

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



Sections

October 2024

British Academy 125th anniversary in 2027: Paper E

This paper is for information
Purpose:
<i>This paper invites Sections to start considering how they might contribute to the marking of the 125th anniversary in 2027.</i>
Recommendation(s):
<i>Sections are invited to discuss the paper, and to make both general and Section-specific suggestions for how the anniversary may be marked.</i>
Author
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Financial or resource implications, and/or risks to consider
<i>None at this stage</i>

Background

1. The Academy has previously celebrated the 25th anniversary of its establishment by Royal Charter (in 1927), the 50th anniversary (in 1952), and the Centenary (in 2002). For the 120th anniversary (in 2022) we celebrated ‘12 Decades’ of the British Academy.
2. The Heritage Committee has begun to think about how the Academy’s 125th anniversary in 2027 might be marked in ways that would draw upon the Academy’s own heritage and that of its disciplines; and the anniversary is also on the radar of the Communications and Engagement Committee (CEC), and the Publishing and Conferences Committee (PCC). The purpose of this paper is to invite Sections to start considering how they might contribute to the marking of the anniversary – as they did in such an engaged way at the time of the Centenary.

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Potential activities

3. Activities to mark the Academy's Centenary in 2002 included [a series of publications about the Academy's disciplines](#), and [anniversary lectures](#). More recently, in 2022 we produced a range of digital content and a booklet documenting the '[12 Decades of the British Academy](#)'. A possible outlet for any new 'state of the discipline' reflections could be the *Journal of the British Academy*.
4. The Heritage Committee is conscious that the Academy's history is a complex interplay of institution, individuals and ideas. It is also mindful of the need to avoid being inward-looking, and to be aware of how the Academy has been and is perceived by others. And it is particularly aware of the lead times needed for pulling together any co-ordinated and collaborative activities.
5. Particular ideas considered by the Heritage Committee include:
 - (a) Contributions reflecting on the evolution of the Academy's disciplines, perhaps particularly developments since the Centenary in 2002 (during which time three new Sections have been added), or on possible areas for development in the next 25 years; each Section might be invited to consider how it could contribute to this (and this is also something that could be addressed in future Fellows' Weeks).
 - (b) More personal perspectives from within the Fellowship, including about key figures in the evolution of particular disciplines (or perhaps examples of FBAs who made major contributions on the national stage, or of FBAs who made significant scholarly contributions from outside the ranks of academia); this could draw on the Biographical Memoirs of Fellows ([which are all now available online](#)).
 - (c) Selections of key documents from the archive demonstrating the Academy's history and the role it has played; and selective reissues of, for example, formative [Academy lectures](#) previously published in the *Proceedings / Journal*, with short commentaries on their significance.
6. At their meetings over the summer, Section Standing Committees have had the opportunity to hold preliminary discussions of how the anniversary may be marked. Ideas floated by Standing Committees include:
 - (a) Reflections on how the various disciplines have developed since the Academy's foundation, and the roles they have played in the Academy's intellectual life.
 - (b) A study/celebration of a scholar from the earlier years of the Academy who was particularly famous/significant in the development of the discipline(s).

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- (c) Discussions on the future of the Academy’s various disciplines, by panels involving a diverse range of contributors (e.g. including Academy-supported mid and early career researchers, and Honorary Fellows).
- (d) A history of the Academy through key ideas – perhaps one per decade, or one per Section.
- (e) Discussion of major contemporary themes, such as climate change, ‘the good society’, and ‘big data’.
- (f) A survey or history placing the Academy in comparative international perspective.
- (g) A celebration of the long-established Academy lecture series.

What is needed now

7. To inform the thinking of the Heritage Committee, and of the two committees (CEC and PCC) through which particular activities can be delivered, Sections are invited to consider how each Section might contribute to the marking of the 125th anniversary.
8. At this stage, it would be helpful if Sections could:
 - provide initial comments on the merits of any of the possible approaches listed in paragraphs 5-6 above;
 - suggest any alternative general approaches for marking the 125th anniversary that they think could be explored;
 - provide a provisional indication of whether their Section is interested in participating in some way;
 - record in their minutes any Section-specific suggestions that they would be interested in seeing taken further.
9. After the October round of Section meetings, the Heritage Committee, CEC and PCC will be able to review what Sections have said, gauge the level of interest in contributing to the marking of the anniversary, and shift through any specific suggestions for an initial assessment of what may be feasible and what scope there may be for co-ordinated and collaborative activity.

JR
September 2024