![[Council of University Classical Departments]]()

**Minutes of the 127th meeting of the Standing Committee**

**Saturday 12 June 2010, 11 am**

**Stewart House, 32 Russell Sq., University of London**

**Present:** Robin Osborne (Cambridge; Chair), Bruce Gibson (Liverpool; Secretary), Alan Beale (JACT), Mike Edwards (Director, ICS), Sarah Francis (Liverpool; Classics Subject Centre), Steven Green (Leeds), Miriam Leonard (UCL), Fiona McHardy (Roehampton; Editor of the *Bulletin*), Jonathan Powell (RHUL), James Robson (Open; Languages), Ulrike Roth (Edinburgh), Jakob Wisse (Newcastle).

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Adam Bartley (Kent; Treasurer), Elena Isayev (Exeter), Peter Jones (Friends of Classics), Nick Lowe (RHUL; Webmaster), Christopher Pelling (Oxford), Mirjam Plantinga (Lampeter), Catherine Steel (Glasgow; Subject Centre), Matthew Wright (Exeter).

**2. Minutes of Last meeting.**

The minutes of the SC meeting of 13 February 2010 were received and approved.

**3. Matters arising.**

1. **Item 3: Language ‘boot camp’.** It was noted that Dr Robson had put the organisers of these summer schools at KCL and Reading in contact with each other.
2. **Item 5, ii): AHRC / ERIH.** It was noted that the ERIH was effectively a dead letter. There was however some concern expressed at anecdotal reports that an Australian database of journals was apparently coming into use within the UK HEI sector in determining promotions.
3. **Item 8: Standardisation of contact hours.** The wider implications of growing demand for increased contact hours were discussed. It was noted that the School of Humanities at Bristol had provided a powerful defence of current practice, and that Newcastle University, whilst pressing ahead for the standardisation of its 'Undergraduate Framework' for curriculum design, had nevertheless agreed to allow small language classes to continue.
4. **Item 12: Membership of the SC and Officers.** The Chair reported that Mirjam Plantinga would be leaving the Classics department on becoming Dean of Humanities at Lampeter on 1 August 2010. She had accordingly decided to step down from CUCD SC. Members of the SC recorded their appreciation of her service to CUCD. As her position was that of a co-opted member, there was no requirement for an election either now or at the November Council.

**4. Chair's Report**

1. **Financial Position of UK HE and the future of Classics departments:** Those present offered an update on their own institutions and on others where the situation was known to them. Letters which had been sent in support of the department at Leeds were welcomed.
The Chair reported on a recent meeting convened by the British Academy, where the VC of Exeter had predicted cuts of 6% each year from 2010 to 2014. It was noted that even if fees were raised in the light of the Browne report, the full financial benefit would not be realised until 2015 (on the basis of such a change beginning in 2012). Were there to be any threat to HEFCE's quality-rated (QR) funding of research, humanities subjects, which were dependent on this for around 80% of their funding, were likely to be hit hard. At a recent meeting of the AHRC with subject association on its research themes, it had been reported that the demise of the AHRC was unlikely.
Until concrete decisions were taken, the picture would still be unclear. Members of SC agreed that it might be preferable for the AHRC and the BA to concentrate funding on people (e.g. early career researchers) rather than projects amid the current financial uncertainty.
2. **REF:** The response to the consultation had now been published, but offered little in the way of clarity, and had deferred decisions on panel configuration and on the methods to be used for the measurement of impact. It had been indirectly reported that it was possible that Archaeology would be put together in the same (sub-)panel with Geography, that History might stand alone, and therefore that Classics too might be permitted to stand alone. Members of SC agreed that it was important that the various elements of Classics should not be disaggregated and assigned to several other subjects such as Philosophy, History.
3. **Impact:** Though the new Minister for HE had sounded a sceptical note in relation to impact, there was some anxiety within the HE sector that HM Treasury was deemed to be greatly in favour of impact within the REF. It was thus unlikely that impact would not play any role, whether as 'impact' or under another name, though there was some hope that it might be reduced from 25% to 15% of the total assessment. Informal reports from English at Cambridge indicated that participation in a pilot study had been no worse than expected. The Chair had received limited materials in response to his invitation to departments to submit material to HEFCE for possible consideration. Given the short timescale, it was agreed that the Chair could take the decision whether to make any Classics submission on behalf of CUCD.
4. **Roberts Funding for research training:** This funding in support of research training would be phased out from 2010-11, though universities would continue to be required to provide training without funding. In discussion it was noted that institutions differed widely in their approaches to doctoral research training, but that generic skills provision was ill-conceived in most institutions. It was agreed that the Chair should contact AHRC to encourage them to take a lead in trying to improve this situation. Colleagues noted as well that there was a danger that institutions might attempt to expect departments to finance central arrangements for research training which had previously attracted Roberts funding. The Director of the ICS noted that there was a possible role for the ICS in co-ordinating classical research training on a national basis, which might extend what was already in place for language training and workshops on reception: this suggestion was warmly welcomed.

**5. Institute of Classical Studies and the Joint Library.**

The Director reported that the move back to South Block had gone very well. While arrangements were in general excellent, there were still some confidential security issues; since these had not been resolved, the Hellenic and Roman Societies were currently withholding rent from the UoL.

In the longer term, the future of the School of Advanced Study was a cause of uncertainty. There would be a review next year, and it was not clear that funding levels would be maintained. There was a risk that the total bill from ULRLS for the cost of the Library might exceed the combined resources generated from funding of the ICS by the SAS and the Societies, which could create financial difficulties in the future.

**6. Electronic publication on institutional websites.**

It was reported that institutions were beginning to require staff to put electronic copies of publications on institutional websites, which could create a potential conflict of interest with publishers who regularly do not permit publication of pdfs of final formtatted copy on the internet. Members of SC reported varying practice in this regard, and it was agreed that member departments should report on this issue to the Secretary.

**7. MA Benchmarking.**

Prof. Powell reported that QAA had issued new guidelines for M-level benchmarking in April 2010: the documentation was entirely generic. Only a few subjects had an M-level benchmark, and none were from the humanities. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that Prof. Powell would investigate further, and that a decision would need to be taken in the future as to whether classicists would welcome an M-level benchmark, or whether the very wide diversity of degrees already offered at M-level in classics might be restricted by a benchmarking document.

**8. Classics Subject Centre.**

Dr Francis, reporting on behalf of the Director, thanked CUCD for letters of support, and reported on developments relating to the future of the Subject Centre. Contracts of staff had now been extended until December, but a decision would be taken by the HEA in September on what, if anything, could be offered in the way of subject centre activities based in universities. The government's emergency budget later in June would be crucial in determining the level of cut in funding and the nature of HEA's decision.

Dr Francis reported that contingency plans were already in place for what might happen to classical activities in the medium term if the Subject Centres were no longer able to offer discipline-based pedagogical support. Discussions about possible use of the ICS were already in train, and it would perhaps be possible, for example, for the ICS or for classics departments to taken on responsibilities for organising provision on Language Teaching and on Teaching Ancient History. It was noted that strong links with JACT were likely to prove to be of advantage.

Most events, such as those organised on Language Teaching and on Ancient History, that had already been planned would run next year, perhaps with support for travel for delegates attending such days being withdrawn. There would also be days on research-led teaching (23 June 2010, sponsored by the ICS), and on MA restructuring (24 November 2010); the latter occasion would include the chance to consider the implications of the Bologna agreement.

**9. Treasurer's Report.**

The Secretary reported on behalf of the Treasurer that the finances were in good order [the balance was subsequently recorded as Â£4158.43 on 14 June 2010], and that his recommendation was to have no increase in departmental subscription levels this year. It was agreed that in terms of larger-scale expenditure by CUCD, it would be better to wait until there was greater clarity about issues such as impact and the general financial position of HE in the UK, before organising a CUCD-sponsored event.

**10. Update from Webmaster.**

The Secretary reported on behalf of the Webmaster that the website was in good order. Discussions with the Classics Subject Centre had taken place with a view to the migration of the now out-of-date CUCD list of external examiners to the forthcoming new website for the Subject Centre, a suggestion that was warmly welcomed.

**11. CUCD *Bulletin*.**

The Editor reported that four articles had been promised thus far for the *Bulletin*. It was noted that a new editor would need to be appointed from November 2010, since Dr McHardy's second term on SC was due to come to an end at the November Council.

**12. Statistics.**

The Statistics Officer reported that returns were beginning to arrive, following the initial call for statistics. Members of CUCD were asked to consider in the coming weeks whether there was material not currently displayed in the statistics which it would be useful to make available.

**13. Elections.**

It was noted that Dr McHardy and Prof. Powell were due to come to the end of their second term on SC in November and that two vacancies would be created, since they were not eligible for further re-election. Dr Green and Prof. Pelling would complete their first term in November and were eligible for re-election: both had indicated that they would be seeking nominations. There would thus be a total of four vacancies on SC in November. It was agreed that on the day of the elections in November the Secretary would act as returning officer, since the Elections Officer would himself be a candidate for election. The Elections Officer would in due course send out a message inviting nominations of candidates.

**14. Non-completion codes.**

Dr McHardy reported that Roehampton was applying non-completion codes to students missing the final element of assessment (which could be a single piece of work if other modules are completed) with the consequence that funding for the students was being terminated. After a brief discussion of practice in this respect in other institutions, it was agreed that Prof. Powell would investigate the matter further.

**15. Date of next meeting.**

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Saturday, 9 October 2010 at 11 am.