

**UCML-AULC survey of Institution-Wide Language Provision in universities in the UK (2016-2017)**

**March 2017**



# Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Method .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1	Surveying the sector .....	2
2.2	Questionnaire .....	3
2.3	Limitations .....	3
<b>3.</b>	<b>Results .....</b>	<b>3</b>
3.1.	Number of students on IWLP-type course .....	3
3.2.	Languages offered .....	4
3.3.	Changing preferences for languages compared to last year .....	5
3.4	Reasons for Growth	6
3.5.	Proportion of accredited and non-accredited learning	7
3.6.	Prospects for IWLP .....	8
3.7.	External language provision	8
3.8	Challenges facing IWLP.....	9
3.9.	IWLP teaching staff: professionalisation	11
3.10.	Themes for the AULC to address .....	12
<b>4.</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Appendix: List of participating institutions .....</b>	<b>15</b>



## I. Introduction

This survey, carried out by members of the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML) and the Association of University Language Centres in the UK and Ireland (AULC), sought to obtain a snapshot of Institution-wide Language Provision (IWLP) activity across the higher education sector in the UK in the 2016-2017 academic year.

Also sometimes referred to as ‘Languages for All’, IWLP typically comprises elective language modules/course units taken for academic credit as minor components of a degree, and language courses studied in addition to and alongside a student’s degree programme. Students taking these courses have been referred to as ‘non-specialist language learners’ since they may often have little background in foreign language learning, and the courses they study are not a compulsory component of the degree programme for which they are registered.

This is the fifth year in succession that the UCML-AULC survey has been conducted. As there is no other mechanism or agency in a position to compile this data<sup>1</sup>, the UCML-AULC survey is of particular importance.

The last four UCML-AULC surveys (2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016) showed that IWLP is an expanding area attracting increasing numbers of students, and this trend in UK HE is the continuation of a pattern originally identified in earlier surveys (Marshall, 2001; Byrne and Abbott, 2007<sup>2</sup>).

Specific aims of the present survey were to:

- gauge availability and demand for different IWLP languages in UK HE and note changing trends
- ascertain the proportion of and arrangements for credit and non-credit provision
- determine the extent to which HEIs offer IWLP languages externally
- explore the impact of the EU referendum, and other changes, on IWLP
- gauge respondents’ views on the value of promoting HEA Fellowship status

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Surveying the sector

IWLP activity is rather difficult to survey as it is a somewhat diverse phenomenon. In most institutions, it includes accredited provision offered to non-specialist language learners; in others, it may only encompass provision which carries no academic credit. Many institutions offer both forms of provision, in some cases separately, in others in an integrated way. Activity may be managed from within a university language centre or it might be offered alongside degree programmes within a language department. In some institutions, provision for external students (members of the public/lifelong learning students) may be incorporated as a part of the IWLP provision. The sector is also diverse in terms of the range 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, e.g. length of courses, number of contact hours per course.

<sup>1</sup> Registrations for IWLP course units are not recorded in UCAS or HESA statistics.

<sup>2</sup> Through its members, AULC conducted surveys of non-specialist language learners in 2003/04 and four subsequent years, obtaining an increasing response rate each year largely as a result of methodological improvements.

## **2.2. Questionnaire**

A simple electronic questionnaire was devised using the *Google Forms* survey tool. It was sent out in the fourth week of October 2016 to all AULC institutional representatives in the UK using the AULC members' list. It was also sent to contacts on the UCML list. Thus the survey was sent to institutions with language centres and to those with IWLP activity in modern languages departments, even though in the latter case the activity might not be formally identified as IWLP. The survey sought to obtain data only on students who were taking a language either as a free choice (elective) course unit or on a non-credit basis.

## **2.3. Limitations**

As was the case with last year's survey, the present survey only collected information on: i) students studying a language course as a free choice, or 'elective', accredited course option and ii) students studying a non-accredited language course in addition to and alongside their degree programme. Thus data was not collected for students who were studying a language which, though comprising a minor part of their degree (less than 50%), was not a 'free-choice option'. As a result, it is likely that a considerable number of what might be termed 'non-specialist language students' have not been included in the figures reported here. This differs from the approach used in the Byrne and Abbot surveys (2007) which were designed to collect figures on the number of students at HE institutions who were taking a language simply as a minor 'assessed part of their degree (under 50%)'.

The survey did not collect information on the range of levels offered for each language. It was felt that breaking this information down across the languages would be time-consuming for the respondents and would result in a lower response rate. Likewise, data was not sought on the numbers progressing in a particular language across the years of study. Unlike in the earlier surveys (e.g. Byrne and Abbot, 2007), students themselves were not surveyed.

## **3. Results**

By the end of the survey period, data had been collected from 62 institutions, 21 of which were Russell Group universities. Most of those who completed and submitted the questionnaire were directors of language centres or coordinators of IWLP programmes. However, there were also some responses from heads of academic departments and a small number of responses from programme administrators. This latter group responded to the part of the survey which asked for quantitative data but most did not complete the entire questionnaire.

### **3.1. Number of students on IWLP-type courses**

The number of students reported as being enrolled on IWLP courses in this survey was somewhat higher than the number reported in 2015-2016: the total number of enrolments reported for the end of October/early November period in the 2015-2016 academic year was 55,345 (61 HEIs reporting). The total number of enrolments reported for the end of October/early November period in the 2016-17 academic year was 62,445 (62 HEIs reporting). The figure for the same period in the 2012-13 academic year was 49,637 (61 HEIs reporting). Year to year comparisons have to be treated cautiously because not only does the actual number of respondents vary from year to year but the actual institutions which report also vary slightly. Nevertheless, a general pattern of increasing enrolments is suggested by these figures, which are summarised in the table below:

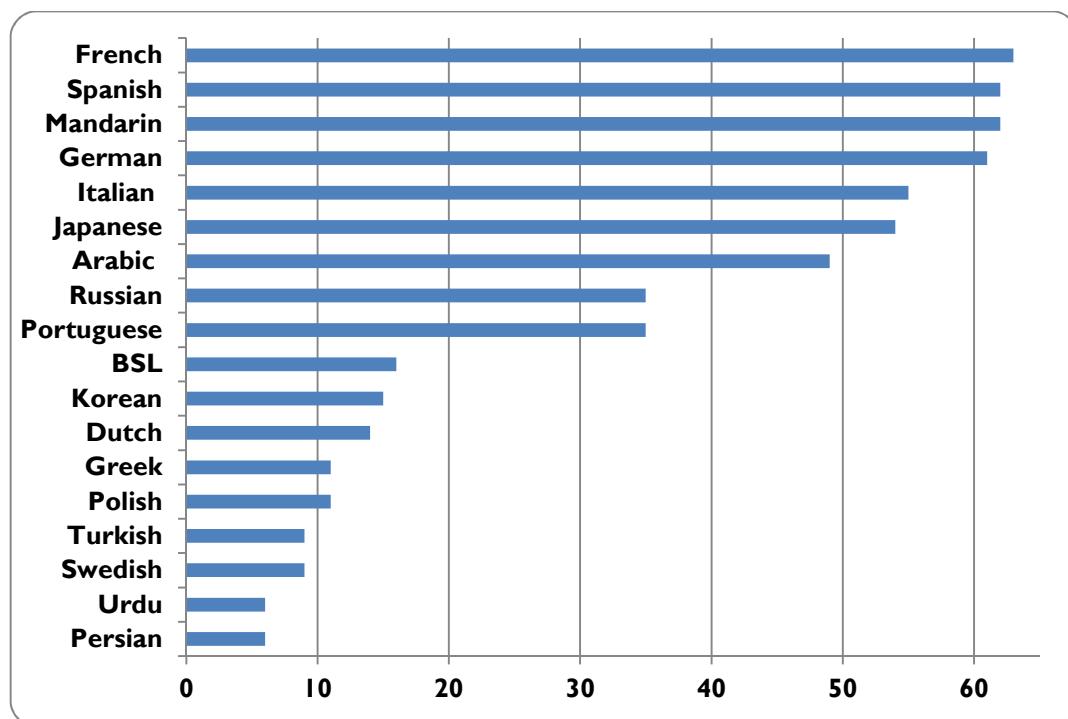
**Table 1. Number of enrolments reported in the UCML-AULC surveys**

Year	Number	Number of HEIs reporting
2012-2013	49,637	61
2013-2014	53,971	64
2014-2015	54,975	61
2015-2016	55,354	61
2016-2017	62,455	62

Bearing in mind that data was not collected from all HEIs, we can be quite confident that the total number of students who enrol on IWLP courses each year in UK HE is over 62,000.

### 3.2. Languages offered

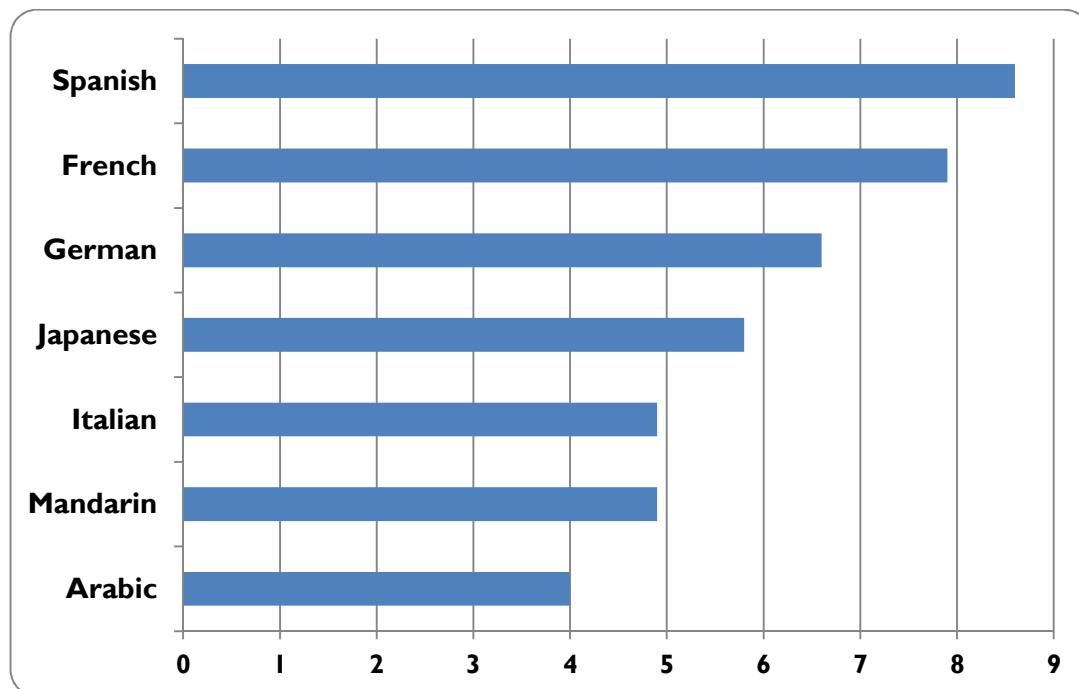
Question 2 of this year's survey asked respondents to indicate which languages their HEI offered. Our survey data indicates that, whilst some institutions are only able to offer students three or four languages, more typically around nine different languages are available to study. Some of the larger universities are able to offer up to 20 languages. Figure 1 below shows the number of institutions offering each language (where the total number of students reported for that language reaches 150 students or more).



**Figure 1. Number of HEIs surveyed offering different languages (n = 62)**

Although his table shows that French is offered by more higher education institutions than any other language, the language which appears to be most popular with students is actually Spanish (see below). Mandarin and German are also widely available. Other widely-taught languages, including Italian, Japanese and Arabic, are offered by the majority of HEIs with more than half also offering Russian and Portuguese. The data also tells us that around one sixth of the HEIs in this survey offer the following languages: Greek, Korean, British Sign language, Dutch and Polish.

As with last year's survey, we asked respondents to rank the main languages according to their popularity among learners. The following chart reveals the relative levels of popularity based on an average of their ranked positions:

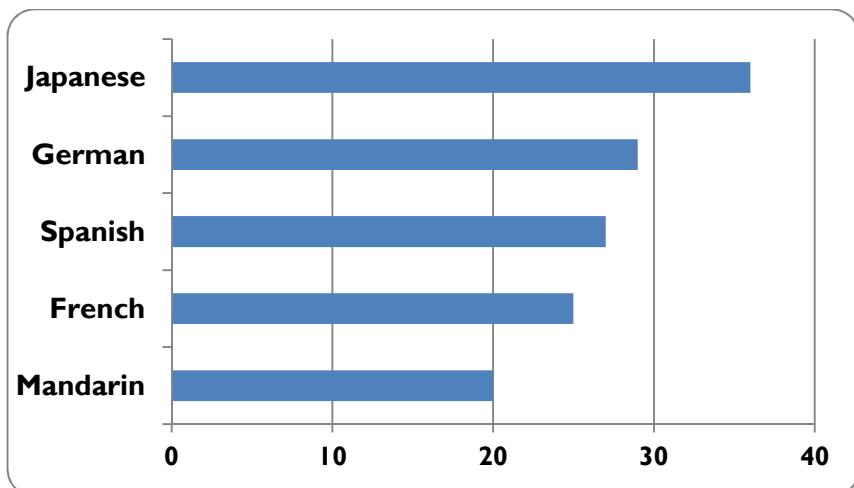


**Figure 2. Main languages ranked according to popularity**

It is interesting to notice that whilst Spanish is not offered by as many institutions as is French (ref. Figure 1), it is actually the most popular language in terms of demand. The other interesting point to notice in the above figure is the relative popularity of Japanese. The indicative popularity of Mandarin Chinese shown in Figure 2 may be an underestimation since the survey did not collect data of the numbers of UK students learning Mandarin Chinese on a non-accredited basis at the Confucius Institutes located on UK university campuses ( $n = 11$ ). Compared to its position in 2015-16, Mandarin appears to have fallen behind Italian in overall popularity.

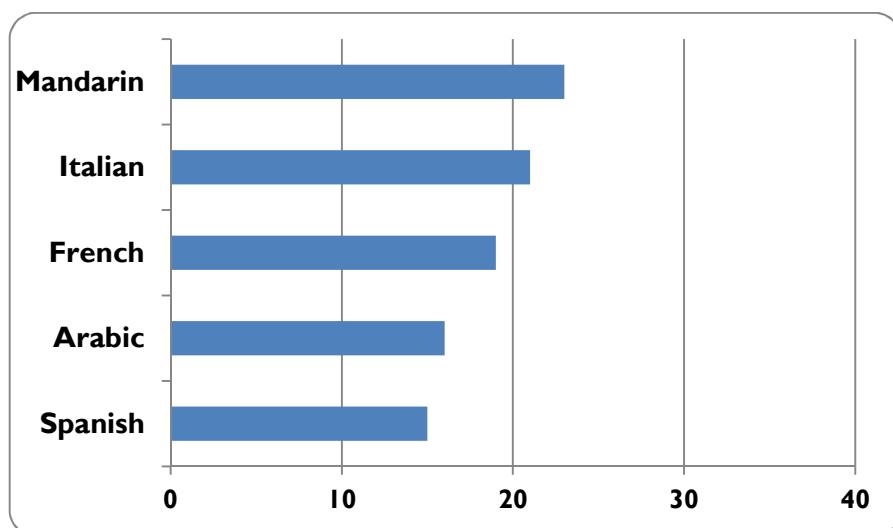
### 3.3 Changing preferences for languages

The survey asked respondents to indicate which languages have experienced an increase in demand and which languages have experienced a decrease in demand at their institutions. Figure 3 below shows the five languages most reported as showing an increase in numbers of learners compared to last year. About half of the respondents reported that there had been an increase in the number of students taking Japanese and German. It is significant that both of these languages reported an increased uptake in 2015-2016. In fact, the positive trend for German was also revealed in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 surveys. In responding to a question about why German was proving popular, respondents in last year's survey cited the economic importance of Germany, employability reasons, and also the popularity of German with Engineering students among some groups of international students.



**Figure 3. Languages which have shown an increase in student numbers (HEIs reporting)**

The figure below shows the five languages most reported as showing a decrease compared to last year. It should be noted that the actual numbers reported in this figure are less than those reported in Figure 3 above. Furthermore, it is likely that, in both figures, below or at around 15 reported increases or decreases for a given language, HEIs are experiencing natural variability in enrolment patterns. Nevertheless, it is notable that in each of the previous four surveys (2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-16) Italian has been most reported as showing a decrease.



**Figure 4. Languages which have shown a decrease in student numbers (HEIs reporting)**

### 3.4 Reasons for growth

In an attempt to learn more about the drivers of changing recruitment patterns, the survey included open questions which asked respondents to say why they felt overall numbers had increased or decreased. When grouped thematically, the most common explanations for an increase in numbers were 'better promotion' (x5):

"Strenuous attempts have been made to promote languages as part of the credit-bearing curriculum, or when taken on a supplementary fee basis"

and an increase in either capacity or funding, or both (x5):

"In the case of my institution, we have increased the number of places available in French, German, Spanish and to a lesser extent Italian and Japanese to meet student demand"

Another driver that respondents identified was increased demand from international students (x3):

"Japanese numbers are up 50%, especially popular with students from China and Korea"

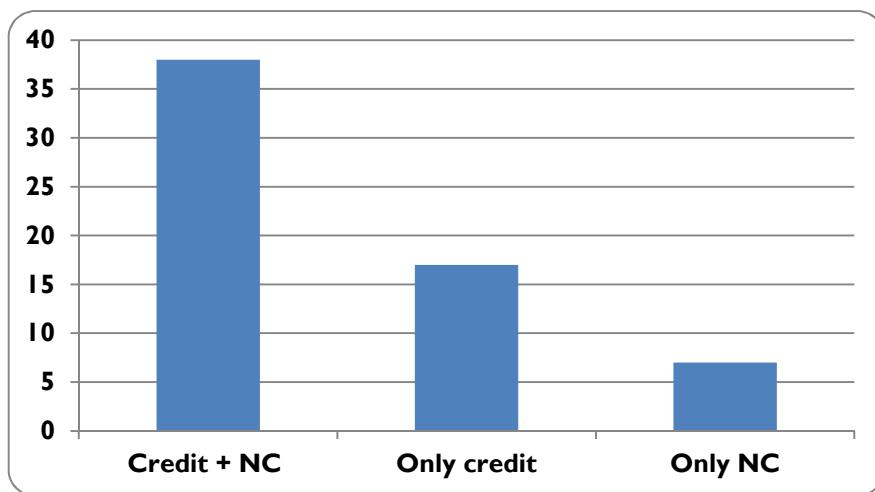
Two respondents indicated that increased numbers were related to university policies. Notable here were the institutional strategies of promoting internationalisation and employability, thus IWLP is seen to make an important contribution to both of these initiatives.

"Over the past two years, the University has placed a stronger emphasis on employability skills and graduate competences, and languages sit at the centre of such initiative"

Other reasons cited for increased numbers were 'reduced fees' (x2) (which were also related to 'university policies') and 'shorter courses' (x1).

### 3.5 Proportion of accredited and non-accredited learning

The majority of institutions (60%) in this year's survey indicate that they offer both accredited and non-accredited institution-wide language courses. Just under one third of respondents indicated that their HEI only offers accredited language learning, whilst around 12% indicated that their HEI only offers non-accredited language learning. This breakdown can be seen in the table below:



**Figure 5. Number of HEIs offering accredited and non-accredited learning**

Where institutions offer both modes of study, proportions for accredited and non-accredited registrations vary significantly, from 90% accredited to just 10%. Across the sector, the overall average appears to be that around 55% of registrations are for accredited learning and around 45% of registrations are for non-accredited learning.

### 3.6 Prospects for IWLP

In the aftermath of the UK's vote to leave the European Union, it was felt useful to ask respondents whether they had noticed an effect of this event on the take-up and interest in their language courses. The majority of respondents (80%) indicated that it was too early to tell. However, some concern was expressed about the future of the Erasmus exchange programme and the impact on IWLP. This is because IWLP serves to prepare students prior to studying abroad and also because IWLP attracts fairly high numbers of exchange students studying in the UK.

Nevertheless, despite these concerns, the survey found that the majority of respondents were very optimistic when asked about the prospects for IWLP. Figure 6 below shows that out of all the responses to this question, 70% of respondents selected 'encouraging' and 25% selected 'uncertain'. This shows a relative increase in optimism compared to last year when the figures were 57% and 38% respectively.

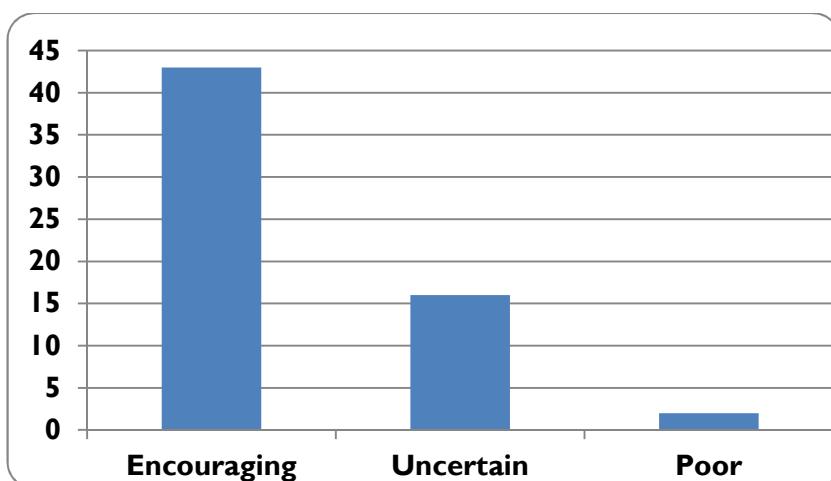


Figure 6. Prospects for IWLP

### 3.7 External language provision

In 2016-17 AULC has sought to evaluate the prevalence of language course provision outside the institution, in particular to members of the public, or to those in work for professional purposes. 24 members reported that they provide commercial language courses for professional purposes (this distinction is used deliberately to distinguish them from merely "business courses"). This is a small but growing area that offers opportunities to university language programmes.

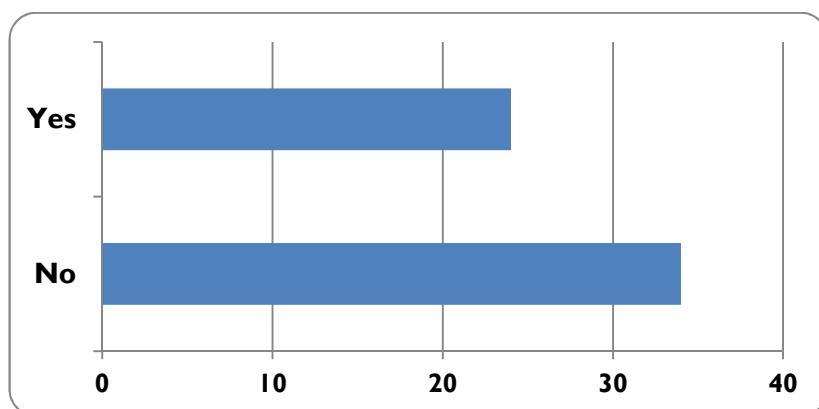
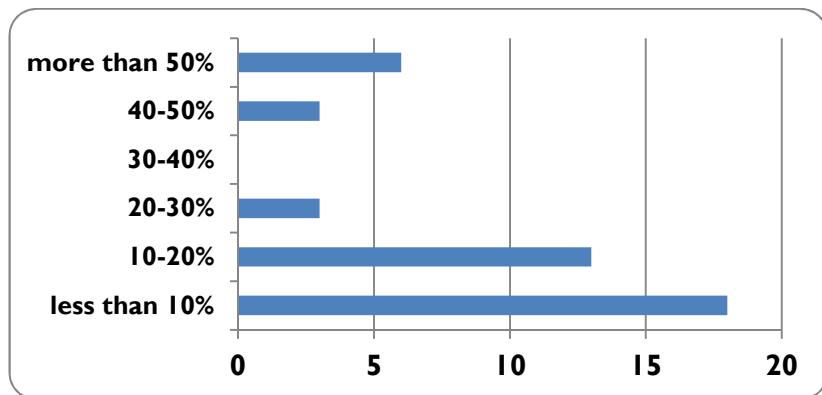


Figure 7. Number of AULC member institutions offering courses for business

More prevalent are courses offered to members of the public (MOP). 46 AULC members offer language courses to members of the public in some form, either integrated with students or separately. Proportions vary, although in 6 institutions members of the public make up over 50% of all registrations. For the majority (31), the proportions are 10-20% or less.



**Figure 8. Proportion of Members of the Public in AULC member institutions**

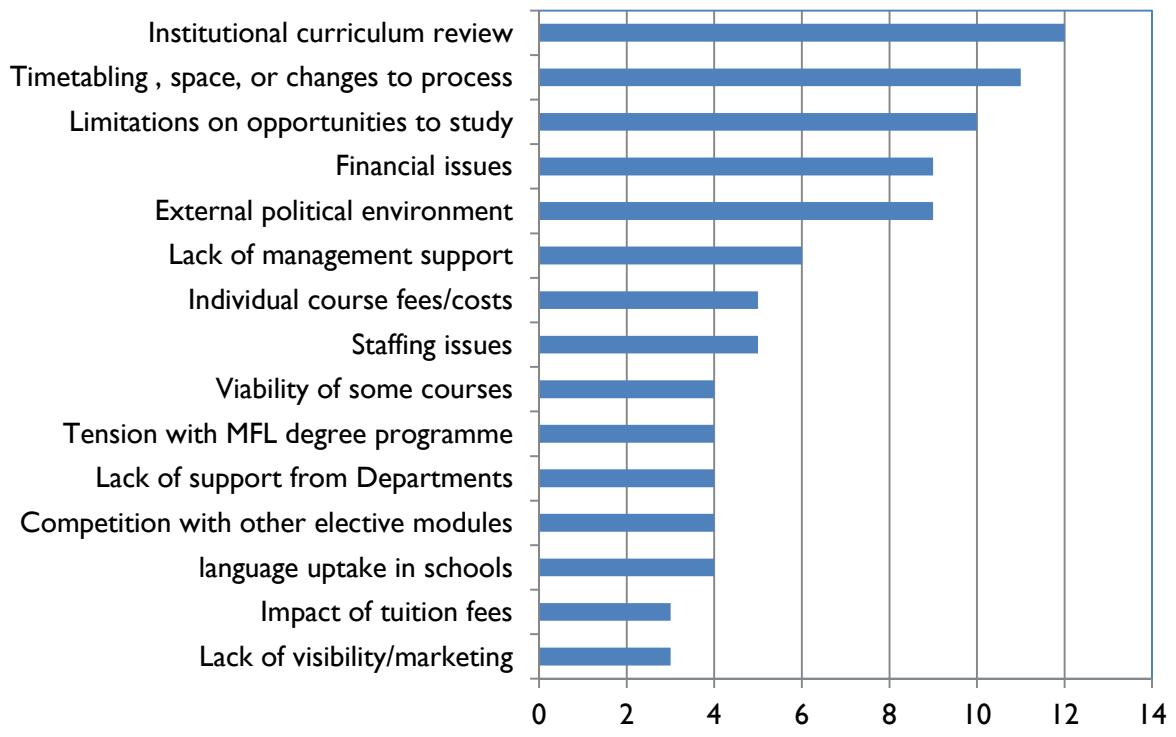
The survey found that members of the public are generally taught separately from credit bearing students. 18 institutions teach together, with 26 institutions teaching separately, albeit often with students and others studying on a non-accredited basis. Institutions generally teach members of the public separately for reasons of timetabling, or because of different expectations about the pace and formality of learning. Such mixing of the public and credit bearing students may also be prohibited locally by regulations, or be incompatible due to course fees. There are, however, also benefits of co-teaching reported - these include cost effectiveness (i.e. maximising numbers to make courses more viable), the diversity that different types of learners can bring to the classroom, and perceptions of an improved atmosphere that results.

In summary, such provision to language learners outside the student body is becoming widespread amongst AULC members, adapted to suit local conditions, and offers strong connectivity to business, public and community engagement strategies, as well as additional income streams.

### **3.8 Challenges facing IWLP**

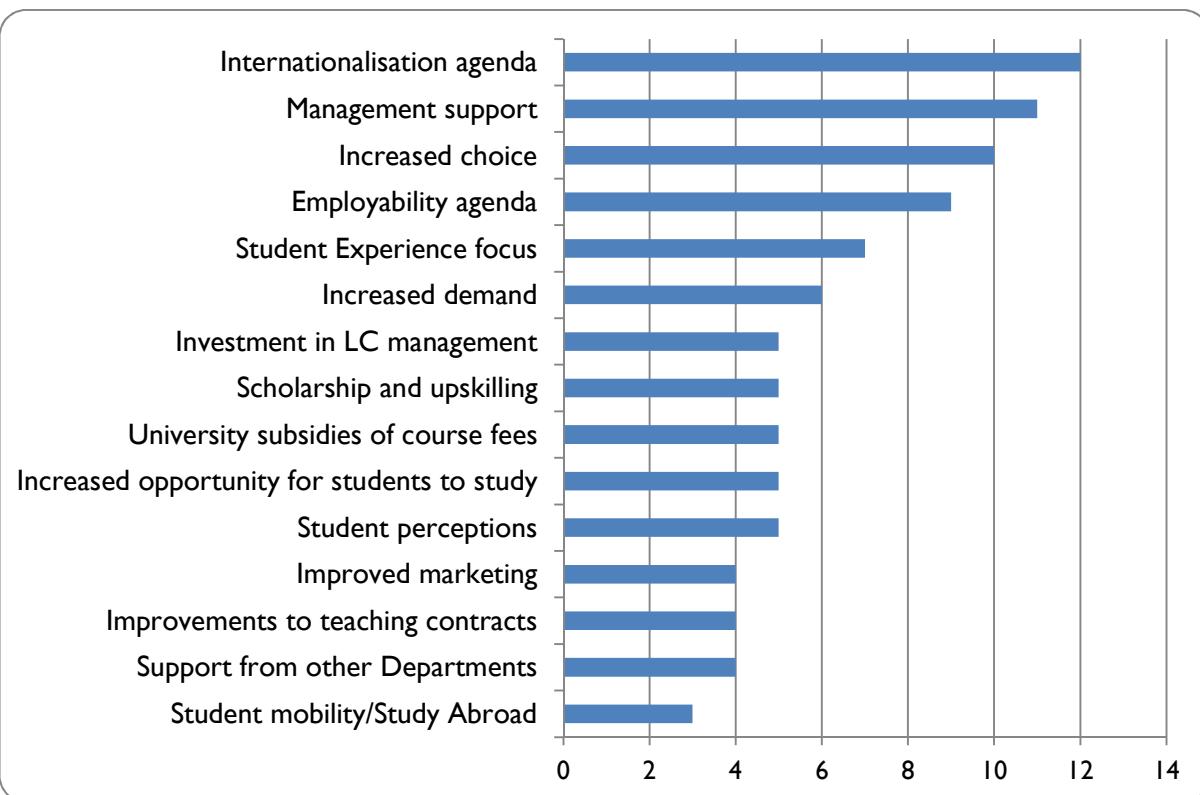
In this year's survey, we asked providers about some of the challenges facing IWLP within their institutions. It appears that different institutions value the contribution of IWLP quite differently, with some respondents offering the same factors both as positive contributors or negative challenges to their IWLP.

The most widely reported factors are as follows:



**Figure 9. Reported negative challenges to IWLP**

The positive factors impacting on IWLP were reported as follows:



**Figure 10. Reported positive impacts on IWLP**

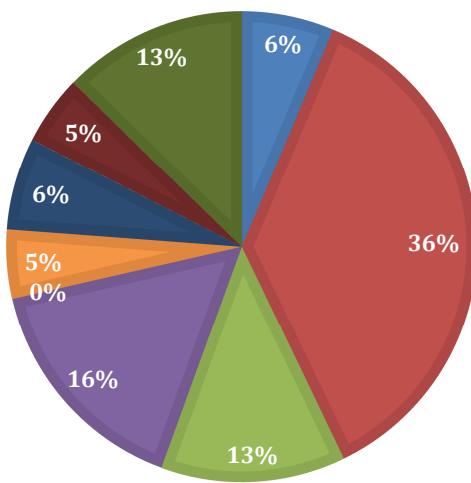
There are clear benefits being drawn within some member institutions regarding alignment with, and support from, internationalisation and employability strategies. Some of the negative challenges, such as

space and timetabling, may be considered reflective of challenges resulting from positive growth. Conversely processes of continuous structural review and staffing issues remain problematic for others, and the external political climate, especially as it relates to the economy and Brexit, creates additional uncertainty.

### 3.9 IWLP teaching staff: Professionalisation

In 2015-16 the annual survey introduced questions regarding the number, the contractual and the professional status of language teachers within IWLP. In 2016-17 this has been extended to look further at the matter of professionalisation, and in particular in relation to Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

■ n/a ■ < 10 ■ 10-20 ■ 20-30 ■ 30-40 ■ 40-50 ■ 50-60 ■ 60-70 ■ > 70



**Figure 11. Proportion of teachers (minimum 50% FTE) with HEA Fellowship**

The pie chart above indicates the relative proportions of staff within responding AULC member institutions who have HEA fellowship. Almost half (49%) of respondents indicated that fewer than 20% of their teaching staff are Fellows of the HEA. As a corollary to this, almost a quarter (24%) of respondents report that 50% or more of their teaching staff are Fellows of the HEA. As a sector we may wish to encourage teaching staff to become Fellows of the HEA as an indicator of the quality and professionalisation.

Perceived benefits of HEA Fellowship are relatively clear: accreditation and status (both for the individual and the institution – 57% of respondents), opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD – 31%), reflective practice (15%), and a sense of networking and belonging (13%) are those most frequently reported. However, many respondents also identify barriers that we collectively need to consider and reflect on. These principally include time and workload issues (50% of all respondents), which reflects as much a challenge towards CPD and achieving the criteria as completing the application. Other factors principally relate to contractual status (27%), limits to training and support (12%), and the resultant loss of motivation or colleagues not seeing the relevance of HEA Fellowship to them as individuals (23%).

### 3.10 Themes for the AULC to address

In recent surveys, AULC has asked its members to identify activities that it could address on behalf of its membership. The 2016 survey sought feedback on where the AULC could begin to work or could do better. The responses indicate five main areas and can be categorised as follows:

Champion	Continue to work with UCML, the British Academy, the HEA and so on to champion, lobby for and better support language learning
Communicate	Positive stories about languages/language learning in the UK, in print and social media
Facilitate	More networking and collaboration particularly at a regional level; More CPD; Greater engagement with the AULC Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
Further develop	The website to foster a greater sense of community; share resources; disseminate good practice, initiatives and reports; develop online discussion groups; encourage collaboration; share sources of funding
Develop UNILANG	The UNILANG certification scheme was seen as an excellent initiative with scope for development as more external examiners are approved and more institutions participate - <a href="http://www.unilang.website/">http://www.unilang.website/</a>

The results suggest a desire for the organisation to play a more prominent role in promoting language learning generally and IWLP specifically, enabling the membership to share information and resources in a way that has hitherto not been possible. For this to happen, it may be worth considering whether to develop new roles to enable individuals to lead initiatives. The Executive may also need to consider alternative platforms for hosting the website and whether to engage a website officer/developer. (Members may not be aware that it is currently maintained by the Chair of AULC.)

Respondents were also asked to identify other aspects of IWLP activity that could be covered by the survey. The section in this year's survey about the proportion of teachers with HEA Fellowship status was included partly as a result of the feedback last year. The responses to this question from this year's survey are summarised as follows:

- assessment: the types of assessment used; the assessment weightings
- innovative accredited courses, including languages for specific purposes
- delivery/organisation of IWLP, e.g. contact hours; credits; language levels; prerequisites; modes of delivery; use of technology and e-learning; use of VLE; timetabling; length of courses; pricing; whether courses are available to the public and/or staff
- institutional language strategy, policy and support
- links with degree programmes
- completion rates, drop-out rates

This will inform the authors when designing next year's survey.

## 4. Conclusion

The overall picture of student recruitment is broadly positive across the HE sector and indicates that at least 62,000 students are enrolled on IWLP language courses. The general outlook for the sector for the future is also broadly positive though it is too early to determine the effects of Brexit.

In terms of provision of languages, the main western European languages continue to be offered by the majority of institutions. Mandarin Chinese, Italian and Japanese are also widely available. In addition, important languages such as Russian, Arabic and Portuguese are offered by more than half of institutions in our sample. In terms of demand, Spanish continues to be the most popular language with German and Japanese enjoying increases in take-up.

The mode of study on IWLP courses varies across institutions. However, it appears that around 55% of registrations are for accredited language learning and around 45% of registrations are for non-accredited learning. In addition to this, many institutions open their courses to members of the public and/or are engaged in providing language tuition to the business sector.

The main threats to IWLP operations appear to emanate from policy decisions from within institutions and include: timetabling restrictions, limitations of space and funding, and also academic review affecting course unit choice. On the other hand, IWLP benefits from its importance in supporting the internationalisation and employability agendas at many institutions.

The number of teaching staff on IWLP programmes who have HEA Fellowship status appears to be rather low, with half of respondents indicating that less than 20% of language teachers at their institution have this. Despite this, many respondents were positive about the many benefits of HEA status.

This survey found that, among respondents, there is a feeling that AULC could play a greater role in promoting language learning generally and IWLP specifically. Suggestions for future surveys include: a focus on assessment practices and on the provision of languages for specific purposes.

The AULC and UCML will continue to monitor IWLP through this annual survey. We will take steps to further engage the membership, both institutionally and individually, and appeal to all members to play a full part. Collectively we are strong and can support each other, developing initiatives to mutual advantage. In this respect we will continue to promote the work of Special Interest Groups and use our annual conference to allow more time and space to discuss some of the key challenges and opportunities facing language centres and institution-wide language programmes.

This survey was carried out on behalf of the University Council of Modern Languages and the Association of University Language Centres by: Caroline Campbell, Mark Critchley, Chiara Cirillo and John Morley

## References

Byrne, N. and Abbot, J. (2007) Survey on university students choosing a language course as an extra-curricular activity. *Results from the second year of a planned three-year survey conducted by AULC on behalf of the DIUS*. November. Unpublished. Presentation based on this survey is available here:  
<http://www.celelc.org/docs/byrne.new.multisubject.programmes.0.pdf> (accessed on 7th January 2014)

Klapper, J. (2001) 'Introduction: professional development in Modern Languages', in Klapper, J. (ed) (2001), Teaching languages in Higher Education. Issues in training and continuing professional development, London: CILT, 1-14.

Marshall, K. (2001) Survey of less specialist language learning in UK universities (1998-99)  
<http://www.llas.ac.uk/resourcedownloads/614/KeithMarshall.pdf> (accessed on 7th March 2016)

UCML-AULC (2016) UCML-AULC survey of Institution-Wide Language Provision in universities in the UK (2015-2016) <http://www.ucml.ac.uk/languages-education/he-languages> (accessed on 7th March 2017)

UCML-AULC (2015) UCML-AULC survey of Institution-Wide Language Provision in universities in the UK (2012-2013) <http://www.ucml.ac.uk/languages-education/he-languages> (accessed on 7th March 2016)

## 6. Appendix: List of participating institutions

Aberdeen, University of	Loughborough University
Aston University	Manchester Metropolitan University
Bath, University of	Manchester, University of
Birmingham, University of	Newcastle, University of
Bristol, University of	Northumbria, University of
Brunel University	Nottingham Trent University
Cambridge, University of	Nottingham, University of
Cardiff University	Oxford, University of
Central Lancashire, University of	Portsmouth, University of
Coventry University	Queen Mary University of London
Dundee, University of	Queen's University Belfast
Durham University	Reading, University of
Edinburgh, University of	Roehampton, University of
Edinburgh Napier University	Royal Holloway, University of London
Essex, University of	Salford, University of
Exeter, University of	School of Oriental and African Studies
Glasgow, University of	Sheffield, University of
Glasgow Caledonian, University of	Sheffield Hallam University
Heriot-Watt University	Southampton, University of
Hertfordshire, University of	Southampton Solent University
Hull, University of	St Andrews, University of
Imperial College London	Surrey, University of
Keele University	Sussex, University of
Kent University	Swansea University
King's College London	University of the West of Scotland
Kingston University London	Warwick, University of
Lancaster University	Westminster, University of
Leeds Beckett University	Wolverhampton, University of
Leeds, University of	Worcester, University of
Leicester, University of	York, University of
Liverpool, University of	
London School of Economics and Political Science	