

UCML Executive Committee

Friday 29th April 2022 10am-12pm

Via MS Teams



Item 3: Chair's Report

1. UCML appointments and departures:

We appointed **Mary Newman** to be our new Executive Assistant and I want to give her a very warm welcome. Mary has already proved to be absolutely invaluable, and I know that we will all work very well together. Thank you, Mary!

Routes into Languages Coordinator UK: Vicky Wright and I were delighted to appoint **Sky Herington** to be the new UK-wide coordinator to help relaunch RiL activity; she began her role in March. This is also a key new appointment. Welcome, Sky!

James Illingworth, who has done such an incredible job as Project Coordinator for us, stepped down from this role at the end of January 2022, and we are delighted that he has assumed the running of the Year Abroad SIG which will be the focus of considerable activity in the coming year, beginning with our successful plenary.

2. **UCML/IMLR relationship** – Marcela and I attended the 25th February event on Future Directions in Modern Languages, and I concluded the final session with Charles Burdett.

3. **UCML/BA Neil Kenny**, Lead Fellow for Languages at the British Academy and I continue to meet to discuss ongoing initiatives together, following on from TNLS. The Chair of UCML and Neil have co-Chaired the **Strategic Committee on Languages in Higher Education (SCLHE)**. Neil has passed his Chairing responsibilities this year to **Charles Forsdick**; Marcela recently attended this meeting as Co-Chair (4th March) and we will follow up on the actions which include thinking about lobbying for community languages (there is already a group looking at this which combines British Council and BA reps) and gathering data on lesser taught languages – we can think about how best to do this. As UCML Chair I also sit on the British Academy **Languages Advisory Group** whose purpose is to advise the Academy's Lead Fellow for Languages and the HE & Skills Policy Team on the delivery of their programme of work on Languages – there is an upcoming meeting.

- Among other initiatives, **LAG** is overseeing the implantation of the Languages Portal UK, provisionally to be hosted on the BA website, commissioning the gathering of data (e.g. data on cold spots which may be developing in HE language provision, enabling us to develop a rolling geographical picture of particular languages offered and not offered).

- The groups have underlined the need to keep an eye on original **TNLS** recommendations to ensure they are still being implemented.
- Closer relationship between UCML and the APPG MFL. I attended a meeting of the APPG MFL in September and presented at a Language Show panel discussion chaired by the APPG MFL on Friday Nov 12th on zoom on 'What next for language policy in the UK'). The APPG will now have a close relationship with CIOL who are financing or part-financing the secretariat.

We have agreement from the BA that they will help us to buy the most recently available UCAS data (2019-21) and proceed to commission a new follow-on granularity report (following the July 2021 BA/UCML report on 2012-18). We will update as this develops.

4. **QAA.** The QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Languages, Cultures and Societies and for Linguistics is due for renewal in 2022 and Vicky and I are currently on the advisory panel along with other UCML reps. We will report on progress in due course.

5. **Routes into Languages** – I have now attended a meeting of the network with Vicky and representatives from Routes hubs. Vicky's report contains more detail here, however it's worth noting that we are very invested in relaunching Routes, and to finding further funding for it. As she notes, we now have representation across all the English regions as well as Routes Cymru, NICILT and SCILT.

6. **DfE:** In early January 2022, the VC Education and I were invited to a discussion with representatives from the DfE policy team for languages (**Laura Church, Hannah Jack and Philip Denley**). We invited **Rene Koglbauer** of ALL/UCML to join us. The policy team explained that our meeting forms part of a scoping exercise whereby they will discuss primary languages with a range of stakeholders. They mentioned that the new Minister of State for School Standards, Robin Walker, is very committed to languages, and especially in the context of social cohesion and access. We had a very positive discussion, and they have requested regular meetings with us. This will be a very important conduit for us to engage with language policy. We suggested that the RiL network might provide a very useful framework for establishing UK-wide projects.

7. **GCHQ:** We have developed a good relationship with the Head of Languages Engagement at GCHQ. GCHQ will be an important partner in helping to coordinate effort across the languages community and government. They currently run a Cross-Whitehall language group bringing together managers from FCDO, Cabinet Office, DfE, BEIS, Ministry of Justice etc. They have input into the Languages Portal UK project and other strategic committees and groups for languages.

8. **AULC:** We are continuing in 2022 with the publication of a report of provision across the sector. We have released our UCML survey to Heads, and once we have the data, we will liaise with AULC on the joint report.

9. **Year Abroad SIG:** **James Illingworth**, as the new Chair for our Year Abroad SIG is currently gathering information about visas for Japan which are proving especially tricky, and convened a meeting for Heads and YA reps to discuss the situation in Russia/Ukraine.

10. **Charitable status for UCML:** this discussion was originally prompted by the transfer of Routes to UCML. Currently we have no legal protection as we are an unincorporated organisation, and as individuals that makes us liable for any legal action against UCML or financial debt that may

accrue. We are considering moving to gain charitable incorporated status and are in the process of trying to understand what this may mean and whether it is desirable for us. We welcome any advice or thoughts on this. Some other comparable organisations have this status; others don't (ALL, SFS are charities for example). Marián, Vicky and I met with Rene to take this forward, and I am very grateful for all Marián's advice about this process. We aim to bring a proposal to the AGM in the summer which will need careful thought.

11. **Head of Languages Special Interest Group:** David Cowling (Durham) has agreed to chair this, and there will be a meeting shortly.

12. Marcela and I met with our representatives from the three devolved nations, and we exchanged information about progress with policy developments as well as agreeing that the Chair of UCML would visit the institution of each Chair in due course for further detailed discussion. Belfast was suggested as the first venue and the trip to coincide with Society for French Studies conference at QUB in late June.

13. Liz and I met the three new AHRC Future of Language Research Fellows and were interviewed. We are following up on the information they requested and will keep a close eye on their work as it develops.

14. Events and other participation in groups: on 9th March 2022 I gave a keynote on trends in Modern Languages in HE at a one-day conference, 'Shaping the Future of Modern Foreign Languages in Education' at the Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGPP) in a session with Neil Kenny and Megan Bowler.

15. Chairing of the Arts and Humanities Alliance (AHA) – this has passed from English (Martin Halliwell and Susan Bruce) to ML for the first time. Thea Pitman (Leeds) and I will be co-Chairs from June 2022.

16. Units in need of assistance: Fransiska is preparing a letter of support for the University of Arts, London, which is proposing closing its languages programme, and we have also signed a letter from Mark Critchley of AULC.

17. Possibility of a SIG which would be a WP network of Universities with high proportions of students from less privileged backgrounds where ML is offered, led by Becky Muradás-Taylor.

18. I have been invited to join the **Language Services Future Pipeline Working Group** which includes representatives from the Ministry of Justice among other stakeholders.

19. Attended Event on 31st March - **UK Language Policy from 2015 to 2022 and Beyond:**

[UK Language Policy from 2015 to 2022 and Beyond Tickets, Thu 31 Mar 2022 at 09:00 | Eventbrite](#)

In the afternoon there was a closed working session for around 20 participants run under Chatham House rules on the theme of **How best can government and academics work together to promote languages in the UK?**