

## Meeting Minutes

### Teaching Sustainability Languages Subgroup

17 November 2025

#### 1. Welcome and apologies

**Attendees:** Fiona Devine (Chair), Julia Dobson, Huw Twiston Davies, Fiona Smyth, Cristina Collier, Elizabeth McCullough, Alexandra Martin Hernandez, Tom Woerner-Powell, Ben Cawley, Emma Rose, Lexy Cummins, Jayne Hindle, Thomas Schmidt, Gemma Gaffney, Emma Wilson, Hannah Jordan (Secretary)

**Apologies:** Camden Reeves, Isobel Morgan

#### 2. Minutes from the last meeting: for confirmation

The [minutes](#) were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### 3. Outstanding actions

FD and TS reported on the successful launch of the Bank of England event. During the event, there was discussion regarding the national shortage of teachers and an initiative enabling teachers to deliver economics lessons outside their primary subject area. It was proposed that a similar approach could be considered for language teaching. JD has contacted a representative at the Manchester Institute of Education but has not yet received a response. FD will also follow up on this with Lisa.

Action Number	Action Description	Update
89	ER to speak to Amanda Grimshaw about implications for admissions requirements and KH in terms of marketing side for umbrella model.	Update from ER on 29/10: The requirements and implications for marketing and admissions are being worked through as part of the development of the Umbrella model. All the component parts of the recruitment funnel (web, marketing, admissions, etc) are being assessed and there is a meeting scheduled for 10th Nov to bring all aspects together and confirm the processes and requirements.
90	BC to feedback to KH regarding the ask for separate webpages for members of the public looking to register.	BC to discuss further with EM how and where best to host the LEAP public registration page.
91	JD to discuss work looking at competitors and what the market currently looks like with KH.	No capacity for JD to explore this - focus on umbrella structure workstream

[Action Log - Languages Subgroup.xlsx](#)

#### 4. RAID

LC noted that the RAID log had been reviewed but asked risk owners to continue to review and contact LC if there was anything to add or raise.

#### 5. Market Insight report: presentation

##### Presentation points

- Syndicated market research conducted in collaboration with five UK universities: Birmingham, Leeds, Warwick, Newcastle, and Bristol.
- Large-scale quantitative online survey completed with a full sample of 1,000 students. This included a mix of students studying languages at GCSE and A-Level, those intending to progress, and those without plans to study languages.
- Findings summarised in a detailed report circulated previously; represents significant work undertaken over the past year on language-related insights.
- It was found motivations for studying language included enjoyment of language learning, interest in travel and they had achieved good grades in GCSE languages.
- The barriers found in studying language were a preference for pursuing other subjects, a perceived lack of career options, particularly among STEM-focused students and a perception that other subjects are easier and more opportunity for learning progression.
- There was a theme that state school students prioritised career relevance and private school students show greater interest in languages and have more exposure to formal language learning.
- Approximately 50% of students have decided by Year 12–13 whether to continue studying languages. Students in Years 9–10 are more receptive to information about language study options.
- External influencers (parents and teachers) have a stronger positive impact on students intending to study languages compared to those pursuing other subjects.
- Students are generally aware of available choices but believe prior language experience is necessary before university.
- Languages are perceived as harder than most humanities and social science subjects but easier than STEM subjects.
- Students who intend to study languages value the breadth of languages offered at UoM.
- These students search only for courses related to their subject of interest rather than reviewing the full portfolio.
- Strong interest in joint honours programs. They were seen to broaden horizons and future-proof skill sets. Positive feedback was received on existing combinations; STEM combinations were less well-known.
- Feedback on the website showed students found it accessible and easy to navigate.
- Areas for improvement:
  - Course pages perceived as dense.
  - Need for clearer information on:
    - Language modules, cultural and historical content, and technical aspects of language learning.
    - Sample timetables and contact hours.
    - Year abroad details, including support and guidance offered by the University.
  - Desire for more personal and interactive content:
    - “Day in the life” videos, testimonials, and project examples.
  - Students use terms like “year abroad” or “study abroad” rather than “residence abroad.”
  - For joint honours, a clearer explanation of subject split, workload and integration.
  - Require reassurance about beginner accessibility.
  - Clear entry requirements and progression examples.
  - Information on teaching methods for languages with different writing systems
  - More careers information than currently provided.
- Pipeline risks identified comprised of:
  - Declining A-Level entries and teacher shortages.
  - Spanish and other modern languages recovering slightly at GCSE.
  - Financial pressures leading to closures at some universities (e.g., Nottingham reducing language provision).

- Russell Group institutions less impacted; UoM remains strong and has gained market share.
- Manchester is the main provider of languages in the North.
- Joint honours combinations are challenging to implement as there is limited data on demand for specific combinations, especially STEM and languages.
- BC to engage with School Communications Coordinators to discuss recommendations on enhancing schools' marketing and advertising strategies, informed by feedback and insights from the report.

### Action BC

### Discussion points

- Durham presents languages more clearly, in a consolidated format.
- UoM and Leeds offer the widest range (9 languages); Durham offers 8.
- There is a misconception that studying a language at university is purely language learning and students are rarely checking detailed course unit information.
- High grading standards at GCSE and A-Level create risk to overall tariff.
- Attempts to modernise A-Level curriculum have had limited success and there is a disconnect between primary and secondary language education which causes a barrier for language study in Higher Education. There are GCSE and A-Level reviews planned, and this will provide an opportunity to influence discussions.
- Initiatives like the "Languages for All" consortium model discussed, which has been working well for Royal Holloway, enabling shared resources between schools and universities. The scheme leverages existing funding to connect schools with students interested in studying languages. Where demand at an individual school is insufficient, the scheme facilitates collaboration with other schools that have capacity. Royal Holloway partners with this initiative by offering careers days, educational trips, certificates and related activities. These efforts aim to establish the group as a specialist advanced subject cohort, fostering a sense of community and encouraging early engagement with career pathways and progression opportunities. This is something UoM would be interested in doing. JD to follow up with Languages for All and report back to the Subgroup. **Action JD**
- Strong emphasis on local recruitment; risk of promoting languages without linking to Manchester specifically.

### 6. Programmes within scope of review: update

- German Studies, Middle Eastern Studies and Italian Studies will continue to be retained as anchor subjects for language provision. There are low recruitment numbers for single honours; majority of students opt for joint degrees (language and another subject). No realistic opportunity to grow single honours. However, the subject identity is often linked to historical single honours programmes; important for external reputation.
- Italian Studies is stable, and its performance is in line with the national landscape for Italian Studies, primarily through joint degrees. Students are largely attracted to joint degrees here too.
- Middle Eastern Studies has low recruitment but higher completion rates; retention ensures exit pathways for students.
- Joint degree combinations (e.g., Art History and Italian) could benefit from stronger marketing and a clearer articulation of benefits. Course profiles need to be rewritten for some of these subjects to include narrative explanations rather than relying on tables and links; rollout planned for March 2026.
- It was discussed if it could be beneficial to make exit pathways more visible to reassure students where they felt it may be a risk to take a subject or joint honours subjects if they have not done an A-level in them. EM to investigate options for incorporating additional details and improving visibility of exit pathways during the revision of course portfolios. **Action EM**

- There was a discussion around the positive feedback from students around the idea that is similar to the US model about in the first year doing a more general broad study of a subject with the option to move into something more specialised after.
- Modern Language and Business & Management (Portuguese) has sustainability concerns and retention depends on improved marketing and clearer messaging on joint honours.
- Linguistics requires more time now that English Language route has been withdrawn. The benefits could be better articulated under the broader umbrella model.
- There are costs with maintaining programmes which include but are not limited to advertising, processing applications, timetabling and setting up them up campus solutions etc. The group would appreciate further data and costs on this for when discussing decisions with colleagues. ER is developing a paper that outlines the resources required to offer a programme and share with this group. **Action ER**
- Sociology combined with Arabic, Chinese, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian – focus will be on Politics and a language. EM to obtain and share Ofqual data to identify the A Level subjects taken by students who are more likely to take Politics than Sociology. **Action: EM.**
- The counter-proposal from SALC that had been submitted were all agreed. **Decision**
- EM and LC are to follow up on the next steps on application of normative criteria following the counter proposal being agreed. **Action EM/LC**

### Senate update

- Programmes agreed for withdrawal will be considered by School and Faculty QSDE, but outcomes will be subject to subsequent consideration against the normative criteria being developed. Proposals for the establishment of normative criteria would be routed to Senate via the Academic Quality and Standard Committee (TLS) and would also consider the use of delegated authority from Senate for approval of programme withdrawals, and the role that the AQSC TLS could perform in this process.
- Stephen Mossman's paper had identified as a cause of concern proposals to close 17 programmes in MLC. Senate was advised in response that no formal decisions on closure had been made yet regarding the programmes, and that once the Subgroup had completed its deliberations; any proposed closures would be reviewed through the proposed normative criteria framework.
- Formal approval of the normative criteria is scheduled for February 2026, but discussions will take place beforehand.
- Communications planning is critical, particularly for students.
- Advertising for 2027 entry would normally begin in March; UCAS events and open day bookings start from April.
- FD is keeping donors updated through DDAR.
- Communications to staff about the outcomes of decisions on the 17 programmes under review will be coordinated through the Departments, School Executive, and School Board. BC to assist with staff communications. **Action BC**
- Japanese is the third-largest language subject and a key area for promotion. Marketing should reflect cultural appeal and student interests. UoM performs strongly in Japanese compared to peers, with higher numbers than most institutions.
- JD noted the new Cumulative Impact – MLC Cohort Data (E2018 – E2024) was useful. LC explained that once 2025/26 Census data is available it can be added to the data set. LC grant JD owner access to that the data set. **Action: LC**
- 

### 7. **Umbrella model: update**

- Work on the umbrella model is progressing at pace, led by Gregory Scott (Director of Teaching and Learning, MLC).
- Tasks include writing programme specifications, completing amendment forms and updating HEAR statements.

- Marketing considerations are being addressed in collaboration with EM.
- Regular meetings and updates are in place; paperwork is on schedule.
- Internal School meeting planned for December; Faculty approval meeting scheduled for 13 January 2026.

#### 8. **LEAP registrations: update**

- There are currently 1,127 students enrolled on LEAP courses for Semester 1.
- Recruitment for two online LEAP courses (Polish and Russian) has been very strong. Both courses have successfully transitioned to online delivery via Teams. Polish enrolment has doubled, with 135 students from the Greater Manchester area, indicating strong regional interest.
- Marketing insights show that many students and members of the public value in-person teaching, even as online options expand.
- LEAP online delivery is currently supported through teams; Manchester Online does not hold responsibility for LEAP. It was expressed that this should be supported through Canvas rather than through Teams but there is no Canvas license for online elements currently. FD, FS and JD will arrange to meet with Ange Davis to discuss options for this. FS will also follow up with Canvas representatives about how LEAP could be supported. **Action FS/FD/JD**
- A strategic review of LEAP as a digital and face-to-face package is needed to determine how these offerings complement each other and what the department can realistically manage.
- A presentation on LEAP, including opportunities for development, will be scheduled for a future meeting.

#### 9. **PGT admissions: update**

- The MA in Modern Languages and Cultures is currently below the minimum number threshold agreed by the Teaching Sustainability Taskforce. However, it does provide a AHRC funded route through to PGR. There is a pathway that provides an ESRC funded route. This is not advertised through taught programme profiles but is promoted by the Doctoral Academy. It is proposed that this programme be retained because it provides AHRC and ESRC funded routes. The proposal was agreed. **Decision**

#### 10. **Communications**

- Communications will be prepared to ensure current students are fully informed about any approved programme closures and the implications for their studies.
- The latest British Academy report is being uploaded to the Teaching Sustainability StaffNet page, along with links to the Government's Curriculum and Assessment Review and responses from the British Academy.
- A University has recently announced a major restructuring, including suspension of language provision, which has caused significant disruption for applicants, current students seeking transfers and concerned parents. Similar changes are anticipated at other Universities.
- It is critical that communications about any approved programme closures emphasise the substantial language provision being retained, including single and joint honours, and advocate strongly for the value of languages. Duncan Ivson remains highly supportive of languages and is engaging with fellow Vice Presidents and Deans to promote a positive discourse focused on change and not decline.
- Discussions highlighted the need to reassure staff and students that this project is not financially driven. There have been no discussions of voluntary redundancies or severance, unlike other institutions.
- Advocacy for languages will remain a priority, and programme reviews will continue annually across the Faculty to ensure sustainability in a highly competitive market.

- Regular monitoring of admissions data will continue as part of business-as-usual processes across all schools and departments. The subgroup will conclude at the end of the Teaching Sustainability project.
- Enquiries to transfer from other Universities are being received following closures or suspension of language provision. Capacity to accommodate transfers may vary by subject area. JD/EM to review some of these issues and pick up with key people. **Action JD/EM**

## 11. Summary of actions and decisions

ACTION/DECISION	DESCRIPTION	OWNER	DEADLINE
Action	BC to engage with School Communications Coordinators to discuss recommendations on enhancing schools' marketing and advertising strategies, informed by feedback and insights from the report.	BC	Next meeting
Action	JD to follow up with the Languages for All contact to confirm whether this is an initiative UoM could participate in and provide an update to the group.	JD	Next meeting
Action	EM to investigate options for incorporating additional details and improving visibility of exit pathways during the revision of course portfolios	EM	Next meeting
Action	ER is developing a paper that outlines the resources required to offer a programme and share with this group.	ER	Next meeting
Action	EM to obtain and share Ofqual data to identify the A Level subjects taken by students who are more likely to take Politics than Sociology.	EM	Next meeting
Action	EM and LC are to follow up on the next steps on application of normative criteria following the counter proposal being agreed	EM/LC	Next meeting
Decision	The counterproposal from SALC that had been submitted were all agreed	TS/JD	N/A
Action	BC to assist with staff communications about the retention of 9 programmes with the withdrawal of 8 programmes.	BC	Next meeting
Action	LC to grant owner access to JD for the dataset Cumulative Impact – MLC Cohort Data (E2018 – E2024)	LC	Next meeting
Action	FD, FS and JD to arrange to meet with Ange Davis to discuss options for delivery of LEAP online. FS will also follow up with Canvas representatives about how LEAP could be supported.	FD/FS/JD	Next meeting

Decision	The proposal to retain the programme MA in Modern Languages and Cultures because it provides AHRC and ESRC funded routes was agreed	ER	N/A
Action	JD/EM to review some of these issues and pick up with key people regarding transfer enquiries.	JD/EM	Next meeting