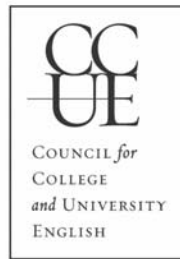


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18<sup>th</sup> October 2005

Dear Dr Gale,

**Review of Subject Benchmark statements  
Response from the Council for College and University English**

With reference to your letter of 19 August, CCUE would like to make the following points. We have canvassed the Executive of CCUE and taken evidence from Professor Ben Knights, Director of the Higher Education Academy English Subject Centre. On this basis we feel confident in saying that the subject community (although it may sometimes express doubts about benchmarking as a concept) has found the existing statement a serviceable document, and one which is widely used in dealings inside and outside universities. We are not aware of any surge of opinion in favour of radical revision. We are however, increasingly aware of one weakness of the existing statement. Given the continuing increase in the number of programmes involving elements of Creative Writing we think that the subject of Creative or Imaginative and Transformative Writing needs to be addressed. The 2000 statement does refer to this area of work, but its recommendations remain largely implicit. Nevertheless, reading QAA's Guidelines (*Recognition Scheme* paragraph 25), we do not believe that circumstances warrant an application for a separate statement.

Indeed, in our view a separate statement would prove divisive and detrimental to the scope of activities currently understood to take place within English Studies. The practice of Creative Writing is anchored in wide and skilled reading and knowledge about form. To that extent its natural home is with the English group of disciplines. Further, most undergraduate students who study Creative Writing do so on modules or strands of modules within (typically) English degrees. Relatively few students study on purely Creative Writing courses. And if we leave aside practitioners on part-time or temporary contracts most of the academic staff concerned teach English in a more traditional sense as well, and would regard themselves as members of the subject community. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the benchmarking process there is a real need to spell out what remained largely implicit before: the knowledge, understanding, skills, and assessment norms of a rapidly growing domain.

With your agreement, we would therefore propose to undertake a minor revision of the existing statement. This would incorporate small scale revisions on the lines suggested in the annexe to your letter, and a few minor re-wordings. But principally it would involve

the addition of paragraphs making more explicit the meaning of the Benchmark in relation to Creative Writing. Naturally, any revision group would need to represent this new constituency.

In relation to your further point about benchmarking at M level. We have some reservations, principally that an M level benchmark might be such a higher order statement as to be virtually meaningless. It would need to be simple without being entirely bland. But as a subject association we would of course be willing to take part in the preliminary consultations to which you refer.

Yours sincerely,

Elisabeth Jay