

**Minutes of the
Annual General Meeting of the German Studies Association of Ireland (GSAI)
26th February 2021, 3-4:10 pm on zoom**

1. In Attendance

Marieke Krajenbrink (UL), Gisela Holfter (UL), Siobhán Donovan (UCD), Tina-Karen Pusse (NUIG), Anne Fuchs (UCD), Anne Marie Walker (TU), Britta C. Jung (UCD), Caitríona Leahy (TCD), Christine Bremer (formerly UCC), Clive Earls (MU), Cordula Boecking (MU), Deirdre Byrnes (NUIG), Gillian Pye (UCD), Jean Conacher (UL), Michael Hofer-Robinson (UCC), Michaela Schrage-Früh (NUIG), Sabine Egger (MIC), Sabine Strümper-Krobb (UCD), Sandra Wagner (MIC), Simone Klapper (NUIG), Tony Coulson (DCU), Valerie Heffernan (MU), Hanna Bingel-Jones (UCC).

2. Welcome and apologies (Marieke Krajenbrink)

Marieke Krajenbrink, Co-Chair of the GSAI, welcomed all attendees to the AGM and noted apologies from Christiane Schönfeld (MIC), Florian Krobb (NUIM), Barbara Siller (UCC), Joe Twist (UCD), and Jürgen Barkhoff (TCD).

3. Announcements (Marieke Krajenbrink)

Marieke noted the recent passing of Mary Howard (once Head of the German Department at UCC) and Ian Wallace (Emeritus Professor, University of Bath). She also noted that Michael Shields retired from NUIG. She congratulated to the following promotions: Jürgen Barkhoff was appointed as Vice-Provost, Chief Academic Officer and Deputy President of Trinity College, Rebecca Braun as Executive Dean of the College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies at NUI, Caitríona Ní Dhúill as Professor of German at UCC, and Gisela Holfter was promoted to Associate Professor at UL. She also congratulated Gisela Holfter who has been awarded the Bundesverdienstkreuz for her special contribution to German-Irish relations. Clive Earls also noted that Linda Shortt replaced Florian Krobb as Head of Department at MU. All colleagues were congratulated on their successes.

4. Minutes of 2019 AGM

Marieke asked Clive to correct a sentence in his report in the 2019 AGM regarding PhD students. Clive suggested that it must mean: "Half of PhD students who are currently studying in Modern Languages are not in German Studies." There were no further comments and the minutes were considered as agreed.

5. Election of Officers

Marieke announced that the post as representative of the Postgraduates has been handed over from Andreas Weidlich (NUIG) to Michael Hofer-Robinson (UCC). She expressed warmest thanks to Andreas for his dedicated work and thanked Michael for taking on this role. Michael's appointment was formally approved by the members in attendance and he was welcomed to the committee.

6. Co-Chair's report (Marieke)

Marieke spoke about the recent trends in student numbers. There are decreases at all levels between the years of 2018/19 to 2019/20, however, the overall picture across years and programmes is more stable. Most institutions reported a decrease both in the uptake of German in the first year and of post-LC German. A positive trend observed was that at least two institutions reported an increase of students doing German in Business German, in Sciences or Biotechnology. Marieke expressed particular concerns about the low postgraduate numbers both at MA and PhD level.

Regarding PhD students, Clive remarked that for the next survey it would be useful to ask for reports on PhDs who are studying in neighbouring disciplines such as Applied Linguistics and Comparative Literature but are focusing on German-related topics. Marieke expressed concerns that this may lead to some unclarity in terms of which developments in German Studies are counted but generally welcomed the proposal.

Siobhan also supported Clive's request. She remarked that the supervision of PhD students from other disciplines is an essential part of many colleagues' work and it shows the wide range of German Studies and their increasingly interdisciplinary focus.

Tina remarked that the funding landscape also provides a reason for the low numbers of PhD students. She explained that at NUIG internal fellowships were not available for the past two years due to the college's financial deficits.

7. Reports from Associated Organisations

Marieke reported from her and Joe's attendance at the 2020 online conference of the British AGS (*Association for German Studies*) that took place in September. The AGS highlighted the serious pressures for British colleagues working in modern languages post-Brexit. A particular instance is the recent suspension of language provision at the University of Hull. Marieke also represented the GSAI at the 2019 *Deutsche Germanistentag* in Saarbrücken. She asked the colleagues to remind their PhD students of the very well-funded Postdoktorand/innentreffen at the Germanistentag and to apply for the Association's next conference in 2022 which will take place in Paderborn and will be on the theme of "Mehrdeutigkeiten".

WIGS Women in German Studies (Siobhan Donovan)

In her capacity as the Irish representative for WIGS, Siobhan Donovan emphasised the value and supportive role of the organisation and that it is a pleasure for her to be in the committee as the Irish representative. She reported that the next conference will be held virtually at the University of Aberdeen in June 24-26, 2021. This year's conference is not only for WIG members but open to everyone and the theme will be "Crossing Thresholds". Siobhan also noted that WIGS had announced three new vacancies as treasurer, postgraduate representative, and early Early Career Academic Representative (deadline in March 2021). The annual committee meeting always takes place in May in the location of the institution holding the next conference. She highlighted that WIGS welcomes new members and encouraged everyone interested to visit the Vlog¹.

Business German in Ireland Group (Gisela Holfter)

Gisela Holfter, chair of the BuGi group, announced the group's 21st anniversary this year which, however, would not be celebrated in the Residency of the German Ambassador as planned, but by a normal BuGi meeting and the theme would be online assessment. She also reported on a successful workshop in June 2020 focussing on using online tools for teaching Business German and an equally

¹WIGS Vlog:

productive meeting in January 2021 on sharing experiences of the last term's online teaching. Gisela informed about the project "Unternehmen Deutsch" that the group will embark on with the Goethe Institute Dublin. The project has been initiated in different countries and it will be a pilot run this year in Ireland. It is currently targeting schools but the aim is to take it to university level for which Gisela together with Michaela Schrage-Früh will establish a working group. Gisela also announced an annual competition event at which students will submit videos on Irish-Germans relations in Ireland. She expressed her gratitude to the Irish Chamber of Commerce for providing the funding for the prizes. More information on this will follow in the group's autumn report. She finally asked colleagues to get in touch with her if anyone wants to join the working group for "Unternehmen Deutsch".

Centre for Irish-German Studies (Gisela Holfter)

In her capacity as Director of the Centre for Irish-German Studies she reported that the event on "Irish-German diplomatic relations – towards the 100th anniversary" on 18th February 2021 was successfully performed by a number of high-profile speakers from the political domain as well as videos from experts in Irish-German relations and key stakeholders representatives. A recording of the two parts conference is available on <https://ulsites.ul.ie/irishgerman/node/19121>

One Voice for Languages

No representative was present, but Marieke highlighted that the group has been very active in 2020/21 and she noted two successful webinars of the group, one of them on the theme on linguistic diversity and the primary language curriculum.

Languages Connect (Clive Earls)

Clive Earls reported on positive developments regarding Languages Connect in that there is now finally contact between the Department and third level education (the focus was so far on post primary education). The contact person in the Department is Joanne Tobin. Maynooth, DCU, UCC, and WIT are currently involved in a Higher Education working group but Clive expects that a call for participation will be soon sent to all universities.

Clive highlighted that the Post Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) are very open to working with third level colleagues and suggested that the AGS and GSAI should contact PPLI to build upon cooperation. He also pointed out funding opportunities with PPLI for outreach activities for foreign languages. Secondly, the PPLI will be launching a new scheme for funding 15 ECTS for any candidates that are short-credit for teaching council accreditation in the foreign languages.

Further comments on PME studies and teaching council

Marieke spoke about a very positive trend in the PME Professional Master of Education (Languages) programme in Limerick. The student numbers including those doing German are very high. This was followed by a discussion between Siobhan, Marieke and Clive about new teacher specifications that the teaching council has planned to implement but not until 2023, as Clive noted. One of the concerning developments that was discussed is that PME students can spend less time abroad than as is currently required. It was decided to write to the teaching council in order to express concerns about the planned changes and it was also suggested to involve the other language associations in this initiative through One Voice for Languages.

8. Treasury's report (Tina-Karen Pusse)

Due to time constraints, it was decided to send the treasury's report on the GSAI budget by email.

9. Secretary's report (Hanna Bingel-Jones)

Hanna reported that the membership numbers have been stable over the last year. While some members have been removed from the list, six members have joined the association in 2020/21. The number of colleagues who are receiving the email circulars are currently 89. Hanna also noted that, despite the corona-related cancellations and restrictions, the mailing list was actively used and she thanked the colleagues for sending her a great number of events, publications, calls for papers, and websites that she was able to circulate among the members.

Postgraduate Travel Bursary

Hanna noted that the last year's travel bursary amount was 250 EUR and two applicants had applied for it. She expressed her congratulations to Michael Hofer-Robinson who finally received the bursary.

As confirmed by Tina, the travel bursary for 2021 allows for a sum up to 400 EUR. In view of the continuing travel restrictions the committee suggested to extend the possibilities of using the travel bursary. Next to conference registration it may also be used for publication in open access journals, the purchase of research literature or library loans. The proposal was accepted by the audience.

10. Report of the Yearbook editors (Germanistik in Ireland)

Due to time constraints, Siobhan's report of the yearbook was shifted to the book launch.

11. The Postgraduate Representative's Report (Michael Hofer-Robinson)

Michael thanked the committee again for appointing him as the GSAI postgraduate representative. He announced an event on career planning for postgraduates in German Studies that he is currently organising with Joe and would be soon announced. He also asked the colleagues to refer the PhD students of their departments to him and also to contact him regarding possible suggestions for postgraduate events.

12. Date and venue of the next GSAI conference

The GSAI conference in 2021 will take place at Maynooth University.