

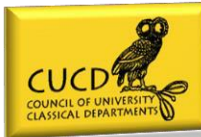
Chair's Report 2023

by Helen Lovatt

In a year in which men are thinking about the Roman Empire, sometimes as often as every day, Classics continues to flourish in UK Higher Education. The shape of the discipline fluctuates, influenced, as is everything, by government rhetoric and the volatility of the UK HE sector. Some departments have recruited very large numbers of students, so many that their universities struggle to accommodate them, while others have had low recruitment and lost posts. We were very sad to see the massive reduction of Arts and Humanities at Roehampton, and the redundancy of nearly all Classics colleagues there. However, other departments have been able to hold off destructive change, and CUCD continues to provide support.

The post-REF analysis revealed that while the number of units submitting to the Classics panel has reduced from 22 to 17, many colleagues are nevertheless research active, and making important contributions to different subject units, including Languages and Cultures, Archaeology, History and English Studies. The FTE researchers submitted increased from 383 to 448, reflecting the requirement to submit everyone, but also showing a healthy maintenance of colleagues on research-related contracts. The Impact report was particularly inspiring for showing how colleagues engage creatively with many different audiences and are reshaping the way people think about Classics and the ancient world.

Katherine Harloe organised an excellent set of post-REF reflection meetings, which were well attended and very useful in responding to subsequent consultation and deciding on departmental REF strategies. We are very grateful to Katherine, and other colleagues on the REF panel, particularly Maria Wyke, Lin Foxhall and Barbara Borg for attending and offering advice and explanations. We made a robust response to the consultation on planned changes to REF, and the People Culture



and Environment assessment process, and contributed to the responses produced by others; we are now awaiting final consultation on Open Access REF policy.

CUCD continues to offer help and support for departments in difficulties, both by pointing to resources, including this [tool-kit](#), providing mentoring and writing letters where this might make a difference, and contributing to more high profile campaigns if considered desirable or useful by colleagues under threat. In general, I would say that universities are less likely to target Classics in particular as a subject area, and more likely to target the Arts and Humanities as a whole, or to focus on cutting parts of subjects, such as pre-modern History, or early English. It is harder to argue against pure financial cases for general retrenchment than unfair targeting of one subject area.

The main areas of activity for CUCD are EDI and Education. Both committees give grants to support relevant activities, to bring together colleagues who work in these areas to share good practice, and to produce reports for the Bulletin as well as their own blogs. To give two examples of recent grants: the Education committee supported a [conference in the University of Lincoln](#) which discussed the ways that students now read and how best to support them in reading online, while the EDI committee supported the Classics and Class survey, which gathered over a thousand responses, and will provide important data on how class background affects studying and succeeding in UK Classics.

During the pandemic and with other stressors in the HE sector, such as the Marking Assessment Boycott and its effects, it remains hard for volunteer officers to stay active, and to find volunteers to take on the more substantial areas of work. However, all areas of activity are now functioning well. Everyone is incredibly busy, and CUCD is very grateful for all the work people contribute. In particular, the statistics were not gathered for some years, and we are now working hard to remedy the situation, since this is one of the most important things the Council does. We very much appreciate all the work that these statistics take for individual departments, and emphasise how important the independent statistics are,

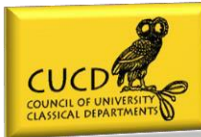


particularly for making a case for the continuing viability of departments. CUCD statistics are the only ones which bring all of the Classical disciplines together, and count students otherwise submerged in other cohorts (for instance, Ancient History), as well as maintaining continuity of method, which enables comparison across time.

On the agenda at the moment are further REF consultations; finding REF panellists; working with the Arts and Humanities Alliance to build a toolkit for departments in difficulties that will apply across the whole range of our subject areas; dealing with recent AHRC doctoral funding changes; working with the Classics Development Group to coordinate different types of activities across the discipline; building international collaboration to support Classics in other contexts; enabling better communication and understanding between secondary and tertiary Classics teachers; and improving the status of the CUCD Bulletin by gaining an ISSN.

JISC-mail lists have been set up to facilitate communication and support between different administrative roles in Classics: Heads of Department; Directors of Research and Impact; Directors of Teaching and Student Experience; Admissions and Outreach officers; EDI officers. This should enable better sharing of tactics that work in these areas, more collaboration and avoidance of reinventing the wheel. Please do sign up to these lists if you hold a relevant role, and we will aim to organise regular meetings to share ideas and suggestions. Links to join the various lists have been circulated on the Classicists list and will be kept on the [About Us page](#) of the CUCD website.

CUCD is the only organisation that represents all UK HE departments teaching Classical subjects who wish to belong, rather than representing primarily its own members (institutional members rather than individual members, in contrast with the Classical Association, SPHS, SPRS). It therefore has a distinctive role in the landscape, while other organisations support the subject more widely in both schools and universities. CUCD also took on the work of the former Subject Centre in supporting UK HE pedagogy in Classics. The role of the Council, which used to be made up primarily of Heads of Department, and now more often consists of



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nominated deputies, has changed somewhat, but the representative nature of the organisation remains the same. Classics as a discipline is very lucky to have excellent communication, a high level of engagement, proactive subject associations and excellent links with related disciplines. We are well-placed to keep working together, and I encourage colleagues to get involved, keep involved and work to keep the subject flourishing.

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