

AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY HEADS OF ENGLISH

Meeting Minutes

Annual Meeting, ADFA/UNSW Canberra, November 19 2014

Present: Leigh Dale (UoW); Paul Eggert (ADFA); Meg Tasker (UFed); Giselle Bastin (Flinders); Deborah Pike (Notre Dame); Jesper Gulddal (UoN); Melissa Hardie (USyd); Paul Giles (USyd); Jennifer McDonnell (UNE); Helen Groth (UNSW); Clare Archer-Lean (USC); Ralph Crane (UTas); Matthew McGuire (UWS); Tom Clark (VU); Amanda Nettelbeck (Adelaide); Alison Ravenscroft (La Trobe); Chris Danta (UNSW); Simon Ryan (ACU); Michael Griffith (ACU); Steve Evans (Flinders); Monique Rooney (ANU); Chris Lee (Griffith); Heather Neilson (ADFA); Susan Martin (La Trobe); Clare Tuite (Melbourne); Ann Vickery (Deakin); Antonina Harbus (Macquarie); Anthony Uhlmann (UWS); Nicole Moore (ADFA).

Minutes: Jesper Gulddal

9.40-11.30 Literary Studies & the ARC and ERA.

Chair: Nicole Moore

The Annual Meeting was opened with presentations by Chris Marshall and Denyse Meridith of the ARC. Chris Marshall presented the methodology and process of the 2015 ERA rankings and encouraged the AUHE to get involved by making submissions. Denyse Meredith discussed ARC funding outcomes and the ARC evaluation process.

Attendees highlighted the possibility of crafting a submission on what counts as esteem in English.

12.00-1.00 Developments in Literary Studies 2014 – General Discussion

Chair: Helen Groth

Helen Groth presented the main findings of Graeme Turner and Kylie Brass's report *Mapping the Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences in Australia* as basis for a general discussion of the state of English as a discipline. Key discussion points were:

1) Academic workload

- Workload numbers skewed by the fact that staff members assigned to management tasks are often not replaced
- Increased student loads make us more reliant on casualization, which is a risky strategy in a period of budget restraint
- Workload is increased by the push for online teaching, which is more labour-intensive at the level of the teacher
- AUHE should collect data on various workload models and formulate a set of disciplinary workload expectations
- AUHE should collect data to reduce casualization

2) Self-representation of the discipline

- AUHE should collect information on successful students with an English degree (CEO of NAB)
- AUHE webpage should be used to promote a new narrative as an alternative to current perceptions of decline and crisis
- The discipline should highlight employability skills that students get from studying English

3) English and Creative Writing

- What is the status of Creative Writing across different universities?
- The status of Creative Writing is complicated by the fact that it is placed in a different FoR code
- The problem of the Creative Writing exegesis

2.00-2.30 General discussion continued

Chair: Anthony Uhlmann

Anthony Uhlmann introduced the second half of the meeting relating to questions of AUHE capacity and highlighted the two working parties and the Literary Studies Convention as places where the organisation can offer meaningful contributions. However, the AUHE still has no steady source of funding.

Further contributions could consist in supporting regional universities via collegiate support, visits and collaborations; organising one-day workshop on how we define English in relation to other fields; and collecting statistics about the state of the discipline.

Anthony highlighted that he will be stepping down as president at the end of 2015. A discussion about succession should be initiated in early 2015.

The discussion of funding resulted in the following motion:

“AUHE requests membership subscription amounting to \$350 annually from universities teaching English”.

This motion was approved with overwhelming majority.

2.30-3.00 TLOs for English & AUHE

Chair: Nicole Moore

Nicole Moore reported on the year’s work by the Learning and Teaching Standards committee. Efforts have focused on drafting a set of national TLOs for English, to be pursued further in the form of an OLT application. Workshops have been held in Sydney (May 14-15) and Melbourne (June 11).

The following points were made in the discussion of the TLO draft:

- There is a need to distinguished between spoken word as distinct from literature and between literature and language as its medium
- TLOs should include the word “demonstrate”

- The number of TLOs should be reduced so as to limit burden of implementing them
- There should be more focus on capacities that we produce and the use-value of the discipline in terms of workplace readiness
- Capstone courses are the place where students apply skills and knowledge, and TLOs could potentially be extracted from the course descriptions

3.00-3.30 Curriculum committee

Chairs: Leigh Dale & Giselle Bastin

Leigh Dale reported on the work of the Secondary/Tertiary English committee. This committee was created to engage in the discussion of the National Curriculum. However, while this is not officially admitted, it is now clear that the National Curriculum has been allowed to lapse. Each state finds that their model is the best. Further, Leigh spoke about the antagonism between secondary and tertiary English in Australia, highlighting the volatility of secondary English, its thematic orientation, and its conceptual vagueness. Leigh concluded that there is a need for research on conceptual basis of secondary English and on secondary/tertiary transition.

Giselle Bastin discussed the possible goals of a mapping of the secondary environment:

- Build better knowledge of and relations with secondary schools?
- Provide universities with more detailed and more accurate knowledge as to the kinds of knowledge and expectations held by incoming students, so as to better tailor first-year subjects to those students?
- prepare students for teaching such subjects, i.e. potentially to reshape various elements of the tertiary curriculum, given that the present gap between secondary and tertiary versions of the discipline suggest that this preparation is not currently being optimized, although many students doing English majors cite teaching preparation as a career goal?
- encourage academics to think about the contribution they might make to the structure, purpose and content of secondary English curricula?

The assembly encouraged further work in this area. The committee's report, "Secondary/Tertiary Nexus. AUHE Discussion Paper no. 2", is available on the AUHE webpage (www.auhe.org).

4.00-4.30 Literary Studies Convention

Chairs: Leigh Dale, Tom Clarke, Chris Danta, Helen Groth

Leigh Dale spoke about the upcoming Literary Studies Convention (theme: Literary Networks), held at the University of Wollongong July 7-11 2015. AUHE members are encouraged to submit papers and invite colleagues and postgraduate students to attend as well. A motion to bring back the Frank Moorhouse Ballroom Dancing competition was approved.

Other Business

It was raised as a concern that English has a culture of criticism that potentially lowers our grant success rates. Fostering a culture of constructive criticism and collegial support might help improve funding outcomes for the discipline.