

Fit for work

The transition from university to work is a decisive moment in the lives of our students. In our subject areas, they have a better chance of finding employment than most of their contemporaries, but it is only in recent years that many departments have begun to take a serious interest in their students' careers.

In many European countries a degree is viewed as preparation for a specific career. In contrast, British employers typically regard a first degree as a general education, and are less concerned with the subjects studied than with the general skills and attitudes students have acquired. There are benefits in this situation, since it gives great freedom to undergraduates and their teachers. However, it also puts on us to give our undergraduates a broad spectrum of skills, which could be applied to many career paths.

Undergraduates often have a more nebulous sense of what careers are available, and what preparations they should be making in their studies. Fortunately, there are now many studies of employment patterns, including the recent report published by LLAS and other subject centres in the humanities, which reveals the longer term nature of our students' engagement with work: they tend to be slow starters in the graduate job market. It confirms the limited value of the annual survey of graduate destinations six months after graduation, suggesting that a census two or three years after graduation would be more meaningful. But it also points to the need to make students more conscious of the assets they bring from their studies to their future

careers. The *Languages Work* materials are a good example of what can be done.

Vocational considerations arise mainly at Masters' level, though there are relatively few vocations specifically tied to Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. Of these, the most frequently quoted are teaching, interpreting and translation. Recent work within the European Thematic Network in languages has pointed out that the language industries are now a major sector of employment. Translation and interpreting are growth areas world-wide, and there are many new roles emerging in editing, revising and engineering linguistic material. At a European level there is a serious shortage of native English speakers to enter these professions. We hope that the *Routes into Languages* project will play a positive role in developing stronger links between universities and employers in this area, and will help to present the language-related professions in a more attractive light for potential postgraduates.

There is also a growing demand for people with expertise in cultural and Area Studies. One of the best-known effects of globalisation has been to show the importance of being able to understand and navigate foreign cultures. Even where English is used as a lingua franca there remain fundamental cultural differences, which can be masked by a foreign language. The contribution of our subjects to addressing these issues needs to be made more explicit in our curricula and drawn more vigorously to the attention of employers.

Michael Kelly
Director of the Subject Centre

Routes into Languages

Many of you will have heard that HEFCE is to fund a £4.5 million programme to encourage the take-up of language courses in England.

The *Routes into Languages* programme will run for four years from 2006-07 to 2009-10. It will be led by LLAS in partnership with the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML) and CILT, the National Centre for Languages.

Under the programme, a number of regional networks will be established in which higher education institutions will work together, and with schools and colleges, to enthuse people about studying languages. HEIs will be invited to bid to lead these networks. Funded activities may include: undergraduate ambassadors, e mentor schemes, language graduates talking about their experiences to students in schools and colleges,

summer schools for non-Western European languages, and taster days.

National consortia will be set up to promote translation and interpreting as careers. And research projects will be commissioned to help universities develop programmes in community languages and enterprise and to investigate how best to ensure a lasting legacy for the London Olympics in terms of promoting languages.

The decision to launch *Routes into Languages* stems from the recognition by HEFCE that language skills are of crucial strategic importance to the UK. More details will be made available on the Subject Centre website (www.llas.ac.uk) and through our monthly ebulletins.

International matters

The Subject Centre has been engaging in a number of activities with an international theme with funding from the Higher Education Academy

The first of these is a staff development workshop to raise awareness of some of the issues (academic and cultural) encountered by international students.

The workshop, developed by Dave Burnapp (Northampton), looks at assessment practice, teaching styles and attitudes to learning and is both research-driven and interactive. This workshop formed part of an event run at the University of Southampton and at Sheffield Hallam University in April and June of this year. The event looked at ways of improving the learning experience of international students. It presented the results of a Portsmouth research study that looked at how students experienced lectures. The study highlighted some of the areas in which difficulties were encountered and explored some practical ways in which these difficulties might be addressed by being a more 'mindful' teacher. A report on this workshop can be found on the Subject Centre website (www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive). Over the coming year LLAS plans to rerun the workshop at the request of individual



institutions (see p3) and it will also be developed as a module for new staff training as part of a new project funded by the HE Academy.

As the EU moves towards the setting up of the European Higher Education Area in 2010, the impact of the Bologna Process on UK Higher Education is of growing concern. In collaboration with the Subject Centres for English and History, LLAS ran an event to explore the Bologna process from a disciplinary as well as from a more general academic perspective. A key issue for languages was how the four-year degree will fit the new model (3+2). Also of concern was mobility, particularly in the light of the differential fee structures across the EU. A report on this event can be found on our website (www.llas.ac.uk/events/archive).

Finally the Subject Centre is pleased to announce that it has just received funding from the EU to carry out a new two-year project (The Language Café) exploring informal and networked language learning for adults.

Crossing frontiers: languages and the international dimension

Crossing frontiers: languages and the international dimension was the theme of the fourth biennial LLAS/CILT conference held at the University of Cardiff on the 6th and 7th of July 2006.

In his introductory address to the conference, Michael Kelly, Director of the Subject Centre, outlined the global changes which are setting a new context for higher education in Europe. These changes pose challenges for languages education and research in the UK, including overcoming language barriers to communication, mobility, the knowledge society, cooperation, citizenship and social inclusion. We can respond to these challenges by promoting language diversity and language learning at all levels. Research and teaching development is needed to enable the next generation to be rich in languages, to develop cultural agility and to cross frontiers.

Elsbeth Jones, International Dean at Leeds Metropolitan University, presented a plenary paper on Internationalisation: crossing cultures and changing culture. The paper focused on:

The contribution of linguists to internationalisation

What does it mean to be a linguist? Are linguists the best equipped to facilitate change in internationalisation? Do specialists in intercultural communication and other disciplines have an equal or higher claim to making a significant contribution to internationalisation?

20 key factors in internationalising higher education

Factors were listed under 5 themes: institutional, staff, students, the formal and extended curriculum, and support.

Case study of internationalisation at Leeds Metropolitan University

Different institutions take different approaches to internationalisation: some are focused on research or student recruitment, while others have a wider reach. Leeds Metropolitan has taken a values-driven approach, which aims 'to develop staff and students' international opportunities and global perspectives'. Their internationalisation strategy has 6 themes:

- internationalising learning, teaching and research
- enhancing the international student experience
- enhancing the international experience of home students
- developing and fostering international partnerships and alliances
- developing staff capability for internationalisation
- effectively recruiting international students

More reports on the LLAS/CILT conference can be found in the latest edition of CILT's bulletin, Higher. Proceedings will be available on the LLAS website in the New Year.

Subject Centre update



Departmental visits

The Subject Centre is happy to announce that it is now offering a new service to departments in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.

Members of Subject Centre staff are available to visit individual departments on request. Choose from our menu of topics below which are delivered as presentations, workshops or advisory meetings.

Departmental visits menu		
Topic	Format	Cost
Pedagogic research methods	Workshop	£350
Promotion of languages and outreach with schools	Presentation Advice	£50 £50
E-learning	Presentation Advice Workshop	£50 £50 £350
Student attitudes to reading in a second language	Presentation	£50
Employability	Presentation Advice	£50 £50
Interdisciplinary learning	Presentation Advice	£50 £50
Education for Sustainable Development	Presentation Advice	£50 £50
Project management/bidding for funding	Advice	£50
Supporting student learning (new staff training)	Workshop	£350
Disability issues	Advice	£50
Residence Abroad	Presentation	£50
Improving the learning experience of International Students	Workshop	£350
Using PDP and Portfolios	Workshop	£350

We are also able to offer a general introduction to the Subject Centre.

Presentations and advisory visits will normally take a half-day and the Subject Centre will make a small charge of £50 to cover costs of travel, etc. Workshops will be a day event (10.30 - 16.00) and a fee of £350 will be charged. We also strongly encourage institutions to share the visit with other local institutions. To find out more or to book a visit go to our website: www.llas.ac.uk/visits

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning Group

The Higher Education Academy provided funding for LLAS to lead a programme of activity on interdisciplinarity over the last year.

A highlight of the programme was the conference, Disciplines in Dialogue II: Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning, which was held at the University of Birmingham in July 2006.

Presenters discussed interdisciplinarity from arts, humanities, sciences and social science perspectives.



Keynote speakers were Professor Dick Ellis, Head of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham, (he is also chair of the LLAS Special Advisory Group for Area Studies) and Dr Lori Breslow, Director of the Teaching and Learning Laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

A problem-based learning workshop focused on the sustainability of the 2012 London Olympics was held in December 2005. Participants from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds contributed essays that will be published later this year.

The findings of two projects funded by the group will be published in November 2006. The first, being undertaken by Neill Thew, University of Sussex, examines interdisciplinarity and the internal economy of the university. The second project, a literature review of interdisciplinary teaching and learning, is being led by Angelique Chettiparamb Rajan at the University of Cardiff.

From September 2006 John Canning (Academic Coordinator for Area Studies) is spending about one day a week managing the IDTLG on behalf of the Subject Centre Network.

Activities for the forthcoming academic year include a conference and further project funding opportunities.

“ keep this excellent activity going ”

conference participant

More details of our programme are available on our website www.llas.ac.uk/events

3 November • Aston University Supporting students' learning in modern languages

This interactive workshop will focus on developing generic learning skills; enabling students to take more responsibility for the learning process and encouraging wider use of the target language. It is likely to be of particular interest to tutors in university language centres and new languages staff.

16 November • Lancaster University Teaching sociolinguistics to undergraduates

Organised by the department of Linguistics and English Language at Lancaster University this event will focus on the teaching of sociolinguistics and will cover the following topics: language variation and change; sociophonetics; language and the media; language and gender; bilingualism.

3 dates • Leeds, York and Birmingham Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

LLAS is administering a series of discussion seminars to explore the interactions between the Natural and Human Sciences in relation to ESD. These will take place on 26 October, 20 November, and 10 January in Leeds, York and Birmingham. Places are limited. Expressions of interest can be addressed to Dr Alex Ryan: alex@learning-energy.org

27 February • British Library Area Studies and the Globalised World

LLAS is organising this conference in partnership with the Eccles Centre for American Studies (British Library), the UK Council for Area Studies Associations (UKCASA) and the Canadian High Commission in London. Keynote speakers will be Lord Giddens, former director of the London School of Economics and John Ralston Saul, co-chair of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship.

Sign Language

We hope to organise an event on Sign Language in 2007. The date and venue is to be confirmed, but expressions of interest may be made to John Canning: jc9@soton.ac.uk

Order free copies of these publications via our website: www.llas.ac.uk/publications

'Hard going but worth it': a snapshot of attitudes to reading among languages undergraduates

LLAS has recently carried out a questionnaire survey on attitudes to reading among languages undergraduates amid concern that students do not want to read. Seven universities from across the UK took part in the research and returned questionnaires from 601 students of Spanish, German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Chinese, Arabic and Russian.

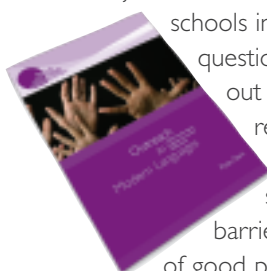
The research report presents detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations, which focus on the following issues:

- Improving transition from sixth form into higher education and paying attention to the learning experiences of year 1 students;
- Examining the experiences of ab initio students throughout their degree programmes;
- Raising awareness of strategies for dealing with vocabulary difficulties, especially among year 1 students;
- Exploring ways of promoting more extensive reading, with particular regard to engaging the more instrumentally-oriented students.



Outreach in Modern Languages: a DfES funded report mapping cross-sector collaboration

The Subject Centre report into cross-sector collaboration between universities and schools in England is now available. The report contains an analysis of a questionnaire survey into collaborative activities, which was carried out last winter. 171 people from 154 different institutions responded to the questionnaire, which asked them about the range of activities they were involved in, the usefulness of such activities, motivations for engaging in them and the barriers they encountered. The report also contains many examples of good practice in languages and other subject areas, together with detailed case studies from a range of schools and universities. It is hoped that the report will be a useful resource for higher education staff and school teachers involved in language outreach activities.



Language Unlimited

Following the success of the 'Why study languages?' materials a similar set of resources for Linguistics is being developed. These will introduce young people to some of the knowledge about language that Linguistics explores in the form of quizzes, facts and information about courses and careers available. English Language will also be covered. The materials will be completed by spring 2007 and will be available to download from the Subject Centre website.

Why American Studies?

The Office of Public Affairs at the United States Embassy in London has contributed funding to produce materials for marketing American Studies. Based on the well-received 'Why study languages?' pack, the work for this project will be carried out by Sara Wood, a researcher at the Department of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Birmingham. For further details, please contact Sara Wood: s.k.wood@bham.ac.uk or John Canning: jc9@soton.ac.uk

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