

**Council for College and University English
Minutes of the AGM Business Meeting**

Saturday 24th April, St Anne's College, Oxford

The Chair (Linda Anderson, Newcastle) welcomed members to the business meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Faye Hammill, Ben Knights, Sharon Ruston and Nahem Yousaf.

2. The minutes of the OGM (5th December, 2009) were accepted as a correct record.

3. There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. The item on the **English Subject Centre** (ESC) was taken first, led by Jane Gawthrop from the Subject Centre at Royal Holloway in Ben Knights's unavoidable absence.

(i) It was noted that the ESC would be celebrating its tenth birthday on 17 September at King's College, London and it seemed an appropriate point at which to celebrate its achievements. It has provided a space for English colleagues to discuss teaching via its conference and workshop events; its publications (Teaching the New English series and *Wordplay* journal) have been well received and its Heads of Subject Networking and Starting Teaching for PGs days have proved extremely popular. 3,500 people a week make use of the website and its report series has been widely consulted. More importantly the centre represents the English community, along with CCUE, in policy consultations.

(ii) The current situation as regards ESC is uncertain. The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is currently without a Chief Executive. Its budget has been cut by 30%, which makes it impossible for the HEA to continue in its present form (24 discipline specific subject centres and a central government base in York). There has been discussion over whether to concentrate resources on the base in York or the individual subject centres. The HEA board has asked for proposals and scenarios on this matter and has now asked for costings for those proposals. Most scenarios centralised control and resources and reduced and fragmented the subject centres. The earliest decision will be made in September with implementation in July 2011; funding is guaranteed until December 2010.

(iii) In the light of an immediate 10-15% budget cut, the English Subject Centre will focus more on the website and student-focused work, with a focus on the experience of students studying English as part of joint/combined honours programmes, education for sustainable development and employability. The ESC may have to begin charging for events.

(iv) There would be a meeting of the ESC Advisory Board on 7 May and Chairs of SC advisory boards would be meeting with HEA reps in June. Chairs of Subject Centres would be pressing for more consultation on and involvement with the changes.

The Chair congratulated the English Subject Centre on their valuable work and their birthday and reminded members of the positive working relationship that CCUE has had with ESC. CCUE would take every opportunity to endorse the Subject-based approach in the future and the meeting agreed that CCUE should do what it could to

mobilise support from HoSs and other relevant individuals not in subject associations, e.g. PVCs for learning and teaching.

5. **The Chair's Report** was taken next (Linda Anderson)

The election means that there is a great deal of uncertainty at the moment. Higher education has not figured prominently in media discussion or election debates and all parties seem to be waiting for the Browne report on tuition fees. The Lib Dems have pledged to abolish tuition fees, but this may be unrealistic, given the sector's dependency on this source of funding. Three things do seem fairly certain:

- Higher education is facing cuts
- Arts and Humanities will fare worse than STEM subject
- The emphasis on both skills and impact is unlikely to disappear

What makes the financial situation so difficult to read is that there is so much variation between different universities across the country. Some are suffering – and will suffer - much more than others. This is the negative aspect of the degree of autonomy individual universities enjoy. This variation makes it particularly urgent that our response be both local and national, and that we make the case for English and the Arts in our own institutions when we get the chance, as well as nationally.

- (1) The cuts are posing an imminent problem for the future of the English Subject Centre. CCUE historically has a close relationship with ESC which it values and would want to play a part as advocate and supporter of the Centre in the difficult times ahead. The subject community has always benefitted enormously from the creativity and hard work of the staff at the centre, and their productivity is a real asset and source of pride for us. Professor Lyn Pykett is chair of the advisory group and there will be a meeting on 7th May.
- (2) A meeting of the Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) was held in March which Lyn Pykett attended on behalf of CCUE. Steve Smith (VC Exeter) warned delegates about how important the dual support system is for research funding in the Arts, the extent and depth of the financial threat, and the need to engage with the impact agenda
- (3) The results of the REF consultation have been published. The timing of the exercise seems open still. There will definitely be an English Language and Linguistics panel, along the same lines as before. However there is a proposal that Linguistics be split between a modern languages language and literature panel and a sociology panel. Area studies will be similarly split. It seems sensible that Literature specialists in American Studies submit to the English panel (this is mostly what happened last time). The principle of double-weighting has been accepted, though how it will be implemented is not settled. We will have to submit 4 items, not 3 which is what we argued for.
- (4) How to evaluate impact is still under discussion. Impact pilot panels are beginning to meet (first meeting is 26th April). Greg Walker and I both on panel as is Rick Rylance.

- (5) In the autumn panel chairs and panel members will be appointed for the REF. CCUE would expect to play a major part as did last time in the process.

My final word would be that this is not a time for retrenchment. We need to be bold about making our case. Our strengths are many: we are writers and many of us have access to the media. Remember we've seen off the worst lunacies of the REF - use of citations and change in the configuration of the panel. We're comfortable with interdisciplinarity, and internationalism, and we should draw on both of these. CCUE will go on creating occasions where the anxieties of the current situation can be aired and the great strengths of our subject can be celebrated.

6. Report from ESSE (Marcus Walsh)

- (i) The next ESSE board meeting would be in Turin on 23-24 August 2010 immediately before the tenth ESSE conference, 24-28 August 2010. Information about the conference is on the ESSE website.
- (ii) The 2011 board meeting would be on 30-31 August 2011 in Prague.
- (iii) At the last board meeting in Szeged, Hungary, Fernando Galvan was re-elected President. Currently, ESSE finances are secure although UK membership has fluctuated and has recently dropped again.
- (iv) ESSE offers a number of benefits to institutional members. They receive a copy of the *Messenger* and are entitled to apply to ESSE's two bursary competitions: Competition A is for up to 1500 euros, available for scholars in need of support to pursue a project or programmes of research leading to the writing of their PhD dissertation. Competition B is for up to 1500 euros, available for scholars already holding a doctorate or its equivalent and employed at Universities in Central and Eastern Europe who are in need of support to pursue a project or programme of research. There are also book awards (for details please see website) and ESSE also produces the *European Journal of English Studies*, a refereed journal.

7. Treasurer's Report

Finances were generally believed to be in good order but due to Nahem Yousaf's unavoidable absence the treasurer's report was held over until the OGM.

8. Election to Executive Committee

3 members of the Executive were standing down: Chris Christie, Lyn Pykett and Sue Zlosnik. The Chair thanked them all warmly for their contribution, in some cases over several years.

4 people were elected to the Executive Committee: Claire Connolly (Cardiff University) (proposed David Duff, seconded Linda Anderson), Fiona Douglas (University of Leeds) (proposed David Duff, seconded Linda Anderson), John Lyon (University of Bristol) (proposed Helen Small, seconded, David Duff) and

3 members of the Executive were re-elected: Deborah Cartmell (proposed Scott Brewster, seconded Susan Watkins), Faye Hammill (proposed David Duff, seconded Linda Anderson) and Susan Watkins (proposed Deborah Cartmell, seconded Scott Brewster).

Gail Marshall (University of Leicester) was co-opted to the Executive committee.

9. AOB

There was no other business