SOAS, University of London

Learning and Teaching Quality Committee

Report on the Periodic Programme Review of programmes in the
Language Centre

6th June 2014

Review Panel
Dr Michael Jennings Chair
Dr Radia Kesseiri University of Leeds
Dr Minjie Xing University of Manchester
Ms Ayse Ebru Akcasu
Dr Mandy Bentham
Dr J Simon Rofe
Dr David Smyth

Panel Secretary
Mr Luke Dillon

Departmental representatives
Ms Anne Campbell Director of Centre
Dr Anil Biltoo Head of Languages
Ms Jae-hee Cho Language Specialist - Korean
Ms Wei Jin Language Specialist - Chinese
Mr Shin Okajima Language Specialist - Japanese
Ms Ilham Salimane Language Specialist - Arabic
Mr James Vallerine Course Administrator
Mr Salman Al Saad Arabic Language Teacher
Dr Amal Ayoubi Arabic Language Teacher
Ms Farihan Cheblak Arabic Language Teacher
Ms Fatima Dabbousi Arabic Language Teacher
Ms Noriko Inagaki Japanese Language Teacher
Mr Yuegang Jin Chinese Language Teacher
Ms Ji Liang Chinese Language Teacher
Ms Angela McCullough Chinese Language Teacher
Ms Hitomi Micallef Japanese Language Teacher
Dr Akin Oyetade Senior Lecturer
Manouchehr Rezavandi Persian Language Teacher
Ms Moon Tan Chinese Language Teacher

Faculty representatives
Professor Anne Pauwels Dean
Professor Andrew George Associate Dean (UG)
Mr Roger Nuthall Faculty Administrator

Administration and services representatives
Ms Beth Clark Head of Electronic Services (Library)
Mr Mike Haddon Head of Facilities Management
Ms Gemma Ludgate Acting Head of the Careers Service

The Panel also met student representatives, including:
Ms Lucy Anderson Beginners Arabic
Mr Zeid Bsalbes Diploma in Communicative Arabic
Ms Chloe Cornish Diploma in Communicative Arabic
Ms Noriko Iwasaki Proficiency Level Korean
Ms Samira Khalifa Diploma in Communicative Arabic
Mr Stephen Kilroy Diploma in Communicative Arabic
Ms Elena Malik Diploma in Communicative Arabic
Dr Baycum Naydoo Sanskrit Beginners Course
Mr Peter Rixon Diploma in Communicative Arabic
Mr Hugh Williams Diploma in Communicative Arabic
## Table of contents

### Section

1. **Summary of recommendations and good practice**
   
   1.1 Conclusion on Quality and Standards
   
   1.2 Good Practice
   
   1.3 Recommendations

2. **Introduction**

3. **Action following previous reviews**

4. **Programmes**
   
   4.1 Curriculum Design and Development
   
   4.2 Learning, Teaching and Assessment
   
   4.3 Student Recruitment, Progression and Achievement
   
   4.4 Student Support and Guidance
   
   4.5 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

5. **Acknowledgements**

### Appendices

(available on request from the Panel Secretary)

1. Departmental Self Evaluation Statement and supporting documentation
1 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICE

This summary should be read in conjunction with the paragraphs shown in brackets, where applicable. Action on recommendations should be taken, and a written report of that action received by the Panel Secretary, within TWO MONTHS of the approval by LTQC of this report.

1.1 Conclusion on Quality and Standards

The Review Panel concludes that, subject to the recommendations below, required quality and standards are being achieved in the programmes reviewed, listed below.

The portfolio of languages offered in the Language Centre provision varies from year to year. All the language courses, both short courses and accredited programmes, taught over the past 7 years (2007-2014) were under consideration at this review.

The following programmes are currently offered by the Department:

**Accredited Programmes**

**Certificates/Diplomas**
- Communicative Arabic
- Communicative Chinese
- Communicative Japanese
- Communicative Korean
- Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language
- Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

**Non-Accredited Language Courses**

**Africa Courses**
- Afrikaans, Amharic, Igbo, Somali, Swahili, Tigrinya, Yoruba and Zulu

**China and Inner Asia Courses**
- Chinese, Mongolian, Russian and Tibetan

**Japanese and Korean Courses**
- Japanese and Korean

**Near and Middle East Courses**
- Arabic (Modern Standard), Arabic (Colloquial and Literary), Arabic (Media)

**South Asia Courses**
- Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Nepali, Panjabi, Sanskrit, Sinhala, Tamil and Urdu

**South East Asia**
- Burmese, Indonesian, Khmer, Malay, Thai and Vietnamese

1.2 Good Practice

The Review Panel commends the Department for:

1.2.1 The quality of teaching and of its programmes. [4.2.1]
1.2.2 The positive student experience. [4.5.2]

1.3 Recommendations

The Review Panel recommends the following:

**Necessary action**

The Centre should:

1.3.1 Maximise the online submission of coursework and feedback. [4.2.1]

1.3.2 Provide additional learning materials to bridge the gap between Level 1 Arabic and Level 2 Arabic and reflect on the consistency of Arabic teaching materials used by the Language Centre and elsewhere in the Faculty. [4.2.1]

1.3.3 Liaise with the E-Learning Manager to provide BLE training for Language Centre staff. [4.2.2]

1.3.4 Liaise with Communications Team to promote greater awareness of the Centre in the School. [4.3]

1.3.5 With the support of the Faculty continue to liaise with Marketing to identify ways to more effectively promote its programmes and courses both internally within the School and externally. [4.3]

1.3.6 Liaise with the QA Team to discuss how it can most appropriately follow School procedures for Student Evaluation of Courses (SEC) and programme review for all accredited and short courses. [4.5.1 and 4.5.2]

1.3.7 In discussion with the QA team, consider whether it would be appropriate to benchmark accredited courses against FHEQ, as well as CEFR, levels, and to publish this information in line with courses elsewhere in the School. [4.5.1]

1.3.8 Reverse the culture of isolation of the disparate groups of staff within the Centre by holding more team building activities. [4.5.4]

1.3.9 Ensure that the workload allocation model employed by the Centre for part-time fractional staff is transparent and clearly communicated to all staff. [4.5.4]

**Advisable action**

The Centre is advised to:

1.3.10 Include student testimonials on the course and programme webpages. [4.2.1]

1.3.11 Consult student representatives on the appropriateness and desirability of facilitating further opportunities for conversation with native language speakers [4.2.1]

**Matters for attention outside the Department (responsibility shown)**

**Necessary action**

71
The Faculty should:

1.3.12 Clearly define and agree the coverage of languages by the Centre and the language Departments in the Faculty to ensure no overlap of provision and no unnecessary competition. [4.1 & 4.2.1]

1.3.13 Ensure that the Centre is included in discussions of new courses and programmes. [4.1]

1.3.14 Protect the continuity and stability of the senior management team within the Centre. [4.5.4]

Advisable action

The School is advised to:

1.3.15 Consider the provision of IT Helpdesk support for evening classes. [4.2.2] [Library and Information Services]

1.3.16 Restore full access rights to the Library for part-time Language Centre students enrolled on short courses. [4.2.2] [Library and Information Services]

1.3.17 Consider how best to support the teaching requirements of the Centre and the provision of additional resource to ensure that rooms allocated for evening classes are cleaned and reset. [4.2.2] [Estates and Facilities]

1.3.18 Explore and implement ways to more effectively engage with Language Centre students. [4.4] [Careers Service]

2  INTRODUCTION

This Periodic Programme Review was conducted using the Learning and Teaching Quality Committee’s Guidelines for Periodic Programme Review September 2013. The Centre submitted a Self Evaluation Statement (SES) and supporting documentation for consideration by the review panel. In addition, students of the Centre made submissions to the review panel.

The aims of the review were explained at the start of the session: the review was intended to be a positive exercise, whose purpose was to identify, and, where appropriate, to disseminate good practice across the School as a whole. Periodic Programme Review is intended to aid departments and centres in developing and enhancing their processes in regard to research, teaching and administration. Recommendations are therefore provided for the Centre’s, School’s or Faculty’s attention as is thought appropriate by the review panel.

The report is broadly set out using the suggested headings provided in the Guidelines as applied to the Centre’s SES. A summary of recommendations and good practice is provided in Section 1 and a copy of the Centre’s SES and supporting documentation is at Appendix 1.

3  ACTION FOLLOWING PREVIOUS REVIEWS

The Centre was last under review in 2007. The recommendations of that report were addressed by the then Director of the Centre, Dean of the Faculty and respective Heads of Professional Services Departments, and followed up by Executive Board.
4 PROGRAMMES

4.1 Curriculum Design and Development

The Centre currently teaches four accredited Certificates/Diplomas, Communicative Arabic, Communicative Chinese, Communicative Japanese and Communicative Korean as well as Certificates/Diplomas in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language and Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. In addition the Centre provides beginner/introductory, intermediate and advanced evening and daytime courses in a wide range of languages of Africa, the Near and Middle East, China and Inner Asia, Japan and Korea, South Asia and South East Asia.

The Panel noted that during the period under review the Centre introduced the Certificate/Diploma in Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language and from 2007-2010 offered the Certificate in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, which was replaced in September 2010 by the Certificate/Diploma in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language.

The Panel heard from the Centre that there were impediments to course and programme development caused by internal competition and that there needed to be greater collaboration between Centre staff. The Panel heard that staffing issues (see 4.5.4) had impeded the development of new and more innovative courses and programmes.

The Panel heard from the Centre that it had not been consulted when Departments proposed new courses and programmes which have the same name as ongoing Centre courses and programmes. It was noted that the courses and programmes proposed and currently offered by the Departments needed to be clearly differentiated from any with similar titles in the Centre.

4.2 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

4.2.1 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies

The Panel heard from the Centre that the programmes offered by the Centre were unique, being mainly non-degree evening classes. The Centre takes a communicative approach to language teaching, focusing on the use of language skills, whereas the Departments focus on a more grammatical, reading and writing approach. The Panel heard from students that the learning needs and required methods of assessment of Language Centre students were different from those of students enrolled on undergraduate degrees. Panel members noted that it was unusual, in their experience, for an HEI to offer the variety of approaches to language teaching seen at SOAS. It was noted that there was now increasing and direct competition with other Departments and Centres across the School, as they sought to expand their provision of short courses, including Summer Schools.

The Panel heard from students that the quality of teaching was very high, many teachers went above and beyond contractual expectations and the courses and programmes were supported by good supplementary handouts. Course descriptions on the website are very good and accurately reflect course content and teaching aims. The Panel heard from students that assignments were not submitted electronically but in hard copy and that feedback was also received via hard copy. The Panel heard from students that they would welcome the opportunity to do more communicative work with native language speakers in class.

The Panel heard from students that the Sanskrit programme was not a colloquial language course but a classical one, which used a lot of e-resources to help with studying the phonology of the language. It was noted that students needed to use specific software, e.g. for fonts, which had been provided by the course teacher and not by the School’s IT Department.

The Panel heard from students that they were concerned about plans to condense the teaching of the Diploma in Communicative Arabic from five to four days a week, which they feared might reduce the
immersive nature of the programme, and therefore its effectiveness. The Panel heard from students that the gap in level of difficulty between Arabic 1 and Arabic 2 was too great and that the Diploma in Communicative Arabic made extensive use of the Al-Kitaab textbooks for learning Arabic, which had a big leap in difficulty from Level 1 to Level 2. This was difficult for part-time students to adapt to, given the more limited time they have for private study, but the Centre was aware of this difficulty and was addressing it by the provision of supplementary materials. The Panel heard from the Centre that the Diploma in Communicative Arabic was a very intensive programme and that Al-Kitaab was designed for intensive teaching.

4.2.2 Specialist Equipment and Resources

The Panel heard from the Head of Languages that the Centre used the BLE, and that many staff would welcome the opportunity to use more new technology. There had been a degree of resistance from a few staff to the use of new technology, but the Head of Languages confirmed that a minimum IT competency was expected, and that this standard will be gradually met through training. The Panel noted that the LTQC had approved a minimum standard for the use of the BLE by teaching staff and that Centre staff would have to adhere to this minimum standard.

The Panel heard from the Centre that prior to the restructure it had employed a full time person with responsibility for all IT related matters but there was now only a part-time (0.5 FTE) post, which included IT support alongside support for other activities, such as marketing, and that individuals were responsible for uploading their own material. The Panel heard from the Centre that the previous full-time support for IT had been available to offer support on Saturdays and via telephone in the evenings and that the Centre was now reliant on the School's IT Helpdesk for support. The Panel heard from the Centre that the limited budget for IT support meant that E-learning activities have been restricted, which has impacted negatively on class-based learning.

The Panel heard from the Centre that it was in the process of transferring its student records to UNITe. The migration of the accredited courses to UNITe would be completed in September 2014 in time for the 2014/15 session and the migration of the short courses would be considered for implementation in 2015.

The Panel heard from students that they had limited access to the Library and that five years previously access had been withdrawn for part-time students. The Panel heard from part-time students that they would welcome the opportunity to have a Library card and access to the Library. The Panel heard from the Deputy Head of Teaching and Research Support (Library) that previous to 2010 all students in the Language Centre had full access to the Library but the increasing loss of books meant that, with the support of the then incumbent Head of the Language Centre, it was agreed that Diploma students would have full access and borrowing rights but that part-time students enrolled on the short courses would have reference access only. The Panel noted that this was an example of how part-time students enrolled on short courses can be treated differently from other SOAS students, which was also reflected in the very limited number of part-time students who become SOAS Alumni.

The Panel heard that the premium fees for the Centre’s programmes and courses meant greater student expectations, and there had been a large number of complaints from staff and students regarding the allocation and condition of rooms for the evening classes, e.g. insufficient room size, furniture missing or not being set and noise disturbance from the Students’ Union. It was noted that the Language Centre used between thirty and forty rooms per evening and that there was no-one on duty from Estates and Facilities in the evenings to deal with concerns. The Panel heard from students that the rooms allocated for their classes were often too small and became very crowded, with insufficient desk space; the Language Labs were underused and that during the winter months there had been evenings when the rooms had no heating.

The Panel heard from the Head of Facilities Management that the furniture settings to accommodate tablets in the classrooms reflected the teaching requirements of small tutor groups. It was noted that the North Block Initiative, once completed, would provide additional teaching rooms with either small tables or
desk tables, though these would also be used in the evenings by Birkbeck. The Department of Music held its classes in designated rooms, which were not soundproofed and the Students Union Room (B103/4) should not have music in it but students had on occasion flouted the code of conduct for use of the room. The Panel heard from the Head of Facilities Management that there is a main heating system, with heating on in the winter evenings; the examples given by students were therefore thought to be isolated incidents related to the Language Lab.

The Panel noted that the Language Centre used the same teaching rooms as the rest of the School but the key issue related to evening classes being taught in rooms that have been in constant use from 09.00-17.00. In several respects the School was not set up to accommodate a large number of evening classes (unlike, for instance, Birkbeck): for instance Estates and Facilities staff finish working at 16.00; and no staff are therefore available to reset rooms for which different layouts are needed for daytime and evening classes. The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that the Centre paid into the RAM and should reasonably expect a return on its contribution and that she was concerned that the Language Centre had not been consulted regarding the allocation and use of rooms in the North Block. The Panel heard from the Head of Facilities that to resolve the issues of layout, a period between 17.00 and 17.30 would need to be built into the timetable, and additional staff resource made available.

The Panel heard from the Head of Facilities Management that the current SOAS cleaning policy meant that cleaning was done in the School from 06.00-08.00 and that a limited budget would restrict amendments to the current cleaning policy. The Panel noted that the School was increasingly becoming a 24/7 institution and that it needed to have in place a strategy to meet the future needs of increasing numbers of evening classes.

The Panel noted that Language Centre students were potential ambassadors for the School and to enrol more students required adequate provision of rooms and furniture settings. It was noted that when considering proposals for programmes that will be taught in the evening the School needed to take into account the impact on classroom provision for the Language Centre.

4.3 Student Recruitment, Progression and Achievement

The Panel heard from students that they chose to study at the Language Centre because of its good reputation, word of mouth, good interaction between staff and students and the central location of the Russell Square campus. It was noted that the Diploma programmes are very intense, of a very high standard, well regarded and widely recognised. Despite a significant number of the Centre’s part-time teachers often teaching at other institutions, SOAS was perceived by prospective students to be the leading provider of communicative language programmes and courses in London. The Panel heard from the Centre that it was a hub of language learning, with the vision to enhance student recruitment, but had been impeded in this by the prolonged restructuring period.

The Panel heard from the Centre that the School was not fully aware of what the Centre offers and that the Centre needs greater internal publicity. It was noted that students from other Departments wishing to take language courses with a more communicative slant can and do enrol on courses in the Language Centre.

The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that she had met with the Interim Head of Marketing to discuss improving the effective marketing of the Centre but that Marketing had very limited resources and additional resource would be required to effectively promote the Centre’s programmes and courses.

The Panel heard from students that the dropout rate in the Centre varied across its classes and languages, e.g. they perceived it to be very low among learners of Korean, but for the Diploma in Communicative Chinese it was considerably higher. The Panel heard from students that the learning and teaching methods for the Diploma in Communicative Chinese course were too grammar focused and not sufficiently communicative in approach and that the mixture of abilities in the class had a negative impact on the morale of some. The Panel heard from students that once allocated to a teaching group it was...
very difficult to transfer to another class due to the limited sizes of the teaching rooms. The Panel also 
heard from students, however, that the differences of ability varied depending on course and that these 
issues generally became less important as students progressed to intermediate and advanced courses.

4.4 Student Support and Guidance

The Panel heard from the Centre that it provides support for students via tutorials and workshops 
delivered by teachers, Language Specialists and Learning Advisors, as well as individual consultations by 
apPOINTment. Certificate/Diploma students receive close attention collectively and individually from their 
teachers and are further supported by a Learning Advisor who helps them on matters such as setting 
leArning targets, finding extra materials, time management and developing study skills. Students are 
encouraged to raise problems with teachers, the relevant Language Specialist, Courses Administrators 
and where necessary with the Head of Languages or the Director of the Centre. The Panel heard from 
students that complaints had generally been resolved promptly by the Centre, but that some students had 
experienced delays in resolution, which they attributed to staff turnover.

The Panel heard from the Acting Head of the Careers Service that the Careers Service did not currently 
provide 1-2-1 tuition for Language Centre students, but that there were no obstacles to extending this 
service to students enrolled on Language Centre programmes and courses or to inviting them to Careers 
events.

4.5 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

4.5.1 Use of the Academic Infrastructure and Other QA Requirements

The Panel considered the Self-Evaluation Statement (SES) to be frank, informative and helpful. The 
documentation of the Centre’s submission was not complete and the Panel heard from the Director of the 
Language Centre that during the period under review, the Centre was subjected to a period of great 
upheaval during and following the protracted structural review, involving major changes in systems and 
staffing, up to and including the recent change of Director. It was noted that during this period key 
information including records of strategic decisions and documentation of management procedures had 
been lost, either because it was not saved to shared drives or because it was deliberately 
deleted/removed by outgoing members of staff.

The Panel received the majority of programme specifications for the accredited taught programmes under 
review, the content of which was appropriate, and showed careful engagement with the relevant subject 
benchmark statement. The Panel noted that the non-accredited short courses did not have programme 
specifications. Monitoring of learning outcomes is via Annual Programme Review (APR), and the Panel 
received the majority of APRs for the accredited programmes. The Panel heard that the Associate Deans 
(Learning and Teaching) received and summarised APR reports for consideration by the Learning and 
Teaching Quality Committee. The Panel noted that non-accredited short courses had not to date been 
incorporated into the School’s APR processes.

The Panel heard from the Centre that since the last Departmental Programme Review the Centre had 
been continuously improving its compliance with the School’s internal QA requirements. However, it was 
noted that the procedures had not been fully integrated: for instance the School’s programme approval 
processes were still not fully adapted to provide an appropriate route for short courses. It was noted that 
the preparation for the PPR had identified the gaps in the Centre’s QA records and documentation and 
that the Centre would work with the QA team towards rectifying this.
4.5.2 Student Feedback

The Panel noted that students from the Centre do not complete Student Evaluation of Courses (SEC) forms. The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that all students fill in mid-term and end-of-term course evaluation forms specific to the Centre. These forms are passed on to the Language Specialists and the Head of Languages for consideration and discussion at language team meetings. The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that, in the main, teachers responded appropriately to student feedback but that the practice of writing summary reports on evaluations and follow-up action was variable and that in the case of the short courses, there was no systematic gathering of feedback from every course, which was left to the discretion of individual teachers and not rigorously monitored.

The Panel received feedback on all aspects of the Centre via online submission of a questionnaire distributed to all students within the Centre. The Panel heard from students that they are represented in the Centre by elected student representatives for both the accredited and short courses in each of the language specialisms.

The Panel heard from students that they do not perceive themselves to be an integrated part of the School’s community but tend to form a self-contained network. This was attributed in part to the intensity of the accredited Diploma programmes, which leave little time for social activities. Language Centre students were not aiming at greater integration with the School but wanted improved provision of and access to facilities.

From the combined student feedback it was clear that the majority of students are satisfied with the teaching they have received and that they value the Centre highly. Student representatives appear to be enthusiastic and effective in this Centre and the majority of staff value and are responsive to their contribution. The Panel noted that overall student feedback was positive regarding the atmosphere and the learning environment. Teaching was considered to be of a high quality and the student experience was generally a very positive one.

4.5.3 External Examining System

Visiting Examiners’ reports were received for the Centre’s programmes over the period under review, and the Panel was satisfied that Visiting Examiners were employed appropriately in the examination process.

4.5.4 Staff Development and Workload

The Centre currently has four members of full-time teaching staff: one Head of Languages, two full-time Language Specialists and one full-time language teacher. The rest of the Centre’s teaching staff are on permanent fractional contracts or are working off-contract. The Centre uses Staff Development Review and Peer Observation of Teaching in line with School procedures.

The Panel heard from the Centre that it was difficult to convene regular meetings of all Centre staff because of the large proportion of part-time teachers who would need to be paid to attend. It noted that hourly-paid work was an impediment to part-time staff working extra hours e.g. holding office hours. In future, consideration might be given to including office hours as part of the paid hours. The Panel heard from the Centre that the current 2.5 multiplier for Grade 6 fractional staff did not cover all of the work that some teachers did, e.g. answering emails, but covered general administration, teaching and marking. It was noted that specific guidelines needed to be agreed to define the workload covered by the multiplier and that part-time staff are teaching on credit-bearing courses which involve a greater workload.

The Panel heard from the Centre that there was no one individual in the Centre with responsibility to allocate teaching hours, which can lead to the uneven allocation of classes, often without explanation. In addition the large number of part-time staff employed by the Centre has on occasion led to gaps in staff coverage. The Panel noted the Centre’s concern that some part-time staff who also teach in other
institutions use teaching materials developed while employed by the Language Centre and which are, therefore, the intellectual property of SOAS.

The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that the recent restructuring of the Centre was implemented for financial reasons and resulted in a 40% reduction in staff. It was noted that the majority of the staffing cuts had been of middle management positions and had been perceived by many Centre staff as an overzealous and even punitive exercise.

It was noted that since the beginning of the restructuring there had been a two year period of inertia and that the current mission of the Centre was not clear. Low morale was affecting the motivation of many staff and a number of staff had left the employ of the Centre. The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that a few members of staff who had left the Centre had taken all of their records and teaching materials with them and that these malicious acts had resulted in considerable additional workload and repair work for the remaining staff. There had been a number of Directors of the Centre and the previous Director had deleted all managerial documentation when departing from the Centre, which meant the current Director of the Centre was having to re-create critical and strategic documents. It was noted that the loss of key documentation had severely impeded the preparation for the PPR submission and had meant incomplete sets of supporting documentation. The Panel noted that the only continuity of managerial staff was provided by the incumbent Head of Languages.

The Panel heard from the Head of Languages that the restructuring of the Centre could have been better supported by the School and that although an external observer had been employed to review the impact of the restructuring of the Centre, no report of these findings had ever been received. The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that a strategic Departmental Plan was being drafted to map out the next three years, with a revised business model positioning the Centre as part School-facing and part external client-facing. The plan would include only those programmes and courses most likely to realise an operating profit for the Centre.

The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that a number of contracts were still pending following the restructure and that she was working with HR to draft revised contracts, which would clearly define roles and responsibilities. It was noted that the issuing of contracts was based on the Framework Agreement, which left very little flexibility in specifying workloads. It was noted that the x2.5 multiplier for G6 contracts and the x3.0 multiplier for G7 were fixed and could not be adjusted. A small number of staff had been downgraded from G8 roles as Programme Co-ordinators to G7 Language Specialists, a role which included some of the same work. A review of the support needs of part-time staff was planned. The Panel heard from the Head of Languages that each Language Section Leader was responsible for ensuring that workloads were evenly allocated and that areas of good practice were shared.

The Panel heard from the Director of the Centre that the Centre was making a financial loss each year, with the current deficit approximately £100,000. It was noted that in the past the Centre had done a lot of work with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), but that the Government had transferred the contracts to private providers. It was noted that the Centre had lost the FCO contracts because it had not been in a position to bid for them competitively and that students were still writing to the Centre saying how much better the Language Centre courses had been, compared to those offered by the new FCO providers. It was noted that the Centre was drafting a financial strategy aimed at reducing the deficit by expanding the business of the Centre. The Director of the Centre will be meeting with Finance over the summer to clarify the budgeting of all income streams and costs. It was noted that the Centre has high payroll costs and disproportionate central overhead costs due to maintaining systems such as student registration and enrolment functions as well as contributing to central School services.

The Panel heard from the Dean that the Language Centre, although anomalous in some respects, has been incorporated into the Faculty Plan, with the Director of the Centre attending the Faculty Management Group and Faculty Board and the Head of Languages attending the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. It was noted that the Centre needed to collaborate more effectively with other Departments to avoid overlap and competition for courses. The Panel heard from the Dean that the Centre had received support and encouragement from outside of the Faculty, e.g. from Executive Board,
but the key risks for the Centre were declining student numbers and increasing competition from external language providers. The School does wish the Language Centre to have a long term future and considers it an important external facing part of the Faculty and the School, hence the financial scrutiny which it has been under in recent years. The expectation is not that it should be independently profitable, but that its high fees should be shown to make some contribution to the School’s finances. It was noted that this in itself is a challenge for the Centre.

5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Review Panel would like to express its thanks to all members of the Centre’s staff and students who took part in this review, and to all Faculty and other School officers who attended or otherwise assisted. In particular, the review Panel would like to thank Ms Campbell, Dr Biltoo and their colleagues for the considerable time spent in producing the SES and supporting documentation.