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AHRC
Modern Languages
Leadership Fellow

CCEA Symposium, March 2019

***Growing the numbers taking Languages.
Northern Ireland in the wider UK Context.***

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Issues for today

- 1. Pupil and Student Numbers. Northern Ireland in wider context.**
- 2. Evidence in making the case for languages.**
- 3. Policy developments ('top-down' action) and other positive developments at UK level that will benefit NI .**
- 4. Current priorities for Northern Ireland.**

GCSE Entry 2003 – 2018 (All Awarding Bodies)

	2002-2003	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
French	12,647	5,533	5,179	4,709	4,301
German	1,278	1,044	1,163	937	1,050
Irish	2,040	1,980	1,901	1,987	1,991
Spanish	3,206	3,734	3,593	3,877	3,817
Total	19,171	12,291	11,835	11,510	11,159
Total Entry	203,777	171,325	161,975	156,806	170,348
4 main langs as % of total entry	9.4%	7.2%	7.3%	7.3%	6.6%

Source: JCQ



Northern Ireland A-level Entry 2003 –2018 (All Awarding Bodies)

	2002-2003	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
French	832	536	503	473	429
German	201	97	102	100	110
Irish	290	330	331	333	332
Spanish	419	534	524	529	434
Total	1742	1,497	1,460	1,435	1,305
Total Entry	28,650	32,390	31,828	30,684	29,004
4 main langs as % of total entry	6.1%	4.6%	4.6%	4.7%	4.5%

Source: JCQ



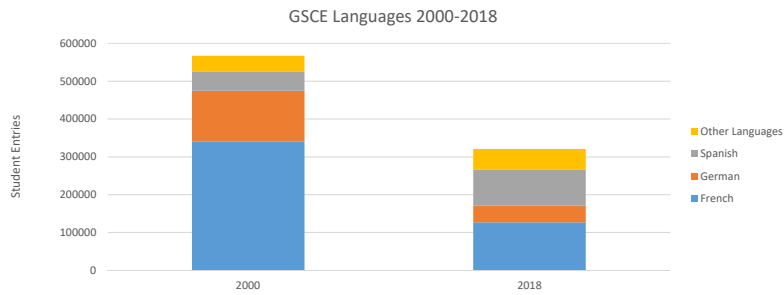


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- Schools in England, Wales and NI: similar trends for French and German; Spanish has had major growth

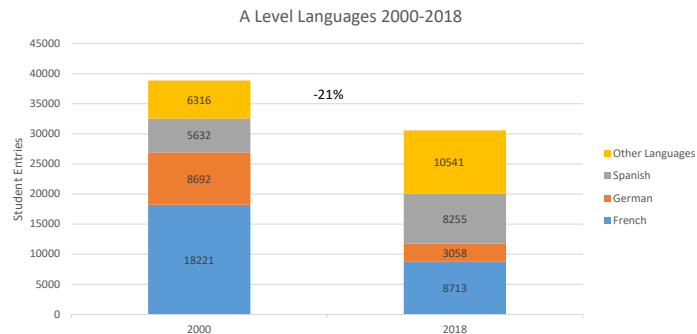


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- **UNIVERSITIES in UK: all languages falling.** Closure of 10 ML departments (many post '92); at least 9 have cut back provision, including Russell Group Universities.

Selection of larger subjects in (F) Languages subject area	2010-11	2016-17	Difference	% change
(R1) French studies	11,300	6,215	-5,085	-45.0%
(R2) German studies	4,340	2,490	-1,850	-42.6%
(R3) Italian studies	2,960	1,110	-1,850	-62.5%
(R4) Spanish studies	8,875	5,600	-3,275	-36.9%
(T1) Chinese studies	1,870	1,420	-450	-24.1%
(T2) Japanese studies	1,540	1,240	-300	-19.5%
(T6) Modern Middle Eastern studies	1,810	1,225	-585	-32.3%



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Factors influencing pupil choice are clear...

Perception that **'English is enough'**

Perception that **languages are difficult** relative to other subjects:
relates both to curriculum content and grading
(overwhelming response in sample of 81 NI Languages teachers; plus BBC survey)

'Messaging' around Languages is not strong enough from the top

Push for STEM: Languages need a similar campaign



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Evidence of the need for language skills is clear (series of reports):

- Languages in the UK. A Call for Action (2019). Four national academies.
- CBI 2018 Education and Skills Report: top 5 in demand from employers are French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic
 “The need for languages has been **heightened by the UK’s departure from the European Union**. To achieve the government’s ambition for a ‘Global Britain’, we have to get language teaching in our schools right.”
- Born Global Report (UK 410 SMEs, 2015).
- Cardiff Business School (2014): loss to UK economy of 3.5% of GDP per year.



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POSITIVE POLICY CONTEXTS

- **Scotland and Wales** have clear Language Policies: secondary and HE ‘joined up’. Foreign languages, indigenous languages (Welsh, Gaelic, Scots), community languages (Urdu, Chinese) – ‘joined up’. **Funded by devolved governments**.
- **Scotland: ‘1+ 2’ policy**. Partnership: government, local authorities, schools, universities.
- **Wales: ‘Bilingual + 1’**. ‘Global Futures’ strategy, including mentoring programme for languages. Funded by Welsh government.
- **England: new ‘Centre of Excellence’ and 9 hub schools** working across England in different regions, funded by DfE and backed by CBI, £4.8 million. Started in Autumn 2018.
- **Republic of Ireland** launched its foreign languages strategy in December 2017: ‘**Languages Connect**’. Includes community languages – of the ‘New Irish’.



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CURRENT POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS at UK level which will benefit NI

- 5 –way collaboration on a **National Languages Strategy for Education and Skills**: AHRC, British Academy, British Council, ASCL, Universities UK (Vice Chancellors)
 - > Policy recommendations will be made at UK level in early Summer 2019. Backed by the Four National Academies and All Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages (APPG)
- Campaign for a **Chief Government Linguist** (Westminster, November 2018, ongoing). Raising profile of languages across government departments.
- **'Routes into Languages'** programme to be supported by AHRC in 2019-2020. Language Ambassadors project. Call forthcoming for 2 selective and 2 non-selective schools in NI.
- Ofqual looking at the question of **severe grading** at GCSE.



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PRIORITIES FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

(these have all been raised in the discussion of forthcoming recommendations for a National Languages Strategy for the UK)

SHORT TERM:

- **Campaign** from government, through universities and schools along similar lines to STEM. Support needed from Industry, Business etc.
- Small **pupil premium** at A level to support teaching where threshold for viability not reached.
- Light touch but **urgent review** of the new GCSE and A level specs to ensure no unintended negative consequences around **difficulty**.
- Small funding for current **NICILT** activities to support schools, could include **ambassadors/mentoring** schemes.



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MEDIUM TERM:

- Planning and support to **avoid language 'cold-spots'** at university level: impact on social mobility.
- Language **policy for Northern Ireland** that is joined up across primary, secondary and university; across foreign languages, Irish, and community languages; across different government departments (education, communities, trade, health....).
- Development of **other qualifications** with a languages component (e.g. BTECs) or incorporating languages component into existing qualifications.
- Fully-funded **primary languages programme**.



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