



The Wulkow
Group

Memorandum

**WULKOW MEMORANDUM ON THE IDENTITY
AND PROFILE OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN
LANGUAGE CENTRES IN HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS**

Introduction

In January 2019 Language Centre directors from thirteen countries came together to mark the 11th annual workshop of the Wulkow Group.

The Wulkow Group, an informal professional network, was founded in January 2008 by Dr. Thomas Vogel, the director of the language centre at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), Germany. The purpose of the group is to gather directors of language centres from all over Europe to exchange ideas and best practices, but above all to promote quality in teaching and management across Europe and beyond.

Key Points of the 11th Wulkow Meeting

Over the past decade, teachers in higher education language centres have experienced substantial changes in learner biographies, needs and expectations. No longer can we rely on the fact that the majority of learners have grown up monolingually and have acquired their second and third languages in secondary education. Indeed, the internationalization of European universities has brought new target groups, who sometimes present didactic and intercultural challenges at a time when the definition of teacher roles and expectations regarding methodologies clash. With the integration of languages into the overall curriculum of universities, the need to survey and analyze these changes has become of utmost importance for teachers, curriculum designers, material developers and not the least for directors of language centres.

Such societal, technological and educational shifts necessitate responsive developments in key aspects of teacher recruitment and staff development. Newly qualified teachers will come with new skill-sets much sought after by recruiters. For more experienced teachers these new or revised skill-sets will be key in setting the agenda for language centre teachers' development programs. Both the increasing integration of technology and social media into pedagogy, and the need for creative approaches to develop flexible modes of delivery increase pressure on teachers to respond effectively to the needs of students and future employers. This will in turn have an impact on the resources, which parent institutions must provide to help ensure the quality of content delivery while increasing student satisfaction as well as success. This calls for a properly accredited professional development.

The process of broadening and extending the core skills of the language centre teacher is something which will continue throughout the next decade. These developmental needs are driven, influenced and controlled by a diverse and potent mix of technology,

financial constraints, perceived employers' needs and students' expectations. All the subsequent scenarios will be played out under the proscenium arch of the universities, many of which are by necessity adapting and re-writing their roles in society by balancing academia with workplace, research with teaching, and idealism with pragmatism. All stakeholders benefit from targeted investment in relevant skills, helping to ensure the quality of subject delivery within a framework of aspirational excellence. There are key skill-sets which the 2020+ language centre teacher needs to demonstrate:

1. PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE - demonstrating subject knowledge and delivering effective knowledge transfer using sound pedagogy based on applied research, varied experience and reflected practice

2. OPENNESS TO CHANGE - demonstrating active thinking, innovation and imagination to increase effective communication of subject, positive collaboration amongst colleagues and stakeholders to extend field of reference

3. **DIGITAL COMPETENCE** - demonstrating its full potential by using social media and technology's own user-friendliness, flexibility and adaptability to maximize the effectiveness of learning and teaching

4. **MANAGERIAL COMPETENCE** - demonstrating the ability to understand the managerial aspects of their own role, and the organizational and financial workings of their language centre outside of the immediate world of the classroom

5. **TEAM SKILLS** - demonstrating the ability to play a variety of pedagogical roles and to utilize multiple teaching styles which best serve both subject and student as well as enhancing the teacher's own skills.

If the above skill-sets are to be exploited to the full, the following issues need to be addressed by all four stakeholders:

1. **EMPLOYER:** Senior Management should ensure that language centre directors are fully supported, and should also recognize the potential of the language centre to contribute to agendas outside of language teaching per se. They need to recognize the work language centres already do in the areas of quality assurance, effective teaching, employability, social cohesion, internationalization and aspirational excellence. Language centre directors need to devise and implement robust training programs for professional development. University heads and Human Resources should be made aware of the expanded skill-set of language centre teachers. This would result in more effective recruitment procedures, recognition and later appropriate reward for professional development.
2. **STUDENTS:** Students need to assume responsibility for their own learning; they should be open to new formats, e.g. by developing a flexible approach to

language learning. This process, facilitated by their teachers, helps to ensure that students are able to increase and hone their own skills in order to develop an attitude and enthusiasm for lifelong languages learning.

3. LANGUAGE CENTRE TEACHERS: Teachers need to know that their professionalism will be fully recognized and supported by management. In turn, they should fully participate in all measures which expand their own skills and career development. This approach should be embedded in the working culture of all language centres.

4. BUSINESS: Future employers of students should recognize and reward language skills in ways that help the teacher persuade the learners to advance their language learning to the greatest extent. Other outside agencies such as local governments and the central government should increase their cooperation with language organizations.

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Signatories

Bočková, Alena	Language Centre, Charles University, Prague Czech Republic
Bonczyk, Angelika	Language Centre at Erfurt University, Erfurt, Germany
Byrne, Nick	Independent Language Consultant, London- Berlin, U.K. - Germany
Critchley, Mark	Centre for Foreign Language Study, School of Modern Languages & Cultures, Durham, United Kingdom
Dijk, Anje M.	Language Centre, University of Groningen, the Netherlands
Filipchuk, Olga	Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics, Volga State University of Technology Joschkar-Ola, Russia
Fischer, Chaya	Hebrew University Language Center Jerusalem, Israel
Fronterotta, Cristina	University for Applied Sciences and Arts, Hildesheim/Holzminen/Göttingen, Germany
Furmanek, David	viadrina sprachen GmbH, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany
Grainger, Tom	Faculty of Science, University of Aix- Marseille, Marseille, France
Grimm, Alexander	Language Centre, European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany
Hettiger, Andreas	Language Center, Technical University Braunschweig, Germany

Hilden, Antti	Quality Assurance, Tampere University, Finland
Hincks, Rebecca	KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
Karppinen, Merja	Language Centre Saimaa University of Applied Sciences & Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT), Finland
Keenan, Brendan	International Programs Department, Post Graduate School and Research Institute Civil Engineering, Transports, Planning and the Environment, Lyon, France
Kirchmeyer, Susanne	Language Centre, Bauhaus University Weimar, Germany
Koch, Robert	Language Center, RWTH Aachen University, Germany
Kühn, Bärbel	Language Council of Bremen, Germany
McLean, Neil	Teaching and Learning Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom
Merkelbach, Christoph	Technical University Darmstadt, Germany
Moreira Silva, Manuel	Language Centre, Porto Polytechnic Institute, Porto, Portugal
Neuner-Anfindsen, Stefanie	Language Centre, University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Paliot, Elisabeth	Language Centre EPFL, University of Lausanne, Switzerland
Pavlinova, Klara	Language Department, University of South Bohemia in Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic
Pérez Guillot, Cristina	Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, Spain
Poslušná, Lucie	Language Centre, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic
Rontu, Heidi	Language Centre, Aalto University, Finland
Schaffner, Sabina	Language Center of UZH and ETH Zurich, Switzerland
Štěpánek, Libor	Language Centre, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
Szczuka-Dorna, Liliana	Centre of Languages and Communication, Poznan University of Technology, Poland
Tobias, Ruth	Language Center, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany
Tual, David	Language Unit of the Department of Engineering, Cambridge University, United Kingdom
Vogel, Thomas	Language Center, European University

	Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Germany
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For further information on the Wulkow Group
please contact:

Thomas Vogel (vogel@europa-uni.de)