

UCML Executive Committee

Friday 12 November 2021 10am-12pm

Via MS Teams



Item 9a: Northern Ireland

Following the meeting with the Education Minister in July, and subsequent discussions, we are pleased to report the formation of a new Languages Programme Board at the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), to review and develop the languages curriculum, from primary school to A level. The board includes representatives from Higher Education, Initial Teacher Education and NICILT who are members of UCML. The first meeting of the board will take place in December.

NICILT continues its engagement work with schools across the region with very high levels of energy and commitment, but reports a limiting of engagement activities with schools to Key Stage 3 and 4 only, due to funding restraints. A level activities have been curtailed. Director Dr Ian Collen notes with concern significant decreases in government funding year on year and is keen to learn more about possible funding sources from UCML. He is aware of the small grants scheme. NICILT continues to work with school principals and has developed an ambassador scheme in collaboration with Prof Janice Carruthers at QUB, previously piloted, including an academic masterclass, and pupil mentoring by QUB undergraduate linguists prior to pupil GCSE choices. Recruitment and training of language ambassadors is underway. This project will include a full evaluation of pupil attitudes to GCSE languages before and after the mentoring intervention. It is anticipated that NICILT will consolidate or grow the project in 2022/23. In addition, NICILT will host an online employability event for schools, a Francofest, Hispanofest and Spelling Bee events in Irish and German. NICILT coordinated the Northern Ireland Network of ALL and actively collaborates with Post Primary Languages in Ireland.

Dr Seán Mac Corraidh of St Mary's University College reports the formation of a local branch of a highly effective group organised on an all island basis named An Gréasán, which translates as 'the network'. They see themselves as a strong, independent voice for teachers of Irish and organise TeachMeets and motivating workshops in attempts to support Irish language teachers as they strive for excellence in the teaching and learning of that language.

Dr Morgan Macleod of Ulster University reports that The Language Awareness for Key Stage 3 (LAWKS-3) project has completed the first version of its suite of teaching resources, which are now available to the public via their website. They continue to develop the programme following feedback from participants and are following up with schools in and beyond NI. Ulster continues to collaborate with the MFL Mentoring team based at the University of Cardiff, who are adapting these resources for use in Welsh primary schools and sharing their insights on the embedding of multilingualism within the new Curriculum for Wales.

Erasmus funding has been extended to 2023 for existing projects in Northern Ireland. Student primary and post primary teachers at Stranmillis University College will continue to have the opportunity to undertake placements in a range of European countries. They will all

engage with Erasmus Online Linguistic Support and can choose to take language courses during their time abroad. Turing Funding has been secured for US outward mobility but the college is considering how best to deploy future funding for mobilities that support language development moving forward, particularly post 2023. Negotiations continue in Northern Ireland, as reported by the BBC, regarding potential Erasmus collaboration with Higher Education Institutions in The Republic of Ireland.

Sharon Jones
UCML NI Representative
04/11/21