

# UCML Winter Plenary 2020

Friday 17 January 2020 10.00–16.00

The Reading Room, British Academy,  
10–11 Carlton House Terrace,  
London SW1Y 5AH



## Business Meeting

All pre-meeting reports referred to below can be found on the UCML website at <https://university-council-modern-languages.org/2019/12/06/ucml-winter-plenary-2020-early-career-academics-in-modern-languages-support-development-and-career-progression/>

## MINUTES

### Initials: see Attendance list at end

### Other acronyms:

APPG	All-Party Parliamentary Group (on languages)
BA	British Academy
BA-NLS	British Academy National Languages Strategy
BC	British Council
GA	Gender Action
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
IB	International Baccalaureate
IMLR	Institute of Modern Languages Research
ML	languages
OWRI	AHRC Open World Research Initiative
RiL	Routes into Languages
SIG	Special Interest Group
UCAS	Universities & Colleges Admission Service

### 1. Welcome

### 2. Apologies for absence (Exec members only)

Apologies had been received from: Caroline Campbell, Ana de Medeiros, Alex Ding, Mustapha el Lahlali, Allyson Fiddler, René Koglbauer, Par Kumaraswami, Begoña Rodríguez, Frances Weightman.

### 3. Minutes of last meetings

#### 3.a UCML Executive meeting of 8 November 2019

- *Accuracy & approval*

The following corrections were noted:

- 6.ii with HA → with GA
- 9.a heading should be inset
- 11.iv contacts → contracts

- *Matters arising not otherwise in the Agenda*

The following Action points were updated:

- 2.b 10.I: One SIG application had been received, from AMLUK/IMLR; this will be discussed at the Exec meeting in April 2020.
- 2.d 3.iv: Severe grading: this is covered in Chair's Report.
- 4.iii UCAS granularity project: UCML has purchased UCAS data and will analyse it to identify patterns. The BA will be a collaborative partner. The final report will produce a more granular pattern of languages in HE, including degrees which do not have languages in the title.
- 5.ii JD has spoken to Susan Hodgett, Chair of sub-panel 25 Area Studies. They cover all languages in which they expect to receive submissions.
- 6.iii Gender Action: UCML is fully involved in this project, with AdM co-founding it. As AdM is standing down from UCML, CG will find a replacement (probably VW or RK); **Action: CG.**
- 15.i Website: the new website (<https://university-council-modern-languages.org/>) is now in UCML control, and a style guide has been created so that colleagues can upload information themselves. Many thanks to CSJE!
- 15.ii CSJE is stepping down from Admin Assistant role. A new role profile has been created and will be advertised shortly. The role will now include RiL admin. **Action: CG**
- 13 UCML small grants scheme: 15 applications were received in the first round, 8 in the second. We are hoping to partner with other bodies, to offer more.

### 3.b UCML Plenary AGM of 5 July 2019

- *Accuracy & approval*

No corrections noted.

- *Matters arising not otherwise in the Agenda*

- 3.iv Severe grading: CG was to invite Ofqual to attend today's Plenary; this has been postponed as discussions with Ofqual are continuing.
- 4.v Language trends: CG was to invite colleagues from British Council to a 'future AGM': the upcoming July plenary Workshop will centre on Education and BC colleagues will be included; **Action: CG.**

## 4. Reports from UCML Steering Group

### 4.a Chair

*CG amplified her report.*

- 4.a.i *Severe grading:* Schools, policy makers and UCML are all a part of this discussion - having a united voice is helping to keep momentum in the process. A small group has been convened by UK government to review the content of the MFL GCSEs, but the recommendations may be on grammar and phonics rather than course structure and assessment, so there may still be more work to do.
- 4.a.ii *Routes into Languages:* the idea is for RiL to gain funding outside UCML; it will be supported but not funded by UCML.
- 4.a.iii *Recruitment:* CG and OGC have had meetings with English departments, who are undergoing same difficulties as ML. Colleagues encouraged to contact colleagues in English departments for shared action and discussion; **Action: all.**

### 4.b Vice-chair Languages & intercultural education

*VW amplified her report.*

- 4.b.i The picture is not generally positive, but other arts disciplines are also undergoing drops in recruitment. England has experienced an increase in GCSE uptake for MFL. In Wales the uptake has dropped. When looking at data, it is interesting to note that while Spanish is on the increase at GCSE/A level, it is declining at university.

- 4.b.ii A general discussion ensued. EE suggested it could be useful to divide English into Language and Literature, which would highlight that the drop is occurring mainly in English Language. HO: entry tariffs may be influencing acceptance rates. VW: applications are around 5:1 which is standard. OGC: tariffs are a very important aspect to unpick the data. It was agreed that severe grading also affects this: harsher marking makes it more difficult to meet rising entry requirements at HE. Despite Brexit, languages are needed more than ever in light of increasing international trade etc. It was recalled that (see the recent HEPI report on ML: [https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HEPI\\_A-Languages-Crisis\\_Report-123-FINAL.pdf](https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HEPI_A-Languages-Crisis_Report-123-FINAL.pdf)) part of the problem dated from 2004 when languages ceased being compulsory at GCSE in England; could this be reversed? It was felt that would be expensive & not entirely desirable: VW noted that teachers are sometimes wary of making all students take languages regardless of academic ability – *see also §5b below*: problems of timetabling & mixed ability groupings. Other issues raised: teaching languages as vocational qualifications as well as GCSE would allow the subject to be more accessible to more students; follow-through from primary to secondary can be a hitch. CG: Ofqual is aware of this issue, but they are not focussed on non-GCSE qualifications; in Wales the picture could be more positive for the new curriculum coming in in 2022.

#### **4.c Vice-chair Research**

*JD supplied & amplified her report.*

- 4.c.i Her remit will be to focus on Early Career Research, and precarity in academia. It is important for colleagues and for the health of UCML to have a range of voices and diversity within UCML. We need to promote as well as listen to younger/newer colleagues and be aware of the challenges they are facing. Over 49% of academic work in the UK is done under part time/temporary contracts. This was the subject of this afternoon's Workshop.
- 4.c.ii *REF*: Details of panel membership and additional readers are now online for the Area Studies and Modern Languages panels. Useful way to identify who will be reading outputs in your research area. DH: the Chinese studies community has raised the problem that it can be difficult to build up evidence for the REF when data is collected in distant countries like China. JD is aware of the fact that it may be easier to achieve standards in some places than others. **Action: JD** to raise with the Chairs of the relevant REF sub-panels.
- 4.c.iii JD also wants to develop links with the research reps of member Subject Associations, so would value contacts; **Action: all** members of Subject Associations to help her liaise.
- 4.c.iv The Research section of the new website is to be redesigned & new content added as it is currently quite out of date.

#### **4.d Vice-chair External engagement & communications**

*In AdM's absence her report was briefly discussed.*

- 4.d.i Followers on twitter and Facebook have increased well over the last 3-4 years, especially recently.
- 4.d.ii Ana was warmly thanked for her excellent work in UCML over the past years.

#### **4.e Hon. Secretary**

*NS amplified her report.*

- 4.e.i NS welcomed new Exec colleagues and invited applications for her and AdM's roles. The Call for nominations is on the website: closing date 6 February. We are also recruiting a new Admin Assistant, so applications welcome for this; the Call will go out at the end of January.
- 4.e.ii NS was warmly thanked for her many years of work for UCML.

#### **4.f Hon. Treasurer**

*OGC amplified her report & end-year financial report.*

- 4.f.i *Income:* She and CSJE have been proactive in bringing in subscriptions. HEIs: a few have discontinued but not many. Subject associations: we should get into better communication with subject associations as members and partners. OGC encouraged those present to promote UCML among colleagues.
- 4.f.ii *Expenditure:* We are operating at a loss this year although this will be mitigated by BA's payment for UCAS data. We are able to be more ambitious now. UCML has a pot of money which we are putting to good use, enhancing the benefits of UCML membership. We are spending on the website and offering funding to the devolved nations/jurisdictions; the Small Grants fund has proved very successful. Cost of meetings: CG: we are now rotating our committee meetings, to have them outside London - we are a UK-wide organisation and this should be reflected in our venues.
- 4.f.iii OGC requested approval to spend money once the business card is authorised (in CG and OGC's names): this was approved *nem con*.

## 5. National reports

### Northern Ireland

*SB amplified her report.*

- 5.a.i The NI Assembly is now again in place so policy work can recommence.
- 5.a.ii CDo: There is a proposal for two language commissioners to be appointed in NI as part of the restoration of the devolved administration: what might this mean for languages in NI? SBo: It is very early to say, interesting that there are two commissioners now (one for Irish and one for Ulster-Scots), and languages increasingly form part of a regional conversation about identity.

### 5.b Scotland

*JC amplified his report (& digest on Scottish Highers stats).*

- 5.b.i The stats give rise to concern. The number of A grades which students are achieving is declining, with Spanish the only increase. Many pupils in Scotland just take Highers and not Advanced Highers, especially in languages; thus there is a large cohort drop between these two exams. The aim is for teachers to encourage students to take the Advanced Higher before going to university, which gives them the best chance at university. There is a perception among Scottish teachers that you are advantaged by doing Highers in two languages rather than Advanced Higher in one. Timetabling is also a barrier, & students from up to three different streams (National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher) may be placed in the same class. In Scotland it is not uncommon, e.g. in rural schools as there are smaller numbers of pupils, so teachers are more used to it. However it is still not beneficial for students.
- 5.b.ii On a more positive note, after 8 years of work, MLs are gaining traction in primary schools and university academics are visiting schools to help the 1+2 languages policy.
- 5.b.iii 3-7 Feb is Languages Week Scotland. It will be launched in the Scottish parliament & will involve activities in schools, plus universities will show and tell what they are doing in that week. **Action: all colleagues** to promote by tweeting the hashtag #ScotlandLovesLanguages.
- 5.b.iv SB: When NI ran the ambassadors' scheme the multi-stream classrooms were also happening. Could it be happening in Wales and England too? **Action: SB** to ask the BC to put this in one of their questions for the Language Trends Northern Ireland.

### 5.c Wales

*LWO amplified her report.*

- 5.c.i *Secondary:* There is a decrease in GCSE and A-level uptake in Wales. There is currently a curriculum review in process. There are opportunities here for more joined-up thinking on how we deliver MLs as part of a broader literacy framework.
- 5.c.ii *Primary:* There is an impetus for primary schools to deliver languages other than Welsh. Primary schools are enthusiastic about this, but unsure how they will deliver. Routes into Languages Cymru is leading with this with a Language Pack full of resources to help teachers, as well as a pedagogical guide to help deliver. CG: There will be a renewed Global Futures programme for languages for two further years. The hope and expectation is that it will continue with a cross-curricular approach.

## 6. Other UCML activities

### 6.a National Languages Strategy

- 6.a.i *General:* BK updated the meeting. The BA is in the final sign-off phase of the report. We expect a cabinet reshuffle in February and budget on 11 March, so that is when they are hoping to publish it. They aim to build cross party support for the NLS. Having learned from the previous LS (2001-2010) they will now take a UK-wide approach. Also including MLs in FE: 39% of students go to university – many others go to FE.
- 6.a.ii *Discussion:*
- CG: BA is one of five organisations who are contributing to the NLS: it is cross-disciplinary and cross-institution. BK: AHRC, ACSL and Universities UK and British Council. NS: Are the other Academies going to be involved? BK: they were signatories for the 'Call for Action' and support our policy work on languages but are not closely involved with the LS.
  - LWO: say more about the inclusion of primary education. BK: the discussion is ongoing – there are sometimes conflicting views on specific pedagogies of languages in primary school: we are trying to build a consensus.
  - Q: Were AHRC initiatives *Translating Cultures* and the *OWRIs* involved? BK: Charles Forsdick and Janice Carruthers (both AHRC) have contributed.
  - JC: Have teachers in Scotland been consulted? BK: the report covers all parts of the UK at secondary level; at primary there was a differing degree of involvement of the home nations . JC: In Scotland, two MLs are learned in primary school (at Primary 1 then Primary 5), but this presents some complex problems, eg. with primary teachers not being linguists. CG: colleagues from Scotland have been involved: it is an all-nations report. Janice Carruthers is very well informed on this as she is in NI.

### 6.b *Erasmus+* statement

*A draft statement from UCML had been pre-circulated.*

- 6.b.i *Statement:* The steering Group has drafted a letter for colleagues to send to their MP, and it can be used as a lobbying tool. Feedback and comments are welcome. It will be publicised on UCML social media and website. JD suggested also sharing with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Modern Languages, chaired by Baroness Coussins. The APPG has now re-formed following the General Election.
- 6.b.ii *Parameters:* JC: Important to underline that MLs are not just for the 'liberal elite'. CG: it's very clear in the letter that this is about primary, vocational etc. JC: it's also for disability groups, community groups, football groups etc. CG: important to support those groupings.
- 6.b.iii *Dissemination:* Comment: Could we formally send to the prime minister with a list of signatures. **Action: CG** to send to Prime Minister and Devolved Ministers on UCML headed paper, requesting a response. LWO: Could we publish in the Guardian? CG: I have done an interview with the Guardian so it should appear in there.
- 6.b.iv *Substitute status:* Q: Can non-EU countries participate in Erasmus+? CG: We want to participate as a full member, not as associate member like other non-EU countries. This is a gold standard that students, groups, communities deserve.

## 7. Any Other Business

- 7.i DH pointed out that Cambridge assessment are stopping their Pre-U qualification in Chinese. This is very negative, as the Pre-U paper is better for non-native speakers of Chinese. He has been discussing with colleagues and they have produced a letter. CG has agreed to lobby the exam board about the danger of the move: it will mean losing a cohort of non-native speakers. In the light of the successful Mandarin Excellence initiative, this is a real setback.  
**Action: CG** to circulate draft letter to DH for comment and UCML will send.
- 7.ii There is a conference in Durham: *Modern Languages: Where are we now*. All are invited: 20–22 April – see <https://www.dur.ac.uk/mlac/research/conf2020/>.

### ATTENDANCE LIST (55)

surname	first	initials	member organisation
Archer	Leona	LA	Surrey
Arens	Sarah	SA	St Andrews
Baffelli	Erica	EB	Manchester/BAJS
Black	Sharon	SB	UEA/speaker
Blake	Sally	SBI	Cardiff/speaker
Boubakir	Yasmine	YB	Lancaster
Boulanger	Dorothée	DB	ABIL
Bowskill	Sarah	SB	QUB/Exec
Burdett	Charles	CB	Durham
Carlisle	Ann	AC	CIoL
Carson	Joe	JC	St Andrews/Exec
Cazzoli	Marcela	MC	Durham
Choi	On Hee	OHC	Bristol
Cotgrove	Louis	LC	AGS
Davies	Catherine	CD	IMLR
Díaz-Vicedo	Noèlia	NDV	QMUL
Doak	Connor	CDo	Bristol/Exec
Drugan	Joanna	JD	UEA/Exec
Eppler	Eva	EE	LAGB
Faloppa	Federico	FF	Reading/Exec
Finch-Race	Daniel	DFR	Bristol/SDN/speaker
Ford	Joe	JF	IMLR
Gant	Mark	MG	Chester
Gomez-Cash	Olga	OGC	Lancaster/Exec
Gorrara	Claire	CG	Cardiff/Exec
Grindulis	Josie	JG	Cardiff/speaker
Hammond	Charlotte	CH	Cardiff/speaker
Hicks	Jeremy	JH	QMUL
Hird	Derek	DH	Lancaster/Exec
James	Katie	KJ	DAAD
Joyce	Paul	PJ	Portsmouth
Kim	Young	YK	Bristol
Kolata	Paulina	PK	Manchester
Kulka	Ben	BK	BA
Labeau	Emmanuelle	EL	Aston/Exec
Loxham	Abi	AL	AHGBI
Marquez Reiter	Rosina	RMR	OU
Montoro	Carlos	CM	OU/speaker

<b>surname</b>	<b>first</b>	<b>initials</b>	<b>member organisation</b>
Orlov	Mike	MO	NRPSI
Owen	Hilary	HO	Manchester/Exec
Park	Simon	SP	Oxford/speaker
Polisca	Elena	EP	Lancaster
Segal	Naomi	NS	Birkbeck/Exec
St John Eve	Claire	CSJE	Exec
Sulis	Gigliola	GS	Leeds/Exec
Sutton-Maddocks	Julia	JSM	Bristol
Thornborough	Joanna	JT	BA
Vanhove	Pieter	PV	Lancaster
Walker	Rebecca	RW	St Andrews
Wang	Chuyi	CW	Reading
Wells	Naomi	NW	IMLR
Wharton	Steve	SW	Bath/ASMCF
Wren-Owens	Liz	LWO	Cardiff/Exec
Wright	Vicky	VW	Soton/Exec
Xenophontos	Panayiotis	PX	Oxford/BASEES