UCML Executive Committee

Friday 12 November 2021 2-4pm

Via MS Teams

Item 10o: Early Career Academics Special Interest Group

1.   Mentoring scheme

The ECA Support Network continues to host the Mentoring Scheme. In August-September 2021, the ECA Support Network ran applications for the second round of the year-long mentoring scheme; after receiving 7 applications in 2020, this time we received 24 applications, of whom 22 are now paired with mentors until September 2022 (the remaining two being ineligible). There were no applicants at all from Hispanic studies. In terms of mentors, we had just enough mentors to supply the demand for the year-long scheme this year, with almost nobody who is prepared to mentor for this scheme remaining unpaired with a mentee.

IMPORTANT: It would be very desirable to build our list of mentors further, especially in all areas of German, Italian, and linguistics, and most areas of French studies (though we are fairly well provisioned in contemporary/post-colonial specialisms).

The one-off requests scheme has been called upon less than anticipated - before setting up the schemes, this was the element which most people remarked positively upon as being particularly useful, but take-up has been minimal since around April 2021.

Noted in feedback from mentors was the lack of training for supporting ECAs through anxiety and mental-health challenges posed by early-career academia. We are addressing this by developing an informal training scheme.

2.   Resource Kit for ECAs

We are developing a centralised space on UCML website for ML resource sharing on job applications, grants, and book proposals etc. This has begun with an update of the ECA SIG members area with details of current members. Last year the SIG ran a symposium to support Early-Career Academics, the recordings of which are now online: https://university-council-modern-languages.org/2021/06/15/ucml-symposium-for-early-career-academics-in-modern-languages/

3.   ECA Survey & Code of Practice

The co-chairs are working on a Code of Practice to be shared among UCML HE members which will adopt its principles, modelled on the Vitae career development framework. Including a definition of scholarship, parity of access to research training/support, training for health & safety issues, and standard of training for PGRs, the ECA Code of Practice will consider both REF and TEF implications.

Actions:
•   **IMPORTANT**: A survey underpinning the development of the Code of Practice is being aimed at two distinct groups: ECAs and permanent staff members in MFL. The questions have now been finalised and we are in the process of putting the survey together for distribution in the coming weeks. The ECA team plans to send surveys to ECA & PGRs and established academic staff

communities to gather data on the impact of short-term, fixed-contract placements and turnover. The framework for this should be completed before the end of the year 2021. The survey would benefit from media interest and the ECA team would appreciate guidance/support on that. The Survey questions are currently available for comment on the ECA SIG Google Drive: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ssUS4FPnftHfuJSRgmxSHbj8WFfGcMs5/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109290600555977171664&rtpof=true&sd=true

4. Social Media

The ECA SIG now has its own Twitter account @UCML_ECA, currently run by Hilary Potter, Dominique Carlini Versini, Caroline Laurent, and Liam Lewis.

Actions:
• We are in the process of preparing a social media protocol/strategy, with some training on the subject. Women in German Studies have recently written a social media strategy and have stated they are happy to share it with us via Hilary Potter as a working basis for our own strategy.

5. UCML Postgraduate Bursary Proposal feedback

The ECA SIG discussed the UCML Postgraduate Bursary Proposal for recent PhDs, which was received very positively as a way of introducing postgraduates to bursaries. We raised a number of points to help develop the proposal:

1. Is the length of time appropriate? A year may be better than 6 months as candidates will be focused on their viva and possible thesis revisions.
2. Using the bursary to have time to develop a publication would also be useful for prospective candidates, as well as public engagement opportunities, which may be harder without an institutional affiliation.
3. The application could be linked to a UCML mentor (possibly organised through the ECA SIG mentoring scheme).
4. An example proposal would be useful to encourage ECAs who have never applied for funding before.
5. It was noted that UCML has small grants for ECAs (although not for maintenance costs), but which could be advertised more specifically to ECAs, who may feel that they are not eligible. Could a UCML ECA hardship scheme be a relevant idea to pursue?

6. Events

The ECA SIG organised a symposium in July 2021 to support ECAs in Modern Languages. We are planning a series of events over the academic year 2021-22 including:

• Workshop on 'Understanding the REF' (December 2021).
• Workshop on 'Peer-reviewing an article/a book' (January 2022).
• Workshop on 'Applying for postdoc and grants over 4 years post-PhD' (tbc).
• Coffee mornings with guests are run throughout the year, with occasional guest speakers for informal discussion. The first guest speaker is Emma Cayley. If UCML Executive members wish to join the coffee mornings as a guest speaker, please email Liam and let us know.
• Half-day research events focused on new research in specific language areas are to be introduced this year.

Updates

British Academy Early-Career Researchers Network

The UCML ECA SIG co-chairs and UCML ECA Rep met with the developers of the British Academy ECR network to discuss ideas of how we could link our work with this new network. The BA network is going to be trialled over the next year in certain strategic areas. We have proposed collaborations on some training events, but also emphasised how and why we differ. We have also suggested an email network for people involved in early career networks and learned societies to collaborate/share ideas and ask questions of one another. We have received an acknowledgement and thanks from the BA ECR team (on 02.11.2021) confirming our feedback and suggestions have been passed on to colleagues for consideration.

Collaborations with other networks

The ECA team is also looking at individual collaborations with other learned societies where there are mutual interests. A joint workshop on peer-review training is proposed with the Women in German Studies ECA/PGR network, provisionally to be held in January 2022 (date tbc).

Decolonisation Workshop

IMPORTANT: Following some advice from our UCML liaison, plans are underway to develop our work in decolonisation, in order to see how we can reach out to our diverse communities and develop mentoring and support networks/workshops in this area. Any expressions of interest from UCML Executive members to support this work, or help with ideas, are welcome.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

The UCML ECA SIG is a space for all our members to share their ideas, interests and experiences. Membership of the SIG is purely voluntary. As UCML ECA rep, Liam is keen to sustain equal and diverse representation of the ECA community among the ECA SIG. He is currently developing ideas for this and welcomes the support of UCML colleagues. If members have ideas of initiatives they wish to explore to enhance the group's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, please email Liam.

If you would like to get in touch, please email me at liam.lewis@liverpool.ac.uk

Liam Lewis
8th November 2021