

# UCML Winter Plenary 2020

**Friday 17 January 2020 10.00–16.00**

The Reading Room, British Academy,  
10–11 Carlton House Terrace,  
London SW1Y 5AH



## BUSINESS MEETING

### Item 5b: Report on Scotland

This went to the Executive in November and is submitted to the January meeting for consideration and possibly discussion.

1. I was asked to provide CG with some figures concerning ML grades and uptake at Higher in Scotland. It is available in Excel format and makes for mostly sobering reading. Spanish is the healthiest with a substantial rise from 2015-19.

All of the figures should be measured against the general demographic decline of only 5.481% across the five years.

The selected other subjects on sheet 2 make interesting comparative reading. There are sharp drop offs, but not as significantly in ML.

There are also, perhaps significantly, substantial differences in the proportion of A grades with all the ML subjects outstripping all of those I sampled on sheet 2. The same is also true at Advanced Higher 2018 compared with Higher 2017.

There is a significant downturn in progression to Advanced Higher across the board for that sample period, but languages are consistently greater losers percentage-wise than most other subjects.

There are factors which affect this, not least the tendency of Scottish state-educated pupils either to take more Highers in the second of the two years instead of Advanced Highers, I discovered at a conference in 2019 that there is a misconception among language teachers especially that this is more likely to get a pupil a place at University.

Many simply leave school with their Highers.

On the point about pupils taking more Highers than moving to Advanced Higher in a language, ideally Schools should be encouraging the AH route because it means when transitioning to University the new student should be better adapted to non ab initio courses.

That is something of a pipe-dream however because of the, frankly, piecemeal provision of AH languages (and, perhaps AH in general) in Scotland. Rectors (headmasters) do not see languages usually as a priority when timetabling comes around each April/May or so.

As a result, it is not uncommon for AH pupils to be in classes with Higher pupils and be left to get on by themselves. I know of cases where National 5 (GCSE equivalent), Higher and Advanced Higher are in the same class. In other cases some High Schools will only provide one language from entry to exit points.

2. I have been asked by the 1 + 2 Strategic Implementation Group to compile as best as possible an overview of University outreach activities for languages across Scotland. Once that is complete, it will be shared with UCML.

JC  
January 2020