



Association of the University Professors and Heads of French+

Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting

11.45-12.45 Friday 27 June

In Partnership with the Third Regional Forum on the Future of French and Francophone Studies at School and at University

University of Bristol

**Humanities Research Centre, 11 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TB
and on Zoom**

<https://uofglasgow.zoom.us/j/87119345614?pwd=b6ifo145abNNA4fzszocUXbqfetq0m.1>

Meeting ID: 871 1934 5614 Passcode: 033103

In Attendance: Hugo Azérad, Dominique Carlini Versini, Rebecca Dixon, Stephen Forcer (Chair), Ashley Harris, Diana Holmes, Martin Hurcombe, Ann Lewis, Nigel Saint, Naomi Segal, Bradley Stephens

Apologies: Claire Gorrara, Nicholas Harrison, Pallavi Joshi, Adam Watt

1. Welcome

SF thanked colleagues for joining online and in person, and for their work for the Association and for the subject generally. By way of opening remarks SF noted the importance of nuancing and challenging the narrative of threat and decline around languages with a dose of the ‘language positivity’ (a phrase used by Baroness Coussins in her work with the APPG ML). E.g. for French specifically, in 2024 A-level French entries rose by nearly 7% compared to 2023 (from 7,063 to 7,544), while at GCSE level, entries for 2022-2023 stabilised and grew slightly compared to 2018, rising nearly 3% to a figure of 125,447. In August 2024 there was a notable rise in top GCSE grades for French (as well as German) as part of what *The Times* called a ‘languages renaissance’, and our own students and graduates continue to embody the enjoyment and benefits of languages and cultures degrees. So while there is acute risk and concern in the sector, SF noted the motivational impact of meeting as part of an event promoting the future of French and Francophone Studies, which also helps to maintain those crucial connections with school pupils and teachers. Many thanks to Charlotte Faucher, Stéphanie Demont, Louisiane Mailly, Martin Hurcombe, and all those hosting the Forum. SF also expressed thanks to Florence Ferran, Anne-Lise Gally and colleagues at the French Embassy for continued support to the Association.

2. Minutes of the Previous AGM

Received and approved previously.

3. President's Report

a. Executive Committee Membership and Future Vacancies

New members of the Executive Committee joining since the last AGM in 2024 are as follows: Rebecca Dixon (Honorary Treasurer), Stephen Forcer (President 2024-2027), Bradley Stephens (Vice-President 2024-2027). Many thanks to Martin Hurcombe and Marion Schmid as outgoing President and Vice-President respectively for all their support in the handover last autumn, as to Margaret Topping for handover of the Treasurer role.

SF noted that Ashley Harris will be coming to the end of her term as Media and Communications Director later this year, and that a call for interest will be issued at the time.

a. Strategy and Identity

SF reported that this has been a central area of discussion at the Executive Committee, where members shared views on the strategy and identity of the association including the name and details in the Constitution, reflected under item 5) regarding the Proposals for the Amendments.

The Executive Committee has also discussed the status of the Association, which is confirmed as a learned society rather than as a charity. There may be benefits to having the association registered as a charity at some point in the future, including opening up for donations and philanthropy. This is a potentially significant avenue to pursue in support of the aims of the association, both for members in HE and in the promotion of the subject with pupils and schools.

b. Activities and Representation

SF and DCV had attended a very useful meeting of subject associations called and hosted by the French Embassy in February, which helped inform the Executive Committee discussions about the identity and strategy of the association. SF, DCV and BS had been pleased to attend events in support of the UK Goncourt Prize the same day, which was a credit to the University students of French involved.

SF had represented the Association at meetings of the Arts and Humanities Alliance, and the AMLUK group (Alliance of Modern Languages, Area Studies and Linguistics Subject Associations UK). Those meetings helped inform the [open letter](#) that SF had written to the Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff University regarding planned cuts to French and languages generally (no response had been received).

The Association is in sound financial shape and it has been possible to launch a 2025 round of the Small Grants scheme, the announcement for which was shared at the meeting. Given rising costs and the desire to help reduce the risk of self-subsidy, the

Executive had agreed to increase the maximum award from £250 to £500, with up to five awards available. Colleagues are warmly encouraged to promote the scheme.

Future plans include a relaunch of the 'Let's Study French!' grants, and a mentoring scheme. The latter will include early career academics but will be open to colleagues at mid-career, too. It is hoped that the mentoring scheme would also help attract new members, not only among prospective mentees but among more senior colleagues who might be interested in becoming a mentor.

4. Updates from Members of the Executive Committee

As Honorary Treasurer RD confirmed that the Association has a healthy balance, standing at just over £7,000 at the time of the AGM. As noted elsewhere this will be used to fund a further iteration of the Association's Small Grants scheme, while leaving a sufficient balance for regular costs as well as a certain amount of contingency.

Based on information from DCV, the Association has just under 100 members, of whom around 20 are early career academics.

5. Proposals for Amendments to the Constitution of the Association [See paper circulated separately]

a. The name of the Association

Colleagues discussed various potential new names for the Association, noting the different constituencies and contexts to which a name will need to speak. The meeting settled unanimously on the Association of University Researchers and Teachers of French, or ART-French (thereby foregrounding the subject even in short form).

SF agreed to follow up with colleagues at the Embassy to check they have no objections to the change in name. Thanks to MH for noting that the change of name will also need to be reported to HMRC as the Association is listed there as an approved learned society.

b. Aims of the Association

These were agreed.

SF thanked colleagues for the very open and constructive way in which the proposed amendments had been discussed.

6. Future Events and Cycle of Business

As discussed previously regarding Small Grants, Let's Study French, and the idea of a mentoring programme.

7. AOB

No further business was raised.

8. EDI Matters

No queries or concerns were raised.

9. Dates of Future Meetings

The next AGM will form part of the 2026 annual event, intended to take place at the University of Glasgow in June of that year. Details will be confirmed in due course, with an online option.