UCML Executive Committee

Friday 8 November 2019 16.00-18.00

room 2.45, Franklin-Wilkins Building (Waterloo campus)
King's College London

Item 4   VC Education report

I first need to thank Elena Polisca who was previously in this role for all the work she has done to date and for her enthusiasm and willingness to continue with some of the projects she has helped to initiate.

Since I am new to this role, this report mainly focusses on the priorities for education that I have discussed with Claire Gorrara as Chair of UCML.

1. Developing a picture of the Languages landscape

- **Statistics**
  It is important to continue to collect, and make available, data which gives us an accurate picture of the take up of Languages in all sectors. Going forward, there could be further collaboration with other organisations such as the Association for Language Learning and the British Council at key times of the year - such as when GCSE and A-level results are published - so that efforts are not duplicated and useful updates are signposted on each other's websites.

- **This year's A-level and GCSE results**
  I was not able to spend much time analysing this year's results unfortunately. In summary, this year's English and Welsh A-level results and the Scottish Highers seem to reveal quite similar pictures. Overall numbers in the 'big three' languages were mainly down in French and German (although German showed a small increase of 0.2% in England) but up in Spanish, following a similar trend over the last few years. A DfE graph (see appendix) showing language A-level numbers in England since 1996 demonstrates how drastically these numbers have changed. In 1996, 22,718 students took French compared to 7,607 this year, whilst 9,306 took German in 1996 compared to 2,864 in 2019. In Spanish there were 4,095 students in 1996 compared to 7,932 in 2019. However, it seems that Languages are not the only Arts subject which is seeing a decline in A-level numbers (see table in Appendix and below). A recent BBC report (15th August 2019), suggests that this move away from the Arts and Humanities in England is partly linked to School Performance measures where the focus is on the EBacc and the Progress 8 school attainment measures.

  The numbers gaining 'A' grades was up in all 3 languages in Scotland and Wales and slightly down in England except for German. There is an interesting difference in the percentage of students gaining these 'A' grades between languages and between countries (see below) which brings up the continuing question of severe grading even though efforts are being made by the English exam boards to address it. The almost complete disappearance of AS levels and the introduction of new A-level curricula are also complicating the picture. However, the news around GCSE numbers is slightly more optimistic.

Percentage of students gaining A or A* at A-Levels and Highers in 2019

	French	German	Spanish

England	36.4%	40.4%	34.9%
Wales	39.2%	51.9%	34.8%
Scotland	49%	53%	47%

Source: OFQUAL 15th August / QualificationsWales.org (with thanks to Joe Carson for the Scottish data).

At GCSE, overall numbers taking a language in England in 2019 increased by 3.2 % over the previous year (see Appendix), as opposed to a 0.4 increase in 2018 which had been the first increase in 5 years (Schoolsweek, November, 2018). Languages according to the BBC report had been the only EBacc subject not seeing an increase in numbers at GCSE; we can hope that this trend has now been reversed. It is only by increasing GCSE numbers that we can widen the pool for A-level and university.

- **UCAS data**
  UCML with the support of the British Academy have now purchased datasets showing language/non-language Joint Honours combinations which are not otherwise available. Interrogation of this data should reveal interesting information about recent trends in language take-up and of students taking languages as part of their degree but who are otherwise invisible in freely available data. I hope that data analysis and a first report of the findings can be carried out fairly soon.
  The publication of the first part of the UCAS end of 2018/2019 cycle report (applicants and acceptances) is on 28th November, 2019 with detailed analysis following on 17th December and 30th January. I would hope to make a summary of the data relating to languages available on the web site.

- **UCML survey 2019**
  The survey of language provision in UK ML Departments was carried out earlier this year and the report, with help from Elena Polisca and Inma Álvarez and Carlos Montoro from the Language Acts OWRI project, should be ready during November. There were 36 responses from Universities in total. It will report *inter alia* on languages offered, departmental configurations and priorities, institutional language strategies and involvement with Routes into Languages.

- **Other sources of data / information**
  As key reports are published we need to signpost them. The recent House of Commons Briefing Paper (Number 07388, 16 October 2019), *Language Teaching in Schools (England)* gives a good overview of recent initiatives and trends in languages at school level and could be useful to pass onto senior managers so that they are more aware of the reasons for the 'supply' problems in our institutions.

2. Promoting Languages

- **Routes into Languages**
  I will be chairing the Routes sub-committee when the transfer of ownership to UCML is complete. Once the sub-committee is in place, there will need to be an urgent discussion of the shape of Routes going forward. Routes as a brand is still fairly active as can be seen on the current Routes into languages website at https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/events. It will be important to build on the good practice and experience that already exists.

  The OWRI projects are currently supporting a joint Routes project which sees University language ambassadors in England working with year 11 pupils to see if positive engagement influences 'waverers' in their decisions about A-level subjects. Data will be collected from each of the participating schools and it is hoped that the results will help to support the argument for the need for further Government funding of these sorts of activities.

- **A national Languages strategy**
  I will work together with others, especially the British Academy to push for a joined up national language strategy and play a role in keeping the case for languages in the public eye. There is an ever increasing need to do this in the current difficult political climate.

3. Developing the UCML Website

- I will contribute to the re-design of the UCML website to help ensure that it can become a one-stop shop for the languages community (HE/ FE and school sectors). One priority, is to highlight (provide space for) the many professional development opportunities available including conferences and workshops being held by member institutions. Other priorities include ensuring access to appropriate data, promotion of opportunities for funding and projects, making the case for languages and intercultural education and so on.

I would hope to have a more active report going forward.

I was very pleased to represent UCML at the launch of the new Department of Languages and Cultures at the University of Reading on the 21st October

VW November, 2019

Appendix

|	French	German	Spanish	Other	All	as a % of all entries
1996	22,718	9,306	4,095	3,435	**39,554**	6.4%
1997	21,364	8,984	4,328	3,473	**38,149**	5.8%
1998	19,629	8,903	4,499	3,457	**36,488**	5.4%
1999	17,774	8,527	4,640	3,499	**34,440**	5.1%
2000	15,240	7,581	4,516	3,660	**30,997**	4.6%
2001	15,393	7,607	4,501	3,409	**30,910**	4.5%
2002	13,599	6,367	4,430	3,860	**28,256**	4.4%
2003	12,904	6,068	4,504	3,999	**27,475**	4.1%
2004	12,480	5,643	4,650	4,279	**27,052**	4.0%
2005	11,963	5,238	4,930	4,534	**26,665**	3.9%
2006	12,190	5,534	5,202	5,084	**28,010**	3.9%
2007	12,152	5,615	5,491	5,119	**28,377**	3.9%
2008	12,605	5,560	5,728	5,530	**29,423**	4.0%
2009	12,231	5,119	6,089	6,090	**29,529**	3.9%
2010	12,324	5,055	6,564	5,912	**29,855**	3.8%
2011	11,490	4,554	6,398	6,799	**29,241**	3.7%
2012	10,871	4,208	6,198	7,099	**28,376**	3.6%
2013	9,878	3,774	6,516	7,084	**27,252**	3.5%
2014	9,078	3,716	6,617	7,066	**26,477**	3.6%
2015	8,991	3,624	7,607	7,510	**27,732**	3.7%
2016	8,459	3,446	7,455	7,436	**26,796**	3.6%
2017	8,306	3,281	7,566	7,359	**26,512**	3.6%

Gender divide at GCSE

Proportion of entries earning at least an A or a 7 in England
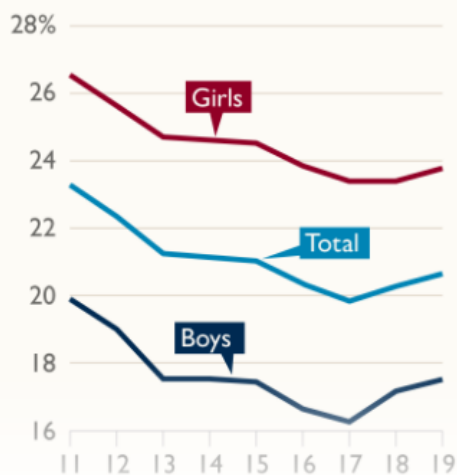
Entries for modern languages*

*England only

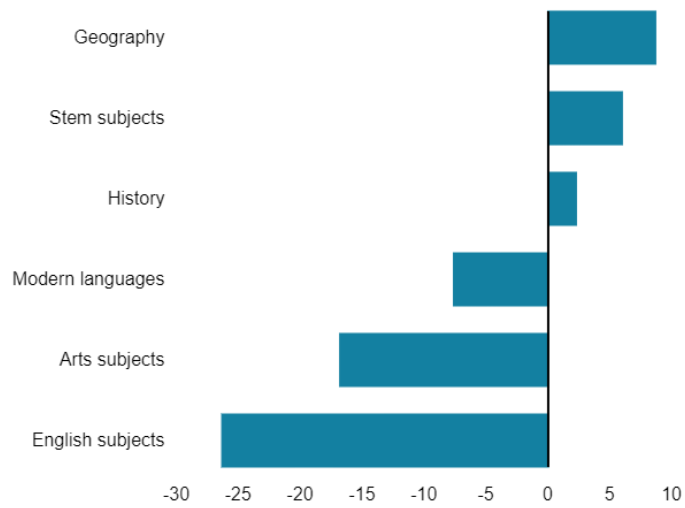Source: JCQ
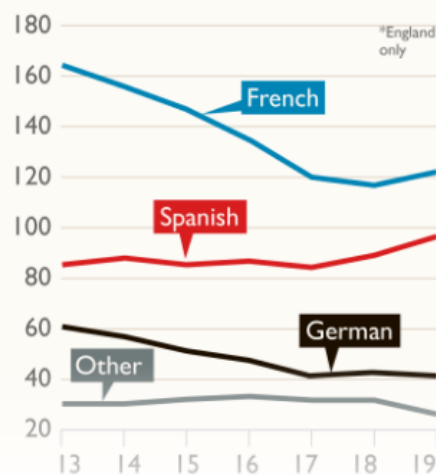
Source: The Times, August 23rd 2019

% change in entries for A-Level subjects between 2014 and 2019

BBC

Source: BBC report, 15th August 2019