

UCML Executive Committee

Friday 12 November 2021 10am-12pm

Via MS Teams



Item 10k: IWLP (including the UCML/AULC report)

1. IWLPs 2021 delivery and intake

After the move to almost exclusively online delivery triggered by the COVID pandemic in 2020, IWLPs across the country have largely moved back to face to face delivery, although a number of institutions use hybrid modes of teaching.

Whilst registrations are reported to have dropped in some extracurricular programmes, the overall interest in language learning, and registrations for credit-bearing programmes in particular, seem to be healthy and picking up in those institutions where they saw a drop last year.

Common strategies to deal with any increase in demand appear to be larger group sizes, and the use of recorded classes backed up with a shift to more self-study supported by enhanced VLEs. An increase of F2F teaching is unlikely due to a continued pressure on resource availability and ongoing cuts in funding in many institutions, which remains the main challenge in relation to meeting the existing demand.

Some institutions report IWLP optional modules being removed due to cutbacks in administrative staff – thereby removing student access to non-specialist language modules for credit.

2. Covid-19 impact

There is a perceived lack of strategy in some institutions in relation to achieving a balance between online vs. on campus teaching. Where staff may have volunteered to return to campus, they now feel penalised citing lost time as well as cost.

However, it is acknowledged that there may be opportunities presented by on-line delivery in the long-term, especially in relation to lifelong learning. How to take these opportunities forward and find a balance between in-person and on-line delivery is an ongoing debate.

An ongoing loss of not only traditionally lesser taught languages but also any language which falls below an arbitrarily set level is still reported from several institutions. The University of Roehampton, after closing its BA in French and Spanish in 2020, has now closed its LFA program, meaning that the University no longer has any provision in languages beyond English language support for foreign students.

There is also some more positive news from institutions which report to have been able to maintain small teaching groups and improve workload models, as well as making headway away from casualisation.

3. Shortage of qualified language teachers

There seems to be a shortage of teachers in several languages, making difficult the recruitment of native speaker language teachers.

Such shrinking pool of applicants for teaching posts is also further limited by visa issues for language teachers/assistants employed from Europe. Especially for those on part time contracts, which are, unfortunately, still often needed. In this post-Brexit situation, recruitment is likely to become more difficult and covering for unplanned leaves very challenging even for European languages. A Tier 2 visa requires a salary of £25,600 per annum (often equivalent to a 1.0 FTE teaching-only contract) so part-time posts will not qualify for Tier 2 visa.

The increasing prevalence of language teachers working for multiple employers which was reported last year in the wake of on-line teaching continues to be a reality, often resulting in workload issues.

4. Professionalisation of language teaching and IWLPs position within universities structures

We have come a long way in the professionalisation of language teaching in the UK, moving away from the view of the language tutor simply as a native speaker. However, many colleagues still report issues such:

- A return to a very strong emphasis on research in several institutions and, as a result, a low valuation of teaching as a core HE activity, despite the opposite being conveyed in most discourses.
- Allocations for scholarship activities in workload models tends to be small, leading to a negative impact on colleagues' ability to take forwards initiatives and larger projects and the subsequent detrimental impact on their career progression. In some cases, the lack of promotion pathways and resistance to looking into options for recognition reflects this.
- A lack of understanding in senior management in HEIs of the importance of language and intercultural skills to 'global graduates'. These rarely feature in university internationalisation strategies and there are few universities with a real language(s) policy which should be related to internationalisation strategies; UK HEIs are still too focussed on internationalisation meaning recruitment of international students (with EAP requirements) and international research collaboration – but without recognition of the accompanying (linguistic and intercultural) skills needs.
- A lack of representation of Language Centres/IWLPs at senior management level: the high number of part-time and hourly-paid colleagues employed means that while teamwork is strong at IWLP level and outcomes are positive in terms of teaching and learning, there is little room for representation or participation in the wider structures of the University.
- Increased workload due to administrative staff shortages have reduced time and opportunity for networking and strategic work by diverting energy and time to basic administrative tasks in some institutions.

5. UCML-AULC Survey of Language Provision in UK 2020-21

A joint survey by UCML and AULC of all language provision in the UK was published in July 2021. Trends identified in IWLP by previous AULC surveys continue:

- After several years of growth, IWLP provision continues to remain healthy and seemingly stable;
- integration of IWLP provision within academic departments, neither widespread nor consistent: Most universities with IWLPs also offer degree programmes. All four universities now offering IWLP only have offered degree programmes in the past;
- availability of languages via IWLP slightly more extensive: 13 different languages are offered by at least 10 institutions across the UK;
- French and Spanish remain most available, and most programmes offer also Chinese and German;
- small reductions in the numbers of institutions offering Arabic, BSL and Portuguese as part of an IWLP;
- small rise in the number offering Dutch and Korean.

Changes in registrations to IWLPs in 2020-2021 include an increase in elective modules and a decrease in evening courses, as reported above in relation to intake.

6. Sector conferences and publications

6.1. InnoConf21

The 11th *Innovative Language Teaching and Learning at University* 2021 annual conference took place on Friday 17 September 2021 as a virtual conference hosted by the university of Reading. The conference theme was SHAPING FUTURES FOR MODERN LANGUAGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

6.2. CercleS

CercleS hosted the launch of the book *World Universities' Response to COVID-19: Remote Online Language Teaching – a collection of case studies* in June 2021. The book is available here: <https://research-publishing.net/book?10.14705/rpnet.2021.52.9782490057924>

6.3. AULC conference 2022

The 23rd AULC conference will be hosted by the University of Nottingham in spring 2022. Further details to be released soon.

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