

UCML Executive

Friday, 26th May, 2023

IWLP Report

IWLPs in 2022-2023

IWLP activity across the UK continues to be mixed but ongoing, as reflected by the answers to the AULC 2022 survey and the number of memberships in the association. Leeds Beckett and the University of the Arts closed their language programmes in 2022 and, unofficially, at least one more university is also closing its language programme by 2024, and another one is planning to close its languages pathways and fighting to keep their IWLP. On the other hand, some universities (Worcester, Hull, and Strathclyde) who had planned to or already cancelled their AULC memberships because of the closure or downsize of their languages programmes, may be coming back in 2023.

UCML AULC Survey 2022

The report on the latest UCML AULC survey was published in December 2022 (Chaurin, Critchley, and de Medeiros). Participation was lower than in previous years, with a total of 40 universities responding. Whilst the total number of students reported to be enrolled in IWLPs was also lower (40,590) than in past years, the average number of registrations per institution remain stable, even a bit higher (1,015).

This survey focused on IWLPs and specifically on:

1. Gauging availability and **demand for different IWLP languages** in UKHE as well as changing trends in **registrations by language**.

Provision continues to be dominated by French, Spanish and German. Other widely taught languages include Mandarin Chinese, Italian, Arabic, Russian and Portuguese. Japanese and Korean continues to be on the rise, as well as BSL, Dutch, Polish and modern Greek, whilst there is a fall in numbers for Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese and Russian.

Overall, the offer is varied and IWLPs continue to be key in the sustainability and expansion of provision of less widely taught languages across the UK, including through delivery of courses on-line to maximise accessibility to language learning.

2. Obtaining a better understanding of the **activities being undertaken under the umbrella of IWLPs**.

In relation to the various roles of IWLPs, delivering credit bearing modules (as electives, options, minors) as well as extracurricular courses (for University students, staff and the wider community) continues to be central.

In addition to these, the survey highlighted the wide range of activities being undertaken within these programmes, demonstrating that an IWLP is much more than just the delivery of extracurricular language courses. IWLPs across the 40 HEIs surveyed offer:

- Language courses for professional purposes (internal and external)
- Intercultural communications courses (internal and external)
- Language courses for researchers and staff
- CPD courses for language teachers
- External certification (e.g. DELF/HSK etc.)
- Self-access centre
- Tandem Language Exchanges
- Language advising
- Supported independent study for students and one-to-one tutoring
- Regional language learning support
- Translation & interpreting support
- Language cafes
- Student ambassadors and public engagement

IWLPs continue to play a role acting as external ambassadors for the discipline of Languages, Cultures & Societies in our regional communities, and to increase an appreciation of language and inter-cultural competence across the UK in all fields and for all purposes.

3. Gaining a sense of the **opportunities for collaboration** between universities where particular challenges exist.

IWLPs will play an important role in a developing initiative to improve language provision in Further Education through the national languages strategy, as well as for the support of so-called home, heritage or community languages. The role of IWLP (via language centres) in supporting the study of Scots Gaelic, Welsh, Irish, BSL and increasingly EFL is also important.

In fact, respondents highlighted that further collaboration between institutions would be welcomed in the specific areas of:

- Regional support networks
- Shared training & CPD
- Scholarship forum
- UNILANG language certification

AULC intends to promote, and give more visibility to the excellent scholarship emerging from language teaching colleagues within IWLPs. The ultra-diverse nature of IWLP offers excellent scope for high quality scholarship to further develop modes of teaching, learning and assessment. This is an area where collaboration between institutions and associations will no doubt be highly beneficial.

In addition to these areas, the survey also asked about **organizational structures** and found that since 2015, the numbers of IWLPs delivered in language centres has declined, whilst those delivered within academic departments has increased. The driver for this change has largely been financial, reflecting sustainability issues with both degree-level programmes and IWLPs. As a result, closer collaboration is inevitable due to the need to increase the sharing of scarce resources between programmes.

In relation to collaboration between IWLPs, the AULC management SIG is carrying out ongoing research around three important aspects: workload, the role of the language centre director, and the status and sustainability of language centres. In all areas, there are aspect that merit closer collaboration with academic departments and other units engaged with language provision.

In order to address the need for collaboration highlighted above, a new **UCML AULC joint SIG: [Modern Language Provision – Academic Directors/Leaders Collaboration SIG](#)** has now been launched together with a call for IWLPs and Academic departments’ representatives to join the group.

An initial agenda was discussed at the AULC conference (Edinburgh 27th and 28th April 2023) and a follow up meeting is expected to take place at the UCML summer plenary.

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