THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC REVIEW OF
DEGREES IN THE SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES

1. Programmes Covered by the Periodic Review

BA Single subject in French, German (suspended) and Italian

BA Combined subject programmes involving French, German and Italian. In such cases, review was solely of the elements of the programmes offered in the School of Modern Languages.

Institution Wide Language Programme modules

MA Subversion, Revolt & Censorship
MA East German Studies (suspended)
MA Modern Italian History
MA Italian Studies

2. The Periodic Review took place on 22 and 23 January 2004

3. Objectives of the Periodic Review

The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:

- Monitor the quality and standards of the degree programmes under Review;
- Enable the School of Modern Languages to evaluate its taught programme provision, particularly student achievement of the appropriate academic standards, and the learning opportunities offered to students;
- Enable an independent Panel to review this self-evaluation through consideration of documentation and discussions with staff and students;
- Provide a means by which the School was able to reflect on the success, development and possible improvement of its taught programmes;
- Ask fundamental questions about the rationale, structure and resourcing of the programmes under Review;
- Consider the educational aims and objectives of the programmes;
- Review teaching, learning and methods of assessment in their contexts;
- Consider whether the programmes under Review should continue to run for a further period of up to six years;

4. Conduct of the Periodic Review

The Periodic Review was conducted by a Panel chaired by the Director of Teaching and Learning of the University’s Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and also comprising two other internal members of academic staff (neither from the School of Modern Languages) and two external academic members.
The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, including a Self-Evaluation Document prepared by the School and also relevant programme specifications. During the Review Visit, the Panel considered other documentation and met relevant staff from the School and also a selection of current students studying on the degree programmes under review.

5. **Evidence Base**

In addition to the meetings held with academic staff and current students, the Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including examples of student work, copies of programme handbooks, minutes of relevant committees and statistical data. The Panel was able to see External Examiners reports for the three previous years, which confirmed that the academic standards of the programmes are fully met.

The Panel was also able to see the evaluation questionnaires produced by students and the minutes of recent meetings of the student-staff committees, which indicated that appropriate action was taken in response to issues raised. Examples of staff feedback to students on their written work demonstrated that work was returned promptly and that students were offered one-to-one feedback on it.

6. **External peer contributors to process**

The external members of the Review Panel were present for the duration of the Periodic Review. They were appointed by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Board for Teaching and Learning, after considering nominations from the School of Modern Languages. The role of these External members was to provide subject expertise and judgement of the validity and appropriateness of the programmes under Review.

7. **Main characteristics of the programmes covered by the Review**

All programmes across the three intra-School departments provide teaching and curricula content of the very highest level, as attested to by both students and external examiners alike. All teaching is research led, and the School is to be highly commended for this. As a result of meeting new members of staff the Panel was made aware of the fact that those appointed to lectureships within the School believed that there were good ‘clusters’ of expertise within the School to which they added.

8. **Conclusions on innovation and good practice**

Examples of good practise identified included:

- the excellent work of the IWLP in promoting the learning of a language across the University;
• collaboration with other local universities in the provision of research training, both to ensure that students received the best possible training but also to ensure the development of student networking opportunities;

• the Year Abroad handbooks;

• the use of the Year Abroad to both improve language skills and to develop transferable skills;

• the integration of the CMS module with preparation for the Years Abroad, and in relation to this the excellent website for CMS in the Department of French;

• the introduction of a Study Skills module at Part 1;

• the use by IWLP of an attendance hurdle whereby 10% of the marks are deducted if more that 25% of classes are missed.

9. Conclusions on quality and standards

The Review Panel concluded:

• that the intended learning outcomes of the undergraduate and taught master programmes were clear and appropriate and were being obtained by students;

• that quality and standards were being achieved; and that the programme specifications were being delivered.

10. Conclusions on currency and validity of the programmes under Review

The Review Panel concluded that the following programmes under review remained current and valid and recommended that all programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years, or until such time as the next Periodic Review of programmes of the other subject in respect of combined programmes:

French Studies

(a) BA French
(b) BA Intermediate French
(c) BA French and Economics
(d) BA French and English
(e) BA French and German
(f) BA French and History of Art
(g) French and International Relations
(h) BA French and Italian
(i) BA French and Linguistics
(j) BA French and Management Studies
(k) BA French and Politics
(l) BA French and Sociology
(m) BA History and French
(n) BA History with French
(o) Linguistics with French
(p) BA International Management and Business Administration with French
(q) BA Music and French
(r) BA English with French
(s) BA Philosophy and French
(t) MA Subversion, Revolt and Censorship in Francophone Literature and Culture

German Studies

(a) BA German and Economics
(b) BA German and History of Art
(c) BA German and International Relations
(d) BA German and Italian
(e) BA German and Linguistics
(f) BA German and Management Studies
(g) BA German and Politics
(h) BA German and Sociology
(i) BA English and German
(j) BA Film & Theatre and German
(k) BA History and German
(l) BA History with German
(m) BA Linguistics with German
(n) BA International Management and Business Administration with German
(o) BA Music and German
(p) BA Philosophy and German
(q) BA German (suspended)
(r) MA East German Studies (suspended)

Italian Studies

(a) BA Italian
(b) BA Italian and Classical Studies
(c) BA Italian and Economics
(d) BA Italian and History of Art
(e) BA Italian and International Relations
(f) BA Italian and Linguistics
(g) BA Italian and Management Studies
(h) BA Italian and Politics
(i) BA Italian with Film Studies
(j) BA Italian with Japanese
(k) BA English and Italian
(l) BA Film & Theatre and Italian
(m) BA History and Italian
(n) BA History with Italian
(o) BA Linguistics with Italian
(p) BA International Management and Business Administration with Italian
(q) BA Latin and Italian
(r) BA Music and Italian
(s) BA Philosophy and Italian
(t) MA Modern Italian History
(u) MA Italian Studies

Japanese

(a) Level C module in Japanese

Institution-Wide Language Programme

(a) Level C Modules in French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Modern Greek, Spanish.

11. Summary of Recommendations

The School of Modern Languages was asked to address the following:

(a) The current level of the grant to the Department of German for the IWLP be reviewed to ensure that it reflects accurately the amount of work undertaken by the Director.

(b) The termly plenary session be expanded to allow the full sharing of examples of good practice in teaching and learning across the School.

(c) The School Teaching and Learning Committee be charged with monitoring the numbers on option units to ensure the optimum use of resource whilst ensuring student choice.

(d) The Part 1 Study Skills course be assessed.

(e) A School-wide coversheet for coursework be introduced.

(f) The role of Programme Liaison Officers be better explained to students.

(g) Those students who achieve less than a certain mark in written work be required to attend for a feedback session.

(h) School handbooks should be standardised.

(i) The School continue to monitor the mentoring of Language Assistants and every opportunity be taken to ensure they have received the necessary CSTD training.
(j) The necessary resources be found to allow IWLP tutors to attend CSTD courses.

(k) The School attempt to increase the number of work placements available for students in the Departments of French and German; the Department of Italian consider the introduction of placements.

(l) The School continue to develop the use of IT in both the teaching of language and options.

(m) Students be encouraged to make greater use of APILL.

(n) A statistical analysis of module evaluations be considered as a matter of course by the relevant Board of Studies

(o) The routine evaluation of each module be introduced along with the full evaluation of the Year Abroad.

(p) Boards of Studies minutes be routinely submitted to the School Teaching and Learning Committee.

(q) The introduction of School level Examination Board be considered. The School ensure that formal written responses are made to External Examiners Reports.

12. Summary of actions taken in response to the Review

In response to these recommendations the School of Modern Languages has taken the following actions:

(a) The Head of School is to propose an appropriate level of funding for the IWLP Director.

(b) The School is developing ways of identifying and spreading good practice in teaching and learning, and will use at least one termly session for this purpose.

(c) The School will monitor through its Teaching and Learning Committee the numbers of option modules closing and introducing new options in response to demand

(d) The School is to investigate modules of study skills assessment at Reading and elsewhere to establish how best to incorporate such assessment into the Part 1 programme for 2005 entry.

(e) The School is commissioning a member of staff to produce a coversheet for introduction in 2005.
(f) The Departments will ensure that a cleared explanation of the School’s Liaison Officer structure be included in course handbooks as soon as possible.

(g) The School’s T&L committee will determine the mark that should be set for any major piece of assessed coursework requiring attendance at a feedback session.

(h) Standardisation of the School handbook is taking place. Full standardisation will be implemented by Autumn 2005.

(i) The School is asking language co-ordinators and Language Assistants to produce a needs analysis for implementation of training provision from October 2004.

(j) The Director of the IWLP will conduct an audit of IWLP staff to discover the level of their CSTD training needs and aspirations.

(k) The Department of Italian is considering work placements for introduction from October 2005. The School as a whole will look to expand work placement opportunities over the same period.

(l) The School’s Learning Technology Officer will carry out an audit of IT use in teaching and learning, in order to discover any major differences in practice between common types of teaching/learning to consider the IT training needs of any member of staff requiring additional training in IT.

(m) The School is working hard with the School of Applied Language Studies to produce a model for a full and effective Language Centre but, until such a Language Centre exists, the School will continue to work with APILL to develop resources and ensure that students use them.

(n) A statistical analysis of module evaluations had been conducted by the Board of Studies for French (March 2004). Italian and German will discuss a statistical analysis at their Boards of Studies at the end of the Summer Term 2004.

(o) Discussions are taking place on how to modify the current module and programme review process. The Teaching and Learning committee is to consider different models of evaluation, in particular for the Year Abroad, in order to implement a new extended process from Autumn 2004.

(p) Boards of Studies minutes will from now be routinely submitted to the School Teaching and Learning Committee.

(q) The Examination Officers in each Department have organised a School level Examination Board for Summer 2004 for combinations of two
modern languages and will consider the introduction of other combinations as well.

The School will ensure that formal responses to External Examiners report are made fully and in a timely fashion.