

# UCML Executive Committee

Friday 26 April 2019

12.30 – 16.00

Room C60b/c, InfoLab21  
School of Computing & Communications  
Lancaster University, LA1 4WA



## Item 5 Vice-Chair Research

There are two items to report, one is the release of further REF criteria and the other a meeting of the Arts and Humanities Alliance.

1. On reading the latest REF updates we were a little surprised that for UoA 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics there was still no explicit mention of non-European languages such as Mandarin and Arabic. We responded after all to the autumn consultation recommending that these languages be expressly included. I wrote to Charles Forsdick for clarification and received a detailed response in which he explained that non-European languages could be assessed in UoA 26 and indeed were expected to be included in submissions. For reasons of continuity with REF2014, however, when the sub-panel was formed from the old language sub-panels and non-European languages were expected to be entered under Area Studies, Mandarin and Arabic were not mentioned and this is why there were as yet no experts from these languages on the sub-panel. This does make some sense. There has been an agreement made with Area Studies.  
The other point of interest applies across the sector and to all disciplines, though given the current situation in at least two ML departments deserves special attention from UCML, and concerns the submission of outputs by staff made redundant after the outputs' publication. This is technically going to be possible. I wrote to [info@ref.ac.uk](mailto:info@ref.ac.uk) about this and received (not for the first time!) a completely uninformative answer. Charles Forsdick was rather more forthcoming and explained that institutions would have to account for their actions in the Code of Practice attached to each submission. I have since also learnt from the chair of Panel D Dinah Birch (see below) that HR counts researchers employed on fixed-term contracts attached to projects as redundant at the end of the projects and that such researchers are often needed in submissions or required to be submitted. It is not the fault of the authorities organising the REF if institutions behave dishonourably and try to 'game' the system. The view from REF is that the ruling on redundant staff was legally needed and that it is not REF's fault if universities behave badly.
2. The meeting of the Arts and Humanities Alliance held at UCL on 5 March was the most productive I have attended, though not necessarily for the best of reasons: all subjects now appear to be in a campaigning mode familiar to Modern Linguists. A number of matters were discussed. The UUK subgroup working on Open Access was said to be more aware of the challenges than it was but that we are unsure when guidelines will be issued. Staff at Research England working on OA were reported to be stretched. AHA is very concerned about the future of Erasmus+ (and took great interest in Claire's correspondence) and asked for examples of initiatives and research projects which have grown from the partnerships and exchanges. The academic credentials of the new minister for universities were praised by the rep from the Royal Historical Society (Chris Skidmore is also a member). The BA's Languages in the UK: A Call for Action was circulated in advance but unfortunately not discussed. UCU and the NUS are now both on board when it comes to persuading students to register to vote. Susan Bruce, the co-chair of AHA, was especially proud of this achievement and confessed that she dreamed

of being the woman responsible for stopping Brexit should students register en masse and we have a second vote which overturns the result of the first one. In the afternoon we were addressed by Dinah Birch who explained from the inside how so many apparently small details of procedure and criteria had been decided through lobbying and negotiation.

And finally:

On the subject of the BA report, co-authored by the three other academies, should UCML recommend some action in response? We could take the opportunity of writing to all VC's, perhaps recommending that each HEI appoint a Languages Champion, as the government is either doing or being encouraged to do. Or we could ask each HEI for its Languages strategy. It seems like a chance to make a significant point and attempt to change behaviour which we should take.

Julian Preece  
13 April 2019 [10 March 2019]