

# From REF to TEF

---

## Chair's Report 2015

It has been a quiet year for CUCD.

That is usually good news, and it does seem to have been a good year for classics in British Universities. For the first year in a while CUCD has not been asked to get involved in campaigns to save departments from closure or destructive restructuring.

Indeed our subject continues to expand at university level. The revised constitution, agreed in November and now available on our splendid new [website](#), recognises the presence of classical subjects in universities which do not offer entire degree programmes. Taking full members and associate members together we now represent 36 institutions. Last year we celebrated Winchester offering degrees in ancient history and archaeology. This coming year Southampton and Manchester Metropolitan will do the same. New degrees seem to grow where students have already enjoyed taking classical courses. This new growth is a tribute to the inspirational work of teachers in universities and before that in schools as well.

If you are reading this, it follows you have located the new website and the new look Bulletin which went live in January. But this is a good moment to thank those who set it up especially our long-standing Webmaster Nick Lowe, Valerie James at the ICS, and our Bulletin Editor Susan Deacy. Subject Associations are all about communication: this will make a real difference. We would be glad of suggestions for other things we and/or the ICS could do to make it more useful yet. Several articles in this and recent Bulletins testify to the energetic work of the Education Committee, now working very closely with the Classical Association's teaching board. To all those who have organized events, panels at the CA conferences and have kept an eye on how changes in school teaching of classical languages and subjects may impact on university programmes, many thanks.

CUCD officers and the standing committee have continued playing our part across the HE landscape. December saw the final approval of [the revised QAA benchmarking statement](#). January saw the publication of Geoffrey Crossick's [report for HEFCE on Open Access and Monographs](#) to which we contributed. We also contributed to OFQUAL's consultation about AS and A levels in ancient languages, and with the Classical Association wrote to the Times expressing our concern about decoupling the AS and A levels (so students in the lower sixth could not be taught together on those courses) and also about changes to the GCSE Latin syllabus. In May we were asked, at very short notice, to contribute to an evaluation commissioned by the British Academy into the value of the [BASIS institutions](#). Every university department that responded to our rather rushed consultation stressed the huge value of the British schools in Athens, Rome and Ankara in supporting research and graduate education in particular. We await the report of Professor Warry's Evaluation committee.

The big news this year, of course, was the publication of the REF results. There were no huge surprises here – ours is a fairly stable discipline and, as Robin Osborne the Panel Chair stressed when he spoke about the results to Standing Committee in

June, Classics does not really have a tail in the way some subjects do. Good news again? Except it seems an increasingly expensive form of regular health check, and not just in financial terms: more on that [elsewhere in this Bulletin](#).

What about the year to come?

There is a great deal of uncertainty in the sector as a whole, of course, with a comprehensive spending review scheduled before Christmas that promises huge cuts to most government departments. It might take a few months before we know how cuts are passed on the Funding Councils, and what they intend to do about them. Meanwhile Sir Paul Nurse is conducting [a review into the Research Councils](#). Commissioned by the Coalition Government it will report imminently to its Conservative successor. The general election brought with it a new Business Secretary, Sajid Javid MP and a new Minister of State for Universities and Science, Jo Johnson MP. In his [first major speech](#) he announced:

my priority as Universities Minister will be to make sure students get the teaching they deserve and employers get graduates with the skills they need by introducing the Teaching Excellence Framework we promised in our manifesto.

Part of our work next year will be to contribute to discussions about what form the TEF will take. We are promised that it will be light touch and not bureaucratic but will involve some kind of external review. But we do not yet have answers to even basic questions such as Will panels of university teachers be involved as well as metrics? Or will the devolved administrations choose to participate? At present the Funding Councils for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (but not Scotland) are [consulting on teaching quality assurance and the external examiner system](#). But their steering group is not discussing the TEF, and there is no sense yet of how the two sets of reforms will fit together (they promise that they will).

Some REF survivors will doubtless be tempted to respond with Dorothy Parker's words "What fresh Hell can this be?" On the other hand, the huge success of classics courses at the moment shows that some competent assessors – our students – think we are doing something right. It will be important to get that message across in the TEF.

**Greg Woolf**

**[Greg.Woolf@sas.ac.uk](mailto:Greg.Woolf@sas.ac.uk)**

# The Future of Postgraduate Training and Skills Development

## CA Roundtable Report

In June 2012 the QAA published new guidelines on the research, personal and professional skills training that universities should be providing for students on research programmes (*QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education – Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality – Chapter B11: Research degrees*). These guidelines replaced the 2004 Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education and became the reference point for the purposes of reviews carried out by QAA from June 2013. Chapter B11 sets out a series of 18 'Indicators' that reflect sound practice, and through which higher education providers can demonstrate they are meeting QAA expectations. Indicator 14 requires that:

Research students have appropriate opportunities for developing research, personal and professional skills. Each research student's development needs are identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate staff at the start of the degree; these are regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate.

The training to meet these needs is increasingly provided at institutional level, through Graduate Schools and Doctoral Colleges or similar. But what professional training should and could be delivered at Departmental level? Are we adequately preparing our PhDs for future careers in and outside academia? Are we providing adequate training in ancient and modern languages? Are we providing adequate support and training to help our postgraduates become effective lecturers? What models of sound practice exist in the sector that might be shared with other departments? And how can a commitment to developing personal and professional skills be reconciled against competing pressures to ensure that research students complete and submit on time, alongside financial pressures that require students to work and study part-time? The following papers, based on presentations at the Nottingham CA Roundtable, address these and other key questions.

During the plenary discussion at this roundtable we looked at some of the models of good practice that exist in Classics and Ancient History Departments internationally. Ronnie Ancona (Professor and Graduate Director at Hunter College, New York) generously shared the following:

<http://apaclassic.org/education/careers-for-classicists>

At this link are directions for downloading the whole document as a pdf or one can browse by section. We have encouraged departments to share this information with students and faculty. While some of it is clearly aimed at the US market, the overall points may be useful for UK based PGRs too. It includes some honest words about the job market...

[http://www.aclclassics.org/uploads/assets/files/Standards\\_for\\_Latin\\_Teacher\\_Preparation.pdf](http://www.aclclassics.org/uploads/assets/files/Standards_for_Latin_Teacher_Preparation.pdf)

While this document is aimed at preparing secondary school Latin teachers, it has value for all of us who teach Latin or prepare (indirectly or otherwise) future Latin teachers.

Finally, here is a link to abstracts from a panel Ronnie co-organized for APA on graduate education in pedagogy for PhD students. The papers themselves have now been published in the Paedagogus section of Classical World 106 (2012), 103-129:

<http://apa.classics.org/education/2012-education-committee-panel-and-abstracts>

**Genevieve Liveley, University of Bristol ([G.Liveley@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:G.Liveley@bristol.ac.uk))**

# The Future of Postgraduate Training and Skills Development

## *What Postgraduates Want*

The CUCD panel at the 2014 Classical Association conference was a roundtable discussion about 'The Future of Postgraduate Training and Skills Development' convened by Dr Genevieve Lively. As a current PhD student at the University of Glasgow, I was asked to begin the discussion by giving my ideas about 'What Postgraduates Want'.

Of course, everyone will have different backgrounds and requirements, but there are lots of things that are hard about being a postgraduate, including researching (especially in foreign languages); writing abstracts; being a teacher; being a member of staff (sort of); being supervised; getting involved in the department (or faculty); organising conferences and workshops; marking essays; thinking about the future; doing "enough". These things boil down into three groups: teaching, researching, and CV building, and I will discuss each of them in detail.

Teaching came up again and again when I spoke to other postgraduates about this subject, and that shouldn't be a surprise. Teaching is a brand new thing for postgraduate students, something they will mostly have no experience of and little time to prioritise. That means that training and ongoing support are essential because otherwise both postgraduates and undergraduates suffer. While general introductions to teaching practice are useful, the most helpful teaching advice I have received has been subject specific, even course specific.

Observing other people's teaching practice can be a quick and easy way to get new ideas and perspectives on teaching. Peer-observation can be thought-provoking for both parties without being time-consuming, providing models of what to do (or not). This is something Fiona McHardy also recommended during her talk, which followed later in the roundtable discussion. This year (2014-15), Classics at the University of Glasgow has introduced a peer-observation system whereby postgraduates and members of staff observe one another in teams. There was some initial reluctance among postgraduates who were worried about the criticism they might receive but the results have all been positive and constructive. Personally, this has made me think about self-presentation, and observing others has taught me new techniques for student engagement as well as how to deal with inevitably not knowing everything.

Essay marking is also difficult for postgraduates who have only ever been on the receiving end of that process before. Although by postgraduate level you are able to critically assess written work, it is often difficult to translate that into a mark that you are confident is a fair one. I think there are a lot of postgraduates who would appreciate spending more time with experienced essay markers to get a greater sense of doing the right thing – for the student whose essay they are marking as well as for themselves.

Another key area is researching. One PhD student emailed me to say: "I am in the final few weeks of my PhD and feel I would have really gained from having some honest advice both before and in the first few weeks of my PhD". This suggests that there could be more guidance at the beginning about what to expect, giving an outline of progress or milestones that you could reach in order to hit that three year

deadline. PhD students are ever more aware that they are working to a schedule and formalising this process further is not necessarily a bad thing to give people confidence that they are “on track”.

More training would also be beneficial in language learning. I am glad that my supervisors have supported me in learning Italian in the Modern Languages department at Glasgow and I have benefited from taking a structured course with regular assessment and feedback. The problem is, of course, that learning a language takes a long time. This is a problem that could be addressed earlier by integrating modern language learning into Classics (and other subjects) at undergraduate level.

The last challenge is training in careers beyond lecturing and academia. As there aren't enough jobs in academia there have to be effective resources available for planning careers outside academia, including applying for jobs, writing CVs, doing interviews. At Glasgow they do provide training days and workshops in each of these areas. But the other thing, of course, is having the time and opportunity to go off campus and get the experience necessary to fill in the gaps of your CV and make credible applications. Transferable skills aren't always enough, I think, to get a job.



Jennifer at Sacred Heart Primary School, one of The Iris Project schools in Glasgow. ©Martin Shields, *Herald & Times*

Doing outreach is a win-win in this respect, as it can feed into your research as well as being fun. Working with schools, organising talks, speaking to the media are all good ways for postgraduates to get experience outside academia that might help in the long run. I have been involved with the Communicating Ancient Greece and Rome project run by APGRD at the University of Oxford

<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/learning/communicating-ancient-greece-and-rome/school-trips-with-the-iris-project>) and the training they have provided in speaking to the media, writing pitches to newspapers, and working with external organisations has shown me that there are lots of opportunities out there.

So what do postgraduates want? In my opinion: help with teaching, honest advice about doing a PhD, and solid career guidance. Training doesn't have to be formal, expensive or time consuming. Some of the best training might come from a departmental meeting, supervision, or chat with the course convener about how they would grade a particular essay. Lecturers and professors have a wealth of experience to offer postgraduates and something as simple as making time for a coffee every once in a while could make a big difference.

In the discussion that followed we talked about how this kind of mentoring could benefit postgraduates as well as whether supervisors themselves needed training on this issue. It was suggested that more engagement with industry could help postgraduates to gain knowledge and experience outside academia, possibly taking advantage of alumni networks. Finally, we also thought about how to “sell”

the postgraduate experience to future employers, before we moved on to the next discussion point: 'What Postgraduates Need' by Dr Shushma Malik.

**Jennifer Hilder, University of Glasgow (<https://twitter.com/JenniferHilder>)**

# The Future of Postgraduate Training and Skills Development

## *What Postgraduates Need*

Academic jobs have always been extremely competitive. Recently, growing numbers of PhD and DPhil students has combined with financial uncertainties in the public sector to make arguably some of the most competitive years of all. However, we must not lose heart. Excellent projects such as Professor Eleanor Dickey's blog [Hortensii](#) ensure that the insecurity postgraduate researchers face in terms of job prospects continues to attract attention and be taken seriously.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there are many things that postgraduates themselves can do during their own studies to maximise their employability, both within academia and outside it. We must remember that doctoral work equips us with a wide set of skills that a whole range of employers consider valuable; for some academia is the ultimate goal, but we should not assume that teaching and/or research positions in Higher Education Institutions are for everyone. Consequently, a greater number of universities are offering their students a variety of skills training opportunities that allow postgraduate researchers to bolster their CVs beyond the traditional activities of academic research and teaching.<sup>2</sup> A combination of established and newer training programmes can help to give students a range of options following graduation. However, it can take time for us to decide which career path we want to follow. Therefore, I will discuss how to acquire the specific skills that universities demand of potential candidates applying for their first jobs, and how those same skills can also be valuable for employers outside of the academy. All of the routes I suggest and advice I offer is based on what I have seen and done; I cannot and do not claim to be speaking for anyone other than myself. I studied for my PhD in Classics at the University of Bristol, and graduated in July 2013. Since September 2013, I have held a temporary lectureship in Ancient History at the University of Manchester. This piece is the product of my participation in the CUCD panel at the 2014 Classical Association Conference (University of Nottingham), in which Jennifer Hilder and I presented companion papers on postgraduate 'wants' and 'needs'. While this article is aimed at (and addressed to) those currently studying for a PhD/DPhil, I hope that it will also be useful for academics already in post, particularly current supervisors of doctoral students in Classics and Ancient History.

For those intending to pursue an academic career, reading the 'Essential' (let alone the 'Desirable') criteria in the 'Further Particulars' of a vacancy post for the first time can be somewhat daunting. Teaching experience (often including language teaching), publications, and administrative experience are three fundamental aspects of an academic job, but how can a postgraduate gain this experience *ahead* of their first academic post? The answer, or at least part of the answer, I suggest, is to take advantage of less obvious opportunities that can provide similar experience and many of the relevant skills. Widening participation programmes, private tuition, and university internships, for example, can allow a postgraduate to gain valuable, transferable skills that will help to fill out a CV and cover letter for most

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://hortensii.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>2</sup> Many training programmes adhere to the guidelines and principles laid out by Vitae's Researcher Development Framework: <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework>.



types of job. Certainly, completing a PhD/DPhil thesis in a timely manner is the priority and ultimate goal, but we cannot ignore the fact that the majority of jobs in the 'current climate' (some postdoctoral research fellowships excluded) do not just require a completed thesis, but a wider set of developed academic skills as well. Similarly, we cannot deny that a first academic job demands the ability to cope with a wide variety of tasks in a limited amount of time. CV-building beyond the thesis goes some way towards preparation for this.

### Teaching

Teaching experience at university level can be difficult to acquire, particularly experience of teaching groups larger than ca.15 students. Seminar teaching is extremely valuable, but it also helps if you can demonstrate the capacity to lecture to a hall full of first or second year undergraduates. Here, widening participation and outreach programmes can help. Giving talks in these programmes allows you to lecture to a large group of students in a university environment on broad topics in Classics and Ancient History (i.e. not just your own research specialism). Your students are likely to be in the process of completing their A-Levels (16-18 years old), and are therefore fairly close in age to first year undergraduates. Crucially, in addition to looking good on your CV, preparing for these lectures will help to develop skills in pitching your material at the right level. After years of intense research, widening participation teaching forces postgraduates to take a step back and work on communicating classical subjects to non-specialist audiences. To get involved in widening participation, contact your departmental Admissions Officer and put yourself forward. It is a fun and worthwhile way to bolster the 'teaching' section of a CV. Personally, as a PhD student and as a lecturer, I have greatly enjoyed going into schools and talking to students about Roman history. Many of these students had not studied the ancient world before but were very keen to ask questions and participate in discussions. Increasing awareness of our discipline amongst students in this way is, I think, extremely rewarding work.

Also familiar from job descriptions is the line: 'the candidate will be able to teach ancient languages'. Classics and Ancient History departments can have large cohorts of *ab initio* Latin and/or Greek students, and often need their new staff (both temporary and permanent) to contribute to language teaching. At the same time, however, this can be extremely difficult experience to gain as a postgraduate, particularly if you only started learning these languages yourself at undergraduate level. A solution that helps you to gain some ancient language teaching experience, and will help your own language skills considerably, is personal tutoring.<sup>3</sup> A growing number of schools in the UK are offering GCSE and A-Level Greek and Latin to their students, not to mention fellow postgraduate students in related disciplines (e.g. History) for whom knowledge of an ancient language might prove useful. By providing private tuition on a one-to-one basis, you can learn how to articulate complicated rules of grammar and syntax effectively to another person (not an easy task to begin with). While studying for my own PhD in Bristol, I was lucky enough to have two tutees over two and a half years: one teenager also studying Latin and Greek at school, and one postdoctoral fellow only studying Greek with me. Apart from giving me language teaching experience to add to my CV and discuss in an interview, it also required me to build up a bank of teaching materials for two different types of student. These materials have proved very useful in my first academic job.

---

<sup>3</sup> There are many tutoring companies across the UK that need teachers for a range of subjects, and can organise either home visits or online tutorial sessions. One example is 3A Tutors Limited, based in Bristol: <http://www.3at.org.uk/www.3at.org.uk/info.php?p=9>.

## Conferences and Publishing

In an ideal world, all postgraduates would be in the position to include at least one substantial publication on their CV by the time they apply for their first academic job. However, this is not always an easy goal to achieve for a number of reasons. For some, a lack of time is to blame, for others, a lack of opportunity, and for a third



Group photo from the *Eleventh UNISA Classics Colloquium: Integrity and Corruption in Antiquity* at the University of South Africa in Pretoria, October 2010. Pictured here are academics at all career stages: postgraduate researchers, recently graduated postdocs, established 'in post' staff and distinguished professors. I am in the third row up, the second person in from the right.

group, anxiety about committing words to print so early in a research career. All of these problems, I think, can be helped by active participation in academic conferences.

It goes without saying that participation in conferences throughout postgraduate study is immeasurably useful in getting your research out into the wider world and for obtaining feedback from experts in your field. However, we must not underestimate the broader opportunities that can arise from having our research heard by others at small specialist colloquia and large

annual meetings. Presenting a paper could lead to an invitation from an academic or postgraduate to present your research at a future conference or seminar series, which allows your work to benefit from the suggestions and comments of an additional audience. Moreover, it could provide the (gentle) encouragement you need to publish your first chapter or article. Organisers of specialist conferences often publish a volume of conference proceedings, for which you could revise and submit your paper. Alternatively, comments you receive from your audience could give you the confidence required to revise your paper and send it to a journal. I published my first article in a supplementary volume of a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the proceedings of a conference I attended in Pretoria, South Africa in the third year of my PhD. It was reassuring to know that my paper had already undergone scrutiny by the conference participants before the written-up article went to peer reviewers. Ultimately, presenting research papers has a multitude of positive outcomes that go beyond the conference itself, and can lead to some impressive additions to your CV.

## Administration

Proving that you have relevant administrative experience for an academic job can often be the hardest part of a job application to write. Convening (organising and running) an entire course by yourself, or acting as an officer within a department are tasks that postgraduates cannot usually perform. Here, as with teaching, the key is to

show that you know what it takes (and have experience in aspects of what it takes) to be trusted with academic administration from the start. For me, that meant a part-time (paid) university internship.

I cannot stress enough the benefits of working part-time within your own department or institution instead of for an external company. Universities understand the timetables and pressures placed on students and often offer flexible contracts where hours can be changed according to individual needs. During the final year of my PhD, I worked in my university's Research Office for 15 hours per week (on which days those 15 hours of work were done was entirely up to me) as the intern on a project focused on developing postgraduate skills training. I quickly became very familiar with organising, attending, and presenting at high-level meetings in an administrative instead of an academic context – tasks that departmental officers often undertake. Even aspects of the job as mundane as sending and answering large numbers of emails proved relevant for convening/organising a course unit where a large number of students are often in frequent contact. Moreover, it proves that you have taken time to acquire as many of the skills you can to meet academic job criteria and gives you convincing evidence for your interview panel. To find out what opportunities your institution offers, check regularly your Careers Service website for jobs aimed specifically at postgraduates.

### **Beyond the Academy**

Perhaps the most important aspect of the suggestions I have just made is that all of them equip postgraduate students with skills that are also applicable outside of academia. When I was working in the university Research Office, all of my colleagues had doctorates. In fact, a PhD/DPhil was an essential criterion for their posts. There are a variety of employers in the private and public sectors that value the attributes of postgraduate researchers. By presenting at conferences and/or teaching, candidates with doctorates can prove their experience of, and comfort with, presenting ideas coherently in front of groups. The ability not only to learn languages but to help others learn them too is impressive on any CV. In addition, the independence, focus and drive required to undertake and complete a significant research project are extremely valuable transferable skills. Whether applying for an academic job or not, passion and enthusiasm about past, present and future projects and opportunities are appealing and contagious.

I realise that all of the CV-boosting activities I have outlined here require time away from a doctoral thesis. However, the reality of the job market in which we are competing is such that a PhD/DPhil alone is no longer enough to gain most types of academic employment. Similarly, other professional employers value skills training beyond specialised research. As it is highly likely that, in your first job, you will have to juggle a large number of unfamiliar tasks, pushing yourself as a doctoral student to find time for widening participation lectures, language tutoring and possibly some administrative work is a skill well worth acquiring in and of itself.

**Shushma Malik, University of Manchester**

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/research/shushma.malik/>