

Item 4: Report of Vice Chair Languages & Intercultural Education

This report reflects some of the ongoing interests in the Languages area and given the interest we all have in the health of languages, starts with a review of this summer's examination results.

1. The Languages landscape

• A-level and GCSE results 2020

Given the extraordinary circumstances around this year's exams in all parts of the UK, it is difficult to identify any trends with certainty. On the 13th August before grades were revised to reflect centre assessments, the TES¹ was announcing an **increase in A* grades across French (15.2% compared with 10% in 2019), German (20.7 % of students compared with 13 %) and Spanish (15.7 % compared with 10.1%)**. The percentage gaining A or A* had also increased in French (45.9% of candidates compared with 36.8 % in 2019), German (53.8 % compared with 41.2 % in 2019) and Spanish (43.8% compared with 35.2%). On the 20th August, OFQUAL published revised results tables² for England and on the 10th September, GCE results tables were republished by JCQ³. The statistics for all UK entries are given in the JCQ tables plus separate statistics for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (percentages for England are given in blue here) and in all cases the numbers gaining top grades had increased in French, German and Spanish at A-level compared to the earlier grades given. **In French UK wide, a fifth (20.4%, 20.1%) of candidates eventually achieved A* with over half (54.4%, 53.6%) gaining A or A***. In German, over a quarter (23.4% 22.9) gained A* and over half (58.7%, 58.3%) gained A or A*. In Spanish, the numbers were over a fifth (21.7% 22.1%) and over a half (54.3%, 54.5%) respectively. In other modern languages, nearly a third achieved A* (31.3%, 31.5%) and nearly three quarters (73.8%, 73.8%) achieved A* or A, however entry numbers were low (4928, 4606) compared to the previous year (8289, 7762).

In terms of numbers at A-level, there was a 0.9 per cent rise in Spanish entries compared to last year (to 8,705 candidate), whereas French entries fell (by 1.1%), as did German entries (by 6.2%). It is suggested that some of the decline in numbers could be attributed to the fact that private candidates aged over 19 as well as younger native speakers taking A levels early would not have been able to secure a teacher-assessed grade or rank order to gain an A-level this year. The 18-year-old cohort also declined by 3% according to OFQUAL with overall A-level entries declining by 2%. **AS level entries continued to decline in French (722 candidates in 2020 compared to 1217 in 2019) German (338 compared to 512) and Spanish (785 compared to 1211).**

Data from OFQUAL⁴ shows that at GCSE there is slightly better news in that **overall MFL entries increased by 2% (from 268,955 to 275,00) compared to 2019. Both German and Spanish**

¹ <https://www.tes.com/news/A-levels-2020-big-leap-top-languages-grades>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/results-tables-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-results-in-england-2020>

³ <https://www.icq.org.uk/examination-results/?post-year=2020&post-location=>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/provisional-entries-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-summer-2020-exam-series/provisional-entries-for-gcse-as-and-a-level-summer-2020-exam-series>

numbers increased (by around 3% and 5% respectively) and French entries remained stable. Other MFL numbers declined slightly whilst Ancient Languages remained stable. Overall GCSE entries in EBacc subjects increased by 2% while the 16-year-old cohort increased by 3%. Top grades also increased in 2020 with severe grading for this year at least not being an issue given the percentages gaining grade 9 or 8 in GCSE in French (17.4% of candidates compared to 12.8% in 2019), German (19.8% compared to 13.1%) and Spanish (19.2% compared to 15.5%).

Change in GCSE entries 2019 - 2020

	2019 entries	2020 entries	
French	125,700	125,770	0%
Spanish	101,080	105,840	5%
German	42,175	43,390	3%
Other modern languages	32,035	30,685	-4%
Ancient languages	12,170	12,215	0%

- ### UCAS statistics

It is too early to know what university acceptances for Languages and related studies have been and a look at the clearing updates give a very uncertain picture. It is to be hoped that we will have a clearer picture when the UCAS end of 2019/2020 cycle reports (applicants and acceptances) are published. The first is published on the 16th December and will focus on widening participation and the impact of the events of 2020 with further reports due on the 28th January. One of these will focus on student choice and motivation.

The UCML/British Academy Granularity Project which will provide an analysis of UCAS UG admissions data for the period 2012-2018 for degree combinations with Modern Languages has been continuing. UCML is funding 3 internships to further analyse sub-sets of the data.

- ### UCML survey 2020

The survey of language provision in UK ML Departments which was planned for earlier in the year was put on the back burner during lockdown but it is hoped that the survey can still be designed, trialled and implemented as soon as possible during this academic year.

2. Promoting Languages

- ### Routes into Languages

Now that the transfer of ownership to UCML is almost complete, the Routes into Languages sub-committee has met three times formally and presented its activities at the summer plenary – we were pleased to see that so many colleagues are interested in participating in RiL type activities. The Routes web site still sees several thousands of visits every month and a RiL working group is bringing the site up to date and deleting any resources which are likely to be problematic in terms of data protection and IPR. There is now a RiL presence on the UCML website.

- ### National Centre for CLIL: Learning through Languages UK (Aston)

The Director of the Centre, Emmanuelle Labeau contacted UCML and given the synergy of the CLIL initiative with Routes activities, she has been invited to join the RiL sub-committee. We were also pleased to support her bid to the AHRC for funding.

- ### Mandarin Excellence Programme

There is advance notice of a second phase of the MEP programme which aims to advance the uptake of Mandarin in schools through intensive language learning (8 hours per week). We are investigating whether there might be a role for UCML/RiL in the next phase. This has been discussed at the recent Routes meeting and we are awaiting the release of the tender document.

- **Gender Action** (<https://www.genderaction.co.uk/>)
GA was set up with funding by the Institute of Physics. As the funding has now ended DECSY (Development Education South Yorkshire) has now taken over the scheme since no other options have come forward. UCML will remain on the steering group as one of the founding partners.

VW December, 2020