

University Council of Modern Languages
Association of University Language Communities in the UK &
Ireland

Survey of Language Provision in UK Universities in 2021

July 2021



Durham Teaching & Learning Centre, image courtesy of Durham University

The survey and this report have been designed and written on behalf of the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML) and Association for University Language Communities in the UK & Ireland (AULC) by Mark Critchley, James Illingworth, and Vicky Wright, with the Introduction provided by Mark Critchley and Claire Gorrara.

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University Council of Modern Languages

As the unifying voice for modern languages higher education in the UK, UCML represents the views and opinions of scholars and professionals in modern languages and cognate disciplines to Government, the funding councils and other bodies at national level. UCML collects and disseminates information about the state of study, research and teaching of modern languages and cognate disciplines in the United Kingdom, and provides a forum for debate on issues of concern to its members through meetings, working parties, discussions, conferences, seminars and publications and presents the case for languages in the media.

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Association of University Language Communities in the UK & Ireland

AULC is an organisation for all staff working in HE language departments and centres, and acts for the delivery of institution wide language learning programmes in universities in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. AULC's remit is to encourage and foster good practice and innovation in language learning and teaching, and effective resource management and administration, supporting common interests in the professional development of language teaching & learning. AULC facilitates collaboration on the diverse activities of university language centres, and to promote university language centres both within and outside the university community.

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List of Acronyms

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
AULC	Association of University Language Communities in the UK & Ireland
BSL	British Sign Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
IWLP	Institution-Wide Language Programme
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
OWRI	Open World Research Initiative
SCILT	Scotland's National Centre for Languages
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UCML	University Council of Modern Languages
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

Executive Summary

This is the third survey of UK modern language provision carried out by the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML), following the reports from 2018 (Álvarez et al.) and 2019 (Polisca et al.) conducted in association with the AHRC-funded Language Acts and Worldmaking project. This year the survey was carried out in association with Association of University Language Communities in the UK & Ireland (AULC). It forms part of a longitudinal project to track changes, developments and trends in language provision in UK higher education, with a particular interest in how modern language degree programmes are delivered and how these programmes interact with Institution-Wide Language Programme (IWLP) provision in UK institutions. It should be read in conjunction with the AULC-UCML surveys of Institution-Wide Language Provision in the UK undertaken annually since 2012.

53 institutions responded to this survey. Of these institutions, 49 offer degree programmes in languages, while the other 4 deliver languages on IWLPs only. Our research suggests that modern language provision is available in 91 UK institutions, of which 71 offer degree programmes and 81 offer institution-wide language programmes (see Appendix 3). This year's survey therefore represents the most comprehensive coverage of UK modern language provision since this initiative was launched in 2018. There are, however, limitations to the coverage, since some institutions have only provided half the picture, with responses only from IWLP or degree programme provision, rather than fully accounting for both.

The trends in the language offering identified in the 2018 and 2019 surveys continue. French, Spanish and German remain the three dominant languages on degree programmes, and the rise of Chinese is confirmed as it takes fourth place ahead of Italian in this survey for the first time. Russian and Portuguese have also both seen a significant increase on previous surveys. This survey asked about the availability of *ab initio* languages, which was not explored in previous surveys, and found that this is a widespread practice, with most institutions offering most languages from beginner level on degree programmes. If there are any languages that are not available *ab initio*, these are statistically more likely to be French and German, but even here several institutions reported plans to introduce these in the near future. The average number of languages offered per institution is 7, slightly up on the 6.4 of previous surveys.

A further question that was asked for the first time in this survey required respondents to state how they feel about the future of modern language degree provision in their institution. Although this academic year has faced unprecedented disruption through the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK's withdrawal from the EU and from Erasmus+, record low A-level language entries, a series of news stories about declining university admissions in modern languages, and a string of university restructures that have included closures or reductions of language programmes, the response to this question was not overwhelmingly negative. In fact, 52% of respondents gave 'positive' responses. Responses were also generally positive concerning IWLP provision, with 71% of responses being positive. Although, it is noted that this is notably more positive than AULC surveys of IWLP provision in 2019 and 2020.

development and resourcing issues all took priority along with any crisis management. The latter included issues relating to residence abroad and bringing students home in the first instance and putting in place alternative arrangements for the 2020/21 academic year. This initial period of rapid change seems to have settled down by the time of the survey (mid-February 2021) when we were well into a second period of 'lockdown' in the UK and once again teaching and learning was taking place online after a period of some in-person teaching during semester 1. Research had come to a standstill however due to difficulties of access and research leave having for the most part been cancelled.

Reflections on the experience of the last eleven months revealed how we have dealt with online delivery in our discipline area and the particular challenges of language teaching online, especially ab initio learners. There was also much thought given as to lessons learnt during this period and the changes to our practices that we might want to keep going forward. These include the use of some online meetings and research events, better use of technology and an increased use of online and blended teaching and learning than in pre-COVID days. Many however, were simply looking forward to the informal and impromptu chat with colleagues on campus.

In terms of the impact of Brexit on our institutions, institutions seemed to be in various stages of readiness by 1 January 2021. Several had set up bilateral partnerships with all their European partners as early as 2019 in order to minimise the impact of the expected withdrawal from the Erasmus+ scheme, whilst others were still moving in this direction. There seems to be varying amounts of support from individual institutions and their International Offices on the implications of the withdrawal of Erasmus+ funding and on mobility for our students going to EU countries. In some cases, Brexit seems to have led to more support for modern languages and recognition of their importance within the university strategy and in other cases there seems to be a rather untimely disinvestment in languages.

In the answers around current plans to expand Routes-type activities, it was pleasing to see that 14 of the institutions 'are fully committed to Routes already' and another 28 might or would like to expand their activities. As in the 2019 survey, there remains some limited institutionally funded activity in England and in the case of at least one regional consortium, the Routes regional lead is working with other partner universities. As we reported in 2019, the Routes brand still seems to be strong despite national funding having ceased in 2016. In Wales, Routes Cymru activity is ongoing and well-integrated into the Welsh educational system. Two universities, one in Scotland and one in Northern Ireland, reported plans to introduce mentoring schemes for school students.

1. Introduction

This survey, carried out by members of the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML) and the Association of University Language Communities in the UK & Ireland (AULC), sought to obtain a snapshot of language provision across the Higher Education sector in the UK in the academic year 2020-21. This includes provision through the delivery of modern languages degree programmes and of IWLPs. The title of this iteration of the survey report reflects an important shift in relation to the previous surveys, referring to provision of modern language teaching in UK universities rather than modern language departments specifically. This shift recognises that an important amount of credit-bearing language provision in UK universities is delivered from outside modern language departments.

In previous years, IWLP and degree programmes have been surveyed separately. AULC has been undertaking surveys on a regular basis since 2003, and annually since 2011.¹ This is the third year in succession that UCML has conducted a detailed survey. With current languages provision evolving, and since there is no other mechanism or agency in a position to compile this data, this UCML-AULC survey is of particular importance.

In addition, the survey sought to gather feedback in relation to three key aspects of national concern: the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of Brexit, and the future of schools outreach and Routes into Languages. Survey questions were framed to elicit appropriate responses, and these are analysed within the body of this report. Specific aims of the present survey were to:

- Review breadth of language provision at degree level;
- Review breadth of language provision across IWLP;
- Consider the nature of collaboration between IWLP and modern language degree provision;
- Review the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of language teaching;
- Review the ongoing impact of Brexit on language provision;
- Consider current and potential future collaboration with Routes into Languages.

This AULC/UCML annual survey is produced at a momentous time of change for the global and UK HE sector. COVID-19 has impacted our ways of working, our pedagogical practices and traditions and our partnerships. More than ever, the need to find common ground and to work jointly to support our fellow scholars, teachers and our students have been our priorities.

For the languages communities in HE, and across the education sector as a whole, the impact of further challenges, including the cultural ‘shock’ of Brexit, have been considerable. We have witnessed reductions and closures of modern language units in UK universities, accelerating a pre-existing trend². We are experiencing the ongoing questioning of the value

¹ These are available from <https://aulc.org/documents/>.

² See Baker, Simon (2021). Languages decline sees numbers drop to zero at UK universities. *Times Higher Education*, 24 February 2021. Available at:

and worth of subjects, like modern languages, that do not appear to speak to a skills-based education agenda promoted by some policy makers. However, for all that, this report demonstrates the resilience, energy and passion of our language communities. Colleagues continue to innovate in the teaching and research of languages in their rich and multifarious manifestations, alive to the life-changing opportunities that come with the study of languages. Our 'language lives' are multiple and 'languages live' in many forms in the university sector, as this report shows. Everything changes, as the last 15 months prove, and languages adapt.

Mark Critchley and Claire Gorrara

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/languages-decline-sees-numbers-drop-zero-ukuniversities> and Bowler, Megan (2020). *A Languages Crisis?* Higher Education Policy Institute. Available at: https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HEPI_A-Languages-Crisis_Report-123-FINAL.pdf.

2. Method

2.1 Surveying the sector

Language provision across UK Universities comes in many forms. Activity is rather difficult to survey as it is a somewhat diverse phenomenon. It includes specialised in-depth single honours undergraduate programmes, multi-layered degree programmes offering a breadth of language provision, joint honours, minor programmes with other subjects, individual elective modules, and extra-curricular language tuition. There is also specialist postgraduate provision. Many institutions offer both degree programmes and IWLPs, and language delivery may be organised in a variety of departmental structures. The sector is also diverse in terms of the ranges of languages offered, with some institutions offering only three or four languages and others offering up to twenty, and in the ways these languages are offered to students, such as levels, length of courses, and contact hours.

2.2 Questionnaire

An online survey was created using Microsoft Forms. A link to the survey was emailed in January 2021 to the individuals listed as core contacts at all 73 UCML member institutions, the 62 AULC member universities in the UK, as well as to the wider AULC distribution list with an initial deadline of 12 February 2021. Some more targeted emails were sent following the original deadline to elicit further responses, with the survey ultimately closing on 26 February 2021.

The survey included 30 questions. Several of these reproduced questions from previous surveys in order to track longitudinal trends, particularly those around languages offered in degree programmes and IWLPs, those interrogating modes of collaboration between modern language departments and IWLPs, and those asking about collaboration with Routes into Languages. The 2019 survey asked about preparations for Brexit, and these questions have been supplemented in this survey by questions asking about Brexit's impact and the associated withdrawal from Erasmus+. New questions were added around the provision of *ab initio* languages and languages at postgraduate level. The main addition to this survey, however, emerges directly from the circumstances in which the survey was carried out: in the midst of a global pandemic. A new section was added that asked respondents to reflect on how their department/IWLP/institution had responded to the pandemic, and how this has affected modern language provision.

2.3 Participation

From the 75 institutions invited to participate in the survey, 57 responses were received. 46 responding institutions are members of AULC (74% of the total AULC membership) and 51 are members of UCML (70% of the total UCML membership). Duplicate responses were received from three institutions, and two separate responses (one from the modern languages department and another from the IWLP) from one, amounting to 53 valid responses, or 70% of institutions surveyed. This is the highest rate of responses received across the three

iterations of this UCML survey (48% in 2019, 64% in 2018), although responses on IWLP remain lower than in previous years' surveys which have been running since 2003 (annually since 2012). A full list of institutions that responded to the survey is given at the end of this report (see Appendix 1).

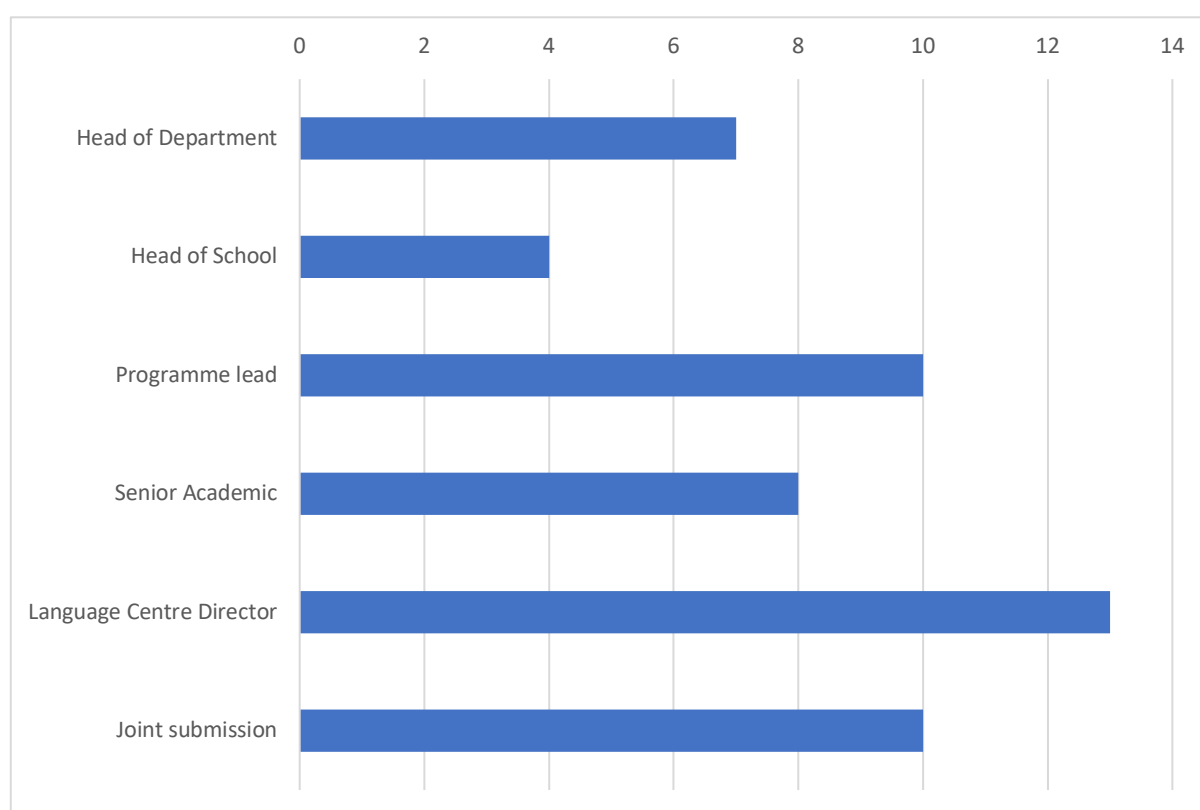
Of the responding institutions, their language offer can be characterised as follows:

Degree level	IWLP	Degree level & IWLP	Degree level only	IWLP only
49	50	46	3	4

2.4 Respondents

Following the trend set by the 2018 and 2019 surveys, respondents were generally senior managers in either modern languages departments or IWLPs. In 10 cases, a joint submission was received, where colleagues in IWLPs and departments worked together (we have included in this number the twin submissions from one institution, where the IWLP director answered the IWLP-related questions, while the head of modern languages answered the questions on the degree programme). One submission was anonymous.

Figure 2 Role of Survey Respondents (n=52)



2.5 Languages

Languages offered are separated into those offered as part of a degree programme and those offered as part of an IWLP. In some cases, individual languages will inevitably overlap as degree teaching and IWLP teaching responsibilities in some cases overlap, for example with minor degree pathways, which sometimes are delivered as part of a degree programme, and sometimes as part of an IWLP.

There are some inconsistencies in interpretation of languages to be included, with some lower-than-expected response rates for languages such as Welsh, Gaelic, Latin, ancient Greek, and possibly BSL and EFL, where these have perhaps not been fully taken into account in the context of IWLP.

2.6 Limitations

In the discussion that follows, limitations to some of the data will be identified. Some key issues include: the number of responses; the roles of respondents; conflicting responses; inaccurate responses; some further clarity required in questions (for instance, what constitutes an IWLP, what constitutes postgraduate provision in a modern languages context).

The survey did not collect information on the range of levels offered for each language. As a result, languages are construed as offered even if only at *ab initio*/Beginner level. The survey does not therefore attempt to indicate the scale of language learning overall. Likewise, data was not sought on the numbers of students registered in a particular language. This may well be worth investigating in the future, but with the addition of questions around Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic there was a concern that the survey would become too labour intensive and that this would discourage responses.

While every effort is made to involve the same institutions in the survey year-on-year, it is not always possible to obtain a response from each university. A degree of caution must therefore be exercised when analysing the results and comparing the data.

As regards a comparison with previous years' surveys of IWLP (2003, 2007, 2008, 2011-2020), there are some noted differences in returns according to the interpretation of what is included in an IWLP. For example, in some cases returns appear to have only included accredited learning (e.g. elective modules), and may not be fully reporting non-accredited learning (e.g. evening courses, lifelong learning etc.) in every institution. However, since this survey is not estimating numbers of learners, this does not appear to materially influence the outcomes of the survey.

3. Findings: Degree programmes

3.1 Languages offered

The survey asked institutions to list the languages currently on offer on undergraduate degree programmes. The results should be read alongside Figure 4, which provides details of language courses returned through a UCAS search.

In line with the results of the 2018 and 2019 surveys, the five languages that most institutions reported they offered are French, Spanish, German, Chinese and Italian, with French and Spanish the only languages taught in 100% of the institutions who responded to this question. This contrasts with the UCAS search results, where French and Spanish were not offered by 8% of institutions. There are few surprises in the least widely taught languages, too, though in 2019 there were no responses for Finnish, Hungarian, Norwegian, Icelandic or Romanian, while all of these are present in this year's responses.

However, among the top five languages it is noteworthy that this is the first time in the history of this survey that more institutions have reported teaching credit-bearing modules in Chinese than in Italian. This corresponds with UCAS search results, which also suggest more undergraduate courses in Chinese than in Italian. In addition, here is a notable rise in the number of institutions reporting that they teach Russian and Portuguese. In this survey, 42% of institutions reported teaching Russian (against 30% in 2019 and 25% in 2018), while 47% reported teaching Portuguese (against 30% in 2019 and 33% in 2018). The proportion of institutions teaching Arabic and Japanese continues to fluctuate from survey to survey (Arabic: 33% in 2020/21, 50% in 2019, 22% in 2018; Japanese: 39% in 2020/21, 46% in 2019, 19% in 2018). More institutions reported teaching Portuguese, Catalan, Modern Greek and Swedish in our survey than appear in the UCAS search results. The UCAS search gave no returns for Hindi, which is reported by 1 institution in this survey. This serves as a reminder of the limitations of UCAS data when drawing conclusions about modern languages provision in the UK, since credit-bearing provision delivered by IWLPs is often not captured by UCAS, as in many cases students register for these modules only after they begin their courses.

The results returned for Celtic languages (Welsh, Irish and Gaelic) should be considered in their context. This survey was directed at modern language departments and IWLP programmes, but in some institutions programmes in these languages are delivered by separate units. This may well be reflected in the UCAS data in Figure 4, where the number of institutions recruiting to programmes including Welsh, Irish and Gaelic are significantly different from the survey responses.

Figure 3 Languages Offered in UK MFL Departments in 2021 (from survey responses) (n=49)

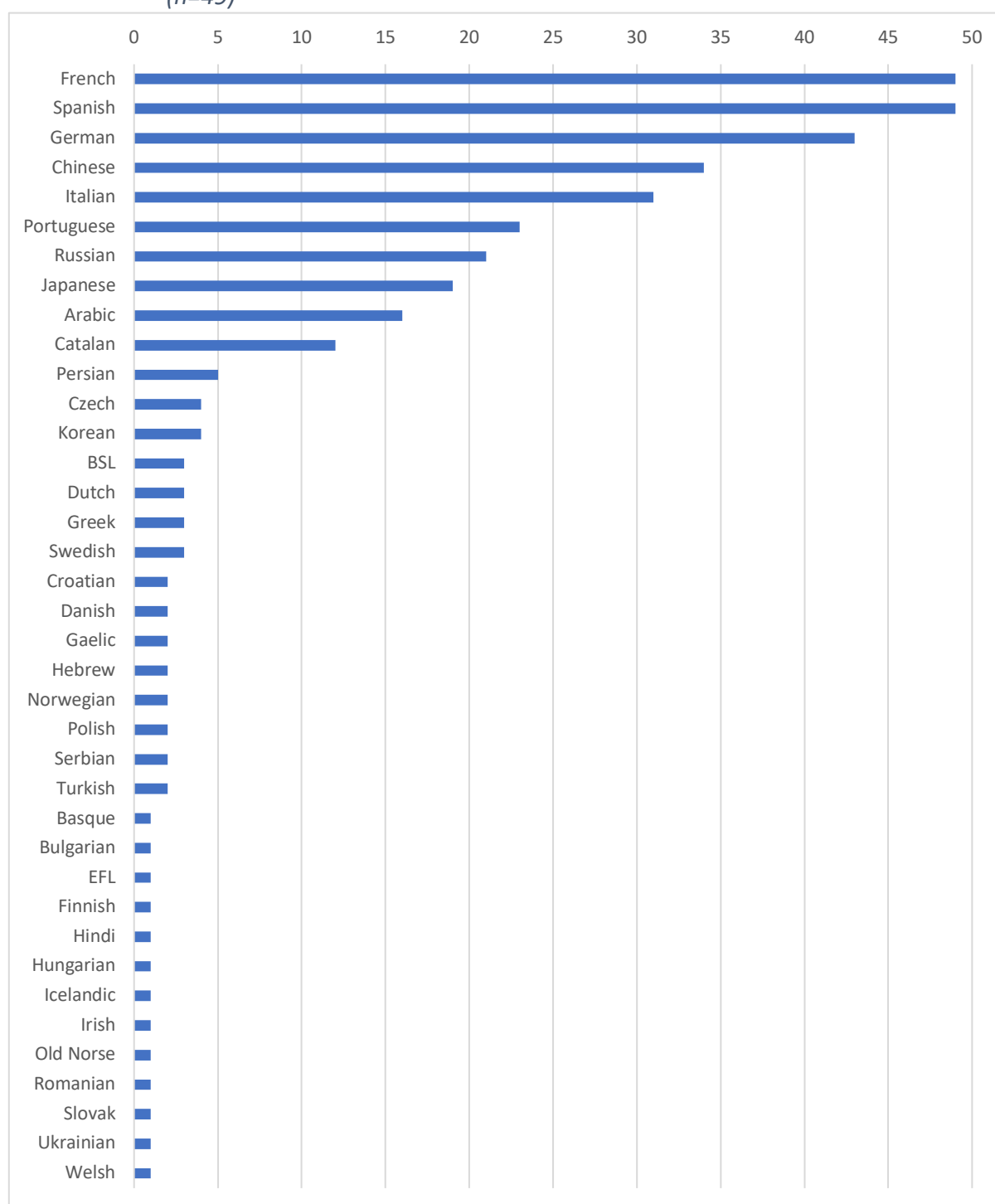


Figure 4 *Number of Institutions Recruiting to Modern Language Degree Programmes in Individual Languages (UCAS search for 2021/22 entry) (n=71)*

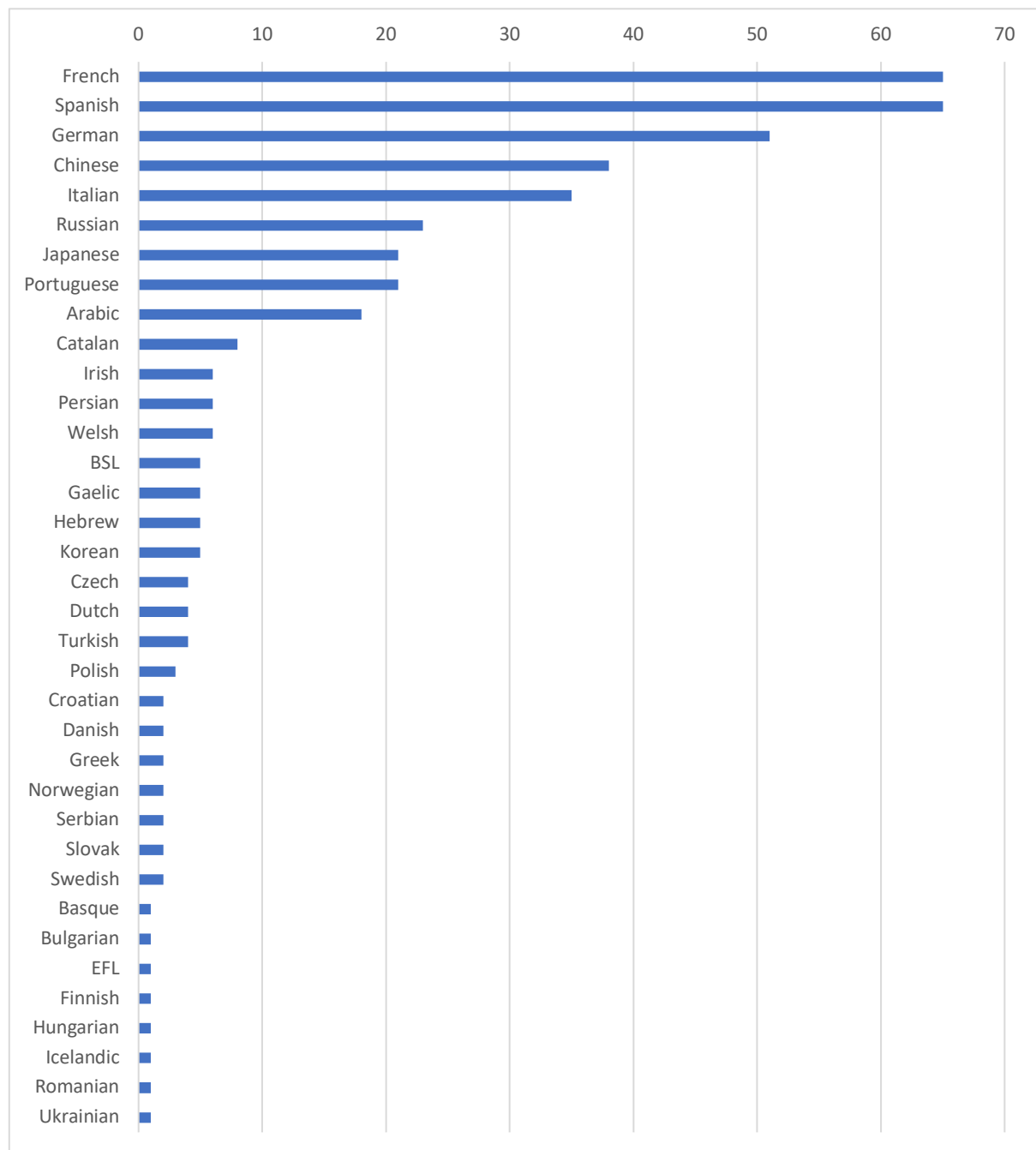
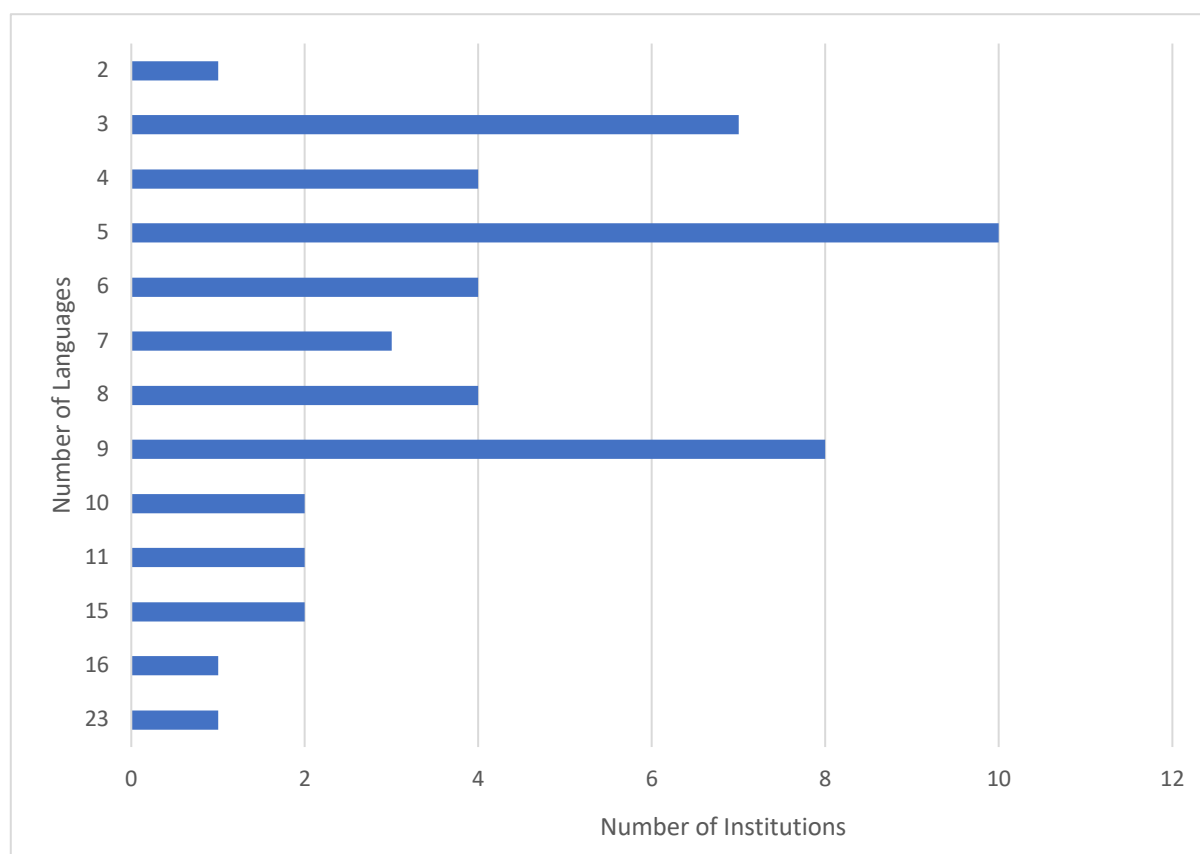


Figure 5 indicates the number of languages offered in UK modern language degree programmes in the institutions who responded. Of those 49 institutions, 6 offer over 10 different languages. The average number of languages offered by responding institutions was 7.

Figure 5 Number of Languages Offered on MFL Degree Programmes (n=49)



3.1.1 *Ab initio* languages

This is the first time this survey has asked which languages can be taken from beginner level in modern languages degree programmes. Of the 47 responses received to this question, every institution reported that most languages can be taken *ab initio*. The two languages that appear to have a particular status in relation to *ab initio* provision are French and German. In cases where not all languages offered on the degree programme were available *ab initio*, these were almost always French (in eight cases) and German (in six cases). Additionally, three institutions reported that although French and/or German were available *ab initio*, this was a recent development (in the past two years), or that they are planning to introduce these languages from beginner level in the near future.

3.1.2 Postgraduate provision

In the 2018 survey, fewer than half (42%) of the responding institutions reported that language modules were delivered at postgraduate level. This question was not asked in 2019, but in this year's survey 66% of respondents stated that their institution offers postgraduate language provision. However, the form this provision takes varies across the sector. 16 institutions said that languages were available at postgraduate level as part of an MA in Translation Studies and/or Interpreting, or TESOL. Four said that this was possible through IWLP postgraduate provision, while the remaining eleven reported that postgraduate

languages were provided through the institution's MLitt, MRes or MA in one or more of Area Studies, Cultural Studies, Literary Studies or Film Studies.

While the focus of this survey is on undergraduate provision, should further research into postgraduate language provision be considered worthwhile it would be useful to clarify what kind of postgraduate provision we are interested in or requesting greater specificity from respondents. It also appears that the response received to this question depended on who filled out the survey. Where the respondent was from an institution's IWLP, the answer to this question was generally 'no' or 'as part of an IWLP', but where the respondent is in the modern languages department programmes like MRes, MA, or MLitt in cultural/literary/film studies have generally been included. Of the 48 responses received, 15 institutions reported that no postgraduate provision was available with a further three responding 'n/a'.

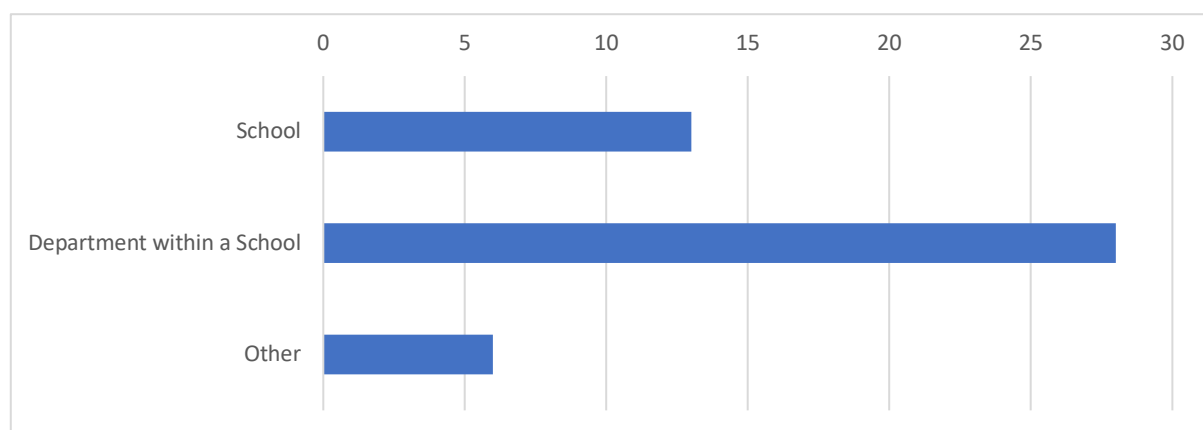
3.2 Place within university structures

The 2019 survey tracked the location of modern languages provision within broader university structures, hypothesising a 'structural "downgrading"' of MFL units (Polisca et al., 2019: 13). In that survey, 30% of institutions reported that modern languages functioned as an independent school within the university. In the current survey, this proportion has reduced slightly to 27%, though it should be noted that from three institutions we only received details of the credit-bearing IWLP. All three of these institutions also offer degree programmes, but we did not receive responses related to these in this survey. In each case the IWLP functions as a separate unit from the modern languages department, usually as part of academic services, but crucially in two of these the modern languages department is an independent school. This suggests that had those departments responded, the findings of this survey would reflect those of 2019.

Nevertheless, it is clear from this data that the sector norm for modern languages provision is that it forms part of a broader unit, usually in a wider school unit in combination with other Humanities disciplines. Moreover, of the thirteen institutions where modern languages degrees are delivered as an independent school unit, all but two are members of the Russell Group. In one institution, individual languages function as independent schools in their own right (i.e. School of French, School of German, etc), while in one other institution languages are delivered by two separate schools, one focusing on Western-European languages while the other focuses on Eastern-European languages. For the purposes of this survey, a school of languages and (applied) linguistics has been classed under 'Department within a School'.

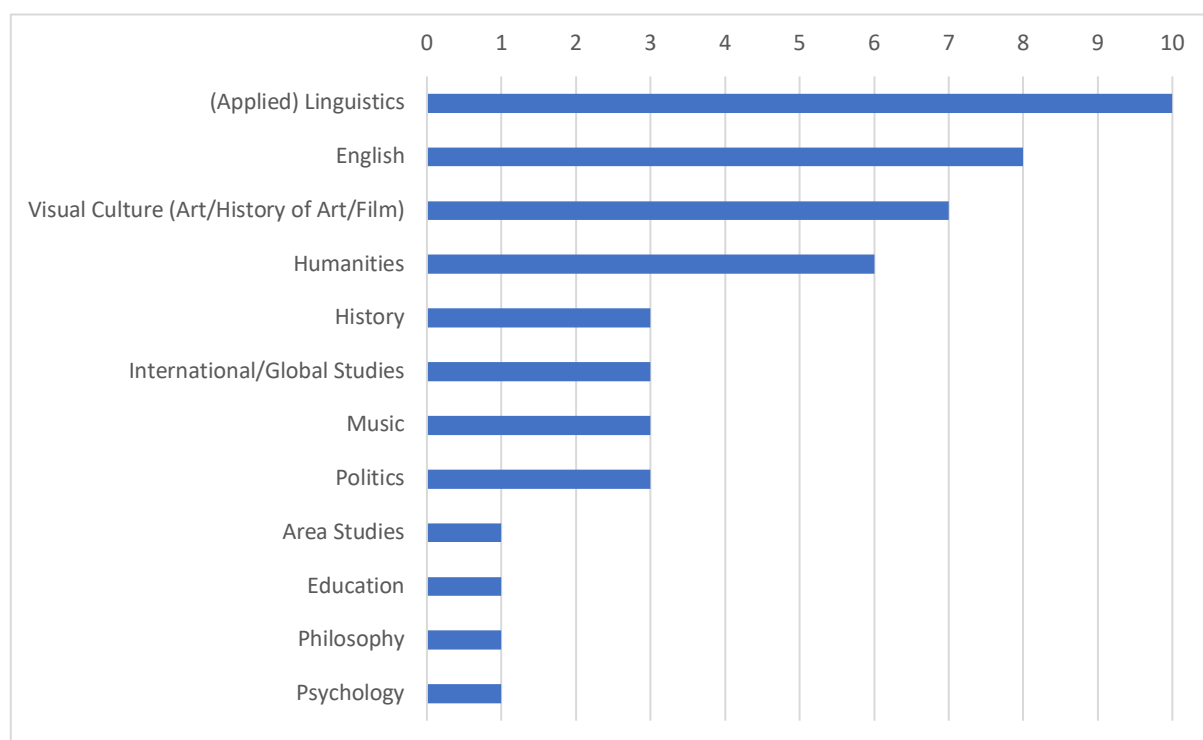
Conversely, where institutions are listed as 'other', this is where degree provision is delivered through an IWLP. In all cases these are either minor programmes or individual credit-bearing language modules. In the six cases concerned, these programmes are situated outside formal academic departments, either as part of an ELT unit, or as a unit within academic or library services.

Figure 6 *Location of MFL Provision within Institutional Structures (n=47)*



It is evident, therefore, that the majority of modern language degree programmes are taught by smaller units within a larger school. Figure 7 demonstrates the occurrences in our data of different subject areas within these broader school units where survey respondents specified the composition of these larger schools. How this wider unit is configured varies considerably across the sector, but there are some clear trends. The most common combinations are with (applied) linguistics and English (broadly conceived: usually literature, but also language and in one case EAP).

Figure 7 *Disciplines Joint with MFL in Larger School Units (n=47)*



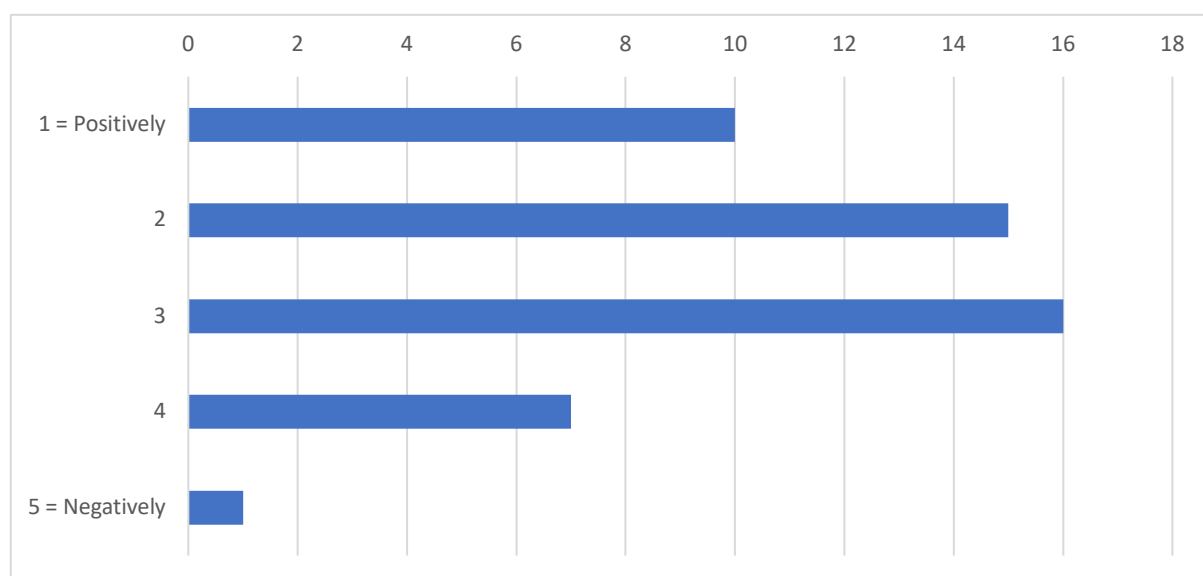
3.3 Future of provision

This survey included a new question that asked respondents how they felt about the future of modern language degree programme provision in their institution. Respondents were offered a sliding scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated that they felt positively and 5 negatively. Despite the particular circumstances in which this survey was conducted (mid-pandemic, only a few weeks post-Brexit, and amidst a series of news stories about declining modern languages admissions and departmental closures), the picture is not overwhelmingly negative. In fact, 52% of respondents selected options at the 'positive' end of the scale. Only one respondent picked 5, and this was at an institution that has publicly announced suspension of recruitment to modern languages programmes. At the other end of the scale, ten respondents indicated that they felt extremely positive about the future of modern languages degrees at their institution. Sixteen, meanwhile, opted for the middle ground. It should be noted, however, that of the institutions who have announced restructuring of modern languages provision, suspension of languages recruitment, or closure of the department over the course of the 2020-21 academic year leading up to this survey, only two responded.

Within the group of respondents at each point at the top end of the scale there was a mix of institution type, though among the eight respondents choosing either 4 or 5 in response to this question only one belonged to a Russell Group university.

Of course, this question is highly subjective, and within any given institution we may have received a different response had someone else answered the survey. In fact, in two of the institutions that submitted duplicate responses we received different answers to this question. In both cases, the respondent from the IWLP responded more positively to this question than the respondent from the degree programme, but as this question pertains to the degree programme, we have excluded the submission from the IWLP respondent.

Figure 8 How Respondents View the Future of MFL Degree Provision in their Institution (n=49)



3.3.1 Previous modern languages provision

In recognition of the shift in some institutions away from full modern languages programmes, this survey asked respondents whether their institution had previously offered full degree pathways in modern languages. This question received eight responses, all from those where credit-bearing language modules form part of minor or IWLP pathways. Of these, six indicated that this was the case (with one specifying that they offered area studies programmes delivered through the target language), while only two indicated that their institution had never run full modern language degree programmes.

4. Findings: Institution-wide language programmes

4.1 Numbers of Universities offering IWLP

50 of the responding institutions indicated that they have an IWLP; 3 responded 'no'. Of those responding 'yes', 46 are members of AULC. As a result, the level of response is very close to that of the 2019-20 AULC survey, in which there were also 46 responses, although from a slightly different mix of institutions, and slightly down on previous years prior to 2018.

In 2021, AULC has 61 university members in the UK who offer an IWLP. As a result, it is estimated that 50 of at least 65 institutions with an IWLP responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 77%.

The majority of universities with IWLPs also offer degree programmes. All four universities now offering IWLP only have offered degree programmes in the past.

4.2 Languages offered

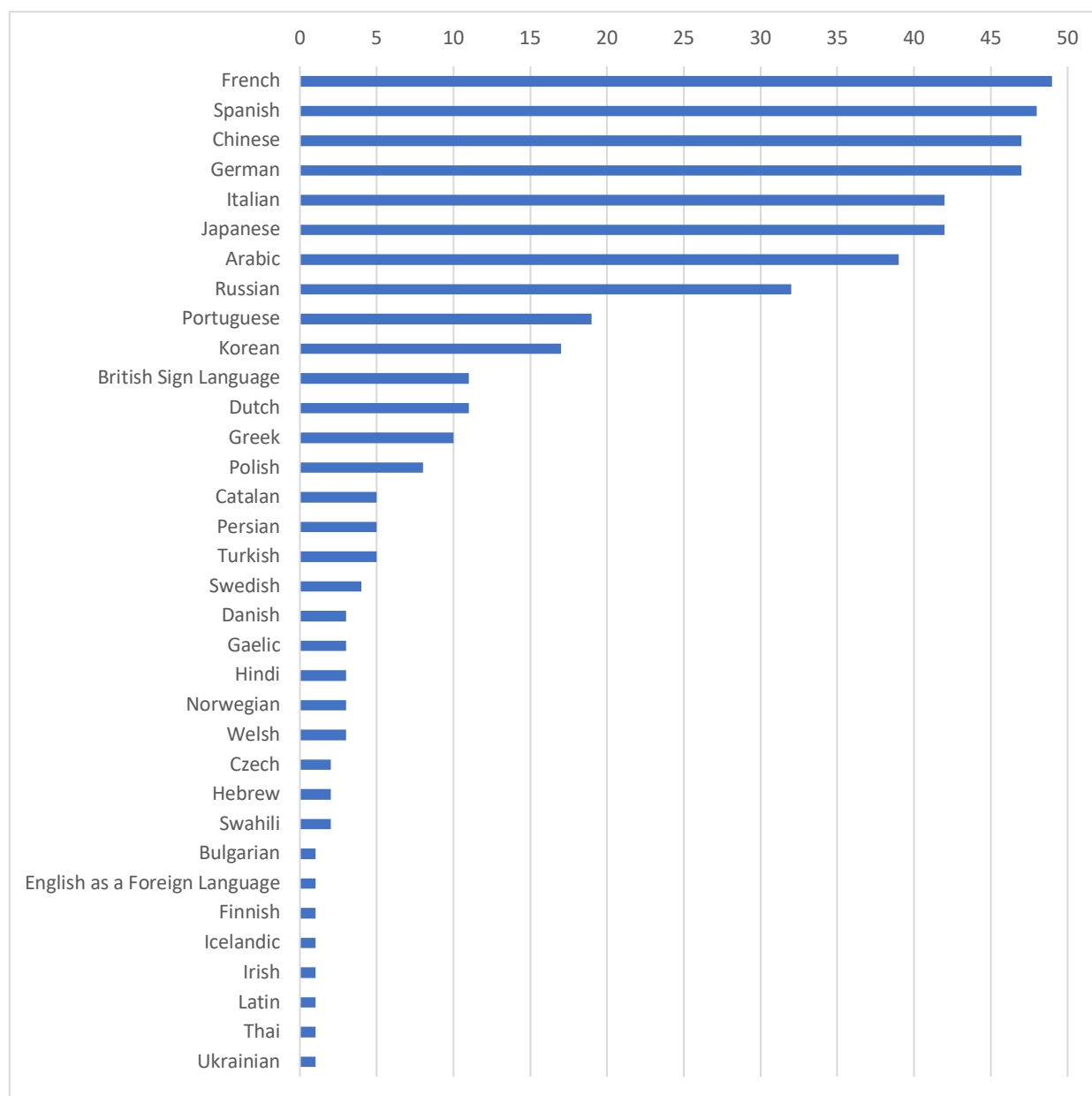
The graph overleaf (Figure 9) represents the number of institutions reporting the offer of individual languages as part of their IWLP.

The number of languages offered is 34 in total (including Latin and EFL). This compares to 25 languages reported in the 2019-20 annual survey report from AULC. French and Spanish remain almost universally available, with significant numbers of programmes offering Chinese and German. 13 different languages are offered by at least 10 institutions across the UK. Several languages remain available only at a very few institutions, although some under-reporting is obvious.

There appear to be small reductions in the numbers of institutions offering Arabic, BSL and Portuguese as part of an IWLP compared to previous years, with a small rise in the number offering Dutch and Korean. Some changes may be due to under-reporting. There are inconsistencies in the reporting of regional languages, in particular Welsh and Gaelic, where some known provision has not been reported, perhaps because these have not been recognised as part of IWLP provision.

There are some gaps in the data from institutions where language provision may be spread across several academic units. Overall, responses suggest some lack of clarity or understanding as to what constitutes an IWLP. This might include credit-bearing elective modules, it might include non-credit bearing language courses, this might include an evening course programme, and it might include a programme of language courses available through a lifelong learning programme. It can and does include any form of language learning opportunity available to students and/or the wider external community beyond a specialist modern languages degree. Some institutions are known to have under-reported the languages offered, probably in relation to the awareness of the individual completing the survey response. It is clear that not all language-learning opportunities on offer have been reported.

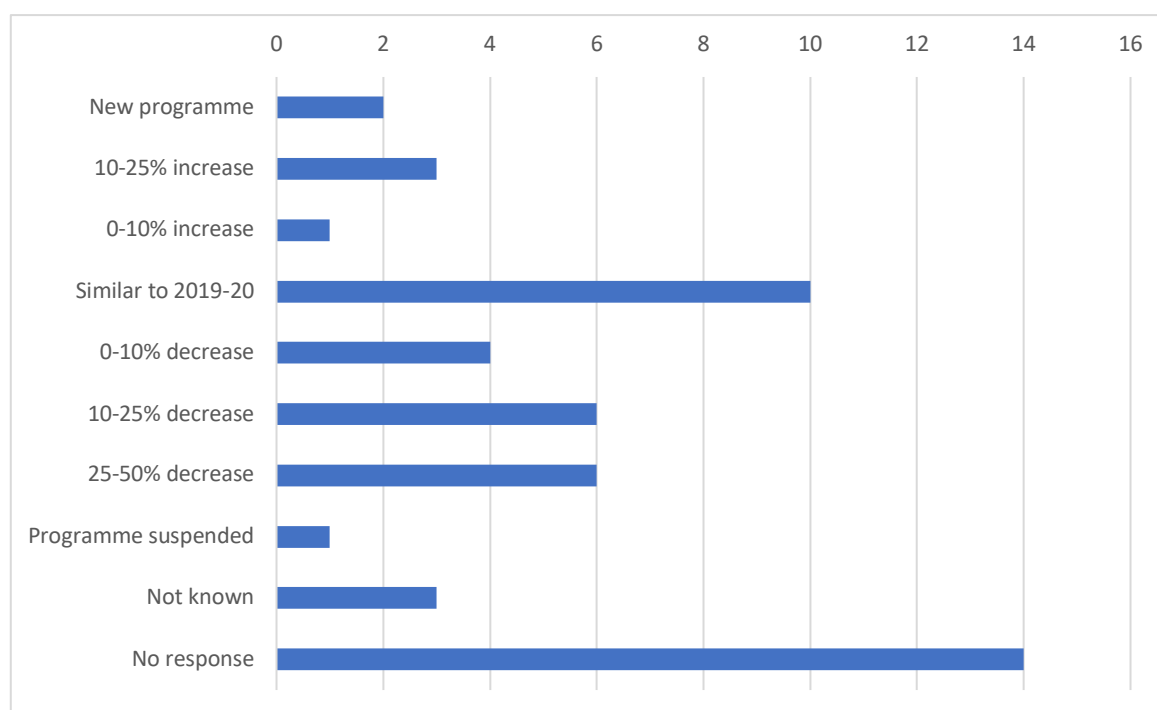
Figure 9 Languages Offered in UK Institution-Wide Language Programmes in 2021
(n=50)



4.3 Changes to numbers of registered students to IWLPs 2019 to 2020

Responses to this question proved very challenging for many institutions. Since IWLPs consist of different types of course formats, it is clear that in some areas, such as elective modules, registration numbers have increased, and in other areas, such as evening courses, they have decreased, often in the same institution. However, the overall picture is as described in Figure 10.

Figure 10 *Changes in Registrations to IWLPs in UKHE Institutions (n=50)*



Only 33 institutions felt able to respond to this question. Overall, the picture is mixed, and indicates a general decrease in the numbers of students registering for IWLPs in 2020. There is a marked difference, however, with some universities reporting programmes full to capacity, others in danger of permanent collapse. There will inevitably be various local factors influencing demand at the present time, not least of which is a frequent mismatch between demand and capacity, and information provided cannot realistically be considered to indicate any trends in demand for IWLP.

A decrease in numbers of registrations to evening courses will also inevitably lead to issues with part-time freelance teaching capacity. The authors of this report are aware of anecdotal ongoing concern regarding language teaching capacity.

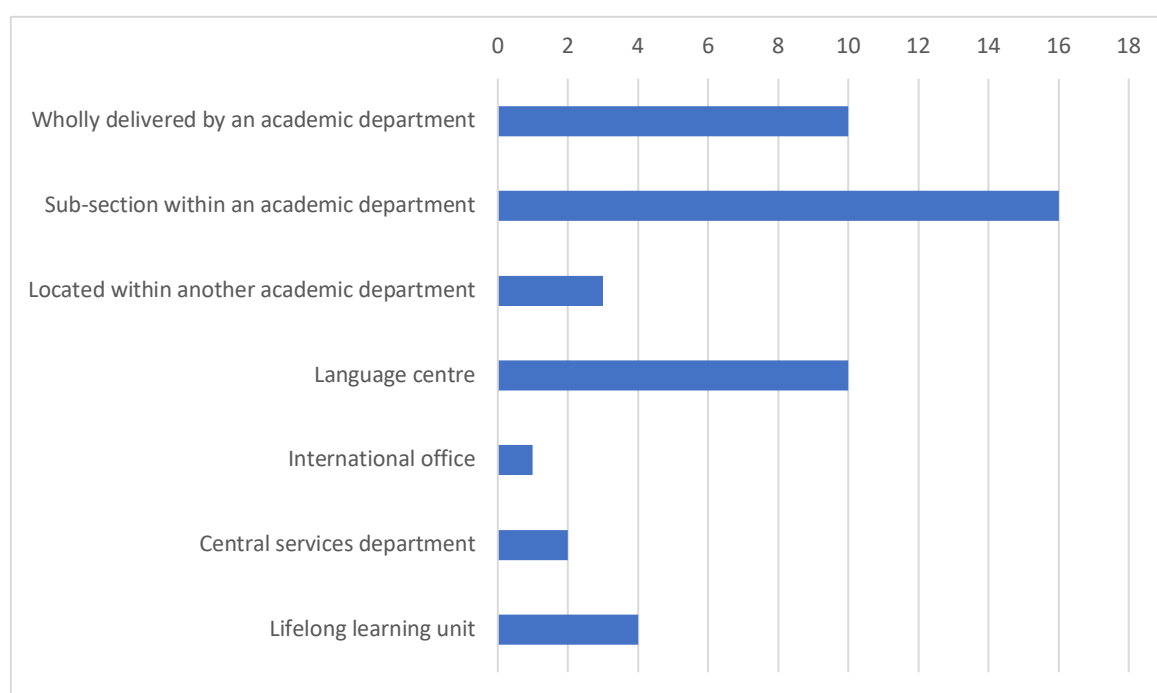
It is interesting to observe that two new IWLPs have been established (one is rather a newly expanded programme). One university reported the suspension of its IWLP during the pandemic. It is known that a number of IWLPs have been undergoing review and re-structure over the preceding 12 months, and several IWLPs are under threat of closure. Since the closing date of the survey submissions, a number of IWLPs have reported challenges,

including withdrawal of elements of their programme, temporary withdrawal of the programme, or full closure.

4.4 Place of IWLP within university structures

There are almost as many ways of organising an IWLP as there are IWLPs offered. The organisational structures, for management, administration and teaching, are highly influenced by local provision of modern languages degree programmes, where these exist, and other institutional factors. There have been a number of changes in recent years in individual institutions. Whereas in the past IWLPs were more commonly based in Language Centres, often in combination with EAP, they are now in the majority delivered from within an academic School/Department of Languages and Cultures.

Figure 11 Location of IWLP Provision in UK Institutions (n=46)

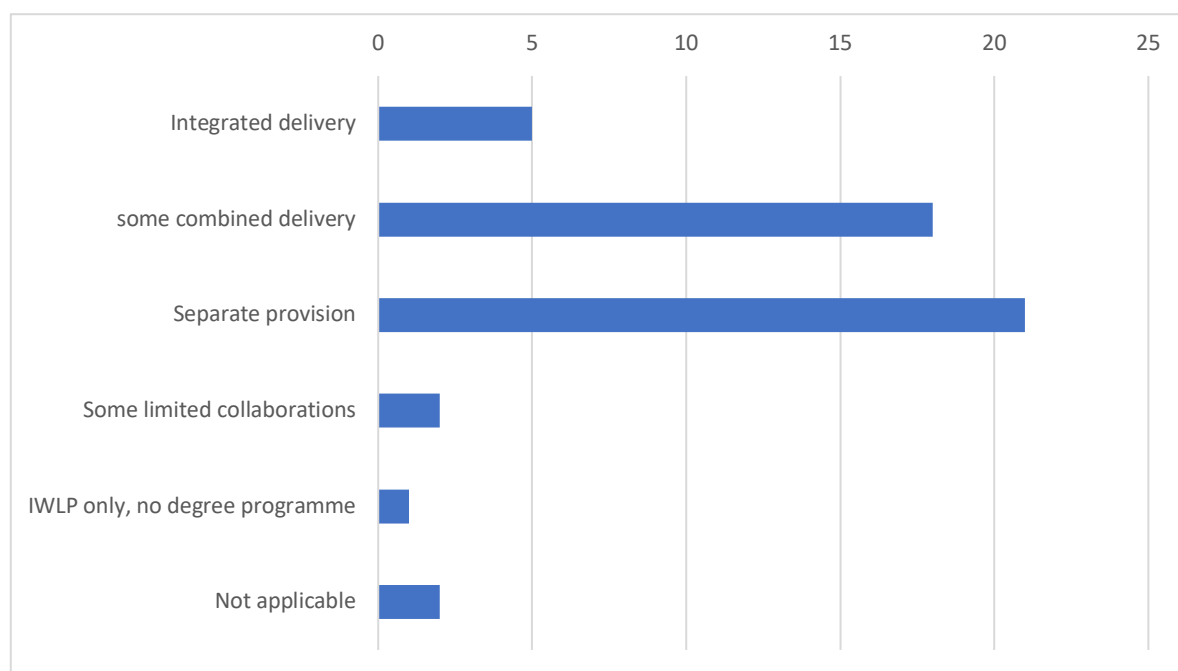


Different structures also will influence the scope and nature of the IWLP. Language centres tend to have a more varied portfolio of language services, whereas IWLPs delivered wholly within language departments tend to concentrate on core module delivery. Those units that have a combined organisation for delivery of IWLP and EAP tend to have greater resources.

4.5 Extent of collaboration between ML degree programmes and IWLPs

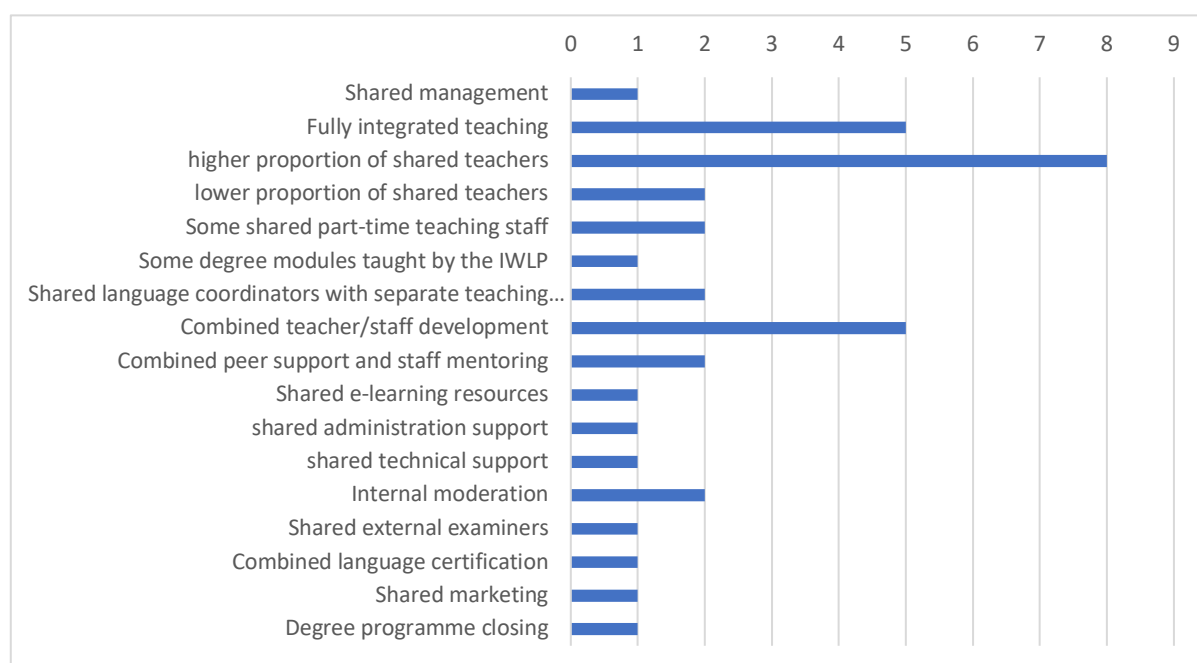
Whilst many IWLPs are organisationally located within academic Schools/Departments of Languages and Cultures, the majority continue to operate autonomously. There is some collaboration between language programmes offered to students taking a languages degree and IWLP, but it continues to be relatively limited. There is little evidence of systematic collaboration being reported through this survey.

Figure 12 *Level of Integration between IWLP and Degree Programmes (n=49)*



Five universities teach IWLP students in the same courses as for students taking a languages degree. 18 universities have some form of integrated delivery, which is principally related to individual languages and how they are taught. The greatest level of integration relates to the sharing of teaching resources across programmes, and how teachers are supported.

Figure 13 *Types of Integration between IWLP and Degree Programmes*



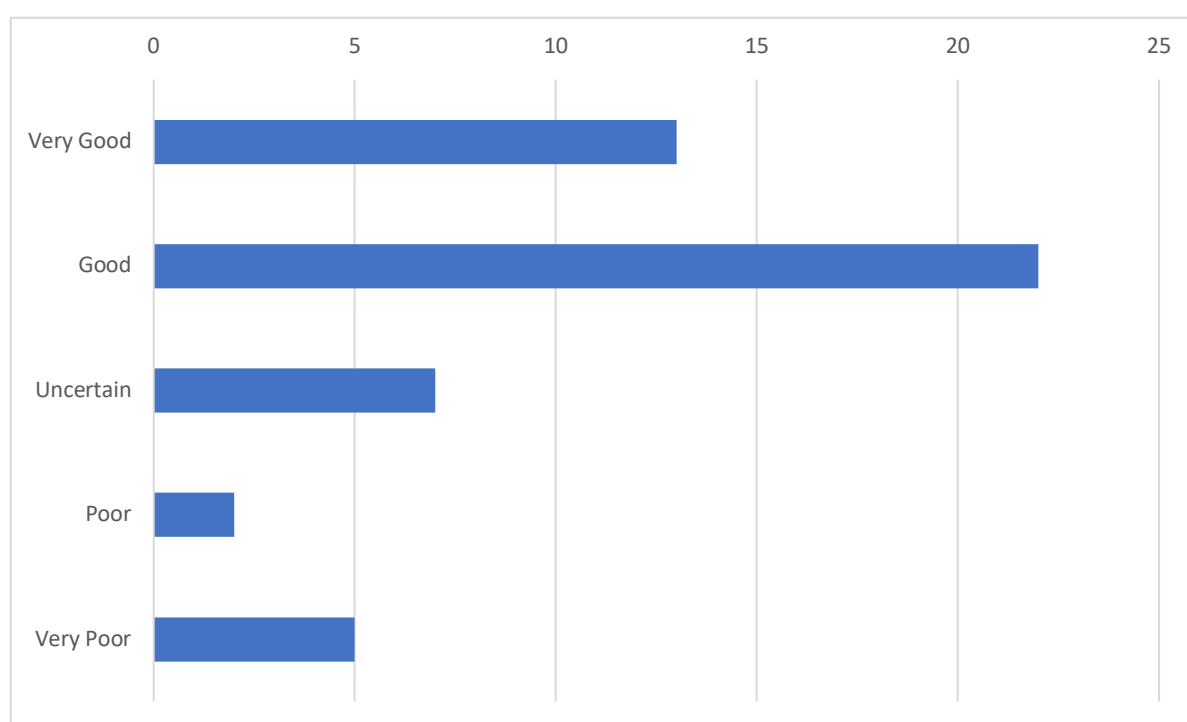
For the future, there is clear anecdotal evidence in the survey responses that closer collaboration can only be a good thing. However, in terms of improvements to collaboration, the focus lies principally with organisational matters, including the contract status of language

teaching staff engaged in IWLP teaching, and the barriers that can be created by perceptions of the value of IWLP within academic departments.

4.6 Prospects for the future for IWLP

In respect of this survey, the majority of respondents report that they are positive about the future of their IWLP, with 71% responding either Very Good or Good. 15% reported as Uncertain, 14% responded Poor or Very Poor, with one programme reporting that it is (sadly) due to close – this implying the end of language provision at that university. This is an improvement on responses received in the 2019-20 AULC survey, at which time only 54% responded positively, and a further 40% responded “Uncertain”.

Figure 14 How Respondents View the Future of IWLP Provision in their Institution (n=49)



It is unclear if this year’s responses indicate a genuine improvement in outlook, or differences in perceptions according to who completed the survey. It is interesting to note that responses received in 2020 are more positive than responses to the AULC surveys in each of the past 3 years, within which had been reported an increasing sense of uncertainty within IWLPs. There is a relatively high amount of change ongoing at present within IWLP provision nationally in the UK. Certainly, responses from within academic schools tend to be more positive about IWLP than those from within the IWLPs themselves. From separate discussions within the AULC community, it is known that at least seven AULC member programmes are facing considerable uncertainty about their futures, and anecdotally AULC are aware that a high level of uncertainty remains. Since the closing date of the survey, AULC have been notified of the closure or potential closure of two IWLPs who had otherwise indicated positive perceptions in the survey.

In the context of the National Languages Strategy³ and the desire to increase numbers of individuals both studying languages and having a heightened appreciation of languages and cultures, it is important that the wider discipline support a broad-based language provision across the institution from specialist immersive learning, through to supplementary learning alongside other academic fields and professions. Each side of this spectrum supports the other.

³ British Academy, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Association of School and College Leaders, the British Council and Universities UK (2020). *Towards a National Languages Strategy: Education and Skills*. Available at: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/towards-national-languages-strategy-education-and-skills/>.

5. Findings: Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

5.1 Challenges since the beginning of the pandemic

There is no doubt that the arrival of the pandemic has had a huge impact on the university sector and on all our practices and as one participant put it ‘there is no going back’ to where we were before the pandemic. In many ways too, it seems that the arrival of the pandemic in March 2020 and the sudden move to conducting all our activities online has accelerated processes already in place.

The challenges reported in the 56 responses to this question were varied but clustered around staffing and management perspectives, work/life balance, online teaching and student recruitment. Additionally, there were several responses which related directly to the challenges faced by those running evening classes and IWLPs. However, what came through in all these responses is the number of hurdles put in our way at the start of the pandemic and the ingenuity and dedication with which these challenges were faced by the staff concerned. It was pointed out more than once that the amount of time and work involved in moving to online working was not always appreciated by senior management in our universities nor were they always ‘language friendly’, especially in cases where the pandemic coincided with institutional restructuring.

5.1.1 Staffing and management perspectives

Colleagues in posts of responsibility reported facing a number of issues to do with the recruitment and management of staff. Those working with staff on fixed-term contracts who were only contracted to work during term-time and often lacked experience with online working faced real difficulties around developing new ‘sound pedagogical direction’ and the situation has served as a timely reminder of how much the sector relies on temporary contracts and the dangers these entail for both the staff concerned and their managers. Ensuring funding to adequately remunerate temporary staff for the time involved in moving their teaching online was also mentioned.

Several respondents highlighted issues around management relating to staff in crisis and the consequent higher number of referrals to Occupational Health. It was felt that there was no slack in the system if staff became ill and this was likely to lead to unmanageable workloads for others, especially if the team was small. Conversely, those working with large teams of staff emphasised the difficulties around online staff management.

There were a number of comments around staff recruitment and the difficulties of staffing online courses which in some cases has led to more part-time, temporary contracts than departments were comfortable with ‘in order to plug gaps’.

5.1.2 Work-life balance

It is clear from many of the responses that the move to online working has created additional stress and workload and that ‘there is very little recognition from senior management of just how much work is involved in moving online successfully’. The impact of ‘excessive screen time on health and well-being of staff’ as well as the stress of lockdown itself were also elements that were mentioned. Many staff encountered constraints on their time, especially those who had caring responsibilities, and found it difficult to deal with the additional work needed to put their courses online. Changes in contact hours were mentioned as well as ‘the additional time needed for teaching to different time zones’. All these factors led to ‘staff overwork’ and, for some, the feeling that ‘real workload has increased but not the way in which contracts are calculated’.

5.1.3 Student recruitment and retention

Student recruitment was an issue mentioned by a number of respondents with the feeling that the pandemic would ‘impact on recruitment of the next generation of linguists’. However, at least one modern languages department felt that ‘numbers have held up well considering’ and another mentioned the need to ‘rejig’ the UCAS offer. Undoubtedly, the shift to teacher-assessed grades, with associated uncertainties this may create, will also impact the sector for the next few years⁴. Several institutions mentioned initial problems around recruitment open days but as is shown in Section 5.3.4, there have been a number of creative responses to this challenge. Another mentioned that they were unable to launch a newly created language department at this time.

However, for those teaching units running evening classes and IWLPs and thus recruiting from within the university or from the local community, there were additional issues of recruitment and retention and different strategies had to be found to deal with them. In one case, ‘online delivery of evening classes had a mixed reception (reluctance for video)’ but ‘50% socially distanced classes were found to be a good mitigation’. In another case, it was reported that ‘some of the older students did not have access to digital devices and/or internet and chose not to re-enrol’. In another case, the switch to remote learning impacted directly on the IWLP since it rendered evening classes less convenient for some international students, but this was mitigated with the provision of lunchtime classes.

5.1.4 The move to on-line teaching

Most responses in this section related to the ‘sudden switch to online delivery’ and the need to adapt to online methodologies and assessment. However, some months into the pandemic there was considerable positivity in many of the responses with one respondent commenting that ‘online delivery was initially challenging but both staff and students have adapted well

⁴ British Academy (2020). The British Academy Responds to 2020 A Levels Data. Available at: <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/news/british-academy-responds-2020-levels-data/>.

to the new delivery mode’ and another that ‘online education worked surprisingly well but requires a lot from both staff and students’. There seemed to be a general feeling that ‘by and large the educational side works well’, although there are still issues to address such as ‘community building in the online class, encouraging students to turn on their camera during language classes, making pedagogically sound decisions under pressure to deliver’. However, as one respondent pointed out, the real challenges may now lie elsewhere and are to do with ‘student sociability, staff and student mental health’ among others. As another respondent noted, there are also issues to do with ‘shifting professional identities’ – moving from classroom delivery to learning design as we adapt to online delivery.

The sub-sections below briefly highlight some of the more detailed comments relating to the move to online teaching.

a. Training implications

At the outset, moving to online delivery of all teaching and providing the appropriate training for staff was an enormous challenge reflected in many of the responses. It was not just a question of providing technical upskilling and familiarity with new platforms but also guidance on appropriate pedagogies and assessment formats. In many cases, training and support was provided centrally by institutions but in at least one case, the CPD needed had to be funded directly by the teaching unit concerned. This is likely to be the case, for example, with an IWLP which does not receive direct funding from the university.

b. Technical challenges

At the outset, there was a ‘lack of confidence in teaching online’ as colleagues dealt with ‘unfamiliar technologies’ and both staff and students faced technical issues around online access. It was pointed out that ‘some aspects of the technology are still under-developed’ and not yet fit for purpose. For some universities, however, especially those used to teaching online, ‘the technological background for online delivery and assessment was in place’.

c. Delivery modes

When a mixture of online and in-person teaching was implemented in most institutions in the first half of the academic year 2020/21, this hybrid provision seems to have led to staff feeling ‘very unsafe health-wise’, experiencing a number of difficulties around in-person teaching and unsure how to deliver their teaching ‘with some students in class and some at home’. It was also felt to have been ‘counterproductive and led to students being isolated in halls making planning harder for staff’. This was largely resolved it would seem with moves back to entirely online teaching in the second half of the year – although this of course brought its own difficulties.

d. Language teaching online

It was pointed out that developing ‘suitable methodological approaches for different languages and different levels’ and adapting the resources that were needed was a real challenge at the outset. Several respondents mentioned that ‘online delivery has been particularly challenging for *ab initio* languages’ and for BSL.

e. Online resources

A number of respondents mentioned 'the lack of availability of electronic resources in all languages', although one mentioned that in their case language teaching resources were already in digital format in a VLE. Others mentioned that the development of online materials was challenging for some colleagues particularly when coupled with 'the tight deadlines' that everyone was working to.

f. Changes to assessment patterns

There were many comments on the challenges involved with the move to provide online assessment and the need to assess 'in a fair and meaningful way'. There was a comment about the need to fit in with university-wide principles and examples given of closed book exams moving to timed, open book assessments and of replacing in-class tests with online assessment. Particular concerns were expressed around the assessment of language modules 'given the need for real-time processing' and around the 'integrity of online language exams when you can't be sure if they're using phones etc to access dictionaries and online translation tools'. As one respondent mentioned, 'unlike other subject areas, we can't rely wholly on continuous assessment' given issues of academic integrity. There were real concerns around the 'reliability of reading and writing online assessment'. It was mentioned that 'some forms of online assessment, e.g. oral exams, are proving very time consuming to organise' and elsewhere, that all online assessment for *ab initio* classes was proving problematic. One respondent felt that we could adapt previous assessment practices but that the ideal solution has not been found yet. This is a sentiment shared by many, it would seem.

g. Student engagement

There were many comments on levels of student engagement with online learning and teaching and there was some feeling that students were engaging well and that feedback was largely positive. Others were not so clear that students were engaging well and felt that student engagement remained a major challenge or that it 'is low for many different reasons including mental health but also student lack of participation and understanding of what it takes to learn a FL', perhaps exacerbated during the pandemic. It was also pointed out that it was 'difficult to monitor student engagement when cameras and microphones are not used' and this made things particularly difficult in language classes 'more so than in the cultural studies classes'. Managing student expectations and their anxieties is a related challenge and as one participant pointed out 'pastoral care has been difficult, and some students have lost interest'.

h. The student experience

Many of the comments in the survey indicate that 'online education has worked extremely well', citing the quality of coursework as evidence as well as feedback from student surveys. However, the difficulties of 'providing a consistent and reliable experience for all students' were highlighted as a real issue which has not yet been fully addressed. This is the case despite the many successful examples of online teaching and the undoubted 'extraordinary progress' in the area. There are obvious difficulties in providing 'equal access for students with poor

internet connections and/or unsuitable study spaces'. One solution was to ensure that contact hours are maintained (but see paragraph i below).

i. Group size

Group sizes were identified as another issue in online delivery. Where there had been large classes it was sometimes necessary to reduce synchronous class time, in one case 'to allow for small group teaching of no more than 8 per group'. It was pointed out by one respondent that 'students have voiced a strong preference for additional synchronous class time but drop-out rates are lower than in previous years'. There is no doubt that maintaining class sizes appropriate for online teaching have led to additional logistical issues and in some cases additional costs (and higher workloads) when more teaching hours have to be found.

5.2 Impacts of the pandemic on academic staff

There were 56 responses to this question. Answers reinforced many of the points which came through in the last question. It is quite clear that the year since the first lockdown in March 2020 has been a period of enormous adaptation to new working and living circumstances. For some, despite the initial difficulties experienced, several positive aspects are cited but for others the difficulties outweigh any gain, citing the '24/7 working culture' as a result of working from home and the 'imbalance between work and personal life that characterised academic life even before' and the impact that this has had on mental health.

On the positive side, this period has been seen as an opportunity to think about online delivery and discover new ways of working, especially since 'all of us at the same time have to embrace it'. There was a feeling that on the whole colleagues 'have done an exceptional job at adapting their practice to the new formats'. Others felt that along with the improvement of digital skills and the 'huge upskilling' that had taken place there were other real advantages to online working. These include easier virtual networking which has 'opened up a whole new range of opportunities', and online research seminars, conferences and CPD sessions which have 'improved access to these events considerably for many colleagues'. Although not all have benefitted equally if they have IT and other accessibility issues. There have been benefits too for 'tutors on fractional contracts [who] could work for several institutions from any location across the UK without the need to commute' and this will have eased the life of many, including early career academics.

Despite the many positive aspects associated with this change in working practices, there have been and still remain many real difficulties to be overcome and at some cost to the individual. It was 'tough at the start' with many citing 'severely' increased workloads and anxiety and the need to balance responsibilities, especially those with caring responsibilities and/or children who had to be home-schooled. Some of these pressures could be set against time gained through a lack of commuting but 'the pressure to do brilliantly' and parallel feelings of a lack of confidence in the digital medium have taken their toll with no opportunities 'to have face-to-face chats with colleagues over a coffee (or a beer!)'. Many staff are 'exhausted' sometimes with a 'sense of alienation from the work environment',

needing to make an 'extra effort [...] to maintain contact with students' and with real concerns about the 'feasibility of working from home (e.g. technical issues, workspace etc.)'. For many, although 'a degree of rebalancing has occurred', there has been 'increasing frustration with regard to the isolation created by exclusive homeworking' and 'the concept of "working from home" now being experienced as "living to work"'.

For many, too, research has had to take a back seat with research leave being cancelled or deferred and 'extreme difficulty' experienced accessing archives and libraries. Access to primary materials was 'impossible for many' and has also led to projects being delayed. This, as one respondent stated, 'in turn creates a backlog further down the line'. To summarise, as one respondent put it, 'we have lived up to the challenges, but at a cost of a lot of overtime and stress for many'.

5.3 Lessons for the future to adapt our practices

Although many might wish to return to pre-pandemic days, there was a general feeling in the 52 responses to this question that 'everything' has changed and that 'many positive developments have come out of our experience of the last 9 months and, to an extent, have propelled [...] us [...] into the 21st century'. There was some feeling that much of 'what we are developing now is going to be kept in a hybrid future' and we should be 'resisting the temptation of reverting wholesale to pre-COVID practices where the new practices offer advantages'. However, there is also the message that we must move ahead cautiously. As one respondent put it, we should 'find time for a review and (only) keep/develop positive approaches', and as another said when referring to educational change, 'creating virtual learning communities that are successful is not easy and not something that can be rushed'. As we move forward as a community, it may be that we should 'take a much more holistic view of our work' and 'address areas which could be improved across the board'. There is also a real need for caution as 'it will be important to be able to come together as one community rather than split into those who only access the institution virtually and those who are able to be on campus all the time'. Lessons for the future came in a number of areas which are outlined below.

5.3.1 Teaching/pedagogy

There is no doubt that there has been 'a palpable teaching paradigm shift' and that new approaches to teaching will emerge post-COVID which will involve a different blend of online and face-to-face teaching from pre-COVID days.

It seems that many colleagues intend to make more use of flipped approaches to teaching/learning with asynchronous learning taking place online before a synchronous face-to-face session. The online element could include access to learning resources (including potentially lectures or 'lecture segments') and online collaboration which could include 'ad-hoc spaces for peer-to-peer student engagements'. One respondent reported 'positive feedback from students who appreciate the flexibility of having pre-recorded materials

available to work though at their own pace before joining the webinar'. There were others who make the point that blended learning has its place but that there is 'a clear demand for return to in-situ classes when possible'. It seems evident however that going forward there will be a 'more integrated use of appropriate technology in learning outside the classroom' along with better use of course content on VLEs, improved storage and accessibility of learning resources, and use of VLEs and other technology resources for remote assessment. For language learning, there will better use of technology which will also facilitate the development of independent learning, and better knowledge of the resources available. It is clear that how we 'blend' teaching in future will have to be considered carefully with one respondent describing how oral classes had been prioritised for in-person teaching but concluding that 'offering a mix of in-person classes (i.e. across the skills) rather than just one skills category would possibly have been better'.

There were some examples in the survey of potential future changes that could encompass whole courses, such as Masters courses that could be delivered predominantly online, or possible binary approaches where modules and/or courses would be offered as both face-to-face and online. This was likely to be the case for several IWLP providers going forward who are considering offering certain modules online and also for minor programmes within modern languages since 'students are often focussed on their main programme and miss classes at certain busy times of the year'. These changes are no doubt proposed because it is hoped that these courses will become more accessible for staff and students and therefore more viable. A suggestion had been made in one university that online teaching would reduce costs but as was pointed out 'evidence points to the contrary'.

5.3.2 Communication

It is clear that as we move forward many expect the majority of meetings and conferences to remain virtual since 'they to help facilitate accessibility and inclusion'. Attendance is significantly higher as a result. It was felt that staff meetings in particular have benefited from being online. However, although some meetings with staff and students may lead to better communication and are more focussed, they may be much less useful for smaller meetings and committees. It is likely that there will be 'increased use of virtual spaces for professional networking' including 'virtual research events and between teachers and programme coordinators but also perhaps for certain student-facing meetings such as 'office hours' or 'small group tutorials'.

However, even though virtual meetings have undeniable benefits, it was felt that they are not a substitute for the 'the real thing', and even if the substitutes have become better technologically, as one respondent put it 'virtual meetings should become part of the diet of meetings, but shouldn't be the go-to mode, as virtual meetings cannot replicate valuable conversations in corridors and staff kitchens'.

5.3.3 The environmental perspective

The point was made many times about virtual meetings and online teaching saving both time and often money but also reducing our environmental impact. As one respondent put it, 'lots of unnecessary travelling to meetings has ceased' and post-pandemic we need to 'harness technology' to reduce our environmental impact further.

5.3.4 Outreach and recruitment

In many cases, it seems that virtual modern languages open days and outreach activities have had better attendance than on-campus events with the result that these, or a blended approach, will be continued going forward. It was felt that some virtual activities work particularly well and that they can be more 'inclusive' as there may be fewer costs attached to attending open days and 'more sustainable from an environmental point of view'. However, it was pointed out that providing a mix of online and on-campus activities is 'hard with scarce resources to provide on-campus delivery as well as online delivery and blended'. Some felt that school visits were much more effective using online media 'rather than spending a whole day with just a small group of pupils in one school'. For others, virtual open days were badly attended to the extent that it was felt that this might well affect recruitment. The success or otherwise of these events may be context dependent. As well as virtual open days and visit days, there was the suggestion that 'remote teaching' could be potentially used to increase recruitment – presumably allowing prospective students to experience what study is like in a particular institution.

5.4 Strategies to respond to the impact of the pandemic on residency abroad

In the 54 answers to this question, there is a mixed picture as to how individual institutions have responded to the pandemic in terms of residence abroad. Part of the problem, as one respondent says, has been that 'the situation is continuously evolving and strategies have had to evolve in step with them. Forward planning has been very difficult'. The following captures some of the main points made:

- In the academic year 2019/20, some institutions allowed students abroad to choose whether to return home whereas others asked their students to return. Some provided additional online classes to make up for time lost in the target language country. Many allowed their students to apply for 'Extenuating Circumstances' to partially compensate for the likely impact on achievement in the following academic year. Regulations had to be changed to remove the minimum period of residence abroad and assessment requirements had to be modified to allow for students returning home early with incomplete marks.
- In 2020/21, many universities did not permit their students to travel abroad for the first semester although one institution reported that they relaxed this ruling as a result of student pressure. Most departments were fairly flexible, allowing students to either defer or to split the year in a number of combinations. In some cases, the year abroad was completely replaced with a virtual year and in one case students were allowed direct entry into the final year without a year abroad.

- Many universities supplemented the virtual year abroad with the online resources and MOOCs made available through UCML as well as other materials. There were examples of students given access to guided learning materials, conversation classes, online 'events', and tandem learning. Examples were also given of the use of student learning portfolios documenting engagement with the learning materials and the target language, culture and society.
- Lessons learnt over the last 12 months included recognition of the role of the personal tutor in supporting the student in the virtual year abroad and of the point that virtual exchange with partner universities can lead to a very varied student experience depending on the country and institution in question. Concerns were also expressed around the flexibility that departments had to support their students who could not travel and also about the additional costs that this incurred.

Overall, despite the difficulties faced there was a feeling of a job well done and that overall 'we have been successful in managing student expectations and concerns' and that 'Virtual Year Abroad Programmes have been very well received by students, although can never fully replace the immersive development experience'.

6. Findings: Responses to Brexit

6.1 Steps taken to address changes to teaching and research brought about by Brexit

There were many comments in the 49 responses to this question implying that it was too soon to say what the full implication of Brexit might be, although a number of steps are being taken to counter the immediate effects, especially in the area of residence abroad. There were general concerns about recruitment following Brexit with the impact of EU fee status changes still being monitored. There was particular concern around the future of programmes, for example, where there are insufficient Home students and combined programmes with an international focus such as 'International Relations and Languages'. It was felt that very little is being done to solve this issue at the moment in our universities. In terms of the impact on the curriculum, one respondent cites a broader project on decolonising the curriculum and the likely changes that will have to be made, especially in terms of residence abroad.

Post-Brexit 'limitations on travel and longer-term stays abroad' were seen to be damaging to existing placement partnerships in Europe. At the time of the survey, very little was known about the Turing Scheme and how it would replace Erasmus+ membership. However, with the end of Erasmus+ exchanges now certain in England at least (this may not be the case in all home nations⁵), most universities are establishing bilateral agreements with their European partners. Progress is slow and although some institutions completed this process as early as 2019, others were still working on this. Institutions through their International Offices are providing advice but there was felt to be 'little visible progress'. Departments themselves are trying to maintain contacts and in at least one case setting up memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with their partners.

The immediate focus within universities has been on the impact of Brexit on residence abroad and the need for new exchange agreements but at least one example was given of additional resources being directed 'to supporting colleagues engaged in research with EU partners'.

6.2 Arrangements to minimise the impact of withdrawal from Erasmus+

There were 49 responses to this question. As mentioned in the previous section, most institutions are moving to set up bilateral agreements with European partners to minimise the impact of the exit from the Erasmus+ scheme but this may well have budgetary implications which have not yet been addressed by senior management, it would seem. It is

⁵ For Wales, see Adams, Richard (2021). Wales Sets Up Its Own Erasmus Programme. *Observer*, 21 March 2021. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/mar/21/wales-sets-up-its-own-erasmus-programme>; for Northern Ireland, see BBC (2020). Erasmus: NI students with British passports can access funding. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-55455532>; and for Scotland, see BBC (2021). Brexit: Scotland in talks over EU Erasmus scheme. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-55804113>.

not clear that all European partners will want to set up bilateral relationships given the loss of Erasmus+ funding for incoming students, although the 'majority' of university partners so far are willing to do so. At least one university is considering virtual exchanges going forward. There are general concerns too around new residency requirements for placements in general. As one respondent put it:

'The loss of funding for students is a great concern, as are the requirements that now apply to British citizens wishing to spend longer periods in the EU/EEA/Switzerland, which may pose particular problems for students who wish to embark on work placements, including British Council assistantships'.

A certain amount of lobbying has been carried out by institutions in order try to solve this and how the different home nations continue to respond to the UK-wide withdrawal from the Erasmus+ scheme will be of marked interest (see previous footnote).

6.3 Changes to institutional attitudes, policies and strategies affecting languages

The 47 responses to this question drew out a number of examples of the impact of Brexit on languages and in some cases a greater will to promote them. In one example, an institution reversed its decision to cut most combinations of languages with other subjects 'for timetabling reasons' and agreed to implement a new language policy proposal which included community evening classes opening up to students for free and new programmes incorporating languages. In another example, there was a successful plea for an internationalisation strategy which did not mention languages to 'have a reference inserted'. Another university is currently making the case for a departmental language strategy to sit alongside or be incorporated within the university's internationalisation strategy.

Another example was given of a 'higher commitment to language study and internationalisation' although 'the mode of commitment is currently under discussion'. Elsewhere, there were no evident changes as an 'institutional Languages Strategy has existed for a number of years' and 'global citizenship continues to be seen and promoted as an important graduate attribute', although there is no new funding. In two other institutions it was felt that there was 'a long-standing commitment to teaching ML' which in one case is 'built into our education strategies'. In yet another, a Brexit Group was set up several years ago to discuss the potential impact of Brexit on different areas of the university and languages has always been represented as 'one of the main stakeholders'.

Not all examples were positive and in at least one case, languages are under threat and there are discussions on the reduction of contact hours 'because of the costs of ML programmes'. Another respondent felt that Brexit may be 'strengthening people's prejudices about language programmes as being resource heavy or problematic'.

Elsewhere, it was mentioned that Brexit has accelerated plans for expansion with partners beyond Europe and that there was a 'diversification of internationalisation initiatives especially at PGT level'.

The picture therefore appears to be decidedly mixed, with some positives and some negatives, though in general it seems we must be cautious that the impact of Brexit does not unduly exacerbate pre-existing tensions surrounding modern languages provision.

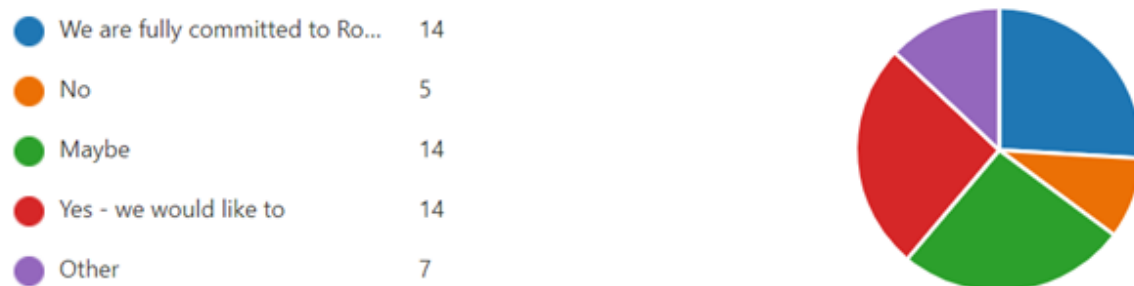
7. Findings: Routes into Languages

7.1 Commitments to Routes into Languages and schools outreach activities

Given the interest that many universities expressed in Routes into Languages at the 2020 UCML summer plenary, we asked whether universities were considering expanding their activities in this area. Of the 54 responses, 14 said that they were already fully committed to Routes, 5 said no, 14 said maybe, 14 said that they would like to do so.

This is a very positive response with those answering ‘no’ likely to do so because it was not relevant to their centre (e.g. Language Centre) as was made clear in the ‘other’ responses given. In at least one case the respondent was interested in being more involved with Routes but did not have institutional support. The point was also made that Routes was not relevant to Scotland since it is only England and Wales which have received Routes into Languages funding, however UCML would be delighted to explore possibilities of extending Routes collaboration to Scotland.

Figure 15 Current or Wished for Involvement in Routes into Languages (n=54)



In terms of follow up in this area, the Routes into Languages committee will be contacting the 28 institutions who have indicated that they may be interested in being more involved in Routes activities. One of the priorities for the Routes committee going forward is likely to be a much wider take up of the undergraduate ambassador scheme for schools with perhaps a national (virtual) training scheme for the undergraduate ambassadors.

7.2 Institutional participation in Routes into Languages outreach activities

The ‘vital role’ that Routes into Languages ‘plays in securing the future of language learning’ was expressed in many of the 35 additional responses and there were many expressions of support from those that have been involved in Routes in some way in the past and would like to explore getting involved in the future. There were also other examples of successful non-Routes outreach work, including summer schools, which many universities are undertaking to promote languages.

However, as one respondent put it:

‘While colleagues are always willing to contribute to these activities, more substantial resource is needed both nationally and locally to ensure this effort is sustainable and that the Routes "brand" remains recognisable to our allies in secondary schools and in business across the country’.

A lack of funding to take forward school-facing activities was expressed in several responses. Organising and promoting such activities is very time consuming and the role of a coordinator and/or an inspirational lead is seen as an ongoing key to success. There are three Routes into Languages regions in England which report still being actively involved in Routes activities and in one case a former Routes regional manager is ‘an important part of the team’ and in another case the commitment of senior academics has been important to secure on-going funding.

In other parts of the UK, ‘the Routes Cymru programme is ongoing and is well integrated in the Welsh education system’. One Scottish institution ‘collaborate(s) extensively with Local Authorities and SCILT, and (is) looking to develop a school mentoring scheme along the lines of the successful Wales scheme once more normal working conditions return’. In Northern Ireland, one institution which participated in an OWRI undergraduate school mentoring scheme reports how the Department for Education of the Northern Ireland Executive ‘will be supporting a similar ambassador scheme from 2022, mentoring year 10 (year 9 in England) pupils in non-selective schools and aiming to raise GCSE numbers in Languages’.

In one response, there was mention of the ‘lack of causality between the work undertaken locally and recruitment trends’ which was a potential weakness of Routes. As the respondent goes on to say, it is ‘vital to be able to demonstrate conclusively the positive impact of Routes into Languages on recruitment’ if we are to maintain the push for funding and a joined-up approach to promoting languages amongst our younger learners.

8. Conclusion

This study sought to continue the analysis provided by the 2018 and 2019 surveys by gathering further data on the current language provision in UK higher education. This iteration of the survey was particularly interested in determining the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit on languages in the UK, in addition to continuing to monitor trends in which languages are offered, at what levels, and how degree provision sits alongside or works with IWLP provision.

The previous survey suggested that the UK's languages landscape had shrunk, from 69 institutions offering language degrees in 2018 to 64 in 2019 (Polisca et al., 2019: 24). Desk research for this survey suggests this may be an underestimate (see Figure 4 and Appendix 3), since 71 institutions appear to be recruiting to modern languages programmes (whether as a major or minor degree component) for 2021/22 entry. This survey has also revealed that some language provision is hidden when conclusions are based solely on UCAS data; significant levels of credit-bearing language teaching is delivered by IWLPs. This survey has indicated that the trends acknowledged by previous surveys are not supported by this year's data, and that the situation is much more nuanced, especially considering the full spectrum of provision. Of course, this survey does not reflect student numbers and the size of the courses/credit-bearing modules here is unknown, but it nevertheless provides a welcome reminder that modern language provision extends far beyond what is reported in UCAS data.⁶

Looking ahead, one trend that this survey seems to confirm is an evolution in the constitution of the UK's language degree landscape, with Chinese displacing Italian to become the fourth most-widely taught language on university programmes. This survey has also indicated a potential increase in institutions offering Japanese and Portuguese that should be carefully tracked looking forward. The other is the rise of *ab initio* languages, which are now almost universally available.

On the IWLP side of the spectrum, the picture is one of stability and consolidation. Provision overall appears consistent with recent years in terms of breadth and scale, albeit this survey has presented a less complete picture as regards the full range of institution wide language provision than might actually be the case. The opportunities for continued cooperation and collaboration between academic Departments and IWLPs should be developed where appropriate, and with a stronger understanding of the priorities from each side, there should be good scope for mutual advantages to be drawn.

It is clear that both the pandemic and Brexit have had a terrific impact on our academic lives and on the educational experiences of our students. As a community, however, albeit virtual over the last year or more, the evidence in this survey shows that we have not just survived; we have learnt new skills, developed new ways of working and shared ideas which will stand us in very good stead going forward.

⁶ For further details on this issue and an analysis of UCAS modern languages admissions data, see UCML and British Academy (2021), *Report on Granular Trends in Modern Languages in UCAS Admissions Data, 2012-18*.

It is also very gratifying to see an increase in interest around 'Routes' type activities across the UK nations compared to the previous survey and also to see some evidence of financial support for schemes involving the undergraduate language ambassador. However, the need for further funding remains if universities are to truly build on the good practice and enthusiasm that remains in both the university and school sectors for this sort of initiative.

The results of this survey have been supplemented through additional research by the authors in terms of verifying the situation nationally. Subsequent to the survey census date, there have also been a number of institutions reporting uncertainty regarding their future provision, be this related to degree provision, or IWLP provision. The results of this survey can be useful to UCML, to AULC and to our member institutions in responding to ongoing challenges, and to develop joint strategies to support the sector, not least as the evolving National Languages Strategy #LanguagesUK takes shape. It will be important to draw on and emphasise the many positive aspects of language provision across UK higher education, and to use the findings of this survey to our advantage as we face the combined challenges of Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and evolving policy as it may affect the Humanities, and Modern Languages in particular. Yet this survey has also identified the breadth and scale of language provision across the UK, with much to be positive about. It is important to maintain this provision, and to continue to make the case for language learning and the study of languages across all levels and for all reasons within our institutions. UCML, AULC and our communities will use these results to support the sector, working collaboratively to reinforce our individual and collective positions at a time of uncertainty but also one of opportunity.

Appendix 1: List of Participating Institutions in the 2020-21 Survey

1. Aberystwyth University
2. Aston University
3. Bangor University
4. Cardiff University
5. De Montfort University
6. Durham University
7. Imperial College London
8. Keele University
9. King's College London
10. Lancaster University
11. Leeds Beckett University
12. London School of Economics and Political Science
13. Loughborough University
14. Newcastle University
15. Northumbria University
16. Nottingham Trent University
17. Open University
18. Oxford Brookes University
19. Queen Mary University of London
20. Queen's University Belfast
21. Regent's University London
22. University College London
23. University of Aberdeen
24. University of Bath
25. University of Birmingham
26. University of Bristol
27. University of Cambridge
28. University of Central Lancashire
29. University of Chester
30. University of East Anglia
31. University of Edinburgh
32. University of Essex
33. University of Exeter
34. University of Glasgow
35. University of Kent
36. University of Leeds
37. University of Leicester
38. University of Liverpool
39. University of Manchester
40. University of Nottingham
41. University of Oxford
42. University of Portsmouth
43. University of Reading
44. University of Roehampton
45. University of St Andrews

46. University of Southampton
47. University of Surrey
48. University of Sussex
49. University of Warwick
50. University of Westminster
51. University of Worcester
52. University of York
53. York St John University

Appendix 2: References & Supplementary Reading

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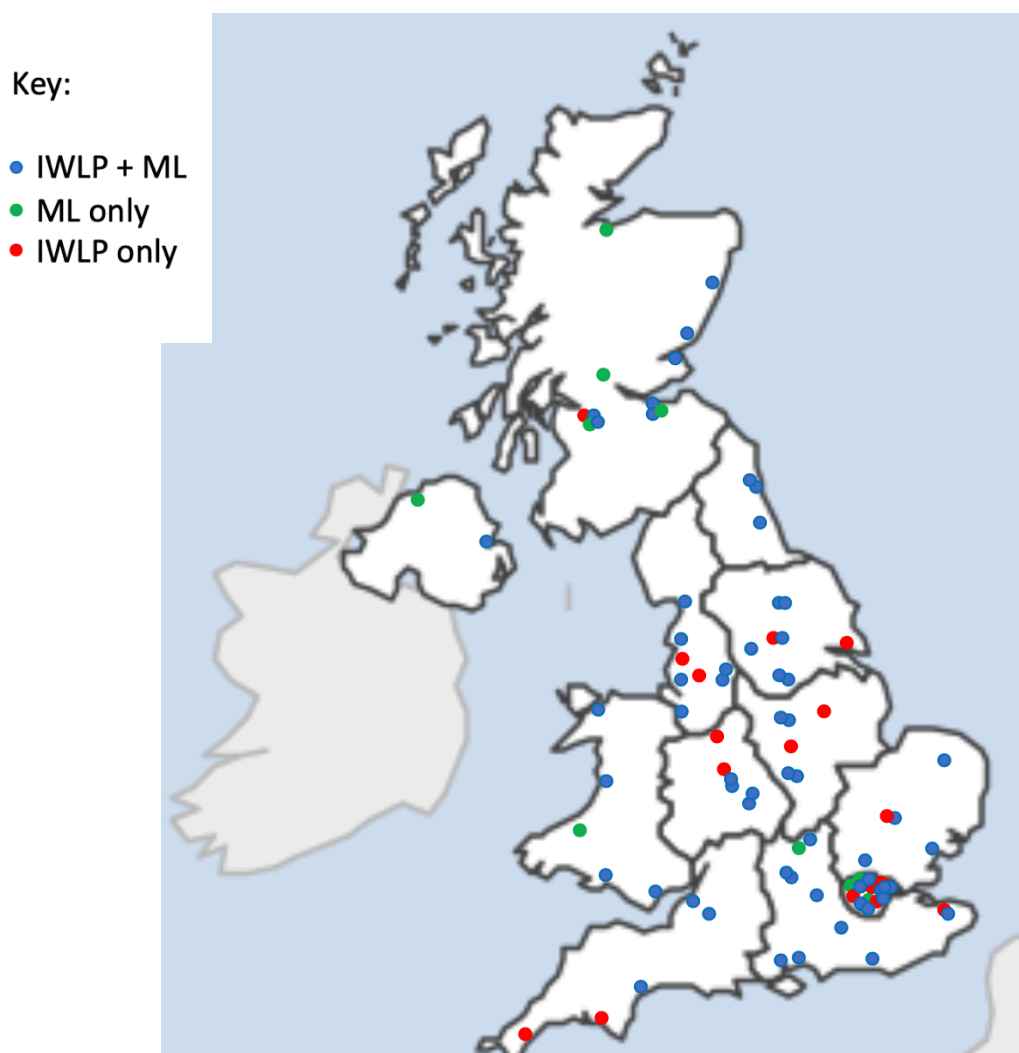
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Appendix 3: Map of UK Modern Languages Provision

The map below (Figure 16) aims to visualise the provision of modern languages across the UK. The map is divided into the regions used by UCAS, and the coloured points represent institutions that deliver language programmes either through IWLP or degree provision, or both. The map is indicative; there are several institutions here that did not respond to the survey, and the locations are approximate (though provided as per the UCAS regional data). Degree provision (here listed as 'ML') has been identified through 2020 UCAS data and through desk research, where an institution's website is currently advertising degree programmes for 2021/22 entry that include a language component (even if only as a minor pathway) or where the institution is advertising for 2021/22 recruitment to programmes include languages on UCAS. IWLPs have been listed through cross-checking against the AULC membership list and desk research, where an institution's website clearly offers IWLP-type provision with 2021 enrolment dates. This research has identified 92 institutions in the UK where modern languages are taught in some capacity. The table that follows the map provides a numerical breakdown by region of the data represented on the map.

Figure 16 Map of Language Provision across the UK December 2020



Region	IWLP Only	Degree Programme Only	IWLP + Degree	Total
East	1	0	4	5
East Midlands	2	0	4	6
London	8	4	9	21
Northeast	0	0	3	3
Northwest	2	0	6	8
Northern Ireland	0	1	1	2
Scotland	1	4	7	12
Southeast	1	1	9	11
Southwest	2	0	3	5
Wales	0	1	4	5
West Midlands	2	0	4	6
Yorkshire & Humber	2	0	6	8
Total:	21	11	60	92