

UCML business meeting

Friday 14 January 2022, 10am-12pm



Item 4d: Early Career Academics Representative

Initiatives

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.

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.

A survey underpinning the development of the Code of Practice was agreed by the UCML Executive at the November 2021 Business Meeting, and has been sent to ECAs and permanent staff members in MFL.

The survey was completed by 192 participants in total covering a range of languages as well as language and literature/history/translation combinations. The ECA group is in the process of analysing the data and will seek executive support in speaking to the media about our findings in the first instance and refining the Code of Practice and reasons to adopt it in the second instance. We will need advice going forwards on garnering interest in the Code of Practice.

4. Social Media

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

6. Events

The ECA SIG will run a series of workshops this academic year to support ECAs, the first of which took place on 15 December, on the topic “Understanding the REF”. The workshop was well attended (about 20 participants), and received positive feedback. The video and PowerPoint presentation will be made available on the UCML website. The ECA SIG would like to thank UCML for its generous financial support of the event.

The ECA SIG will be launching a seminar series to promote new research in all the languages represented in the group. The first event of the series will be devoted to French and Francophone studies and will be co-organised by Dominique Carlini Versini, Ashley Harris and Liam Lewis.

The ECA SIG will carry on hosting its coffee mornings this term. Our warmest thanks to Emma Cayley, who kindly shared her experience with us during our first coffee morning last term; and to our next guest, Liz Wren-Owens.

We are planning a series of events over the academic year 2021-22 including:

- Workshop on ‘Peer-reviewing an article/a book’, in collaboration with Women in German Studies / WIGS (tbc 2022).
- Workshop on ‘Applying for postdoc and grants over 4 years post-PhD’ (tbc).
- Half-day research events focused on new research in specific language areas are to be introduced this year.

Updates

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

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
7th January 2022