

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

HELD 5 DECEMBER 2009
INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
SENATE HOUSE, LONDON

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

2. Chair's Report

LA began by saying that we are entering a volatile and difficult period which is reminiscent of the 1980s, the last time the higher education sector experienced compulsory redundancies. Universities had not yet felt the full force of the general funding cuts nor the effect of the rolling out of the transfer of research funds to STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) from RAE 2008. The last fifteen years may be looked back on in future as something of a golden age for Higher Education.

(i) Accountability

One effect of the increase in funding to Universities was that it has also been accompanied by, and used to justify, a discussion about public accountability. What are the public benefits of research? This discourse has been mostly around STEM subjects but, as is often the case, the Arts and Humanities suffer from having the terms of the debate set by the interests and needs of STEM. Where do the Arts and Humanities fit into this discussion which foregrounds economic benefit; and if they do not, are they simply an expensive luxury? The idea of 'innovation', the topical term which is widely used in relation to University research, sits uneasily with our understanding of research; its political importance is signalled, however, by the transfer of the management of Universities from Education first to DIUS (Department Of Innovation, Universities and Skills) and then to DBIS (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills).

(ii) Role of CCUE

One of our responses at this time has to be to enhance the role of CCUE and to make sure it is representing as many English Departments as possible. This is what will make us effective in future consultations. That means taking that message to Heads of Department and ensuring we have as many subscriptions as possible. To this end, the Executive has instituted two small but significant innovations. One is a re-vamping of our website, making it more user-friendly. The website <http://www.ccue.ac.uk/> is intended to be a place to which people can turn to find out about consultations and issues CCUE is involved in on behalf of the English subject community. The second innovation is to establish a CCUE prize for a first book. The details of this have yet to be worked out and the prize will be formally launched at our AGM in April. The idea, however, is to enhance our profile and significance amongst English colleagues, particularly younger colleagues.

(iii) Consultations

During the period since July 2009, the significant consultations CCUE has been involved in have been about the new category of 'impact' proposed as part of the REF.

- (1) In May 2009 the AHRC previewed its important publication about the impact of Arts and Humanities research, 'Leading the World'. Philip Essler, the outgoing Chief Executive, gave a very up-beat presentation, and the AHRC have gathered some very useful data about economic impact.
- (2) In June 2009 the British Academy held a meeting for Learned Societies about impact which was addressed by David Sweeney, Director of Research at the Higher

Education funding Council for England (HEFCE). He warned that it would be pointless to ask for less than 20% as the contribution of impact to the REF.

- (3) The final consultation, and the most important, is the consultation about the REF which is due to be submitted on 16th December. We are very grateful for the close working relationship we have established with the English Association and for the fact that we will submit a joint document with them. We are also grateful for all the useful feedback we have received and for the work undertaken by Greg Walker (Edinburgh), on behalf of the CCUE Executive, in stimulating debate and preparing the document. The highlights of our response are as follows (the full text of the response is on the website):
- a) We suggest weightings should be 70% outputs/15% environment/15% impact
 - b) We support the suggestion that the number of outputs decrease from 4 to 3
 - c) We would like a year extra, and that the REF be in 2013 rather than 2012
 - d) We would like double weighting to work as in the RAE 2008
 - e) The problems with impact are as follows: the difficulty of assessing it; the narrow definition which is not appropriate to our subject; staff mobility and who claims impact; excellent research does not, as seems to be assumed, generate excellent impact and vice versa; who are the research users; what is the difference between engagement and impact and is there not a danger of double-counting.
 - f) We don't find it appropriate to be in a larger panel with Linguistics
 - g) There is a need to involve us at all stages

Following the Chair's report, there was a brief discussion of some of the points raised, including the nature of the 'double-weighting' arrangement in RAE/REF and the problem of relating 'environment' to 'impact'. A number of members, including LA, were involved in impact pilot studies, which were being used by HEFCE to develop criteria for assessing impact. CCUE would continue to look for opportunities to influence the impact agenda.

3. ESSE Conference 2014

Marcus Walsh (Liverpool) sought CCUE's backing for a prospective bid to host the ESSE 2014 Conference at Liverpool. This suggestion was welcomed and approved by members.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Nahem Yousef (Nottingham Trent), had been unable to come to the OGM so the Treasurer's Report was deferred till the AGM in April.

5. AOB

There was no other business.

David Duff, CCUE Secretary, March 2010