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Issues paper

This report is for information

This review of the health of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in English higher education was commissioned by HEFCE in response to concerns about falling numbers and funding provision. It surveys current trends and makes recommendations to ensure the long-term sustainability and vitality of MFL provision.

Review of Modern Foreign Languages provision in higher education in England

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'I believe that a university without modern languages is a university that has lost much of its ability to look outwards – a university without universality, if you like. It seems to me that the whole process of higher education is a process of coming to terms with, learning to understand and then learning to appreciate what is strange and foreign.'

David Lammy, Minister for Higher Education and Intellectual Property, Speech to the *Languages Matter* Conference, British Academy, 3 June 2009

Foreword

This Review was commissioned in the Spring of 2009 by the then Chief Executive of HEFCE, Professor David Eastwood. The intention was that I would undertake a broad-brush review of the health of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in English higher education, taking into account policy and other developments over the past few years in order to make recommendations on how the long-term sustainability and vitality of MFL provision in higher education could be assured.

This Review is a personal one, but it has been informed by information, data and views supplied to me by many organisations and individuals. I owe a particular debt to colleagues in HEFCE for the provision of many data sets; and to the HEA Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies and CILT, the National Centre for Languages, for their analyses and commentaries. My thinking was further inflected by the responses of the many departmental, institutional or Subject Association representatives to my online questionnaires and also by the open and robust debates at the consultation day I held on 1 July 2009 with representatives of Modern Language Departments, of Subject Associations, and of University Language Centres. The thoughtful responses of many individuals and of organisations ranging from the British Academy and Government Skills to the Russell Group and the University Council for Modern Languages were also of particular help. I am grateful to all of the contributors to the review process; these are detailed in Appendix C.

Executive summary

1.   This review of the health of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in English higher education (HE) was commissioned by HEFCE in response to concerns about falling numbers and funding provision. Drawing on a range of data, it surveys current trends and makes a series of recommendations to ensure the long-term sustainability and vitality of MFL provision in HE.

Policy and developments: the national context

2.   This section explores the financial, political and educational contexts in which MFL in UK HE is currently operating.

3.   Over the last decade, Government and other agencies have supported a number of initiatives to provide financial support and innovation funding to the academic MFL community, including £41.5m of new investment from HEFCE and other agencies for languages between 2005 and 2012.

4.   Following the Government's 2002 decision to make languages optional for pupils after the age of 14, there has been a sharp decline in the numbers of pupils studying a language to GCSE, particularly in the state sector; this decline now appears to have levelled out, although take-up post-14 remains low. In the longer term, the Government's decision to make languages compulsory for all seven year olds from 2011 should help to create more linguistically and culturally aware young people who want to study languages at university. Nevertheless, universities need to be realistic in planning for the impact on their own provision of recent policy decisions at primary and secondary level.

5.   HE featured less prominently than other sectors in the National Languages Strategy, and there has been insufficient 'joined up' thinking about the role of foreign languages in the UK over the past decade; there remains no sense nationally or internationally that the UK is committed to multilingualism and thereby to informed cultural interactions. It is also a concern that, despite significant investment in languages, the languages community sees its future health as dependent on additional funding from external bodies, rather than on its own actions.

Languages in HE: facts and figures

6.   This section of the Review considers the quantitative data available from a range of sources, including the Higher Education Statistics Agency, UCAS, HEFCE and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

7.   While it is important to consider broad trends, the overall picture conceals many individual differences for individual languages. There is no uniform trend with regard to student numbers, for example: an overall 5% decline in numbers masks growth in Asian, Modern Middle Eastern and African and Iberian Studies. Similarly, home and overseas student numbers are declining, but EU students are up 13%. The numbers of academic staff in MFL Departments are generally falling, but, surprisingly, this seems to be in areas where student interest is rising.

8.   It is difficult to establish how many non-specialist linguists are studying a language alongside their degree programme; estimates suggest that there are at least as many

non-specialists studying a language at universities as there are students on Modern Foreign Language degree programmes.

9.   Research funding is the greatest source of current anxiety; there is also a widespread perception that language disciplines performed less well than other disciplines in the Research Assessment Exercise. However, the proportion of submitted staff in the language disciplines did not rise as it did in other areas and this inevitably resulted in a reduction in funding reflecting their declining share of fundable research volume. Nonetheless, the average real terms increase in grant per fundable active researcher was 10% across all disciplines, and the aggregated languages and foreign studies group also received a 10% increase per researcher.

10.   Additionally, while the protection given to science, technology, engineering, medicine and mathematics (STEMM) disciplines appears to amount to an 11% cut in funding for languages, the STEMM protection greatly benefits the pre-1992 universities, where the majority of MFL Departments are located. There is therefore scope for MFL colleagues in institutions to persuade their own institutions of the importance of their work and thereby to secure continued investment in them.

11.   The AHRC block grant system will mean that the number of doctoral awards available for MFL from 2008-9 is greater than the number of awards made in 2007-8 through open competition.

Languages in HE: a snapshot of the discipline

12.   To inform the review, responses were invited to three discrete online questionnaires, each aimed at a particular constituency within languages in HE. The results of this exercise serve as a snapshot of the current health of the discipline and as comparative data which can be tested against the quantitative data in the previous section.

13.   The consultation revealed a community which feels itself to be vulnerable – and, indeed, beleaguered. There is a strong sense that the importance and the value of languages are not properly understood and recognised either by Government or by potential students. It was also clear that different language groups, and, indeed, different disciplinary groups, often argue from different perspectives and with different views of the future.

14.   *Modern Foreign Languages Departments:* Programme content is changing, with a pronounced increase in contemporary cultural studies. Several Departments reported an increase in the number of courses which are accessible to non-linguists (e.g. texts in translation). Respondents tended to note concerns about the quality and preparedness of students, rather than focusing on difficulties in recruiting *per se*. Several institutions have added new languages to their provision, to a certain extent prompted by engagement with the needs of their local communities. Nonetheless, overall, there is a sense that Modern Foreign Language Departments tend to respond reactively, rather than innovative pro-actively.

15.   There is scope for further development of existing models for teaching collaborations between Departments and institutions, and for closer collaborations across

disciplines. There is some evidence of innovation in delivery, including through the use of new technologies.

16.   The two most common research challenges were the perceived lack of funding for languages research (which suggests a need for greater understanding across the sector about the context for funding allocations) and the tensions between research, teaching and administration within Departments/Schools. A number of respondents were also concerned about the difficulty of measuring 'impact' in MFL research, as the Research Excellence Framework looms ahead.

17.   There was no consensus amongst respondents as to the future of 'the discipline'; indeed, one of the most significant outcomes of the consultation was the number of respondents who wished to stress the disadvantages of presenting or thinking of MFL as a collective discipline, given the differences between the specific premises and practices of different languages.

18.   *Language Centres:* There is considerable diversity across the sector, and the customer base is broad, presenting significant challenges in terms of teaching and organisation. There is no single model of provision and no uniform model for the relationship between Language Centre Departments and the academic MFL Departments. A recurring theme was the need to challenge the 'false dichotomy' which exists between Language Centres (erroneously perceived as teaching only language skills) and academic departments (who define themselves as teaching language through content and culture). Reflecting considerable optimism across the Language Centre sector, most respondents felt that their Language Centre was strong and would remain so.

19.   *Subject Associations:* The main issue raised by Subject Associations related to funding, both for teaching and research. This group also wished to stress the implications of MFL being more of an undergraduate subject than many other humanities disciplines – for income levels, staffing, departmental profile and research activities.

Conclusions

20.   While there is a great deal of understandable anxiety amongst the MFL community, there is also a tendency to argue for sustainable salvation through ever more investment in teaching, research and widening participation/outreach activities. The evidence shows, however, that there has been and continues to be substantial investment in languages activities.

21.   Continued strategic investment will undoubtedly be essential for the next few years. However, it is vital that universities themselves take action. Much is rightly made of the autonomy of universities in the UK; now is the moment for the languages sector to embrace that autonomy as a creative and enabling force. This includes the development of a clear and compelling identity for Modern Foreign Languages in an increasingly competitive higher education context, one which presents a convincing case for the contribution that Languages Departments make to the strategic objectives of their institutions and more widely. Crucially, Vice-Chancellors and senior management teams should provide sufficient funding to allow them to develop in ways which are appropriate to the institutional context.

22.   The languages community and university leaders need pro-actively to establish and maintain dialogue with Government and major funders and stakeholders about how the study and research of foreign languages can respond to current and future challenges and to the needs of increasingly complex markets. It is vital for the long-term future of MFL in higher education that the Government's expectations of language learning in primary and secondary schools are met.

23.   The Review's recommendations can be found at paragraphs 206 to 228.

Introduction

24. The higher education (HE) languages community in England perceives itself to be in crisis, and it is indeed facing several major challenges. Several universities are closing down or reducing their provision of language teaching for non-specialists; others are closing single honours programmes, while still others are restructuring Language Departments. In part, this is driven by the reduction in languages-related income to universities, notably as a result of the somewhat disappointing Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) results for languages, coupled with the decision by HEFCE following advice from the Government to include in the allocation of their grant an element of protection for STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Medicine and Mathematics) disciplines.

25. Furthermore, over the past decade, there has been a gradual but apparently inexorable reduction in provision nationally, with Modern Language Departments now being located essentially in pre-1992 universities and, indeed, mainly in Russell Group universities.

26. In the context of a small but steady decrease in the numbers of undergraduate students studying languages over the past several years, some Departments are experiencing difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of good and/or appropriately prepared postgraduate students, although the picture varies from Department to Department and from language to language.

27. There is also evidence from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Postgraduate panels indicating that the quality of candidates both for Masters and for PhDs is highly variable, with some languages rarely having outstanding applicants (and some panels sometimes reporting that the quality of applicants is no more than average and sometimes weak).

28. Another cause for concern is that doctoral applications across the languages tend to be for the 20th and 21st century, with very few applicants wishing to work in earlier periods. This raises real concerns about the future viability of the disciplines as currently conceived, where, for example, in French, there are several 'orphan centuries' between the medieval period and the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, in German, almost all doctoral topics tend to be in the 20th century, and in Spanish and Italian the majority of applications are in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the minority languages, such as Asian languages and Middle Eastern and African languages, there is, interestingly, a wider range of chosen topics in terms of period.

29. On a positive note, while there is a drift away from the earlier periods and from canonical authors, increasing numbers of doctoral candidates are working on interdisciplinary projects and there is real appetite for working on collaborative projects.

30. Across the community, there is considerable anxiety about funding and about the long-term future of languages in HE. This has led to a crisis of confidence, fuelled by perceptions that the Government's view of languages is purely as a support for business and economic development and that university management teams do not appreciate the importance of teaching and research in the language disciplines, especially in a time of significant funding challenges for universities.

31.   HEFCE's awareness of these challenges and concerns has prompted this review. At their request, I have therefore set out to provide a survey of the 'health' of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in English universities and to offer a set of recommendations to take the discipline forward over the next 10 years. Crucially, I have been mindful of the dual nature of 'languages in HE' – a concept which encompasses the broad linguistic, pedagogical and content diversity of the specialist discipline as well as the more general language skills which are increasingly regarded by students and employers as an essential graduate attribute – and I have sought to ensure that what follows is relevant to both of these important fields of activity.

32.   Much excellent research and teaching is going on in MFL Departments and in Language Centres and Institution-Wide Language Programmes (IWLPs), and levels of student satisfaction are generally high. However, 'Modern Foreign Languages' as a discipline has an identity which is vague and uncertain as a result of its dual nature.

33.   A further complexity is raised by the fact that the individual language disciplines seek to define themselves individually, rather than as a single collective discipline. One element that links all of them is their inter-disciplinary nature, yet this very point of commonality raises questions to 'outsiders' about the specificity of each language discipline beyond that of the individual language in question. We therefore face the challenge of formulating broad, inclusive and yet also clearly delineated messages about 'languages', with, alongside these, supporting and complementing defining statements about each of the individual language disciplines. Collaboration across the entire educational sector and partnerships with Government and employers are needed in order to formulate these messages and to create a national landscape of provision which is sustainable and which both meets national needs and provides choice to students and other stakeholders.

34.   The report is divided into three distinct sections. As the HE sector is operating in the context of broader, national change around languages in education, I have first sought to summarise those developments and their impact on HE. This is followed by a qualitative analysis of some of the key data around student recruitment, teaching and research activity, supplemented by a qualitative 'snapshot' of the discipline, based on responses to a number of questionnaires circulated to those working in languages in HE in England. Finally, on the basis of this information, and mindful of the national context, I have presented a series of recommendations for consideration by university Language Departments, university senior managers, HEFCE and Government.

Policy and developments: the national context

35.   Over the past 10 years, much attention has been paid in the UK to the place and role of languages in education.

Languages in higher education

36.   In 2000, the Nuffield Foundation published *Languages: The Next Generation*, which highlighted what they saw as the fundamental issues of policy and provision that needed to be addressed if the UK was to meet the nation's linguistic needs for the 21st century, arguing for an explicit and proactive national agenda to review and develop all aspects of the UK's capability in languages. The following key question was posed: 'In a complex and disparate world in which modern communications have transformed personal contact across boundaries, is English really enough?'. The firm answer was: 'In our view it is not. Capability in other languages – a much broader range than hitherto and in greater depth – is crucially important for a flourishing UK.'

37.   The Nuffield review highlighted the disquieting fact that there was no rational path of learning that led from primary school through secondary school to university and beyond, and argued that while funding was evidently being given to all sectors, investments in one domain were rarely exploited in another. Above all, it painted a picture of incoherence and disarray. In HE, the sector which has greatest autonomy from Government, they found poor strategic management and a lack of coherence nationally in the planning of provision, proposing that a national strategy should be formulated which would, *inter alia*, plan the range of languages taught in higher education and include languages in the teaching of all subject areas. The report also called both for a national policy of languages for all, whereby all students would be entitled to learn a language as an optional part of their degree and for a language requirement for university entrance.

38.   In 2001, the Higher Education Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS) was launched with five staff members. Since then, it has grown into a stable organisation which is respected by the HE community for its ability to deliver a reliable and professional service. It now has 21 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members working in three broad strands of activity: supporting learning and teaching in HE; increasing the take-up of languages in secondary and higher education (with funding from HEFCE and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)); and providing support and development for language teachers in schools (with funding from DCSF). Now one of 24 Subject Centres funded by the Higher Education Academy, LLAS is an essential part of the infrastructure for learning and teaching in languages in HE. One of its most important development projects is the HEFCE-funded Routes into Languages programme which seeks to increase the take-up of languages in post-14 education in schools, colleges and universities in England, and there is strong evidence that the nine regional consortia of Routes into Languages are making significant contributions to interest in and study of languages. This regional focus is particularly significant and has resulted in some innovative and potentially sustainable inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral partnerships.

39.   Also, in 2001, and in response to demand from the HE community, HEFCE set up a three-year Collaboration Programme for Modern Languages, awarding £482,950 to the University Council for Modern Languages and LLAS. This Programme was highly collaborative, involving 24 higher education institutions (HEIs) and 39 Departments.

40.   This Programme tested and promoted 10 examples on inter-institutional collaboration and co-operation, with the evaluation demonstrating (in 2004) the importance of embedding collaborations as long-term institutional activities which are aligned with broader institutional and national strategies. The Programme also helped to develop a culture and understanding of inter-institutional collaboration.

41.   The evaluation stressed the knowledge that had been learned about collaboration, but also pointed to the need to think through other factors such as competition, identity, research paradigms in the Humanities and regional, global and cross-sectoral partnerships.

42.   In 2003, the Nuffield Foundation published a follow-up report to its challenging 2000 report, *A New Landscape for Languages*, which described itself as 'a wake-up call for languages in 16-19 education and higher education'. This study noted a decline in the specialist study of languages, whilst also highlighting the increasing demand for languages studied as a supplementary skill. It pointed out that this was not unique to UK higher education, but argued that clearer rationales were needed for studying languages at both secondary and HE level in order both to inform public opinion and to guide curriculum development. It argued for more effective management of the growth of increasingly different provision and emphasised that increased collaboration was needed both between institutions and between different education sectors.

43.   While the publication in 2002 of the National Languages Strategy had been an important event for languages (see below), it soon became recognised that it had done little regarding HE, so the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) commissioned a survey which resulted in *The National Languages Strategy in Higher Education*, led by Hilary Footitt, on behalf of the University Council of Modern Languages, and managed by LLAS (DfES, 2005). This survey considered the trends in take-up and provision, supplemented by information and data taken from interviews with members of staff at six universities. A key message was that MFL Departments need support both from Government and from their Vice-Chancellors/institutions, although it also argued pertinently that it was vital institutionally to gain the support of senior managers and middle managers to act as advocates for the discipline. The report recommended that the DfES International Strategy (November 2004) should encourage universities to develop an international policy which would include, *inter alia*, strategies for the provision of study or work placements abroad; steps to encourage the international dimension for staff at all levels; strategies for internationalising the curriculum; and an explicit institutional language policy. The survey also argued for the designation of Modern Foreign Languages as subjects of strategic national importance and urged HEFCE, the DfES and the Regional Development Agencies to establish a funded Languages Outreach Project for each region. While many of the recommendations have since been implemented, the report's core message about the need for strong and collective advocacy remains as urgent today as in 2005.

44.   In October 2008, HEFCE published the final report of the 2008 Advisory Group on Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subjects (SIVS). The group noted the sustained volume of modern language provision in higher education and gave explicit support to the recommendations in Lord Dearing's *Languages Review* to develop languages at lower levels. The group also supported the suggestion in that Review that there should be no immediate return to compulsory language study until 16 years of age. The report highlighted the success of the £8m HEFCE/DCSF-funded initiative, Routes into Languages[1] and the programme of investment with the AHRC, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Scottish Funding Council to create a world-class cadre of researchers to enhance the UK's understanding of the Arab world, China and Japan, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union through the creation of five new collaborative language-based Area Study Centres at a cost of £26m; these were launched in June 2006. These Centres were intended to create a world-class cadre of language-based researchers who would provide the deep understanding and specialist linguistic skills needed to strengthen the UK's greater engagement in trade and social links with the selected regions.

45.   For the past decade, HEFCE has invested considerably in foreign languages, and will continue to do so for the next three years. In the period 2005-06 to 2011-2012, it has committed more than £22.5m to special initiatives for languages, bringing in matched funding of £18.8m from other agencies (AHRC, DCSF, ESRC, and the South East England Development Agency), giving a total of nearly £41.5m over the period.

46.   Despite the positive impacts of these initiatives, the SIVS Group's view was that languages remain vulnerable. It recommended that there should be a language entitlement in primary schools (now Government policy), and stressed the importance of alternative qualifications such as the Asset Languages qualifications, linked to the government's Languages Ladder. It also argued for a broadening of the languages on offer, away from mainstream European languages and towards languages needed by business, for example, Arabic and Chinese.

47.   In the context of the broadening of language provision across the three education sectors, to include both languages important for business and languages important for social cohesion, it is important to note the report commissioned by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) from Professor Sir Drummond Bone, *Internationalisation of HE: A 10 Year View,* which urged that universities should move away from 'the temptation of short-term mass recruitment to traditional study in the UK' and should focus their international efforts on a long-term programme of internationalisation. Bone argues forcibly that 'internationalisation' needs to be strongly re-conceptualised with much more emphasis on bilateral and multilateral partnerships. He also argued that an international experience should be one of the key reasons behind students' choice of university: 'Schools need to make it clear to students that they should consider the international opportunities offered by universities as part of their reasons for

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[1] £4.5m of this investment came from HEFCE, £3.5m from DCSF.

choice. Language provision must be available and must be part of a normal core curriculum.'

Policy and developments in primary and secondary schools

48.   It is becoming increasingly evident that, while each education sector has its specific problems and challenges, the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors need to work together in a much more thought-through and systematic way. Teaching and, indeed, research in languages in HE are inextricably bound up with developments in the other sectors, and the HE sector needs to understand and seek actively to influence and shape the future development of policy in primary schools and secondary schools.

49.   In 2002, the DfES published a National Languages Strategy, *Languages for All: Languages for Life. A Strategy for England*. The main objectives of this Strategy were to improve the teaching and learning of languages in schools, to introduce an entitlement to languages for all pupils in Key Stage 2, to introduce a new voluntary recognition system to complement recognised qualifications such as the GCSE (later to be known as the Languages Ladder), to expand the number of Specialist Language Colleges, to provide additional training for language teachers of Key Stage 3, and to increase the number of people studying languages beyond school. Alongside these very positive proposals, however, was the proposal that schools should no longer be required to teach Modern Foreign Languages to all pupils in Key Stage 4, which was to prove one of the most important – and certainly for many people the most damaging, decisions for languages made over the last decade.

50.   Interestingly, but ominously, the National Languages Strategy hardly mentioned HE, simply encouraging further education (FE), HE and schools to work together more, suggesting that there should be more diverse language provision in FE, HE and work-based learning, and urging the Secretary of State to write to HEFCE setting out his expectation that HEIs would contribute positively to the Strategy.

51.   In 2004, when the Government announced the implementation of its decision to make languages at GCSE non-compulsory, it argued strongly that the decline in young people studying languages was not to be reversed by making languages compulsory, but by starting the study of languages earlier. While there is undoubtedly merit to this logic, the removal of languages from Key Stage 4 of the National Curriculum was effected in an over-rapid and ill thought-through way with regard to the timing and articulation with the introduction of a national entitlement to language learning in primary schools at Key Stage 2. The National Languages Strategy had set a non-statutory target that all children should have an entitlement to language learning in class time by Key Stage 2 by 2010, but, as will be seen later, this target will by no means be met by all primary schools.

52.   In December 2005, the Schools Minister, Jacqui Smith, announced a new Modern Foreign Languages initiative, which sought to reverse the decline in GCSE language entries since the removal of languages from the National Curriculum the previous year. From September 2006, schools were expected to deliver a 'statutory entitlement' to Modern Foreign Languages by ensuring that 50-90% of their pupils should continue the study of at least one language to a recognised qualification at Key Stage 4.

53.   Other initiatives included the inclusion in the Languages Ladder Achievement Recognition Scheme of community languages and the creation of a more diversified post-14 languages offer, including the introduction of applied language GCSEs and new vocational courses.

54.   This recognition by the Government of the importance of offering pupils the opportunity to study a language at school was to be welcomed, although the Government remained clear that they would continue to resist calls for languages to be made compulsory again at GCSE, preferring rather the route of encouragement to schools.

55.   As Jacqui Smith wrote in a letter to all secondary schools on 27 January 2006: 'In Science the Government expects nationally 80% of students to continue to take the equivalent of two Science GCSEs, while in Languages we expect nationally between 50% and 90% of students to continue with their studies until the end of Key Stage 4. We are not prescribing these figures in legislation, but we want school leaders and governors to ensure that as many young people as possible study two Sciences and at least one modern language in order to prepare themselves better for their future lives and job prospects.'

56.   The target of 50-90% of students was unfortunately largely ignored by schools. In 2006, CILT, the National Centre for Languages, reported in its *Language Trends 2006 – Key Stage 4* report that, although 73% of maintained schools which responded to their survey were aware of the Government's requirement to set a bench mark of between 50% and 90% of students taking a language qualification at Key Stage 4, only 17% had done so. In the following year, the *Language Trends Secondary Survey 2007* reported that 77% of all responding maintained schools in England had indicated that languages were now optional for their pupils at Key Stage 4, whereas only 17% of responding independent schools had indicated that languages were optional for their pupils.

57.   More recently, in August 2009, a Cambridge Assessment survey reported that pupils in grammar and independent schools were generally at least twice as likely to have chosen a foreign language as one of their AS or A2 level subjects than pupils in any other type of school in the survey.[2]

58.   This survey also revealed that there was a considerable 'drop-out' rate between AS and A Level for foreign languages, with French and Spanish being among the top 10 most dropped subjects: 39% of students who studied French at AS Level dropped it as an A2 Level; the figure for Spanish was 36%.

59.   A recent report on *Community Languages in Higher Education* (2008) revealed that the picture is very different for community languages. Focusing on the period 2005-07, it considered the issue of the retention rate for languages (i.e. the percentage of students continuing from GCSE to A-Level). Overall, the retention rate for languages in the period

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[2] See 'AS and A Level Choice: Modern Foreign Languages are not popular choices', http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/digitalAssets/169149_AS_and_A_Level_Choice_ Factsheet_10.pdf.

was 7.5%, but in the case of languages that can be studied as community languages, the rate was considerably higher, with, for example, Chinese at 78%, Polish at 51%, and Russian at 42%. Only Bengali (3%) and Punjabi (4%) had retention rates below the overall average.[3] These findings would suggest that in their planning and in their development of strategies for languages, universities should take account of the demographic make-up of their local population and the nature and extent of demand for particular languages.

60.   On a more positive note, however, in their 2008 Language Trends Secondary Survey, CILT reported that the decline in participation in language learning in Key Stage 4 had been halted, even though there was as yet little sign of any overall increase in numbers. While they pointed to 'serious barriers' to rebuilding provision for a significant minority of schools, particularly those with high levels of social disadvantage and low educational achievement, and while they highlighted growing regional differences, with the North East giving particular cause for concern, they noted that the picture nationally was one of change and transition in language teaching, with much innovation and new practice as schools attempted to revitalise provision.

61.   There was also greater diversification in provision, with Spanish, Italian and Mandarin continuing to rise in popularity, while French and German were still falling, although less steeply than before. Furthermore, there was a strong growth in new qualifications, with 41% of schools offering alternatives to GCSE (as opposed to 22% in 2006).

62.   In October 2006, the then Education Secretary, Alan Johnson, announced a Review of the DfES's Language policy, to be undertaken by Lord Dearing and Lid King, the DfES National Director of Languages. The *Languages Review* report (2007) argued that there was scope for many more teenagers to do better in languages than in the past and argued that it was both in their interest and in the public interest for more of them to do so.

63.   The Review urged the Government to put its weight behind the case for languages, but held back from recommending a return to statutory status for languages. Nonetheless, the Review report concluded with a recommendation to the Secretary of State that he make clear that he was 'prepared, if the decline [in the number of pupils opting to learn a foreign language at Key Stage 4] is not halted and turned around within a reasonable timeframe, to return languages to the statutory curriculum'. That assurance was not given, but there are now calls from many different quarters for a return to compulsory status for languages amidst fears that there will be a 'lost generation' of linguists and inter-cultural thinkers and that native Anglophone Britons may become one of the most monolingual peoples in the world.

64.   In 2008, LLAS published *Five Years On: The Language Landscape in 2007*, which argued that the continuing decline in numbers of students studying languages in schools

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[3] Joanna McPake and Itesh Sachdev, *Community Languages in Higher Education* (2008).

meant that the language landscape was as much a cause of concern in 2008 as it was in 2003. It pointed out nonetheless that the decline was less severe than had been feared five years earlier and that there was growing diversity of provision in terms of the languages offered. The report concluded that a combination of Government initiatives and the efforts of language teachers at all levels were slowing the decline – and forecast that the increasing diversity of languages in schools would be reflected in the pattern of provision in universities.

65.   In July 2009, the National Foundation for Education Research published *Primary Modern Foreign Languages. Longitudinal Study of Implementation of National Entitlement to Language Learning at Key Stage 2*. This survey was commissioned by the DCSF to assess the nature and extent of language learning provision and progress towards implementation of the non-statutory targets set in the National Languages Strategy that all children should have an entitlement to language learning in class time in Key Stage 2 by 2010.

66.   The survey found that by 2008, 92% of schools were offering pupils in Key Stage 2 the opportunity to learn a language;[4] this represented a 22% increase from 2006. In 2008, 69% of schools were fully meeting the entitlement for all year groups (a rise of 35% from 2006). However, it was estimated that 18% of all schools might not be able to offer the full entitlement by 2010. A further anxiety was that transition in languages from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 was perceived by staff to be under-developed. Here, as throughout the educational sector, the issue of language progression remains a cause for concern. So, while the Government has indicated that it is making languages compulsory in primary schools from 2011, nearly one in five schools will struggle to meet this target. The survey also found that while there is 'almost universal approval' for primary language teaching, secondary schools are 'generally unclear' about how to ensure good progression from primary school to secondary school in terms of language learning.

67.   Given the importance of the National Languages Strategy for the long-term sustainability of language learning and teaching in universities as well as in primary and secondary schools, these findings are disquieting. On the other hand, we should take heart from the innovations in language teaching in primary and secondary schools, since these should create more linguistically and culturally aware young people who should want to continue their studies at university level – and also be more creatively demanding about the courses on offer there.

Implications of the national policy context for MFL in HE

68.   Over the past decade, the main focus of national strategic thinking and policy making has been the schools sector, initially the secondary sector and now both the secondary and the primary sector. HE has never figured very largely, and there has been little sense of 'joined up' thinking about the role of foreign languages in UK education and

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[4] Most schools were teaching languages in discrete lessons, with the most common pattern being one lesson of around 40 minutes each week.

about their importance for both the UK economy and the UK's global profile. The absence of foreign languages from the national curriculum after the age of 14 sends out a powerful negative message, especially in comparison with other countries, be this in continental Europe, the Far East, Central Asia and so on. The situation is being addressed to a certain extent by the primary school entitlement. However, there remains no sense nationally or internationally that the UK is committed to multilingualism and thereby to informed intercultural interactions.

69.   There has therefore been little incentive for universities to invest themselves in foreign languages as they have, for example, in Biomedicine, Science and Engineering, or the Social Sciences.

70.   The reduction in the number of students taking GCSEs, AS or A2 levels in foreign languages over the past years has also led to assumptions that foreign languages are a diminishing field – with consequent loss of status and often of funding within institutions.

71.   On the other hand, HEFCE has invested significantly in foreign languages across the country and has sought to encourage collaborations, although it should be said that there is as yet no embedded culture of collaboration in the HE foreign language community in England. On the contrary, a culture of uncertainty and anxiety has built up, coupled, somewhat paradoxically, with a culture of dependency, whereby the language community sees its future health as dependent on additional funding from bodies such as HEFCE or on changes in research funding policies and priorities by bodies such as the AHRC.

Languages in HE: facts and figures

72.   At first sight, the picture is very gloomy: for instance, the LLAS report for the AHRC (2008) found that as many as a third of university Language Departments had closed in seven years,[5] and this year alone, several universities have announced drastic reductions in language provision, both in Language Departments and in Language Centres/IWLPs. However, it is important to recognise that the expectations of what universities should do and provide have been changing over the past decade. Furthermore, while it is important to consider broad trends, it is also vital to recognise that the overall picture conceals many individual differences for individual languages – and that statistical trends, especially those that aggregate all languages and/or are based on percentages, are not and should not be the only drivers for either national or institutional decision-making.

73.   The facts and figures reported in the following paragraphs report on headcounts of staff and students, unless otherwise stated.

Student numbers

74.   There is no uniform trend with regard to changes in student numbers: individual languages and the Departments teaching them vary widely, with some appearing to have grown considerably, while others have shrunk significantly.

75.   In terms of comparison between SIV subjects, the HEFCE data demonstrates considerable variability[6]. Over the period 2002-08, the number of applicants to European language courses increased by 20% (with a dip in 2003-05 followed by a subsequent recovery). However, the number of applicants to non-European language degrees declined steadily (by 22% over the same period). Of the other SIV subjects, only Mathematics and Computer Science recorded a similar decline in the number of applicants (22%).

76.   Between 2002-03 and 2007-08, A-level entries in Chemistry increased by 17%; in Mathematics by 30%; whereas Physics A-level entries declined by 6% over the same period. In the case of the languages, A-level entries in French over the same period declined by 2% and in German by 8%. On the other hand, A-level entries in Spanish increased by 27% and entries for all other foreign languages by 38%. It is important that Departments and institutions are aware of current trends, since they have significant implications for staffing levels as well as for recruitment.

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[5] See M. Kelly, Research Review in Modern Languages (AHRC), 2008.

[6] Figures drawn updated versions of Tables C2 and C3 of 'Strategically important and vulnerable subjects: Final report of the 2008 advisory group' (HEFCE 2008/38). Tables updated to include the most recent data published by UCAS (in relation to applicants to academic year 2008-09), and DCSF (in relation to A level entrants in academic year 2007-08).

77.   In 2002-3, there were 1,482,869 Home/EU and Overseas undergraduate students (FTEs) in UK HEIs.[7] 48,577 of these students were studying languages as a named component of their degree programme at a UK higher education institution (HEI), i.e. 3.3% of all undergraduate student FTEs. In 2007-8, there were 1,622,843 student FTEs, of whom 46,940 students were studying languages, i.e. 2.9% of all undergraduate student FTEs. The overall decrease in the number of student FTEs studying languages over the period was 3%, compared with a 9.4% increase in student FTEs overall.

78.   In England, where the vast majority of the provision occurred (c. 80%), the situation is a little worse: over the same period, the number of undergraduate student FTEs studying languages as a named component of their degree in the UK fell from 38,892 to 36,964, i.e. from 3.2% to 2.7% of all undergraduate student FTEs.

79.   Over the period, the overall decrease in the number of student FTEs in English HEIs studying languages was 5%, compared with an 10.7% increase in student FTEs overall.

80.   The growth areas in terms of numbers of student FTEs studying on a programme at an English HEI with a languages element are: Asian Studies, and, to a lesser extent, Iberian Studies, and Modern Middle East and African Studies. Asian Studies, for instance, saw a 41% overall increase in student FTEs between 2002-03 and 2007-08, Iberian Studies was up 16% and Modern Middle Eastern and African Studies was up 14%.[8]

81.   The most significant declines over the same period were in Other Eastern, Asian and African languages (67%), followed by Italian (13%), then German (7%) and French (6%). However, we need to remember that large percentage changes are usually the product of small numerical changes within a relatively small cohort rather than representing significant fluctuations in numbers of student FTEs.

82.   Interestingly, the relative proportions of students studying each language (as a proportion of all those studying languages at degree level) have remained broadly steady over the period 2002-2007. In other words, Departments are still attracting the same proportion of students, even although overall numbers are falling in some cases.

Types of programmes studied

83.   Overall, the number of student FTEs opting for a joint programme with a languages component has increased slightly (5%), where as the numbers choosing a single language programme have decreased by roughly the same amount (4%). This suggests that there is no additional pool of students coming in to study new kinds of languages

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[7] Note that in the following consideration of the undergraduate population, figures reported are numbers of full-time equivalent students (FTEs).

[8] Thus, for example, a 20% change in German is likely to be equivalent of a 70% change in Other Eastern, Asian and African languages.

degrees and that those who might have chosen single language programmes in previous years are now studying on joint programmes.

84.   Again, the overall picture conceals significant differences between languages. For instance, Asian Studies reported in the period a 26% increase in single language programme studies, Iberian Studies reported a 20% increase, and French reported a 1% increase. On the other hand, Other Eastern, Asian and African Languages reported a 67% decrease in single degree programmes, with Modern Middle Eastern and African Studies reporting a 22% decrease and Celtic Studies a 23% decrease.

Profile of language students by registration/fee status

85.   The number of UK student FTEs studying languages declined by 6% from 2002-03 to 2007-08 (from 40,394 to 38,153) and the number of high-fee-paying overseas student FTEs declined by 21% (from 1,367 to 1,075), whereas, positively, the number of EU student FTEs increased by 13% (from 3,049 to 3,438).

Language Centre/IWLP student numbers

86.   One of the main problems with understanding the exact changes in student numbers and the student options of types of language provision to take at university is the fact that the data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) do not distinguish clearly between students following a language course as part of a named language programme and those who are taking courses in a Language Centre or through an Institution-Wide Language programme (IWLP). The numbers taking languages in evening classes are also difficult to analyse at anything beyond an individual institutional level.

87.   Nonetheless, it is clear that significant numbers of students are studying languages through Language Centres or IWLPs. The numbers for 2007-08 were reported by the Association of University Language Centres (AULC) to be 56,440 at 52 institutions. This is a significant number, especially given that in the same year 46,940 students were studying on a degree programme. However, some care needs to be exercised in using these data, as they are somewhat unreliable, in that they depend on accurate returns by all IWLPs/Language Centres and not all provided their numbers.

Equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQs)

88.   The withdrawal by HEFCE, following a government instruction, of funding for students studying for ELQs has caused consternation in the HE community because of the negative impact that it will have on lifelong learning agendas.

89.   As a Strategic and Vulnerable Subject, languages are currently financially protected from the impact of the ELQ ruling if languages form 50% or more of the student's curriculum on a degree programme. Given the small numbers of students following a languages degree as an ELQ, most MFL Departments will be relatively unaffected in terms of teaching income, although there will be considerable negative impact on institutions specialising in lifelong learning such as Birkbeck College and the Open University.

90.   However, the protection will not apply, for instance, to students following one or two courses in a Language Centre or IWLP as part of a programme that s/he is following as

an ELQ, and providers of adult education/extra-mural studies are already being hit by a drop in funding, with several universities and colleges announcing closures of or significant cuts in lifelong learning provision, including in languages.

91. The Government's decision on ELQ funding is highly regrettable – and astonishing in terms of its commitment to lifelong learning and to the skills agenda. As part of its advocacy to Government, the languages community in HE and FE must emphasise the importance of linguistic and intercultural competencies as key skills that need to be developed and maintained as a core part of lifelong learning and the consequent need to find ways of funding the study of languages as part of ELQs, adult education or lifelong provision, etc.

Profile of staff

92. The numbers of academic staff in MFL Departments are generally falling, with a 9% decrease overall across the sector (from 2,216 to 2,023) in the period 2002-07.[9] Strangely, this seems to be in areas where student interest is rising, (e.g. Spanish and Middle Eastern Studies).

93. It is encouraging that Departments are increasingly using PhD students as Postgraduate Teaching Assistants (and providing them with appropriate training beforehand). However, this, coupled with the appointment of staff on fractional and often short-term contracts in specialist areas, can lead to perceptions – and a very real risk – of casualisation, especially at a time when it is important to secure strategic investment from host institutions.

HEFCE funding for research

94. The issue of research funding after the last RAE is probably the greatest source of current anxiety. Here again, it is important to understand the full picture – which needs careful analysis and, in some cases, decoding.

95. There is a wide-spread perception that the language disciplines performed less well than other disciplines in the RAE, with some members of the community believing that the relevant panels were over-harsh and with others outside the MFL community questioning why languages as a whole had performed less well than other Humanities subjects or Social Science disciplines.

96. There are many ways of analysing the outcomes, with 'power weightings' perhaps finding greatest favour. However, it is important for the community to look behind the quality-related research funding (QR) allocations and their use in their individual institutions and to understand fully how the allocations were made and why the MFL disciplines benefited less than they felt they should have done.

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[9] When considering staff numbers, it is important to note that the figures are only for staff on 0.25 FTE contract or above; they do not include hourly-paid staff or staff on small fractional appointments.

97.   A key factor is that between 2001 and 2008, the number of staff submitted for assessment in the language-related disciplines as a group remained almost static (with a very slight decrease of 1%), while submissions in all disciplines rose by 12%. In other words, the proportion of submitted staff in the language disciplines counted in HEFCE's funding allocations did not rise as it did in other areas, resulting inevitably in a downward adjustment reflecting their declining share of fundable research volume.

98.   The protection afforded to STEMM disciplines has caused considerable dismay – and annoyance. While this decision was taken in order to ensure that the STEMM disciplines at least retained their share of mainstream QR grant by reference to 2008-09, it has been perceived within the Humanities and Social Sciences as 'taking money away' from the non-STEMM subjects.

99.   The difference made is that the non-STEMM disciplines will receive 11% less grant than would have been the case, had the protection not been in place. There therefore is a significant reduction in what might have been expected for the languages (and other Humanities and Social Science subjects). However, it is important to recognise that the STEMM protection greatly benefits the pre-1992 universities and, especially the Russell Group universities, where most of the language Departments are located – and it is vital to remember that there is no compulsion whatsoever for HEIs to mirror HEFCE's allocations, be this in terms of teaching or research funding: it is up to Vice-Chancellors and their leadership teams to decide on their allocation of HEFCE funds within their institution.

100.   From a national point of view and the need to ensure the healthy development of the UK's knowledge economy and society, there is clear justification for the protection of STEMM. The MFL community should therefore be working more pro-actively and more creatively to persuade Government that the study of and research into languages are just as important as for STEMM, and MFL colleagues within institutions need to persuade their own institutions of the importance of their work and of the consequent need for investment in them.

101.   There is also a significant change in HEFCE's calculation of the volume measure for allocating mainstream QR. In most of the years between the 2001 and 2008 RAEs, the volume measure was based upon the number of staff in the subject unit of assessment in Departments rated 4 and above (in 2002-03 only, staff in Departments rated 3a were included).

102.   For the grant for 2009-10, the volume measure is all research activity (counted in staff FTE) assessed at 2* or above in the 2008 RAE. Because the 2008 exercise used a quality profile rather than the previous single point rating scale, it identified some work of very high quality in all of the Departments submitted, including 'islands of excellence' in Departments that in 2001 were assessed at 3a or lower. Thus in 2009-10, there will be no submitted Departments receiving no research grant; furthermore, overall, the staff volume counted in the grant allocations has risen by significantly more than the 12% increase in staff submitted for assessment. Given that the languages submitted fewer staff than in 2001, it is therefore inevitable that its share of the available funding should decrease.

103.   In a context of aggrieved suspicion on the part of the languages, a useful comparison in terms of research funding may be established by comparing the grant per fundable researcher after RAE 2001 with that allocated after RAE 2008. After making the appropriate adjustments regarding the 'anomalous' year of 2002-03, it appears that the average real terms increase in grant per fundable active researcher between 2001 and 2008 was 10% for all disciplines taken together.

104.   Significantly, the aggregated languages and foreign studies group kept pace with this, also receiving a 10% real terms increase (which is slightly higher than for all arts, humanities and social science subjects taken together). It should, however, be noted that, as in other areas of MFL, there is significant variance between individual languages, due in large part to HEFCE's decision to take relative quality into account in setting the 'pot' for each unit of assessment from 2009-10, not having done so previously.

AHRC-funded research student funding

105.   In the period 2005-08, MFL account for c.12% of research awards overall, with the proportion of doctoral awards in MFL declining slightly from 16% in 2005 to 14% in 2008. The most significant finding here is that there were significant declines in the main languages of French, German and Spanish.

106.   From 2009 onwards, the AHRC has moved to a block grant system and doctoral awards for MFL will fluctuate between 14-15% of all awards over the next five years. However, it is worth noting that the number of Doctoral awards available through the block grant scheme for MFL is greater than the awards made last year through open competition, e.g. 18 in French (a 5% increase on 2008), 12 in German (a 50% increase on 2008), and 11 in Spanish (a 42% increase on 2008). Furthermore, in the open competition category, from 2009, 8% of awards are expected to be made to MFL proposals (four out of 50 awards available overall).

Graduate employability

107.   Modern Foreign Language graduates go into a wide variety of careers, where their many skills are recognised by employers. This is reflected in the fact that the mean salary of language graduates 3.5 years after graduation is £26,823, the highest mean salary of all of the SIV subjects – ahead of that of graduates of Engineering, Mathematical Sciences, Physics and Astronomy and Chemistry.[10]

108.   Furthermore, a recent Confederation of British Industry (CBI) report *Emerging Stronger: The Value of Education and Skills in Turbulent Times* (April 2009) stressed that UK firms competing in an increasingly globalised business environment highly value language skills, with more than a third of companies (36%) recruiting employees specifically for their language skills.

109.   The CBI report also found that, as UK companies seek to operate ever more internationally, many employers are seeking graduates who may do not necessarily have

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[10] *Graduates and Their Early Careers* (HEFCE, 2008) p.28.

advanced linguistic skills but who can communicate conversationally in the foreign language, since this helps to 'break the ice' with potential business partners, customers and clients. Indeed, according to the CBI report, the majority of employers (74%) are seeking conversational and associated inter-cultural competences rather than full fluency in foreign languages, since UK firms are now much more explicitly aware of the importance of understanding the culture of countries in which one is operating or is seeking to operate – and inter-cultural competence must always be built upon linguistic competence.

110.   While European languages, particularly French and German, continue to be the languages which are most frequently specified by employers seeking specific language skills, the CBI survey found that the desire of many UK firms to expand their activities into the Far East, Central Asia, Russia and Latin America has resulted in a significant proportion of firms looking for speakers of Mandarin/Cantonese (38%), Russian (21%) and Spanish (28%). Furthermore, as the financial markets in the Middle East expand and as Middle Eastern countries develop economic strategies which look well beyond oil and gas, 15% of employers are now looking for staff with Arabic language skills and an understanding of Arabic culture and especially of business behaviour in the Arab world.

111.   The CBI report highlighted the fact that the lack of language skills amongst UK employees is genuinely problematic for firms who are seeking to expand their international activities. 72% of UK international trade is with non-English speaking countries, but it is estimated that only one in 10 people in the UK work-force can speak a foreign language. There is, of course, in the Anglophone countries a wide-spread belief that English is and will continue to be the *lingua franca* of business and industry. However, this is rapidly changing: as CILT has recently highlighted in *Why Languages Matter* (2009), on the internet which both facilitates global communication and drives much economic and business activity, English language accounts for a declining share of internet traffic and, indeed, world GDP, moving from 51% in 2000 to 29% in 2009.

112.   The 2008 report, *Graduate Employability: The Views of Employers*, published by the Council for Industry and Higher Education, found that 49% of employers are dissatisfied with university leavers' foreign language skills, with the result that employers will inevitably increasingly recruit from overseas graduates in order to meet the need for linguistic and inter-cultural competencies, unless universities and their students prioritise and promote the study of languages.

113.   The lack of suitably qualified graduates also seriously affects the areas of government and public policy. There are, for instance, high levels of demand from the European Commission, where there is a particularly urgent need for more mother-tongue English speakers with expertise in other languages, and UK Government Departments ranging from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development to the Ministry of Defence and Government Communication Headquarters are eager to recruit graduates with high level linguistic skills.

114.   In *Stronger Together: Businesses and Universities in Turbulent Times* (September 2009), the CBI Higher Education Taskforce stresses the fact that the UK HE sector is world-class and that it is essential to build on this strength in order to increase our economic competitiveness. However, while the Taskforce indicated that it did not find any

problem with the overall supply of graduates, it expressed concern both about graduates' employability skills and about the quantity and quality of graduates with STEMM degrees and about 'other valued skills such as competency in foreign languages', reinforcing the important role that language skills must play in the economic recovery and development of the UK.

115.   It would thus seem clear that in the highly competitive job market of today, foreign language skills are at a premium and add great value to a candidate's portfolio of skills, giving them a competitive edge when applying for jobs. However, this message has not got through to all Modern Language students. For instance, of all the SIV subjects, languages had the lowest percentage of graduates who felt that they needed their subject in order to gain their job (43%). The disjunction between the demand for high-level language and inter-cultural skills and the negative perceptions of languages students regarding their employability need to be urgently addressed in universities, with evidence-based careers advice being provided both within Departments and by university careers services.

Languages in HE: a snapshot of the discipline

116.   To inform this review, I invited responses to three discrete online questionnaires, each aimed at a particular constituency within languages in higher education. This yielded responses from 80 members of staff in university Language Departments; 16 responses from Language Centres and 14 formal responses from Subject Associations. Twenty-four languages were represented across these returns. (Further details of the contents of each of these questionnaires can be found at Appendix B.)

117.   My intention was to obtain a snapshot of the current health of the discipline, and to use this intelligence from the languages community to inform and supplement the quantitative data which is currently available from a range of sources (including HEFCE, UCAS, AHRC and others).

118.   The consultation revealed a community which feels itself to be vulnerable and, indeed, beleaguered – and not valued as a 'strategically important' subject.

119.   There is a strong sense that the importance and value of languages are not properly understood and recognised either by Government or by potential students. Further more, several departmental responses highlighted difficulties experienced within their own institutions, particularly in terms of a lack of sufficient funding, of finding themselves out of step on policies around contact hours, and of what is perceived as inappropriate rationalisation of teaching,

120.   It was also clearly demonstrated from the many written submissions and from the discussions at the consultation day that different language groups and, indeed, different disciplinary groups, often argue from different perspectives and with different views of the future. This diversity has resulted in what is now one of the major challenges facing the languages community in HE: the move towards separatism and forms of protectionism at the very moment when it is vital that new forms of partnership and collaboration be established.

121.   There are already many teaching collaborations between Departments, mainly between Language Departments but increasingly involving Departments in other Humanities, Social Sciences and Management/Business Departments. Furthermore, as more and more programmes move to include a period of study abroad, there is scope for closer teaching collaborations with Architecture, Engineering, Law, Medicine, etc. These interdepartmental links should facilitate more interdisciplinary research projects within and across institutions, as researchers in disciplines as diverse as Anthropology, Biomedicine, Development Planning, Environmental Studies, etc realise how much they need the linguistic and/or intercultural expertise and insights of languages researchers.

122.   Furthermore, as employment and career issues become ever more important to students, MFL Departments and in Language Centres/Units need to work together in forging closer, dialogic partnerships with local business organisations and with national and/or regional bodies, such as the Association of Graduate Recruiters, the CBI, Government Skills, Regional Development Agencies, in order both to foreground the significance of languages skills and research and to maintain an active awareness of the implications for both curricula and, indeed, potentially also for research of national and global socio-economic changes and developments.

123.   Unless greater consensus across the community is achieved and unless greater, sustainable collaborations are established *within* HEIs, *between* HEIs, *between* HEIs *and* both primary and secondary schools, and *between* HEIs and extra-educational organisations, the future health of the languages discipline cannot be assured.

a) Responses from Language Departments

<u>Major trends for languages over the last five years: programme development</u>

124.   By far the most widely-reported trend was a move towards a greater emphasis on contemporary cultural studies – including film studies, contemporary literature and 'area studies'. The community was divided on whether this was a positive development, although in most universities, literary studies courses have not been significantly affected by this trend.

125.   Several Departments also reported an increase in the number of courses offering texts taught in translation or other options accessible to non-linguists. This was generally driven by the need to increase student FTE numbers (and therefore income), but was generally perceived as a form of 'dumbing down' or even a betrayal of the nature and aims of a Modern Foreign Languages curriculum.

126.   Respondents regularly cited the need for remedial support for first year linguists; the majority felt that current A Level provision does not provide students with either the grammatical knowledge or the language learning skills necessary for university-level study. Interestingly, several respondents noted that '*ab initio* candidates often outperform those entering with some prior knowledge of a language'.

127.   On the issue of content, several respondents noted the need to find an appropriate and attractive balance for students between linguistic and cultural content, whilst others felt challenged by the perceived need to ensure that their subject remains 'relevant'.

128.   The issue of teaching literary and other texts in translation is a controversial one, but Language Departments should formulate explicit positions on this as they engage in reconceptualisations and redefinings of the place of Modern Foreign Languages in the university of the 21st century.

129.   The question of 'relevance' remains another thorny issue for many languages colleagues, but in publicly funded universities, it is appropriate that the relevance and fitness for purpose of activities are scrutinised and re-evaluated on an ongoing basis and that attention is paid as to how curricula can respond to changing contexts, be these cultural, political, socio-economic or, indeed, educational.

130.   Furthermore, 'research-led teaching' is a concept often referred to in discussions of teaching in Language Departments, but often this seems to mean little more than teaching students about what one is currently researching and/or using one's publications as core reference material. As curricula are reviewed, Departments should explicitly consider such issues as how research and scholarship can respectively best contribute to teaching, how student research can inform and shape student learning at all levels, what the role of the canon may or may not be, etc.

131.   The key question of the identity and strategic importance of Modern Foreign Languages is bound up with the aims that Departments set themselves with regard both

to their students and to the (many and diverse) users of the research which is produced within those Departments. Programme development thus always needs to be undertaken in terms of a series of contexts, notably that of the relationship between the teaching and research programmes of the Language Departments and the mission and strategic aims of the institutions within which they are located.

<u>Major trends for languages over the last five years: delivery</u>

132.   There was a wide range of responses to this question, with consensus in only a very small number of areas. Interdisciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration over course delivery appears to be significantly on the rise, probably as a result of the many institutional restructurings, which have incorporated Language Departments in Schools of Languages or of Humanities. However, each language community makes strong claims for its own specificities and there is resistance to such groupings if it is for any purposes other than administrative stream-lining.

133.   Over the past few years, MFL Departments have increasingly offered courses to non-MFL degree students; with 61% of Departments indicating that they offered such teaching. However, in many cases, non-specialist languages students were directed to the Language Centre (which was often part of the same Faculty).

134.   Several respondents indicated a shift away from researchers teaching language content towards what was sometimes described as service teaching by 'non-academic', i.e. non research-active language teachers.

135.   While some Departments operate a 'referral' system of non-specialists to Language Centres, the relationship between Language Centres/IWLPs and the Modern Language Departments is often an uneasy one, with the Language Centres often being perceived by the MFL Departments as mere service providers of 'everyday' language learning.

136.   There is some evidence of innovation in delivery, with, for instance, several respondents indicating that they were actively working with new technologies to develop new modes of delivery, and a small but significant minority reporting an increase in team-teaching.

137.   Beyond these responses, there is a mixed picture, with some Departments showing growth, others decline.

138.   It is encouraging that there are instances of innovation and experimentation with the new technologies, although these are still not widely used in the community of Language Departments. It would be good to see more use made of a greater variety of technologies and also of social networking tools in order to reinforce the message that languages are about communication and interconnectedness in the modern world. In this respect, there is also enormous scope for using the new technologies to develop new assessment methodologies and including assessment as much more explicitly part of the learning process. The move in some Departments towards team teaching is also to be encouraged, as is more active involvement of students in curriculum, peer-assisted learning and assessment.

139. More ongoing dialogue between providers of 'languages for all' courses and those providing 'specialist academic' courses would undoubtedly lead to productive synergies in both curriculum design and delivery.

Trends in student recruitment

140. Significantly, the most common response to this question was that the calibre of students is improving; this is set against the second most common which indicates that non-*ab initio* students are often not equipped with a sufficiently high understanding of the language. Furthermore, some respondents suggested that students arrive with unrealistic expectations about the course content and the workload. Throughout the responses, this was a recurrent tension: the students admitted to MFL programmes are strong but their language skills are not.

141. Recruitment to languages programmes as a whole remains buoyant, with many respondents reporting an increase in numbers (largely in lesser-taught languages), while only a small minority reported a decline.

142. A number of responses indicated that their School/Faculty had added a new language to its provision in order to attract students from untapped potential markets; these were generally lesser taught languages, many offered *ab initio*.

143. A few suggested that they had made changes to their programmes as a direct response to the changes in the secondary school curriculum and in school-leavers' experiences of language learning (notably the fact that there are fewer with qualifications in two languages).

144. The attractiveness (or not) of MFL for career purposes is a subject often raised by teachers, academics and potential students and their families. Here, it is imperative that clear, coherent messages are developed in partnership between Government (notably DCSF and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)), universities, Subject Associations, and employers.

145. Students have a wide variety of reasons for studying a foreign language, but, as indicated by a three year study commissioned by DIUS on the growth of students taking a language either as an integrated degree module or as an extra-curricular activity, their main motivation is the benefit that this will bring to their career prospects. The next two most important reasons were to obtain a qualification and for personal reasons.[11]

146. There are already useful sources of career-related information and ideas, such as the LLAS publication *700 Reasons for Studying Languages*, but clear (and yet also cogently differentiated) messages need to be developed to promote the study of and research into the full range of languages. Data on career destinations should be

[11] See http://www.celelc.org/docs/byrne_new_multisubject_programmes_0.pdf : *How UK universities are offering integrated and non-integrated language modules*, a presentation on the 2008 DIUS report by Nick Byrne, Head of Academic and Professional Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and Jason Abbott, Senior Researcher.

maintained institutionally and also shared, perhaps through both LLAS and Subject Associations. Key positive information should also be highlighted as soon as it is discovered, e.g. the fact that the mean salary of languages graduates 3.5 years after graduation is, at £26,823, the 4th highest mean salary of all subjects – after Medicine, Pharmacy and Pharmacology, and Architecture, Building and Planning (see SIVS Report, 2008).

147. It is interesting that most responses focused not on a sense of difficulties with recruitment in terms of numbers, but in terms of the quality and preparedness of applicants. It is also encouraging that several institutions have added new languages to their provision, to a certain extent prompted by engagement with the needs of their local communities.

148. Overall, while there is less pessimism on recruitment than on other issues, there is nonetheless a sense that the Language Departments tend to respond reactively rather than innovating pro-actively.

Research challenges

149. Unsurprisingly, the two most common issues raised under this heading were the perceived lack of funding for languages research and the tensions between research, teaching and administration workload within Departments/Schools.

150. A number of respondents were also concerned about the difficulty of measuring 'impact' in MFL research, especially as the Research Excellence Framework (REF) looms ahead. Interestingly, some felt that their work was 'invisible' in the UK but valued abroad, which would suggest that arguments about how to assess impact for MFL disciplines must include reference to impact perceived in other countries.

151. A minority of responses noted an increasing shift towards collaborative research, and several responses reported increasing difficulty in attracting postgraduates due to the difficulty of securing funded places and expressed concern that the new AHRC block grant system will exacerbate the situation for some Departments.

152. Concern was also expressed about the need to maintain scholarly critical mass in some smaller languages and also about the danger of expanding into new areas of research in a quest for funding without ensuring that more traditional research topics are protected.

153. There is a widespread perception that there is insufficient time available to engage properly in research during the academic session, and there is significant variation between institutions on levels of sabbatical provision on offer. These issues need to be addressed in individual institutions, and Departments should be encouraged to think carefully about the levels and nature of their teaching and assessment, since by using new methods and new technologies, students can be given an equal, if not better, learning experience and academic staff can be liberated more throughout the year to engage in research.

154. On funding, there is in the community a strong feeling of being ill served by the funding allocations consequent on the RAE. In this context, there is clearly a need for wider understanding across the sector, both about why the funding allocations are as

they are and also about how individual institutions themselves choose to distribute those allocations.

155. On the issue of preserving 'traditional research areas' whilst also entering new (and often interdisciplinary) areas, there is a need for much more explicit collaboration in terms of research planning within institutions and between institutions.

The future for MFL

156. One of the most significant outcomes of the consultation was the number of respondents who wished to stress the disadvantages of presenting or thinking of MFL as a collective discipline, given the diversity across the sector.

157. However, there was no consensus whatsoever around the issue of what the future could and should be for MFL, with a huge range of predictions made but with very few made by more than one respondent. Several respondents felt that little would change or, indeed, needed to change, stating that their discipline would thrive, even if it were concentrated in fewer Departments than 10 years ago, whilst a similar number forecast that Departments would continue to close.

158. Of the small number of responses which cited particular languages, German emerged as the most vulnerable in people's perceptions, followed by Italian and Portuguese. French was regarded as likely to remain steady, and Spanish was felt to have the brightest future, along with Arabic, Chinese and Russian.

159. Concern was repeatedly expressed about the need to change funding models in order to ensure the long-term viability of the discipline. This included the need to take special measures to address the fall-out from the RAE and the QR allocation and suggestions that further positive adjustments could be made to the teaching formula.

The relationship between Language Centres and MFL Departments

160. There was a clear division in positions and attitudes here, with almost equal numbers stressing the separation of their IWLP/Language Centres from their MFL Departments and reporting that they were all part of the same Faculty (in many of these latter institutions, the Language Centre provides some degree-level teaching). In a few other cases, there is an overlap in staffing between the two entities, and a significant minority reported that they expected collaboration between the Language Departments and the Language Centre to increase in future.

161. However, there was some anxiety amongst a group of respondents about the profile of Language Centres and the extent to which they represented a threat to the status of the academic Departments.

162. There is clearly a certain degree of tension between MFL Departments and Language Centres, with the latter often being seen as simply providing 'service' language teaching or 'basic', 'everyday' language teaching. In fact, Language Centre teachers are usually properly trained specialist language teachers, whose courses are developed for precise purposes and often include high levels of 'content', whether this be relating to culture, to business and society, to politics, to medicine, etc, whereas Language Departments often make substantial use of foreign language assistants who have little or no formal training in teaching their language as a foreign language. Furthermore, unlike

virtually all Modern Language Departments, most Language Centres have explicit (and implemented) Continuing Professional Development strategies; they are also highly committed to innovating in pedagogy and curriculum and in using the new multi-media technologies, and to collaborating, both nationally and internationally.

163. There would seem to be many areas in which pedagogical and intellectual collaboration between Language Departments and Language Centres would prove productive and HEIs should encourage the development of such synergies. There is also an urgent need for an open dialogue between MFL Departments and Language Centres that recognises the unique role that each can play in creating an identity and a profile for MFL in HE.

The profile of teaching staff in MFL Departments

164. The vast majority of staff in all Departments are involved in language teaching; 36% reported that all of their staff are involved in the language elements of their programmes; 68% reported between 80% and 100% involvement.

165. However, as is evident from the RAE submissions, there are very few full-time staff researching into language and language pedagogy – and, indeed, very few languages academics have undergone professional training in the teaching of a foreign language. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in each institution in the light of its own configuration of language units (MFL Departments and Language Centres/IWLPs).

Skills teaching

166. While the intention of the online questionnaire's question about skills training was intended to elicit responses on the kind of skills training (if any) which is explicitly embedded in language courses, most respondents answered about staff skills training, rather than student skills training

167. Of those who did respond appropriately, the most common skills training provided in-house was general study skills, followed by IT training. Several respondents were clear that their Department/School/Faculty did not offer support of this kind, while a few specified that this was delivered through the standard curriculum, rather than through additional, discrete delivery. Small numbers reported the outsourcing of training in study skills, IT and employment training to centralised units within the university.

Challenges in relation to knowledge transfer and 'impact'

168. The majority response here was that the challenge was to communicate the value of modern languages to a range of audiences (students; Government; HEIs; the public). This suggests that not all respondents were alert to the implications of the term 'impact' – and indeed several noted that this term was difficult to define for Humanities research. Some respondents felt that MFL is disadvantaged because the emphasis of both HEFCE and the funding councils is on 'the national interest', whereas MFL research often has most impact abroad. A few respondents argued that 'impact' was not an appropriate evaluative measure for Arts and Humanities disciplines.

169. There was considerable anxiety in the languages community about the Research Excellence Framework (REF), particularly the issue of impact and regarding the use of bibliometrics.

170.   However, some comfort should be drawn from the latest statement on impact from HEFCE in *Research Excellence Framework: Second consultation on the assessment and funding of research* (September 2009), where it is emphasised that there should be a 'wide definition of impacts, including economic, social, public policy, cultural and quality of life'. The document goes on to insist that 'we include all these types of impact throughout this document, whenever we refer simply to "impact" or "social and economic impact"'. There is also a recognition that it is difficult fully to assess the impact of research through quantifiable indicators and so rather than seeking to **measure** impacts in a quantifiable way, impact is now to be **assessed** in the REF – via expert panels which will review narrative evidence supported by appropriate indicators and produce graded impact sub-profiles for each submission.

171.   The impression from the responses is a mixture of indignation about the changing research funding landscape and concern that their discipline is not being taken seriously enough. No respondent suggested the need for the community itself fundamentally to reconceptualise MFL, although this would seem to be an important part both of making the case for languages as of national and institutional importance and of preparing for the REF.

b) Responses from Language Centres

172.   The majority of the respondents came from pre-1992 universities, which makes the sample unrepresentative of the spread of Language Centres across HEIs in England; the following analysis of the responses should consequently be used only indicatively.

173.   There is no uniform model for the relationship between Language Centre Departments and the academic MFL Departments and the level of interaction between them varies considerably. For instance, over half (56%) of the Language Centres responding to the survey provide some degree-level courses to students.

174.   A recurring theme was the need to challenge the 'false dichotomy' which exists between Language Centres (perceived as merely teaching language skills) and academic Departments (who define themselves as teaching language through content and culture).

Major teaching challenges for Language Centres/IWLPs

175.   The student body following courses in Language Centres is much more diverse than that of students following courses in MFL Departments. The most-cited challenge for Language Centres is consequently the diversity of classes, since their students come from a range of backgrounds and discipline areas, and with very different experiences of language learning and different aspirations for their study.

176.   A number of respondents noted that Departments across the university are often reluctant to release students for credit-bearing language study (either because of loss of student fee income or for reasons of programme coherence).

177.   Respondents also emphasised that Language Centres are often supported by staff in vulnerable positions (e.g. on hourly paid contracts) and that it can be difficult to balance financially the need to provide a broad range of languages as well as higher-level provision in certain languages.

178.   As before, there was little consensus on this issue; most responses were given only once, suggesting that there is considerable variation across the sector. Nevertheless, a number of respondents noted that Language Centre students are increasingly motivated by the need to secure employment after their studies and that there is a steady increase in demand for Arabic, Chinese and Japanese for future career purposes rather than for reasons of purely cultural interest.

179.   In demographic terms, students studying in Language Centres are more likely to be EU/Overseas students than UK students – and UK students in particular are less prepared for the challenges of languages study and less likely to have a realistic perception of what this will entail.

180.   The customer base of Language Centres is extremely diverse. There is no one model of provision, with students studying courses in a Language Centre either as part of an MFL degree, as part of a non-MFL degree, or as a non-credit-bearing evening course. Several Language Centres provide specialist 'languages for academic purposes' courses for graduate students (e.g. Italian for art historians, French for lawyers, Mandarin for Business and Current Affairs, etc).

181.   Most also provide English for Academic Purposes courses for non-native English-speaking students, thereby playing an important role in terms of helping universities to recruit and retain overseas students .

182.   Furthermore, there is a considerable amount of provision for external audiences (evening classes, public and private sector training contracts, etc), which brings in welcome additional revenue but also necessitates that the management teams be commercially aware, market-sensitive and able to respond swiftly to new opportunities. Much could be gained if this expertise were to be shared with other, more traditionally academic parts of their home universities.

Profile of Language Centre within the institution

183.   Most felt that their Language Centre was strong and would remain so or grow, while a few stated that the Language Centre would play an increasingly important role in their home university's ambitions to internationalise itself.

184.   A minority felt that external funding would be important to secure the future of the Centre at current levels of activity, whilst another minority anticipated cuts in the Language Centre funding.

185.   Overall, there was considerable optimism in the responses from the Language Centres, and the AULC provided significant evidence of innovation and collaboration in teaching, both nationally and internationally.

c) Responses from Subject Associations

Major trends in languages

186.   There was little consensus on this issue, which is perhaps not surprising given that the great majority of responses were given at individual language level. Like the MFL

Departments, Subject Associations noted growth both in contemporary cultural studies and in collaborative research.

187. There were also concerns that the new AHRC block grant system would impact negatively on Departments' abilities to attract good postgraduate students.

188. The main anxieties were about levels of funding, both for teaching and for research.

<u>Major research challenges for MFL and for individual languages</u>

189. Again, there was little consensus here. The RAE QR settlement and its negative impact on the sustainability of research in particular subjects were mentioned by several responses, with anxieties articulated about the 'impact agenda' and about the trend towards collaborative research, with some respondents arguing that the individual, 'lone' scholar model was not compatible with Research Council funding models. Concerns were also expressed about a lack of critical mass in some smaller subjects.

<u>Future of the discipline</u>

190. There was only one area of broad agreement under this heading, which was that languages would increasingly become the preserve of the middle-class (and privately-educated) student studying at a Russell Group university.

191. Otherwise, all of the other predictions were made only once, ranging from expansion of provision in Asian Languages to buoyancy in Spanish to decline in French; from increased student interest to stable numbers to falling recruitment.

192. Despite this lack of agreement, many of responses felt that their particular language was facing similar challenges to other languages in terms of funding, access/recruitment. Differences included: Chinese and Russian having a more social science bias; Russian being more likely to have native speaker students; French having less *ab initio* teaching.

<u>Other comments</u>

193. In terms of MFL as a discipline, several respondents noted that MFL is more of an undergraduate subject than many other humanities disciplines. This view is based on the fact that the great majority of students in MFL Departments are undergraduates, with Languages Departments having typically having fewer Masters and PhD students (pro rata per member of staff) than other Humanities Departments, such as English or History.

194. This dependence on undergraduate students has considerable implications for income levels, for staffing needs, for research activity, for departmental profile, etc, and is one of the reasons why universities are considering restructurings, in order to facilitate more (and more effective) pedagogical and research inter-departmental collaborations and to seek to provide greater time for MFL colleagues to undertake more research.

Conclusions and recommendations

195. The decline in modern language learning in England is a cause of real concern for a variety of reasons. If not arrested, it will lead to the UK becoming one of the most monolingual countries in the world (even the USA is in many areas bi-lingual, with Spanish as the primary language spoken at home by over 34 million people aged five or older). The decline will have implications in many areas:

- For the UK economy and the ability of companies to operate competitively in the global environment.

- For the UK's international position and our ability to negotiate in all fields with in-depth intercultural competence.

- For the UK's role in addressing global challenges through international partnerships.

- For the development of sustainable community cohesion in the UK.

- For the development of generations of young people as true global citizens who understand and are informed by cultural difference and who are committed to international mobility.

- For the maintenance of the UK as a global hub for research.

196. The move away from specialised 'Single Honours Programmes' to Joint or Combined Programmes is being driven by student views and, to a somewhat lesser degree by employers; this represents a challenge but also an opportunity for HEIs in terms of developing new interdisciplinary and employment-focused courses.

197. While there is a great deal of understandable anxiety, there is also in the HE languages community a tendency to argue for sustainable salvation through ever more investment in teaching, research and widening participation/outreach activities. The evidence shows, however, that there has been and continues to be substantial investment in languages activities, in teaching, research and outreach and schools engagement activities, through, for example, the designation of MFL as SIV subjects, the investment by HEFCE and the Research Councils in five Language-Based Areas Studies research and training centres, the creation by the AHRC of a four-hub Research Training Network for languages, and the facilitation of outreach and collaborative activities via funding awarded by Government Departments and by Funding Councils to LLAS and CILT.

198. Continued strategic investment will be essential for the next few years. However, it is vital that universities take action themselves in

a. identifying, recognising and promoting the value of languages

b. developing their international and/or regional strategies with explicit reference to languages provision

c. aligning the development of Language Departments/Schools with their missions and their conceptions of the graduate attributes they seek to nurture in their students.

199.   In international debates about the role and function of universities in the 21st century, much is rightly made of the importance of the autonomy of universities in the UK. For the languages sector, now is the moment to embrace that autonomy as a creative and enabling force.

Recommendations to universities

200.   It is crucial that Language Departments and Language Centres learn to work more effectively together to reconceptualise, redefine and promote foreign languages as a discipline, both internally and externally and to Government and funding agencies. University management teams need also explicitly to understand how their languages provision articulates with and underpins their individual educational missions and international and/or regional strategies.

201.   One of the most significant outcomes of the consultation was the evidence of a tension between the idea of languages as a collective discipline, and the diversity of experiences across the sector. There are, of course, major differences between languages, and also between their associated cultures, histories and traditions - as well as significant differences in the ways that they are perceived by students. Nevertheless, what links them all together as MFL is the fact that, in each case, culture and history are examined through developing an understanding of and a familiarity with language. They also all share a focus on expression and communication, in terms both of the works studied and of the learning and researching experiences of the students. It will be important to the future vitality of language study to ensure that the sector is able to come together to publicly acknowledge this tension – and to find ways of conceptualising it in a positive light, finding synergies and opportunities for collaboration across languages where this is appropriate (e.g. sharing of online teaching resources, generic postgraduate training; advocacy for language study within an institution), whilst showcasing and celebrating diversity.

202.   Universities should take a more active leadership role in encouraging young people to study foreign languages, both at school and at university. By emphasising the importance of intercultural competence and multi-lingual skills as well as the career opportunities offered by studying foreign languages, universities can incentivise more students to study languages while at university. This extends through into postgraduate study, with Departments needing to take a more pro-active role in attracting Master's and research students into languages fields, rather than accepting arguments that MFL is largely an 'undergraduate field'.

203.   Universities can also use their own admissions and other policies as a means simultaneously of foregrounding their own missions and encouraging students to study languages. For instance, University College London (UCL) has decided that from 2012, all applicants, regardless of discipline, should have a GCSE qualification or equivalent in a Modern Foreign Language. If, for whatever reason, this is not possible, they should follow a foreign language course while studying for their degree at UCL.

204.   This decision was taken by UCL in order to signify the value that it places on candidates being able to demonstrate a certain level of cultural awareness which fits with UCL's framework of Education for Global Citizenship. Many maintained schools have

welcomed the UCL decision, since it shows the high value it has placed on the study of languages, and several other universities are now actively considering following the UCL example.

205.   There are already many examples of inter-departmental, inter-institutional and cross-sectoral collaborations. Many of these are facilitated by the Routes into Languages programme or are parts of universities' Widening Participation activities. Significantly more collaboration can and should be achieved in terms of employer engagement and proactive engagement with policy makers – and crucially, with curriculum development outside HE, notably in the secondary schools sector, but also in the primary schools sector. Pro-active and ongoing dialogue is essential with bodies such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, Edexcel, etc in order to ensure that the languages curriculum is truly 'joined up' in content and purpose from primary through secondary to further and higher education.

Recommendation 1

206.   University Modern Languages Departments, Language Centres, LLAS and CILT should work together to promote a clear and compelling identity for Modern Foreign Languages as a humanities discipline, one which:

- Reflects the diversity across the sector.

- Relates the various branches of the discipline (textual and historical scholarship; cultural study) to the whole.

- Is clear about the ways in which teaching in the discipline is led by research.

- Is explicit about the attributes of the specialist languages graduate and the specialist languages researcher.

- Presents a convincing case for the contribution that Languages Departments make to the strategic objectives of their institutions and of HE more widely.

- Articulates the relationship between specialism in languages and general language competence.

(See paragraphs 41; 43; 122; 131; 148; 156; 171; 198-99; 201)

Recommendation 2

207.   At a strategic level, Vice-Chancellors and other senior managers should be encouraged to:

- Understand that languages have more than one function within the context of a university: they are both an important graduate skill (and therefore relevant across the discipline spectrum) and a Humanities discipline (with a specific role to play in furthering the institution's reputation and research profile).

- Locate these two functions within the context of internationalisation ambitions and the university's strategic mission.

- Encourage the development of strategic approaches to partnership working, including with external organisations.

(See paragraphs 43; 47; 99; 131; 183-5; 200)

Recommendation 3

208.   Universities should use their Learning and Teaching Strategies and admissions policies to demonstrate clearly the importance that they place on the study of foreign languages. They should also encourage the development of more undergraduate and Masters programmes with an element of Study Abroad.

(See paragraphs 200, 202-3)

Recommendation 4

209.   Vice-Chancellors and Senior Management teams should provide sufficient funding and support to MFL Departments and to Language Centres to allow them to develop together in ways which are appropriate to the institutional context.

(See paragraphs 47; 131)

Recommendation 5

210.   Departments should review their programmes and courses in terms of both content and modes of delivery in order to ensure that they are appropriate for the global 21st century.

(See paragraphs 68; 107; 138)

Recommendation 6

211.   In addition to continuing their existing outreach and widening participation activities, university Language Departments should actively engage with schools at primary and secondary level to help to develop a languages curriculum for the 21st century. This may include proactive engagement with, and support for, the Languages Ladder and/or the Languages Diploma.

(See paragraphs 42; 48-67; 123; 205)

Recommendation 7

212.   Language Departments should liaise pro-actively with their institutional Careers Services and employers to ensure that skills development is an integral and important part of their programmes at all levels.

(See paragraphs 106-124; 122)

Recommendation 8

213.   Modern Foreign Language Departments should work more proactively on skills development and careers advice and guidance, both institutionally and through facilitating programmes such as Routes into Languages and through their own local or regional networks, with a clear sense of what each partner brings to the collaboration.

(See paragraphs 38; 106-124)

214.   Universities need, where appropriate, to address the tensions that can exist between MFL Departments and Language Centres, ensuring that there is parity of esteem for both, and with a commitment to building a culture of collaborative development for languages provision.

(See paragraphs 135; 139; 160-163; 174; 201)

215.   The importance of contextualised language learning should be recognised by the appointment and the continuing professional development of highly trained specialist language teachers, in MFL Departments as well as in Language Centres.

(See paragraphs 164-5; 177)

216.   Departments should, where appropriate, seek to challenge the bias towards undergraduate teaching in MFL Departments, in particular by working creatively to enhance the attractiveness of postgraduate study in languages. This might include collaborative working (intra- and inter-institutionally) to promote a graduate career path, a languages graduate community and training opportunities for postgraduate researchers. It might also extend to the development of interdisciplinary collaborations into fields which might stimulate new roles for postgraduate researchers, including new fields of enquiry. It might also be achieved through a greater focus on strategically chosen research specialisms within a Department or group of Departments working collaboratively.

(See paragraphs 119; 121; 135; 193-4; 220)

Recommendations to external bodies

217.   The Government, Funding Councils, universities, learned societies, professional associations and major funders such as the Wellcome Trust have all made a significant contribution to the public understanding of science, which is now an embedded feature of intellectual and public life in the UK. The same cannot be said of the Humanities whose national role and purpose are far from understood by the general public. This is particularly true for Modern Foreign Languages, and Government, notably BIS and DCSF, universities and professional associations should work together to formulate and disseminate clear messages about the strategic importance of Modern Foreign Languages and what they represent and do within the UK.

218.   The commitment to languages of the Government as expressed by ministers in DCSF and BIS is appreciated, but the languages community and university leaders need pro-actively to maintain ongoing dialogues with Government Departments about how the study and research of foreign languages are developing and are responding to current and future challenges and to the needs of increasingly complex markets and intercultural research questions. The policy on the entitlement to learning languages in primary schools will take some time to have its full effect, especially once languages become compulsory in primary schools from 2011. In order to prevent the possibility that an entire generation of linguistically and interculturally competent young people is lost to the UK, it

is vital that the Government's expectations of language learning in secondary schools be monitored and, crucially, met.

219.   The investment in the Language-Based Area Studies Centres has been an important response to the challenges of globalisation, but equivalent investment is needed also with regard to other regions, notably Central Asia, South Asia, South America and, indeed, Western Europe. The vision of creating collaborative partnerships between institutions which would build capacity by providing co-ordinated multidisciplinary advanced training and support for researchers at all stages in their careers, albeit with a strong focus on early-career researchers, was a bold and imaginative one, and there is evidence from the interim reports that sustainable transformations in high-level research training are being realised.

220.   While much excellent research continues to be done across the sector, this is often in 'pockets' or 'islands' of excellence. Furthermore, the numbers of high-quality doctoral students in the languages disciplines are diminishing, with some areas and periods of research attracting few suitably qualified candidates. The future viability of the disciplines will depend in part on a new strategy being developed for postgraduate training and capacity building, which will strengthen and, where appropriate, create critical mass, via the creation of doctoral training centres and doctoral training units.

221.   HEFCE has been investing in MFL as in other Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subjects for the past decade. This help has been crucial for the maintenance of student numbers, while the evidence shows that overall, student numbers are more or less stable. However, there are significant variations between the individual languages, and the declining numbers of A2 entries for languages constitute a threat for the long-term health of the language disciplines.

222.   It is encouraging that the range of languages studied at all levels in English education is widening beyond the traditional western European languages. This is encouraging both in terms of community cohesion and also has the potential to benefit the UK in terms of the international success of business, diplomacy and cultural dialogue. On the other hand, languages which employ non-Roman scripts or are character-based pose particular challenges for language learners, especially those learning the language *ab initio*, with evidence indicating that many more contact hours are needed than for European languages. While there is evidence both nationally and internationally of this, it is important that the situation in English universities be fully analysed to ascertain whether special funding needs to be provided for the teaching of such languages.

Recommendation 12

223.   A forum, possibly led by CILT, the National Centre for Languages,, should be set up between representatives of DCSF, BIS, HEFCE, universities, schools and employers to formulate clear, coherent messages which are agreed by all and then to develop a communication strategy for these messages.

(See paragraphs 36; 91; 217-218)

<u>Recommendation 13</u>

224.   HEFCE and the Department for Children, Schools and Families should continue to fund the Routes into Languages programme for a further period beyond 2009-10.

(See paragraphs 38; 123)

<u>Recommendation 14</u>

225.   The AHRC, ESRC and HEFCE should give serious consideration to investing in a second phase of Language-based Area Studies Centres, widening the global focus to include Central Asia, South Asia, South America and Western Europe and building on lessons learned from the first Centres.

(See paragraphs 46; 219)

<u>Recommendation 15</u>

226.   Building on the models of the Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council doctoral training centres and the ESRC's proposed doctoral training centres and doctoral training units, the AHRC should consider the creation, through a national competitive process, of a network of doctoral training centres and, possibly, doctoral training units.

(See paragraph 220)

<u>Recommendation 16</u>

227.   HEFCE, through its Strategically Important Subjects Advisory Group, should undertake or commission a study of teaching hours and outcomes in languages using different writing systems than those using Roman script.

(See paragraphs 46; 222)

<u>Recommendation 17</u>

228.   The DCSF should consider changing its 2006 'expectation' that between 50% and 90% of students should continue with language studies until the end of Key Stage 4 into a mandatory target, and OFSTED should closely monitor the performance of all secondary schools against this target.

(See paragraphs 55-56)

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Appendix B: Consultation questionnaires

In order to inform this review, three discrete questionnaires were circulated amongst the community:

- Subject Associations questionnaire
- Modern Foreign Languages questionnaire
- Language Centre questionnaire.

Invitations were sent directly via email to named heads of Departments and/or heads of Schools in each of the English universities with a Modern Foreign Languages Department; to the named heads of Department or Directors of all English universities with a Languages Department, and to the relevant Subject Associations whose contact details are registered with the British Academy. In the small minority of cases where no named contact was given on a university's website, the questionnaires were, as far as possible, sent to the general languages contact named on the site.

In addition, the questionnaire was kindly promoted via the mailing lists of the LLAS Subject Centre and the University Council for Modern Languages (UCML). Responses were invited from as many members of staff as wished to respond, and were not limited to Department heads or others in leadership positions.

Each questionnaire focused on areas most relevant to the constituency at which it was aimed. Details of the questions for each of the three are given below.

1.1   Subject Associations

1.   What language(s) do you represent?

2.   Which Subject Association or learned society do you belong to?

3.   What, in the opinion of your organisation, have been the major trends for your language(s) over the past five years in terms of the subject's focus? (You might consider: the relationship between teaching and research; changes in curriculum content; balance of provision; collaborative working; staffing.)

4.   What are the major research challenges for the discipline in general and your language(s) in particular?

5.   Where do you think the discipline – and your language(s) – will be in five years?

6.   Do you think that the trends in your language(s) are broadly in line with trends in 'Modern Foreign Languages' as a collective discipline?

7.   Do you wish to make any other comments in relation to the HEFCE review of MFL?

1.2   University Modern Foreign Languages Departments

1.   What language(s) do you represent?

2.   Are you responding:

As an individual member of staff at an English HEI

As a Head of Department in a MFL Department at an English HEI (or on behalf of a Department)

Other (please specify)

3.   Which institution are you from? (optional)

4.   How is your Department known? (e.g. Department of French; Department of East Asian Studies)

5.   What is your position within the Department?

6.   Is your institution:

a pre-92 university?

a post-92 university?

7.   What is the structural relationship between individual Languages Departments in your institution?

Grouped in a Faculty or School of Languages

Grouped in a multi-disciplinary Faculty or School

Other (please specify)

8.   What, in your opinion, have been the major trends for your language over the past five years in terms of your Department's focus? (Your answer might cover: the relationship between teaching and research; changes in curriculum content; the impact of the employability agenda; the balance between language and cultural studies).

9.   What, in your view, have been the major trends over the past five years for your language in terms of modes of delivery and departmental structures? (Your answer might cover: interdisciplinary working; collaborative working; staffing; the relationship between research and teaching; structural decisions taken at institutional level).

10.   What are the major teaching challenges for your language?

11.   Does your Department offer teaching in your language to students who are not following a degree programme in that language? If yes, how is this managed, and what implications does it have for the Department?

12.   How many staff members in your Department are actively involved in teaching language modules or courses? What percentage of your Department does this represent?

13.   Of the staff who teach language elements of the degrees you offer, how many were returned to the 2008 RAE? (Please give absolute numbers and the percentage of the Department as a whole.)

14.   Does your Department provide skills training? If so, what skills are they? And does your Department arrange for skills training to be provided by other units in your university? If so, which skills and who are the providers?

15.   What trends have you noticed in student recruitment? (This may cover: profile of students; language proficiency; calibre of applicants)

16.   What are the major research challenges for your language?

17.   What are the major challenges for your language in relation to knowledge transfer and 'impact'?

18.   Where do you think your language will be in five years? Do you think these trends are broadly in line with those for 'Modern Foreign Languages' as a collective discipline?

19.   Do you work in an institution which operates an Institution-Wide Language Programme (IWLP)? If yes, what is the relationship between Languages Departments and the IWLP? How do you think this will develop in future?

20.   Do you wish to make any other comments in relation to the HEFCE review of MFL?

University Language Centres/Institution-Wide Language Programmes

1.   Are you responding:

On behalf of an Institution-Wide Languages Programme?

As a member of staff at an Institution-Wide Languages Programme?

Other (please give details)

2.   Which institution are you from? (optional)

3.   Is your institution:

a pre-92 university?

a post-92 university?

4.   What is your position within the IWLP?

5.   Does your institution also offer specialist degree programmes in MFL?

6.   Which languages does your IWLP offer? Which three are most popular amongst students?

7.   Please describe the structural relationship between the IWLP/Language Centre and any MFL Departments within your institution?

8.   What proportion of your teaching is:

Students on a specialist language degree programme

Students on a non-languages degree taking an optional credit-bearing language course

Students taking an extra-curricular languages course (non-degree-related)

Other (please give details)

9.   What are the major teaching challenges for IWLPs?

10.   What trends have you noticed in student recruitment? (You may consider: profile of students; language proficiency; length of study; motivation for study).

11.   How do you think your Department's role in the institution will develop over the next five years?

12.   Do you have any further comments to make in relation to the HEFCE review of MFL provision in English universities?

Appendix C: Contributors to the Review

Consultation questionnaires

<u>Subject Associations</u>

Formal written responses were received from the following Subject Associations:

Association for French Language Studies

Association for Low Countries Studies in the UK and Ireland

Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France

Association of University Professors and Heads of French

British Association for Applied Linguistics

British Association for Chinese Studies

British Association of Japanese Studies

British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies

Society for French Studies

Society for Italian Studies

UCML

Two additional responses were received from contributors who indicated affiliation to a number of associations but did not indicate the association(s) on whose behalf they were responding.

An invitation to respond to the questionnaire for Subject Association representatives was sent to all Modern Foreign Language Subject Associations on the mailing list of the British Academy.

<u>University Modern Foreign Languages Departments</u>

An invitation to respond to the questionnaire for Modern Foreign Language Departments in universities was sent to all named Heads of Departments on university websites.

Eighty responses were received, of which 57 were complete. Responses were received from staff in a range of different roles at the following universities (at least two responses from each Department in the majority of cases).

Aston University

Bournemouth University

King's College London

Lancaster University

London Metropolitan University

UCL

University of Bath

University of Birmingham

University of Bristol

University of Cambridge

University of Durham

University of Exeter

University of Hull

University of Manchester

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

University of Northumbria at Newcastle

University of Nottingham

University of Oxford

University of Salford

University of Warwick

University Language Centres/Institution-Wide Language Programmes

An invitation to respond to the questionnaire for university Language Centres was circulated to all heads of Language Centres named on university websites. Sixteen responses were received to the University Languages Centre questionnaire, from the following universities:

King's College London

Loughborough University

LSE

Nottingham Trent University

School of Oriental and African Studies

Teesside University

University of Birmingham

University of Bristol

University of Cambridge

University of East Anglia

University of Exeter

University of Hull

University of Leeds

University of Manchester

University of Nottingham

University of Portsmouth

University of the Arts London

The questionnaires were also kindly publicised by the LLAS Subject Centre (via its mailing lists), the Association for University Language Centres (AULC) and at the HEFCE MFL Review consultation event on 1 July 2009.

Submissions

Submissions, additional papers and data were received from a wide range of sources:

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Association of University Language Centres (AULC)

British Academy

CILT

Government Skills

HEFCE

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Language, Linguistics and Area Studies Subject Centre (LLAS)

Modern Humanities Research Association

Routes into Languages

The Russell Group

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

Society for French Studies

Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)

University Council for Modern Languages (UCML)

University of Bristol Language Centre

University of Central Lancashire

University of Leeds

University of Oxford Modern Foreign Languages Department

Attendees at the MFL Review Consultation Event, 1 July 2009

The following attended the MFL Review Consultation Event, which was held at Birkbeck College on 1 July 2009:

Aimee Lean	HEFCE
Akiko Furukawa	British Association for Japanese Studies
Alison Brunt	HEFCE
Alison Fenner	University of Reading
Alison Nader	University of Reading
Alistair Renfrew	Durham University
Andrea Dlaska	University of Surrey
Andrew Gerstle	SOAS
Angela Gallagher-Brett	Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies
Angela Kimyonger	University of Hull
Anny King	University of Cambridge
Catherine Fletcher	University of West of England
Charles Burdett	University of Bristol
Chris Millward	HEFCE
Christine Hoffman	UCL
Clare Goudy	UCL
Claire Griffiths	University of Chester
David Yeandle	King's College London
Davina Benton	HEFCE
Dominique Borel	King's College London
Dr Lesley Twomey	Northumbria University
Dr Lianyi Song	SOAS
Dr Lid King	The Languages Company
Dr Peter Howarth	Association of University Language Centres
Edwin Williamson	University of Oxford
Elizabeth Andersen	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Emmanuelle Labeau	Aston University
Enza SicilianoVerruccio	University of Reading
Eve Rosenhaft	Liverpool University
Frank Finlay	Association for German Studies

George X Zhang	SOAS	
Heather McGuinness	Routes into Languages	
Helen McAllister	University of the Arts London	
Hilary Footitt	University of Reading	
Irene Macias	University of Bath	
Itesh Sachdev	SOAS	
Jackie Clarke	Association for the Study of Modern and Contemporary France	
Janet Lloyd	University of Salford	
Jennifer Rogers	HEFCE	
John Canning	Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies	
John Naysmith	University of Portsmouth	
John Selby	HEFCE	
John Shaw	University of Central Lancashire	
Jonathan Lippman	University of Exeter	
Juliet Perkins	King's College London	
Lik Suen	SOAS	
Lucille Cairns	Association of University Professors and Heads of French	
Maggie McEwan	University of Portsmouth	
Mairéad Hanrahan	UCL	
Maria Emmerson	University of Brighton	
Marion Sadoux	London Metropolitan University	
Mark Allinson	University of Bristol	
Mark Williams	British Association for Japanese Studies	
Martin Cornick	University of Birmingham	
Martin McGlouchlin	Chair SIS	
Martin Shipway	Birkbeck College	
Martine Shepherd	Liverpool John Moores University	
Maryse Wright	University of Nottingham	
Matthew Treherne	Society for Italian Studies	
Michael Shade	University of Brighton	
Michael Worton	UCL	
Mike Kelly	University of Southampton	

Neil Bermel	University of Sheffield
Nicholas Harrison	King's College London
Nick Byrne	LSE
Nick Harrison	The Association of French Studies
Pam Moores	Aston University
Pamela Moores	University Council for Modern Languages
Paul Hazell	HEFCE
Paul Rowlett	University Council of General and applied linguistics
Peter James	UCLAN
Peter Saraga	Chair of HEFCE's SIVS advisory group
Philip Swanson	University of Sheffield
Pilar Gray-McGrath	University of Reading
Prof Alison Sinclair	University of Cambridge
Professor Brinson	Imperial College London
Raquel Medina	Aston University
Ray Sachell	University of Bristol Language Centre
Richard Pym	Royal Holloway, University of London
Rita Balestrini	University of Reading
Roel Vismans	University of Sheffield
Ron Nield	University of Wolverhampton
Sarah Chaytor	Russell Group
Sharon Handley	Manchester Metropolitan University
Sibylle Nalezinski	UCL
Stephen Bellas	London South Bank University
Steve Hutchings	University of Manchester
Suzuko Anai	British Association for Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language
Theo Hermans	UCL
Tim Wright	British Association for Chinese Studies
Tony Chafer	University of Portsmouth
Tricia Hammond	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
Uwe Baumann	Open University
Vicky Wright	University of Southampton

| Vivienne Hurley | The British Academy |
| William Dodd | University of Birmingham |

List of abbreviations and acronyms used

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
AULC	Association of University Language Centres
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CILT	CILT, the National Centre for Languages
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DIUS	Department for Industry, Universities and Skills
ELQ	Equivalent or Lower Qualification
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FE	Further Education
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IWLP	Institution-Wide Languages Programme
LLAS	Higher Education Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
QR	HEFCE Quality Related (research funding)
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SIV(S)	Strategically Important and Vulnerable (Subjects)
STEMM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Medicine and Mathematics
UCAS	University and Colleges Admissions Service
UCML	University Council for Modern Languages