

HUMANITIES FACULTY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 12 November 2025

Present: Fiona Devine (Chair), Fiona Smyth, Dimitris Papadimitriou, Maggie Gale, Claire Alexander, Thomas Schmidt, Khalid Nadvi, Paul Armstrong, Sofia Yasmin, Charles Insley, Umit Kenal Yildiz, Chloe Nahum-Claudel, Roddy Hawkins, Roz Webster, Georgina Lewis-Vasco, Sofia Parker, Alec Severs, Stuart Hyde, Sarah Lindop

Apologies: Emma Rose (secretary), Jon Shute, Patricia Perlman-Dee, Ken McPhail

In attendance: Gemma Keaveney (note-taker), Victoria Roberts (Business Support Manager), Beth Daintree, Vicky Skinner

1 Welcome, introduction and apologies

Professor Fiona Devine welcomed the new members of the group (Paul Armstrong – SEED, Sofia Yasmin – AMBS, Roddy Hawkins – SALC, Khalid Nadvi – SEED and Alec Severs – SU rep) to the meeting, along with established members and visitors.

2 Minutes and actions of previous meeting

Members were given the opportunity to raise any issues with the current Terms of Reference (ToR) and all confirmed they were content with current version.

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved and an update on actions from the last meeting was presented by Victoria Roberts. All previous actions had been completed.

3 Presentation: Student Recruitment

Tania Smith and Amanda Grimshaw (Admissions Team) had been invited to present an update on student recruitment. Key points from the presentation include:

- Faculty is experiencing much change and turbulence at the present time.
- Forecast numbers are down by -96 home and -317 overseas. Admissions and Marketing teams are working together to build on the home recruitment market.
- Earlier in the year, PGT had been in a good position but that's now changed which means the year ahead could prove difficult with SEED being heavily hit in their overseas target numbers.
- Noticing differences in student behaviour and the attraction of other countries such as Singapore and Ireland.
- Further podcasts being produced to target areas of under-recruitment and tracking of programmes to be targeted.
- Although recognised that we want diversification across the rest of world, China is our first market to target.

HFC121125-03-01: All FAC members are encouraged to engage with conversations and to keep Admissions colleagues in the loop with travel plans so that potential link ups may be identified.

HFC121125-03-02: Noted that the international travel plan collated for Faculty Exec and Leaders could be regularly shared with Tania and Amanda.

In terms of UG the overall picture is slightly more positive, and degree programmes associated with careers and employability are currently more successful than those not associated.

It is confirmed that there is much work already underway to diversify the student body and our long-term strategy includes targeting India, global scholarships, identification of funding streams etc. In the meantime, we will continue to identify trends and target the China market which is considerable.

HFC121125-03-03: Emma Rose to continue conversations with the Admissions Team.

The University uses appropriate channels across all communications and social media.

In terms of EDI, the University currently has a number of networks for black students and other networks can be developed for other minority groups and working-class students with suggestions welcome.

The Chair reminded the Committee that it isn't all bad news and that some areas across the Schools in Humanities are doing very well. We must enhance this and create further growth for success across the Faculty.

Given the situation in other Universities at the present time, the admissions and T&L teams will seek out any opportunities to attract students who would have other Universities as first choice.

One final point to remember is that 86% of the Humanities budget comes from tuition fees so we are most exposed to any market changes.

4 Presentation: NSS update and 5 Discussion: NSS and Student Experience

Professor Fiona Smyth presented the Committee with a general overview of the NSS and then invited the group to discuss further and ask questions which incorporates items 4 & 5. Key points to note from the presentation were:

- Student experience is key.
- First action plan was produced last year with overall positivity and although the University as a whole has seen improvement, Humanities improvements have been higher.
- Although actual numbers of student responses were down, we have moved up from second to fifth last in the Russell Group and have a new action plan to work on.
- Our strategy is to continue this improvement working our way up until we reach the top quartile.

All the above is positive however we are still below the sector benchmarks in assessment and feedback, student voice and learning resources. We have therefore identified 21 actions to progress in these key areas. We will build on actions from last year and embed into our business as usual.

Update reports will be prepared by Vice-Deans for TLSE and delivered monthly between October and February.

Some key items from the feedback being received:

- Feedback to students on their work is not always clear, nor are the students being advising on what improvements are required. There has also been an issue of using language unfamiliar to students whether international or home.
- Feedback to students should be timely.
- Make sure students are aware of what happens to their feedback.
- Employability skills for units – advise students.
- Strengthen the student voice.
- Ensure courses have streamlined information available and that it is properly and appropriately communicated to students.

There are of course a number of things that worked really well and further information can be found in the NSS slides.

It was confirmed that campus universities seem to do better in terms of creating an environment/sense of belonging. The sector as a whole has done work to understand what makes one place more attractive to students than another however there is a lot of variation and no tangible result.

Alec had responded to a question of whether 'belonging' was included in the NSS and offered to share the Student Priority Report which did include this type of question.

HFC121125-04-01: Gemma to provide link to the Student Priority Report along with their report to Senate in October 2025 for information and general interest.

[StudentPriorityReportPages2425.pdf](#)

[Senate Paper 22.10.25.pdf](#)

5 Teaching Sustainability Project – Programme Closure

Roddy Hawkins had been invited to outline the issues brought to him by colleagues in SALC and responses to the questions posed are below.

HFC121125-05-01: Fiona Devine agreed to circulate figures shared as part of the responses to the questions raised and the full response can be found at Appendix A.

6 Issues with Research Staff Paid Over-time

Paul Armstrong outlined the issues that had been put forward for discussion.

Sarah Lindop, representing the People Team, confirmed that there are no overtime payments in place for these colleagues noting that this can be very difficult to deal with.

If additional work funding is not built into a grant at the start, there should be no expectation for colleagues to have a contract on top of a partial FTE. The grant covers only the work specifically outlined and not overtime or training days.

HFC121125-06-01: Recommended that People Partner and Heads of School meet when preparing future grant applications to discuss workload and training to be considered and built in as necessary or appropriate.

7 Issues with Promotion Process

Umit Kenal Yildiz had outlined issues brought to him for the Committee in the areas of EDI and communications between School and Faculty Promotion Committees (SPC and FPC).

Fiona Smyth confirmed that both Committees work independently and that sometimes FPC approve cases not approved at School level.

It was also confirmed that EDI issues are always considered within the FPC and that from last year, the Vice-Dean for EDI/SR will have residency at both FPC meetings which consider promotion to chair and all other promotions. To note that data is collated at both School and Faculty level and it is confirmed that there are no obvious discrepancies in gender or ethnicity, but the point is noted on perceptions.

It was agreed that the Committee and the processes could be made clearer and more transparent and one suggestion would be to organise workshops with people who have been through the process.

Another suggestion would be to involve the Heads of Schools more in the ongoing development of those who are unsuccessful in their application for promotion.

It is recognised also that there are consistent issues with the quality of advice given by HoDs in their supporting statements and that in some cases, the HoD may not have been very encouraging of an application. This may be caused by lack of training in this area.

HFC121125-07-01: People team to pick up transparency, workshops and training for relevant parties as part of the overall improvement to processes.

It was confirmed that part time working, and work experiences before joining the University is considered within the process whilst recognising that there will still need to be evidence of the trajectory of performance during the time at the University of Manchester.

8 Any other business/closing remarks

Fiona Smyth, deputising for Fiona Devine during the second half of the meeting, thanked members for attending and confirmed that the next meeting would take place at 11.30 on Thursday 5 February 2026.

A suggestion was made that the order of the agenda be changed to allow a fuller discussion of the agenda items submitted by Committee members.

As the meeting did over-run, it was agreed that the meetings going forward would be amended to two hours to allow for proper discussion time of items. This would ensure plenty of time for discussion on agenda items submitted by Committee members.

HFC121125-08-01: Gemma Keaveney to amend the length of meetings in colleagues' diaries.

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Action log

Meeting	Action	Responsible	Context	Update
HFC121125-03-01	Faculty Committee members are encouraged to engage with conversations and to keep Admissions colleagues in the loop with travel plans so that potential link ups may be identified.	All Faculty Committee members	Relates to item 3: Student Recruitment Members are encouraged to liaise with Amanda Grimshaw and Tania Smith directly regarding international travel.	
HFC121125-03-02	Noted that the international travel plan collated for Faculty Exec and Leaders could be regularly shared with Tania and Amanda.	Gemma Keaveney	Relates to item 3: Student Recruitment Faculty collates travel plans for FE members and Associate Deans and shares with the International office regularly. Information will now also be shared with Amanda Grimshaw and Tania Smith.	
HFC121125-03-03	Emma Rose to continue conversations with the Admissions Team.	Emma Rose	Relates to item 3: Student Recruitment Continuing to identify trends and target the China market which is considerable.	
HFC121125-04-01	Provide link to the Student Priority report along with their report to Senate.	Gemma Keaveney	Relates to item 4: NSS/Student Experience sense of belonging for students and whether this was captured as part of the NSS	complete
HFC121125-05-01	Circulate figures shared as part of the response to questions raised	Fiona Devine	Relates to item 5: TSP -programme closures Part of the response included as Appendix A	complete

HFC121125-06-01	Recommended that People Partner and Heads of School meet when preparing future grant applications to discuss workload and training to be considered and built in as necessary or appropriate.		<p>Relates to item 6: Issues with Research Staff Paid Overtime</p> <p>If additional work funding is not built into a grant at the start, there should be no expectation for colleagues to have a contract on top of a partial FTE. The grant covers only the work specifically outlined and not overtime or training days.</p>	
HFC121125-07-01	Provide transparency, workshops and training for all relevant parties as part of the overall improvement to processes	People Team working with HoS/DoSO	<p>Relates to item 7: Issues with Promotion</p> <p>School and Faculty level promotions processes to be made clearer and more transparent. Training to be provided utilising the knowledge and skills of those who had been through the process. Heads of Department to also be more involved in the ongoing development of those unsuccessful in application.</p>	
HFC121125-08-01	Amend the length of meetings in colleagues' diaries.	Gemma Keaveney	<p>Relates to item 8: Any other business/closing remarks</p>	

Appendix A

Faculty Committee, 12 November 2025 Submitted item (submitted 3 November 2025)

ITEM TITLE

Teaching Sustainability Project. Closure of programmes (SALC)

CONTEXT

On 22 October 2025 Senate agreed to establish a new subcommittee comprising Senate members and the new Vice-President for Teaching and Learning Prof. Jenn Hallam, with the task of drafting new normative criteria for the closures of programmes. This decision implicitly recognises that the criteria used by TSP so far are inadequate.

Factual clarification: The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (AQSC) is an existing subcommittee to Senate, chaired by Professor Jenn Hallam, VP for TLS. It is this group that has been asked to develop the normative criteria.

Senate's decision was taken in response to multiple representations made by several constituencies concerning the irregularity and inconsistency of the raft of closures enacted by a bespoke subcommittee of the Faculty TSP programme targeted specifically at the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures (MLC). It was agreed by Senate that prior to the formal agreement of the new protocols, no UG programmes will be closed, including the x17 MLC programmes that were placed back 'in scope' this October after being retained on previous occasions.

Factual clarification: The languages group is a sub-group of the Teaching Sustainability Taskforce. The sub-group was established in recognition that the languages would need to be considered in a different way when reviewing programmes, notably programme closures, to the rest of the Faculty's UG and PGT portfolio. Appreciating the external challenges re languages, it was acknowledged early on that, while some single and joint honours degrees attracted high numbers, other languages attract low numbers.

On 28 October, during a meeting requested by PDs in MLC, the HoS in SALC, Prof. Thomas Schmidt, made it clear that the TSP Languages subcommittee will continue meeting and preparing recommendations for programme closures even in the absence of agreed normative protocols for undertaking such a process. The specially constituted TSP Languages subcommittee is next due to meet on 6 November to discuss the potential closure of x17 further programmes in MLC as requested by the Dean of Faculty, Prof. Fiona Devine.

The meeting of the language subcommittee has been rescheduled to Monday 17 November. A counter proposal to retain 9 of the 17 programmes will be considered then. The chair of AQSC, Jenn Hallam, is currently developing some normative criteria for all programme closures across the UoM and these will be discussed in due course with reference to the final set of programmes that will be considered for closure.

This is happening against the background of 51 programme closures made in MLC (out of 59 in SALC, so 86%), which have reduced MLC's portfolio by 35%. Closures have affected languages disproportionately since, to sustain themselves, languages by nature have always relied on *small* numbers of students from *many* combinations of Joint Honours. Portuguese is scheduled for a

reduction from 17 to 2 UG entry routes (88%), while the programme offer in Italian, Arabic, Russian and German has been reduced by 60%-75%. This scale of cuts places the medium-term sustainability of these disciplines in question.

Factual clarification: Records indicate there were 12 active programmes involving Portuguese at the start of the project. Another 5 had already been suspended by the School in response to Covid and these were subsequently withdrawn under the TS project.

Academic staff, Programme Directors and the HoD in MLC have been unified in their resistance to many of the closures since the inception of the process, whilst acknowledging the necessity of ‘shelf-checking’ zero-recruiting programmes which remained on the books. The closure of many recruiting programmes and the reluctance of Faculty to accept the established national ecology of Languages as a discipline has been repeatedly protested, including in the ‘Letter of Dismay’ sent to the Dean in July Faculty Committee, 12 November 2025 Submitted item (submitted 3 November 2025)

2024, and in a second MLC PD statement addressed by PDs to the HoD of MLC in October 2025.

In addition to the implied recognition that the TSP work is underpinned by inadequate criteria for the closures of programmes (as evidenced by the necessity to devise new criteria for such closures by Senate), there are several other flaws and inconsistencies:

- The TSP Languages subcommittee, created with the dedicated purpose to examine Language programmes and their complex ecosystem, now hosts only one member with expertise in Languages, out of 14 people. It appears clear that there is an imbalance in the composition of this committee, and that a serious issue of underrepresentation is at stake.

An MLC programme director, Tom Woerner-Powell has been invited to join the subgroup, and he will attend the meeting on 17 November. The academic members of the subgroup now include Fiona Devine (VP and Dean), Fiona Smyth (Deputy Dean and Vice Dean for TLS), Thomas Schmidt (Head of SALC), Camden Reeves (SALC Director of TLS), Julia Dobson (Head of MLC), Huw Twiston Davies (School Head of Admissions) and Tom Woerner Powell (MLC PD as noted above). In 2023-24 and 2024-25, Francisco Elissa-Barroso sat on the subgroup as the SALC head of Admissions. He is also a member of staff in MLC.

- These programmes recruit students. Quantitative analysis undertaken by academic staff in MLC on the basis of limited available data evidences that some 100 UGs are studying on programmes the TSP has shut down or intends to shut down, with the attendant loss of c. £1,000,000 p.a. in fee income.

Using 2024/25 data, the following information on the 51 programmes withdrawn is as follows.

	Intake		All Years		
	HC	HC Income	HC	FTE	HC Income
51 withdrawn programmes	18	£159,625	78	36	£542,792

HC refers to head count and FTE refer to full-time equivalent (number of students). The drop in student numbers and income will spread out over a number of years.

- The majority of these programmes were under scrutiny last year but, in summer 2025, the very same members of the TSP Languages subcommittee agreed to retain them (so staff simply do not understand what has changed between then and now). This points to moving goalposts and suggests arbitrariness in how the TSP operates, worsening the already bleak picture of staff's stress levels, sense of precarity and trust in Senior Management in SALC and Faculty. (In the recent staff survey, SALC was the worst performing school, being in the bottom three for 19 out of the 44 questions.)

Factual clarification: Minutes of the subgroup meeting in November 2024 stated that student numbers would be considered at the beginning of each academic year. Please refer to the Teaching sustainability website. This applies to all UG and PGT programmes going forward in the Faculty as we look to offer an attractive teaching and learning offer that will attract home and international students to SALC, HUMS and the UoM.

In his inaugural address in 2024, Professor Ivison directly and proudly quoted languages as an example of how, at Manchester, we can combine “subjects in ways that other universities can’t”. We now seem to be prepared to close routes into languages in a way competitor HEIs aren’t, passing them market share, additional student numbers and increased fee income in the process.

Factual clarification: Announcements at Nottingham and elsewhere in recent times suggest that other institutions are having to make very hard decisions about language provision. We have sought to sustain the languages at Manchester. We will continue to offer a large number of single honours and joint honours UG degrees.

QUESTIONS

1. **Can Faculty SLT clarify what work the specially formed TSP Languages subcommittee undertook during the meeting of 6 November, and what it intends to undertake at any subsequent meetings, in light of Senate’s requirement that no further programme cuts are made prior to the formal ratification of agreed closure protocols?**

The meeting of the language subcommittee has been rescheduled to Monday 17 November. A counter proposal to retain 9 of the 17 programmes will be considered then. The chair of AQSC is currently leading on developing some normative criteria for all programme closures across the UoM and these will be discussed in due course with reference to the final set of programmes that will be considered for closure.

2. **Can Faculty SLT clarify how the specially formed TSP Languages subcommittee anticipates making recommendations for programme closures in the absence of normative criteria for such closures?**

The TSP Languages Sub-Group will make recommendations for closure subject to alignment with agreed normative criteria.

3. **Can Faculty SLT clarify how they intend to revisit programme closures made through a process and procedures which Senate has identified as having been unfit for purpose.**

Senate did not identify the processes as unfit for purpose. The project will not be revisiting programme closures.

ACTION REQUESTED

That Faculty Committee request the immediate suspension of the activity of the TSP Languages subcommittee, pending formal ratification by Senate of agreed terms of reference and operational parameters for programme closures, as recommended by the specially formed Senate subcommittee chaired by the VP for T&L, Prof. Jenn Hallam.

Neither the Faculty-wide Teaching Sustainability project, nor the subgroup on languages, which is now in its final year of a three-year project, will be suspended. Once the Academic Standards and Quality Committee has developed normative criteria for programme closure, the proposed programmes will be evaluated against those criteria and final decisions made accordingly.

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