

Item 6: VC Languages & Intercultural Education

1. Access to data

The focus in the January plenary report was to provide an up-to-date overview of the UK languages landscape. The UCAS data for the last cycle had recently been released. Using the data to look at the overall drop in acceptances to languages between 2009 and 2019 was indeed sobering and to some extent surprising given the increase in take-up at GCSE / A-level of certain languages, notably Spanish. The increase in unconditional conditional offers may be of concern too if it creates an uneven playing field for some universities. Of course, we don't have any details yet this year as to how universities will exceptionally deal with Admissions.

The **UCAS data** that we have purchased in order to try and understand all combinations of degrees which include a language in the title remains to be interrogated. This will be a priority for the time that we will now be working from home.

Last year's **UCML survey** provided a great deal of useful data around departmental and institutional priorities concerning Languages. However, the response rate was relatively low. Carlos Montoro and Inma Alvarez from the Language Acts and Worldmaking Project presented the report of its findings at the January plenary. They have kindly offered to contribute their expertise for this year's survey in the next few months before their project comes to an end. Given the changes to ways of working that we are all experiencing at the moment, it may be more important than ever before to capture relevant information on how our universities are organising their teaching and what plans they have in mind for Languages going forward.

2. Routes into Languages

I was able to access historic Routes into Languages documents (IPR agreements, logos etc) at Southampton in order to inform the transfer of ownership of the 'brand' to UCML. I also fielded the odd enquiry from schools about particular resources (the latest was from a teacher trying to download the resources for 'Score in French'). Quite a few of the regions advertise activities still via the website. Hopefully we can arrange the first meeting of the refreshed Routes advisory group, at least virtually, soon.

3. Gender Action (<https://www.genderaction.co.uk/>)

I have joined this group as UCML representative. It is a really interesting project which aims to challenge gender stereotypes in nurseries, schools and colleges. It is hosted by the Institute of Physics and runs a 3 level recognition scheme around gender equity which was initially launched with funding from the Mayor of London. At the moment, Gender Action is looking for a host as the IOP are coming to the end of their project funding. This seems to be a very active project and what they have achieved so far is impressive – the content on their Twitter page (https://twitter.com/gender_action?lang=en) is inspiring. However, a key focus for them is to promote opportunities in science for girls – we have the opposite trend to reverse in Languages for the most part.

4. Events

Unfortunately, the (Re) creating Modern Languages event in Oxford on the 19th / 20th March which I was invited to attend was cancelled but the contributors are sharing ideas online. There are many other relevant online meetings and webinars which seem to be taking place in the next few months – It would be good to bring these together on UCML web pages as a one-stop shop for staff development opportunities.

5. Shared resources

Given the sudden unprecedented moves to online teaching, there is an urgent need to capture and make available all the ideas, and where possible, the resources that are being generated across our sector. There are so many being made freely available at the moment by publishers, organisations and individuals that it is hard to keep up. The UCML resource sharing initiative with a similar initiative by AULC is a great way forward. At Southampton, we host a searchable open repository (Humbox - <http://humbox.ac.uk/>) which may be of interest and could complement other initiatives. It contains over 500 items already and although the last few additions are from some years ago with a few additions last year, I am assured that anyone can use it to access existing resources or to make others available.

Vicky Wright
25th March 2020