

## Periodic Review Report Template

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Arts, Design &amp; Social Sciences</b>
<b>Discipline Name</b>	<b>Modern Foreign Languages</b>
<b>Date of Review</b>	<b>20 - 21 May 2013</b>
<b>Review Panel</b> (approved by Review Sub-Committee)	<p><b>Internal Membership</b></p> <p>Ian Shell (Chair): Head of Academic Quality, Academic Services  Suzanne Crozier: Director of Review &amp; Approvals; Faculty of Health &amp; Life Sciences  Nicole Pegg: Students' Union; Vice President, Academic Affairs</p> <p><b>External Membership</b></p> <p>Professor Michael Kelly: Professor of French, University of Southampton</p> <p><b>Facilitator</b></p> <p>Sally Iles: Academic Quality Review Co-ordinator</p>
<b>Method of Review</b>	This review was conducted using the periodic review procedure defined in Northumbria's Review Handbook (February 2012 version), available from <a href="http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/review/intrev/">http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/qualitysupport/review/intrev/</a>

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Discipline Aims and Context</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short summary of scope of review – programmes or programme areas included, total student and staff numbers</li> <li>• Short statement of the main aims of the discipline</li> <li>• Short statement of any necessary contextual information (e.g. physical and organisational location, any recent restructuring etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) is part of the recently formed Department of Social Sciences and Languages within the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences. Following a University review MFL was joined with the English Language Centre to form the Northumbria Language Centre (NLC). This resulted in a number of changes to staffing, a reduction in the number of programmes on offer and some staff being offered training in teaching English for Academic Purposes for potential redeployment if the market for foreign languages continued to reduce nationally as seemed to be the trend at the time of the review. Staff now look forward to a period of stability in which the new delivery patterns are consolidated and MFL can regain its competitive edge in the market. Programmes at Northumbria aim to help students develop into autonomous, self-confident learners with strong communicative, cultural, academic, research and linguistic skills, producing graduates that are able to take on leadership roles in a wide variety of industries and sectors.</p> <p>The following undergraduate programmes are currently running with a complement of 91 students in total:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA (Hons) French and Spanish</li> <li>• BA (Hons) French with Business</li> <li>• BA (Hons) Spanish with Business</li> <li>• BA (Hons) German with Business</li> <li>• BA (Hons) Contemporary French Language with Business</li> <li>• BA (Hons) Contemporary Spanish Language with Business</li> </ul> <p>Of these programmes only BA (Hons) French and Spanish will continue, as all the other programmes are running out: German with Business will end this year (2012/13). There are also joint programmes run by the Faculty of Business &amp; Law:</p>	

- BA (Hons) International Business Management with French
- BA (Hons) International Business Management with Spanish

In addition to the degree programmes, Modern Foreign Languages also offers Unilang. Unilang is an opportunity for students to opt for an accredited language module within their own programme of study. The languages currently offered are: French, Spanish, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin and British Sign Language (BSL). The provision is embedded as formal options in degree programmes such as History, Politics, Health, English Literature, Criminology, Advertising and Media, and Applied Biology among others. Many of the Languages sessions are taught in the multimedia Sanako labs on the first floor of the Squires Building. These facilities enable students to develop their skills in and out of scheduled teaching and as a teaching and learning resource they are well integrated into the curriculum. Students also have a dedicated 'Language Zone' in the Library, which provides an exclusive 24x7 open access study environment with a mixture of digital and analogue work stations. Assistance with equipment and resources is available and Modern Foreign Languages students can access digital resources and online language exercises via Citrix as well as DVD, audio playback, live foreign language TV, TV/VCR combi units, audio tape decks, a group viewing area with TV, VCR and DVD facilities, and language course and reference books. In addition to the acting Head of Department, 10 academic staff support the academic programmes with 1 lecturer and 5 associate lecturers contributing to the Unilang provision. 2 technical staff provide technical support to the programmes.

The panel acknowledges that the provision is in a transitional phase, compounded by the restructure, and understands that there will be a review of Modern Foreign Language (MFL) provision in the context of the Corporate Strategy and the Faculty plans.

Within this context the panel recognise the potential importance of MFL in the internationalisation strategies of the University and the value to employers of students graduating with a language.

In recognising the understandable desire for stability, we feel that it is important that this in itself does not lead to stagnation and therefore we encourage the Faculty and the Discipline to move forward with their planning process in the light of the University's evolving strategies of learning and teaching and internationalisation.

## Section 2

### Curricula and Standards

#### The Panel identified the following strengths:

- The currency of the curriculum offered (as noted by the students themselves).
- Enthusiastic and committed staff (a recurring theme).
- The placement/year abroad opportunity and its subsequent impact on personal development and academic achievement.
- Confirmation of standards by external examiners.

#### The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:

- If growth is to be achieved through an increase in "with" programmes, attention should be given to the design of a coherent student experience. This is a University issue and consideration might be given to establishing principles to guide the design of cross discipline 'with' programmes to assure the student experience.
- Support for the placement year abroad could be strengthened, including stronger communications and staff visits.
- The rebranding of Unilang along with greater clarity of communication to students and Faculties on the opportunities presented by Unilang.
- Higher profile/mapping for Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

## Section 3

### Management Information Trends

#### The Panel identified the following strengths:

- The Discipline is aware of issues related to recruitment and the need for increases to be achieved.
- The Discipline is part of the "Routes into languages" initiative.
- The Discipline has a good employability record as reflected in their high standing in league tables.

- The Discipline achieves good degree performance e.g. 2011/12 91%.

**The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:**

- To strengthen recruitment and internal marketing strategy informed by strategic direction of the Faculty plan (core programme and Unilang).

**Section 4**

**Student Experience**

**The Panel identified the following strengths:**

- The support given to students by academic staff.
- Loyalty of students to those staff in appreciation of their effort.
- Strong NSS scores.
- The placement/year abroad is greatly appreciated by students.
- The level of assessment feedback is greatly appreciated by students.
- A welcoming and inclusive, student friendly environment.
- Students gain great confidence from their experience within MFL particularly in relation to the year abroad, the perceived added value of a second language and students receive a good response to issues they raise.

**The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:**

- A noticeable difference in satisfaction of students on the “with” programmes - may benefit from specific student handbook for these students and a dedicated member of staff for liaison.
- Need for greater integration and inclusivity for “with” students. Students would appreciate more support in relation to the placement/year abroad which may be informed by seeking formal feedback on the placement year.

**Section 5**

**Enhancement Strategies**

**The Panel identified the following strengths:**

- Employability initiatives are well received e.g. Employability Week.
- The Discipline makes good use of alumni in communicating their experiences to existing students.
- Developments within language labs and good technical support make this a valuable resource for students.

**The Panel made the following recommendations for further development:**

- Possible establishment of an Employers’ Forum to build on the strong informal relationships which already exist.
- Discipline and Faculty to work together to ensure Discipline enhancement strategy is informed by the equivalent Faculty strategy.

**Section 6**

**Discipline Response to Report**

**Curricula and Standards**

*If growth is to be achieved through an increase in “with” programmes, attention should be given to the design of a coherent student experience. This is a University issue and consideration might be given to establishing principles to guide the design of cross discipline ‘with’ programmes to assure the student experience.*

We have proposed a highly attractive new approach to offer that responds to several (urgent) market needs underpinned by the following:

- The proposed offer underpins the University’s Corporate Strategy on global graduateness, access to modern languages, access to opportunities of study abroad, employability, leadership and recruitment of high calibre students. Internationalisation of the home student body and enhanced visibility overseas also reinforce key aspects of Vision 2025.

- A Graduate with More scheme that uses research-informed teaching, current affairs and staff expertise is distinctive to what competitors offer in that the acquisition of bankable skills is contextualised in area studies, strengthening global graduateness.
- The new offer would support graduate employability by means of establishing a virtuous circle of transferrable skills, study abroad opportunities and wider access to work placements overseas and in the UK. Modern Languages at Northumbria was ranked 1st in the UK for graduate employability in The Guardian League Table 2012.

This would;

- Underpin a process of internationalisation of the student body and global citizenship.
- Support improvement of quality indicators such as student satisfaction, internationalisation of curricula and graduate employment.
- Be a cost-effective provision that uses existing modules flexibly to concentrate recruitment and use existing resources more efficiently. No new modules are needed beyond the French beginners route.

The programmes under proposal would mirror the structure of successful current programmes whilst reducing programme complexity. They would be centrally managed to ensure parity of student experience in Modern Foreign Languages. Student satisfaction levels demonstrate that Modern Languages has the capacity to successfully manage joint routes that deliver a positive student experience. The proposal reflects employer feedback.

*Support for the placement year abroad could be strengthened, including stronger communications and staff visits.*

A year abroad coordinator will be appointed to complement the existing country-specific co-ordinators and communications with the International Office will be developed.

*The rebranding of Unilang along with greater clarity of communication to students and Faculties on the opportunities presented by Unilang.*

There will be a review of Unilang including how it is made available across the University to support the distinctiveness of the offer and enhance employability and student satisfaction. It will be designed to support global graduateness and outward mobility. The appointment of a Unilang coordinator and enhanced visibility at option fairs (completed September 2013) has resulted in an increase in applications of ~ 70% for 2014-15. A policy recommendation to modularise and accredit English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) has been made at University level.

*Higher profile/mapping for Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL).*

Reference to CEFRL has been included in grade descriptors for modules that include language and communication skills as part of their learning outcomes, this has been published in module guides.

### **Management Information Trends**

*To strengthen recruitment and internal marketing strategy informed by strategic direction of the Faculty plan (core programme and Unilang).*

1. A market investigation of competitors' offers in Modern Foreign Languages has been carried out.
2. Opportunities have been identified for coherent growth, looking at external context and internal expertise.
3. On completion of 1 and 2, the Department has identified cost-effective and quality-driven changes to offer in order to ensure subject area and core module viability, profitability, academic credibility, and in order to inform university strategy. A detailed proposal has been submitted to the Faculty Executive.
4. To underpin points 1, 2 and 3: HEFCE Catalyst Fund bids will be submitted, in order to attract new students to Modern Languages and Area Studies, with a view to obtaining medium to long term funding for programme development. Participation confirmed in strand 2 of a national bid, and creation of Northumbria-led regional bid has been agreed with the discipline and HEFCE. Point 6 (exploration of international markets) will also be part of the HEFCE Catalyst Fund bid work.
5. Rebranding of Unilang will be undertaken, along with a review of how it is made available across the University. A Unilang coordinator has been appointed and visibility has been enhanced at

option fairs.

6. There has been exploration of access to Modern Languages degrees via Foundation Programmes; particularly from international markets.
7. Presence has been enhanced in outreach activities, Open Days and Applicant Visit Days. There has been an improvement of 16% in applications and conversion rate for 2014 entry compared with the same point in the UCAS cycle in 2013, despite deteriorating market conditions and competitiveness of offer compared to competitors. There will be increased Marketing effort for new undergraduate degrees from the start of the 2015 entry UCAS cycle.

### **Student Experience**

*A noticeable difference in satisfaction of students on the “with” programmes - may benefit from specific student handbook for these students and a dedicated member of staff for liaison.*

A Programme Leader has been allocated for Graduate with More and for each Joint Route. Each degree route has a separate handbook.

*Need for greater integration and inclusivity for “with” students. Students would appreciate more support in relation to the placement/year abroad which may be informed by seeking formal feedback on the placement year.*

A Programme Leader has been allocated for Graduate with More and for Joint Routes. Currently cross-faculty joint programmes BA Spanish with Business and BA French with Business are ranked 1st and 2nd in the faculty for student satisfaction. A year abroad coordinator has been appointed to complement the existing country-specific co-ordinators and there has been improvement of communications with the International Office by means of including the Modern Languages Programme Director in International Office executive from 20 May 2014.

### **Enhancement Strategies**

*Possible establishment of an Employers’ Forum to build on the strong informal relationships which already exist.*

An Employers’ Forum has been established to complement Employability Week in 2015.

*Discipline and Faculty to work together to ensure Discipline enhancement strategy is informed by the equivalent Faculty strategy.*

All actions are being coordinated with internal decision makers in the faculty and central departments.