SOAS Languages Strategy 2018

1. Introduction

Languages are central to SOAS, and have been subject to considerable discussion and work over the last few years. For some, languages are the bedrock of SOAS's academic mission, and central to our activities, while for others, they have not kept pace with changes internal to SOAS and in the external environment, and now threaten to hold the institution back.

The current strategy acknowledges the complex situation and perceptions of languages within SOAS, and emphasises both our strength in languages, as well as the need to change and address key problems – such as financial sustainability, pedagogic innovation and student success – with some urgency.

1.1 Strategic priorities

The SOAS Vision and Strategy 2016-2020 makes extensive reference to languages. It notes that SOAS is a 'small research-led university with excellent teaching and language and area studies specialisms in Asia, Africa and the Middle East', and a global university focussing on 'teaching and researching across a range of social science and humanities subjects, rooted in the culture and languages of the regions in which we specialise'. Our language scholarship enables SOAS staff and students to listen, speak, read and write in the languages in which key local, regional, and global debates take place, and to meet speakers of African, Asian and Middle Eastern languages on their own linguistic terms.

Through our languages, we enable our staff and students to understand and interpret both local and global contexts, to mediate between them, and to critically challenge one in terms of the other. We draw on this strength in our research and our teaching, and use it to change and make an impact locally and globally.

Our overall strategic aim is to embed language in the student experience and academic mission of the School and to provide an excellent learning experience for diverse learner groups. Through this, our language scholarship supports the School's distinctiveness, underpins engagement with our regions, and provides students with key interpersonal and life skills.

Our core values underpinning language scholarship and learning are 1) a diverse portfolio of African, Asian and Middle Eastern languages, 2) language study as part of degree study, 3) supporting diverse learners and audiences, and 4) excellence.

In order to achieve our strategic aims we will have to take urgent action in a number of areas, where we are currently facing challenges and are not working on the level of excellence we aim for. Our main challenges are financial sustainability, student success and pedagogical innovation, and they will be addressed by four strands of activity: Two strands focussing on different language groups (strategically important and vulnerable languages, and high recruiting languages), one strand focussing on the Language Centre, and one overarching strand for pedagogical innovation.

1.2 Previous work
The School has undertaken considerable work around languages over the last few years. A review of languages was submitted to Academic Board in March 2016, which provided the background and context for subsequent strategic development. In 2016/17 a Working Group co-chaired by the Associate Dean (L&T MA) (FLTC) and the Dean (FLTC) developed a draft Languages Strategy, of which the current draft is a development. In 2017/18 there was also a Working Group specifically looking at student success and progression in languages, reporting to the Academic Development Committee. In addition, a review of the Language Centre took place in 2015/16, with the findings of the review still being implemented.

Several recent developments in programme and curriculum design have had an effect on languages. From 2015/16 beginners-level language modules have been designated as FHEQ Level 5, allowing final year students to take these modules. The PGT credit reform has made it much easier for PGT students to take a language as part of their degree. We have also developed and expanded our 2-year MA programmes combining a discipline with intensive language study, and the MA Translation. There are also projects for the development of Distance and Online Learning in co-ordination with the Academic Head of Online Learning.

In 2016, we launched the SOAS World Languages Institute which has since then supported a range of research, outreach and public engagement activities, highlighting and showcasing our languages work.

In 2017, the School was awarded £5m funding from the HEFCE Catalyst Fund for safeguarding teaching and scholarship of strategically important and vulnerable languages. The project is linked to an ambitious fundraising campaign to raise £5m for languages as part of our Questions Worth Asking campaign.

2. The wider picture
There has been vigorous public debate and considerable amount of work devoted to languages. The British Academy has published several reports on the importance of modern languages, as has the British Council (which is notable as the British Council's primary mission is to support English). The BBC maintains, and has recently expanded, foreign languages services, and there is a cross-party parliamentary group on languages. Specific

thematic support for languages in HE has been provided by HEFCE, the AHRC and the British Academy.

Languages in education has been a central topic in these discussions, but also the role of languages in the wider social domain, and in particular the importance of foreign languages for business. While the main modern languages featuring in these discussions tend to be European languages, there is also considerable attention devoted to non-European languages, especially Chinese.

There are some voices which question the need for learning foreign languages, often with reference to the perceived dominance of English as an international language, or to technological innovation, such as automatic translation, which would render knowledge of foreign languages obsolete. However, there appears to be a consensus among published studies on the topic that there are considerable individual and societal benefits associated with foreign languages learning, and that there is a deficit in the UK of learners and speakers of foreign languages.

2.1. Languages in UK education[1]

Support for languages in schools has varied over the last decades. In 2002, languages became no longer compulsory at Key Stage 4, and language uptake at GSCE level dropped from around 76% in 2002 to 44% in 2008, although uptake has increased slightly again since then. At the same time the National Languages Strategy (2002-2011) refocused language learning at primary school level, and the numbers of primary schools offering a language rose from 22% in 2002 to an estimated 99% in 2014. In 2012 the government introduced the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) which is awarded to students having at least a C GSCE grade in five core academic subjects, including a language. The inclusion of a language in the EBacc resulted in an initial increase in language take-up, but did not reverse the overall trend. For example, in England GSCE uptake from 2013 to 2017 declined in French, German, and Spanish, although there was a small increase in other modern languages. In 2016, students taking a language GSCE varied from 41% in the North East to 64% in Inner London. It is also noteworthy that opportunities to study languages remain much greater in high performing schools with low indices of socio-economic deprivation.

At university level enrolment in language degrees has been declining. From 2010/11 to 2013/14 new enrolments in language degrees fell by 46% from 16,965 to 9,130, although numbers were up to 9,945 in 2014/15. However, in contrast to language degrees, numbers in institution-wide language learning courses have increased considerably during the last decade. The number of universities offering language degrees has declined from 93 in 1998 to 56 in 2014, largely due to reduction at post-1992 universities, so that language degrees are increasingly concentrated at Russell Group universities.

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[1] This section draws heavily on two key reports: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. 2016. *Options for a sustainable programme of demand-raising activity in modern languages. Report to HEFCE*, and The British Council. 2017. *Languages for the Future: The foreign languages the United Kingdom needs to become a truly global nation.*

With the end of the National Language Strategy in 2011, there is currently no overall languages strategy or policy in England. At university level, the phasing out of special subject funding and funding of the Routes into Languages programme, and the abolishment of HEFCE, indicates the end of government involvement in strategic support for languages. Activists and proponents of languages have called for a change in approach and to establish a wider strategic and support infrastructure for languages.

2.2. Benefits of language learning

Proponents of languages have pointed out the benefits of language learning in numerous publications.[2]

Societal benefits of language learning include enhanced economic opportunities through harnessing the linguistic and intercultural skills of the workforce, increased global standing and better foreign relations through the use of languages in policy and diplomacy, and strengthened community relations and social cohesion through valorisation of community languages.

Learner benefits of language learning include personal cognitive benefits, intercultural communicative skills and cultural agility, and accumulation of cultural and social capital.

Several large-scale studies have presented growing evidence for the cognitive benefits of bilingualism. These are related, for example, to healthy ageing and cognitive functions like attention across the life-span. Language learning provides everyone with access to some of these benefits.

Multilingual and intercultural skills allow language learners to approach problems from different perspectives, taking into account different cultural expectations and assumptions, to construct knowledge and skills through another language, and to develop contextualised and effective solutions.

Particular attention has been paid to employment-related benefits. A recent LFHE report notes:[3] 'Employers benefit from the specialist skills of interpreters and translators, but also more broadly from the linguistic and intercultural skills of language graduates. There are also wider societal benefits from the promotion of language and intercultural studies in terms of the broader community cohesion and cultural benefits which they bring in an increasingly multilingual society and the needs of an increasingly globalised economy.'

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[2] E.g. The British Academy. 2012. *Language Matters More and More: A position statement*, The British Academy. 2016. *Born Global: Implications for Higher Education*, Cambridge Public Policy Strategic Research Initiative. 2015. *The Value of Languages: Ideas for a UK Strategy of Languages.*

[3] Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. 2016. *Options for a sustainable programme of demand-raising activity in modern languages. Report to HEFCE*, p. 15.

2.3. Public demand

There is evidence for high public demand for graduates with languages skills.

A number of studies have argued that language skills are essential in international business. Even in contexts where English is used, knowledge of foreign languages can help to add another dimension to business negotiations, and familiarity with relevant languages and cultures helps to behave culturally appropriately and to avoid pitfalls. According to an estimate by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Languages, the UK is losing about £50bn per year because of lack of language skills.[4]

Graduates with language skills are in demand not only because of their specific language skills in a particular foreign language, but also because of the cultural and communicative competencies they have acquired as part of their language study. The British Academy's 'Born Global' project,[5] which involved interviews with a range of language practitioners and employers, found that employers value 'cultural agility' as a key asset for working in multilingual, transnational, and diverse teams and environments. Cultural agility is developed through engaging with a different language and culture, and through international experience and study abroad. The project found that employers often reported that graduates had only limited experience of living abroad.

In public services language skills are in demand especially in the areas of international relations and foreign policy. In 2014, a House of Lords Select Committee[6] reported that the UK capacity to 'build connections is constrained by the small number of its citizens who are able to speak foreign languages', which is relevant to the influence and engagement required in modern international relations. In a study published by the British Academy, Berdal (2015)[7] describes the language and cultural skills required in post-conflict state-building and notes that the decline in languages and area studies had led to a limit on the available expertise and knowledge of countries in conflict.

Technological innovation in languages, such as automated translation, is likely to have a positive effect on practical day-to-day translation, and on enriching learning and teaching of languages, but is unlikely to reduce the need for skilled, high-quality translation, or for the need for graduates with excellent linguistic and inter-cultural training and the skills associated with this.[8]

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[4] See e.g. 'The cost of Britons' failure to learn foreign languages', The Guardian 6 Nov 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/nov/06/the-cost-of-britons-failure-to-learn-foreign-languages, and 'Modern languages "recovery programme" urged by MPs', BBC News 14 July 2017 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-28269496 .

[5] The British Academy. 2016. *Born Global: Implications for Higher Education.*

[6] The House of Lords Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence, Persuasion and Power in the Modern World (2014)

[7] Berdal, Mats. 2015. Afghanistan and After – Reflections on Western Interventionism and State Fragility in the post-Cold War Era. In *Rethinking State Fragility*. London: British Academy, 6-18.

[8] See e.g. 'Will language learning become obsolete?', *Artefact* 16 Nov 2017, http://www.artefactmagazine.com/2017/11/16/will-language-learning-become-obsolete/

2.4. English is necessary, but not sufficient

Over the last century, English has developed into the world's most widely used language of wider communication. English as a lingua franca (ELF) is the global language of business and international relations, and in many parts of the world a language of education and social aspiration. However, the UK and UK graduates cannot rely only on English alone. There are significant parts of the world – both in geographical and social terms – where English is not used, and when English is used as a lingua franca, it is typically used within complex patterns of multilingualism, knowledge of which is essential for successful understanding and communication.

A British Council report on the foreign language needs of the UK notes that: 'Both within and beyond Europe, we will need to reach out beyond English, not only to maintain and improve our economic position but to build trust, deepen international influence and cultural relationships, and to keep our country safe.'[9]

For research within and understanding of diverse communities, relying on English only carries the risk of partial and biased understanding, because often only small sections of the society have access to and use English, such as government and administration, or educated elites.[10] This risk can be mitigated through competence in the relevant language(s).

Even in situations in which English is used as the lingua franca, it is embedded in a context of multilingual practices, and without understanding of and exposure to these practices, monolingual speakers of English are often at a disadvantage.[11] Bernardette Holmes, Principal Investigator on the British Academy Born Global research project, points out that 'cooperation in multiple countries means interaction with multiple languages and cultures. While English is the nexus, communication in multinational operations is functionally multilingual and culturally diverse', and that for employment prospects 'those graduates who offer only English are at a competitive disadvantage to their multilingual peers'.[12]

2.5. Languages of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East

The discussion about foreign languages in the UK is mainly concerned with European languages, but languages of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East play an important role as well.

On a global level, more than half of the world's languages – about 4,000 languages out of an estimated 7,000 languages – are spoken in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Six of the ten biggest languages in terms of number of first-language speakers are from these regions:

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[9] The British Council. 2017. *Languages for the Future: The foreign languages the United Kingdom needs to become a truly global nation.*
[10] Cf. Bamgboṣe, Ayọ. 2000. *Language and Exclusion. The Consequences of Language Policies in Africa.* Münster: Lit Verlag.
[11] Hulmbauer, C., H. Böhringer and B. Seidlhofer. 2008. Introducing English as a lingua franca (ELF): Precursor and partner in intercultural communication. *Synergies Europe* 3: 25-36.
[12] Cambridge Public Policy Strategic Research Initiative. 2015. *The Value of Languages: Ideas for a UK Strategy of Languages*, 8-9.

Chinese (ranked first), Arabic, Hindi, Bengali, Japanese, and Punjabi. Arabic and Chinese are among the six working and official languages of the United Nations.

In the UK, many languages of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East are important community languages, such as Arabic, Bengali, Turkish, Persian, or Somali. A number of African, Asian, and Middle Eastern languages also play a role in education, and notably Chinese has become an increasingly popular school subject – in part as the result of strong support by Hanban, the Chinese Language Council. And in 2016, the BBC World Service announced the biggest expansion of its languages since the 1940s, launching 11 new language services, all of which are in African or Asian languages: Afaan Oromo, Amharic, Gujarati, Igbo, Korean, Marathi, Pidgin, Punjabi, Telugu, Tigrinya, and Yoruba.[13]

The 2017 British Council Report 'Languages for the Future' discusses the language need of the UK, largely based on economic criteria, but also taking into account aspects such as diplomatic, educational, and communication importance. Among the ten most important languages identified in the report overall are Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese, and eight of the ten most important emerging markets languages are languages of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East – Hindi, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Mandarin, Malay, Thai, Arabic, and Turkish.

Languages of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East also have an important role to play for development, societal progression, and decolonisation. The historic marginalisation of many African, Asian, and Middle Eastern languages has critically been analysed as a colonial legacy and related to wider asymmetric processes of power and knowledge creation. Engagement with this wider legacy also entails revalorisation of and investment in these languages.[14]

3. SOAS values
Languages have always played an important role at SOAS. They were central to the founding of the School and in its early years, and have grown into an integral part of the modern SOAS, with a high number of students learning languages as part of a single-subject degree, a joint degree, or as an open option. In addition, the SOAS Language Centre offers courses in African, Asian, and Middle Eastern languages to the wider public. The strength of language study at SOAS is due to strong institutional support and key strategic decisions.

3.1. Diversity of the portfolio
SOAS teaches the highest number of languages at degree level in the UK, and is among the world's top universities in terms of our range of languages. We currently teach 26 modern languages of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and another 16 ancient and classical languages.[15]

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[13] BBC World Service announces biggest expansion 'since the 1940s', 16 Nov 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-37990220

[14] See e.g. Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1981. *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature.* London: James Currey.

[15] Excluding languages only taught in the Language Centre.

Africa (6)	Amharic, Hausa, Somali, Swahili, Yoruba, Zulu
Near and Middle East (4)	Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Turkish
South Asia (5)	Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Urdu
South East Asia (5)	Burmese, Indonesian, Khmer, Thai, Vietnamese
East Asia (6)	Chinese (Mandarin), Cantonese, Hokkien, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan
Ancient and classical languages (9 + 7)	Akkadian, Hittite, Sumerian, Avetsan, Pahlavi, Pali, Syriac, Prakrit, Sanskrit, plus classical Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Malay (Jawi), Persian, Tibetan and Ottoman Turkish

Among the modern languages, four are high-recruiting languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean), and 22 are strategically important and vulnerable languages (SIL). For 13 of our SIL languages, SOAS is the only UK university to offer these languages at degree level, and for the remaining ones, provision exists only at one or two other institutions.

The languages we teach are typically widely used languages, or languages of wider communication, are spoken in regions of specific diplomatic, business or cultural interests for the UK, and hold significant cultural and literary value.

Many of today's key debates about the world's social, political, and economic future are held in the language we teach at SOAS. Through maintaining research, scholarship, and teaching in a wide portfolio of languages, we equip our students with the linguistic and cultural tools to take part in these debates, and help the UK as a whole to play a productive role in the world.

While over the history of the School there has been fluctuation in terms of the specific languages taught, the overall scope of the portfolio has remained comparatively stable.

The selection of languages aims at broad geographical coverage of our regions of expertise – there are six African languages, four languages of the Near and Middle East, five languages of South Asia, five Southeast Asian, and six East Asian languages. This achieves broad coverage of the different regions, even though of course, there remain inconsistencies and gaps.

To some extent the specific languages we maintain are subject to revision and adjustment to changing circumstances – although it is important to keep in mind that once provision and scholarship in a language has ceased, it is hard to re-establish it as crucial expertise and infrastructure such as library holdings have not been maintained.

However, we believe it is important to maintain a range of languages per sub-region, in order to credibly and meaningfully maintain our approach to language-based area studies. Reducing, for example, our African languages to Swahili, or our South Asian languages to Hindi, would mean to give up on language-based African or South Asian Studies, in favour of

Swahili and Hindi Studies. In order to avoid this, we wish to maintain a balances portfolio of about 25-30 African, Asian, and Middle Eastern languages.

3.2. Language study as part of degree study

Advocates of languages in the UK have noted the decline in language study in particular within degree programmes. A 2015 Cambridge SRI report emphasises the importance of degree-level language study, because 'it is here that the higher skill in language proficiency and cross-cultural agility are achieved, as well as deeper cultural and societal aspects of language learning.'[16]

At SOAS we have made the decision to encourage and support degree language learning and to support all our students to engage in language learning. Our undergraduate degree programmes are designed to allow language learning not only in language degrees, but also in discipline degrees through the use of language open options, and as part of a wide range of joint degree combining a language with a discipline. The vast majority of our UG programmes permit a language option in the first year of study, and a recent decision by the Executive Board requires all new UG programmes to include such provision. At MA level, our flexible degree structure with four 30-credit taught modules allows the study of a language in most of our MA programmes. In addition, we offer a wide range of two-year MA programmes with intensive language study. Both our UG and PGT language degrees include a period of study abroad.

Our strategic approach to languages places language study at the heart of our educational and academic mission, and provides students with a range of ways to engage with and benefit from language study. Through this we emphasise the association of language, culture and society, and help students to become competent, culturally agile actors and interpreters within today's complex realities.

3.3. Diversity of leaners, widening participation, and wider communities

Against a national trend in which languages are seen as a subject only for the brightest or most well-funded students,[17] we believe that language study is for everyone. SOAS is among the most diverse universities in the UK. For example, in 2012/13 to 2014/15, 13% of our UG students were from the rest of the EU, and 26% from outside the EU. In the same period, 34% of our UG students were black or minority ethnic.

The diversity of our students and staff is reflected in the heterodoxy of our scientific approaches, in our culture of debate and developing alternative ways of thinking, and in our multilingual practices. We believe that learning a language helps to develop the ability to adopt different perspectives, to understand different points of view, and to question carefully and with empathy. These are key critical skills and valuable employment assets,

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[16] Cambridge Public Policy Strategic Research Initiative. 2015. *The Value of Languages: Ideas for a UK Strategy of Languages*, 16.

[17] Cambridge Public Policy Strategic Research Initiative. 2015. *The Value of Languages: Ideas for a UK Strategy of Languages.*

and we wish that all our students have the option to develop these skills, independent of educational, personal, or financial background.

We have a strong programme of Widening Participation for languages, and we are co-leader of the London Routes into Languages consortium. As part of this engagement, we work with schools, universities, and other stakeholders, to encourage the uptake of languages, and to empower more students from a wide variety of backgrounds to develop their aptitude for language learning.

The SOAS Language Centre provides high-quality language courses in African, Asian, and Middle Eastern languages to external audiences, such as individual learners, businesses and companies, government, and public and private organisations. In 2015/16 the Language Centre had more than 2,000 enrolments and it plays a key role in SOAS's mission to make the study of the languages of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East available to a wide range of learners.

We believe that our inclusive approach to languages, which provides all students with options to learn a language – plus offering language learning opportunities to the wider public – is an important element in our academic and wider impact agenda to provide high quality education which underpins personal and professional development and social change.

3.4. Excellence

SOAS is committed to excellence in all we do. Our language activities have to be based on excellence in learning and teaching, research, and the student experience.

We wish to provide students with an excellent learning and student experience. Studying languages supports students to become global citizens who can understand and engage with the world. We strive to provide holistic language and culture learning where foreign language skills and linguistic and cultural competence are intertwined with the development of subject knowledge and regional expertise. The learner is at the centre of our activities, and we support learner autonomy, critical and problem-solving attitudes, and the development of learner responsibility over the learning process. We value learner diversity and reward student achievement. Our students regularly achieve the highest attainment in language competitions such as the Chinese Bridge Competition, and we are proud to showcase their work.[18]

We believe that our language teaching should be based on excellence in pedagogy and innovation. We understand the importance of paying attention to learners' needs and develop syllabi and learning materials which reflect different learner backgrounds and expectations. We have started to engage with and develop on-line and blended learning models for languages. We support students' international experience through including periods of study abroad and we explore other aspects of transnational education.

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[18] E.g. the award of prizes for Arabic year-abroad ISPs, https://www.soas.ac.uk/nme/arabicislam/isps/

Our language learning experience needs to be based on excellent support for our teaching staff. We provide administrative, professional and developmental support for all staff and encourage the formation of strong teams and communities of practice. We recognise that many of our language teachers are fractional staff and we aim to build opportunities for training and development which are easily accessible for all staff engaged in language teaching.

4. SOAS strategic priorities

In order to maintain and progress our language activities we need to address challenges we are facing and improve in key strategic areas – financial sustainability, student success and progression, and pedagogical innovation.

4.1. Sustainability

The School overall faces significant financial challenges, in part related to internal dynamics, in part through a volatile environment.[19] Languages play an important part in this, because of the comparatively high costs of language teaching, and because of the internal cross-subsidy to support strategically important and vulnerable languages.

There are a number of costs associated with language teaching which are different from, and often higher than, costs in other arts or social sciences subjects:

- Costs related to direct teaching, including more contact hours than non-language classes, a cap on student numbers at least for some classes (e.g. conversation classes), a higher amount of assessment due to e.g. regular homework and oral exams
- Costs related to the year/period abroad, including direct costs such as fees of the partner institute, and indirect costs such as administration, selection, and support of students abroad
- Costs arising from low and fluctuating enrolment in some languages, which means that some classes have to run with very low student numbers

In recognition of these higher costs, and of the strategic value for the School of the on-going provision of strategically important and vulnerable languages, SOAS has agreed an internal cross-subsidy, whereby other parts of the School transfer funds towards the costs of teaching these languages. The current amount of this cross-subsidy is £1.6m which will be reviewed annually, with the aim to reduce the cross-subsidy over time.

In 2017, the School was awarded a HEFCE Catalyst grant of £5m, subject to raising £5m of philanthropic income, for the support of strategically important and vulnerable languages.

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[19] Including the loss of HEFCE minority subject funding which at some time supported our language teaching and scholarship with up to £2m direct funding.

The Language Centre has its own financial challenges, as it operates in a different, more commercial environment. Part of the Language Centre's mission statement is to make an overall contribution to the School's finances, and it needs to develop a financial strategy to address this requirement.

The overall financial challenge for languages is to control the costs of provision, to increase income principally through attracting more students, and to gradually reduce the cross-subsidy, while maintaining – or achieving – high standards of excellence across a wide range of learners.

4.2. Student success and progression

There is some concern about progression in languages, and some evidence for a high number of transfers, drop-outs and failures.

Problems with progression require critical reflection on pedagogical approaches, student support, and course and programme design. There are also financial implications, as loss of student enrolments entails a loss of student fee income. Conversely, addressing problems with progression has positive effects on financial sustainability.

While it is widely accepted that attrition in language classes – especially of non-European languages and those languages which require the learning of a new script – tends to be higher than in non-language classes, we need to develop strategies to increase progression and student success.

A complicating factor for the understanding of progression is that different languages often follow different models and approaches, and that there is no shared or common approach to teaching languages. This means that at least initially, provision of data and analysis have to be conducted separately for individual languages.

Recent papers at Executive Board and Academic Development Committee have addressed this problem, and highlighted the need to put more robust measures in place to support student success.

4.3. Pedagogical innovation

In 2017, the Academic Development Committee convened a working group to investigate options to increase the attractiveness and availability of languages and ensure that they supported student success.

In their report, the working group found that there was scope for a School-wide review of language pedagogy, which would address questions such as pedagogical approaches and learning material, student training and needs analyses, curriculum design, and teacher training and development. The review should also explore methods of flexible learning, e.g. through summer offerings, internationalisation and transnational education, and online and blended learning.

The working group also noted the absence of a common approach to questions of learning and teaching of languages, and suggested the establishment of a co-ordinating and oversight position for languages, which would lead and support pedagogical innovation within the School.

It is expected that the provision of more structured strategic oversight over language learning and teaching will also have a positive effect on progression, and through this on financial sustainability.

5. Activity strands

Based on the key strategic priorities, a number of activities are proposed to address the major key challenges identified: financial sustainability and pedagogic innovation and student success. The four activity strands proposed are SIL, high-recruiting languages, pedagogic innovation, and the Language Centre.[20]

5.1. Strategically important and vulnerable languages (SIL)

5.1.1. Fundraising

Long-term success of SILs depends on a more secure financial basis. Fundraising plays a key role for this, both in terms of direct funding of posts through endowment and through funding activities and scholarships which support SILs. The key strategic fundraising activity for SIL is linked to the £5m linked to the HEFCE Catalyst project and the associated fundraising campaign. This aims to raise up to £5m in philanthropic income by 2021. In addition, we wish to increase philanthropic income for UG Language/Language and … studentships to encourage students to continue language learning to a high level of competence. We also wish to raise philanthropic income for our collaboration with Chatterbox, a social enterprise which provides refugees with work as language professionals. This would combine the School's work on languages and on supporting refugees and could be part of a crowd-funding campaign aiming at £27,000 p.a.

5.1.2. Curriculum reform and harmonisation

Curriculum reform is a key vehicle to strengthen the position of our SIL. Attractive, well-designed curricula can increase student numbers and reduce costs and inefficiency. For SIL we propose two key elements of harmonising curricula and programme structures. 1) We wish to adopt a 13 contact hour model: 4+4+3+2 hpw, i.e. the Language 1 and Language 2 modules are 4 hpw, Language 3 modules for 3 hpw, and Language 4 modules for 2 hpw. For most SIL (e.g. those with fewer than 12 students per year), the curriculum can be taught with 1.5 FTE staffing (see below) – 1 FTE academic post teaching 4 hpw (approximately half of their teaching, the other half on thematic/discipline modules related to the language/area), and a 0.5 lector teaching 9 hpw. 2) We wish to harmonise syllabus structure, in particular for first year/initial modules. This includes aligned milestones for all SIL, with pre-teaching needs analysis and training, early assessment points, clear exit points

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[20] The current document does not address ancient languages, which operate in a slightly different context.

(such as 'life boat' options), as well as harmonisation of assessment structure: All SIL are assessed based on the same number, timing, and weighting of assessment elements. Through this, we will be in a better position to support student success, read early warning signs, and provide clear and helpful academic advice.

5.1.3. Pedagogic innovation
We wish to continue developing our pedagogic approaches and practices. At present the ley strategic element in this is the development of flexible period abroad study, which provide alternatives to the one-year abroad currently part of 4-year language degrees. More flexible periods abroad will provide students with more study options, and may reduce the overall costs of their degrees. We can draw of the successful development of accredited periods abroad which are part of our new two-year MA programmes.

5.1.4. Staffing strategy
In accordance with our strategic aims in curriculum reform, and in view of the need to reduce the institutional cross-subsidy, we propose to adopt an overall staffing policy based on a 1 + 0.5 model, where one academic staff and 0.5 lector support one SIL language based on a 13 hpw SIL curriculum. In some cases, one academic staff may be aligned with more than one language, and some larger languages may have a slightly higher staffing level. There is a risk that due to visa restrictions, recruitment to a 0.5 lector position will be difficult. This might be mitigated by appointing 1.0 FTE with 50% teaching and 50% scholarship and support functions (or inclusion of additional teaching hours, e.g. over the summer). The 1 + 0.5 model will be the guiding principle of our SIL staffing strategy.

5.2. High recruiting languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean)

5.2.1. Fundraising
Fundraising for high-recruiting languages plays a less central role than for SIL. However, there might be possibilities to encourage philanthropic gifts, for example, for classical languages such as Classical Chinese, for which a gift proposal is currently being developed.

5.2.2. Curriculum reform
High recruiting languages provide an attractive degree choice and are among the larger degree programmes within the School, in particular Japanese. Ongoing curriculum reform has resulted in several innovations over the last years, and this work will continue. There is also need to increase retention and progression rates. Specific strategic activities are 1) review of open option language courses to ensure their relevance and currency, 2) development of two model syllabus structures – one for named language degrees, one for open option classes, and 3) harmonisation of syllabus structure with aligned milestones for all (initial) modules, with pre-teaching needs analysis and training, early assessment points, and clear exit points.

5.2.3. Pedagogical innovation
There is scope for development in particular for the intensive language MA programmes, and study abroad arrangements.

5.3. Pedagogical innovation

Development of pedagogical approaches and practices is an overarching strategic activity, relevant for both SIL and high-recruiting languages. It includes 1) the development of strategic oversight mechanisms and co-ordination of activities across different languages at School or inter-departmental level, 2) review of language pedagogy across different languages, 3) increase of student satisfaction and success, and increase of progression, 4) development of mechanisms for easier entry and exit around the core teaching and learning activities, 5) increase of flexibility of the curriculum through, for example, shorter periods abroad or the development of 15 credit units, 6) collaboration with wider School-wide activities related to pedagogy and curriculum, such as Decolonising SOAS, 7) appropriate programmes of support and development for language-teaching staff, and 8) technological innovation and development of language technology for African, Asian, and Middle Eastern languages.

5.4. The Language Centre

The main strategic activity of the Language Centre is the development of a strategy consistent with the overall SOAS strategy and the Language Centre mission statement with a focus on outwards facing activities which make an appropriate financial contribution to the School. Elements of this strategy are: 1) discontinuation of accredited courses, 2) discontinuation of provision of LEP modules, 3) discontinuation of the teaching of European languages/languages of European origin, 4) critical assessment of language testing activities, 5) development of robust structures of QA oversight for non-degree students, 6) further development of a wide range enterprise activities, and 7) development of a strategy which spells out how core activities are maintained, and which underpinning elements need to be in place to achieve this.

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