

Paper identifier	Meeting	Date	Protective Marking
Paper D	Sections	October 2024	None



# Sections

October 2024

Update from Chief Executive: Paper D

<b>This paper is for noting</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>
<i>To update you on key Academy matters not covered elsewhere on your agenda. This paper complements the Programmes and Activities paper for June 2024 Council which provides a more detailed picture.</i>
<b>Author</b>
<i>Hetan Shah, Chief Executive</i>
<b>Financial or resource implications, and/or risks to consider</b>
<i>None</i>

## 1. Election and post-election engagement

At the start of the election the Academy released a ‘[Manifesto](#)’ outlining priorities we would wish to see in the next Government. This made the case for more sustainable funding for higher education and research, and the value of humanities and social sciences and of research infrastructure such as libraries and archives. We also hosted a ‘[hustings](#)’ event in partnership with the other National Academies with representatives from the main parties.

After the election we have moved quickly to engage with the new Government including a meeting with Science Minister Sir Patrick Vallance and engagement with both the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Department for Education. Our President Professor Julia Black PBA has been contributing to the Universities UK ‘Blueprint for Universities’ which is due out shortly.

The Government is engaging in a spending review which will determine funding for research and include the settlement for the Academy’s core grant. We are expecting a tight settlement given pressure on the public finances, but are making the case for the value of humanities and social science research.

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## 2. Open access and other consultations

The Academy made a strong [submission](#) to the consultation on open access. We, and many others, were critical of the impact on research and researchers – in particular on long form publications. We are pleased that as a result of the input from the sector, these changes have now been paused. The Academy has also fed into the REF People, Culture & Environment Indicators survey. The Academy put in a strong [response](#) in the spring to the Migration Advisory Committee’s consultation about the Graduate Visa scheme and we were pleased to see that the concerns we raised were [heeded](#).

## 3. Curriculum review

We are delighted that Professor Becky Francis FBA has been appointed to lead the Government’s review of the curriculum. The Academy will be developing a response, led by Professor Margot Finn FBA (Vice President for Higher Education and Research) and Professor Anna Vignoles FBA (chair of the Education Section).

The Academy published a [report](#) over the summer which showed that changes in England in 2015/16 following the decoupling of AS/A-level qualifications has probably been a contributing factor to students taking fewer qualifications and studying a less diverse range of subjects. The report received extensive media coverage. Through our [SHAPE Observatory](#) we also draw together a variety of pipeline data about post-16 subject choice trends.

## 4. Academy building and events

We were pleased to welcome many Fellows to our Summer Showcase which was the busiest and most popular yet, as well as to the AGM and summer reception. We weren’t able to use the new spaces for the Showcase which put a squeeze on our capacity so we are pleased that the Academy building is fully re-opening this autumn. The new and enhanced Fellows room is on the ground floor, consisting of two interconnected rooms with space to study, meet with others and relax between engagements. We hope you like this space. Our new lower ground floor spaces will enable a range of events including a public events [programme](#) through the autumn. There are a host of events during Fellows’ week which we hope will give you a chance to use the facilities and meet each other after a long hiatus.

## 5. Book prize

We have [announced](#) the shortlist for the British Academy book prize. Now in its 12th year, the international book prize, worth £25,000, rewards and celebrates ground-breaking works of non-fiction that have made an outstanding contribution to the public understanding of world cultures and their interactions, and are grounded in rigorous and high-quality research. This year’s British Academy Book Prize judges have chosen a shortlist of six exceptional books from a record-breaking number of submissions. They are:

- ***Material World: A Substantial Story of Our Past and Future*** by Ed Conway (WH Allen / Ebury Publishing / Penguin Random House)
- ***Smoke and Ashes: Opium's Hidden Histories*** by Amitav Ghosh (John Murray / HarperCollins India)

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- ***The Secret Lives of Numbers: A Global History of Mathematics & Its Unsung Trailblazers*** by Kate Kitagawa and Timothy Revell (Viking / Penguin Random House)
- ***The Tame and the Wild: People and Animals after 1492*** by Marcy Norton (Harvard University Press)
- ***Language City: The Fight to Preserve Endangered Mother Tongues*** by Ross Perlin (Grove Press UK)
- ***Divided: Racism, Medicine and Why We Need to Decolonise Healthcare*** by Annabel Sowemimo (Profile Books / Wellcome Collection)

## 6. Early Career Researcher Network

Our Early Career Researcher Network (ECRN) continues to grow, with over 4,000 members. We have clusters in the Midlands, South West, Scotland and London, and are shortly to announce a new North West / North Wales cluster, and are now working on a North East / Northern Ireland cluster. One of the things the ECRN members value most is engagement with Fellows. There is a paper providing more detail about how you can get involved specifically with our encourage and engage programme on the agenda but there are many other ways in which the ECRN would love to work with you. If any Fellows wish to become more involved in the ECRN or simply learn more about it please do contact the team by email at [ecr\\_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk](mailto:ecr_network@thebritishacademy.ac.uk)

## 7. Research funding

We are grateful to Fellows for their work in peer review of grant applications which helps support the next generation of researchers. We are pleased to have [awarded](#) 45 Postdoctoral Fellowships this year and continue to have a very wide range of schemes including the ever popular Small Grants scheme. This year we have been especially successful in bidding for international funding, and hence have a range of international funding schemes throughout the year.

## 8. Journal relaunch

We have [relaunched](#) the Journal of the British Academy. It has a wonderful fresh design, and has widened scope to include contributions from Fellows, funded researchers and more, so it now fits much more neatly into the Academy's wider strategy. If you have not seen it, do take a look. The launch issue includes:

- Personal notes on the art of the African diaspora' by Bernardine Evaristo
- 'How the British have misunderstood Ireland and Northern Ireland' by Paul Bew
- 'Health and wellbeing in the face of crises associated with climate or conflict: how can knowledge from the humanities and social sciences help us respond to disasters?' by [Sarah Curtis](#), [Melissa Leach](#), Kate Arden, Carly Beckerman, Paul R. Hunter, Hanna Ruszczyk and Mark Pelling
- '(Extra)ordinary images: photography, memory and creative documentary – Rwanda and Argentina' by Piotr Cieplak

New content is added to the website regularly, with the next volume due out 22 September.