Language Provision in UK MFL Departments 2018 Survey

Other

How to cite:
Álvarez, Inma; Montoro, Carlos; Campbell, Caroline and Polisca, Elena (2018). Language Provision in UK MFL Departments 2018 Survey. University Council of Modern Languages.

For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© [not recorded]

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk
Language Provision in UK MFL Departments 2018 Survey

October 2018

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies, The Open University, Walton Hall Campus, Stuart Hall Building
The survey and this report have been prepared on behalf of the AHRC-funded Language Acts and Worldmaking project, the Association of University Language Centres and the University Council of Modern Languages by Inma Álvarez, Carlos Montoro, Caroline Campbell and Elena Polisca.

We wish to acknowledge the respondents for their kind responses. We are also grateful to the British Academy’s Maxime Delattre for his contribution in the early stages of development of the survey as well as to Noemi Palmer González and Cristina Berenguer Pérez for their help with the compilation of the list of institutions. We thank our critical readers for their useful comments though the authors take full responsibility for the content of this report.

Front cover image credit: Photograph by Martine Hamilton-Knight for Peter Haddon & Partners Architects ©

License used: This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/. This license lets others copy and redistribute this work as long as credit is provided for the original creation, it is not modified and it is not used for commercial purposes.
Contents

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... 5

LIST OF ACRONYMS ................................................................................................. 6

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ......................................................................................... 7

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................... 8

2. METHOD .................................................................................................................. 9

2.1 Surveying the sector ............................................................................................ 9

2.2 Questionnaire ....................................................................................................... 9

2.3 Participation .......................................................................................................... 9

2.4 Respondents ......................................................................................................... 9

2.5 Languages ........................................................................................................... 10

2.6 Limitations ........................................................................................................... 10

3. FINDINGS ............................................................................................................. 11

3.1 Languages offered .............................................................................................. 11
  3.1.1 Provision history ........................................................................................... 11
  3.1.2 Range of languages ..................................................................................... 11
  3.1.3 Postgraduate language studies .................................................................... 12

3.2 Teaching staff ...................................................................................................... 12
  3.2.1 Range of staff .............................................................................................. 12
  3.2.2 Type of staff contract ................................................................................... 13

3.3. Models of collaboration between MFL departments and IWLP ......................... 13
  3.3.1 Presence of IWLP ......................................................................................... 13
  3.3.2 Types of collaboration .................................................................................. 14
  3.3.3 Lack of collaboration ................................................................................... 15
  3.3.4 Length of collaboration ............................................................................... 15
  3.3.5 Value of collaboration .................................................................................. 16
  3.3.6 Improving collaboration .............................................................................. 17

3.4 Looking forward .................................................................................................. 18
  3.4.1 Challenges .................................................................................................... 18
  3.4.2 Solutions ....................................................................................................... 19

4. CONCLUSIONS .................................................................................................... 20

5. REFERENCES ....................................................................................................... 21
6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1. List of UK HEIs offering Modern Foreign Languages programmes in 2018

Appendix 2. Languages offered as an integral part of MFL programmes at 69 UK HEIs in 2018
List of figures

Figure 1. Distribution of languages offered on MFL degree programmes in UK higher education in 2018 (in percentages) ........................................................................................................... 12
Figure 2. Range of staff teaching language modules on MFL programmes 2018 ..................... 13
Figure 3. Collaboration between MFL and IWLP teachers .......................................................... 14
Figure 4. Length of MFL-IWLP collaboration (n=33) ................................................................. 16
Figure 5. Value of MFL-IWLP collaboration (n=34) .................................................................. 16
List of acronyms

AHRC  Arts and Humanities Research Council
AULC  Association of University Language Centres
HEI   Higher Education Institution
IWLP  Institution-Wide Language Provision
JCQ   Joint Council for Qualifications
MFL   Modern Foreign Languages
OWRI  Open World Research Initiative
UCAS  Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UCML  University Council of Modern Languages
Executive summary

This is an executive summary of the report on the results of the Language Provision in UK MFL Departments 2018 Survey conducted by Language Acts and Worldmaking in partnership with the Association of University Language Centres (AULC) and the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML).

The focus of the survey was the provision of language modules (i.e. modules whose object of study is language) in MFL departments, and on models of collaboration between MFL departments and Institution-Wide Language Provision (IWLP) in UK universities. The aim was to fill a space that is under-researched and to complement the annual AULC-UCML national IWLP survey. The focus on language modules is an attempt to find a common unit of analysis and build bridges between MFL and IWLP.

Of the 69 universities offering MFL degrees in the UK (about 80% of them located in England), 44 responded to the survey. Excluding language minors that are intended as an add-on to existing courses in the form of a single IWLP course per year, 52 languages are currently being offered as part of MFL programmes in the UK (6.4 languages on average per institution). Roughly, the ten most widely-available languages (20%) occupy 80% of the current MFL presence at UK universities, while the remaining 42 lesser-taught languages (80%) represent only 20% of the current offerings, creating a typical Pareto distribution that raises questions about equal opportunities. This is relevant considering that 2018 A-level uptake and trends figures show the ‘other languages’ group (including new third place holder Chinese) is now the most popular choice ahead of French, Spanish and German.

Despite growing, wide-ranging and deeper collaboration between MFL and IWLP within institutions, as was the case with the distribution of languages and language programmes described above, an uneven split can be seen in relation to the working conditions of MFL and IWLP staff. While about 80% of MFL teachers work on full-time contracts, this is the case for only 20% of their IWLP colleagues. This is a reality that may require careful consideration of equality issues.

MFL-IWLP collaboration is largely seen as valuable though not trouble-free, except for those institutions that have achieved full integration. Fully-integrated units and those with some level of integration argue that this is the only way forward in these uncertain times dominated by constant budget cuts and structural reforms, while those with little or no collaboration mark a clear distinction between MFL and IWLP work pointing to perceived differences in their status and capabilities.

In an increasingly multilingual landscape, the survey responses present us with an invitation to reconceptualise our discipline, possibly under a unitary ‘languages’ label, dropping ‘modern’ and ‘foreign’ from its title to strengthen an agenda of inclusion and diversity, integrating all languages, ancient and modern, foreign and local, for those with and without disabilities, as well as a single voice for MFL and IWLP.
1. Introduction

This *Language Provision in UK MFL Departments 2018 Survey* was born out of the need to investigate issues around language provision (i.e. modules focusing on language as an object of study) in Modern Foreign Language (MFL) degrees in higher education, and the level of collaboration between MFL departments and Language Centres or other forms of Institution-Wide Language Provision (IWLP). The survey has been designed, distributed and analysed by the *Language Acts and Worldmaking* project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s (AHRC) Open World Research Initiative (OWRI), in collaboration with the Association of University Language Centres (AULC) and the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML).

This is the first survey of its kind in terms of the scale and focus. While IWLP in universities in the UK has been surveyed annually since 2012 by the UCML and the AULC, the language offer (i.e. language-focused modules) in university degree programmes has never been mapped. The sector is diverse with language modules delivered as part of MFL degree programmes in departments being accredited and mostly targeted towards specialist language learners, while modules delivered as part of IWLP, often in Language Centres, may or may not carry academic credit and often serve the non-specialist undergraduates and sometimes postgraduates. The reason for choosing to focus on ‘language’ modules is not to widen the divide between so-called ‘language’ and ‘content’ or ‘culture’ courses in MFL but to find a unit of analysis to build bridges between MFL and IWLP. Moving forward, the aim is to run this survey annually in parallel with the AULC-UCML survey to inform further changes in the sector in future.
2. Method

2.1 Surveying the sector

Sixty-nine university departments were identified as providers of language degrees in the UK (see Appendix 2). The list was compiled by means of online searches of publicly-available information from university websites and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Languages offered only as an add-on to programmes (even when advertised as minors) through IWLP courses (e.g. at Language Centres) have not been included (see below for reasons). In contrast, language minors have been included when they are attached to specialist modules within dedicated MFL departments.

2.2 Questionnaire

A short online survey, composed of 10 main questions, was created using JISC online surveys. A draft version was piloted at the three institutions with which the authors are affiliated and the feedback was used to design the final version of the questionnaire. An email with a link to the final version was sent between May and the end of June 2018 to individual contacts at the 69 higher education institutions (HEIs) offering language degree programmes. This was slightly later than originally planned owing to the industrial action which affected HEIs earlier in the year – it was felt that circulating the survey earlier might have had a negative impact on the number of responses.

After the response deadline, non-respondents were contacted again via email and asked to confirm the languages they offered for census purposes. The data was cross-checked with the information gathered in the previous phase to build an accurate picture of the MFL academic offerings in HEIs in the UK at the time (see Appendix 2).

The survey sought to obtain data on the following key areas: the range of languages offered at undergraduate MFL degree programmes; the range and status of staff involved in delivering the language teaching; the range of taught language modules as part of postgraduate MFL provision; the level of collaboration, where relevant, between teaching staff in Language Centres or IWLP units and teaching staff in MFL departments and the perceived value of this collaboration.

2.3 Participation

Of the 69 HEIs providing programmes of study in MFL in the UK in 2018, 54 (approximately 80%) are located in England forming a so-called Pareto distribution (see below for details). Valid responses were received from 44 institutions (64%) with details of the 52 languages offered nationwide (see Appendix 2). This represents on average 6.4 languages being offered per institution. The range and distribution of languages on offer are commented on below (see 2.5 Languages).

2.4 Respondents

The initial piloting phase confirmed the need to target respondents in senior managerial posts to achieve greater participation and accuracy of information. As a result, all but six
of the respondents (86%) held positions of considerable administrative responsibility, such as Head of Department, School or Division, and Area or Programme Director.

2.5 Languages
For the purposes of this survey, classical languages such as Latin, Ancient Greek and Old Norse have not been included, though others like Aramaic and Sanskrit have, on the basis that they are still in common use for everyday purposes. Regional languages (e.g. Gaelic, Welsh and Irish) as well as British Sign Language have been included because it might be strategic for MFL to consider language policies associated with them in the UK to inform proposals for discipline change. However, beyond these attempts to draw the shape of the discipline, there is clearly an argument in favour of grouping all languages, ancient and modern, foreign and local, for those with and without disabilities, under a unitary ‘languages’ label that drops the ‘modern’ and the ‘foreign’ from its conceptualisation. This would meet the aims of inclusion and diversity in an increasingly fluid linguistic landscape.

2.6 Limitations
In order to keep the survey brief and to encourage participation, the number of questions and the amount of information requested was very focused. Therefore, the survey did not collect information on issues such as the range of language levels offered by each institution, that is, whether the languages were available from ab initio or not (see UCML, 2014; UCML, 2016).
3. Findings

The results of the survey reveal that there is considerable diversity in terms of the range of languages offered as part of MFL undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes and how the languages are offered, though some clear patterns have emerged. The extent of the integration and collaboration between MFL departments and IWLP providers also varies considerably within each HEI, though the specific details are beyond the scope of this survey given the time constraints.

3.1 Languages offered

One of the aims of the survey was to investigate the history of MFL teaching in HEIs in the UK and the range and distribution of languages on offer in order to map the development and presence of languages across the sector.

3.1.1 Provision history

The survey tracked the history of MFL teaching in HEIs in the UK. All but two of the participating universities (Greenwich, Oxford Brookes) were founded before 1992 and had established MFL at their institution as a formal discipline before that key year when many so-called new universities (formerly polytechnics) were introduced. Of the two exceptions, only one institution started offering MFL after 2008, that is, after the global financial crisis that brought significant funding cuts to all sectors, including higher education. All 24 universities in the Russell Group include MFL in their academic offerings. The evidence suggests that the MFL discipline has fared less well in new universities (if programmes were opened they are all but closed) and only one MFL department has opened in the last ten years.

3.1.2 Range of languages

HEIs were asked to indicate all the languages currently offered as part of undergraduate MFL degree programmes, including language minors. Generally speaking, the survey revealed that French, Spanish and German are the languages present at most institutions. These languages are also the most popular within IWLP courses (see AULC-UCML, 2018) and therefore non-specialist university students also have easy access to learning these three languages. This may reflect the historical importance granted to these European languages from the early days of the discipline in the UK in the 19th century (Kelly, 2017).

As Figure 1 shows, of the 52 languages present at HEIs, French is offered at 68 out of 69 institutions (99% presence), Spanish at 65 (94% presence), German at 50 (72% presence), Italian at 40 (58% presence), Chinese at 34 (49% presence), Portuguese at 23 (33% presence), Japanese at 20 (29% presence), Russian at 17 (25% presence), Arabic at 15 (22% presence) and Catalan at 13 (19% presence). Combined, these 10 languages account for 79% of the total MFL presence at UK universities. In contrast, the remaining 42 lesser-taught languages only account for 21% of the overall MFL offerings (see Appendix 2 for details). This seems to mirror a typical Pareto principle distribution (or 80/20 rule; Pareto, 1971) whereby about 20% of the languages occupy 80% of the space available in MFL programmes at UK HEIs. This linguistic landscape in higher education raises a number of questions about the extent of change over the years and whether these offerings match
recent A-level language uptake and trends (e.g. the rise of Chinese, now the third most popular language, and ‘other languages’, currently the largest group ahead of French, Spanish and German; see JCQ, 2018a and JCQ 2018b).

![Figure 1. Distribution of languages offered on MFL degree programmes in UK higher education in 2018 (in percentages)]](image)

3.1.3 Postgraduate language studies
Less than half of the responding MFL departments in the UK (42%) reported offering language modules at postgraduate level. The focus of this survey was mainly undergraduate provision but more questions about postgraduate provision can be added to future surveys.

3.2 Teaching staff
The survey investigated the type of staff who deliver core and optional language modules in HEIs. The results show that the staff teaching language (as opposed to so-called content) modules in MFL programmes is very diverse.

3.2.1 Range of staff
Figure 2 below shows the range of staff reported as teaching language modules. It ranges from (senior) lecturers (91%), to language tutors or associate/assistant lecturers (68%), professors (59%), teaching fellows (55%), lecteurs and lectrices (and similar posts in other languages) or external providers (and others) (41%), postgraduate students (41%) and Language Centre or IWLP staff (18%). These percentages represent the number of responding institutions (n=44) reporting that each category of staff is teaching language modules for them. Staff categories are not mutually exclusive. No data was gathered about the proportion of modules taught by each group.
3.2.2 **Type of staff contract**
Most of the staff in MFL departments are reported to work full-time (82%) rather than as part-time or hourly-paid staff (18%). The opposite is true for IWLP – in about half of universities only 20% of their staff are full-time while the remaining 80% work part-time or as hourly-paid staff (UCML-AULC, 2016). This again seems to be a Pareto distribution in terms of contractual conditions in MFL and IWLP with potential implications worth probing in future surveys or case studies.

3.3. **Models of collaboration between MFL departments and IWLP**
A section of the survey focused on models of collaboration between MFL departments and IWLP as this is increasingly important in the sector.

3.3.1 **Presence of IWLP**
Not all institutions have both an MFL department and an IWLP unit. 25% of respondents reported that their institution does not offer IWLP, be it in the form of a Languages for All programme or through a Language Centre. Yet, after cross-checking this information, it emerged that actually only 11% do not offer IWLP. Looking at this discrepancy in detail, in two cases IWLP had existed in the past in the form of Language Centres but they were closed in response to financial crises (institutional and global). However, the closure of a Language Centre does not necessarily mean that the university stops offering IWLP. Looking forward, only two respondents (8%) revealed plans to offer IWLP in the future at institutions where it is not currently offered.

In addition to this, a growing trend involves institutions offering their students the option of taking language classes from IWLP in order to graduate with a language minor, which in this survey has not been taken as proof of offering a degree with an MFL component. As one respondent explained, “it is important not to put provision of these two languages [taught at the Language Centre] on the same level as others [in MFL departments] – it is not comparable at all”. Whether these two types of language courses may or may not be comparable is beyond the scope of this survey but stand-alone language courses...
unattached to an MFL department that count towards a minor seem to be isolated ‘add-on’ cases in the absence of a more permanent or streamlined language offer. On the other hand, the respondent’s comment also raises issues such as the value of (non) credit-bearing IWLP courses and historical perceptions of MFL and IWLP language courses worth pursuing in future surveys. As this seems to be a contentious and significant issue, future editions of the survey should consider it by, for instance, looking at the weighting of IWLP modules that count towards minor degrees in MFL and whether different pedagogical approaches are linked to stereotypes and prejudice.

3.3.2 Types of collaboration
Through the survey, universities with MFL departments and IWLP were asked to describe the extent of collaboration between teachers in both units. Respondents indicated a variety of ways in which there was collaboration (see Figure 3). It should be noted that, as in Figure 2, the data is not mutually exclusive.

The main collaboration between units involves teaching staff, with more than half of the participating universities (57%) sharing MFL and IWLP teachers. A couple of responses revealed that when cuts affected MFL departments, the teaching of language modules was assigned to IWLP tutors whose working conditions tend to make them less costly.

After teaching, the most significant form of collaboration is ‘other duties’ (34%) such as MFL departments overseeing quality assurance of IWLP modules that count towards degrees, joint internal moderation or second-marking (16%), oral examinations (11%) and shared personal tutoring (7%). Some respondents reported other types of collaboration while others referred to a range of levels of joint work, from full MFL-IWLP integration to a complete absence of collaboration. Examples of collaborative activities reported are:

- teaching responsibilities in one language being shared between one teaching fellow in the department and an IWLP tutor

Figure 3. Collaboration between MFL and IWLP teachers
• international exam preparation courses taught jointly
• staff development activities
• staff meetings
• research/scholarship projects

One respondent explained: “We have a mutually beneficial collaboration, especially around student support, innovation and wellbeing.” Another respondent commented that the collaboration is part of a broader sustainability strategy at their institution. In a similar vein, one respondent argued that “increased collaboration (rather than competition) (...) [is] key to our survival as a department offering degree programmes” because it is only through IWLP personnel that a beginners track to their programmes can be offered.

3.3.3 Lack of collaboration
When no collaboration was reported, three main situations were highlighted. Firstly, a number of universities (25%) were unaware of the presence of IWLP at their institution. Secondly, one institution suggested that the range of language learning in majors, electives and extracurricular courses was delivered jointly, that is, following a fully integrated model beyond collaboration. Thirdly, five institutions (11%) indicated that they had two distinct units and there was no collaboration at all between them. One respondent suggested reasons for this: “There is effectively no collaboration at all as degree level language and IWLP are managed in two separate departments. Several factors, including the way the university accounts for income in each department, but also other non-institutional factors, have entrenched this for years.”

3.3.4 Length of collaboration
In the survey, universities were asked how long the collaboration had existed across units. The MFL-IWLP collaboration has lasted over a decade for 34% of the responding institutions. 23% had been working in collaboration for 4 to 6 years. 9% recorded a collaborative environment lasting 7-10 years and another 9% reported a shorter collaboration of 1-3 years (see Figure 4). Despite the length of the collaboration in most universities, whether the potential benefit has been fully realised remains to be seen, as the following sections reveal. In future surveys the length of the collaboration may need to be considered in the context of the history of IWLP and MFL at each institution.
3.3.5 Value of collaboration
Institutions were also asked how valuable the collaboration for their MFL department is perceived to be. The majority of respondents (83%) see some value in a collaborative relationship. Half of the respondents (50%) described the collaboration as extremely valuable and 24% perceived it as quite valuable. However, a few (9%) consider the collaboration only as somewhat valuable and others (6%) as not valuable (see Figure 5).

When asked to elaborate on these responses, sustainability, finances, flexibility and drawing on each other’s experiences were provided as aspects that influenced the value of the collaboration. Respondents named the following aspects as valuable:
• Being part of a broader sustainable strategy e.g. key to the survival of the department delivering degree programmes; income from students enrolling on the credit-bearing modules flows directly into the School
• It gives flexibility by allowing the Language Centre to offer MFL teaching in elements the department cannot provide and vice versa (e.g. IWLP can offer Chinese for MFL programmes and the MFL department can provide quality assurance for IWLP courses)
• IWLP brings departments recognition in other faculties and at university senior level
• It enhances employability and career opportunities for teachers, including consolidation of posts
• Collaboration offers opportunities to develop scholarship and a culture of reflective practice among staff, including collaboration on projects and teaching initiatives
• It gives insights into each other's teaching - content, pedagogy, approach – across the various levels of languages taught
• Sharing of resources/task design/marking criteria/effective feedback
• IWLP has significantly increased the take-up of languages across the University (though not necessarily the number of MFL students)

While IWLP is recognised as a valuable partner in some universities, as reflected in the above list, problems were also highlighted. Firstly, two respondents commented on a perceived lack of teaching quality in IWLP and suggested that collaboration could help to improve standards. This is of course a contentious perception that requires further probing in future surveys. Secondly, one respondent also indicated that some of the collaboration can add to the administrative and organisational burden for the school and for staff who are already working to full capacity, though no details were provided about the nature of this burden. Thirdly, another respondent explained that collaboration was not possible due to a variety of issues such as the physical location of the units, spread across different campuses, and the differences between the teaching calendars, schedules and types of students. Finally, one respondent suggested that their financial model sets them against each other as separate and competing units making collaboration difficult.

3.3.6 Improving collaboration
Participants were also asked how the collaboration between their units could be improved. Twelve respondents suggested a higher level of integration between both units, or even to have a single unit for MFL and IWLP though the detailed arrangements fell outwith the scope of this survey. There was also a call for more support from the institution. In addition, suggestions regarding better collaboration included:

• working more closely and developing initiatives
• breaking down current organisational barriers/silos
• acknowledging the value of teaching-related scholarship and not seeing it as of less value than research
• flexible staff appointments to meet teaching needs and make the best use of resources overall
• finding creative, innovative solutions to language-related issues together

One respondent suggested that MFL departments and IWLP should become one unit, while another argued that IWLP "does not fit within the institutional degree framework". An option considered at another institution with no IWLP was to offer MFL language modules as electives. It was also suggested that working more closely may require institutional support to prevent setting the two areas against each other as ‘competing units’, for instance by turning the Language Centre into an administrative unit ‘with no academic clout’ (and thus limited funding). The issue of whether either of the units sees the other as a threat may be worth pursuing in future surveys. Divisions or hierarchies between MFL and IWLP units may also be worth exploring further.

3.4 Looking forward

When asked to comment on the current needs of language modules within MFL programmes as well as the challenges and solutions for the future sustainability of the sector, respondents provided a rich array of responses as described below.

3.4.1 Challenges

Financial constraints and associated cuts were mentioned repeatedly, as were difficulties recruiting students. There were references to structural changes to the curriculum as being both challenging and persistent over the last 6-11 years, starting in 2009-2012 depending on the institution. For instance, MFL at one institution has had to sustain a "high level of integration" with Linguistics because postgraduate programmes in Linguistics "are booming". Another respondent referred to "an endless cycle of reviews and requests for streamlining and simplification, reducing hours, reducing staff" with negative effects on student attainment and staff morale, while some institutions reported MFL programme closures underway. Paradoxically, a reduction of casualisation of staff (e.g. employing more full-time teaching fellows) that appears positive in principle, seems to have come with a reduction in funding for lecteurs and lectrices. A significant number of respondents reported a wide range of staffing issues, such as difficulties filling high-skilled posts with the right candidates.

In addition, one respondent pointed to the contradiction in having a steady number of students in MFL degrees but fewer of them completing the programme, to some extent linked to the strategy of creating ‘open’ MFL modules to recruit students across the entire institution in order to offset the decline in single and joint language programmes. A significant trend that is also reported is the increase in ab initio routes into MFL programmes to increase uptake, though often these language classes are ‘exported’ to IWLP. The issue of IWLP modules being accepted as minors in degree programmes was also raised and therefore this is a trend that is worth tracking in future surveys. Several respondents also underscored difficulties associated with matching the expectations of new students with the kind of work expected at higher education level, which some attributed to an increasing emphasis on target language accuracy (as opposed to communication, presumably) in secondary education. Finally, several respondents expressed concern regarding the impact of Brexit on recruitment. On a national scale, the above challenges, mainly perceived by MFL departments, are offset by the increase in the
uptake of language courses through Language Centres or IWLP which are bucking the trend and suggest a growing interest in the sector.

3.4.2 Solutions
Some solutions to these challenges were suggested as follows:

- Increasing the number of international students at postgraduate level to generate income.
- Investing in disciplines that need growth rather than in those that are already growing, with a period of grace from further cuts and reviews.
- Alternatively, streamlining provision to reduce costs (e.g. by creating more ‘open’ language modules available cross-faculty or cross-institution in the hope of increasing the number of students changing to a language programme after first year).
- Attracting more students and generating income by promoting the value of languages and cultures and creating new programmes with other disciplines, for instance, with the introduction of degree ‘pathways’.
- Advocating greater collaboration between MFL departments nationally (in line with most of the proposals presented by Worton, 2009).
- Encouraging language teachers to develop new pedagogical approaches (e.g. blended learning).
- Further integrating the teaching of language and culture, possibly by offering teaching-scholarship and teaching-research posts.
- Greater MFL-IWLP integration.
- Better promotion of MFL at home and internationally, developing outreach schemes and fundraising.
- Raising awareness of the high levels of employability for language graduates.
4. Conclusions

This study sought to gather data on the current MFL landscape at higher education level in order to provide relevant information in a fluid and fast-changing environment. In particular, the survey asked questions relating to languages taught in British universities, the staff teaching them and the different types of staff contracts, and the extent of the collaboration between Language Centres or other IWLP units and MFL departments offering modules within MFL degree courses.

The results reveal that the number of HEIs offering MFL degrees (69) and the variety of languages taught nationwide (52) is significant. These range from the most-widely taught languages (French, Spanish, German) to lesser-taught languages such as Czech, Hebrew, Icelandic and Thai. The fact that about 20% of the languages occupy 80% of the space in MFL programmes points to a disparity that may be worth investigating.

Diversity was also found in the teaching staff responsible for language modules in MFL departments, ranging from established professionals (e.g. Professors, Senior Language Teaching Fellows) to language assistants (e.g. lecteurs and lectrices) and PhD students. A comparison with IWLP staff shows a sharp difference between contracts, whereby the majority of staff teaching in MFL departments are employed on full-time contracts while staff who work for Language Centres or other IWLP units are often employed on a part-time or hourly-paid basis.

The last aspect of the study offers an insight into the mode of collaboration between IWLPs and MFL departments, focussing on the type and length of collaboration and the perception of such collaboration amongst respondents. The results show that within most of the HEIs surveyed, administrative duties, teaching and marking are shared between the two divisions with each HEI proposing a different model of engagement. Generally speaking, the perception is that the collaboration is valuable; this also seems to suggest that collaboration within the sector may represent a successful way of moving forward in these uncertain times. However, not all HEIs share the same level of collaboration as some MFL and IWLP units operate separately and may even compete with one another.

Overall, this study shows the diversity of the higher education languages landscape. From the results, it seems clear that the various challenges faced by the sector might be overcome through the different sections joining forces and promoting one collective ‘languages voice’. In this respect, it is recommended that, nationally, a more comprehensive title be used when referring to the sector as a whole. According to the ethos of inclusion and given the fluidity of the landscape, the expression ‘languages’ alone could be used for this purpose, thus dropping any references (such as ‘modern’, ‘foreign’, ‘ancient’ etc) that may point to differences rather than unity within the education curriculum.

It is hoped that this study, through the provision of relevant data, is of use to the sector and to language practitioners generally. It is recommended that further surveys be carried out annually to offer the most up-to-date information on the field.
5. References


6. Appendices

Appendix 1. List of UK HEIs offering Modern Foreign Languages programmes in 2018

1. Aberdeen, University of
2. Aberystwyth University
3. Aston University Birmingham
4. Bangor University
5. Bath, University of
6. Birkbeck, University of London
7. Birmingham, University of
8. Bristol, University of
9. Buckingham, University of
10. Cambridge, University of
11. Canterbury Christ Church University
12. Cardiff University
13. Central Lancashire, University of
14. Chester, University of
15. Coventry University
16. De Montfort University Leicester
17. Durham University
18. East Anglia, University of
19. Edinburgh, University of
20. Edinburgh Napier University
21. Essex, University of
22. Exeter, University of
23. Glasgow, University of
24. Greenwich, University of
25. Heriot-Watt University
26. Hertfordshire, University of
27. Highlands and Islands, University of
28. Hull, University of
29. Imperial College London
30. Kent University
31. King’s College London
32. Lancaster University
33. Leeds, University of
34. Leicester, University of
35. Liverpool, University of
36. London Metropolitan University
37. Manchester, University of
38. Manchester Metropolitan University
39. Newcastle, University of
40. Northumbria, University of
41. Nottingham, University of
42. Nottingham Trent University
43. Open University, The
44. Oxford, University of
45. Oxford Brookes University
46. Plymouth, University of
47. Portsmouth, University of
48. Queen Mary University
49. Queen’s University Belfast
50. Reading, University of
51. Regent’s University London
52. Roehampton, University of
53. Royal Holloway University of London
54. Sheffield, University of
55. Sheffield Hallam University
56. SOAS University of London
57. Southampton, University of
58. St Andrews, University of
59. Stirling, University of
60. Strathclyde Glasgow, University of
61. Sunderland, University of
62. Surrey, University of
63. Sussex, University of
64. Swansea University
65. University College London
66. Warwick, University of
67. Westminster, University of
68. York, University of
69. York St John University

NB: 44 survey respondents appear in bold.

Disclaimer: This information has been compiled using several sources (including non-respondents) in addition to the survey. Every effort has been made to gather accurate information. We apologise for any omissions or inaccuracies. Please contact us to let us know if any amendments are needed at diasporic.identities@open.ac.uk or ucml@bbk.ac.uk.
## Appendix 2. Languages offered as an integral part of MFL programmes at 69 UK HEIs in 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>No. of HEIs where language present within an MFL programme</th>
<th>Presence %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish, Korean, Persian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech, Dutch, Hebrew, Welsh</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek, British Sign Language, Gaelic, Icelandic, Irish, Sanskrit, Turkish</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aramaic, Basque, Danish, Norwegian, Serbian/Croatian, Swahili, Swedish, Ukrainian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian, Bengali, Bulgarian, Burmese, Finnish, Galician, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Luxembourgish, Romanian, Scots, Slovak, Syriac, Thai, Tibetan, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yiddish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>