

UCML Executive Committee

Friday 26 April 2019

12.30 – 16.00

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



Item 10c – Germanic & Low Countries studies report

[ALCS](#) (Association for Low Countries Studies) will hold its 2019 conference, ‘Worlding the Low Countries’ from 6-8 November at University College London. ALCS reports that Dutch is being removed from the University of Nottingham academic curriculum and that the final cohort will graduate in 2020. This leaves [UCL](#) and [Sheffield](#) as the only two HEI providers in the UK (click on these links to learn about the exciting range of events in Dutch Studies offered by both institutions in recent months). ALCS is working on a ‘first action plan’ with the Dutch Language Union and is very keen to hear campaigning ideas from fellow language associations and from colleagues in MFL.

UCML is reminded of the substantial ALCS co-authored study, itemised in my previous report (‘The State of Dutch Studies in the UK and Ireland: A Study into the Provision of Dutch Language and Culture Teaching in Higher Education, 2017-2018’ (June 2018). It is still available [here](#).

[AGS](#) (Association for German Studies in Great Britain and Ireland) will hold its annual conference at the University of Bristol, 4-6 September 2019 (lead panel this year is on the theme of ‘citizenship’). AGS has broadened its traditional research remit to include standing panels at the annual conference devoted to schools outreach. This also includes the work of the eleven Regional Networks (these grew out of the [Think German campaign](#)).

WIGS (Women in German Studies), held a very successful 30th-anniversary conference at the University of Aston in 2018. The event always includes a postgraduate/ ECR workshop. The 2019 conference will take place at University College, Dublin 8-9 November and its call for papers is [open until 11 May](#). There are a number of new postholders on the WIGS committee, and the new Chair of WIGS is Prof Ingrid Sharp of the University of Leeds.

UCML is already apprised of the **cuts to the Language programmes** at the University of Hull and the threatened staffing cuts at the University of Reading. German is, of course, just one of the languages that will be impacted by these cuts. Germanists have taken note and responded to **media reporting** in recent weeks covering the drop in language-learning at GCSE (‘Foreign language learning is at its lowest level in UK secondary schools since the turn of the millennium, with German and French falling the most’).¹ Equally, the ‘better’

¹ Branwen Jeffreys, ‘Language Learning: German and French Drop by Half in UK Schools’, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47334374>, 27 February 2019.

news that ‘German overtakes French as the language most sought-after by employers’² received varying responses and was reacted to with nuanced replies. *Schadenfreude* is not called for, and the community of UK Germanists is as aware as any language community or organisation that more linguists of all languages are needed, for general societal and cultural benefit but also to meet the very real needs of UK industry and commerce.

The Heads of German meeting, or ‘**HoGmeet**’ will take place this year on 20 May at the IMLR, Senate House, London. The agenda incorporates short updates from UCML as well as from the DAAD, the German Embassy, Goethe Institute, AGS, WIGS, and IMLR. Co-convened by myself and Prof Margaret Littler (Manchester; and Chair of AGS), the meeting *optimistically* hopes to discuss any updates on matters such as REF, TEF, Augar Report...

Allyson Fiddler, UCML, Germanic and Low Countries, 14/4/2019

² Alan Jones, ‘German Overtakes French as the Language Most Sought-After by Employers’, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/top-language-skills-german-french-english-brexit-a8861971.html>, n.d.