UCML business meeting

Chair’s report:

1/ UCML steering group appointments and departures:

We appointed Mary Newman to be our new Executive Assistant and Mary has already proved to be absolutely invaluable and I know that we will all work very well together. Thank you, Mary!

Routes into Languages Coordinator UK: Vicky Wright and I were delighted to appoint Sky Herington to be the new UK-wide coordinator to help relaunch RiL activity; she began her role in March. This is also a key new appointment. Welcome, Sky!

James Illingworth, who has done such an incredible job as Project Coordinator for us, stepped down from this role at the end of January 2022, and we are delighted that he has assumed the running of the Year Abroad SIG in which endeavour he is now rejoined by Jonathan Long.

2/ UCML/BA Charles Forsdick/Neil Kenny, Lead Fellows for Languages at the British Academy and UCML continue to meet to discuss ongoing initiatives together, following on from TNLS. The Chair of UCML and Neil have co-Chaired the Strategic Committee on Languages in Higher Education (SCLHE). Neil has passed his Chairing responsibilities this year to Charles Forsdick; Marcela recently attended this meeting as Co-Chair (4th March); I co-chaired the meeting of 4th July. Follow up actions included sending out an additional survey on community languages (there is already a group looking at this which combines British Council and BA reps) and gathering data on lesser taught languages – a SIG has been mooted as a possible way to engage in this space. As UCML Chair I also sit on the British Academy Languages Advisory Group whose purpose is to advise the Academy’s Lead Fellow for Languages and the HE & Skills Policy Team on the delivery of their programme of work on Languages.

- Among other initiatives, LAG is overseeing the Languages Gateway, currently in development, commissioning the gathering of data (eg. data on cold spots which may be developing in HE language provision, enabling us to develop a rolling geographical picture of particular languages offered and not offered).
- The groups have underlined the need to keep an eye on original TNLS recommendations to ensure they are still being implemented.
- Closer relationship between UCML and the APPG MFL. I attended a meeting of the APPG MFL in September and presented at a Language Show panel discussion chaired by the APPG MFL on Friday Nov 12th on zoom on ‘What next for language policy in the UK’; and attended an in person meeting on Monday 11th July in the House of Lords where the group heard a number of presentations including the recent Language Trends survey from the British Council. The APPG will now have a close relationship with CIOL who are providing the secretariat.

We are collaborating with the BA on a follow up report on UCAS admissions data (2019-21) (following the July 2021 BA/UCML report on 2012-18). We will update as this develops.
3/ QAA. The QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Languages, Cultures and Societies and for Linguistics is due for renewal in 2022 and Vicky and I are currently on the advisory panel along with other UCML reps.

4/ DfE: In early January 2022, the VC Education and I were invited to a discussion with representatives from the DfE policy team for languages (Laura Church, Hannah Jack and Philip Denley). We invited Rene Koglbauer of ALL/UCML to join us. The policy team explained that our meeting forms part of a scoping exercise whereby they will discuss primary languages with a range of stakeholders. They mentioned that the new (now former!) Minister of State for School Standards, Robin Walker, is very committed to languages, and especially in the context of social cohesion and access. We had a very positive discussion, and they have requested regular meetings with us. This will be a very important conduit for us to engage with language policy. We suggested that the RiL network might provide a very useful framework for establishing UK-wide projects. We have had subsequent meetings and will need to catch up once the political landscape settles down a bit.

5. AULC: We are continuing in 2022 with the publication of a report of provision across the sector. We released our UCML survey to Heads, though had a relatively poor response. We are trying again, and once we have further data, we will liaise with AULC on the joint report.

6. Charitable status for UCML: this discussion was originally prompted by the transfer of Routes to UCML. Currently we have no legal protection as we are an unincorporated organisation, and as individuals that makes us liable for any legal action against UCML or financial debt that may accrue. We were considering moving to gain charitable incorporated status and are in the process of trying to understand what this may mean and whether it is desirable for us. We welcome any advice or thoughts on this. Some other comparable organisations have this status; others don’t (ALL, SFS are charities for example). Marián, Vicky and I met with Rene to take this forward and I am very grateful for all Marián’s advice about this process. Our feeling is currently that on balance, this may not work for us, however we are keen to hear thoughts on this from the AGM.

7. Head of Languages Special Interest Group: David Cowling (Durham) has agreed to chair this, and there will be a meeting shortly.

8/ Marcela and I met with our Chairs from the three devolved nations, and we exchanged information about progress with policy developments as well as agreeing that the Chair of UCML would visit the institution of each Chair in due course for further detailed discussion. Belfast was suggested as the first venue and the trip to coincide with Society for French Studies conference at QUB in late June. I met Sharon Jones as planned to discuss NI language policy, and we agreed to have regular catch ups with the other Chairs. UCML will be supporting a British Educational Research Association (BERA) event on developing language learning across the 4 nations on 17th November, organised by Sharon with Arlene Holmes-Henderson, to enable a number of schoolteachers to attend.

9/ Liz and I met the three new AHRC Future of Language Research Fellows and were interviewed. We followed up on the information they requested and attended the reporting session held at the IMLR on 5th July.
10/ Events and other participation in groups: on 9th March 2022 I gave a keynote on trends in Modern Languages in HE at a one-day conference, ‘Shaping the Future of Modern Foreign Languages in Education’ at the Institute of Government and Public Policy (IGPP) in a session with Neil Kenny and Megan Bowler.

11/ Chairing of the Arts and Humanities Alliance (AHA) – this has passed from English (Martin Halliwell and Susan Bruce) to ML for the first time. Thea Pitman (Leeds) and I are now co-Chairs, and would be interested to see how UCML’s work can feed into and be enhanced through this relationship.

12/ Units in need of assistance: Fransiska is preparing a letter of support for the University of Arts, London, which is proposing closing its languages programme, and we have also signed a letter from Mark Critchley of AULC. We have sent letters to Roehampton, and to Huddersfield.

13/ We have recently launched a Widening Participation Languages Network SIG, a WP network of Universities with high proportions of students from less privileged backgrounds where ML is offered, led by Becky Muradás-Taylor.

14/ UCML was invited to join the Language Services Future Pipeline Working Group which includes representatives from the Ministry of Justice among other stakeholders. This will now be taken on by Begoña Rodríguez de Cespédes and Marina Rabadán Gómez, our reps for Translation and Interpreting, and IWLP.