

# Bulletin of the COUNCIL of UNIVERSITY CLASSICAL DEPARTMENTS



**Bulletin 29 (1999)**

## **Contents**

Parthian Glances

Christopher Rowe

Chair's Report 1999

Appendix: correspondence between Peter Wiseman and David Pilsbury (Head of Research Policy, HEFCE)

Geoffrey Eatough

Classics at British Universities, 1998-9: Statistics

Mary Beard, John Richardson, Dorothy Thompson

CUCD Conference Panel, Liverpool 1999: "Money, Money, Money"

Robin Osborne

JACT Ancient History A Level: the new specification

Stephen Hill

JACT Classical Civilisation A Level: the new specification

## Parthian Glances

To begin with the annual roll-call of saviours of the editor's bacon, special thanks are due this issue to Robin Osborne and Stephen Hill, who produced their articles on the changes in A-Level syllabus at near-zero notice - following a Standing Committee meeting in October at which it emerged that few colleagues knew anything about these far-reaching changes to the structure of the subject in schools. Like too many things this year (v. Chair's Report *passim*), these changes have come in so rapidly that many are only now beginning to register their significance. We should be particularly grateful to the colleagues who have set the new structures out so clearly, and for their own long and largely thankless work in getting these new curricula in place.

The above notwithstanding, long-time readers may notice a bit of a hole at the centre of this year's contents. It's traditional for the *Bulletin* to leaven its joyless recitations of new administrative structures and bureaucratic shenanigans with inspirational articles on the kinds of professional matter that actually get our juices flowing. (Language teaching is always a reliable winner.) One can only hope that it is a sign more of editorial fatigue than of anything in the times that this year's *Bulletin* is the first to include no such article, and (more worrying still) that the editor found himself instead perversely spellbound by the Chair's report and HEFCE letters.

When that happens, it's time to get out. By an unusual conjunction of the spheres, this season sees a mass rotation of CUCD officers as the team that has managed the show for the last few years collectively expires. But five years is quite long enough for the *Bulletin* to be dragged downhill by the same editor. All else apart, I am now two daughters the wealthier - both choosing to arrive at *Bulletin* time, a demonstration of power to which both have continued to live up - and I live in annual dread of more if I don't lay down the reins now. At least I take away from the experience a rich accumulation of editorial how-not-tos, including:

- An illusion of professionalism would be much enhanced by spelling the titles of articles correctly.
- The patience of printers is more limited than the excuses of colleagues, and that last-minute article you're holding on for never, *ever* does actually arrive.
- Beware of the innate decency and sensitive respect for human weakness that characterise our profession: if you do something that utterly transcends all normal bounds of human witlessness, such as putting the wrong title on three successive issues or leaving the wrong contents page on the web for a full year, colleagues will be far too polite to draw your attention to it.
- *Nobody but the editor* is the least interested in the fact that covers for the last five years were generated (in about 30 seconds each; cave, lector) by a long-dead music program which can also be trained to do an impressive\* line in ambient galliambics.
- Editorials should be written more than ten minutes before the issue goes off to the printers.

I leave it to my successor to uphold the high standards I have consistently set in the disregard of these matters. Except at the time of year when it happens, editing the *Bulletin* is a generally enjoyable activity; I hope its satisfactions may yet conquer even that remaining unscaled height.

\* (Provided that one is easily impressed.)

# CHAIR'S REPORT: 1998-9

*Christopher Rowe*

A written report from the Chair (please note the change from 'Chairman', approved by the last meeting of Council) again seems appropriate. Thanks to assiduous use of e-mail facilities, I have managed a good deal more consultation this year, and I know that many on my circulation list (mainly Heads of Departments, or ex-Heads of Departments, and Standing Committee members) make a habit of consulting their colleagues before responding to my circulars. However this is still likely to leave many out of the loop; moreover it is probably in any case a good idea to look back and reflect on the implications of what has been going on during the year.

What has certainly emerged, once more, is that CUCD as currently structured is not well-placed - either structurally or financially - to deal with the sheer quantity of business that, in common with other subject associations, it is now expected to handle. Although both the Funding Councils and the QAA appear regularly either to forget to contact us or to lose our address, both officially recognize the importance of consulting with subject associations, and fitfully use us as a conduit into particular subject-areas. In this new environment the old arrangements, with a single meeting of Council every year, and three meetings of Standing Committee, are just not adequate, insofar as - despite the benefits of e-mail - the Chair ends up having more of a say (or at any rate this Chair feels that he has ended up having more of a say) than seems healthy in what is meant to be a representative organisation. Standing Committee has discussed the issues, and will return to them. We probably need more meetings of Standing Committee (which would require a further significant rise in subscriptions), if not of Council; we probably also need a more formal process of election to Standing Committee, and to the offices of the association; and I think a case could well be made out for working groups to handle particular issues.

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I may begin the main part of my report with two items mentioned in the Postscript of the report for 1997-8 (*Bulletin* 27, 1998, 16-17).

- a. Professor John Davies kindly attended the Subject Association conference organised by the QAA in Manchester on 8.12.98, and produced a very full set of reports on the occasion, later circulated to members.
- b. To HEFCE Circular letter number 36/98 (on 'Subject centres to support learning and teaching in higher education'), I replied on 27.11.98, as follows:

'CUCD proposes to respond only to a very limited number of the questions in the consultation document, observing that the time allowed for consultation has proved far from sufficient for proper and systematic discussion of the issues by those directly concerned with them. Institutions may be able to respond quickly; subject associations, whose members are widely scattered, find it rather more difficult to do so, even with the benefits of electronic communication.

**QA.5** We are in principle in favour of support for innovation and the spread of best practice in teaching and learning, but we see considerable difficulties in establishing

such support in the case of multidisciplinary areas like our own. Insofar as different disciplines may involve differing strategies, they might need to draw on expertise developed in widely different areas. Thus while on grounds of economy one might prefer unitary Subject centres, in practice a distributed system (if of a rather different kind from the one described) might have to be developed for such subjects.

**QA.10** The grouping of 'classical languages' with ancient history, history and archaeology in Centre 16 makes a kind of sense if 'classical languages' means 'Classics'; if it means what it says, 'classical languages' ought presumably to be with 'languages', and then the remaining areas within Classics, apart from ancient history and classical archaeology, would be unaccounted for, unless they were taken as subsumed under related non-Classical disciplines. As the response to QA.5 indicates, Classics cannot easily be accommodated within any single coherent grouping, just because of its multidisciplinary nature. A centre which attempted to develop the strategies necessary for each of the constituent disciplines of Classics would itself be extraordinarily diverse; one ancient ('historical') subject is not made akin to another just by virtue of being ancient. (Philosophy appears to be one subject altogether missing from the list: here too Classics has an interest, insofar as it includes the study of ancient philosophy.)

**QD.2** We raise here, once more, the inadequate time allowed for consultation.'

Further business for CUCD then came thick and fast:

- c. [strictly a continuation of (a)] I requested advice from colleagues about how we should proceed to set up the Subject Benchmarking Group for Classics and Ancient History - one of the key elements in the TQA structure the QAA presently intends to introduce as a replacement for the present one. Eventually, we were formally asked to set up this Group, and after canvassing member departments for nominations, Standing Committee proposed the following names (subsequently accepted by the QAA):

Malcolm Schofield, David Braund, Christopher Carey, Philip de Souza, Ken Dowden, Chris Emlyn-Jones, Alan Lloyd, Charles Martindale, Elizabeth Moignard, Robin Osborne, Jerry Paterson, Tessa Rajak, Charlotte Roueché, Bob Sharples, and Chris Tuplin, with (representing Modern Greek) Elizabeth Jeffreys and (representing Byzantine Studies) Margaret Mullett (Modern Greek and Byzantine Studies were included with Classics and Ancient History at the request of the QAA: both subjects initially questioned the idea, but decided to go along with it).

Malcolm Schofield has chaired the Group, with Gillian King acting as volunteer Secretary. We were probably the first subject-area to set up its benchmarking group, for which we earned the warm thanks of the QAA at the time. The result is that Standing Committee had a draft of our benchmarking statement before it at its October meeting, whereas I gather that e.g. the Philosophy benchmarking group was due to have its *first* meeting only at the end of September. Our promptness is not a sign of weakness, but rather of a desire to get and keep control of the process, so far as is humanly possible. It remains to be seen whether the group have actually been given a task which is conceptually coherent (and at the time of writing the QAA in general appears to be in some disarray in its relationship with the Funding Councils).

Standing Committee was broadly in favour of the draft statement, evidently finding it at any rate coherent in itself; Malcolm Schofield will introduce it to Council. He and the other members of the group, and Gillian King, deserve a considerable vote of thanks for taking this job on and doing it with such evident effect and efficiency. We must now wait to see how the QAA and the Funding Councils receive it, and how it may be used in the promised new TQA regime.

- d. [a continuation of (b)] The process towards the setting up of a 'History' Learning and Teaching Support Centre has been one of the more colourful parts of my year. Early on, we and the archaeologists began to get together, on the understanding that the decision to lump both subjects together with History was irreversible, and that as smaller subjects we would be better off working in concert. I was invited to attend a meeting of the Standing Committee of University Professors and Heads of Departments of Archaeology (SCUPHA) in York; meanwhile the History at the Universities Defence Group, chaired by Anthony Fletcher, had begun planning for a Centre which would be not only put together but actually run by the relevant subject associations. In part this was a defensive move, to prevent the field being left to the CTI (Computers in Teaching Initiative) Centre for history, archaeology, and art history in Glasgow, which looked in a strong position to bid for the new Centre. There followed an extraordinary series of meetings of historians of different colours and affiliations, including not only HUDG and Glasgow, but History 2000, the Institute of Historical Studies, and the Royal Historical Society (and others). One or more of John Davies, Bob Sharples and I attended several of these meetings, and had reports of others. There was also a meeting between HUDG, SCUPHA and CUCD with the HEFCE officer responsible for the whole initiative, Cliff Allan.

However at a fairly early stage both we and the archaeologists began to part company with HUDG, not least because HUDG appeared to us to be proposing a heavily management-orientated Centre, remote from any centres of recognized expertise in learning and teaching matters. We joined forces with History 2000, based in Nottingham and Bath, and ultimately supported a proposal for a distributed Centre based on these two universities, with archaeology (in the persons of Lin Foxhall, David Mattingly, and others) located in Leicester and Classics (in the person of Lorna Hardwick) located at the Open University. The main strength of this proposal, we thought, was that it was built around people who were in fact already working in the development of learning and teaching.

An enormous amount of work was put into this proposal, especially by Lorna and Lin. In the event, the Funding Councils agreed that it should go forward into the second and final stage of the bidding process, along with a separate bid from Glasgow (which had its archaeology element based in Reading, and so far as I know no detailed provision for Classics and Ancient History); a third bid, from HUDG - so I am told - was rejected. At the same time, the Councils (in fact mainly SHEFCE, who are running this particular show) made it clear privately that they preferred the Glasgow bid, mainly because it involved a securer management structure - and clearly in general they had turned their backs on the idea of a distributed Centre. However, in the second stage (which came to an end on 30.9.99) Glasgow decided to try to amalgamate its bid with ours, largely because they needed the approval of subject associations. After much hard work, on the Classics side all done by Lorna, a new consolidated bid has gone in. If this is accepted, and so far as we know it will be the

only bid, the new 'History' Centre will be based in Glasgow, but the Subject Director for Classics and Ancient History will be Lorna, in the Open University, with archaeology in Leicester. I should like to express my special thanks to Lorna for her part in what has been a pretty messy affair - and also to the archaeologists (especially Clive Gamble in Southampton) who have stuck with us throughout. I fervently hope that the bid *will* be accepted: based where she is, Lorna will have access to all sorts of relevant resources; there should also be funding to employ the equivalent of a whole person to run an office (to be provided by the OU) and to begin the sorts of initiatives that we think necessary. There will be some continuing input into the Centre from subject associations; so far we have identified problems of limited language teaching as a priority.

For the record, I append the text of the letters which I wrote in support (i) of the first-stage bid (based on Nottingham/Bath/Leicester/OU) and (ii) of the second-stage bid.

- i. 'I write as Chair of the Council of University Classical Departments (the recognised subject association for Classics and Ancient History) to express the full support of the Council for the relevant part of the bid for Subject Centre 18 to which this letter is attached, i.e. the part relating to Classics and Ancient History.

'Our support is based on a number of factors. (1) The bid proposes a scheme for a distributed Centre which provides for a management and staffing structure, and a division of resources, appropriate to the perceived needs of our subject area. It concentrates resources on staff who would be able to address those needs directly, with a relatively small amount devoted to overall management within the distributed Centre. This, rather than e.g. a top-heavy model concentrating resources on an expensive Director and single staff-members covering each subject, appears to us the most obviously cost-effective arrangement, not least because of the great diversity of the area labelled as 'Classics' (see below). A strong management committee for the Centre as a whole, drawn from the three subject associations, would at the same time provide for tight control of general policy and administration. (2) We began negotiating with Leicester (covering Archaeology) and the Open University (Classics and Ancient History) on the basis that these two institutions already contained individuals and groups with a proven track record in the Learning and Teaching area relevant to the two subjects, which are in any case in some respects closely linked. Indeed, the involvement of the Open University was originally at the suggestion of CUCD, precisely because it is in the Open University that the most systematic work of the relevant sort, for Classics and Ancient History, is currently being carried out. The coupling of the Open University with Leicester, a location which - as we understand it - has the support of the archaeologists, then looked obviously attractive, not only because of the geographical proximity of the two institutions, but because there is strong representation from both Ancient History and Classical Archaeology in Leicester.

'We have throughout remained in close contact both with the main Archaeology subject association (SCUPHA), and with the main History subject association (HUDG). It is still unclear to us exactly what scheme

HUDG will propose, although they have assured us that they are entirely in favour of a distributed Centre, and are happy to have the Archaeology and Classics and Ancient History arms of such a Centre based in Leicester and the Open University. In principle, then, we should be open to involvement in any bid that may emerge from HUDG. However our latest information suggests that they are likely to propose a division of resources that would not obviously permit the type of arrangement we have negotiated with Leicester and the Open University, insofar as it would retain too large a proportion of available resources for History itself. It is our view that the needs of subject areas in terms of the dissemination of good practice and the development of learning and teaching practice do not increase in proportion e.g. to the number of those teaching in a particular area, but rather in proportion to the diversity and complexity of subject areas. (In relation to Classics and Ancient History, it is worth noting that for the next TQA round, the subject has been divided into thirteen broad sub-areas.) We are also concerned that the whole Centre, as well as its distributed arms, should be based firmly in existing expertise in the development of learning and teaching: see (1) above. Our support for any overall bid must be conditional both on this, and on what we believe to be the proper distribution of funding between the three subject areas, on which the fulfilment of the first condition in fact partly depends.

'I should add that we have also been in communication with CTICH in Glasgow, who have recently indicated that an institutional bid either for the whole Centre, or for the History part of a distributed Centre, might be forthcoming from the University of Glasgow. Were the first to materialise, notwithstanding that we have the greatest respect for our Classical colleagues in that institution, we have no confidence, or evidence, that Glasgow could in general offer our subject area what is offered by the Leicester/Open element of the present bid.'

The contents of this letter were endorsed by the Standing Committee of the Council of University Classical Departments at a meeting on 22 May 1999.

- ii. 'This letter is to confirm the approval of the Council of University Classical Departments, the relevant Subject Association for Classics and Ancient History, of those parts relating to Classics and Ancient History of the revised bid now being entered by the University of Glasgow for the proposed Learning and Teaching Centre for History, Archaeology, and Classics and Ancient History. The bid, as it stands at today's date, appears to us, and from the point of view of our own subject-area, to provide a good compromise between the original bids made respectively by Glasgow, and by Nottingham together with Bath, Leicester, and the Open University. Our approval is of course conditional on the appropriate settlement of any matters that may be outstanding (which will in any case now be relatively minor), and also presumes that the goodwill exists on both sides to ensure that not merely the letter but also the spirit of what has been agreed in the negotiations between yourself and Dr Hardwick (on behalf of Classics and Ancient History) will be observed in the development of what we must all hope will be a successful enterprise. We in the Classics community will certainly do our best to help it to succeed, and make best use of the public money involved.

'I should like to take this opportunity of thanking you and your colleagues [sc. in Glasgow] for the splendidly positive way in which negotiations in the whole matter have been conducted over the last few weeks. This by itself may well make the penultimate sentence in the preceding paragraph look unnecessarily negative; but in a formal letter even the obvious probably needs stating.'

- e. 2001 Research Assessment Exercise: nomination of panel members. CUCD was asked to forward its list of nominees by 11.12.98; Standing Committee duly sent in a list based on nominations made by member departments. (We included a nomination to cover classical archaeology and art history: see below [will be reference under relevant item (report on response to RAE 4/99) to omission of such coverage on panel].)
- f. Following the informal address to Council by Paul Langford, the Chairman and Chief Executive of the new Arts and Humanities Research Board, I wrote to Professor Langford after the January meeting of Standing Committee as follows:

'The Standing Committee of the Council of University Classical Departments met last Saturday (23 January 1999), with the AHRB as one of the items on the agenda.

'First, I should like to reiterate our thanks for your generosity in giving up your time, at such short notice, to address our Council last November. Your presentation was both illuminating and reassuring, as was your subsequent letter to Richard Janko - which you kindly copied to me, and which formed part of the background to our agenda item last Saturday.

'In fact, our Panel members are keeping us abreast of developments, and I think I may broadly say that we are thus far happy enough with the way things are proceeding. We particularly welcome the series of AHRB seminars, which will no doubt provide an occasion to raise specific issues.

'I thought it might, nevertheless, be helpful just to mention two points which, for the moment, remain matters of concern to us. 1. While it is reassuring that funding for Arts and Humanities will be separately ring-fenced, it is not yet clear what kinds of criteria will be used to divide up the humanities' share of the cake. Maybe these have not yet been finally decided; and perhaps there should be no cause for concern, given all the indications that the new structures will be designed for fairness and transparency. However it is not altogether easy to see how fairness might be translated into practice: thus for example any quantitative measure, or so it seems to us, would need to take into account not just (e.g.) the number of research-active staff who were working in a particular area, but the proportion of staff in a particular area who were research-active, numbers of research students, and in general the *level* and quality of research activity in that area. 2. Your general letter of 25 November asks for nominations for the Board and for the panels from 'institutions, learned societies and professional associations'. We are anxious that the balance in any process of consultation should be tilted towards the 'subject domains' themselves, that is, towards learned societies and professional associations; institutions, after all, are competitors for research funding, while societies and associations (we hope) act out of concern for their subject itself. But perhaps this point is too obvious to be worth making.'

- g. QAA consultation paper on qualifications frameworks: postgraduate qualifications.

After consulting member departments, I sent the following response to the consultation paper:

'I write to give you the response of the Council of University Classical Departments - the subject association for Classics and Ancient History at HE level - to this consultation paper. (May I use this opportunity to ask once again that the change in the chairmanship of CUCD, from Professor Richardson in Edinburgh to myself, which occurred two and a half years ago, be recorded properly in the QAA's mailing list?)

'We prefer to respond discursively rather than completing your 'pro forma sheet', because our concerns tend to cut across many of the issues on which the Agency requests a response.

'Our chief concerns relate to taught MA programmes. The old Humanities Research Board of the British Academy, over the last few years of its existence, instituted a regime under which students going on (or hoping to go on) to HRB-funded research would normally be expected to complete a taught MA first. This was a major factor in the shaping of the new generation of MA programmes: they were to be in the first instance programmes of preparation for research, and usually contained specific elements/modules of training in research methods and resources. This was the HRB's rationale for funding students on such courses - as it is now for its successor body, the Arts and Humanities Research Board. Many students of course take taught MA courses in the humanities without going on to research; nevertheless it is the requirements of intending research students that have tended to take priority.

'All of this is familiar enough, and analogous developments will have occurred in other areas. The question then must be how well the conception of taught MA programmes as preparation for research fits with the conception of progression, and particularly of a hierarchy of levels, which informs the present consultation paper. It is easy enough to imagine subject-areas in which the fit might be good, or at least passable. However, in the broad area described as 'classics' (roughly what the QAA and HEFCE continue to call 'Classical Languages', with Ancient History), the fit is likely to vary only between the passable and the poor.

'One of the underlying reasons for this is the very wide range of different sub-areas within 'classics' (languages, literature, history, philosophy, archaeology, art history, epigraphy, and so on), which has tended to give rise to an equally wide range of options within undergraduate programmes, and indeed to significant differences of balance between programmes. The consequence is that graduates in classical subjects will often still need to develop the full range and extent of specialist knowledge and skills required for independent research in particular fields. In one way there is nothing new about this. Many of us in the old days will just have got on in the early days of our doctoral research to make up any lost ground (e.g. by learning German, how to read inscriptions, or the Greek dialects). Now, however, this is specifically - and quite properly - identified as 'research preparation', and largely separated from research proper. At the same time the diversification and (often) increasing specialization of undergraduate programmes, together with the decline of provision for the teaching of the ancient languages in schools, have meant that even the best and brightest students, the ones who will be winning AHRB postgraduate awards, will

have more skills and experience in some aspects of the field but more ground to make up in others. They are likely, in particular, to have had considerably less exposure than they require to Greek and/or Latin.

'Our problem with the consultation paper is that it appears to disallow, or not obviously to allow, the kind of programme that the set of circumstances just described plainly requires: that is, a programme that combines progression with what in the terms of the paper might count as 'conversion' - and will, perhaps in the majority of cases, include a considerable body of material, the size of which is not independently specifiable, that could in principle be studied (and sometimes will have been studied) at undergraduate level. One of the glosses to Principle XIV, 'Use of a masters title for a conversion programme would only be appropriate where outcomes have been achieved at a postgraduate level', initially seems to offer some leeway here. But that is then put in doubt by the reference back to Principle I, '... may include no more than a defined maximum level of credit at undergraduate honours level'. Again, it is not quite clear, here or elsewhere in the paper, exactly how postgraduate and undergraduate elements are meant to be distinguished; but the very absence of clarity on this point (on which clarity is admittedly difficult to achieve, at least in the humanities) entails that we can build little that is positive upon it.

'The core of the matter is that many departments/schools/faculties have developed extremely flexible systems precisely in order to cater for what is now almost always a highly diverse intake to postgraduate study. This diversity is increased further by the often considerable influx of students from other European countries (and elsewhere), who will frequently have been brought up in an academic culture quite different from our own. Most of us rely in such situations on a heavy, and individually tailored, tutorial input, which once again may have little to do with the language of 'levels' - but has everything to do with progression in the sense defined or implied by the AHRB. (Here too one might hope to get by through stressing the postgraduate nature of the 'outcomes'; once again this road appears to be blocked, or made difficult, by Principle I, with its corollaries.)

'In short, the consultation paper seems to us to propose another change of culture which is not in the interests of our students, or of the subject. It is of course perfectly possible for departments to fudge, or obscure, the issues, e.g. by teaching the same material to undergraduates and postgraduates separately; but if much of the material being taught is in fact identical (which looks as if it is the fundamental criterion here, despite the unclarity of the paper on the issue: see above), this not only looks uneconomical, but a poor way to usher in a new era of transparency and fuller articulation of what we do and mean to do. The full logical consequences of the proposals in the consultation paper are, first, that we would be prevented from doing an essential part of what we, as practitioners in the area, see as not only perfectly legitimate and possible, but necessary for students and subject (i.e., where appropriate, to combine Dearing levels H5 and H6); that many taught MA programmes would have to be redesigned from the ground up, in order fully to meet the new criteria, but at the cost of not meeting those based on the requirements of research preparation; and that therefore the AHRB would need seriously to consider whether it should be funding students on taught MA programmes at all.

'Different departments and individuals in our subject-area have different perspectives on these issues, some seeing them as very serious, others as less so, but chiefly in proportion to the degree to which they have already, post-Harris, anticipated the need to observe what they think is the *letter* of Principle XX. We are apparently being asked to face in two directions at once: by the QAA and the requirement for standardization on the one hand, and by the AHRB and the requirements of research on the other. We wonder about the extent to which the HRB/AHRB (or the research councils) were consulted before the consultation paper was drawn up. More urgently, we would welcome discussion with the QAA about the way forward. It would be at the least odd if MA programmes were to be rendered incapable of fulfilling one of their chief functions for the sake of appearing to meet the concerns of some stakeholders - for after all, as the same stakeholders know perfectly well, differences of quality will continue to exist between programmes even if they are labelled and described in the same way, in proportion to the quality of the environment in which they are delivered.

'The only other issue we wish directly to address is the recommendation under Principle XIX, that in order to avoid the award of qualifications 'as compensation for failure or by default', work would have to be resubmitted for reassessment at a lower level. While there is some disquiet about the about 'the principle of awarding the same degree for an unsuccessful attempt [e.g.] at a PhD and for a successful submission by a candidate not aiming at a PhD in the first place', our near-unanimous view (to the extent that we have been able to consult our members) is that such resubmission would normally be wasteful and serve no obvious purpose. It appears to be normal practice for examiners to consider separately, when a candidate fails to match up to the criteria for one degree, whether he or she matches up to those for another - and to describe the award of a lesser degree under such circumstances as 'compensation for failure or by default' would in our view be to misdescribe it. If the candidate meets the criteria for the award of a degree, that he or she may have failed to meet the criteria for another ceases from that point of view to be relevant.'

**Note:** I subsequently raised the major issues contained in this letter at an AHRB symposium in London, and followed up with a letter to Michael Jubb; both he and Paul Langford agreed that these issues were of considerable concern to the AHRB, which at least by implication had a different agenda for taught Masters programmes from the QAA.

- h. On 16.3.99, I responded to a consultation paper from the new 'Institute for Learning and Teaching':

['ILT Consultation: The National Framework ...](#)

I attach the response to this consultation of the Council of University Classical Departments.

1. There has been, to our knowledge, no consultation [on the matters at issue] directly with the subject areas or subject associations; even the present consultation paper, while inviting responses from 'groups of colleagues speaking for a particular subject area', has apparently not been sent to the most obvious such groups in existence (i.e. the subject associations). CUCD first acquired a copy of the paper from a senior member of another

University who happened to be discussing it with high-level committees in that institution; more importantly, we acquired it too late to carry out any extended consultation with our members. The present response is based on a very limited consultation with as many members as I have been able to reach in the time available. This must at best be a matter of regret, and at worst a piece of mismanagement: so serious a matter deserves proper consideration, which we have not been allowed to give to it.

2. One must also question whether the timing of the consultation paper in relation to the projected launch of the ILT is such as to inspire confidence in the seriousness which the ILTPG places on the consultative process. Comment is in any case apparently invited only on the proposed procedures for accreditation and CPD, not on more fundamental issues such as whether the whole anticipated structure is likely to help, hinder, or have a merely neutral effect on the development of learning and teaching in HE.

3. On that issue, we presently remain agnostic, while tending towards a negative judgement; maybe we might have felt more positively had we been privy to the relevant arguments. As matters stand, we see little positive advantage in a set of expensive and time-consuming procedures for accreditation on an individual basis - procedures, that is, which run alongside a complex and developing set of procedures for institutional and subject-based reviews of teaching quality. At the very least one might have looked for some evidence of cooperation between the ILT and the QAA, to avoid a new proliferation of assessment structures at the very moment that the QAA is seeking to reduce or simplify them.

4. At present, and again in the absence of any argument or evidence to the contrary, there would seem to be rather little benefit for the individual teacher in the whole process of accreditation in proportion to the time that would be required for amassing the 'portfolio' - and indeed for maintaining accreditation. We therefore have some difficulty in projecting immediate success for the ILT, unless membership became obligatory, and - especially in the light of the points made in the last paragraph - we would presently regard any move towards coercion as indefensible. The proposals bear signs of having been designed in part with an eye to membership procedures and CPD provisions for other professional organisations (e.g. in accountancy or law), where membership is in fact a condition of practice; the difference is that there is no other way of checking the competence of such professionals, whereas there is a wealth of checks on the competence of academics, ranging from student questionnaires, through internal reviews, to external quality assessment. In short: the benefits of accreditation remain unclear, while the costs would evidently be considerable. In general we regret the lack in the document of any cost-benefit analysis, or indeed of any explicit recognition of the cost implications, while the benefits are simply assumed.

5. If in some respects the proposed procedures mimic those in other professional fields, in other respects they appear to have been framed with reference to categories of teaching other than those often found in HE. In particular, we miss any clear reference to the *quality/standard* of the *content* of courses (modules/units). On the face of it, it would be possible for someone to qualify for membership of the Institute who excels in methods of delivery, but actually has nothing to deliver of a quality appropriate to HE. Many if not most of us would wish to tie the measurement of quality in teaching in this context closely to the idea of *research-led* teaching. While we recognize that excellent researchers do not necessarily make excellent teachers, and that there are specific skills that all teachers in HE, as teachers, need to acquire, nonetheless the starting-point for the best teaching at this level (even in introductory modules) will almost always be an immediate and direct grasp of the state of understanding in a particular field. We are at a loss to understand how 'providing good teaching support for learning' can be separated from this crucial aspect of teaching in HE, in the way that the consultation document seems - if only by omission - to suggest.'

- i. Also in March, I attended a meeting in Bristol - both in a personal capacity, and as Chair of a subject association - on 'The Intellectual Consequences of the RAE' (partly organized by Charles Martindale). The meeting was attended by Drs Bekhradnia and Pilsbury as representatives of HEFCE, neither of whom appeared to believe that the RAE had any intellectual consequences at all (except beneficial ones). In response to a questioner who asked what he had learned from the day's proceedings, Dr Pilsbury - for Dr Bekhradnia had left, following lunch - said it was that he and his colleagues needed to present their case better. This caused an eminent classical colleague to exclaim at the implied complacency: had Dr Pilsbury heard nothing? Overall, the impression given by both HEFCE representatives was of complete immunity to criticism or even to comment: their view was that the system is necessary; that it cannot be shown to be damaging; and that if we think it is, it is up to us to come up with something better. The first and last points are fair enough, but it would be more encouraging if those in charge of the RAE were still able to retain a certain critical distance from the process.

Subsequent to the meeting there was correspondence between Charles Martindale, Peter Wiseman, and myself with Dr Pilsbury, the intention of which was to follow up some of the points that had been made (my own letters concerned specifically the treatment by RAE panels of journal editorships). It cannot be said that the responses were encouraging, insofar as they tended once more to suggest that everything in the garden was lovely. If it is, some of us continue to miss the loveliness. [The most illuminating part of the correspondence was that between Peter Wiseman and Dr Pilsbury. The exchange of letters is included in this issue, with Peter's agreement.]

- j. At the Classical Association's Annual Conference in Liverpool in April, there was a useful panel discussion on the subject of 'Money, Money, Money: the Funding of Research'. There were four panellists: Mary Beard talked about her experience of assessing applications for postgraduate studentships for the old Humanities Research Board, and the lessons of her experience for those advising future applicants; John Richardson (AHRB Panel Convenor) and Dorothy Thompson (AHRB Panel Member) talked about the AHRB, with John speaking more generally about the emerging shape of the Board and its policies, and Dorothy particularly about the writing up of research proposals; and finally John Davies (a member of the Leverhulme Trust's Research Academic Advisory Committee) was also to have addressed general issues in relation to the composition of grant applications, but in the event gave up his slot to give us more time for discussion. My renewed thanks to all four panellists.
- k. CUCD had been invited by the QAA to nominate members of the Classics and Ancient History panel for the TQA round in 2000/01; after consulting Standing Committee, I decided not to respond, on the grounds that because membership of the panel would be likely to be extremely time-consuming, it must primarily be a matter of individual choice whether to put oneself forward or not; and that in any case a straw poll of departments seemed to suggest that there would in any case be sufficient volunteers. In June I received a letter from the Roman Society querying this decision, which I went on to defend in July - probably wrongly, as it turns out, since the QAA has let it be known during September (apparently only to certain institutions, and certainly not to CUCD) that both the Classics and the Archaeology panels required more nominations. Since it would clearly not be ideal if the QAA were to begin making its own nominations, I immediately circulated departments to seek further names; I then asked three individuals who put themselves forward in response to my

appeal to ask their institutions to complete the relevant procedures for nomination (since CUCD has still not been asked, and may well not be, to assist in any late trawl for further potential panel-members).

- I. After discussion of responses from individual members at Standing Committee on 9.10.99, I sent the following consolidated response on behalf of CUCD to RAE 4/99 ('Research Assessment Exercise 2001: Consultation on assessment panels' criteria and working methods'):

The comments of the Council of University Classical Departments in response to RAE 4/99 are as follows.

0. **In general, accepting the necessity of the RAE as a whole, the criteria as set out by the panel for UoA 57 seem to us judicious and sensible. Much depends on the intelligent application of these criteria in specific cases, and we have every confidence in the judgement of the panel members. There are only a few areas where we would like to register some concern or queries on detail.**

Specific points:

- ii. There is strong concern at the **apparent absence from the Classics panel (as originally constituted) of anyone whose principal specialism is mainstream classical archaeology and/or classical art history**, despite the fact that 2.48.1 of the document makes it clear that these areas are quite central to the UoA. We note the intention of the panel (2.48.5) to 'appoint specialist advisers' in art; this would certainly be better than referring the relevant parts of the submission to the History of Art panel (which we would regard as inappropriate). Nevertheless, we strongly believe that classical archaeology and art should be fully represented on the panel, in view of their status within the subject and within the UoA. We understand that the issue is now to be resolved with the appointment of an expert in the field on Panel 57; if so, we should regard this as settling what is probably our single most important concern.
- iii. However the issue of **coordination between panels** is also an issue of the greatest importance, which must be handled in a way that gives the academic community greater confidence in this aspect of the process than last time. To be fair, the general document (Appendix A, Section 1, at 1.3 b., and Section 2, at 2.6 and 2.7) does broach the issue, but the remit and powers of the envisaged "umbrella groups" are less than clear.
- iv. (2.48.12) (a) We would like to see scholarly exhibitions, whether in physical museum space or online or both, included as a category; this affects art and archaeology in particular, but not exclusively. We also feel that the panel might reasonably consider media productions (TV, radio, or CD), where there is a substantial research input. It is not clear that these are covered by the categories "scholarly support materials" or "teaching materials". (History of Art might provide some useful guidelines in this area.) (b) We are pleased to see recognition for the contribution made by editors of volumes of collected papers when the editor has made a visible contribution to the research published. (c) We welcome the explicit statements that no form of output is seen as intrinsically superior, and that translations will be deemed worthy of consideration (which is a change from 1996).

- v. (2.48.16) There seems (second sentence) to be a error in "will share the reading the responsibility": add "and" after "reading"?"
- vi. (2.48.17) (a) We would like an addition along the following lines: "The approach to evaluation will be pluralistic: no a priori judgements will be made about the validity and usefulness of the range of approaches adopted.' (b) We think the Panel, and HEFCE generally, should give more explicit recognition of, and more guidance in relation to, the difficulties for individuals/Departments of judging which items from intrinsically incommensurable genres of scholarly production to include in submissions. These difficulties are only mitigated, not removed, by the second sentence of 2.48.12; they will perhaps be less keenly felt e.g. in scientific subject-areas.
- vii. (2.48.18) "The Panel will pay particular attention to externally funded studentships awarded on the basis of national competition." We would wish to see this explicitly extended to national competitions in other countries. (b) The useful and sensible distinction which the archaeologists make in 2.49.11 between PGTs and PGRs is not made.
- viii. (2.48.19) We wish to stress that in our field this is an extremely unreliable criterion of quality: many scholars obtain no large research grants because the kind of work that they do needs no large research grants, and the obtaining of such grants is a sign not of how good a person's research is but simply of how expensive it is.
- ix. (2.48.20/21) We feel that there is some tension between these paragraphs. The panel will be looking for "evidence of strategic planning for research" (20) but is aware that research of high quality is often carried out by individual scholars, and assures us that the absence of research groups, etc. will not count against an institution. It should be recognised that both individual and collaborative projects may produce first-rank research, and excellence should be properly acknowledged in both. This is a quite distinct point from fostering younger scholars' work and providing a favourable environment for development in research.
- x. (2.48.26-29) We were pleased to see emphasis given to staffing policies that invested in the development and support of staff research and especially the work of younger researchers. It seems essential to us that departments that invest wisely in human resources with an eye to future potential should not be penalised relative to departments that merely play safe.
- xi. (2.48.32) We were pleased to see the wide range of indications of esteem accepted, and glad that on 2.48.33 the Panel explicitly recognised the list was not complete. We would, however, like to see FRSE's explicitly recognised alongside FBA's. We also hope that the panel will note that not all the indicators it lists are marks of equal esteem.

Acting as a reader for publishers (or a referee for journals) seems less of an achievement than the award of a visiting fellowship. Possession of an FBA may also not be a good guide to achievement within the census period. We felt in particular that recognition from outside the UK ought to be regarded an important indication of esteem.

- xii. (2.48.37) While we appreciate that the panel are explicitly stating that a department will not be disadvantaged by the fact that some members have not submitted the maximum of four published works, we feel that it should be

acknowledged that the nature of research means that a single book of lasting importance normally takes more time to complete than four articles which may be of more limited value. We regret the assumption that failure to maximise sheer number of publications should be regarded as something that needs to be justified or explained away.

- xiii. (2.48.41-3) While welcoming the principle, we would wish to see the Panel exercise the same level of sensitivity here as in the selection of its own members. For that reason, it would seem proper that nominations of foreign experts should not be made without prior consultation with the relevant subject bodies (CUCD, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, SCOMGIU). In some areas, at least, of the field covered by the Panel, there are colleagues and competitors in other countries who hold, and have expressed in print, quite extreme views about the way in which the discipline is practised in the UK. We hope that the panel will take very seriously indeed the considerable task of briefing experts who work in countries with very different traditions of research and its assessment.
- xiv. (2.48.42) The relation of the first two sentences of this paragraph seems to need clarification. In the second sentence does "all relevant" mean all those in the categories stated in the first, or all parts thereof, or what?

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### **Matters that are currently in hand, or need to be in hand:**

Many of the items above will involve continuing attention and development over the next year(s). Among the most immediately pressing additional matters for action are:

- A. Bob Lister and Brenda Gay have been sending out consistent warning signals about the **recruitment of the next generation of Classics teachers**. Most immediately, there have been disappointingly low levels of applications for PGCE places. Bob Lister earlier in the year circulated a request to all departments to appoint a liaison officer to cover issues relating to teacher recruitment and especially to help raise the profile of Classics teaching among undergraduates. Standing Council felt the issues here to be so important that they invited Bob and Brenda to attend both the October meeting and the meeting of Council; they will make a short presentation to the latter, in an afternoon session (a new departure).
- B. We need urgently to look (with JACT) at the consequences for Classical subjects of the **reduction in A-level syllabuses**. It will also be more than helpful to many of us to have an early discussion of the government's **reforms of sixth-form examinations** : how should we react? What sorts of criteria are admissions officers going to set for 2002? I have already been asked by head teachers about this, as I expect others have; so far I have no idea how to respond. Probably this will, primarily, be a matter for individual departments/institutions; but a subject-wide discussion of a common problem would surely be useful.
- C. We also need urgently to look again at **how to sell Classics in the schools**. Charlotte Roueché reminds me that children and parents are making their decisions about choice of subjects earlier and earlier; we need to get to them. *Minimus* will help, but we may also need to think about a central publicity effort (Charlotte has some ideas here, both for sixth-form and lower levels).

- D. At the other end of the spectrum, a number of people have raised the issue about **how we can provide the necessary training to get intending postgraduate students up to scratch in Greek and Latin** (cf. (g) above). At present, the most promising developments seem to be taking place in Ireland (at Cork), though I have no up-to-date information at the moment about how far planning has progressed. (The proposal, as I understand it, is to set up a low-cost, intensive, summer language training facility, rather on the pattern of some US models.)
- E. There is yet another **new consultation paper** to which we must respond: this time on **research policy and funding (post 2001)**, from HEFCE. The closing date for responses 15.11.99. I have sent round a circular about this, inviting members to visit <http://www.hefce.ac.uk> under 'Research' for the details. May I invite colleagues once again to consider what they think CUCD's stand should be on this very important issue?
- F. There is also a parallel consultation paper on a similar set of topics from the AHRB. This - as one might expect - has a more civilized and helpful deadline (in January); either I or my successor in the Chair will circulate members about this in due course.
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It remains for me finally to offer my warm thanks to my fellow-officers, and to the other members of Standing Committee, for their help and support over the last three years. It has been an interesting and busy period - but I have no doubt that the next three years will be no less interesting, or less busy.

Christopher Rowe  
*University of Durham*  
17 October 1999

## **Appendix to Chair's Report:**

Correspondence between Peter Wiseman (Department of Classics & Ancient History, Exeter) and David Pilsbury (Head of Research Policy, HEFCE)

### **1. Wiseman to Pilsbury, 25/3/99**

The Head of Research Policy  
HEFCE  
Northavon House  
Coldharbour Lane  
Bristol BS16 1QD.

Dear Dr Pilsbury,

I'm taking advantage of your assurance, at the Bristol colloquium yesterday, that you are always accessible to comments and suggestions on the RAE, and will always respond to them.

I'm sure it was as clear to you as to everyone else that the main hostility to the RAE, and resentment at the consequences of it, came from academics in the humanities. The

scientists seemed quite satisfied with the system, and content with the corollary that major funding in the sciences will go increasingly to just a dozen or so universities. The social scientists had some reservations, but seemed happy enough on the whole. But there was a marked, and consistent, sense of serious discontent in all the contributions from the humanities. Dr Smith [*John Smith, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge*] was particularly explicit in his assertion that the entire culture of scholarship in the arts subjects was being debased, and though the other humanities speakers were a bit more diplomatic, they certainly didn't disagree with him.

What did you make of Dr Smith's vehemence? The irritation that was manifested when you and Mr Bekhradnia [*Bahram Bekhradnia, Policy Director, HEFCE*] defended the system as being the least bad option, and insisted on your consultations having resulted in appropriate adjustments, was because that didn't engage with the subject of the debate, namely the *consequences* of the RAE. It's not enough to say there's no serious alternative. We're all resigned to that. But all choices have consequences, and what we wanted to hear was that HEFCE understood the consequences and would do its best to address them. (You said you'd be 'long gone' after the next RAE. Lucky you: the rest of us have to go on living with it, and with the regime it has created.) The humanities are a large chunk of higher education, and it's clear that research and scholarship in those fields are not well served by a funding system which takes the 'science model' as the norm.

When Professor Fullbrook [*Kate Fullbrook, Associate Dean, Faculty of Humanities, University of the West of England*] asked what you would take back to HEFCE as a result of the debate, the laughter in the audience was because people didn't believe that you'd taken any of it seriously on board - an assumption no doubt confirmed by your answer that HEFCE will have to improve its public relations. (Subtext, 'your problems must be the result of a misconception'.) That is a gambit very familiar within university hierarchies: unhappiness among the academic community is taken as evidence not of flawed policies but of faded communication. However, I would like to take you at your word, and suggest a way in which your communications with your constituency can be improved.

Ultimately, the main problem with the RAE is that it necessarily dominates universities' strategic thinking. Each institution sets up its own machinery to play the system, and that machinery reflects the RAE itself in not taking account of the differential consequences as they affect the sciences, the social sciences and the humanities respectively. So the unsatisfactory aspect of your system is replicated at the next level in theirs.

What you said very clearly at the colloquium was that 'power resides with the UOA panels'. They know their own subject areas, and will operate in close consultation and collaboration with them; all that working academics have to do is to produce quality research that will be recognised as such by their peers *in their own disciplines*. Amen to that - but it is a message that has to be spelt out much more insistently and explicitly than it has been hitherto. As it is, university 'managers' set up elaborate systems, disproportionately expensive in time and energy, to maximise RAE results across the board, when in fact the only people who really know what is required in

any given UOA are the academics who work in that discipline, and they should be allowed to get on with it.

If you can get *that* across, it will be a real service. As you heard repeatedly yesterday, academics in the humanities have their professional lives dominated by the RAE in variously unhealthy ways. If you can at least persuade their universities to get the management strategists off their backs, that will be one step towards defusing the resentment that you found aimed at you at the colloquium.

## 2. Pilsbury to Wiseman, 7/4/99

Dear Professor Wiseman,

### **Intellectual Consequences of the RAE**

May I apologise for taking so long to respond to your letter of 25th March - I have been giving a series of presentations.

I think it is untrue to say that the RAE is based on a scientific model. It is based on a historic model of scholarship, in which ideas are placed in the public domain and the value of those ideas is assessed by the community at large. We have formalised this process for the purposes of informing the selective allocation of funding; we have not invented an entirely new and alien process.

I also think it is untrue to say that the Funding Councils, and you cite HEFCE in particular, have failed to acknowledge the intellectual consequences of the RAE. We are of course aware that the RAE has influenced thinking and behaviour in institutions and some of these changes are very positive. There are of course suggested negatives, a number of which detailed on one of my slides: discouraging interdisciplinary work, discouraging applied research, devaluing of teaching, encouraging short term perspectives, an explosion of publication, and inappropriate recruitment practices. The fact is however, that there is little evidence to support some of these assertions - such as the promotion of a significant transfer market and the inappropriate assessment of interdisciplinary work. Further, some of the other effects are due, at least in part, to a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of the RAE - for instance, there is no reason inherent in the RAE for scholars to engage in, or benefit from, "salami slicing" of publications.

However, that does not mean we are complacent about the institutional and/or intellectual consequences of the RAE and, as I stated at the Conference, we are just about to embark on a fundamental review of the RAE that will examine all these issues in some detail, including the interrelationship between teaching and research.

I was rather taken aback by the audience's laughter precisely because I thought the issues being discussed were extremely serious and that we had evidenced a commitment to engage with them. I'm afraid I must correct your assertion that my answer was about the need to give a positive spin to HEFCE policies. We discussed at tea, and my recollection is that you agreed, that the consultation on draft criteria

provided an opportunity for communities to engage with the process to ensure that the basis for assessment was appropriate for their discipline. It is essential that the Funding Councils should work harder to get this message across as you acknowledge in your penultimate paragraph.

3. **Wiseman to Pilsbury, 12/4/99**

Dear Dr Pilsbury,

Many thanks for your courteous reply to my letter. In such discussions there's always a danger of talking past each other, so let me assure you that I do accept what you say in your second and third paragraphs: the RAE is indeed not an entirely new and alien process, and HEFCE has indeed identified some of its consequences and is thinking about how to deal with them. I accept too what you said at the colloquium, that there is little statistical evidence to support the idea of a 'transfer market', even though that seems to go against the anecdotal evidence. But none of those points touches the main anxiety I was trying to express.

You dispute my view that the system takes the 'science model' as the norm, but you don't engage with the brute fact (as it seems to me) that the most widespread and bitterly expressed criticism of it comes from scholars in the humanities. I thought it was a very revealing moment at the colloquium when Mr Bekhradnia said dismissively, 'Oh yes, I know Sir Keith Thomas once brought out a book that had taken seventeen years, and it changed the world...', as if such works were so exceptional that no practical system could be expected to allow for them. A book like *Religion and the Decline of Magic* doesn't 'change the world', but it does make the sort of advance in a discipline that can't be achieved by a monograph written between one RAE and another, even with the extended time scale now allowed. And it is not unique, as Mr Bekhradnia implied: such books represent the best in the humanities' scholarly tradition, and the sense of betrayal that was articulated by Dr Smith (I notice you don't comment on his contribution to the debate) is because the RAE now makes it effectively impossible to embark on them.

You say 'there is no reason inherent in the RAE for scholars to engage in, or benefit from, "salami slicing" of publications' - but surely that's a little disingenuous? Universities play the system, and when the structure of the system isn't a perfect match for the activity it is meant to reflect (as I think is demonstrably the case in the humanities), they naturally put pressure on their research active staff to be research active in the way the system wants, and not the way their own instincts may be telling them to work.

The problem is that it *matters* so much. It may well be the case that the panel in my subject area would judge a submission consisting of just one big book, and nothing else, as highly as one consisting of four articles. But that's a gamble that no university management could allow someone like me to take. (Besides, what if the big book isn't ready in time?) It's that sort of dilemma that creative people in the humanities have to live with all the time, and it's not surprising if they are resentful about a funding system that causes their institutions to use them like battery hens.

I don't doubt HEFCE's good faith in trying to adjust and improve the system through consultation. The problem in the humanities is that the mismatch can't really be addressed by easy adjustments. But it would be a useful first step if HEFCE were prepared to recognise that the humanities are *sui generis*, and that the real concerns of scholars in the humanities require more attention than just an ironical throw away line about books that change the world.

4. **Pilsbury to Wiseman, 21/4/99**

Dear Professor Wiseman,

**Research Assessment Exercise**

We corresponded previously on whether the humanities is different to other disciplines and therefore requires a fundamentally different approach to funding. For the reason I outlined before I have to say that we do not see the RAE as an inappropriate mechanism by which to determine the selective allocation of funding across all disciplines.

However, we are not complacent about the appropriateness of the RAE and will soon begin a fundamental review of the exercise looking at existing approaches in different countries and other potential approaches.

It may surprise you to know that the humanities community is no more vociferous about the RAE than scientists, engineers or anyone else. Many people feel passionate about the RAE, and that is absolutely right and proper, it is a sign of the vitality of UK research that we all want to get the approach to funding right. However, I do not equate emotion with antipathy; the dual support system provides immense advantages which are recognised by many - and I believe evidenced by the fact that the UK research base consistently punches above its weight and the quality of UK scholarship is acknowledged around the world.

On the specific point which you mention, panels are perfectly able to award high ratings where scholars are engaged in work which does not produce an immediate output. They must be clear, of course, about the basis on which these ratings are awarded. I would note simply that:

a) ratings relate to submissions not to individuals

b) the textual commentaries are integral to the assessment process and provide sufficient scope for this type of work to be recorded and rewarded.

5. **Wiseman to Pilsbury, 30/4/99**

Dear Dr Pilsbury,

Thank you for your letter of 21 April. I'm afraid we are indeed talking past each other (the danger I referred to in my letter of 12 April), since your answer to my anxieties seems to be just a repetition of your previous position, and too bland, if I may say so, to be much help.

You say in your third paragraph that 'many people [not just in the humanities] feel passionate about the RAE', but that you 'do not equate emotion with antipathy'. That does rather miss the point I was making, that in the humanities the antipathy is explicit, as you had every opportunity of seeing at the Bristol colloquium. May I ask you yet again what you made of Dr Smith's contribution on that occasion? I'm not trying to be difficult; I genuinely want to know what HEFCE's reaction is to that level of bitterness and hostility.

You defend the dual support system, which I never attacked, on the evidence that 'the UK research base consistently punches above its weight, and the quality of UK scholarship is acknowledged around the world'. That is indeed the case: but the question is whether it will remain so, in the humanities, under the conditions of scholarship that the RAE has brought about. When the people who are best placed to judge - i.e. scholars in the humanities themselves - are not confident that it will, then I think HEFCE ought to be listening hard to what they say.

My problem, both at the colloquium and in this correspondence, has been a persistent sense that HEFCE only wants to listen to comments that can be easily addressed, and won't face really serious criticism. I don't expect you to agree with that, but I have to say that so far you haven't given me any reason to suppose it's untrue.

#### 6. **Pilsbury to Wiseman, 15/6/99**

Dear Professor Wiseman

##### **Research Assessment Exercise**

Apologies for taking so long to respond to your letter, I have been unwell for a while.

I seem not to be providing the answers you want, and you state that I repeat my position. I can only say that I am sorry you consider my responses to them insufficient, they are a genuine attempt to engage with the issues you raise. I suspect you will find my reply again repeats these views - but they are still my views - based on evidence available to HEFCE. If we correspond again, I think it is likely that I will repeat them yet again.

It is still my view that the RAE is not an inappropriate mechanism to support the selective allocation of funding - across all disciplines. We have run a series of wide ranging and open consultation exercises and the responses have provided overwhelming support for the RAE as a mechanism to support the selective allocation of our block grant.

I can only state, again, that we are not complacent about its appropriateness and me suggested unintended effects within institutions, and will have begun a fundamental review of HEFCE research policy and funding.

You ask me again what I think of the views expressed at the meeting, to which I can only say again that members of the humanities community are no more passionate about the RAE than scientists, engineers or anyone else. The evidence here is my own

experience as I go round the country taking to all disciplines, drawing on their views in order to develop the most appropriate policies.

Yours sincerely,

David Pilsbury  
Head of Research Policy

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## **CLASSICS AT BRITISH UNIVERSITIES, 1998-99: STATISTICS**

*Geoffrey Eatough*

Despite appearances there is little change from last year in the number of honours students in Classics departments, the first column in Table A. The actual number of people being counted as honours students has declined, back towards the 1995 figure of 5606, but the FTE (Fulltime Equivalent Student) figure, the figure in brackets, on which departmental finances should be based is only 2.7% lower. Since one department has found it impossible to locate their Ancient History students this year one can indeed say there is little change. For the category 'All students in Classics departments' which includes the large category 'Other' the number of students has increased though the FTE value has dropped from 6252.1 to 6118.6. This is a drop of 2.1%, but most certainly not even that, since under the new modular systems some departments are finding it difficult to keep track of students doing modules in their department. One major department was eventually given a dispensation from providing figures in that category; the plaintive demonstrating that the study of the classical arts of persuasion and supplication still has a practical value. The introduction of the Open University (OU) figures I explained in the last bulletin. The OU figures are very much the same as those of last year and do not upset the stability of this year's global figures. The staff/student ratio is also much the same, though this figure has become a little unreal with the universal use of teaching assistants. It is however some kind of indicator.

In Table B the honours students are divided into the major categories of Classics, Greek and Latin (CGL) and Classical Studies, Ancient History and Archaeology (CSAHA) both Single Honours (SH) and Joint Honours (JH). A decade ago it would have been easier than now to think of CGL as the linguistic courses, and CSAHA as the non-linguistic courses. One can however, depending on one's locality, take Classics degrees which have large elements of non-linguistic material, or Classical Studies degrees which are predominantly linguistic. The categories are far from watertight. Let us suppose that the use of these categories represent the individual department's perception of its mission rather than the uncertainties of the member of staff delegated with the task of compiling the statistics. CGL(SH) on a head count remains remarkably close to last year's figure though the FTE figure has risen and there are significant rises in both head count and FTE in JH. A matter of concern might be CSAHA (SH) where there is a drop of 9.3% on head count and 6.1% on FTE. The JH figure for students taking CSAHA subjects is almost the same but again the FTE figure is lower, by 6.2%.

Table C enables us to analyse these figures. There is a significant drop in AH(JH) both in number of students 16.9% and FTE 23.5%, but a rise in CS(JH) of 18.1% and 16.8% respectively. There is a drop in AH(SH), 13.3% and 6.1%; the bigger drop however is in CS(SH), 15.3% and 11.4%. My guess is that in most universities CS has a larger linguistic element than AH. The drop in CS (SH) may be directly compensated by the large increases in G (SH) and L (SH) and C (JH) and G (JH), but also by CS (OTHER) 11.5% and 22.9% which again may be evidence of the difficulties of categorising, or simply a change of statistician in three or four universities. My impression is that new statisticians are rarely inducted into the arcana of their department by their predecessors. There have been large increases in Archaeology SH and JH, but if Ancient History is difficult to control the figures which pass as those of Classical Archaeology seem almost uncontrollable.

The figure for postgraduates seems to be absurdly inflated, and in general volatile, though I was surprised to discover how many postgraduates there were in my own department. There has always been scope for fantasy in returning postgraduate figures. The Taught MA figures must be more solidly based, since departments will have regular contact with students on this kind of course. They show an encouraging and interesting trend.

The winds of change can be heard, and felt. There are many factors, some of which I mentioned in the previous bulletin. The wish of government that a large number of students should study at their local university has been reflected in the innocent remarks of two 'returning officers' from what can be described as city universities, one of which was recently dispersed within its own university, and the other almost liquidated. Both commented on the upsurge of students for the coming year which will be seen in next year's statistics. To be urban is however not necessarily to benefit since even large and famous cities can be on the fringe of Classical Britain.

In Wales devolution will be a major and immediate influence. The universities there face a number of crises which will have to be resolved quickly, the issues are astonishingly complex, and only in part based on the rifts in the Welsh political scenery. The Assembly will move quickly, the debates of which we will be given glimpses on television may provide compulsive theatre. Wales remains an intimate face to face society, names will be named, if only of institutions.

There are rumours of amalgamations elsewhere as departments face up to the next Research Assessment Exercise, trying to reconcile teaching, administration and research. And there appears to be a ceaseless movement of staff. Applying for jobs, even being interviewed, has for some become a way of life.

Departments in my own university are increasingly embracing distance teaching. Someone spoke enthusiastically of a university in Denmark which had 35,000 students with whom it communicated at a distance, but admitted that it was run somewhat like a call centre with a minimum of staff. Such institutions will run on staff/student ratios greater than 1:140. On such a system one university with a staff of about 35 could teach all the Classics students in Britain. The use of information technology may be the issue which should most concern us.

I return to what in a different guise is starting point of this coda. The biggest problem for many Classics departments in the very immediate future will be the relentless creation of new universities, the tilt towards vocational education and the need to compete in a market where

the customers are impecunious students who need to recoup their losses. It will soon be difficult to remember when education was once not perceived as a marketplace.

Geoffrey Eatough

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## **CLASSICS AT BRITISH UNIVERSITIES: STATISTICS**

**Geoffrey Eatough**

### **KEY TO TABLES**

C = Classics

G = Greek

AH = Ancient History

ARC = Archaeology

BG = Beginners' Greek

BL = Beginners' Latin

NC = Non Classical

PG = Postgraduate

TM = Taught Masters

The top figure in the columns or tables referring to students is the number of students irrespective of whether all their time, or only a proportion of their time is spent in Classics departments. The figure in brackets is the Full Time Equivalent (FTE); that is two students, each spending 50% of their time in Classics, equal one FTE Classics student, ten students spending 90% of their time in Classics equal nine FTE Classics students. The Staff/Student Ratio is reached by dividing the FTE figure for all students in Classics departments by the number of staff.

### **TABLE A**

	<b>All Hons students in Classics depts.</b>	<b>All students in Classics depts.</b>	<b>UGC figure for Hons. students in Class.</b>	<b>Staff in Classics depts.</b>	<b>Overall Staff/Student</b>	<b>1st yr. Hons. students</b>	<b>UCAS total admissions in Class.</b>
<b>1986</b>	3032	6415	1671*	354.6	9.3	1059	567
	(2153.2)	(3291.3)				(684.2)	
<b>1987</b>	3287	6284	1699*	334.3	9.9	1276	557
	(2258.4)	(3301.9)				(753)	

<b>1988</b>	3117	6142	1157	326.5	10.0	1052	591
	(2232.4)	(3276.6)	1680*			(700.5)	
<b>1989</b>	3740	7396	1240	353.5	10.6	1419	698
	(2534)	(3750.3)	1782*			(865.1)	
<b>1990</b>	3935	7378	1329	355.7	11.4	1443	737
	(2744.1)	(4049.1)	1869*			(911.9)	
<b>1991</b>	3998	8206	1466	348.3	12.4	1437	813
	(2970.6)	(4306.1)	2006*			(1011.5)	
<b>1992</b>	4649	8911	1638	347.4	14.2	1692	
	(3445.6)	(4924.7)	2178*			(1194.7)	
<b>1993</b>	5214	9549	1790	351.8	15.1	1939	659
	(3848.3)	(5316.1)				(1338.5)	
<b>1994</b>	5731	9731	2310§	378.6	14.4	2168	669
	(4010.8)	(5445.4)				(1340.2)	
<b>1995</b>	5606	9356	2420§	361.2	14.7	2152	643
	(3804.3)	(5317.1)				(1287.9)	
<b>1996</b>	5647	9269	2552§	364.5	14.0	2122	
	(3812.3)	(5095)				(1271.7)	

<b>1997</b>	5762	9219	2596§	356	14.9	2109	999
	(4006.4)	(5288.6)				(1350.6)	
	[including	16616		363			
	OU figures]	(6252.1)					
<b>1998</b>	5610	9878	2678§	350.7	14.7	2071	1012
	(3898.3)	(5148)				(1290.6)	
	[including	16610					
	OU figures]	(6118.6)					
<b>1999</b>	5869	8882		342.7	15.3	2275	1012
	(4120.9)	(5233.4)				(1405.4)	
	[including	18922					
	OU figures]	(6961.4)					
<b>2000</b>	5499	8665		360.3	13.9	2125	
	(3802.7)	(4996.3)				(1361.8)	
	[including	16634		370.3			
	OU figures]	(6475.3)					

\*It was considered that through a change of practice a substantial body of students were being miscategorised in the official statistics and an attempt was made over the years to calculate what could be considered the proper figure. It seems best on reflection to present the official figure, even if it is unfair, in its simplicity.

§These are figures supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency for student enrolments at all publicly funded HE institutions in the UK for subject code Q8 Classics.

**TABLE B**

	<b>Classics, Greek, Latin</b>	<b>Classics, Greek, Latin</b>	<b>Class. Stds., Anc. Hist., Archaeology</b>	<b>Class. Stds., Anc. Hist., Archaeology</b>
	<b>SH</b>	<b>JH</b>	<b>SH</b>	<b>JH</b>
<b>1986</b>	1187	276	819	750
	(1045.6)	(138.1)	(623.4)	(346.1)
<b>1987</b>	1327	211	1030	717
	(1136.8)	(101.9)	(684.9)	(334.8)
<b>1988</b>	1231	224	779	883
	(1069.7)	(107.3)	(647.5)	(398.9)
<b>1989</b>	1253	251	1057	1179
	(1101.1)	(124.7)	(799.9)	(508.4)
<b>1990</b>	1256	290	1148	1241
	(1175)	(139.2)	(926.4)	(503.5)
<b>1991</b>	1278	288	1416	1016
	(1199.8)	(135.3)	(1162.9)	(472.6)
<b>1992</b>	1294	328	1648	1379
	(1210.1)	(153.7)	(1472.6)	(609.2)

<b>1993</b>	1345	269	1813	1787
	(1263.6)	(139.2)	(1629.7)	(815.8)
<b>1994</b>	1335	307	2370	1719
	(1197.9)	(148)	(1888.5)	(776.4)
<b>1995</b>	1234	323	2099	1950
	(1162.2)	(139)	(1661.1)	(842)
<b>1996</b>	1165	299	2011	2172
	(1098.1)	(129.7)	(1703.9)	(880.6)
<b>1997</b>	1243	263	2207	2049
	(1158.5)	(117.8)	(1822.3)	(907.8)
<b>1998</b>	1241	333	2001	2035
	(1181.4)	(155)	(1710.6)	(851.3)
<b>1999</b>	1178	298	2375	2018
	(1073.7)	(119.5)	(2036.2)	(891.5)
<b>2000</b>	1109	219	2068	2103
	(1019.4)	(96.8)	(1823.9)	(862.6)

**TABLE C**

	SINGLE HONOURS						JOINT HONOURS					
	C	G	L	CS	AH	ARC	C	G	L	CS	AH	ARC
<b>1992</b>	1160	12	166	854	712	82	63	42	223	548	713	118
	(1063.6)	(12.0)	(134.5)	(786.5)	(609.9)	(76.2)	(33.2)	(19.1)	(101.4)	(257.5)	(288.7)	(63)
<b>1993</b>	1193	21	131	970	761	82	47	28	194	604	1063	120
	(1134.1)	(14.7)	(114.8)	(867.6)	(682.7)	(79.4)	(31.5)	(13.7)	(94.0)	(291.3)	(464.0)	(60.5)
<b>1994</b>	1124	50	161	1173	974	223	76	39	192	813	768	138
	(1065.1)	(22.3)	(110.5)	(982.4)	(778.4)	(127.7)	(53.2)	(11.9)	(82.9)	(396.2)	(325.8)	(54.4)
<b>1995</b>	1133	19	82	1070	791	238	64	54	205	912	939	99
	(1071.7)	(14.1)	(76.4)	(925.1)	(649.9)	(86.1)	(34.2)	(19.5)	(85.3)	(441.0)	(347.9)	(53.1)
<b>1996</b>	1063	22	80	1121	809	81	72	43	184	885	1246	41
	(1009.9)	(17.7)	(70.5)	(921.6)	(701.3)	(81)	(35.9)	(14.3)	(79.5)	(430.3)	(433.3)	(17)
<b>1997</b>	1163	16	64	1226	931	50	56	37	170	762	1230	57
	(1087.7)	(13)	(57.8)	(1013.3)	(759)	(50)	(28)	(13.9)	(75.9)	(356.4)	(530)	(21.4)
<b>1998</b>	1078	54	109	1038	807	156	93	67	173	890	1022	123
	(1031.3)	(49)	(101.1)	(897.8)	(712.6)	(100.2)	(47.6)	(32.1)	(75.3)	(401)	(405.3)	(45)

<b>1999</b>	1072	24	82	1353	933	89	54	84	160	729	1159	70
	(1000.6)	(15.4)	(57.7)	(1107.9)	(844.3)	(84)	(27.2)	(21.2)	(71.1)	(353.1)	(487.7)	(50.7)
<b>2000</b>	1039	17	53	1179	791	98	53	30	136	627	1180	216
	(953.4)	(17)	(49)	(1066.9)	(685.2)	(71.8)	(26)	(11.9)	(58.9)	(292.4)	(497.8)	(72.4)

**OTHER**

	<b>C</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>CS</b>	<b>AH</b>	<b>ARC</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>BL</b>	<b>NC</b>	<b>PG</b>	<b>TM</b>
<b>1992</b>	55	125	179	1259	1009	38	256	382	501	348	110
	(11.7)	(42.7)	(59.4)	(375.7)	(291.1)	(11.7)	(61.7)	(96.8)	(139.9)	(306.6)	(81.8)
<b>1993</b>	37	139	219	1484	640	93	257	375	560	364	167
	(18.3)	(40.5)	(60.3)	(428.0)	(168.4)	(25.5)	(49.1)	(79.7)	(140.8)	(317.8)	(139.4)
<b>1994</b>	24	135	195	1093	649	133	251	389	542	408	187
	(19.5)	(35.9)	(56.2)	(293.3)	(180.8)	(39.6)	(48.4)	(95.7)	(142.3)	(350.8)	(172.1)
<b>1995</b>	25	107	134	1079	549	94	208	356	608	445	145
	(17.3)	(29.1)	(44.7)	(271.2)	(159.1)	(26.1)	(44.7)	(79.5)	(164.8)	(395.5)	(125.1)
<b>1996</b>	19	96	144	852	640	56	228	330	646	452	159
	(15.9)	(25.4)	(42.4)	(196.8)	(160.5)	(18.1)	(53.3)	(84.7)	(163.4)	(378.2)	(144)
<b>1997</b>	12	50	126	2303	492	142	790	449	5917	381	192
	(7.3)	(12.9)	(29.2)	(769.1)	(124)	(32.7)	(219.4)	(157.9)	(403.8)	(327.1)	(162.3)

<b>1998</b>	46	45	84	2568	296	63	773	314	1010	555	246
	(18.9)	(9.5)	(19)	(945.3)	(78.8)	(17.2)	(181.2)	(83.2)	(216)	(465)	(186.2)
<b>1999</b>	41	98	109	8865*	249	121	665*	1211*	992	534	168
	(18.1)	(23.1)	(27.4)	(1431.6)	(75.8)	(32.4)	(148.1)	(286.6)	(202.3)	(449.5)	(145.6)
<b>2000</b>	9	48	105	7449*	318	140	626*	1206*	495	420	319
	(6.7)	(20.4)	(32.9)	(1354.8)	(75.3)	(37.8)	(133.6)	(269.6)	(133.6)	(363.1)	(244.8)

\* figures marked with an asterisk include Open University figures.

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## **CUCD Panel at the Classical Association, Liverpool 1999:**

### **Money, money, money:**

### **The funding of Research**

*Mary Beard, John Richardson, Dorothy Thompson*

- I. Postgraduate awards - Mary Beard
- II. Research awards
  - A. The AHRB Research Panel - John Richardson
  - B. Some practicalities of research applications - Dorothy Thompson

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The background to this year's panel is set out in the Chair's report. The editor's usual apologies for any inaccuracies in the following report, which this year, in view of the detailed practical advice presented, concentrates on the three main speakers' points rather than on the (valuable) ensuing discussion.

### **I. Postgraduate awards**

*Mary Beard*

The following advice on the process of applying for postgraduate awards comes out of a recently-completed three years as assessor for Classics and Archaeology under the old HRB system. Some things do change from year to year, and may change further under the AHRB, so all present tenses should be taken as provisional.

## A. The process

Under the HRB system, each application is seen by two or three *assessors*, who do not actually make the award, but assess it in a (notionally, at least) two-stage process:

### 1.

#### **The selector's grade.**

Here each assessor is required to grade their copy of the form in one of 6 categories (1, 2a, 2b, 3, 4, 5) on the basis of the quality of the proposal, the reference, and the institutional statement, but *not* the degree result or prediction. The key categories are 1 and 2a; in practice nobody with a 2b or below will get an award. Assessors are told to aim to classify 10% of the candidates in 1 and 10-15% of the candidates in 2a. Not all the candidates in 2a will get an award; the only actual safe candidates at that point are the ones you put in 1. Each assessor does this separately; then they compare one other's grades on the individual forms, and arrive at a combined *assessors' grade*, in a system not unlike blind marking, and with similar compromises in cases of disagreement. It's rare that anybody who doesn't get a 1 or a 2a from both assessors gets through to get a 1 or a 2a at the next stage.

### 2.

#### **The qualifications grade.**

Next comes the qualification or degree result for the master's course, entered by the University on form 107. This is scrutinised by the assessors for fairness (see below), and those results then separately passed on with a *qualifications grade* (in the case of Competition B, jointly made up from undergraduate and master's work) in addition to the selectors' grade. The classics applications then join the larger pool, and from further permutation involving both selector's grade and qualifications grade an order of ranking across the whole competition is established.

To illustrate the level of competition (using Competition A, for clarity's sake): a first-class degree result with a selector's grade of 1 is certain in practice to get a grant. A first with a 2a - so still within the top 25% - may well not get a grant if the first is low; to put it another way, 50% of Competition A applicants do not get a grant. In such a tight competition, selectors tend to find themselves *ruling out* candidates: looking in the forms not for candidates' good features, since the quality is very high, but for reasons to bump them down to a lower category. But the very tightness of competition means that ideological factors - prejudices about certain kinds of research, say - never have room to develop among the assessors.

## B. The institutional statement

Part 3 is in some ways the trickiest part of the form. It won't carry the application on its own in such tough competition, but candidates are sometimes disadvantaged by a mishandled Part 3. The philosophy of Part 3 is for the institution to explain the fit between the particular student and the particular institution. Two opposite mistakes are: (i) an extremely bland institutional statement that fails entirely to engage with the candidate's interests ("The Department of Classics at the University of X was given an Y rating in the last RAE; it has excellent library facilities, lots of staff and lots of FBAs - It would be an excellent place for Jenny to work"; (ii) effectively just another reference for the student: "We've come to think

very highly of Jenny; she's an extremely promising candidate; we're terribly pleased to have her; &c., &c." The central question is *why is this an appropriate marriage between department and student?* - especially important with students from overseas, where the form doesn't always make clear whether the department knows this person (perhaps from an Erasmus scheme) or has simply picked them out of a national pool of Master's candidates. The form does also ask you to rank the student in relation to other candidates for the course; this is essential, and failure to do this can disadvantage your best students, but it's possible to use a less brutally mechanical kind of ranking - saying, for example, "within the archaeological / literary / &c. area of our MA course, this student is among the best".

### **C. Form 107**

This is where the Department or Registry notes what ranking of first the student has attained, or ranks their MA achievement (often before their final dissertation). The entry is scrutinised with extreme care, and some 10-15% of the Universities' rankings are moved down or sometimes up. For example, the box may reveal that there were 18 firsts in the University that year in Classics, of which candidate X was 17th, with an average was 66.6; if the tick in this candidate's box indicates the top category of first, it will almost certainly be moved down to the bottom category of first. Similarly on the MA form, if the discursive statement says "Max has taken rather slowly to graduate work but his last assessed essay did just about make a first class and we are hopeful that he is on a rising curve", and then box 1 is ticked (on the 1-5 scale, meaning absolutely outstanding), then Max will be demoted one or two boxes. This may look arbitrary, but it's only being fair to those universities who look as though they're being honest.

## **II. Research awards**

### *A. The AHRB Research Panel* **(John Richardson)**

Research awards are managed by an entirely separate panel from postgraduate awards - and it's a new system, still evolving and still responsive to feedback. AHRB is not at present a research council, though it's seeking to become one; it emerged from the existence of the HRB (a British Academy initiative) and from Dearing's recommendation of a Humanities research council. When the government failed to take this up, HEFCE and the Northern Irish funding council along with the Academy took the initiative to set up something that will be run like it, and with the Scottish and Welsh funding councils due to join next year. Dearing proposed some 50m per year such a body; by the time Scotland and Wales are in there should be around 49m, though 9m of that is already allocated for support of museums, which was not part of Dearing's understanding of the remit. Nevertheless, it is a considerable upgrade of the sums available to HRB, especially on the research side.

As with the postgraduate panels, research panels were set up under 8 categories, of which Panel 1 is Classics, Ancient History, and Archaeology. One difference from HRB is that one of the panels is Performing Arts (whence the A in the new title) like music and drama, which have their own ring-fenced amount. At present AHRB deals with three schemes:

- (i) research leave, taken over from the BA;

(ii) small grants, up to 5,000, also taken over from the BA and due to revert there for the Humanities, though the panel will still assess small-grants applications for the BA;

(iii) large grants, over 5,000 and up to 100,000 per annum. These operate on the basis of internal, candidate-nominated references, and in the case of large grants also external references chosen by AHRB itself.

The process is roughly similar for all three schemes. Each member of the panel considers the whole range of information gathered (so that, for example, in our panel the archaeologists and classicists all look at ancient history), and applications are graded into A plus, A, A-, B, and R. R is a straight rejection; B means the proposal looks interesting but the application needs presenting differently. The panel also ranks applications; in Panel 1, an A+ has a very good chance of funding, but only the top few of the As will succeed, though research leave, which has more applications will let more As through. Panel 1 deals with a very large number of large research grant applications, about a third of all the large grant applications to AHRB - largely because of archaeological work. Large grant applications are mainly intended to provide wages for research assistance: a pattern of research long familiar to archaeologists, but not a habitual way of thinking for classicists and ancient historians, whose research is traditionally in solo projects. One of the purposes behind AHRB is precisely to make this kind of input to research.

After the applications have been graded by the Panel, they then go to the Research Committee, consisting of all the conveners of the research panels. This is the body that effectively allocates the money available to AHRB according to a formula that takes into account, for example, the number of academic staff in institutions were graded for the RAE; the number of applications (here Panel 1 does well); and so on. The formula determines what proportion of the grant is available, and then each panel's list is gone down until the appropriate number - *not* the amount - of grants is met. Then the actual funding involved is checked; at present, although a smaller proportion of Panel 1's list goes through because our list is longer, for the same reason we do well in the proportion of total funding allocated. One fundamental point is that the large grants and to a considerable extent research leave are funded in terms of *projects*; Dorothy Thompson will have more to say on this below.

AHRB is still very new, and Paul Langford, the present head of AHRB, is keen to listen to the academic community's own views on whether the current process is working for us. Two particular current preoccupations are: (i) funding for *research centres*, units within an institution that would act as a centre for research in a particular part of the field as opposed to particular projects, which are also funded; (ii) *research enhancement*, areas such as large-scale databases where work seems significant for future research. There are also structural questions about the panels and their subject domains: should a single panel covers archaeology, ancient history, and classics? should it be expanded, to include for example Byzantine studies? should it be shrunk, so that archaeology is separated from classics and ancient history?

#### *B. Some practicalities of research applications* **(Dorothy Thompson)**

From the experience of assessing application forms, some practical tips suggest themselves on how to fill the forms in. Much is common sense, but classicists are not as good at writing applications as their archaeologist colleagues and competitors, who have much more

experience of thinking (and applying for funding) in terms of *projects*, and it's no longer sufficient to say that you have been working on such-and-such an author for so-many years.

- *Clarity*, particularly for non-specialists. Out of the panel of seven, the three classicists are John Richardson, Dorothy Thompson, and Pat Easterling; the rest are archaeologists, covering a wide range. One needs to be able to describe one's research project in terms that non-specialists can understand - even down to absolute basics like who your author is and when he lived.
- *Relevance*: the wider context of the proposal. (Why is it interesting? Why should we take any notice of it? Why should we finance this rather than something else?)
- *Methodology*: the form has a section specifically about methodology, and classicists are on the whole rather unsophisticated here. It's not sufficient vaguely to claim your methodology is innovative ("I've got a new approach to my author"): What *is* that approach? How is it new, and why is it worth thinking about and funding? Classicists need to be able to provide, in words that others can understand, their answers to questions equivalent to the archaeologists' "Who's to do your thin sections, and is the cost valid?"
- *Experience*: always give details of relevant personal experience.
- *Project planning*. For large-grant applications, you need additionally to answer such questions as: Is this project feasible? Can it be split up into sections? How will it be monitored? What are the procedures by which a project director can communicate with all these proposed research assistants? It can often help credibility here to specify a particular research assistant whose CV can be attached and for whom references can be given.
- *Coordination*: will the project be coordinated in terms of weekly meetings? monthly meetings? What is the system is for report?
- *Costings*. If you are applying for a textual-critical project, don't just say "I need a laptop computer." What *kind* of laptop? Have you costed different options? Have you identified the best for the job? What particular software do you need? The Panels have considerable expertise here, and look at such issues carefully.
- *Institutional support*. A new feature of the AHRB grants is that 46% overheads go to the University. This is one reason why the money will be seen as going much less far, and why applications cannot be made without institutional backing. The Universities should, however, be offering something in return - equipment, facilities. There needs to be some bargaining with the University administration before putting in the application - even if the administration insist that their share is all swallowed up in their costs.
- *Joint projects and composite funding* are favourably looked upon, particularly where there's an international element: developing or ongoing relationships, between institutions or between individual scholars. Research leave applications are also affected by this - and it should be noted that it's now possible to apply for either four months or six months, so that term-based and semester-based institutions are now on an equal footing. (In the past it was only been possible for researchers in term-based Universities to get one extra term, and thus two-thirds of a year as leave; now, if the University will give six months' leave, the AHRB can match it with another six months.)
- *Interdisciplinarity*. It is also helpful if you can show a project is interdisciplinary in AHRB terms - if you've got something that genuinely involves art history and archaeology/classics, not inevitably because you've then got two panels looking at you, but the interdisciplinary element will help. When it comes to making judgments,

there are 8 columns, one for each of the 8 panels, plus an interdisciplinary column, and quite often people will go further up than otherwise. It's not worth bearing in mind if what you do is bring in elements from another discipline that are no good; that could sink what otherwise is an interesting project.

- And finally, *avoid acronyms*. We all assume that everyone knows what certain acronyms mean; but they irritate people who read forms!

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## **JACT Ancient History A Level: the new specification**

*Robin Osborne*

The JACT Ancient History Committee has been working on revisions to the existing JACT Ancient History A Level Syllabus for the past four years. Successive revisions have had themselves to be revised as Government requirements have changed. Under the rules as finally settled, all A levels will be made up of two parts, AS and A2. In each subject the A level examination is required to consist of six equal units, three examined at AS and three at A2. The A2 units will be examined at the end of Year 13; the AS Units may be examined either at the end of Year 12 or at the end of Year 13, or both, at the candidate's discretion.

The JACT Ancient History Committee has taken advantage of these new constraints to construct a syllabus which maintains the traditional emphasis on encouraging A level Ancient History students to grapple directly with ancient sources of high quality, but which provides much more precise guidance than has been given in the past about what students are expected to study. The syllabus, which will be the only Ancient History A Level syllabus on offer nationally, covers most of the same ground as is covered by the current JACT syllabus, but the material will be examined in different ways, with more explicit emphasis on the understanding of specified ancient texts (particularly in Units 1 and 4 which will be examined by questions on extracts from ancient sources) and on the understanding of change over a lengthy period of time (particularly in Unit 3 at AS and Unit 6 at A2). A new set of papers on Late Antiquity has been added to the syllabus.

There will be three groups of papers, Greek History, Roman History and Roman World. Candidates will be required to offer at AS a Document Study (Unit 1), a Source-based Study (Unit 2) and a Thematic Study (Unit 3) all chosen from a single group, and at A2 a further Document Study (Unit 4) and Thematic Study (Unit 6) along with either a further Source-based Study (Unit 5) *or* a piece of coursework (Unit 7, Individual Study), all chosen from a further, single, group. While it is recommended that candidates follow sets of co-ordinated Document Study, Source-based Study, and Thematic Study at both AS and A2, opportunity is also given to mix and match units to form alternative sets within groups (i.e. one could do 1.2, 2.1 and 3.3). The table below shows in detail both the papers and the papers that will be available.

<b>Group</b>		<b>Unit 1 AS Unit 4 A2</b>	<b>Unit 2 AS Unit 5 A2</b>	<b>Unit 3 AS Unit 6 A2</b>
<b>Greek History Group</b>	<b>Set 1</b>	1.1/4.1 Herodotus on Persia	2.1/5.1 The Conflict of Greece and Persia 499-479 B.C.	3.1/6.1 The Culture of Tyranny c.600-479 B.C.
	<b>Set 2</b>	1.2/4.2 The Athenian Empire 450-410 B.C.	2.2/5.2 Greek History 446-413 B.C.	3.2/6.2 Sparta in the Greek World 520-400 B.C.
	<b>Set 3</b>	1.3/4.3 The Trial of Socrates	2.3/5.3 The Culture of Athens 447-399 B.C.	3.3/6.3 Athenian Democracy 508-399 B.C.
<b>Roman History Group</b>	<b>Set 4</b>	1.4/4.4 The Catilinarian Conspiracy	2.4/5.4 Roman History 81-44 B.C.	3.4/6.4 The Growth and Government of the Roman Empire 133-30 B.C.
	<b>Set 5</b>	1.5/4.5 Augustus and Augustan Propaganda	2.5/5.5 The Age of Augustus 31 B.C.-A.D. 14	3.5/6.5 The City of Rome 33 B.C.-A.D. 117
	<b>Set 6</b>	1.6/4.6 Nero	2.6/5.6 Roman History A.D. 14-68	3.6/6.6 Emperors and Empire A.D. 14-117
<b>Roman World Group</b>	<b>Set 7</b>	1.7/4.7 Britain through Roman Eyes	2.7/5.7 Roman Britain A.D. 43-160	3.7/6.7 The Romanisation of Britain A.D. 43-415
	<b>Set 8</b>	1.8/4.8 Julian	2.8/5.8 Diocletian and Constantine A.D. 284-337	3.8/6.8 The Christianising of the Roman Empire A.D. 284-395

Part of what differentiates the new A levels from A levels in the past is an insistence that candidates at A2 display synoptic assessment, that is that they draw together what they have learned in the A level course as a whole. In the case of history a high degree of pulling together of skills of historical analysis is required in every answer, but candidates will be particularly required to use knowledge and skills gained throughout the AS and A2 Units in answering questions in Unit 4 and Unit 6. The full syllabus will be available in printed form from OCR in January, but in the meantime the draft syllabus can be consulted on the OCR website.

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for the JACT Ancient History Committee

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# **JACT CLASSICAL CIVILISATION AS/A LEVEL: the new specification**

*Stephen Hill*

The JACT syllabus in Classical Civilisation has been re-written to meet the requirements of the post-Dearing modular world in which A Level syllabuses need to be delivered in 6 modules with three modules at AS level and three modules at a differentiated (*i.e.* more demanding) A2 level. It is also a requirement that new syllabuses include synoptic assessment at A2: this involves analysis which brings together learning from various parts of the syllabus and is applied to examinations at the A2 level. Students may be assessed on the new specification in either a linear mode (all modules at the end of year 13) or in a modular way, taking some or all of the AS modules in year 12.

In re-drafting the specification great care was taken to ensure that the new version did not depart from the long-established principle that students should work, as far as possible, with primary material (as either translation or illustrations of material culture) and that, even in a broad multi-disciplinary subject such as Classical Civilisation, breadth of subject matter should not be such as to preclude study of particular topics in depth. Nevertheless the demands imposed by the modular structure and the inclusion of synoptic assessment did lead to the necessity for major changes from the old structure which was based on the study of four topics.

In order to conform to agreed limits on the number of optional routes through a specification and also to provide appropriate material for synoptic assessment there are prescribed combinations of topic. These also serve to ensure depth of study, since candidates are obliged to study prescribed linked combinations (*e.g.* two modules on Greek Tragedy) in order to be assessed at A2.

Major changes from the old syllabus include the re-introduction of the possibility of a substantial optional coursework element on a topic chosen by the student; the removal of Plato and the Pagans and Christians (though these could still be studied as coursework), and the introduction of Roman Britain and Archaeology modules. Minor changes of content include the appearance for the first time of Menander and Pliny.

The following tables set out the modules which are available in the new specification and the routes which must be followed. In practice a student wishing to acquire the full A Level must sit a module from each of groups 1 to 6 on the second table.

## *AS LEVEL*

### UNIT TOPIC

- 1 Greek Epic: Homer
- 2 Roman Epic: Vergil
- 3 Greek Historians: Herodotus and Thucydides
- 4 Roman Historians: Tacitus and Suetonius

- 5 Greek Tragedy 1: Aeschylus and Sophocles
- 6 Greek Tragedy 2: Euripides
- 7 Roman Satire and Society 1: Horace and Petronius
- 8 Roman Satire and Society 2: Juvenal and Pliny
- 9 Archaeology 1: Approaches to Classical Archaeology
- 10 Archaeology 2: Case Study -the Myceneans
- 11 Greek Comedy 1: Early Aristophanes
- 12 Greek Art and Architecture 1: Archaic and Early Classical
- 13 Roman Britain 1: Historical sources and the army

*A2 LEVEL*

UNIT TOPIC

- 14 Greek and Roman Epic Synoptic
- 15 Greek and Roman Historians Synoptic
- 16 Greek Tragedy Synoptic
- 17 Roman Satire and Society Synoptic
- 18 Archaeology Synoptic
- 19 Greek Comedy 2: Later Aristophanes and Menander Non-synoptic
- 20 Greek Art and Architecture 2: High Classical and Hellenistic Non-synoptic
- 21 Roman Britain 2: Artefacts and civilian sites Non-synoptic
- 22 Coursework Non-synoptic

**AS**

A2

Module Unit Title Unit Title Module

ONE

1 Greek Epic 14 Greek and Roman Epic

FOUR

- 2 Roman Epic Synoptic
- 3 Greek Historians 15 Greek and Roman Historians
- 4 Roman Historians

TWO

5 Greek Tragedy 1 16 Greek Tragedy

FIVE

- 6 Greek Tragedy 2 Synoptic
- 7 Roman Satire & Society 1 17 Roman Satire & Society
- 8 Roman Satire & Society 2
- 9 Archaeology 1 18 Archaeology
- 10 Archaeology 2

THREE

11 Greek Comedy 1 19 Greek Comedy 2

SIX

Non-

12 Greek Art & Architecture 1 20 Greek Art & Architecture 2 *or*

22

Coursework synoptic

13 Roman Britain 1 21 Roman Britain 2

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