

## CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2002-03

The CCUE Executive met on four occasions this year and, as ever, conducted an energetic schedule. As predicted, it has been a year of major policy initiatives and CCUE has responded comprehensively on behalf of the subject. Several of these developments are as yet un-concluded, and colleagues will not be wholly surprised, nor wholly cheered, to learn that several new consultations are due to arrive at our desks this very month. There will be the second round consultation on the future of the RAE following Sir Gareth Roberts' interim recommendations; there will be an important Treasury-led inquiry into the future of the dual support mechanism; and the formal consultation on the findings of the Funding Council's 'Report on Improving Standards in Postgraduate Research' (the so-called 'Levinsky report') is also due. In addition, the future career of the White Paper on 'The Future of Higher Education' will be watched with interest and concern.

CCUE made full written responses to the Joint Funding Bodies' Review of Research Assessment and, more recently, to the White Paper. (Both are available on the website.) However, the process of involvement in the creation and maintenance of policy is not confined to written responses. Members of the Executive have attended several AHRB sessions and contributed to the Board's wish to discover opinion in areas such as the future of publishing in the humanities, the development of Masters-level programmes, issues in Doctoral research and, this month, the contribution of the Arts and Humanities to society. Two members of the Executive, one from language, one from literature, also attended a small advisory seminar organised by the AHRB on research in languages and literatures.

The Executive has maintained the Council's involvement with other bodies active in English in education. It contributed to QCA's meditations on the development of statutory assessment in English at Key Stages 1-3 and to its consideration of comparability issues between 'A' level English and the International Baccalaureate. The Common English Forum (a informal group established by CCUE, the English Association and National Association of Teachers of English [NATE]) has continued to discuss issues of shared interest across the sectors, including subject content at GCSE and 'A' Level, during several meetings. Recently, it has advised the Specialist Schools Trust, the quasi-autonomous body responsible for developing specialist schools in various subjects. From 2004 specialist schools and colleges will for the first time include English and other humanities subjects.

Active links have been maintained with other subject associations in the humanities. The History in the Universities Defence Group (HUDG) organised a symposium of humanities associations to discuss common interests, and CCUE contributed a postgraduate representative to the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) board. (The MHRA are keen to expand their involvement in postgraduate education in the Humanities.) CCUE also continued involvements of various kinds with the English Association, the British Academy, the Council for University Deans in Arts and Humanities (CUDA), and the Standing Conference for Arts and Social Sciences (SCASS), whose 'One Voice' initiative, to which CCUE contributed, aims to represent the views of these subject groups to government, initially in relation to the future of the RAE. We also remain thoroughly involved with the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) whose President, Adolphe Haberer, we again welcome with pleasure to the AGM. CCUE has a seat on the ESSE board, and their next meeting will be hosted at St Annes's. CCUE is involved with the development of the next ESSE conference in Zaragoza in 2004 among other initiatives.

CCUE remains comprehensively engaged with the work of the English Subject Centre through active membership of the Advisory Board. There will be a separate report on the Centre's work this year at the AGM, but the Council has contributed substantially to the new curriculum survey administered by the Centre, to its independent External Evaluation (undertaken this year by Professor Marion Shaw), and to the appointment of Professor Philip Martin's successor as Director. We welcome Professor Ben Knights to the post, and thank Philip heartily for his outstanding work in launching the Centre so successfully. Thanks are also due to all members of the Centre's staff,

especially its manager Jane Gawthrope. The last important item to mention here is the International Conference organised by the Centre in partnership with CCUE and the Institute for English Studies. It takes place in July.

There are a number of internal matters to report. Thanks to the labours of Linden Peach as Treasurer, and to individual departments who have paid subscriptions promptly, CCUE's finances are once more sound and at a level comparable with those in the past. The Executive has been eager to secure greater representation of views from across the whole of the UK and has used its powers of co-option to secure delegates from all parts. 'Issues from across the UK' is now a standing item on the Executive Meeting agenda. The Executive has also co-opted an additional English Language specialist to increase the presence of that part of the discipline. Finally, we have also begun to consider changes nationally in the structure of Departments of English, including their increasing inclusion in federal departments or schools of humanities, and the consequences of this for subject distinction.

This will be my last annual report. After three years as Chair and three before that as Secretary, it is time to let someone else take their turn. I leave with regret, and a little relief to be taking a holiday from the seemingly endless, exhausting process of consultative advocacy that is now the entrenched form of policy development for initiatives both wise and unwise. This year I have to say thank-you to many: to an assiduous and resourceful Executive as a whole, and to several individuals in particular: to Mike Rossington, who has been an outstanding Secretary for two years and who also steps down this time; to Vincent Gillespie, a wise and informed Vice Chair and roving ambassador for CCUE to ESSE; to Linden Peach, a prudent, scrupulous Treasurer; to Elisabeth Jay for her work as Assistant Secretary and her patience with the messy organisational ways of QCA; to Chris Ringrose for his good-humoured, tactful and imaginative editorship of *CCUENews*; and to Judy Simons for so dynamically directing the Advisory Board of the Subject Centre. Finally, particular thanks are due Carol Thomas, an expert Administrator at APU and for CCUE over many years. However, I also want to say many thanks to you, the membership of CCUE, for your support for the organisation and your commitment to the subject which is, after all, the best and necessary reason for the Council to exist in what are bound to be testing and possibly divisive times.

Rick Rylance

May 2003