

Item 3b: Vice-chair Languages & Intercultural Education

This report reviews activities since the last plenary meeting and for the sake of completeness starts with a summary of the trends that we were able to share with the sector during the 2020/21 summer school examinations results period. Key points are highlighted in yellow.

1. The UK Languages landscape

Overall, the number of exam entries for languages was relatively encouraging across all nations and across all age groups although it is clear that for individual languages there are both gains and losses. Numbers receiving top grades remained high with the use of teacher assessment but it is of particular concern to Languages that OFQUAL¹ has said that with the expected return to exam-based assessment that the grade profile will drop in 2023 to 2019 levels with an interim position in Autumn 2021 and summer 2022. Some adaption to assessment is being made for certain subjects (English literature, history, ancient history and geography science, art and design) given the likely disruption to learning caused by COVID, but not for MFL.

- MFL GCSE² / National 5 results 2021

Numbers taking French at GCSE in England in 2021 were up slightly at **124,739 compared to 124,404** in 2020 with **32.9% gaining grade 7** and above compared to **29.9%** in 2020. German numbers were down with **36,933 students taking GCSE in 2021** compared to **40,748** in 2020. The percentage gaining grade 7 and above is **38%, up from 34.1%** in 2020. Numbers taking Spanish GCSE in 2021 have risen to **108,982 from 104,280** in 2020 with **34.4% gaining grade 7** and above compared to **32.5%** in 2020. Numbers taking languages other than French, German and Spanish in 2021, were up slightly to **24,103 compared to 22,344** in 2020 and **72.7%** gained grade 7 and above compared to **68.6%** in 2020.

In England, despite the drop in numbers of young people taking German at GCSE in 2021, overall numbers taking a language rose by nearly 3,000 to **294,757** compared to **291,776** in 2020.

There were **3838** young people taking Spanish GCSE in Northern Ireland in 2021, an increase on the **3583 in 2020**, with **45.8% gaining A or A*** in 2021 compared to **43.4%** in 2020. Numbers taking French GCSE in Northern Ireland in 2021 were down slightly at **3567 compared to 3681** in 2020 with **46.0% gaining A or A*** compared to **42.2%** in 2020. Numbers taking German GCSE were **692 in 2021** down from **835 in 2020** and **47.8% gained A or A*** compared to **41.4%** in 2020. Numbers taking Irish GCSE were **1757 in 2021** compared to **1764** in 2020 with **59.4% gaining A or A*** compared to **53.5%** in 2020. **121** students in Northern Ireland took GCSEs in other Modern Languages in 2021, down from **233 in 2020**. **80.2% gained A or A*** in 2021, against **76%** in 2020.

In Northern Ireland, slightly fewer young people took a language GCSE in 2021 with **9,975** entries in 2021 compared to **10,096** in 2020.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/ofquals-approach-to-grading-exams-and-assessments-in-summer-2022-and-autumn-2021>

² The Welsh/ English / NI results are published by JCQ – Joint Council for Qualifications

The numbers taking Chinese in 2021 at National 5 in Scotland were **245** compared to **258 in 2020**. **74.7%** of these received an A grade as opposed to **76%** in 2020. Numbers taking French in 2021 were **down slightly to 7,115** compared to **7,752 in 2020** and **60.1%** received an A compared to **59.9%** in 2020. German numbers were down slightly at **1,422 in 2021** compared to **1,712 in 2020** with **58.4%** gaining an A grade compared to **57.9%** in 2020. **161** students took Gaelic in 2021 up from **125 in 2020**, and **54.7%** received an A grade compared to **50.4%** in 2020 Italian numbers **dropped to 114 in 2021** from **280 in 2020** and **60.5%** gained an A grade compared to **57.9%** in 2020. Spanish numbers at GCSE were slightly down at **5,424** compared to **5813 in 2020** with **59%** gaining an A grade compared to **56.4%** in 2020. **66** students took Urdu at GCSE in 2021 as compared to **87 in 2020** and **78.8%** gained an A grade compared to **89.7%** in 2020

In Scotland, the total number of entries for languages at National 5 in 2021 fell to 14,547 from 16,027 in 2020 and French remained the most commonly chosen language at this level.

Numbers taking French GCSE in Wales in 2021 dropped slightly **to 2711** from **3040 in 2020** and **54.6%** gained A or A* compared to **46.1%** in 2020. Numbers taking German were **485 in 2021**, down from **556 in 2020** and **59.2%** of these students gained A or A* compared to **52.0%** in 2020. Numbers taking Spanish rose in **2021 to 1,553** up from **1,120 in 2020** and **50.9%** gained an A or A* compared to **46%** in 2020. Numbers taking Welsh as a second language increased slightly in **2021 to 21,798** from **21,351 in 2020** with those gaining A or A* dropping to **26.5%** compared to **28.2%** in 2020. The number of students taking other Modern Languages decreased in **2021 to 175** from **264 in 2020** with those gaining A or A* dropping slightly to **80%** compared to **80.7%** in 2020.

In Wales, there was a slight increase of just under 400 Modern Languages entries to 26,722 in 2021 compared to 26,331 in 2020.

- **A level results/ Scottish Advanced Highers**

These are the 2021 A-Level combined results for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and separate information for the Scottish Advanced Highers.

In French, overall numbers taking A-level in England, Northern Ireland and Wales are up very slightly from 8,263 in 2020 to 8,383 this year. The numbers getting A or A* are up from 54.4% to 60.3%. In German, overall numbers are down slightly in England, Northern Ireland and Wales from 2849 in 2020 to 2708 in 2021. The numbers getting A or A* are up from 58.7% to 67.7%. In Spanish, overall numbers are up in England, Northern Ireland and Wales from 8,707 in 2020 to 9,139 in 2021. The numbers getting A or A* are up from 54.3% to 63.2%. There was a slight increase in students taking languages other than French, German, Irish, Spanish and Welsh from 4,928 in 2020 to 5,256 in 2021. The numbers gaining A or A* rose from 73.8% in 2020 to 82.1 in 2021. **In the three languages for which A-level figures are readily available, Spanish remains the most popular language with French numbers going up slightly and German numbers going down slightly compared to last year. Numbers taking other languages have risen slightly and it is particularly rewarding to see the numbers of male linguists increasing slightly over last year in all languages except German.**

In the Scottish Advanced Highers, numbers taking French in the Scottish Advanced Highers went up slightly from **574 in 2020 to 591 in 2021** and the percentage gaining A went up from **59.4% to 60.1%**. In German, numbers also rose, from **106 in 2020 to 143 in 2021** with **67.1 % gaining A as opposed to only 49.1%** in 2020. Numbers taking Spanish remained almost the same at **463 in 2021 as opposed to 464 in 2021** with **60.9 gaining A** as opposed to 53.9 in 2020. In the other languages where statistics were available, numbers taking Chinese language went down slightly from **61 in 2020 to 59 in 2021** with **86.4%** gaining an A in 2021 as opposed to **90.2 %** in 2020 and in Italian numbers went up from **27 to 33** in 2021 with **90.9%** gaining an A in 2021 compared to **70.4%** in 2020. **Overall, numbers taking Languages in the Advanced Highers were steady with slight rises in French, German and Italian with a slight fall in Chinese.**

2. UCAS data³

The end of cycle UCAS analysis reports for 20/21⁴ were made available on the 9th December 2021 and further data will become available on the 27th January 2022.

The 2021 June university applications data⁵ was made available in July, 2021. The data around applications and acceptances seems of the most interest for our purposes with the UCAS dashboard now giving the option of searching the data according to a variety of characteristics (e.g. gender, A-level points, country of provider, subject group, school type etc). It shows data for both JACS and HECOS codes, each of which has its merits and disadvantages.

Application data for HECOS code **CAH19** which covers Language and Area Studies is given below for 2020 and 2021. Data for CAH19 is rather broad since it also includes English Studies but it is useful to show comparisons with previous years and data for the home nations. These figures give some idea of the acceptance numbers and show another overall slight decline but there are evidently many factors at play here.

2020

England	71710
NI	2580
Scotland	6820
Wales	3150
Total	84260

2021

England	70090
NI	2310
Scotland	7090
Wales	3030
Total	82520

Using **JACS 3** codes, key trends data in applications for the last 10 years is given for European and non-European languages. The table below shows core numbers for the 2021 June application deadline compared to other years. Again, it is difficult to interpret the data given the changes in subject combinations over time and the fact that the figures show applications to single subject degrees. It will be interesting to see if a move to more generic degree titles (e.g. BA Modern Languages) will have any impact on these numbers.

Subject group (JACS)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Group R European Langs, Lit & related	22,490	21,250	20,090	19,900	18,630	17,320	15,410	15,700	14,810	13,050
Group T Non-European Langs, Lit and related	6,680	6,240	5,910	6,130	5,760	5,470	5,010	5,120	4,420	3,800
Total	29,160	27,490	26,000	26,030	24,390	22,790	20,430	20,820	19,230	16,850

Data on gender in applications are also available. Less than a quarter of the applicants to European languages are male (3780 men compared to 9720 women) and constitute nearly a third of the applicants to non-European languages (1380 men compared to 2420 women). The higher rate of males applying to

³ <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-timetable-data-and-analysis>

⁴ <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2021>

⁵ <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-releases/applicant-releases-2021/2021-cycle-applicant-figures-30-june-deadline>

study non-European languages is unsurprising but overall numbers are relatively small. The British Council report ‘Boys studying MFL⁶’ (January 2020) makes interesting reading in this area.

Acceptance data for the same period also shows a slight decline over previous years in both HECOS and JACS codes for our subject area (see below). The disparity between the application rate and the acceptance rate and whether this is very different from other subject areas would no doubt merit further investigation.

Accepted applicants by subject group, detailed subject group, domicile, age, and gender

Applicants who were accepted

Subject group (HECoS)	2019	2020	2021
⊕ (CAH19) language and area studies	21,135	20,195	18,725
Total	21,135	20,195	18,725

Accepted applicants by subject group, detailed subject group, domicile, age, and gender

Applicants who were accepted

Subject group (JACS3)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
⊕ Group R European Langs, Lit & related	4,065	4,005	3,780	3,820	3,505	3,425	3,060	2,935	2,920	2,490
Total	4,065	4,005	3,780	3,820	3,505	3,425	3,060	2,935	2,920	2,490

Accepted applicants by subject group, detailed subject group, domicile, age, and gender

Applicants who were accepted

Subject group (JACS3)	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
⊕ Group T Non-European Langs, Lit and related	1,235	1,255	1,115	1,265	1,145	1,095	985	1,045	905	845
Total	1,235	1,255	1,115	1,265	1,145	1,095	985	1,045	905	845

Further detail on acceptances in different language areas which is available on the UCAS dashboard for HECOS CAH19 and JACS codes Q, R and T have been added to the appendices at the end of this report. The data from which these tables are derived are also available on the relevant spreadsheets on the UCAS site.

3. Promoting Languages

• Routes into Languages

In the 2020/21 UCML / AULC survey, we asked whether HEIs were expanding their outreach to schools activities and whether they would be interested in participating in the Routes network in some way. We made initial contact towards the end of 2021 with those that indicated an interest to see if they would like to discuss potential further involvement and we were very encouraged by the speedy and positive email responses. We are now delighted to report that at the first UCML Routes sub-committee meeting of the new year, 2022, every English region was represented alongside Routes Cymru, the national networks for Translation and Interpreting and for the first time Northern Ireland were represented through NICILT and Scotland through SCILT. We meet (online) every three months and hope that we will be able to make a real impact at regional and national level.

- **For note**, two useful recent short reports to be found in the House of Lords Library:
 - Foreign Languages: primary and secondary schools (July 2021) – this includes a useful overview of the recent debate over proposed curriculum changes⁷.

⁶ <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/boys-language-gcse>

⁷ <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/foreign-languages-primary-and-secondary-schools/>

- Foreign Languages: skills in the workforce (July 2021) – this includes a mention of the language deficit in the UK and also of moves to include language skills in the UK export strategy and other bills going through parliament
- **National Centre for CLIL: Learning through Languages UK**
I attend the regular meetings of this group on behalf of UCML and it is good to see that CLIL Mondays⁸ with regular speakers on CLIL topics is reaching a wide audience.
- **Gender Action** (<https://www.genderaction.co.uk/>)
I am on the steering group for GA and attend their regular meetings. Originally set up with external funding by the Institute of Physics, DECSY (Development Education South Yorkshire) has now taken over the management of the GA initiative. There is ongoing active discussion around future funding sources to take the GA programme forward although a lottery funding bid was unsuccessful. There is discussion around potential financial support from Academy trusts and there is a general feeling that school-based gender action has particular relevance in the light of the recent Sarah Everard case.
- **Coventry City of Languages** (<https://coventry2021.co.uk/what-s-on/coventry-city-of-languages-the-launch-event/>).
I attended several planning meetings for this event which is aligned with the events taking place as part of Coventry City of Culture. Initiated by two school teachers this event had amazing support from local universities, the British Council and many others and would be a good model for others to follow.

VW, January 2022

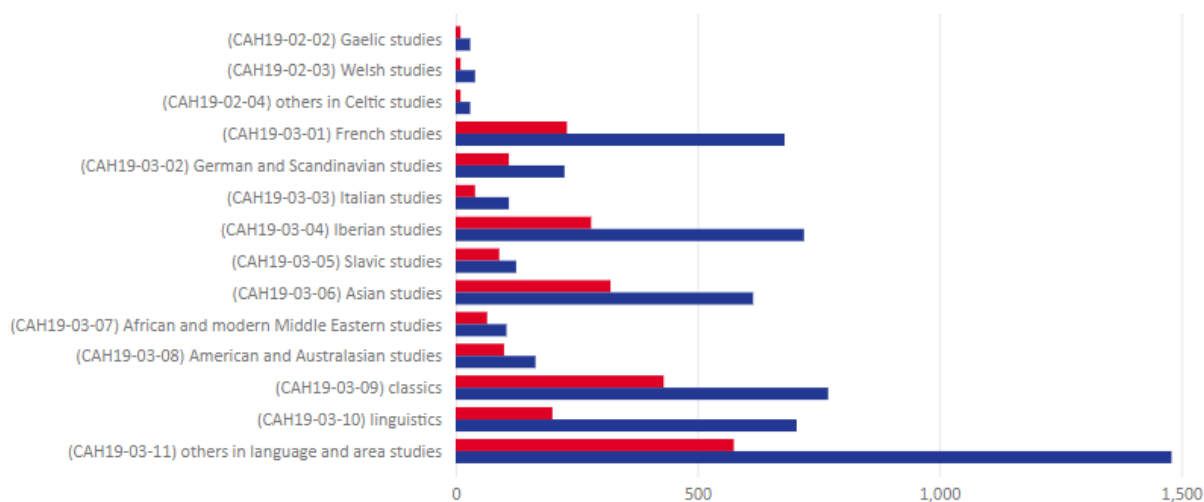
⁸ <https://learningthroughlanguages.org.uk/2020/10/15/clil-mondays/>

Appendix 1

HECOS Codes

End of 2021 cycle acceptance data for CAH19 Language and Area Studies (including English)

(<https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2021>)



Detailed subject group (HECoS)	Men	Women
(CAH19-01-03) literature in English	760	2,940
(CAH19-01-04) studies of specific authors	0	0
(CAH19-01-05) creative writing	530	1,180
(CAH19-01-06) others in English studies	5	55
(CAH19-02-01) Celtic studies (non-specific)	20	20
(CAH19-02-02) Gaelic studies	10	30
(CAH19-02-03) Welsh studies	10	40
(CAH19-02-04) others in Celtic studies	10	30
(CAH19-03-01) French studies	230	680
(CAH19-03-02) German and Scandinavian studies	110	225
(CAH19-03-03) Italian studies	40	110
(CAH19-03-04) Iberian studies	280	720
(CAH19-03-05) Slavic studies	90	125
(CAH19-03-06) Asian studies	320	615
(CAH19-03-07) African and modern Middle Eastern studies	65	105
(CAH19-03-08) American and Australasian studies	100	165
(CAH19-03-09) classics	430	770
(CAH19-03-10) linguistics	200	705
(CAH19-03-11) others in language and area studies	575	1,480

Appendix 2

JACS3 Codes

End of 2021 cycle acceptance data for Group Q – Linguistics, Classics and related

Detailed subject group (JACS3)	Men	Women
Q1 - Linguistics	95	385
Q2 - Comparative Literary studies	20	155
Q3 - English studies	1,295	5,140
Q4 - Ancient Language studies	5	10
Q5 - Celtic studies	25	75
Q6 - Latin studies	5	10
Q7 - Classical Greek studies	0	0
Q8 - Classical studies	340	560
Q9 - Others in Linguistics, Classics & related	30	60
QQ - Combinations within Linguistics, Classics & related	130	475

End of 2021 cycle acceptance data for Group R: European Languages, Literature and related

Detailed subject group (JACS3)	Men	Women
R0 - European Langs, Lit & related: any area	0	0
R1 - French studies	50	160
R2 - German studies	25	45
R3 - Italian studies	5	15
R4 - Spanish studies	50	120
R5 - Portuguese studies	0	0
R6 - Scandinavian studies	5	5
R7 - Russian and East European studies	20	20
R8 - European studies	5	15
R9 - Others in European Langs, Lit and related	335	785
RR - Combinations within European Langs, Lit and related	230	600

End of 2021 cycle acceptance data for Group T: Non-European Languages, Literature and related

Detailed subject group (JACS3)	Men	Women
T1 - Chinese studies	40	60
T2 - Japanese studies	125	135
T3 - South Asian studies	15	25
T4 - Other Asian studies	20	115
T5 - African studies	0	0
T6 - Modern Middle Eastern studies	20	25
T7 - American studies	60	85
T9 - Others in non-European Langs, Lit & related	10	20
TT - Combinations within non-European Langs & related	25	55