

Quality Implementation Plan for the Language Centre

This plan was approved following a meeting of the President and the Director of the Centre on 27 June 2011.

1. Recommendations which the Unit could implement unaided

Recommendation 1.1: That a Quality Improvement Plan based on the policy document be adopted, setting out specific actions, 'actors', timeframes, funding sources to be identified and carried through in the short term (1 year), medium term (2 years) and longer term (4 years),

Action: Work will be carried out on this plan with a view to beginning implementation in 2011-12. It is hoped that the Language Centre will be redesignated as an academic centre in the course of 2011-12 and that the policy document will be located within this context.

Recommendation 1.2:

That annual and other reports be prepared in the context of general policy and within the parameters of targets delineated in the quality improvement plan.

Action: All reports are will be contextualised of general policy and will make reference to the proposed quality improvement plan upon its completion.

Recommendation 1.3 : That Tandem Language Learning similar to the system introduced by Helmut Brammerts at the University in Bochum, Germany, be initiated using 'email' and the Internet.

Action: It is proposed to introduce Tandem Language Learning when all new computers are in place (2011-12).

Recommendation 1.4: The formulation of a brief mission statement and motivating motto in conjunction with the central unifying LC symbol.

Action: The role of the Language Centre will be discussed at Academic Council and a decision regarding a mission statement will be made thereafter.

Recommendation 1.5: The production of an up -to -date short promotional video in a number of languages and of broadcast standard, on the varied activities of the LC.

Action: The Language Centre website is currently being redesigned and the video mentioned above will be included in the new presentation of our work.

Recommendation 1.6: The publication of a monthly on-line LC Newsletter in at least Irish and English.

Action: This will be considered upon completion of the new website.

Recommendation 1.7: Increased participation in language, lifelong learning exhibitions; radio, TV and Newspaper discussions; in on-line platforms *e.g.* Twitter, Facebook, 'Webinars' throughout the year.

The Language Centre already features quite frequently on radio programmes, in particular, Raidió na Gaeltachta, and in various contributions on language education in newspapers, particularly the Irish Times.

Action: The issue of social networks will be explored in the academic year 2011-12.

2. Recommendations which the Unit could implement only with assistance from other bodies within the University and without cost implications

Recommendation 2.1: That an Advisory Group on Language Policy at university level be established in consultation with the Language Centre, in the Faculty of Arts. This has not been implemented for lack of time.

Action: The issue will be raised at a meeting of the Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies and Philosophy once the status of the Language Centre has been confirmed, and will go before Academic Council at the subsequent meeting.

Recommendation 2.2: That strong links with the Department of Modern Irish be maintained and that possibilities of similar beneficial co-operation and of closer contact with the other Modern Languages Departments, be further explored.

The Director of the Language Centre has been invited to attend the meetings of the School of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures. A NUI Certificate course in Irish Language, Literature and Contemporary Culture is being offered by the Language Centre and the University of Alcalá in Spain thanks to the links between the Department of Spanish and that university.

Action: The issue of stronger links between the School and the Language Centre will be raised at the next meeting of the School.

Recommendation 2.3: That a languages and bilingual policy document (relating to Irish) setting out general terms of reference, precise directions, clear priorities and objectives, be prepared – the university could re-evaluate in such a document the importance of its Language Centre's strategic function.

This recommendation should be included in the university language policy mentioned above. The University has, this year, published its second Irish-language *scéim*, as required by the Official Languages Act (2003).

Action: This proposal will be explored in the context of the University's new strategic plan.

Recommendation 2.4 : That closer links with Oifig na Gaeilge be created in the context of the bilingual section of a languages policy document, of the general provisions of both the Universities Act (1997) and of the Official Languages Act (2003)

The Language Centre already provides classes for Oifig na Gaeilge for staff and students wishing to improve their knowledge of Irish.

Action: Further cooperation is envisaged next year, with the introduction of classes in Irish for specific purposes for members of the administrative staff.

Recommendation 2.5: That co-operation with other Faculties be explored with a view to creating further optional language modules for all students in applied skills domains.

An Institution-Wide Language Programme was introduced in September 2011, open to all students of the University and offering several levels in Irish, French, German, Spanish and Chinese. Applied language modules can be provided upon request.

Action: Details of take-up and an evaluation of the programme will be provided in the next Language Centre report.

Recommendation 2.6: To establish closer and better modes of communication with the International Education and Public Relations Offices so that positive PR aspects of language programmes in Paris, France and Alcalá, Spain are used to the benefit of the NUIM LC.

Action: The Language Centre will seek to ensure that the International Committee meets more often. Attempts are already underway to have the Paris course included in Irish Studies programmes in Parisian universities.

Recommendation 2.7:

That access to basic technical, catering room and other services be provided on Saturdays to attend to needs of part-time/on-line courses which assemble throughout the year on the sixth day of the week, if student numbers warrant such provision

Action: Technical support is provided on Saturdays when required. The University has received regular requests from the Director of the Language Centre to provide a catering service on Saturdays during examinations in particular.

3. Recommendations which the Unit could implement only if additional resources were provided by the University

Recommendation 3.1: That language coordinators be employed so that university-wide modules be provided not only in Chinese but in each of the other main languages including Irish.

Action: A modern languages coordinator was appointed on 1 May 2010 on a three-year contract. The IWLP in five languages was introduced in October 2010. One coordinator per language would involve considerable additional resources on the part of the University.

Recommendation 3.2: that the English language coordinator further develops the ESOL, EFL and CELTA courses and seminars both within and outside the university.

Action: The Language Centre is currently exploring the possibility of introducing TEFL courses in the summer of 2012.

Recommendation 3.3: That consideration be given to offering other applied skills *e.g.* IT, Media, Journalism, initially in the LC at Introductory Level and in cooperation with other University units if appropriate through the medium of certain target languages,

Response of Unit: These skills are already offered by the Centre for Media Studies. The possibility of offering them in another language could be explored but would imply additional costs on the part of the University.

Action: The Language Centre will consider this recommendation in light of its own strategic development and other recommendations in the University.

Recommendation 3.4: that participation in 'ab initio' courses by overseas Erasmus, Tempus students emanating from Continental Europe, be increased with the assistance of the International Education Office.

Action: This will be explored in the coming academic year.

Recommendation 3.5: That full-time language coordinators for languages taught within academic university system, be appointed; that more than one language coordinator be appointed where absolutely necessary, *e.g.* for English, Chinese, Irish (as recommended in COURSES section of this REPORT)

One language coordinator for Irish was already in place at the time of the report. A second, modern languages, coordinator was appointed from 1 May 2010 on a three-year contract. Ideally, one coordinator/teacher should be appointed for each language, which would have considerable cost implications for the University.

Action: In the current climate, no action is feasible.

Recommendation 3.6: That mutually beneficial links to NUIM's hinterland Gaeltacht i.e. Gaeltacht Ráth Chairn be re-explored in the context of co-operation with Comharchumann Forbartha Ráth Chairn and the State Roinn na Gaeltachta and Údarás na Gaeltachta / Gaeilge.

This has already been done over a considerable period of time. Greater cooperation would involve greater commitment on the part of the University.

Action: This will be raised with the incoming president.

4. Recommendations already implemented

Recommendation 4.1: That the Irish language coordinator completes the TEG portfolio of language levels (CEFR) and associated examination provision and administers in a full-time role the TGMA (Teaching of Irish to Adults).

Action: Examinations for the final level, C2, have now been developed. The Irish-language coordinator is already responsible for the administration of the TMGA course. No further action required.

Recommendation 4.2: That the teaching of conversational Irish in both university and external communities be extended.

Action: This is already being done as part of the IWLP.

Recommendation 4.3: That a languages for all policy be set in train in conjunction with these coordinators, that is, that courses both certified and non-certified/voluntary at each of the European Framework levels be provided in a limited number of key languages to every single student in the University on an open-door availability basis e.g. "An Cúrsa Deonach Gaeilge" in UCC.

Response of Unit: This has already been done through the IWLP and the Languages for All programme.

Recommendation 4.4: That optional relevant language modules be offered in the other Faculties of the University e.g. Business, Engineering, Sciences.

Action: This year Reading Russian for History was introduced for the Department of History. Courses in Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) are always available to departments upon request.

Recommendation 4.5: that LSP courses for bilingual services as provided by NUIM and other staffs, be offered in the context of the Official Languages Act (2003) and in association with Oifig na Gaeilge, OÉM.

Action: Classes in Irish are already offered to staff. However, the possibility of offering classes tailored to specific needs, heretofore offered by Oifig na Gaeilge, will be offered from October 2011. There will be no duplication of delivery.

Recommendation 4.6: That systems of quality control particularly for off-campus courses be set in train on a tighter more rigorous basis so that higher rates of participation and satisfaction with key elements of syllabus and pedagogy, are achieved.

Action: All courses, whether on or off campus, are subject to vetting through the system of external examiners. The one course with which a certain amount of dissatisfaction had been expressed was the Diplóma sa Ghaeilge, offered on the Kilkenny Campus. Feedback provided to the external reviewers, which contained this information, was from the end of the academic year 08- 09. Changes to the course, involving a greater emphasis on conversation and grammar in the third hour, had already been implemented at the beginning of 09-10.

Recommendation 4.7: That attention be given to the need for expertise in relation to professional language testing in Irish and the other languages The need to train more teachers to test correctly is essential in the context of the application of the CEFR language levels to courses and the LC membership in ALTE.

Action: Our colleague, Siuán Ní Mhaonaigh, has provided a number of short training courses for tutors teaching the new undergraduate course in Irish which is linked to the CEFR. She has also run a workshop on testing speaking for colleagues from other language departments, which was attended by ten lecturers. It is envisaged that this practice will continue, subject to resources.

Recommendation 4.8: That the Language Centre be given high consideration when space is reallocated in the Arts Building in the near future or that dedicated building be provided with all necessary space for the Language Centre and that such a development be earmarked in NUIM's general strategic plan,

Action: In September 2010, the Language Centre moved into new office space, which meets all its requirements.

Recommendation 4.9: That a second multi-media 'digilab' room at least be provided (three or four such rooms are sought by language teachers) and that the Tandberg Analogue language laboratories be replaced with flexible IT digital facilities with appropriate Internet access as soon as feasible,

Action: The former Lab 2 was entirely refurbished in July 2010 and equipped with 15 new computers. The Centre's first digilab and the Confucius Classroom will have new computers from September 2011.

Recommendation 4.10: That the formal teaching qualifications of all teaching staff be given priority at times of contract renewal/appointment,

Action: This has always been the case.

Recommendation 4.11: That regular staff meetings and language teacher meetings be held to enable sharing of information and discussion 'de vive voix' of issues of common concern.

Given the large number of part-time staff (on average 30) it is simply not possible to arrange a meeting which everyone can attend. At the end of each year, however, all staff are invited to a lunch, which is preceded by an hour-long meeting at which they are encouraged to voice any concerns or issues they may have. At the next meeting on 28 April, tutors will be informed that they may request a meeting, even for small groups, whenever they so wish.

Action: Although staff member were of the view that one meeting per year was adequate, a second meeting will be arranged mid-way through the first semester.

Recommendation 4.12: That in-service courses be held at least once a year to enable continuous training and motivation for third level language (NUIM LC) teachers in their subject areas; that they be motivated to study, research and publish relevant articles in language journals, etc.

Action: Some tutors already participate in conferences and publish in language journals and are facilitated in doing so by the Language Centre. During the academic year 2010-11 a workshop in language testing was organized, which tutors were encouraged to attend. Further workshops will be proposed in the next academic year.

Recommendation 4.13:

That membership of the Professional Language Centre Association AULC be continued and that more language administrators and teachers be encouraged / facilitated to attend its meetings.

Action: Language Centre staff are encouraged to attend AULC meetings when these are held within the island of Ireland. Full-time staff may and do attend AULC meetings in the UK when they choose to do so.

Recommendation 4.14: That State PRTLI and European Union Framework Programmes for Languages Promotion and Pedagogy be examined and if appropriate, that careful strategic applications be made.

Action: The Language Centre, in association with NUIM Dept. of Psychology, has been successful in two tenders for research in the past academic year (10-11). It has also submitted an application under Interreg.

Recommendation 4.15: That external and internal partnerships and in particular those which generate seed, matching or other funding, be continued and strengthened.

Action: See response to 4.14

Recommendation 4.16: That the LC consider charging appropriate fees to internal and external customers for consultation, translation, document design services rendered, for equipment, for interpreter services at conferences etc.

Action: This is already our practice, although colleagues from the university are only charged if the Language Centre incurs considerable expense as a result.

Recommendation 4.17: That altruistic financial benefactors (individual or corporate) be identified confidentially in consultation with the University Foundation, Marketing and Finance Offices, cf Toyota Funding for Irish, UCC, C/O Tim O'Mahony.

Action: The Language Centre is currently involved in preliminary discussions with one such source of funding.

Recommendation 4.18: The continual updating of websites, the addition of the promotional video and LC newsletter to the core website, facilities for complete application to courses being enabled on-line.

Action: The first three are have already been addressed above. It is now possible to apply for all Language Centre courses, including the TEG examinations, online.

5. Recommendations which were not considered feasible/appropriate

Recommendation 5. 1: That up to date equipment *e.g.* interactive whiteboards, video and TV monitors, CD and DVD players be provided in each language classroom and that classrooms with windows and of more reasonable size be provided.

Response of Unit: We are of the view that the Language Centre has adequate up-to-date equipment. For security reasons, it is not possible to leave equipment in classrooms. Classroom size is a matter for the University.

Recommendation 5.2:

That the present number of core staff (6 in total) be consolidated by at least renewal of various contracts, if not the relevant key posts being made full-time and permanent, which would be the PRG preferred option; that a second secretary be appointed to LC secretariat.

Action: The first temporary contract is due for renewal on 1 September 2011. The Director of the Language Centre is of the view that there is no need for a second secretary.

Recommendation 5.3: That teacher exchange and relevant staff mobility occur *c/o* TM Socrates Programmes of the EU between the LC and overseas universities in order to enable improvement by detailed comparison in all domains of language promotion and pedagogy.

Response of Unit: None of the Language Centre teachers has a full-time post in the university, so this is unfortunately not a realistic option.