

## The Institute of English Studies and the University of London's 'Recommendation'

On Thursday, 15 May 2014, Professor Roger Kain, the Dean and Chief Executive of the School of Advanced Study at the University of London, announced 'the University's formal response to the news that HEFCE funding for SAS will be cut by 3% with effect from 2014–15'. This response had been decided on the previous day by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group (VCEG) who recommended 'a concentration of funding into a smaller number of institutes'. In effect, part of the academic activity of the Institute of English Studies (IES) will be merged with the Institute of Historical Research (IHR) to create a centre for Palaeography and the History of the Book; part will be merged with the Institute of Modern Languages Research (IMLR) to create a centre for Comparative Literature; and the Science and Music activity of the Institute of Musical Research (IMR) will be merged with the Institute of Philosophy's Centre for the Study of the Senses. Although this document is concerned with the IES, the future of the IMR is also a matter of deep concern.

The VCEG is an administrative, non-academic body that reached its decision about the IES without consulting those involved in the Institute's work or those representing English as a very large national and international subject community. The decision is sudden, arbitrary, and ill-thought out. Interviews for the post of the new Director of the IES had been scheduled for 7 May and were cancelled at the last minute.

The IES was founded in 1999 but dates back to the Centre for English Studies which was created in 1991. Part of the Institute's mission is to 'Promote advanced study and research in English Studies in the wider national and international academic community'. It has consistently fulfilled this aim: by organizing conferences (currently 25 each year) and seminar series (currently, around 40, with at least 6 sessions each year); by a non-stipendiary visiting fellowships programme (12 visitors a year); and by collaborations with some 60 organizations and societies. It also runs the T. S. Eliot International Summer School and the London Rare Books School and Palaeography Summer School. In the recent past, it has raised around £5m, and has been the home to major projects with partners such as the AHRC, the British Library, OUP, and Faber. The projects include: editions of Francis Bacon, John Ford, and T.S. Eliot; the Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts, 1450-1700; digital projects relating to medieval MSS; The Irish Book in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; the Reading Experience Database; The History of OUP; and other projects on writing, publishing and scholarly editing, including A Publishing and Communications History of the Ministry of Information, 1939-45. In addition, the IES established a pioneering MA in the History of the Book. The Institute's work is clearly carried out at national and international levels.

If the VCEG's recommendations are accepted, much of this activity will cease, not least its vital role in training younger scholars. What is proposed is a direct assault on the value and integrity of the Institute and of English studies as a discipline. Book History will not find its natural home in the IHR: in the UK, Historical Bibliography is a core discipline within English Studies. Nor will a Centre for Comparative Literature in the IMLR (which rightly has its own sense of that subject) accommodate the vast range of Research Seminar activity in English Language and Literature. Almost all of what has been most valuable in the IES's work during the last quarter century or so will disappear.

Those who object to the recommendation can seek to stop or delay it: by writing to Professor Kain ([roger.kain@sas.ac.uk](mailto:roger.kain@sas.ac.uk)) and to Professor Smith ([adrian.smith@london.ac.uk](mailto:adrian.smith@london.ac.uk)) – a specimen form of words is available on the petition website; by raising the issue with their Universities, Faculties, and Departments and with subject groups and learned societies; by responding to Matthew Reisz's article on the subject in the THE (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/university-of-london-plans-closure-of-institute-of-english-studies/2013382.article>); by using social media ([#saveIES](https://twitter.com/saveIES)); and by signing a petition at <http://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/professor-sir-adrian-smith-abandon-the-recommendation-to-break-up-the-institute-of-english-studies-2>

The Co-Chairs of the Steering Group of Save the IES

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