

## Item 6: VC Engagement & External Communication Report

I took over as Vice-Chair Engagement and External Communication at the end of March 2020. Many thanks are due to Dr Ana de Medeiros for her kindness and support in ensuring a full handover at King's, London, in what was to be my very last trip before lockdown. I am indebted to the steering group for their warm welcome, and their support as I took on my role under some of the most challenging circumstances for our discipline. We have been very active on social media over the last couple of months, and especially as a direct result of the pandemic. Our twitter following has increased to well over 4000, and our Facebook page now has around 2100 likes. This is largely as a result of some very active campaigning on behalf of the British Council over the last couple of months.

1. *National representation and/or support*

**British Council:** When we heard that the British Council was facing serious financial difficulties as a result of the closure of their schools during the covid-19 pandemic, we responded by composing a letter on behalf of UCML which was sent to Dominic Raab, to the APPG on Modern Languages, to representatives of the devolved governments and widely across our academic and other networks. We organised meetings with PCS, the union which acts on behalf of the British Council, as well as with representatives from the British Council itself to coordinate our campaigns and to help in any way we could. We launched the very popular hashtag *#whatthebritishcouncilhasdone* on the value of the language assistantships programme and other aspects of the British Council's work in the UK and abroad which gained considerable traction. Longer stories were curated on our Facebook page and by James on the website. Along with Claire and James, we gave media interviews and received coverage for our campaign in *The Independent*, the *Politico* website and the *THE*. Following further meetings with the BC, we launched a second phase of the UCML campaign to look at the British Council's work in the UK and globally and put the focus firmly on the work that the BC does for underprivileged groups.

2. **Virtual Year Abroad:** Following the creation of a *special interest group* for UCML, we are working in collaboration with ML sector leads (47 of 64 HEIs), providing framework principles for virtual mobility and development of a curated portfolio of resources. We have spoken with QAA and UUKi and are gathering further information on behalf of the sector. Claire, Emma, and James have joined discussions with Jonathan Long (Durham), following Helen Abbott's departure from the SIG.

3. **SHAPE:** On 15<sup>th</sup> June, on behalf of Claire, I attended the Strategic Forum for Humanities which UCML has been invited to join, chaired by Professor Aditi Lahiri, VP for Humanities at the British Academy, and attended by a wide range of scholarly organisations representing the Humanities, including the Arts and Humanities Alliance, the Leverhulme Trust, the AHRC and Research England. One of the matters for discussion was the new branding of the Arts

and Humanities: SHAPE (Social Sciences, Humanities & Arts for the People and the Economy), a new collective name for those subjects that help us understand the world and make it work better. The British Academy is working with the AHRC, Arts Council, ESRC, ACSS, UKRI and other stakeholders to boost support for the arts, humanities and social sciences among the public and decision-makers. It seeks to do so by a) identifying the common threads between the vast range of disciplines covered by the subjects to develop clear, consistent messages about their value and then b) developing an inclusive coalition to adopt this messaging, generating momentum for this with a campaign backed by a creative concept and visual identity. The British Academy notes that, 'It is important to note that the campaign for SHAPE is not intended to be pitched against STEM; rather, it is about showing the intrinsic value of our subjects and highlighting that the place where STEM and SHAPE meet (i.e. in the creative industries) will be and is a place of tremendous value.' We have taken the campaign to raise the profile of SHAPE to social media and have engaged with a number of stakeholders in this area.

Emma Cayley, July 2020.