UCFL Hispanic Studies Report
May 2024

This report is based on ongoing discussions in the discipline and on updates from representatives of professional associations in Hispanic Studies. The recurring theme is the concern with closures and restructuring of Hispanic Studies and Modern Languages Departments.

Society for Latin American Studies (SLAS):

- Redundancies and department closures affecting Latin Americanists and teaching provision in Latin American Studies. This is not only an issue in language departments but across arts, humanities, and social sciences.
- Like other subject associations, the role of SLAS as an advocate for arts, humanities and social science research has become more important than ever. We also take into account that the current higher education climate has worsened the job prospects and funding opportunities for postgraduates and early career scholars.
- An emerging issue is the trend across the sector to homogenise degree programmes, reducing optionality. This could make Latin American Studies less visible and reduce opportunities for students to study Latin American cultures and societies.
- We are having ongoing discussions about how subject associations like SLAS can respond to the climate emergency by making conferences and research more sustainable. For example, we ask grant applicants and conference organisers to take into account the SLAS Climate Action Plan. This has already led to changes in our annual conferences and examples of remote research collaboration. A related issue is to address and raise awareness of inequalities between academics in the Global South and North by sharing best practices for such research collaborations.

Queen Mary University of London:

Colleagues in Hispanic Studies – external to Queen Mary UL - have raised great concern as to what is happening to Hispanic Studies and the profession QMUL. By 2020, there was a merger that made Hispanic Studies disappear into "Modern Languages". That was an early stage to now merge it further into "School of the Arts" with all degrees and areas of expertise being put at high risk. Hispanic Studies at QMUL has a long tradition (with the merger of both Westfield College and Queen Mary College back in 1989 and physically in 1992). It has enjoyed a great reputation in Hispanism

over many decades and it is home to the Hispanic Research Journal for a few decades now. There was an early, arguably inadequate severance offer. They will now be merged for September as School of the Arts joining two large Schools (English and Drama AND Languages, Linguistics and Film). They have been asked to 'recreate themselves' or risk further redundancies. Colleagues outwith the institution have indicated that they are watching with huge concern what they could become. Raising the profile of what the University Executive at QMUL wants to do is key in the profession if Iberian and Latin American Studies is to survive at QMUL.

University of Kent:

In the once-thriving University of Kent, the BA in Modern Languages (French, German, Hispanics, Italian) has been reduced to 4 members of staff, one for each subject. Hispanic Studies is now delivered by 1 full-time staff member and 1 or 2 lectores employed on an hourly basis. They will no longer have any Hispanics-specific content modules, but only topics within broader ML modules. Spanish-language teaching will be reduced to one module each for Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced. These changes are happening against a backdrop of the closure of Philosophy, Religious Studies, Comparative Lit, Anthropology, and others. It clearly represents a radical deprioritising of ML degree programmes echoed across the sector.

Generative AI:

Colleagues in Hispanic Studies wanted to raise the issue of generative AI and discussions in relation to this. It would be interesting to hear perspectives on how those in other institutions are grappling with this, ideas of how to approach this, examples of good practice.

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