UCML Executive

Friday, 12th Jan, 2024

Report from the Early Career Academics Representative – Ashley Harris

1. ECA Code of Best Practice

Following the creation of an ECA Code of Best Practice for departments and schools of Languages to observe, we are currently planning our management of contact with department Heads and the tracking of sign-up and adherence to the Code.

For information, the Code of Best Practice proposes best practice standards centring around integrity and equality in all respects, and exists to promote the best interests of academics, in particular Early Career Academics (ECAs). The Code can be viewed here: https://university-council-modern-languages.org/early-career-academics/code-of-best-practice/.

We hope that this will be disseminated for sign-up in this upcoming term.

Please encourage all languages departments/schools to consider signing up.

Please share any ideas for incentivising sign-up (e.g. badge/logo/certificate of accreditation).

2. ECA Special Interest Group chairs

Olivia Glaze (Portuguese Studies) and Llewelyn Hopwood joined as new Co-Chairs. Ashley Harris remains a co-chair alongside the role of ECA Representative to the Exec.

3. Events for 2024

The ECA SIG continues to organise popular training, networking and support events. Plans for this term include:

1. ECA languages funding opportunities session
2. Beyond lecturing: careers in translation
3. Publishing for academic and non-academic audiences
4. Informal virtual writing social sessions.
4. ECA Mentoring

The UCML ECA SIG runs a valued mentoring scheme for early career academics, which pairs them with more established academics: https://university-council-modern-languages.org/early-career-academics/eca-support-network/eca-support-network-year-long-mentoring-scheme/.

As Kate Foster is stepping down from her role, we are seeking a new Mentoring Scheme Co-ordinator. Please invite ECA colleagues to consider this role.

5. General concerns

1. Closures: ECA colleagues are anxious and concerned following department closures (or threats thereof).

2. Posts: There is a lack of long-term or full-year posts across the disciplines.
   - Posts are often below 1.0 FTE and teaching only.
   - Colleagues in Russian/Slavonic Studies or in Aberdeen face particularly uncertain futures.
   - Summer gaps are a common challenge for ECAs.
   - Colleagues are often given bulk of language teaching, creating a sense of hierarchy in terms of language vs content teaching.

3. Funding: The ECR funding space is increasingly competitive.

4. CPD: ECAs note the inconsistent access to training including HEA across different institutions.

5. Unrecognised research: Most ECAs are completely highly competitive research without any recognition in their contract but as a necessary step for future contracts. Research is discussed in teaching-only post interviews and advertisements.

Any support or guidance for your ECA colleagues is highly valuable.

If you have any opportunity to model positive change in response to any of the above challenges, please do.

If you would like to get in touch, please email me at harrisa6@tcd.ie

Ashley Harris