

UCML Executive Committee

Friday 12 November 2021 2-4pm

Via MS Teams



Item 10d: Hispanic Studies

This report is based on ongoing discussion in the discipline and on updates from representatives of professional associations in Hispanic Studies. Updates were received from AHGBI and SLAS and well as from individual colleagues working in Hispanic Studies.

- There is continued difficulty for **PGR students** in doing fieldwork/coping with the disruption to fieldwork and there are questions about what this will mean for that generation of students. The disruption also meant that it's been harder for PGRs to build their social/work networks, which could have repercussions as they move into the ECR stage.
- The loss of **ODA funding** has continued to be an issue.
- The **Turning Exchanges** are not a good replacement for Erasmus and the short-term nature of the arrangements makes planning hard and makes it difficult to maintain meaningful exchanges with Europe.
- Several colleagues have mentioned that their university's interpretation of **tax law** has made hiring researchers or postdocs based in Latin America, but paid in the UK, difficult. Also, research trips of over 6 months for staff/students are also now raising tax issues. It's not clear if this is because of a change to HMRC regulations or because of how universities are interpreting guidance. All of these issues taken together make international work much harder.
- Area studies, and Latin American Studies as a subset of area studies, is permanently under pressure. The old **centres of Latin American Studies** set up in the 60s have been largely dismantled, with the Institute for Latin American Studies at SAS being downgraded to a (really very small) centre (that still manages to be very active) located at the IMLR over the course of the last year.
- **Recruitment** to UG programmes with Spanish is still strong across the sector but as part of a JH combination rather than SH. Portuguese is struggling a lot more nowadays. It increasingly only exists as a JH combination with Spanish and numbers here are also dropping. This will impact on the existence of programmes that include Latin American Studies.
- **University of Sheffield:** A top-down management driven Languages Change Programme was introduced last year without the support of the School of Languages and Cultures and with

virtually no input from Modern Languages specialists. Phase 1 saw the removal of all language teaching from the School and its transfer to a separate Languages for All unit, where specialist students are taught alongside non-specialists and there is no linkage between language and content. The remaining staff in the School are now subject to a Phase 2 of the review with outcomes as yet unknown. Two further phases are also planned.

- **Early Career Academics:** AHGBI will be looking to strengthen their work in that area in terms of support, guidance and a broader analysis of the sector
- Communication and **links with other associations and bodies** representing ML is a priority for AHGBI, who want to continue and to consolidate the work they can be part of and contribute to across the sector
- There are key issues about the health of the sector in the ongoing **aftermath of the Covid-19** pandemic. AHGBI are discussing what can we do as a sector to protect our discipline, locally and nationally and as part of wider advocacy networks.
- From a broader point of view, and thinking of the work of Language Acts and Worldmaking, a major issue is how the discipline manages in the context of the seemingly inevitable decline of **students coming through traditional routes**. A lot of work has been done in this area, but there are specific questions about how we maintain and strengthen HE programmes without a) ML uptake in schools and b) our adding inadvertently to the damage in schools through the (necessary) increase in ab initio

Dr Nicola Bermingham
9 November 2021