

# The British Academy

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Office use only:

## RESEARCH GRANTS

Tel: 020 7969 5217  
Fax: 020 7969 5414  
email: grants@britac.ac.uk

**Confidential**

### 1. Closing date: 15 October 2005

Please delete as appropriate. Please do not use this form after 15 April 2006

### 2. Principal Investigator

Surname	John		
Forename	Peter		
Title (Dr, Professor, etc)	Professor		
Date of birth	11 December 1960		
Male	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Address for correspondence

School of Social Sciences	
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Email	<a href="mailto:Peter.john@manchester.ac.uk">Peter.john@manchester.ac.uk</a>

Present appointment and employing institution

Hallsworth Chair of Governance, University of Manchester
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Brief summary of academic qualifications and career (no more than 3 lines, including principal appointments)

BSc Economics and Politics, Bath, 1983; D. Phil, Oxford, 1992. Appointments at the Policy Studies Institute (1998-92) Keele (1992-95), Southampton (1995-1999), Birkbeck (2000-2004).
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I confirm I am not presently working towards a PhD, nor awaiting the outcome of my viva/submission of corrections. (Please tick)

Other partners are involved in the proposal and I confirm Section 18 is attached (Please tick if relevant)

### 3. Title of project

The Policy Priorities of UK Governments: a Content Analysis of King's and Queen's speeches, 1945-2005
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### 4. Duration of research project

(a) Duration of current proposal (maximum 24 months)	start	<input type="text" value="2 January 2006"/>	end	<input type="text" value="2 January 2007"/>
(b) Duration of entire research project (if different)	start	<input type="text"/>	end	<input type="text"/>

If research is planned for more than two years, do you envisage approaching the Academy for support in future years? Yes  No

### 5. Publications

Please list your principal and/or relevant publications (to a maximum of six)

<i>Analysing Public Policy</i> (Cassell, 1998); <i>Local Governance in Western Europe</i> (Sage, 2001); with H. Margetts (2003), 'Policy punctuations in the UK': fluctuations and equilibria in central government expenditure since 1951', <i>Public Administration</i> , 8: 411-432; John, P. (2003), 'Is there life after policy streams, advocacy coalitions, and punctuations', <i>Policy Studies Journal</i> , 31, 481-498; with H. Ward (2004), 'How competitive is competitive bidding?', <i>Journal of Public Administration Theory and Research</i> , 15: 71-87; with Ward, H. and Dowding, K. (2004) 'The bidding game: competitive funding regimes and the political targeting of urban programme schemes', <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> , 34: 405-428.
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## 6. Scheme of research

Please read note §10 before completing this section

One of the key expectations citizens have of a political system is that the government of the day is able to set out its priorities for the year ahead as a clear statement of intentions or promises, upon which it can be judged by the media, experts and the citizens themselves. Such a statement of policies allows the government to have a clear purpose and for others to know about its intentions so they may act accordingly, such as citizens approving or disapproving of the government and voting in a general election. For scholars, such statements are highly useful for understanding the different stages to the policy process, and for finding out how much the government's agenda reflects the pressures of public opinion and other constraints on policy-making, such as whether they inherit policy priorities, or whether governments are able to shape the agenda, seeking to lead public opinion and to address new policy issues out of choice. Democrats believe that effective government is a balance between responsiveness and leadership (see R. Dahl (1971), *Polyarchy* New Haven: Yale University Press), but just which way the balance tips is not clear. Political scientists have identified that many government decisions, such as on budgets, often do follow changes in public opinion (for example, see B. Page and Shapiro (1983), 'The effects of public opinion on policy', *American Political Science Review*, 77, 175-190). But scholars also know that parties seek to define particular issues and try to seize the policy agenda (e.g. I. Budge and D. Farlie, *Explaining and Predicting Elections* Allen and Unwin). In Britain, the annual statement of legislative intent is the institution of the Queen's (or King's) speech, which is made to Parliament each year at the beginning of the session or shortly after a General Election. This occasion is highly ceremonial, but the speech, which is written by No 10, is a serious list of legislative intentions, with little general or procedural content, and which is closely followed by the media as their guide to the year ahead. But there has been very little academic work seeking to report the content of these speeches over time. This project aims to understand the nature of the setting of executive priorities in the UK, by examining Queen's or King's speeches since 1945, and to understand the origins and consequences of the policy priorities. The objectives of the research are, first, to report the content of the speeches and how they change over time; second, to explain why the content changes, such as whether it is different according to the party in power; third, to find out whether the policy priorities of government match the policy content of party manifestoes and public opinion; and fourth, to find out whether the policy priorities is reflected in the budget priorities of government departments. The methods of the project will be a content analysis of the Queen's and King's speeches from 1945-2005. Two research assistants will apply the Policy Agenda Project code frame to the speeches. The researchers of the Policy Agendas Project ([www.policyagendas.org](http://www.policyagendas.org)) have developed a universal coding system to code the text of public documents according to the functions and activities of government, and it has been applied to the United States of America official publications in the Congressional record (see Jones, B. and Baumgartner, F. (2005), *The Politics of Attention* Chicago: University of Chicago Press). The coders will attribute each line of the speech to one of the main codes and also to one its subcodes (e.g. code 6 education, subcode 604 vocational education). The data will be entered into a spreadsheet where each line of the dataset represents a sentence, a subset of each will be checked by the other coder aiming for in excess of 95 per cent intercoder reliability. This process is highly time-consuming, even with the relatively short speeches, as the Policy Agenda code book is forty pages long and highly complex. With the fifty years of data, the initial analysis will be to examine it for changes over time and whether these relate to key periods, such as a change in party control of central government. The second part of the research will be to input and attach further data to the spreadsheet, such as the policy content of party manifestoes available from the party manifestos project, logged at the University of Essex data archive, and public opinion data on citizens' ascription of the most important policy problem available from King, A. and Wybrow, R. (2001), *British Political Opinion 1937-2000* London: Politicos to see if the executive responds to the content of the manifestos (both Government and Opposition), and whether government respond to changes in public opinion as international evidence would suggest (for example see S. Saroka and C. Wlezien (2005), 'Opinion-policy dynamics: public preferences and public expenditure in the United Kingdom', *British Journal of Political Science*, 35. 665-689). Different kinds of analysis suggest themselves, such as coding policy preferences on a left-right dimension to compare and contrast to manifesto data, or an event history analysis, whereby aspects of the content of the Queen's speeches are predicted by public opinion and other indicators (e.g. economic growth). The final part of the analysis will see if the content of the manifestoes is translated into budget outcomes. Here the researchers will add Blue Book data for central government expenditure since 1945 and then use the more accurate budget data created by Soraka and Wlezien available at the Essex data archive.

### 7. Output

Is the primary product of your research intended to be (please tick one or more as appropriate)

(a) monograph or critical edition

  

(c) creation of a digital resource (see also below)

  

(b) article(s)

(d) other (please specify)

**Digital resource** if the primary product of the research will be a digital resource have you obtained guidance from the AHDS/ESDS on appropriate standards and methods?

Yes

No

### 8. Plans for publication/dissemination

Please describe the proposed output from the research, and outline your plans for publication or other dissemination of the research for which you are seeking an award.

Three papers to be published as articles in journals such as *Political Studies*, *The Journal of Politics*, and *Journal of Public Policy*: one paper on the nature and sources of the public agenda, a second paper on the consequences of the public agenda for budgets, and a third comparing State of the Union addresses with Queen's speeches (see note below on collaborators).

### 9. Other participants

Please give the names, appointments, and institutional affiliation of any other participants (excluding research assistants). Where the total participation is not known at the start of the project, please indicate the numbers and status of people who might become involved.

Professor Bryan Jones and Heather Larsen, director of the Centre for American Politics and Policy, University of Washington, Seattle. Professor Jones is the Director of the centre and Heather Larsen, who also works there, is an expert on State of the Union addresses.

### Role of other participants

Please describe the contribution to the project to be made by other participants, citing any particular specialisms and expertise.

Professor Jones and Heather Larsen are both experts at coding the agendas project, and Professor Jones is one of the creators of the project, being co-author of the *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1993), the classic book on the topic, and now the new statement, *The Politics of Attention* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2005). Heather Larsen is an expert on State of the Union addresses. Both can provide expert advice during the project. The aim is also to write a publication based on comparing the two datasets as examples of different executive-led policy agendas. A preliminary paper is planned for the Midwest Political Science Association Conference, Chicago, in April 2006,

# The British Academy

# Subject areas

Applicants are invited to tick one or more of the sections, and one or more of the individual subject areas listed below. The choice of section and subject will help determine how the application is assessed. The subject areas listed below should not be taken as belonging definitively to any one particular section.

## Section

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classical Antiquity                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern History from c. 1800  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theology and Religious Studies                   | <input type="checkbox"/> History of Art and Music   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African and Oriental Studies                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Linguistics and Philology                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Law  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Modern Languages and Literature to c. 1800 | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics and Economic History   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Languages, Literatures and other media    | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Anthropology and Geography  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology, Demography and Social Statistics  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medieval Studies: History and Literature         | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Modern History to c. 1800                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political Studies: Political Theory, Government and International Relations |

## Subject areas

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African Languages                            | <input type="checkbox"/> History of Art                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Studies                             | <input type="checkbox"/> History of Ideas                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ancient History                              | <input type="checkbox"/> History of Science               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archaeology                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Geography                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business and Management Studies              | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celtic                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Law                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Classical Languages (Greek and Latin)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Library and Information Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cognitive Science                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Linguistics                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications and Media Studies             | <input type="checkbox"/> Medieval History                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comparative Literature                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern History from c. 1800      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Studies                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dance (non-performative)                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Oriental Languages               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demography                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Languages and Literatures  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drama and Theatre Studies (non-performative) | <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Modern History to c. 1800              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political Studies     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economics and Economic History               | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Russian and Slavonic Languages   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Language and Literature              | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Anthropology              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Film Studies                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Socio-legal Studies              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Socio-linguistics                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> German                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic Languages                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Theology and Religious Studies   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)                       |   |