

King's College London, Waterloo Campus  
James Clerk Maxwell Bldg, basement room 18

## UCML ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

### Item 9b Scotland report

1 The Universities of Dundee, St Andrews and Aberdeen have launched a new cross sector conference series, 'New Perspectives on Language Teaching and Learning'. The first conference in what is intended to be an annual event was held on June 15th at Dundee University on the subject 'Widening Participation'. There were papers and a round table Q & A including Janice Carruthers and Derek Duncan amongst others. (N.B. JC was unable to attend – unforeseen circumstances.)

2 Following a thematic discussion at a committee meeting, UCML Scotland intends to organise a cross-sector conference around the loose theme of the purpose/focus/validity of MFL learning today. It is hoped that this will address both Scottish (see **B** below) and wider UK issues. Topics for discussion may include:

- the potential need for rebranding;
- reconceptualisation of the curriculum with regards to desirable cultural competence;
- how to close the school / university gap;
- what are pupil / student expectations;
- foregrounding language learning;
- the effect of REF on MFL focus and provision.

What follows went to the UCML Executive meeting on 19th April. It is reproduced here (powerpoint also available) in part for info, but also because there are elements of **B** which are worthy of note.

#### **A** Committees on which UCMLS has representation

i. Wider Engagement Network: key thing to report here is that employers want graduates with language skills and the attendant cultural awareness.

#### ii. Special Implementation Group

a) continued funding of 1+ 2 to meet targets by end 2020-21. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is unlikely as there is a small but significant percentage of Primary Schools which are having difficulty developing L2 never mind L3. Considerably more have abandoned all pretence of providing an L3.

b) 1 + 2 to be rebranded – watch this space...

c) JC to collate an up-to-date document detailing Scottish Universities outreach activities [pending].

**B** National Modern Languages Network meeting, Stirling, 7th February (Education Scotland)

JC gave a presentation followed by Q&A.

Note that slide 5 contains the first question of the diagnostic test used in the French Department in St Andrews to permit us to stream the First Level intake. It asks entrants to conjugate the auxiliary verbs *avoir* and *être* in the present and imperfect tenses and to give the past participles of both verbs. Most students having taken only Scottish Higher are incapable of completing this exercise, with some leaving it blank. It should be remembered that the Higher is the basis on which all offers of a place are made in Scotland's Universities.

Many pupils while at School have not gone on to Advanced Higher which is much closer to what we require in terms of previous knowledge. There are two main reasons for this, which are common to all Scottish State School MFL provision. The first, unfortunately, is a lack of staffing resource in Scottish State High Schools. The second is the misapprehension that chances of securing a place at University are greater if a different language Higher is taken the year after the initial Higher has been gained. In either case, the gap between the initial Higher and University entry can be fifteen to sixteen months, which is problematic.

At St Andrews we are seriously considering the creation of a Higher-only stream at First Level in French which we create *de facto* currently with the Diagnostic Exercise. That is not without its potential, very political, problems however.

Slides 6-9 give an overview of what students could expect in First Year at St Andrews.

Slides 10 & 11 offer a brief comparison of the different papers at French Higher in 1989 and 2018. Slide 10 is quite telling, while on slide 11 we can see what has disappeared from the Higher.

Slide 12 refers to elements of a document indicating which language skills should be taught / acquired at which level, which I am not even going to attempt to start boring you with.

The following Q&A was lively. It has been reported back to me that the session was much appreciated as it opened eyes wide.

One thing I picked up is that Italian is making a gradual return in some State Schools.

**C** And finally

For anyone who has a spare week and wishes to have some insight into how education is framed in Scotland, here is the link to the *Curriculum for Excellence*, from which you should follow the internal links.

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?)

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UCML Scotland, June 2019