Summary of the Periodic Review of Modern Languages (inc. European Studies) and Institution Wide Language Programme

Programmes covered by the Periodic Review

1. The programmes covered by the Periodic Review were:
   - BA French (full and part-time)
   - BA German (full and part-time)
   - BA Italian (full and part-time)
   - BA European Studies (3 and 4 year programmes)
   - BA Archaeology and Italian
   - BA English Literature and European Literature and Culture
   - BA English Literature and German
   - BA English Literature and Italian
   - BA Film & Theatre and German
   - BA Film & Theatre and Italian
   - BA French and Economics
   - BA French and English
   - BA French and German
   - BA French and History of Art
   - BA French and International Relations
   - BA French and Italian
   - BA French and Management Studies
   - BA French and Politics
   - BA German and Economics
   - BA German and History of Art
   - BA German and International Relations
   - BA German and Italian
   - BA German and Management Studies
   - BA German and Politics
   - BA History and European Literature and Culture
   - BA History and French
   - BA History and German
• BA History and Italian
• BA Italian and Classical Studies
• BA Italian and Economics
• BA Italian and History of Art
• BA Italian and International Relations
• BA Italian and Management Studies
• BA Italian and Politics
• BA Philosophy and French
• BA Philosophy and German
• BA Philosophy and Italian
• BA English Language with French
• BA English Language with German
• BA English Language with Italian
• BA English Literature with European Literature and Culture
• BA English Literature with French
• BA History with European Literature and Culture
• BA History with French
• BA History with German
• BA History with Italian
• MA (Res) French
• MA (Res) German
• MA (Res) Italian

IWLP modules:
• Arabic, Levels 1-3
• Chinese, Levels 1 and 2
• English for Erasmus students (Level 5)
• French, Levels 1-5
• German, Levels 1-4
• Modern Greek, Levels 1 and 3
• Italian, Levels 1-3
• Japanese, Levels 1-3
• Spanish, Levels 1-5

Date of the Periodic Review
2 The Periodic Review took place on Monday 10 and Tuesday 11 May 2010.

Objectives of the Periodic Review
3 The objectives of the Periodic Review were to:
• Review the effectiveness of the means by which Modern Languages, European Studies and IWLP manage and assure the academic standards of the degree programmes under Review and the quality of the learning opportunities provided;
• Enable Modern Languages, European Studies and IWLP to consider how they might enhance their portfolio of taught programmes and the learning experience of their students, and to consider the effectiveness of their approach;
• Consider the future plans of Modern Languages, European Studies and IWLP for their taught programmes
• Enable an independent Panel to review this self-evaluation through consideration of documentation and discussions with staff and students;
• Provide a means by which Modern Languages, European Studies and IWLP were able to reflect on the success, enhancement and future development of the taught programmes that they offered;
• Identify examples of good and effective practice;
• Consider whether the programmes under Review should continue to run for a further or initial period of up to six years, as appropriate;

Conduct of the Periodic Review

The Periodic Review was conducted by a Panel chaired by the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning for the Faculty of Life Sciences, with two internal members of academic staff (from the Henley Business School and the School of Humanities), and three external members of academic staff (from the University of Bath, the University of Nottingham and the University of Warwick). The Joint-Faculty Administrative Officer acted as Secretary to the Review Panel.

The Panel received a range of documentation in advance of the Review, made available on a BlackBoard Organisation site, including a Self-Evaluation Document (one for Modern Languages and European Studies and one for IWLP) prepared by the School, a copy of the Pathfinder reports, relevant programme specifications, programme handbooks, and External Examiners’ reports. During the Review visit, the Panel considered further documentation, and met with the majority of staff and current students from the School, along with recent graduates.

Evidence base

The Panel considered a wide range of evidence, including programme specifications, module descriptions, programme handbooks, External Examiners’ reports and the School’s responses, minutes of relevant committee meetings (including the Staff – Student Committees and Boards of Studies meetings), Annual Programme Reports and statistical data, and examples of student work. The Panel received feedback from staff, students and recent graduates from the School.

External peer contributors to process

External members of the Review Panel were appointed by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Board for Teaching and Learning, after considering nominations from the School of Languages and European Studies. The role of these External members was to provide subject expertise and to provide an expert judgement of the validity and appropriateness of the programmes under Review.
Overview of the main characteristics of the programmes covered by the Review

The Panel considers that the aims and outcomes of the programmes under review are appropriate both in terms of the level and coverage of the disciplines represented. Students commented on the welcoming nature of the existing subject areas, and recognised that the relatively small size of the subject areas had considerable learning benefits in terms of “being known” and in relation to the general support and dialogue they received from staff. Many of the modules offered appear to have relatively small numbers and this also enables a high quality learning experience, although in some cases further thought needs to be given regarding the “resource” sustainability of such modules.

The four year programmes including the Study Abroad offer an excellent opportunity for students to be immersed in the language and culture of the subject. However, the current high assessment load associated with Study Abroad year appears to be out of line with many comparable institutions. Although staffing levels vary between existing subject areas there is a general desire and in most cases practice to ensure that teaching is informed and tied to research.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

The Panel commends the following as areas where the Department has particular strengths:

a) The interesting and exciting diversity of programmes available to students.

b) The Study Abroad opportunity, which allows students to encounter the language and culture they are studying as well as how students are supported by staff, such as via Blackboard and Facebook, both before they leave campus and during their time abroad.

c) The flexibility of provision for students and the opportunities for joint programmes are both examples of good practice.

d) Generally there is good feedback within the subject areas, with some examples of innovative feedback, such as the use of Camtasia and video feedback.

e) IWLP offer good language opportunities for students across the University in other subjects apart from the language subjects.

f) The meetings and training available for Sessional staff.

g) The Careers Day for Part Two, in particular the use of alumni in this day.

h) Evaluating and improving programme marketing through the MORE committee.

i) The desire to maintain a focus on research-led teaching.

j) The general value added; students often arrive with lower tariffs and leave with a 2:1 classification.

Conclusions on quality and standards
The Panel is assured of the quality and standards of the programmes that have been reviewed and that the intended learning outcomes of the programmes are being obtained by students.

Conclusions on currency and validity of the programmes under Review

The Panel agreed that the degree programmes offered by the School, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level, met the stated aims and objectives, and were of appropriate standard and quality. The learning outcomes of the degrees were being met by students. The degrees, particularly at postgraduate level, were closely related to the research interests of academic staff.

Recommendations

The Panel recommends to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities that all of the degree programmes be re-approved to run for a further six years.

Single honours:
- BA French (full and part-time)
- BA German (full and part-time)
- BA Italian (full and part-time)
- BA European Studies (3 and 4 year programmes)

Joint honours:
- BA Archaeology and Italian
- BA English Literature and European Literature and Culture
- BA English Literature and German
- BA English Literature and Italian
- BA Film & Theatre and German
- BA Film & Theatre and Italian
- BA French and Economics
- BA French and English
- BA French and German
- BA French and History of Art
- BA French and International Relations
- BA French and Italian
- BA French and Management Studies
- BA French and Politics
- BA German and Economics
- BA German and History of Art
- BA German and International Relations
- BA German and Italian
BA German and Management Studies
BA German and Politics
BA History and European Literature and Culture
BA History and French
BA History and German
BA History and Italian
BA Italian and Classical Studies
BA Italian and Economics
BA Italian and History of Art
BA Italian and International Relations
BA Italian and Management Studies
BA Italian and Politics
BA Philosophy and French
BA Philosophy and German
BA Philosophy and Italian

*Major-Minor Combined Honours:*
BA English Language with French
BA English Language with German
BA English Language with Italian
BA English Literature with European Literature and Culture
BA English Literature with French
BA History with European Literature and Culture
BA History with French
BA History with German
BA History with Italian

*IWLP modules:*
Arabic, Levels 1-3
Chinese, Levels 1 and 2
English for Erasmus students (Level 5)
French, Levels 1-5
German, Levels 1-4
Modern Greek, Levels 1 and 3
Italian, Levels 1-3
Japanese, Levels 1-3
Spanish, Levels 1-5

*MA programmes:*
MA (Res) French
MA (Res) German
MA (Res) Italian

Recommendations to be addressed:

**Advisable**

1. The Panel recommends that the incoming Head of School works closely with staff in order to develop and communicate a clear teaching and learning strategy which can effectively put these areas of provision on a more sustainable pathway.

2. In relation to sustainability of provision going forward, these subject areas need to review the range of module provision and consider whether there is scope for module saving.

3. The Panel noted that there were some concerns with regards to the unevenness of assessment across modules and potential over assessment in some areas; the amount that students are assessed differs quite considerably. The Department needs to address this issue and to produce standard guidelines for assessment loads across the new Department.

4. It is not common practice in other Universities for the weighting the Year Abroad to be as heavy. The Department should address this with a review of practice at other institutions so that the burden on both staff and students with regards to assessment of the Year Abroad can be reduced.

5. The Panel considered that in order to maintain the notion and quality of research-led teaching a common workload model needs to be put into place across the subject areas. This needs to take into account equity in relation to study or research leave, as well as addressing teaching and assessment loads.

6. In order to recruit to its full potential, the Department should update the website and other marketing materials.

7. There appears to be some minor technical or administrative reason that IWLP modules cannot be supported by Blackboard. These issues need to be overcome quickly to allow students on IWLP programmes to maximise their learning.

8. The new School needs to maintain a watching brief on the consistency of technology within classrooms and ensure that arrangements are in place to allow equitable access to the resources that the new Language Centre will provide.

9. The Panel was concerned with the method used to “accommodate” the 5-credits of CMS teaching into the normative 120 annual credit weighting. The current procedure is not in-line with University procedures and could be confusing (and possibly unfair) to students. The Panel believes the current practice needs to stop and that careers teaching should be integrated into the standard 120 credit model.

**Desirable**

1. The new School should continue to investigate how IWLP can be further embedded within the languages taught at degree level by the Department of Modern Languages and European Studies.
2. The dissertation should be re-oriented so that it becomes part of the fourth year of the programme, enabling students to focus on their study/work abroad and also ensuring that they have equitable access to learning resources.

3. The Panel noted that the English &/with European Literature and Culture and the History &/with European Literature and Culture programmes are administered and largely taught within the subject areas under review, but that they are currently “owned” by another the other departments. The Panel suggests that these programmes should be subject to discussions so as to decide where it can best be supported with the aim of improving recruitment.

4. There were some instances of feedback not being received by students on time (i.e. in time for students to use it to inform their exam revision). Additionally, IWLP students were not allowed to retain their feedback. Both of these areas need addressing.

5. The Panel discussed with staff members whether introducing interviews prior to making an offer would help in terms of recruitment and the new School should consider this option.

6. There is evidence of the use of technologies to enhance curriculum delivery, in particular through Blackboard, although there is considerable room for spreading and developing the use of the Virtual Learning Environment to support and enhance learning.

7. The Panel noted a lack of standardisation of information relating to academic misconduct, including plagiarism and poor academic practice. The information relating to this appeared to differ for instance between the programme handbook and online advice. This needs correcting.

8. The Panel was impressed with the Self-Access Language Centre as a central resource to students, particularly on the IWLP modules. The Panel noted that there is an opportunity for more substantial integration of this resource within modules to increase student use, rather than merely relying on initial student introduction to the Centre.

9. The alumni who met with the Panel said that they would welcome involvement in career-type events and noted that the Department needs to keep in regular contact with their alumni by, for example, email and using them in Open Days.