HIGHER EDUCATION, LANGUAGES AND QUALITY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

(August 2002) (revised March 2003)

1.1 Introduction: languages spoken in the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom includes the regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. While at its foundation Northern Ireland was granted a parliament (from 1921) and a degree of autonomy, it is only recently with the victory of Labour that the aspirations of Scotland and Wales to a certain measure of autonomy have been recognised with the establishment of regional assemblies in 1999. Northern Ireland, which, on account of its political problems, had had a period of more or less continuous direct rule from Westminster since 1972 (despite somewhat unsuccessful attempts at various stages to re-establish some form of local body), had again a regional assembly from 1998 but due to political difficulties this was suspended in October 2002.

While the main language of the United Kingdom is English, there are also a number of other indigenous languages, in particular, Welsh (over 590,000 speakers), Scots Gaelic (about 70,000 speakers), Irish (140,000 speakers). Cornish and Manx are also spoken in their respective regions and, in addition, Scots and Ulster Scots are sometimes considered as languages in their own right.

The United Kingdom, in common with other Western European countries, has a considerable population who speak both English and what is called in the UK their 'community' language – the language of their parents or grandparents. These languages include Chinese, Italian, Turkish, Greek, South Asian Languages and West Indian Creoles.

1.2 Modern languages in pre-primary, primary and secondary education

The status of English as a world language today and the misguided belief that this is all the inhabitants of the country need in the way of languages, together with the island location of the country are major factors in the current unsatisfactory level of language learning. Another cause is the nature of the secondary curriculum, which does not promote adequately continuation of language study or the learning of more than one language. The result is that currently nine out of ten students stop learning a language after 16. While the recent *Green Paper14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards* (2002) on education does raise the issue of languages, its solutions may not adequately address the problems. It contains proposals to make a foreign language optional after the age of 14 (instead of compulsory to 16). Counterbalancing this, the paper also proposes giving all primary school children from the age of seven the entitlement to learn a language by 2012. Despite the very welcome facility for all primary school children to learn a foreign language, the suggested measures relating to secondary education are giving rise to considerable concern and debate.

The state of foreign language learning in the UK has, indeed, been a problematic issue for some time and in response to the seriousness of the situation, the Nuffield Languages Inquiry was established in 1998 in an attempt to understand better the state of language learning in the country and to outline future needs. The final report *Languages: the next generation* was published in May 2000. A further report, commissioned by the Nuffield Foundation, *A New Landscape for Languages*, by Michael Kelly and Diana Jones, considers changes in languages in Higher Education and their implications for both the HE sector and for schools and colleges (London, The Nuffield Foundation, 2003).

Language Learning in Primary Schools.

A major pilot project in the 1960's was not pursued and since then early language learning provision has been somewhat piecemeal with no clear policy direction (apart from Scotland). Estimates suggest that around 25% of primary schools teach a foreign language, which in England is mainly French.

In England, the government has recently recognised the potential importance of early language learning. In 1999, they announced the allocation of some funding to support existing teaching and to undertake feasibility studies with a view to future policy initiatives. As indicated above, an entitlement to learn a language in primary school is now proposed. In Scotland, a Scottish Office initiative launched in 1989 has led to the majority of primary schools offering children the opportunity to learn French, German, Spanish or Italian.

There have also been successful national projects in the early learning of Welsh in Wales and of Gaelic in Scotland.

Language Learning in Secondary Schools

The main foreign language taught in secondary schools has traditionally been French and it still continues to be the most generally studied language. Other languages commonly offered in schools (and, indeed, universities) are German and Spanish, although the Nuffield Report judges that the provision of these two languages is insufficient to meet the nation's needs.

Recent statistics on the take-up of languages at GCSE 'O' levels and 'A' levels are not encouraging (GCSE, General Certificate of Education, is taken at different levels during the final years of secondary school.' O', Ordinary level, is taken at approximately 16, two years before the final school examination. AS, Advanced Subsidiary level, recently introduced, is taken in a more restricted range of subjects in the penultimate year of schooling. 'A', Advanced level, is the final school examination on the basis of which entry to higher education is determined). Statistics show that for 'O' levels there is a relative decline in language take-up (Kelly and Jones: 2003). This includes, however, some interesting shifts in choice. According to an article published in Summer 2002, in GCSE 'O' levels, Spanish has risen by 6.7 % whereas the other most widely taught languages have fallen, German by 6.6% and French by 2.5%. The same article suggests that the total take-up of all foreign languages was down by 2.6%. This source points to a rather similar pattern emerging at 'A' level, although at 11.9% the overall fall was even sharper, something of particular concern for the future of language study in higher education. The drop in German was 17% while that for French was 13%. Spanish, on the other hand showed a marginal rise of 1%. The upturn in Spanish is attributed to the extensive provision of budget flights from the UK to Spain. It is estimated that some 12 million Britons visit Spain every year.

The UK has a hybrid secondary system with a state system (managed within local organisational units) that is largely non-selective, with some of the former grammar schools (academically oriented secondary schools) having elected to go into the private sector to retain their academic ethos rather than fall into the comprehensive state system. However, the state sector now includes specialist schools, which, while teaching a full curriculum, offer expertise in particular specialisms (eg arts, modern foreign languages, sports or technology) and which were introduced in a move to revitalise and improve standards. Northern Ireland has so far retained selection at eleven and a system of grammar and other secondary schools (but there has

been a recent report and public consultation which is likely to lead to changes in the nature of secondary school provision there). Secondary schools in Northern Ireland are either state controlled or maintained: the former funded completely by the public authorities and the latter retaining a measure of independence but subject to public controls in exchange for funding (these are largely religiously run schools). In addition to the traditional state and religious school sectors, there is now in most areas in Northern Ireland a small integrated school sector targeting both sides of the community (at both primary and secondary school levels and covering about 3% of the school population). A few areas also have schools, which offer tuition through the medium of Irish. As in England, all schools are subject to the regulations and overall responsibility of government – in the case of Northern Ireland, the government of Northern Ireland – but they are managed at local level.

In the United Kingdom, Classical languages (Latin and Greek) were traditionally taught in public schools (the prestigious private - and expensive - school sector) and in grammar schools (academic secondary level schools under the control of Local Education authorities). Teaching of Classical Languages is very much reduced and is now mainly confined to the public schools, other fee-paying selective schools and academically orientated state schools.

Teaching of 'community' languages (ie languages of the countries of origin of the families; see also above) shows considerable variation and is dependent on the policies of individual local education authorities and schools. The Nuffield report found that in cities with a high proportion of children from one or two minority communities, secondary schools were often able to provide teaching of the home languages within the curriculum but that where schools had a low proportion of children from minority communities, little account was taken of bilingualism. Teachers of these community languages in schools are also often employed on part-time temporary contracts and do not have recognised teacher status, making them (and to some extent, the languages they teach) something of an underclass.

The Specialist Schools programme includes Specialist Language Colleges, as seen above. As part of its response to the Nuffield Report, the government announced its intention of further extending its Specialist Language College programme with the creation of nine more Language Colleges, in addition to the 99 existing ones.

1.3 The Higher Education system in the United Kingdom

The greater part of Higher Education in the United Kingdom is now undertaken in Universities and a number of larger colleges. There is one independent University, the University of Buckingham. Some post school education is also undertaken in Further Education Colleges (usually two year courses of one type or another). Prior to 1992, however, the current university sector was divided into two parts, each with somewhat different approaches to Quality measures and control. On the one hand, there was a University sector with a considerable degree of autonomy and capacity for self-governance including the right for universities to define their own syllabus (albeit in consultation with appropriate professional bodies in certain areas) and to award degrees. There was, nonetheless, some measure of control in relation to the national quality and standing of degrees in the external examiner system, which has long been a feature of higher education in the UK. The external examiner for a subject is an academic from a different institution who will be involved in the examining process and view the work of candidates, thereby ensuring conformity to standards understood and accepted within the system as a whole.

The remaining institutions in the sector (Polytechnics or Colleges) had less independence and were subject not only to the external examining process but also to external degree validation and audits of one type or another. The majority of these institutions had acquired the right to prepare students for degrees as a result of the expansion of Higher Education, launched in the 1960's, following the Robbins Report of 1963 which suggested (*inter alia*) that degree study should take place alongside work at other levels in a number of public sector colleges, a recommendation which led in 1966 to the establishment of the polytechnics and thus saw the creation of the polytechnic and college higher education sector. Provision in these institutions was controlled by a validating body known as the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) which had already been established in 1964 and whose role was extended, creating an early precedent for quality assurance within at least part of the higher education sector. However, even at this stage, not all degrees fell within the purview of the CNAA as certain colleges (largely former teacher training colleges) preferred to have their courses validated by neighbouring universities.

As part of the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, the degree awarding sector was rationalised and the majority of institutions which did not have university status were incorporated into the university sector and granted degree awarding powers in line with those obtaining in the older university sector. Those smaller colleges not granted university status had their degree provision validated by institutions in the university sector. The Open University (which offers higher education through distance learning throughout the UK) took on a major role post 1992 in validating non-university provision and is now the largest validator of programmes in these institutions.

In addition to degree qualifications, post-school education is offered within areas of study such as those eligible for BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) awards: HND (Higher National Diploma) or HNC (Higher National Certificate), largely found in Colleges of Further and Higher Education. These qualifications are in general two or, occasionally, three year awards and are run under the authority of the funding body for Further Education. In England, this is the Learning and Skills Council, established in April 2001 and replacing the Further Education Funding Council: www./sc.gov.uk . While the qualifications are largely national awards (apart from a number of specific Scottish qualifications), further education institutions and their provision are in Scotland under the control of the Scottish Further Education Funding Councils; in Wales the funding body is the Further Education Funding Council for Wales, while in Northern Ireland Further Education provision and colleges come under the Department for Employment and Learning. Universities may also now work in partnership with Colleges in the Further Education sector in the provision of access courses or in offering the first year or sometimes the first two years of a programme to students in the College in a franchise arrangement to widen access.

Recently, the UK has introduced two new qualifications at pre-degree level: foundation degree and associate bachelor's degree. These are discussed in 1.4 below.

Languages in Higher Education

Language education in the UK is delivered in different types of first degree and these may, typically, focus on a language or languages in conjunction with literature or studies or, indeed, a combination of these two fields. Students also frequently take language in varying combinations with another subject area either in a career oriented field such as business, law or informatics or in a combined or joint degree with a more traditional field such as History or

English. Most universities now also offer students the opportunity to undertake language study as part of university-wide languages schemes, which will frequently be organised from a language centre.

The range of languages offered in Universities would normally be wider than that offered in schools, with a number of the less widely taught at secondary school being available *ab initio* in some universities. Certain Universities also offer Asian and African Languages, sometimes in common with business but the less widely studied of these languages would only be taught in a few specialist centres. In particular, London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) offers a particularly wide range of languages in its field while certain specialisms in less widely taught languages are also found in Oxford and Cambridge. Latin is studied as a degree subject in some twenty-one universities and Classical Greek in slightly less (some eighteen).

Post-school language education may also be offered within areas of study eligible for BTEC awards (HND or HNC), taught largely in Colleges of Further and Higher Education. Such colleges may also offer non-degree level courses in languages and different types of office practice and communication as well as including languages in a range of other areas such as business or tourism/ hospitality.

1.4 Two-cycle structure.

Education is clearly structured within the United Kingdom into undergraduate and postgraduate studies, with the initial undergraduate studies being normally of three (or in certain instances, four) years duration. Postgraduate study falls into two categories: taught postgraduate programmes, on the one hand, and, on the other, work leading to a research degree by thesis (although there are now some taught doctorates, mainly in professional areas where there is initially an element of taught work in the doctoral programme).

The undergraduate degree in the UK, the BA (Hons), lasts in most subjects for three years but in the case of the study of a language as a single, major or joint programme will normally be extended to four years to include a year abroad in either one or two locations. This year is most usually spent in one of three ways: studying at a university (generally as part of a Socrates / Erasmus scheme), as a language assistant in the target community or in a work placement.

The UK has recently introduced intermediate qualifications, in general for two years of study. These are the Foundation Degree, a vocational qualification, which includes work experience, and the Associate Bachelor's Degree, a qualification representing two years of academic study.

Beyond the first degree, Universities also offer a range of postgraduate education at different levels. One year MA's most usually consist of a taught programme up to postgraduate diploma level followed by an MA dissertation (such courses would normally be based on a specific theme or area of language study). These exist, for instance, in translating and interpreting or in language (eg Bath; Bradford; Heriot Watt (Edinburgh); Leeds; Salford; Westminster (London)) or in a professional area, frequently in the business domain, where language may be studied in relation to its professional applications. An M.Phil is a short research degree normally of two years' duration. The doctoral qualification normally lasts for three years full-time (but it may take longer) and the successful candidate is generally awarded a Ph.D (occasionally, however, the award is called D.Phil). In doctoral programmes where there is a substantial taught element as well as a research component, the name of the discipline would normally be included in the title (as in EdD for Doctor of Education). It is possible in the UK to study part-time as well as full-time for research degrees.

In the United Kingdom, the Quality Assurance Agency has recently developed national qualifications frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and *The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (see also 5.1). Both of these were published in 2001 and are applicable from September 2003. They represent a rationalisation of the levels and qualification norms and nomenclature within the UK system, in which there has traditionally been some diversity. One of the stated aims, as outlined in *The Framework for Higher Education in England*, clearly relates to Bologna, namely *to maintain international comparability of standards, especially in the European context, to ensure international competitiveness, and to facilitate student and graduate mobility.*

It should be noted that while a number of universities offer undergraduate language degrees focusing on translation and interpreting or with options in them, most students who wish to be trained as translators or interpreters would also take one of the postgraduate programmes mentioned above. Some students are, however, recruited in translation on the basis of the European competitive examinations without undertaking an MA in the area. Students seeking to enter interpreting would normally have completed a postgraduate qualification in one of the universities offering postgraduate courses in interpreting (see also section 2.4b)

1.5 Accreditation of new programmes and of new higher education institutions

As universities within the United Kingdom are autonomous degree awarding bodies, they have the power to bring in new programmes but such programmes are expected to undergo a process of validation by the institution that includes external representation on the University validation panel. The introduction of new programmes is subject to guidelines issued by the Quality Assurance Agency (see below) and the good health of individual university procedures will be checked when the university is audited. Existing institutions applying for university status and degree awarding powers are subject to validation now undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) who advises government in relation to such applications.

1.6 Quality Assessment / Evaluation

The past

With the extension of higher education and increased financial demands on public finance (despite current attempts to moderate these through measures such as the introduction of student fees), government has become increasingly convinced of the importance of monitoring quality and standards in the system as a whole which is, as has been seen, the product, on the one hand, of largely self-regulating universities and, on the other, of institutions that emerged from a range of public sector colleges to meet the need for a much wider spread of higher education and that were subject to more explicit external controls.

Already in the 1980's, the older university sector had responded to pressure from government for greater accountability and transparency in procedures by the development of a certain number of codes of practice (in relation, for instance, to the role of the external examiner and to appeal procedures at postgraduate research level). These codes were developed by a working group of the *Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals* (CVCP), (now *Universities UK*) the umbrella body bringing together the Heads of Universities. Essentially, these codes were based on current procedures and sought to develop and share best practice throughout the sector but compliance with them remained voluntary.

In 1990, a further step was taken in the direction of national assessment with the establishment by the CVCP of the Academic Audit Unit to undertake reviews of quality assurance systems in place in universities. Universities thus recognised mounting external pressure for control but sought to meet this through self-regulation. The Audit Unit was thus owned by the CVCP, its audits were undertaken by teams drawn from throughout the sector and were based around aims and objectives formulated by universities themselves which were considered in relation to the codes and guidelines for good practice already drawn up by the CVCP.

The principle of extending quality assurance and accountability was included in the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 which entrusted the Higher Education Quality Council with the task of undertaking audits at the institutional level in all parts of the sector, thus replacing, on the one hand, the work of the Academic Audit Unit and, on the other, the Council for National Academic Awards, which, in addition to its validation at course and subject level, had also responsibilities in this respect for the institutions for which it was responsible. Whilst still self-regulatory and owned by the sector, the Higher Education Quality Council represented a clear stage in the creation of a more unitary system of quality assurance within higher education in relation to institutional governance and organisation.

The audit procedures for overarching university systems were paralleled at the subject level by two quality control activities carried out under the auspices of the Higher Education Funding Councils. They were granted responsibility for ensuring the quality of education and research in universities (quality assurance for Northern Irish universities being the responsibility of the Funding Council for England, which consults as appropriate with the appropriate department in Northern Ireland). These two activities are, respectively, monitoring the quality of education delivered to the student and measuring the quality of university research. In both areas, the principle of self-regulation by the sector has to some extent been maintained in that the assessment exercises are largely staffed by members drawn from a range of institutions within the sector.

In August 1997, a single Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established which has subsumed both the audit functions of the HEQC and the activities of the funding councils in relation to subject-based assessment. (Research Assessment remains the responsibility of the Funding Councils). The inclusion of subject-based assessment and institutional audit within the remit of a single body represents a further rationalisation of quality assurance provision. While the principle of self-regulation is still to some extent in force in the implementation of the process by staff chosen as before from within the sector, there is a shift towards greater autonomy of those responsible for it in the establishment of the agency as an independent company limited by guarantee with representation on the board of directors from the universities, commerce, industry and the professions. Noteworthy in this connection, is the recognition implied in board membership of the responsibilities of Higher Education towards society, its economic needs and the future employability of students.

Research Assessment

The research assessment carried out by panels of subject specialists is a periodic exercise (the previous period was 5 years) which considers and grades research in specific subject areas as a basis on which research monies are allocated to universities for the duration of the funding period (ie until the following exercise). The latest Research Assessment review exercise was made public in December 2001. There has been criticism of this system as being somewhat

heavy and time-consuming and a review of the exercise is in train with a review under a revised procedure currently projected for 2007 - 08.

Courses of Study

The past

The subject assessment of courses of study was previously centred on categories relating to the student learning experience. From the early nineties, each subject was reviewed in turn over a period of approximately two years during which time each subject provider was assessed in a visit lasting some 3-4 days. Each of the six aspects of provision (Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation; Teaching, Learning and Assessment; Student Progression and Achievement; Student Support and Guidance; Learning Resources; Quality Management and Enhancement) was the subject of a judgment made on the basis of the aims and objectives stated by the subject in question. For each of the six areas a score ranging from 1 to 4 was given (1 being the lowest grade and indicating a failure in provision and 4 being the highest grade indicating that the provider's objectives were fully met). Slightly different arrangements were made for Scotland but the basic principles were similar.

The first cycle of subject reviews of the student learning experience concluded in the academic year 2001/02 and proposed alterations to the process have undoubtedly been conditioned by the establishment in August 1997 of a single Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) covering both the audit functions of the HEQC and the activities of the funding councils in relation to subject-based assessment (see above). From 2001, activities in Higher Education are informed by new guidelines and codes of practice for provision, which have been (or are being) elaborated by the agency. These include **national subject benchmark statements**, which are, in effect, guidelines for subject provision and broad specifications in the different subjects taught in Universities. There is also **a template for course specification**. There are too a variety of **codes of practice** for the different aspects and types of provision that are crucial to the student experience. These outline key elements in good practice (eg there are, for instance, codes on matters such as assessment; distance learning; placement learning; academic appeals and student complaints).

In 2000 –2001 a revised review process for subjects was proposed for England and was piloted in Scotland for subjects scheduled for review. In the late Spring and Summer of 2001, however, Universities continued to exert pressure on government regarding the system of university review with a view to obtaining a significantly lighter and less cumbersome system of quality control. Wide-ranging discussions were held and a system based on audit has now evolved. These developments led to the resignation of the then Chief Executive of QAA in the summer of 2001 who felt unable to support the extent of the move towards institutional based audit and what he saw as the downgrading of the whole review process.

The new system, which is now being implemented, charges institutions with the responsibility for ensuring quality and standards within their own provision. Audit visits allow a consideration of how this is done in relation to their overall structure and various functions and procedures. Auditors look too at the way in which the university's systems deliver quality and standards in selected disciplines through discipline audit trails. As not all institutions will be audited in the immediate future, institutions not scheduled for audit for some time will, in the interim period, have a small number of interactions at subject level, called 'developmental engagements', which will normally be in those subjects which would under the previous system

have been scheduled for subject review. There is also provision for a number of full subject reviews.

The development of the current national system in the UK has thus been a gradual process and it is still, no doubt, evolving. It was driven in large part by the concern to ensure a greater measure of good practice across an expanding sector, which review has shown in the main to be in good health but in which there was certainly some less than perfect practice. While the initial impetus may have come from politically motivated concerns on the part of the then Conservative government, the continuation of the process under a Labour administration has shown an on-going concern to maintain and embed the review process. On the negative side, it is argued by some that at a time of funding constraints and restrictive staff recruitment policies, the system has created an additional administrative and bureaucratic burden for academic staff. It has, as well, cost implications both at national and institutional levels. University unhappiness with the system has been strongly voiced and their continuing lobbying has led to the current rethinking of the approach to quality assurance and procedures.

Within the higher education sector, some fear that the codification implied in the proposed system of guidelines and benchmarks may act as a brake, stifling innovation and creativity, although there is also some stress within the proposals on the recognition of innovatory or exemplary practice. There is, however, no doubt that the process of review has led to greater transparency and an enhancement of standards of delivery as well as a sharing of good practice between different institutions. This academic discussion and interchange of ideas between staff has been facilitated by the establishment of a number of bodies (discussed below in 3.2 c and 4.1 iii), which have as their function the enhancement of quality in subject delivery and classroom practice. It is hoped that the new system will ease somewhat the burden on staff while also permitting the necessary monitoring of higher education. The recourse to codes and guidelines should also play a role in permitting the spread of the more satisfactory aspects of provision across the sector as a whole.

1.7 Funding of Universities and criteria upon which funding is based

In the United Kingdom, Universities and other institutions of Higher Education (apart from the private university of Buckingham) receive their funding from central government. The Department for Education and Employment has responsibility for universities but there are separate arrangements for fund distribution and oversight in the different regional jurisdictions. As a result of the 1992 Act, the Higher Education Funding Council for England was established. Its main role is to distribute the funds made available by government for the provision of education and the pursuit of research to Higher Education Institutions in England. At the same time, Higher Education Funding Councils were established for Scotland (SHEFC) and Wales (HEFCW). In Northern Ireland, a similar function is undertaken by the relevant government department. Funding is allocated for work by universities in two separate categories: teaching and research. The level of funding for research is conditioned by the scores which institutions achieve in the Research Assessment Exercise, while that for teaching is allocated according to student numbers and the funding bands into which particular subjects fall.

In institutions where languages have not recruited well, there have in recent years been considerable cuts in staffing to save money, which has had the undesirable effect of reducing still further the range of language provision in Higher Education. There is some feeling that the expense involved in teaching modern languages is not adequately reflected in the formulae for funding allocations.

It is generally accepted within the University system that where there has been an increase in student numbers this has not been matched by a comparable increase in the funds made available to universities. This means that there has been some erosion of the conditions under which staff work and in staff availability to support students, something which is recognised in relation to the sector as a whole in the recently published White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education* (January 2003), which points to the fact that between 1989 and 1997 funding per student fell by 36%. There is, however, much unevenness in the system with some universities experiencing more pressure than others. It is also argued that the pressure on universities to perform well in the Research Assessment Exercise has led to a certain downgrading of teaching, the funds available for it and for those staff whose main input is in the teaching area. While the above White Paper does propose greater recognition for teaching, this must be seen in the context of a proposal in that Paper for what would in effect be teaching only universities.

1.8 Admission of Students

Universities in the UK operate a process of selection for undergraduate courses on the basis of results in GCSE 'A' levels (the School leaving examinations) and sometimes AS levels (the recently introduced examination taken in the penultimate secondary school year) or SCE (Scottish Certificate of Education) Higher grades (the school leaving examination in Scotland). This system is operated centrally through UCAS (University and Colleges Admissions Scheme) and sees universities making offers to candidates that are conditional on the achievement of certain grades. Some universities (in particular Oxford and Cambridge) also operate their own specific system of selection. Obviously the grades asked for by universities and subjects reflect to some extent the competition for places in the University concerned and the popularity of the subject or programme in question.

Selection for entry to postgraduate courses is normally operated by the universities themselves, although selection for postgraduate teacher training is somewhat different. In England and Wales there is a central system of application for teacher training, through the GTTR (Graduate Teacher Training Register). In Scotland, there is a mixed system with direct application existing for some institutions, while others require application via GTTR. Universities in Northern Ireland undertake the selection for postgraduate teacher training themselves.

In their approach to admissions, Universities are expected to adhere to the code of practice for recruitment and admission prepared under the aegis of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

As is the case for most European countries, the UK has seen across all subjects a considerable expansion in student numbers and the government targets 50% of 18-30 year olds having experience of higher education by 2010.

1.9 Student support and funding

In the UK, it was decided by government that the public purse could no longer fully support students in higher education with the result that students currently pay means tested student fees (£1 100 in 2002/03) and student grants have been replaced by a more extensive loan provision.

With the establishment of regional assemblies in Scotland (1999), Wales (1999) and Northern Ireland (1998) and the devolution of certain discretionary powers in the ordering of higher education matters, some variety in practice has arisen, and this is particularly visible with

regard to student fees and forms of student support. The Scottish Assembly has decided on the abolition of the fee for eligible Scottish students (those resident in Scotland for reasons other than education) and who are studying in Scotland. Northern Ireland has recently made the decision to retain the means tested fee but to enhance the system of student grant support.

There are also special grants for particular categories of student (students with dependants; lone parents; disabled students). In addition, there are a variety of access and hardship funds. To give one instance, in England, the government also introduced 'Opportunity Bursaries' with a view to broadening access for students from low income families where there is little or no experience of Higher Education. (website: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/excellencechallenge/home/).

Despite such initiatives, it has generally been felt that the new financial arrangements are leading to increased hardship amongst certain categories of student and that they are likely to be to the disadvantage of longer and more expensive programmes such as those in languages, with their additional year of residence abroad in target linguistic communities.
(some websites:
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/student support/;
http://www.student-support-saas.gov.uk; www.learning.wales.gov.uk For Northern Ireland, see Department for Employment and Learning; http://www.delni.gov.uk/)

It is no doubt such concerns that have led the government in the January 2003 White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*, to propose the introduction of higher education grants in England for students from the lowest income families (this grant would absorb the current Opportunity Bursaries: see above). It also suggests the abolition of up-front tuition fees with graduates repaying their contribution to the tuition fee back through a new Graduate Contribution Scheme once their earnings reach a certain level. The proposals would also give institutions the right to set their own fees in the band £0 - £3000, something for which certain universities have been lobbying in order to boost the income available to them. Consultations on the Paper are in train at the time of writing and not scheduled to end until 30 April 2003.

1.10 Departments / units in higher education institutions in charge of programmes and portions of programmes constituting the area of languages

In the UK, languages are now very often (but not always) found grouped in a department covering the different languages with sub-divisions for particular languages. While the provision for individual languages will continue to be organised within the language grouping, location in a larger department enables interaction among a wider range of staff whose interests are cognate. Such departments cover undergraduate and postgraduate teaching within mainstream language courses. Some also deal with teaching languages to students of other disciplines, although this may be given to a Language Centre or a division of institution wide language teaching. Language Centres may be located within departments of languages or they may be free-standing units. English as a Foreign Language may generally be found located in a division devoted to the subject or in a Language Centre.

Language departments or the wider grouping within which Languages are found will normally be part of a Faculty, headed by a Dean. Faculties report to the University Senate (or whatever body has the responsibility for academic affairs within the institution). It should be noted that University structures in the UK are by no means standardised and there are different models, with there being in some institutions, for instance, larger Schools and no Faculties. In Oxford

and Cambridge, there is a different structure again with the existence of Colleges as well as cross-University departments and faculties

2 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITY MEASURES RELATING TO DEFINING AND DESIGNING COURSES AND PROGRAMMES IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGES

2.1 Organisation of Quality: benchmarks; guidelines

Individual institutions have responsibility for the provision of programmes in their own institutions and for allocating to departments and programmes adequate resources to support them from within the funds, which they have received from government through the various funding agencies. The validity of the course programmes is tested in the national process of review. Subject content and aspects of delivery are expected to conform to national benchmarks and other relevant codes of practice.

In the provision of programmes, there is, therefore, an interaction between national and institutional levels in that, in the main, institutions validate (see section 5.5 iv for a discussion of validation of courses) and run their own programmes but these are subject to national monitoring and are expected to follow nationally accepted guidelines.

The recent development of subject benchmarks in the United Kingdom means that, at the planning stage, institutions must now take account of certain nationally recognised standards and areas of subject content. National benchmarks for languages and related studies were drawn up by a panel representing different interests within the University sector. A draft set of benchmarks was published in July 2001 for consultation and comment and the final version appeared in 2002. There is too a benchmark statement for linguistics.

The benchmark statements apply to the bachelor's degree with honours, although some elements of the statement for languages and related studies are seen as being relevant to the non-specialist student (in particular, the teaching and learning section with reference to the balance between receptive and productive skills, the exposure to authentic resources and the role of educational technology). Also relevant to non-specialists may be certain points on the usage of the target language (depending on the course of study concerned). In addition, for non-specialists who pursue language study at a level equivalent to final year, parts of the statement with regard to skills, standards and achievements at the end of study are also pertinent.

National Benchmarks are defined as providing a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject. As such they indicate general learning outcomes but not a detailed curriculum. They are also seen as representing general expectations about the standards for the award of qualifications at given levels and articulate the attributes and capabilities that those possessing such qualifications should be able to demonstrate. They are intended to allow for variety and flexibility in the design of programmes and encourage innovation within an agreed overall framework. These benchmarks will be subject to revision but not before July 2005.

The next area that is beginning to be developed is that of benchmarks for postgraduate level programmes.

2.2 Consultations

The national benchmarks were (as seen above) drawn up by a panel of academics assisted by the Quality Assurance Agency who publish the benchmark statements for the range of subjects taught within the UK higher education system. As part of the process of development, draft guidelines for consultation were drawn up and comments invited prior to the publication of the final benchmarks.

Where consultations prior to the launch of degree programmes are concerned, it would be expected that, in the case of professional areas, appropriate stakeholders would be consulted and representatives included in the university validation panel. Non-professional courses would be expected to include representation from elsewhere in the academic community. Good practice would dictate that, where appropriate and possible, views of former and (in particular for revalidation exercises) current students should be sought. Course validations are, it should be remembered, now subject to national control through the process of university audit.

2.3 Areas of concern of the benchmarks and employability

The national benchmarks cover the wide range of types of language study within the UK, including language usage and competence as well as a broad area of associated studies, such as literary and cultural as well as civilisation, economic and social fields. They also recognise that certain degrees may have a stronger focus on translation and interpreting.

The benchmarks cite areas which may be included within the ambit of language degrees as coming from the following diverse fields, indicating the variety found within language degrees in the UK: *literary, cultural, media and film studies; critical theory; gender studies; history; geography; philosophy; politics; sociology; anthropology; religious studies; visual and performing arts; economics; business studies and law*. The statement adds that: *degree programmes will vary as to the relative weight that they attach to these different approaches but all will normally ensure that students completing the programme acquire familiarity with methods, knowledge and understanding appropriate to the academic disciplines involved*. The statement is also concerned to point to the intercultural awareness and understanding that is fostered by degree study in a language or languages. There is discussion too of various subject skills, relating to language and the subject fields included within the degree in question.

Key generic/ transferable skills which the student acquires in the course of the degree and will be of benefit in a range of careers are also considered. Where the programme relates to a vocational area, time spent abroad (a key feature and normal expectation of most language programmes in the UK) would normally include vocationally oriented experience (ie mainly in the case of professional or business programmes with languages). As part of the final level of achievement, students on such courses would be expected to be able to apply their language skills effectively in a professional context.

2.4 Learning outcomes and specific professional profiles

2.4a Teachers

Initial Teacher Training

Teacher training in the UK is subject to two specific systems of quality assurance, depending on the nature of the provision concerned. There is, first of all, a discrete system to monitor the

quality of initial teacher training, that is the first course which intending teachers take to qualify them for their profession whether it be a one year (36 weeks) Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) taken after a specialist degree (in languages or other designated subject area) or an undergraduate course leading to a teacher qualification (these are the two most frequent types of entry by graduates). The general quality systems for subject review described above in the first section are used in relation to the other categories of provision for teachers.

In the UK, initial teacher training through the Postgraduate Certificate of Education is the most frequent route taken by linguists to entry to the profession in schools, granting them the recognition known in England as Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). This qualification has been based since the early nineties on a partnership between selected schools and universities or other institutions of higher education so that the major part of the student's training (at least two thirds) is now spent in school, learning as it were on the job rather than having a higher percentage of time in university departments of education as used to be the case. This development was, like much educational change of the period, motivated at one level by the ideological considerations of the Conservative government of the period which was concerned not only about the standards in schools but also about the training given to intending teachers in university departments (often perceived as somewhat out of tune with the particular preoccupations of Conservatives). On another level, the change was influenced by work that had already been undertaken in the more extensive education of trainee teachers within the school setting, which was considered by its proponents to provide a better preparation for young teachers.

Partnership agreements are thus concluded between university providers and groups of schools for the implementation of teacher training. It has also been possible since the 1994 Education Act for groups of schools to mount their own school centred initial teacher training without reference to Higher Education and a small number of such programmes exist. Initial Teacher Training is carried out under the auspices of the Teacher Training Agency in England, which was established in the 1994 Act and given responsibility for funding. (It should be noted that while this is the system for England there are differences in the operation of teacher training - and in the quality measures in place to monitor it - in other parts of the United Kingdom). For further information on teacher training in UK see, for instance: http://www.canteach.gov.uk

Quality Assurance of Initial Teacher Training

While the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has in England a shaping role in the nature of teacher training, quality assurance of the system of ITT (Initial Teacher Training) is carried out by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education). This is a non-ministerial government department set up under the Education (Schools) Act of 1992 to take responsibility for the inspection of schools in England, replacing the former system judged to be deficient in the maintenance of standards. At the same time a comparable body was established in Wales: Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, to take responsibility for the inspection of schools in Wales. Similar work is done by HMI - Her Majesty's Inspectors - in Northern Ireland and by the General Teaching Council in Scotland. As these bodies are responsible for the inspection of schools *per se*, it seems logical that they should be granted responsibility for quality control in relation to the training of teachers.

OFSTED commenced a rolling programme of inspections in November 1996. An overview report was published in 1999, covering the period to July 1998. For each subject, inspectors reported on 6 points (or 'cells' in their terminology) agreed between OFSTED and the TTA.

These included three aspects of quality (admissions policy and selection procedures; the quality of the teaching process in developing knowledge, understanding and skills set out in the standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS); the accuracy and consistency of the assessment of trainers against the standards for the award of QTS) and three standards (the trainee's subject knowledge and understanding; the trainee's planning, teaching and classroom management; the trainee's monitoring, assessment, recording, reporting and accountability). Each area was graded on a four point scale, This system, although somewhat different in the detail of its application, resembles in approach and principles the more generally applicable quality assurance scheme that was until the end of the academic year 2001/02 in operation for the remainder of subjects in the UK. Here too judgment is made in respect of specific areas against a given scale, although in the case of trainee teachers the quality system comprises a greater measure of external control.

The overview report for modern languages makes (as do the individual reports) an overall assessment of the quality of provision and outlines strengths and weaknesses in training, a procedure that is again similar to that for other subjects. It points, for instance, to a national shortfall in recruitment of 27% as against target in the years 1996/7 and 1997/8 but indicates, notwithstanding, the generally good standard of entrants to the profession, deficiencies in subject knowledge being found only in certain cases where candidates had been recruited from a degree where foreign language was not the main focus of concern. The report also noted the increased recruitment of appropriately qualified foreign nationals.

INSET (In-Service Education and Training)

Quality control for other aspects of provision such as INSET (In-Service Education and Training whereby professional development and up-dating are offered to teachers) is undertaken under the Quality assurance review system, education being one of the last subjects to be considered. In-service courses of up-dating and further training constitute a major area of quality enhancement for teachers in the school sector. In addition to the in-service courses (INSET) that are offered to serving teachers in schools, there are also other bodies at least part of whose remit is to give support to language teachers in secondary and further education, in particular CILT (the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research) and the Central Bureau for International Education and Training (formerly the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges) (discussed below in section 3.2b).

2.4b Translators/Interpreters

A number of institutions in the UK offer post-first degree translation/ interpreting courses of which the best known are to be found in Bath; Bradford; Heriot Watt (Edinburgh); Leeds; Salford; Westminster (London). These institutions are subject to the Quality Assurance Agency Audit (see section 1.6).

2.5 Learning outcomes on language degrees and personal development and citizenship

Various areas of the national subject benchmarks may be said to address the above areas. Considerable importance is placed on the understanding of another culture and openness to it as well as the resultant intercultural awareness. The benchmarks stress too the inclusion of opportunities to acquire a range of skills which enhance personal and social development, such as communication, presentation, interaction; the ability to work creatively and flexibly with others as part of a team; mediating skills, qualities of empathy; self-reliance, initiative,

adaptability and flexibility; the capacity to learn independently; the ability to effect critical judgements on a range of matters.

2.6 Relationship to other accepted levels of proficiency

The UK benchmarks are specifically concerned with providing a general framework within which the broad range of degree level study in languages within the UK may sit. There is an acknowledgement within the statement of the existence of other levels and the statement is seen as a contribution to the various debates currently taking place. The statement also suggests that particular institutions and programmes may wish their own detailed specifications to be informed by the Common European Framework: ... *the benchmark group was ... conscious of other standards-related initiatives in languages, in particular, the National Language Standards, the Common European Framework and the European Languages Portfolio. The group regards this statement as a specific contribution from British HE to these debates. In the context of the Bologna declaration, schools and departments may consider it appropriate also to refer to the Common European Framework in their programme specifications.*

National Language Standards have been developed in conjunction with the *Languages National Training Organisation* and focus in the main on languages for use in the workplace. They fit with the levels as set out by the *Qualifications and Curriculum Authority* (this is the body established to act as guardian of school and vocational standards and qualifications and which works with others to develop and monitor the curricula concerned and associated assessment). The *Languages National Training Organisation* has as its role to promote a greater national capability in languages and cultural skills for business and employment purposes, its aims being: *to raise awareness among employers of the importance of language skills for the UK economy and workforce; to provide information and support to UK companies on language and cultural issues and raise standards of language training for industry; to work with national and international agencies to promote language competence and strengthen the cultural understanding of the UK workforce; to ensure the continued development and implementation of a national language standards framework which supports language training in the workplace, and the teaching and learning of vocational languages in the education system.*

National Language Standards thus concern largely the usage of language in the workplace and relate to a range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ's) and General National Vocational Qualifications at pre-degree level. It is, however, worth noting that the highest NVQ levels represent: for level 4, the level of a good honours degree, while the highest level, 5, *subsumes degree level competence with the implicit addition of highly specialised professional or business proficiency. The latter is the level associated with professional interpreting and translating.* Accordingly, the Agency has defined National Standards in Interpreting and National Standards in Translating although these are not mandatory unless courses offer NVQ's in the area. Postgraduate courses in the Universities which train high level translators and interpreters do not, therefore, have to take account of any national guidelines but are subject to audit by the Quality Assurance Agency. In general, it must be stressed that the majority of the language standards defined by the Languages National Training Organisation refer to language study of a more vocational nature, which may be in the post school sector but which largely falls outside the scope of university study.

2.7 Admission requirements

These are determined by individual institutions and departments. They are, however, subject to review (as appropriate) by the institution's quality control systems as well as being subject to national control when the institution itself is audited.

2.8 New course content based on newly defined learning outcomes

It is a normal expectation that teaching and learning methods will reflect the variety of learning outcomes of particular programmes. For instance, the national subject benchmarks outline a range of activities such as: *...use of authentic materials...* including *written texts in a variety of styles and registers... contact with native speakers, both directly and through radio, TV and the electronic media.* This material is seen as being used in different ways such as *reading or listening comprehension, translation and production of related material in the target language through exercises such as summarising, essay-writing and oral presentations.* Formal grammar, it is suggested, may be taught through *instruction, use of IT resources and by guided study of a textbook, together with drills and exercises.* A variety of language-learning resources, typically for self-access reinforcement exercises should be available. Tandem learning schemes and CALL may also be deployed. Reference is made as well to the delivery of specified course units or parts of course units in the target language. Other techniques mentioned are pair and group work (eg in the preparation of presentations); creative writing; discussion of prepared topics in seminar groups. These various activities, both newer approaches and more traditional exercises for the teaching of languages, are now, in the main, general practice within the UK system. Methods chosen should be appropriate to the desired outcomes.

2.9 New forms of assessment based on newly defined learning outcomes and content

The various types of assessment used should reflect the defined course outcomes. It is also expected that there would be both formative and summative assessment so that through the formative activities, the students have the opportunity to learn as they study.

The subject benchmarks consider that there should be a range of tests and/or assignments, designed to demonstrate, as appropriate:

- *receptive skills (listening and reading)*
- *productive skills (speaking and writing)*
- *mediation skills (translation and interpreting)*

It is suggested that forms of assessment may include the following, which cover both well established and more recent activities (these are all widely found throughout the system):

- *oral presentations*
- *participation in structured oral discussions*
- *transcription and dictation*
- *interpreting between speakers of the target and 'home' languages*
- *grammar tests*
- *summarising and reading for gist or inference*
- *paraphrasing*
- *translation from and into the target language*
- *essays and/or extended projects written in the target language*
- *report writing based on target-language texts or recordings*

- *linguistic commentaries*
- *drafting target-language texts for a defined audience and purpose*
- *computer-based testing including cloze, multiple choice, discrete point testing and testing on non-alphabetic scripts*
- *portfolios of evidence, participation in individual and/or group projects*

3 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITY MEASURES RELATING TO THE PROCESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

3.00 Introduction: Student Programmes of Study

In the UK, there are a number of ways of presenting programmes of student learning. In the main, a student's work will be organised around a subject and / or course. If the student studies only French, for instance, the student's course and subject are more or less the same thing. On the other hand, the student might well take French with a further language or another academic area, in which case these subjects together make up the student's programme or course. Within the course or programme, the student's work in any one subject is broken down into units of study, frequently known as modules. Within a credit system, each module will be allocated a certain number of credit points according to its size. The university will usually set the number of credit points that are normally taken at any one stage of the student's programme. Although there has been considerable work and consultation on credit schemes in the UK, they are not mandatory and universities currently have latitude in their interpretation and implementation of credit schemes so that what they offer matches needs and situation appropriately. Most Universities have also in place a procedure to convert their credits into the ECTS system.

3.1a Scheduling of programme delivery and description of learning activities in a particular module or class.

It is now common practice in the UK to give students a full breakdown at the start of the term or semester of the work that will be covered; dates for the submission of in-course (continuous) assessment and a description of the various aspects of the examination process (including the types of question, general marking criteria and the allocation of marks to the different questions and activities within the examining process); a reading and resource list. At another level, there is a general expectation that in addition to information on the module, students will also receive a course handbook on their overall programme of study.

It is often the case now that the above information is available on the web where it may be easily updated and accessed by students.

The provision of clear information of this type enables the students to understand better what they are required to do and helps to make them more aware and involved partners in the learning process.

3.1b New methods

As indicated in the previous section, the subject benchmarks in languages suggest a range of methods that may be appropriate for language learning (see 2.9).

Very considerable efforts have been made to harness new technology in the development of approaches in teaching and learning in varying ways both in class and for private study. New technology is central to the provision of self-access activities and students of languages normally have available a self-access language learning area which would offer a range of packages and other materials as well as foreign language TV and video resources and internet access.

Students in UK universities are also able to avail of other types of computing facility, whether in teaching or self-access computing laboratories. University libraries too are equipped with computers and offer the possibility of using internet resources.

3.2 Learning environments facilitating quality language learning

3.2a Staff student contacts

It is normal practice in UK universities for staff to set aside times in the week when they are available in their office to see students and to indicate these clearly on a notice. Increasingly, students are in email contact with their lecturers and so are able to advise them quickly of any problems or seek advice. At a time when staff are under greater pressure and students are often less available due to their increasing need to undertake paid employment, email has been found a very useful way of ensuring speedy and efficient contact between staff and students.

3.2b Sources of information and support for teachers

i. CILT (Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research)

The Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research was established in 1966 as an independent charitable trust supported by central government grants, with the aim of collecting and disseminating information on all aspects of modern languages and the teaching of Modern Languages. It is not a membership organisation and indicates that queries and visits from anyone concerned with language teaching and learning are welcome. This body deals with all levels, not just higher education. While CILT is based in London, it operates throughout the United Kingdom, working in partnership with the network of 14 Comenius Centres in England, the National Comenius Centre of Wales, Scottish CILT and Northern Ireland CILT. CILT organises an annual programme of courses, conferences and other training events for professionals involved in all sectors of education from primary to higher and in business. In addition to these events, CILT offers library facilities for consultation by individuals, including books, journals, video and aural material as well as a range of software. A register of on-going research is also maintained by CILT.

ii The Central Bureau for International Education and Training

Part of the remit of this institution is to offer professional development for educators and training providers as well as advice and support for an international dimension in education and training. Unlike CILT, the Central Bureau (earlier the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges) was directly funded by government, namely by the UK education departments and the Department for Educational Development. The Central Bureau is now part of the Education and Training Group of the British Council, the UK's international organisation for educational and cultural relations and it offers a range of schemes to promote and enhance the work of language teachers, principally in the school sector. In addition, the Central Bureau administers the language assistant scheme, which offers opportunities to undergraduate

students and recent graduates as language assistants in schools (largely posts lasting for one school year). Like CILT, the Central Bureau has a well-established role in the UK language scene (predating the current quality movement) in providing support for languages.

3.2 c National initiatives to support teaching and learning and improve classroom practice

i Learning and Teaching Support Network

This is a network of centres for the different academic subjects, supported by the Funding Councils. The aim of these centres is to disseminate and increase good practice, to bring staff together for discussion and to stimulate new developments and distribute information of various types. The Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies is based in the University of Southampton (http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk). It maintains a contact base of interested staff; has an information sheet (*Liaison*) as well as regularly distributing e-bulletins. It organises a number of conferences and seminars (eg on teaching grammar, on Languages and Curriculum 2000: the Implications for Higher Education or on European language portfolio and Languages for specific purposes) and has funds for which staff may bid in order to develop particular teaching and learning initiatives. It cooperates with a number of bodies on a national and international level in the process of subject development and quality enhancement (eg European Language Council, CERCLES, EUROCALL). For recent proposals regarding the inclusion of the Learning and Teaching Support Network in a 'Teaching Quality Academy', see 4.12.

ii The Generic Learning and Teaching Centre

This is a centre which focuses on generic issues in teaching and learning that cut across subject and discipline boundaries. It was established in September 2000 to broker expertise on aspects of learning and teaching that cross subject boundaries and are common to all disciplines. As a small team, the Generic Centre work strategically to build links across the LTSN and make connections with other academic networks and communities (see http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/aboutus.asp). The centre is based in York in the same location as the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) (the ILTHE is discussed in 4.1 iii).

iii Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning

This initiative is supported by the funding councils, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and, for Northern Ireland, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). It is managed by the National Co-ordination Team, Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund. It offers monies, allocated on the basis of the submission of a bid for particular projects in subjects that have been recently gone through Quality Assurance assessment. Successful candidates are normally expected to have achieved 'high quality' in the aspect of provision in which they are seeking funds.

In the round of bids relating to modern languages provision, projects included the following (in addition to the residence abroad projects 3.4 i) (in each case the name of the project and that of the coordinating university are given: projects normally included a number of Universities in addition to the coordinating institution): DOPLA (Development of Postgraduate Language Assistants in Language Teaching), University of Birmingham; CIEL (Curriculum and IndepEndence for the Learner), South Bank University; SMILE (Strategies for Managing an

Independent Learning Environment), University of Hull; Effective Practices in Assessment in the Modern Languages: a German Perspective, University of Ulster; WELL (Web Enhanced Language Learning), Liverpool John Moores University; DEVELOP (Developing Excellence In Language Teaching through the Observation of Peers), Leeds Metropolitan; TransLang: Transferable Skills Development for Non-specialist Students of Modern Languages, University of Central Lancashire. There were also a number of projects based in Linguistics: System for Interactive Phonetic Training and Assessment, University College, London; Resource based data/documents sets for Applied Linguistics, Kings College, London. (See www.ncteam.ac.uk/projects/fdtl/index.htm)

iv TLTP Projects

Launched in 1992, the Teaching and Learning Technology Programme (TLTP) was initially funded by the Universities Funding Council (UFC) and later by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and by the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland. Like FDTL, it has been managed by the National Co-ordination Team, Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund. The Programme was established to encourage the higher education sector to work together and explore how new technologies might be exploited to improve and maintain quality within teaching and learning (http:www.ncteam.ac.uk/projects/tltp). In the Languages area ALLADIN (Autonomous Language Learning for Art and Design Using Interactive Networks), co-ordinated by the Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College, was funded by TLTP and the then Department of Education for Northern Ireland with the aim of raising awareness of the benefits that new technologies can bring to language acquisition in art, design and media disciplines (http://www.alladin.ac.uk).

v JISC

The Joint Information Systems Committee promotes the Innovative application and use of information systems and information technology in Higher and Further Education across the UK. It is a strategic advisory committee, working on behalf of the funding bodies for higher and further education (HE and FE) in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (http://www.jisc). In the modern languages area, JISC is supporting a project on 'Virtual Departments for minority languages' (VDML), which involves collaboration between language teachers from University College London, Edinburgh and Hull and learning technology staff from UCL that has resulted in the development of an intranet site in Danish for students of the three universities. The purpose of this site is to provide support for teachers in small departments of Danish (often one person) by offering access to a wider pool of resources and the potential for developing and sharing up-to-date communicative materials of a higher quality than anything available commercially. Students are able to access the site and use its resources at all times even when away from the university, on vacation for instance (see ***Liaison: Bulletin of the Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies***, issue 3, July 2001, p 7).

vi Technology Innovation Centre

This has been created by the Joint Information System (JISC) and is located in the ILT's offices in York. Its aim is to encourage technology innovation in relation to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

vii Quality Enhancement facilitated by target language cultural services

The Cultural and Linguistic Services of certain target language countries offer a variety of courses and support to Lecturers in Higher Education in the UK.

ix Scholarly Associations

i Association for Language Learning (ALL)

Professional associations have always played a role in providing support and enhancement to teachers. A major association focusing largely on language teaching in schools but also with some relevance to higher education is the *Association for Language Learning*, founded in 1990 through the amalgamation of seven UK associations of language teachers. This body covers a wide spread of languages and operates at regional level and within subject groups. In addition to branches in the regions, language specific committees exist for Arabic, Asian Languages, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and Portuguese, while there are also a range of national Advisory Committees on matters of general interest to the membership. The association offers a variety of seminars, conferences and publications aimed at teachers of specific languages and also covers topics of concern to language teachers as a whole.

ii Other scholarly associations

Lecturers in languages have been active in establishing a wide range of scholarly associations representing the different languages and approaches to the study of languages in Higher Education. These scholarly associations provide a forum for subject discussion and contribute to the enhancement of quality in language teaching through publications as well as various meetings, seminars and conferences.

The associations in the different languages include: Association of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland; Association for French Language Studies; British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies; British Association for Chinese Studies; British Association for Japanese Studies; Conference of University Teachers of German in Great Britain and Ireland; Council of University Classical Departments; Society for French Studies; Society for Italian Studies; Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies.

x Representative National Associations promoting languages and language learning

i Association of University Language Centres in the UK and Ireland

The Association of University Language Centres is an organisation for staff working in higher education language departments and centres in the United Kingdom and Ireland. It has interests in the different types of language clientele and in the varied teaching and learning methods that may be found throughout the university sector. However, its principal focus is, obviously, to bring together those responsible for work in language centres and similar types of activity.

The AULC represents the UK and Ireland as an affiliate of CercleS (European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education).

ii University Council of Modern Languages (UCML)

This body was established in 1993 in order to create a broad national organisation to represent the interests of modern languages, linguistics and cultural and area studies in higher education throughout the United Kingdom. Its membership consists of representatives of the various

language interests, professional and scholarly associations, and other organisations concerned with the study and teaching of languages. It works with corresponding bodies and a range of relevant organisations in other countries and in Europe. As well as speaking on behalf of languages, it offers a forum for discussion of issues and matters of concern to languages, and is also able to publish material and initiate a range of projects, seminars, meetings and conferences.

3.3 Delivery of programmes in other languages

Practice with regard to the delivery of language and language-related subjects in the target language varies and depends on a range of factors such as level of study and nature of the material treated. Increasingly the trend is to deliver as far as possible in the target language. This may, however, prove difficult in certain areas related to languages (eg European Studies, Politics or Business) where language students may be taught particular areas together with non-language specialists, something which may be necessary to effect economies in teaching costs by delivery to larger groups of students. Teaching in the target language is commended in the National Subject benchmarks but it is recognised that it may not always be appropriate or feasible.

3.4 Quality of student mobility

3.4i Linguistic and intercultural preparation and support

It would be a normal expectation for there to be a period of preparation for students undertaking mobility. This would typically include an introduction to key aspects of the host environment as well as relevant linguistic preparation. Departments are expected to establish mechanisms for support and contact with students during their period in the host location. A monitoring visit is considered good practice, although funding does not now always permit this.

The Central Bureau for International Education and Training which co-ordinates the language assistants scheme (see also above 3.2b ii) offers a variety of support through prior briefing and courses for those selected for its schemes.

The Quality Assurance Agency in its national overview reports for languages revealed some years ago (1996) that there were quality holes in relation to the period of study, which students spend abroad. Action was taken to remedy this through the allocation of monies from the National Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) (the fund which enables institutions to bid for monies to develop and disseminate good practice in teaching in certain subjects and which is supported by the Funding Councils: see also 3.2c iii) to a number of projects which concentrated on different aspects of study abroad, its support, integration into the curriculum and assessment. Three projects were funded in which a coordinating university cooperated with a network of other universities: RAPPORT, coordinated from the University of Portsmouth, The LARA project (Learning and Residence Abroad in Modern Language Degrees), organised from Oxford Brookes University and THE INTERCULTURE PROJECT run from the University of Lancaster.

QAA has also guidelines relating to periods of placement learning outside the institution, some of which are relevant to residence abroad since it includes within the definition of placement: *a planned and intended part of an academic programme which typically takes place outside the institution with the support and cooperation of a placement provider.* The purpose of this period may include: *the development of the cultural or employment context of an academic*

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discipline and may take the form of: *enrolment of students on a programme of study at an overseas university* (in addition, of course, to a variety of forms of work placement). Courses and institutions are expected to have in place proper procedures covering such periods (for instance, to define learning outcomes, to offer preparation, support, appropriate assessment and opportunities for feedback). Universities are likely also to develop their own codes of practice for periods of study outside the institution and for placements of different types in line with the QAA code of practice. (For instance, to give one example, the University of Ulster has developed a university code of practice for study periods abroad).

3.4 ii Validation, recognition and certification of linguistic skills and competences acquired during study related mobility

Practice varies depending on the nature of the student's programme, the role of languages within the course and the length of time spent in the host location. Typically, marks might be transferred from the host location; the student might have an oral on their return; students might have to complete a defined amount of work for the home location while in the host location. The student may be given a certificate covering their study in the host location.

3.4 iii Further development of linguistic skills and competences acquired during study related mobility.

It would be normal within language degrees for the year following the mobility to build on knowledge and skills acquired during that period. Students taking languages with another discipline would either continue their language study or, if following an institution-wide language programme, would have the possibility of pursuing a further language option at a more advanced level.

3.5 Organisational structures facilitating language learning

The organisation of departments and units within which language learning is undertaken is described under 1.10. There is diversity reflecting local traditions and needs. In general, any specific language will find itself within a wider language department, which will offer the opportunity for interaction and exchange between teachers of different languages. A substantial number of universities have established language centres, which will have varying functions depending on the institution. Such centres may be charged with the provision of institution-wide language programmes and they are also likely to be associated with self-access facilities for all students of languages, offering a range of written, video/audio and new technology materials. Whether or not the university has established such a centre, it is common practice for there to be some form of self-access learning facility with dedicated materials for foreign language and English as a Foreign Language students (see also 3.1b).

3.6 Languages of communication in modern language departments

Again there is variable practice, depending on the staff concerned, their native language and the native language of the interlocutors – staff or students. In most instances, native speakers would tend to address staff or students in the target language whereas English native speakers would be more likely to communicate in their own language but there are also English speaking staff who regularly use the target language with each other and with students.

Measures designed to facilitate learning in the area of languages in general

3.7 New methods facilitating quality learning in language teacher education in schools

Language teacher education for schools in the UK is subject to the general measures for teacher education, which cover the full range of subjects (see section 2.4 a). Through a greater emphasis on teaching practice in schools, it is hoped that the quality of teaching will be improved among new entrants to the profession.

It is also worth noting that in certain areas of the UK, languages is a shortage subject in schools and that the government in England and Wales is offering financial incentives to potential students to help attract them into teaching. For instance, in addition to a training grant (available to new entrants to the profession in England and Wales), there is a secondary shortage subject scheme, which offers financial support in relation to need and financial circumstances. Wales also offers a teaching grant of £4000 when the first year of teaching is successfully completed and the teacher continues to teach the shortage subject. There is also in Wales, a Welsh medium incentive supplement available to certain students who start a secondary postgraduate course through the medium of Welsh, aimed particularly at those who need extra help to raise confidence and competence in order to teach in Welsh. The expectation is that those who receive these monies will look, on qualification, for a post in a Welsh medium school. In addition, the government has put in place a pilot scheme to repay student loans for new teachers in shortage subjects (including modern languages) in England and Wales, operative from 1st September 2002 (http://www.canteach.gov.uk/about/press/index.htm)

An interesting new venture in primary languages is the Primary Languages Teacher Training Project, a joint initiative of the Teacher Training Agency and the Ministère de L'Education Nationale supported by CILT. This project started in 2001 and has brought together thirteen Higher Education Institutions in England twinned with thirteen IUFM (Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres) institutions in France. From September 2003, this will have expanded to 26 institutions in England and also in France. In addition, seven training providers will also offer German and Spanish primary language training with a period of residency in the target country. (See, for instance, the website of the National Advisory Centre on Early Language Learning: http:www.nacell.org.uk/profdev/itt.htm).

Even prior to this initiative a number of institutions already offered the possibility of including a Modern Language as a specialist subject within either a PGCE or a BA/BEd (Hons) with a view to primary school teaching.

In the area of secondary education, an innovative programme, offered by Oxford Brookes in association with Université de Rennes 2/ Université d'Angers, is a PGCE Maîtrise Français Langue Etrangère. This is intended for teachers of French who will seek a first teaching post in UK and is taught jointly at Oxford and Rennes or Angers over one year, offering the possibility of a both a PGCE and a maîtrise qualification (website: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/education/maitrise.htm.)

Courses for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)

There have been recent national developments in the UK to regulate the education and training of TEFL teachers. The outcome has been the establishment of a new professional body, The British Institute of English Language Teaching (BIELT). It is intended that this institute will regulate the TEFL professional along the lines of other professional institutes such as the British Psychological Association. There is now a BIELT qualification framework, classifying TEFL qualifications at three levels: initial, qualified and expert. To give one example,

Middlesex reports that TEFL qualifications taken there are recognised by BIELT under this framework (one at level 1, one at level 3). Lack of recognition would make it very difficult for graduates to find employment in British Council recognised schools and colleges. To gain recognition, courses have to be judged against benchmarks laid down by BIELT. (http://www.bielt.org/Information/InformationaboutBIELT.htm)

(For quality assurance systems in language teacher education and professional development see also 2.4 a)

3.8 New methods facilitating quality learning in the training of translators and interpreters

As with other courses in the UK, those for translators and interpreters are subject to continual updating and there is also input from the professions. Like other disciplines too, they will see their quality monitored by the university in which they are run and, in addition to yearly monitoring, they will undergo periodic revalidation. Ultimately they are monitored through the audit and subject quality control exercised by the Quality Assurance Agency (see sections 1.6 and 5.5 for further discussions of quality systems).

3.9 a Preparation for lifelong learning

It would be a natural expectation that undergraduate study would give students the tools to continue learning and to effect professional updating in their subjects. A number of universities also offer taught postgraduate courses in the area of languages which may be taken part-time and which, therefore, support lifelong learning among linguists.

3.9 b Opportunities for Lifelong Learning in Languages

Students who have not previously learnt languages at university may wish to access them later in life and demand for languages on the part of adults remains buoyant in the UK. However, the Nuffield Report highlights deficiencies in relation to national policy in the area and there is also a considerable gap between intention and practice on the part of adults (a survey of 1999 revealed, for instance, that whereas 41% of respondents expressed a wish or intention to learn a language, only 5% were actually learning). There is considerable variation in provision, depending on geographical location. Inflexible funding mechanisms do not always promote provision and may lead to the exclusion of potential students. Further training possibilities for staff focusing on the adult language learner need to be set in place. There are already different modes of access to language learning for adults as well as the traditional weekly taught class, which is still the most prevalent form of instruction. Distance programmes in languages are run by the Open University, for instance, and short courses are offered by broadcasting, However, in this field too, the Nuffield report suggests but there should be greater choice and innovation as well as a more flexible system of accreditation of knowledge for the participants.

The opportunities offered by employers in the private sector to learn languages at work depend on the priority they place on language proficiency and company needs. While some companies have positive policies, others tend to see it as the role of individuals to have acquired language skills in the course of their education. The government provides examples of good practice in language learning in The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Language Group (formerly The Diplomatic Service Language Centre) and the Defence School of Languages. The Defence School of Languages is responsible for the training of defence personnel and with the UK's emerging role as a member of international forces, a more varied and extensive programme of

languages is being offered. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office Language Group trains 300-400 officers per year – about 10% of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's staff. Around 84 languages are covered, reflecting a balance between long-term and short-term response needs. A review is under way to make these services available to a wider range of government organisations (see Nuffield Report and *Languages and Employability: A Question of careers*; TJ Connell, City University, London June 2002, National Language Training Organisation website http://www. languagesnto.org.uk).

3.10   Identification, validation recognition and certification of skills, competences, and knowledge acquired outside a given institution

In general, UK universities have in place systems for awarding credit for prior learning and experiential learning which may be used in relation to access to a university course or for undergraduate or postgraduate credits. Candidates seeking entrance to a course or credit for part of the course but offering language knowledge that had been obtained through non-standard routes would be obliged to satisfy academic staff dealing with admissions in the subject that they had in fact the requisite levels of competence to profit from the programme in question or that their experience would be equivalent to a particular section of a course. This might be done through special tests and discussions with subject staff. The results of assessments of any such learning would be officially noted within the institution concerned.

3.11 To what extent has a new learning culture been introduced into programmes and provision in the area of languages?

There has been a considerable shift in learning culture in the United Kingdom towards a student centred approach, a more varied range of language learning activities (in many cases these have been in existence for a considerable number of years) and the introduction of quality systems. The consciousness of quality has been mediated through the work of the Quality Assurance Agency and its predecessors. This has been done, in part, through the development of guidelines which are generally applicable and whose use is verified through audit. Subject review, although found heavy and time-consuming by staff, created a general consciousness of the need for quality. The stress on teaching development, in-service training and the use of teaching methods designed to facilitate student learning and involvement have also played a part in this development. National teaching projects of one type or another and the national support network currently provided by the Subject centres and the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (see 4.1) have been and continue to be influential.

4   Description and analysis of quality measures relating to the training of higher education teachers and trainers working in the area of languages

4.1 (i) Entry qualifications required of university teachers working on the various programmes or portions of programmes

As emerges from the discussion of the language curricula available in the UK, there is a wide range of course provision (see section 1). It is still most usual for lecturers in mainstream language departments to be recruited on the basis of a good first degree and a doctorate in a relevant area. An extension in doctoral studies beyond literature to various areas of the target language and its community has gone some way towards dealing with the need for teachers competent and interested in fields other than literature. In some universities this problem was solved by the employment of foreign nationals with appropriate subject degrees (but who were not always necessarily concerned with the teaching of language as distinct from content) or by

the creation of Language Centres, devoted to the teaching of language. The latter tend also to recruit a number of foreign language nationals, a number of whom would typically be employed part-time, thus creating a sub-class of language teachers who are largely female and, because of their personal circumstances, willing to accept the conditions of service offered. It is true that their lot has been marginally improved by recent legislation in the UK on the equality of treatment of part-time employees. Such staff find, however, that in order to advance professionally, they must undertake further qualifications with a view to becoming research active.

In the UK, recruitment is the responsibility of individual universities. Appointments are publicly advertised; shortlists are normally drawn up in accordance with the criteria for the post and a certain number of candidates are called to interview.

4.1 (ii) Measures relating to the updating of the qualifications of teachers

Universities normally offer opportunities to staff to undertake further study if this is relevant to their work. In general, if the member of staff is undertaking a research degree not already begun before entering employment with the university, they would be expected to register for it at the university at which they were employed unless the field and expertise were not available there. Universities also run a range of in-service courses for staff through a unit whose aim will be to provide developmental activities and training in particular areas of their work for staff (for instance, short courses or seminars might be run on topics such as managing periods of study or placement outside the home institution; teaching various types of class or the application of new technologies) (see also below section: 4.6)

4.1 iii The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE)

The United Kingdom has, relatively recently (June 1999), established the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE), which is designed to act as a professional body for all who teach and support learning in higher education. It offers a range of activities including the accreditation of programmes of training in higher education (in effect it accredits programmes of training run in universities so that successful students of these gain automatic membership of the ILTHE) as well as a variety of sessions, conferences and seminars which offer support and help to those engaged in Higher Education. Further aims are to commission research to aid development in learning and teaching and to stimulate innovation. The ILTHE produces a newsletter, a journal on Learning and Teaching issues (***Active Learning in Higher Education***) and also has a web site with information and networking opportunities. It is now proposed in the recent governmental White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*, that this body be subsumed in a new 'Teaching Quality Academy' (see 4.12).

4.1 iv National Teaching Fellowships Scheme

Funded by HEFCE to promote excellence in Teaching and Learning, this scheme offers finance to twenty selected fellows from throughout the UK to undertake a specific project in learning and teaching (which may be in any discipline). The scheme is implemented by the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE). The White Paper proposes a further extension of the scheme, which it sees as being implemented in the future by the 'Teaching Quality Academy'.

4.2 Status, career prospects, and conditions of university language teachers

Salaries for full-time staff are determined according to a national scale. (Although there is continued discussion of the merits of universities determining their own payscales, this has so far been resisted. There is, however, a specific additional allowance for London due to the higher cost of living in the capital). Salaries in higher education, although adequate, have not kept pace with comparable professions. Indeed, teachers in schools are now, frequently, more highly remunerated than lecturers in university despite the almost uniformly higher qualifications of the latter.

There is also a payscale for part-time staff but their career prospects are less favourable and they have no real security of employment from one period of employment to the next.

4.3 New qualifications required of university teachers working in the area of languages as a result of the introduction of new learning outcomes, new content, new learning methods, and new forms of assessment

It is generally recognised that university teachers must be aware of developments such as these which impact upon their work. Universities mount staff development courses in new approaches to teaching and learning and in the application of new technologies to teaching and learning, although such courses would in the main focus on generic issues (see also 4.1ii). Staff are too (within funding constraints) able to attend conferences in areas of new development

4.4 Programmes and courses for the training of university teachers in the area of languages

While school teachers have always received training for their work in class, the same has not been true of lecturers in Higher Education who were traditionally recruited for their subject and research expertise rather than their teaching ability. Although some staff recruited into Higher Education will have undertaken Initial Teacher Training, this is not very widespread.

In recent years, many UK universities have begun to run specific courses to train their lecturers. While these are now normally compulsory for new staff, they may also be taken by a variety of other lecturers already in post. Such courses would include an introduction to new methods of teaching and learning, often in generic terms admittedly, but the methods and principles are valid across a range of subjects and normally new lecturers following such programmes would have a mentor in their own area. In Ulster, for instance, new lecturers take a *Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching* and there is also a route for experienced lecturers who may gain credits towards the qualification on the basis of their previous experience. New lecturers in languages are allocated a supervisor on the programme with some experience in the field who will be able to indicate applications relevant to languages. New lecturers are also given a mentor within their department to discuss and monitor their work. (It should also be remembered that staff in the UK in their first years of teaching are on probation rather than on a fully permanent contract).

In other universities similar schemes are in place and there may, on occasion, be a specific element more focused on language teaching, run either by a department or in cooperation with it. In addition to a scheme similar to the above, in the University of Warwick, the Department of French Studies employed a language consultant (who had previously been involved in teacher training with graduate linguists) to work with probationary staff, lecteurs (ie native speaking language assistants) as well as staff aiming for promotion who were expected to submit teaching portfolios.

The White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*, proposes that by 2006 all new entrants to the profession should receive accredited training. Following earlier proposals, this is likely to be run by their employer university and accredited by the 'Teaching Quality Academy'. In effect this represents a consolidation of what is already widespread good practice, with courses being currently run by universities and accredited by the ILTHE.

It is also now customary to offer programmes of induction and some training to part-time staff, language assistants and postgraduate students undertaking teaching. It would also be normal practice for part-time staff and postgraduate teaching assistants to be responsible to a full-time member of staff.

The audit and subject review measures in place for universities include some consideration of the training and development of lecturers, something which has helped to promote and embed a practice that had, however, already been in existence earlier.

4.5 Peer observation

The system of peer observation is now widespread in the UK. Under this system a member of staff will observe a colleague and discuss with them the class that they have just seen. This measure is intended to promote a culture of greater openness in the teaching and learning process and to provide opportunities for discussion and support between colleagues, in addition to encouraging reflection on and improvement of teaching.

4.6 Staff development programmes

As already indicated (4.1 ii), universities will normally have a unit for in-house staff development whose aim is to facilitate the development of academic staff and disseminate knowledge about good practice. Such a unit will offer a range of short courses and seminars. These may (to give some examples) be concerned with general issues (eg the role of studies advice); they may be requested by a department and focus more fully on the teaching needs of a particular group of staff ; or training may be provided for various roles that staff will be called upon to fulfil in the course of their careers (eg Course Leader; Head of School; course validator).

4.7 Human Resources Management

Universities will have a section of their administrative services which deals with administrative matters relating to the recruitment and employment of staff.

Where academic work is concerned, staff are organised in a variety of ways in different institutions, but it would be normal to find a structure where a Head of School/Department would have overall responsibility. Where the School or Department covers more than one language, much of the responsibility for day to day delivery would be delegated to a Head of Subject or a Course Leader or Head of a Language Centre (the latter might or might not be part of a wider School). Lines of responsibility and report back mechanisms cover communication and staff management and should ensure that problems are spotted and dealt with in timely and robust fashion.

It is customary now for all staff in universities to be appraised on a regular basis (ie they have a structured interview with the person with responsibility for their work or line manager) which, from the point of view of the teaching and learning process, offers support and advice on areas

for improvement and also permits the line manager to assess training needs for the department or subject as a whole.

The line manager may also discuss with staff the results of surveys of their teaching or of the modules of study on which they teach (for a discussion of these systems see section 5.5).

In a profession where individual academics have always enjoyed considerable freedom and independence, the introduction of these methods of evaluation and control have not always been particularly welcome.

4.8 Measures designed to promote the development of university language teachers

A number of national initiatives support the development of university staff. In this connection, various bodies were mentioned in section 3.2 which contribute to the overall climate of improvement of language teaching or teaching in general but which also promote or support projects in which staff may be involved and thereby develop their competence. They include the following, already discussed: the **Learning and Teaching Support Network of subject centres** in particular for languages The **Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies**, based in the University of Southampton (http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk) (for fuller details on its varying activities and ways in which it supports staff development see 3.2); the **Generic Learning and Teaching Centre** (see http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/aboutus.asp); **Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning** (again various initiatives which have promoted staff development as well as improving classroom practice are discussed in detail in 3.2. As part of the FDTL project, those receiving funds were expected to talk in a range of universities other than project partners about their work). See also 4.12 for proposals on a new 'Teaching Quality Academy'.

Other developments that may be noted are:

4.9 Staff mobility programmes

Universities in the United Kingdom participate in Erasmus/Socrates schemes and teaching staff mobility schemes may be part of inter-institutional contracts. Staff who have participated in such schemes find them interesting and beneficial. One problem may, on occasion, arise from the low level of funding available for teacher mobility, particularly when cash strapped universities are reluctant to make a realistic extra contribution to the costs of mobility.

4.10   Refresher courses

Staff may be sent by their institution (funds permitting) to take part in relevant summer courses abroad relating to certain types of teaching and run, for instance, by universities which focus on teaching the language as a foreign language (France for instance offers such programmes that may sometimes be taken by university teachers). Target language embassies, cultural services or other bodies concerned with promotion of the language may offer courses or seminars, either in the UK or in the target country, of interest to university staff teaching their language If funding is not offered by the course provider, the member of staff is dependent on their institution providing funding or they may have to fund themselves.

4.11 Tailored continuing education

As indicated above (4.6), most universities now run courses of staff development in various aspects of a lecturer's work. Such courses do not necessarily target specific subject areas, although dedicated programmes and seminars are sometimes mounted for particular subject groupings, such as languages.

One short programme, entitled *Supporting Residence Abroad*, focused on the promotion of good practice in relation to periods of residence abroad and targeted language teachers in Higher Education dealing with this area. It was piloted as a distance course by the University of Portsmouth in 2000 – 2001 as part of the FDTL RAPPORT project. Although no longer available, having by its nature a limited lifespan, further information about it may be obtained from Professor J Coleman, Open University.

As already indicated (see 3.2c ii), the subject centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies offers a range of seminars and conferences which may be said to serve as a form of updating and continuing education.

4.12 Recent proposals in the UK to consolidate initiatives

Given the diversity of funded initiatives for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in Higher Education, which is evident from the different measures described above, it is perhaps not surprising that The White Paper on *The Future of Higher Education* (2003) should have indicated support for consolidation. Following the Final Report of the Joint HEFCE/UUK/SCOP group, the Teaching Quality Enhancement Committee (set up under the auspices of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, Universities UK, the Standing Conference of Principals), it suggests that the functions of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) (see above 4.1 iii), the Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN) (see above 4.8) and a further training body, the Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA) be brought together in a new unitary body, a 'Teaching Quality Academy'. In the words of the paper: '*the overarching role of this new body would be to support continuing professional development for teaching in Higher Education, by sponsoring and developing good practice, setting professional standards, accrediting training, conducting research, and helping develop policy on teaching and learning.*' Like the rest of the White Paper, these proposals are currently under discussion.

5. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITY MEASURES RELATING TO THE ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE PROCESS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.1 Descriptions of programmes, courses, modules and other options

As indicated in section 1, languages may be taken in different ways within Universities in the United Kingdom. There may be a single subject language course, students may take two languages or they may take languages in conjunction with another subject, which may or may not be a professional area. Many universities also offer languages within a university wide language scheme, which enables students on a range of courses to add language study to their profile at a level appropriate to them.

The *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and *The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* published in 2001 indicate the levels and qualifications to be attained at the various levels of study (also mentioned 1.4). They also

contain brief descriptors for the different qualifications (qualification descriptors being defined as generic statements of the outcomes of study). It should be noted that *the Framework for England* is a qualifications framework and not a credit framework, nor does it depend on the use of credit (while Universities are expected to organise and structure teaching clearly to ensure progression they are not obliged to use a credit system, although credit systems are now very widespread).

While a student will normally be enrolled in a subject, course or programme, the student's work in discrete areas will be divided into a number of smaller units or modules (see also 3.00). Depending on its size, each module or unit will be seen as implying a certain amount of work. Within a credit system, the credit points represented by particular modules reflect its size and the amount of work involved in it. The number of credit points that are to be taken at the different levels of the student's programme will usually be indicated by the university in question (see also 3.00).   While quite extensive work has been undertaken on credit schemes in the UK, universities have discretion in the way that they order their courses to take account of local needs and conditions (see also 3.00). Most Universities have in place a system to convert their units and credits into the ECTS system (see 3.00).

It would be normal practice for descriptions of the work undertaken in courses and elements within these courses to be made available on the web, in course handbooks and module outlines, so that all content and requirements are clearly laid out and understood by those concerned (see also 3.1a). Universities issue descriptions of courses to potential applicants in their prospectuses.

5.2 Calculation of student workload

Universities are expected to organise student work so that that there is an understanding of the overall workload of a student and so that workloads are appropriate and sensible at different stages of the students' academic career. Within credit systems, it is normal for each credit point to represent a certain number of hours of study and for standard modules to carry a given number of credit points (see also above 5.1) as well as comprising a proportion of a student's given workload at any one period of study. Universities have flexibility in the precise number of modules and their credit loading, which may be adjusted to fit local conditions and patterns of study in particular disciplines.

5.3 Introduction of information management systems

Information management systems are now the norm in universities in the United Kingdom. Information about the various aspects of a student's work is retained on a dedicated system. Areas concerned include:

- personal details regarding the student ie full name, contact addresses; next of kin; age.
- year of entry; level at which the student is studying at any given time; course and modules on which the student is registered
- student registration number

Information is also retained about courses and modules. This will include details such as:
- names and student registration numbers of students on courses and the modules which they are following
- for each module the names, student registration numbers and parent course or subject of students on that module

Statistics will also be held on progress and success throughout the study cycles with information on matters such as the following being recorded:

- entry qualifications
- progression and successful completion
- class of first degree by subject area
- first destination employment statistics

A report of a task group on *Information on Quality and Standards in Higher Education*, published in 2002 recommends open publication of the success and progression statistics (ie entry qualifications; progression and successful completion; class of degree and first destination employment statistics) for each institution (some of these may be provided by HESA: see below).

A wide range of statistics on institutions, on students, subjects of study; first destinations and employment as well as resources of higher education institutions are held nationally by HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) to whom institutions are obliged to make annual returns. This permits the national situation in Higher Education in any one year to be better understood and trends to be pinpointed and monitored.

5.4 Division of tasks among staff members teaching on a specific programme

This would normally be undertaken within the unit in which the staff member works. In the UK there are no nationally set teaching hours for particular categories of staff. This permits flexibility but may on occasion lead to staff overload, particularly in times of financial constraint. In general, there has been an increase of teaching hours for individual staff and this can at times even be set at levels which some consider incompatible with the preparation needed in teaching in higher education.

The person with line management responsibility for the staff member would have final responsibility for the allocation of teaching duties and other responsibilities. In the apportioning of teaching, it would be normal to take account of the staff member's research and teaching interests; of whether or not they were classified as research active; of their other responsibilities in terms of course organisation and pastoral care for students. Duties in addition to teaching might include, for instance, Course or Subject Leader; responsibility for a particular year of study; co-ordination of students undertaking residence abroad; dealing with resources for particular languages and cooperating with the library and language centre in the provision of appropriate material. Organisational duties of one type or another would normally be shared between the different members of staff. Syllabus coverage and other student needs such as the teaching of students in appropriately sized groups would be taken into account in the allocation of teaching and other duties.

Good practice would dictate that there should be open discussion in groups of staff about the allocation of teaching and other duties to resolve any conflicts that may arise in relation to, say, individual preferences on the part of staff and other constraints.

5.5 Systems for the internal and external evaluation of programmes

Internal

Universities are now expected to have clear and transparent procedures for monitoring and review in place to effect regular oversight of their course and subject provision. Evaluation of programmes within the institution should ensure coherent programmes and units of study for students and should also enable monitoring and updating of the provision.

Within UK universities, there are a number of systems which may be deployed to ensure quality provision but there are certain common elements and they may be seen to operate at particular levels in each institution; namely:

- the level of delivery where individual staff regularly re-evaluate and update their own work as part of their normal activities;

- the level of local oversight of delivery within the department or school

- the university level of quality monitoring and review.

There would normally be a schedule for monitoring exercises of different types and intensity or in-depth reviews to take place at particular stages in the provision's life cycle.

Student views are also expected to be taken into account in the above processes.

5.5 i On-going monitoring and evaluation at Course/subject / departmental level

A number of methods of monitoring and evaluation at this level are now common practice in the UK as a whole and are likely to include the following.

Discussion of organisation, problems and development

Committees running courses or subjects

It is common practice for there to be regular meetings of staff concerned with a particular area within a committee overseeing a subject or a course. This may or may not include student representation (but if student representation is not the norm here, there would be another forum for consulting students about the progression of their studies, such as a student liaison committee, see below). It is usual for line managers such as a Head of Subject/Division or School to be *ex officio* members of such committees. This means that as well as facilitating interaction in the organisation of study and discussion of problem areas, committees of this type also permit monitoring of provision by academic managers close to the point of delivery and interrelating with other levels of the University.

Student staff consultative committees

Some form of student – staff liaison committee in a subject or course, where representative students meet with a small number of staff to discuss their programme, provides an opportunity for students to make their views known and for problems to be pinpointed. A report of the results is then made to the course or subject committee and if serious matters arose requiring managerial action rather than more simple remedial action by teachers, they may be reported to the appropriate Head of Division/ Department. The existence of consultation with students is monitored on university audit.

Evaluation and comment on modules of study

The evaluation of units of study or modules from different angles has been introduced in recent years. Student comment may be invited through the completion of a form or participation in a discussion forum of one type or another on the module of study that they have taken. This enables them to make comments on their experience of the module and put forward suggestions for improvements. These evaluations are then considered, responses given to the points made and any subsequent actions indicated. Statistics relating to modules are also supplied for consideration and scrutiny to lecturers and management, permitting any apparent anomalies to be noted and discussed.

Evaluation of staff teaching on programmes

Students may be asked to complete questionnaires on the teaching of members of staff in a particular set of classes. The results from these are normally seen by the Head of School/Department or Division, thus enabling perceived problems to be pinpointed.
The regular appraisal interview between the staff member and the line manager (see section 4.7) may also serve as a further means of monitoring input and quality on the part of staff members and indicating suggestions for change and improvement.

5.5 ii Annual monitoring

In general, Universities will have some form of annual review or monitoring which will consider performance in a particular area (course or subject), based on a number of quality indicators. These may include: applications and admissions; information relating to the student body (academic and sociological); pass and fail rates; levels of performance; qualifications awarded, employment of graduates. Statistics for the programme will also be compared to other relevant university statistics as well as to national statistics as held by HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) which provide a national yardstick against which individual institutions and subjects may be measured.   Such monitoring will also take into account, the yearly reports made by the External Examiner. The minutes or notes from any student –staff liaison committee will also form part of the material considered.. The process will normally be overseen by a University Committee with responsibility for Quality.

London Guildhall (now part of London Metropolitan) have indicated the following example of how this process may work and have outlined some of the benefits that have accrued to languages as a result. Unit monitoring reports allow them to identify problems of language learning and monitor related retention rates. These are fed into course monitoring reports, followed by a departmental report. At each level appropriate action plans are established which are followed up by the Departmental Management Team who address the issue of resources and course development necessary for improving language learning and teaching. Developments resulting from this process of review have included the introduction and integration of CALL into all courses (including English), improvement of IT provision, the development of a language authoring package and regular workshops and training sessions for all staff involved in language teaching.

5.5 iii Periodic Review (an in-depth consideration)

In addition to yearly monitoring, there will normally also be some form of periodic review, where programmes or subjects are looked at in depth on a cycle of a number of years (often in the region of 5 years). The subject staff submit material relating to the programme to a

university committee or sub-committee on which it is customary for external representatives to serve.

5.5 iv Evaluation of new programmes

Institutions will all be expected to have a structured system for the proposal, development and validation of new programmes. The details of the system may differ from institution to institution but there will be a clearly defined structure (something which the national institutional audit of each university in the United Kingdom monitors).

Course proposals may originate from within a subject or a broad based department of cognate or complementary subjects (bottom up) or they may be initiated at levels beyond the subject: Department, Faculty or University when it is felt that the University is missing an obvious pool of students or not fulfilling a need by omitting a particular type of provision from its portfolio (top down). In either case, the proposal will normally be discussed informally before being accepted in principle for development. Then a course planning team will be established (the nomenclature varies from institution to institution), advice taken from both inside and outside the institution and the course elaborated in more detail. Finally the programme will come before a validation panel, which will typically include representatives both from the institution and from elsewhere (as appropriate to the course in question - these may be academics from other institutions or representatives from business and industry or professional bodies).

5.5 v Modification of existing programmes

There will be a structured process within the institution for monitoring and agreeing modifications to existing courses and units of study.

5.5 vi Report and response

In all of the above cases of evaluation: annual, periodic or of new programmes, it is customary for there to be a report to which a response has to be made and submitted to the appropriate university body.

5.5 vii National review mechanisms

If the actual establishment and provision of programmes fall largely within the remit of institutions, control is exercised nationally through the process of **institutional audit** (a review of the university's systems and procedures which takes place at regular intervals and to which all institutions are subject: see also section 1.6 where this is discussed in more detail). This considers university procedures in relation to national codes of practice as well as assessing the efficacy of the procedures within the university in question.

As indicated in section 1.6, the current national system of review operates at the level of institutional audit and includes as well discipline audit trails, which enable the auditors to test the robustness of the institution's procedures in relation to selected subject provision. There will also be some full scale subject reviews and in the initial years what are termed 'developmental engagements' with particular subjects.

The Quality Assurance Agency publishes a report on any monitoring exercise, which it undertakes and this is sent to the institution concerned for comment. Institutions are expected to act appropriately to redress areas of deficiency and to indicate remedial measures. If there is

serious cause for concern about a particular matter or matters, there may also be a follow-up visit to the institution.

In addition to individual reports, summary reports serve to highlight problems that may be emerging in the system as a whole. These may inform action and development elsewhere in the system (the example of the FDTL projects focusing on the year abroad has already been mentioned in section 3. 4 i)

Concluding remarks: The UK system overall

In the United Kingdom, there is an interlocking system of quality in place, which depends on interaction and sharing between various players and stakeholders. This system exerts an influence both in relation to control and enhancement. Institutions propose and define new programmes as well as monitoring and reviewing existing ones but they do so taking account of a national context. There is a national structure of quality audit and monitor which checks on the universities' practice and provision and their application of national guidelines and benchmarks. There are also national measures in place for promoting and sharing good practice in subject delivery. This is thus a system, which seeks to marry the traditional autonomy that universities enjoyed with the creation of a national framework of control and assurance that offers common norms of reference, a generalisation of good practice and stimulus for change within the sector as a whole.

(Note. I should like to thank those people who responded to a questionnaire, which the *Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies* very kindly circulated. Some of the examples of good practice noted in the report result from their replies.)

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