

Eligible Departments

Area studies

Demography

Education

Development studies

Economic and social history

Human geography

Management and business studies

Linguistics

Psychology (but not experimental,
animal)

Political studies and international
relations

Social anthropology

Social policy

Social psychology

Social work

Socio-legal studies

Sociology

In addition: possible contribution
from economics and experimental
psychology to the Centres

What the programme will fund (I)

Each Centre may seek funding for the following *inter alia*:

- **Time for the named co-ordinator** to plan the programme, provide training and supervise student selection
- **Up to 4 new additional FTE posts** to deliver the programme (but programme comes first).
 - Recruitment, salaries and on-costs of the new posts for five years
 - Estates costs or other overheads will **not** be funded
 - Institutional commitment to fund posts for a second 5 year period
- Costs for development of new curricular content or teaching datasets (which may be shared with other funded centres and later more widely)
- Costs for skilled postgrad or postdoc students to supervise data labs or other **additional** training

What the programme will fund (II)

- Course fees and living expenses of students taking summer or other vacation/short courses linked to quantitative training
- Links with HEIs or other institutions for vacation or external short courses, including the time of staff there to develop and teach courses
- Links with organisations that can offer short-term or summer work placements/internships
- Living expenses for internships for summer placements/ work experience at research settings, and staff supervision costs, linked to a clear project or training pathway
- Bursaries for those in fourth year of a 3+1 programme, or possibly for relevant advanced Master's level courses
- Other directly incurred costs related to materials, equipment or infrastructure needed by students

Start up Costs

- Funding for start-up and planning during first 6-months (before activities commence in academic year 2013/14)
- Costs could include *inter alia*:
 - Costs for named co-ordinator's time
 - Advertisement and recruitment of new staff and interested students
 - Travel needed to arrange bursary or internship places
 - Other legitimate costs like costs of bursaries or special course fees for existing undergraduates

What it will not fund:

- Capacity building in **Qualitative** methods
- Existing activities
- Existing staff (including management/admin) other than the named co-ordinator
- QM training aimed mainly at undergraduates in economics or experimental psychology
- Overheads or FEC allocated direct/indirect costs unless listed as eligible above
- Estate costs/overheads for co-ordinator and new posts
- Existing staff undertaking QM skilling-up (though welcome)

Supporting programme

- The Funders to bring together Centres regularly, and create on-line network for communication, i.e. exchange of ideas, discussion of common issues and possible joint initiatives
- May consider other activities that would benefit from cooperation between centres (such as shared access to courses, work placements, career guidance)
- Signal to a wide range of stakeholders that stress on quantitative training is a structural shift
- The Funders will be responsible for a publicity and dissemination programme targeting both policymakers and the wider education community.
- Independent evaluation at the end of the programme

Criterion: **Additionality**

- Likely to have some existing demonstrable base in QM
- Additional teaching resource – up to 4 new funded staff members – means to end to deliver additional learning.
- Additional other inputs
 - Recruitment of students with QM interests or skills
 - New courses, possibly leading to badged degrees
 - Labs, hands on, ‘learning by doing’
 - Bursaries for summer schools, courses elsewhere, placements/ internships

Criterion: Excellent and imaginative

Applicants not expected to have all arrangements/ details completed by time of application, but application must show a clear vision of what might be achieved other than create new teaching posts:

- What sort of courses will they develop? Cumulative? Suite?
- How to ensure that new courses or materials are interesting and exciting to students?
- New holiday courses or bursaries offer for new or existing courses
- Links to workplaces
- Kite-marking and badging of courses, including pipeline to post-graduate work
- Student recruitment strategy

Criterion: Institutional Commitment

Creation of Centres of excellence requires institutional commitment to, and support for, the programme

- New posts funded for 5 years to be supported by institution for at least a further 5 years
- HEIs may wish or need to appoint and fund additional staff
- Indicator of the application's "value for money"
- Other institutional support:
 - Consideration of steps for new course accreditation
 - Steps to develop new recruitment networks / outreach activities
 - Consider broadening QM skills for existing staff
 - Pre-intake activities
 - QM teaching or supervisory body
 - Demonstration that undergraduate QM training is institutional priority

Selection Process (I):

- Two stage application:
 - Written final application
 - Interview of shortlisted applicants
- Final applications
 - Independent peer review by non-UK reviewers
 - QM Social scientists
- Short-listing by selection committee
 - International experts
 - Programme Funders

Selection Process (II)

- Shortlisted applicants may need to:
 - Attend interview by Selection Committee
 - Refine plans prior to award being made
- Funders and Centres to agree monitoring:
 - How to follow progress
 - Mid-term review at 3 years
 - Final report at 5 years
 - Measure outcomes against initial statement of aspirations (not targets)
 - Independent evaluation at end of programme

Timetable

- Competition launched: October 2012
- Applications Due: End February 2013
- Peer review, interviews, selection: March/May 2013
- Planning and set up period
and first joint Meeting: June/July 2013

- First years developmental though some practical steps possible.
*Appreciate that (international) recruitment of staff, student recruitment
and new course/ degrees take time.*
- Appreciate that gearing may take longer than originally planned



www.nuffieldfoundation.org/QM