

UCML Executive

Friday, 26th May, 2023

Hispanic Studies Report

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 colleagues working in Hispanic Studies and subject associations AHGBI and SLAS.

Latin American Studies

- IMPORTANT: Closure of the Latin America and Caribbean Centre at LSE, which was only set up in 2016.
- Visibility of Latin American Studies is a challenge as not only is it an interdisciplinary field, but Latin Americanists tend to work in a diversity of departments in the social sciences and humanities.
- Furthermore, there are tensions for both PhD students and academics between having disciplinary and area studies specialisms.
- The closure of specialist departments and institutes, such as ILAS and the Latin American and Caribbean Centre at the LSE most recently, represents a very worrying trend.
- Latin Americanists have responded to this by establishing networks within universities and at the regional (e.g. collaborations between ESRC/AHRC DTP institutions) and national level (e.g. SLAS and the new UK Latin American History network). These networks are essential but they also need funding and a commitment from universities and funding bodies to interdisciplinary research.

Decolonisation of the Curriculum

- This was raised by a colleague in Hispanic Studies who noted that there were tensions in their department related to curriculum design. This is a point for discussion that could be picked up at the AHGBI Spanish reps meeting.

In addition to the abovementioned points, matters raised in the previous report remain of concern to the Hispanic Studies community:

PGRs and ECAs

- There is continued difficulty for PGR students in doing fieldwork and coping with disruptions to fieldwork. This is also a concern for the next generation of students.
- Opportunities for building networks have been limited for the current cohort of PGRs, and there are concerns about the repercussions this will have as they move into the ECR stage.

Funding/finances:

- 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.
- Several colleagues 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.
- 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. But all of these issues taken together make international work much harder.

Teaching:

- There are concerns about the impact of Brexit on teaching, especially as regards securing placements for students on the Year Abroad and for students obtaining visas.
- The impact of Covid on teaching and assessment practices is something to note, specifically the shift seen across many institutions in moving from exams to coursework. It is important to reflect on the implications of this for language teaching and assessment specifically.

Research:

- The “long tail” of Covid, and how the long-lasting impact it has had on research remains to be seen. Shifts in institutional funding for research post-pandemic is of note.
- EDI implications of the impact of the pandemic research (and teaching)

Dr Nicola Bermingham
UCML Hispanic Studies Representative
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