

## Council for College and University English

### MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING HELD 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2003 AT THE INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH STUDIES, SENATE HOUSE, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

The Chair, Philip Martin (De Montfort) welcomed members to the meeting.

#### 1. Apologies:

Linden Peach (Gloucestershire)

#### 2. The Minutes of the AGM, held 2-3 May 2003, at St Anne's College, Oxford

were accepted as a correct record.

#### 3. Matters Arising: there were no matters arising.

#### 4. Chair's Oral Report:

The Chair reported that CCUE had over the summer responded to both the Roberts Report and the DT/OST Consultation Document: *Sustainability of University Research*. Both of these responses would be placed on the CCUE website ([www.ccue.ac.uk](http://www.ccue.ac.uk)) in the Documents archive. CCUE had been approached and asked to offer comment on applicants for AHRB Ring-fenced Postgraduate Studentships, but having adopted the view that it was not CCUE's role to favour particular applicants, had, instead, offered its support to each of the subject areas that had sought CCUE's endorsement. At the September meeting of the Executive the good relations subsisting between CCUE and ESSE had been furthered by a joint lunch with the ESSE Board, also meeting at St. Anne's College. Although a previous proposal that CCUE should field its own panels at the Zaragoza conference (September 2004) had not proved feasible, CCUE members were urged to submit papers to the panels which still had unfilled places. (For details of remaining spaces, see: [www.essenglish.org](http://www.essenglish.org)). The venue for the ESSE conference in 2006 will be the Institute of English Studies, University of London.

The Chair reported that, by virtue of the English Subject Centre's constitution, CCUE was represented on the ESC's Advisory Board, by four members who were currently Elisabeth Jay, (Oxford Brookes), Sue Manning (Edinburgh). Rick Rylance (Exeter) and Judy Simons, (De Montfort): in addition Vivien Jones (Leeds) had been co-opted to represent Heads of Departments of English.

A recommendation had come to the CCUE Exec. that members of the ESC's Advisory Board should receive an honorarium for their work. CCUE's Executive had decided to refer this suggestion to the CCUE membership. In the ensuing discussion questions were raised as to whether the members of other Subject Centre Advisory Boards received any payment, whether such work was not normally understood to be part of an academic's 'public service', and whether other ways of rewarding the Advisory Board could not be found. Sue Manning then explained that the recommendation proceeded from a matter of principle: neither time nor expertise came without expense and some, though not all, members of the Advisory Board felt strongly that obtaining recognition for their professional services was important, especially at a time when the proliferation of unpaid advisory roles undertaken by academic threatened the casualisation of the profession. After further discussion it was agreed to invite the Advisory Board to submit a paper, outlining the responsibilities of the members, the commitments undertaken and the principle guiding this request.

The Chair then invited the membership to consider whether, as a subject organisation, CCUE should be expressing a view in the current debate about University top-up fees. While there would doubtless

be a variety of individual opinions and institutional interests, English as a subject seemed likely to suffer in a debate whose terms were increasingly dominated by instrumentalist rhetoric. Moreover, since the government had expressed itself hostile to the notion of a 'flat fee', English was likely to find itself priced at the lower end of a graduated scale and thus risk a loss of status in a market-driven economy. After a discussion which highlighted the predicament of Welsh and Scottish Universities threatened by a flood of applicants, but the prospect of inferior academic pay; the dilemma of whether, in seeking to recommend alternative financial strategies to address the funding crisis, we ran the risk of becoming complicit in the government's broken promise to retain the original £1,000 top-up fee as a maximum; and the moral bankruptcy of a nation prepared to abandon the right to free HE and bolster its funds by plundering the third world for graduates bringing full-cost overseas fees to postgraduate courses.

It was agreed that the CCUE Exec. should draft a letter to circulate to the membership, asking the membership's approval for publication, on the discipline's behalf, of a letter setting out the dangers to a Humanities' subject implicit in the current debate.

## **5. The Subject Centre for English: Director's Oral Report**

Ben Knights reported as follows:

The formation of the HE Academy was now well advanced. The LTSN would be absorbed into the Academy during 2004, and assurances had been given that the Subject Centres were pivotal to the HEA's role. In the meanwhile, a further year's funding had been promised, but the revised contract with institutions had not yet been issued. The result was that there was only a relatively brief contractual period (to 31 December 2004), with obvious implications for Centre staff. Relations with the emerging Centres for Excellence in Learning and Teaching represented a largely unknown terrain, and fears that SCs might become marginalized by CETLs had not been entirely allayed.

Dr Siobhán Holland was leaving the SC to take up a job at St Mary's College, and BK wished to applaud publicly Dr Holland's work for the Centre in its formative years. During the period of funding uncertainty, the Advisory Board had supported him in not moving immediately to replace her.

The Subject Centre's core work had been successfully continuing. Events had recently been held on the employability of English graduates, on Irish studies, on American Studies, and on teaching poetry. Forthcoming events included two days at Glasgow on English and ICT, and BK especially wished to draw attention to the event for heads of department to be held at Oxford Brookes on 22 April. The Centre was continuing its publications series. The Curriculum and Teaching Survey had been published, and a 'good practice' guide for departments employing part-time lecturers was at an advanced stage of preparation. Palgrave Macmillan were in the process of making offers on the first six titles in the Teaching the New English Book Series, and a further dozen titles were in preparation.

On the note of publishing, BK wished to affirm what he saw as the ESC's role in assisting the development of a discipline-based scholarship of teaching. He was engaged in preliminary discussions about the formation of a peer-reviewed journal on teaching English in HE, and hoped to enlist the support of CCUE members in this venture.

BK had himself been engaged in a round of visits to departments and institutions, and more were in the pipeline. He gave as an example of a developmental area work with groups and individuals who cross the divide between English teachers in HE and in sixth forms and colleges. He wished to stress that a body as comparatively small as a subject centre could only work successfully through the active collaboration and involvement of colleagues around the UK: he presented as an example dialogue through the website, and demonstrated the use of the revised Directory of Experience and

Interests.

6. Treasurer's Annual Report.

The Treasurer, Linden Peach (Gloucestershire), was unable to attend, but had confirmed that CCUE still held a favourable balance. The Treasurer was also collecting the information, sought by ESSE, of membership details which would enable the *Messenger* to be sent either in one departmental posting or to individuals.

**9. AOB:** there was no other business.

Elisabeth Jay,

Secretary to the CCUE Executive,

3.12.03.