# UCFL General Council AGM

Friday, 5th July, 2024

## Chair's Report

A very warm welcome to new members joining us; grateful thanks and farewell to those leaving (see also report of Honorary Secretary). Currently we are advertising and/or have recently appointed to the following roles: Scotland Representative, French Studies Representative, Hispanic Studies Representative, Institution-Wide Language Teaching Representative, Honorary Secretary, and Translation and Interpreting representative. We say goodbye and are grateful to **Ed Welch, Nicola Bermingham, Emmanuelle Labeau, Marina Rabadán Gómez, and Begoña Rodriguez**.

Huge thanks to **Marcela Cazzoli** who has been doing 2 jobs at once (as new VC Languages and Intercultural Education and Honorary Secretary). We are actively looking for a new Honorary Secretary and are currently in discussions with candidates. Congratulations to our own **Liam Lewis** on securing a permanent job at the University of Cardiff in English. We may also therefore be looking for a new Project Coordinator in due course and will keep you updated.

**Meetings, contributions, and invitations to speak in 2024:**

- **The Strategic Committee for Languages in Higher Education (SCLHE - jointly chaired by UCFL and BA) – 8th May 2024**

  UCFL has prepared a briefing, in collaboration with the British Academy, for the APPG ML on HEI languages degree programme closures and on how to support programmes in this position. Thanks to Wendy and to the Heads SIG for their work on this. A special session at the House of Lords was to be held on 24th June to discuss this paper, led by UCFL, and in collaboration with the English Association, ILCS, BA and others, but parliament will be dissolved due to the general election, and therefore we'll be convening an event in the autumn instead – will keep you updated. Wendy's document will be circulated and available to view on the website.

- **Special Forums on 'Making the Case for German' –** 14th November, 2023, and 3rd May 2024, **German House.** I represented UCFL at these events organised by the German Embassy together with the British Council and NCLE.

- **Strategic Forum for the Humanities, British Academy**, represented UCFL/AHA on 18th March 2024 (special forum on EDI); and will attend regular forum on 12th June 2024.

- Was interviewed to provide background for **BBC Radio 4 Front Row programme** on cuts to Arts and Humanities with Jo Fox (SAS) and Anna Vignoles (Leverhulme Trust) interviewed by Samira Ahmed. 17th April, 2024.

- Interviewed by Patrick Jack for a piece in the **THES, 25th April. 'Is AI the final nail in the coffin for modern languages?** Unhelpful title but balanced piece underlining the opportunities for the sector with the uptick in generative AI and large language models. **https://www.timeshighereducation.com/depth/ai-final-nail-coffin-modern-languages#:~:text=The%20rise%20of%20high%2Dquality,for%20at%20least%20two%20decades.**

- **DASSH – Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities**, 17th May, Birkbeck University. Mood music – crisis mode but how to frame narrative in most positive way possible. Need for data training for colleagues.

- Invited to speak at the **Humanities Summit** on 26th June, 2024 on support for Departments on behalf of UCFL and AHA. An event which brought together colleagues from across the UK to engage in critical discussions surrounding the challenges and opportunities facing the arts and humanities. 10:30-15:00, Wolfson Conference Suite, Senate House, University of London.

- We have been invited to plan an event at ULIP in Paris on the current situation. Any thoughts on specific topics and speakers, please let me know.

- MHRA special research grant to Wendy Ayres-Bennett and Charles Forsdick to pay for a PDRA for a national project to take forward recommendations from the *Languages and Policy: Building Collaborations between Academics and Policymakers* report. The total value of the award will be £14,000. We are advertising this post with a closing date of 15th July.

**BA Languages Gateway**

Ongoing consultation with UCFL on the new Languages Gateway, one of the outcomes of the BA paper, Towards a National Languages Strategy (TNLS). Liaison with Philip Harding-Esch, APPG ML. A working site is up and running and was launched publicly. Feedback is encouraged. Mark Critchley is Chair of the Editorial Board (on which I also sit), and we welcome all feedback. There is also a linked twitter/X account @LangsGateway

As Mark Critchley steps down as Chair of AULC, we want to wish him very well from UCFL, and to thank him for everything he has achieved in this role. We have been delighted to collaborate closely with AULC, and look forward to that relationship continuing under a new chair when one is appointed.

**Health of the Disciplinary field:**

Last year we wrote to **Birkbeck**, **UEA**, **Kent, DMU, and lately Aberdeen, and Oxford Brookes** on behalf of UCFL to offer support to the colleagues there. We remain in contact with Birkbeck, UEA, DMU, and Kent colleagues to support through any further upheaval. Recent concerning developments at **Surrey and others** are also on our radar, and we are in touch with colleagues at these institutions to monitor the situations and offer support as needed. Together with the English Association, University English, the SAS, BA, and ILCS, we wrote to the VC and other senior management figures at Surrey.

**Heads SIG –** Natalie Edwards (Bristol) is Co-chair with David Cowling (Durham) who will be stepping back in July, and we are delighted that **Nadia Kiwan** from Aberdeen has agreed to step in as Co-Chair.

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