

**SCOTTISH HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL
STRATEGIC RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT GRANT - FUNDING APPLICATION**

CONTACT DETAILS

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Initial consortium members which are HEIs funded by SHEFC:

- *Edinburgh University Architecture Department: contact Prof. Remo Pedreschi*
- *Heriot-Watt University School of the Built Environment: contact Prof. Peter Aspinall*

Other initial consortium members:

- *Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland: contact Prof. Gordon Murray(President)*

It is intended that the consortium will expand during the feasibility study to incorporate other architectural schools and research institutions of relevance in Scotland, as well as other relevant government, professional and industrial partner organizations. To this end a letter of support is attached also from the:

- *Scottish Executive, Architecture Policy Unit: contact Jim Mitchell*

THE PROPOSAL

Scottish Matrix for Architectural Research and Knowledge (Scot-MARK)

Brief Description of proposed activity/facility:

To undertake a feasibility study for an institutional structure to promote excellence in, and facilitate wider access to, research in architecture in Scotland, thus creating the basis for collaborative pooling of research capacity in key identified policy areas.

Full Description of Proposal:

Scotland has a strong base for architectural research, with six of the thirty-six UK-wide Architects Registration Board (ARB) recognized schools of architecture and a supportive professional association, as well as a national government Policy on Architecture. This has not, however, been well reflected in the last academic research assessment. Two recent studies (Jenkins, Forsyth & Smith 2004a and Jenkins, Forsyth and Smith 2004b) have identified the potential for more collaborative, as opposed to predominantly competitive, activity in research across the Scottish schools, together with other institutions. This is seen as a means to improve the Scottish competitive edge in an increasingly international context for knowledge development and dissemination, as well as providing a national focus for developing research in specific policy-related areas.

The above recent studies have stressed that promoting the breadth of scope, depth of quality and consolidation over time of architectural research in Scotland requires an overview of research at a national level as well more opportunity for interchange between researchers and coordination in development of research skills. These cannot be provided by the architecture research institutions themselves as they inevitably specialize and to a certain extent compete. Some form of institutional structure at a national level is thus needed to promote collaboration in research and research dissemination as well as other research development such as training, thus providing a more able, focused and accessible research resource for the government, architecture profession, construction industry, and communities. This feasibility study will also examine how a stronger base for cross-disciplinary activity in architecture with associated areas of research (e.g. creative and performing arts, digital media, cultural studies etc) can be established.

Objectives of proposal:

Undertake a feasibility study for a national institutional structure to:

1. Provide information on research in architecture to the wider community in Scotland as well as internationally, including facilitating links between research institutions and those which require research outputs, whether in professions, government, industry, or communities.
2. Undertake strategic development of research related skills, and interchange and dissemination mechanisms of relevance to academic and professional institutions involved in architecture research, with guidance from government, professional and industrial bodies.
3. Develop specific research projects focussed initially on key identified national policy targets.

These objectives will be implemented through the following activities.

1 Knowledge transfer

- 1.1 Produce an overview of on-going research in architecture in Scotland and benchmark this nationally, including some form of widely disseminated publication on recent and on-going research projects in architecture, liaising with existing architecture dissemination mechanisms such as the Lighthouse and www.scottisharchitecture.com.
- 1.2 Develop a national conference on architectural research, with a Scottish focus, to showcase actual research and research capacities, and engage with other possible bodies interested in architectural research, benchmarking this nationally and internationally.

2 Research development

- 2.1 Review and prepare proposals for coordinated education and training in architectural research, including promoting the dissemination of Scottish architectural research in a wide range of academic, professional and popular media as well as other related fora.
- 2.2 Provide a "one stop shop" point of entry for those interested in architecture research in Scotland as well as a means of communication across the active research institutions and professional and industrial bodies who may require research.

3 Research implementation

- 3.1 Develop specific proposals for architecture research in conjunction with interested parties, with an initial focus on the key policy area of user engagement in the architectural process (more detail available).
- 3.2 Assess the feasibility for the continued provision of the above services based on demand, with proposals for the on-going resourcing and options for an appropriate institutional structure, and discuss these with the relevant professional, industrial and governmental institutions.

Specific Outputs:

It is proposed that the feasibility study be undertaken between early 2005 and early 2006, with the following measurable outputs (see indicative work schedule for timing of delivery):

1.1 General publications on architectural research to:

- disseminate research across Scotland in widely available media.
- report on conceptual issues through conference and journal papers.

1.2 National Architectural Research Conference

- organise an architecture conference at a Scottish venue with partner HEIs and other contributors (e.g. professional /industrial/ government institutions), based on core SRDG funding, but with costs shared with other relevant institutions and participants.
- prepare a book proposal based on the conference proceedings, showcasing architectural research in Scotland (and the UK), as well as providing the basis for related research methods training.

1.3 Study reports

- Provide a strategic review of research skills training in architecture across Scotland, benchmarked nationally (UK), identifying the need for any specific coordinated or shared training activity (which would be the subject of a subsequent funding application).

- Provide an overview of on-going research in architecture in Scotland, benchmarked nationally (UK) and internationally.
- Provide a feasibility study report for a Scottish architectural research matrix with proposals for the on-going resourcing and options for an appropriate institutional structure.

1.4 Research proposals

- Based on discussion with research institutions and other interested parties, Scot MARK will undertake a study of how users and communities can be more directly involved in the built environment. This area of research is a key national policy area (Scottish Executive 1999, 2000, 2001, Pearce 2003², Edge et al 2003³), and the study will examine methods and options including a) community involvement in the design process and b) post-completion evaluation.

Management arrangements:

The feasibility study will be undertaken by Edinburgh College of Art Architecture School, with engagement of consortium partners through a **Steering Group**. A similar arrangement has been in place since January 2004 for development and implementation of the two studies of Scottish and UK-wide research in architectural schools, funded by the Edinburgh College of Art Research Board. As with these studies, the funds would be managed through the Architectural School finances, with oversight of the Edinburgh College of Art Research Board. This Steering Group would be expanded to include any new consortium members joining throughout the study period, and a similar arrangement to the National Reference Group for these studies will be created for the dissemination and discussion of the outputs of the feasibility study⁴.

INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSAL

A fundamental objective of this proposal is to create an institutional mechanism to transcend institutional boundaries across academic institutions as well as between academic and other research actors and clients, users and beneficiaries of research. Scotland is unique in the UK in having a clear national policy for architecture and needs to build on this in creating more robust research and research management capacity. This potential is arguably currently under-funded through existing research mechanisms, which recent research suggests tend to exclusively promote competitive depth at the expense of collaborative breadth.⁵ The new body (Architecture and Design Scotland) being established by the Executive as part of the Policy to be the national champion for good architecture, design and planning, will also have a need to access relevant 'value' based research studies.

The currently predominant fragmented nature of architecture research, as well as the dispersed structure of the architectural profession and construction industry, can not provide this form of institutional management or coordinated research effort for architecture. As a result the sector is relatively under-researched with a resulting loss of competitive edge. The need for a coordinated research approach has been highlighted in the Policy on Architecture for Scotland, and this proposal thus rises to the challenge of government policy in both research capacity enhancement and knowledge transfer, as well as engaging the wider community in the built environment.

There is no equivalent national institutional structure for architecture research in the UK or in Europe, although national conferences of architecture research (also part of this proposal) and a national Architectural Research Centers Consortium serves this purpose in the United States of America⁶. Part of the institutional analysis of the feasibility study will be bench-marking in more detail any relevant international practice in this regard in order to ensure international competitiveness.

SHEFC has identified that pooling research capacity for a smaller nation such as Scotland can provide strategic benefits in enhancing research competitiveness (SHEFC 2004). The two recent studies in architecture research across Scotland and the UK bear this out (Jenkins, Forsyth and Smith 2004a,b) and identify support for this approach from the main relevant research institutions, which has subsequently also been confirmed with professional and government bodies. The feasibility study will identify the best way for this to be implemented.

Edinburgh College of Art sees itself as a key research institution within the creative industries nationwide in Scotland and the UK, as well as internationally. The initiative it has taken to review architecture research nationwide has been in line with its position of research development in the field of architecture, where it shares close links with both the Architecture Department at Edinburgh University and the School of the Built Environment at Heriot-Watt University. These three institutions represent the breadth and depth of research possible in architecture in one part of Scotland and this feasibility study will permit the consolidation and widening of this resource nation-wide.

As argued in the above mentioned recent studies, and internationally (e.g. Groat & Wang 2002), architecture is essentially cross-disciplinary, although this multidisciplinary cannot be present in all individual research institutions. This is the fundamental reason for a network permitting a national centre of excellence to compete internationally.

LITERATURE REFERENCES

- Groat L & Wang D (2002) **Architectural Research Methods**, John Wiley & Sons
- Jenkins P, Forsyth L & Smith H (2004a) **Balancing three dimensions in architectural research: depth, breadth and length. An institutional analysis of research in architecture in the UK higher education sector: The Scottish Dimension**, Edinburgh College of Art
- Jenkins P, Forsyth L & Smith H (2004b) **Balancing three dimensions in architectural research: depth, breadth and length. An institutional analysis of research in architecture in the UK higher education sector**, Edinburgh College of Art
- Edge M, et al (2003) **Mapping survey of non-technical research on the social value and benefits of good architectural design**, Scottish Executive Education Department Research Programme Research Findings No. 1/2003
- Scottish Executive (1999) **The development of a policy on architecture for Scotland**, Scottish Executive
- Scottish Executive (2000) **The development of a policy on architecture for Scotland. Report on the public consultation**, Scottish Executive
- Scottish Executive (2001) **A policy on architecture for Scotland**, Scottish Executive
- SHEFC (2004) **Enhancing research competitiveness through the pooling of research resources**, Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Circular letter HE/31/04
- Snyder J C (1984) (ed) **Architectural Research**, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co Inc

NOTES

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- ¹ Dr. Paul Jenkins is the principal researcher responsible for detailed development of the SRDG within ECA.
 - ² The Construction Industry Research and Innovation Strategy Panel commissioned Professor Pearce to undertake a study of "The social and economic value of construction" across the UK, benchmarked internationally. One of the recommendations of the report is the need for more customer-centric thinking.
 - ³ Edge et al 2003 undertook a study for the Architecture Policy Unit of the Scottish Executive of the extent and focus of non-technical research on built environment issues carried out in Scotland since 1997, as well as benchmarking this against similar research across the UK and Europe in the same period. The main findings stressed the need for more focussed research in the area of the social value of design and public participation in provision of the built environment.
 - ⁴ This National Reference Group includes representatives of all interviewed architectural schools across Scotland and those sampled for the UK, plus the Steering Group members (which included the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland) and also representatives of the Royal Institute of British Architects, Scottish Executive Architecture Policy Unit and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. The National Reference Group for the proposed feasibility study will be similar, but should include other institutional members such as CABE, Architecture & Design Scotland, as well as industry representatives such as the Construction Industry Research and Innovation Strategy Panel.
 - ⁵ Edinburgh College of Art has funded two inter-related studies of research in schools of architecture across Scotland and the UK, providing a robust comparative information base for this proposal. This has involved dialogue with all Scottish architectural schools and a sample of UK-wide schools, as well as other key professional and government institutions.
 - ⁶ This institution is an organisation of the research units of some thirty schools of architecture in the United States and the Research Division of the American Institute of Architects Foundation (Snyder 1984) – see the website <http://www.asu.edu/caed/arcc/>