

**Executive Summary of Business  
for Senate**



Title	<b>Review of the Sussex Language Institute</b>
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Type	Report
Date	12 March 2010
Strategic context	The review of the Sussex Language Institute, conducted during 2009, was established by the Vice-Chancellor with a broad remit to consider all options in relation to the Sussex Language Institute.
Summary	The paper reproduces the recommendations from the review report and indicates action taken – or to be taken – in relation to each of these recommendations. The complete review report is also attached.
Essential reading	None.
Risk analysis	A number of risks are implied by the analysis in the review report. Principally, these are addressed by appointing a new Director for the Sussex Language Institute and adopting a new 'language proficiency' approach to the provision of language learning across academic programmes within the University.
Resource implications	The resource implications vary across the various recommendations concerned. The appointment of a Director is to a vacant post, and so is not a new cost. The proposed new approach to embedding language learning in academic programmes has the potential to increase the attractiveness of offerings across the University, increasing demand from Home/European Union students and bringing in new fee-paying overseas students.
Consultation	The review report has been considered by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group. As various of the recommendations are considered in more detail, as outlined in the attached paper, consultation will take place in the normal way with relevant groups.
Future actions	The proposed future actions in relation to various of the review report's recommendations are given in the attached paper.

Effective date of introduction	The effective date of introduction of new programmes is to be determined once the new Director of the Sussex Language Institute has commenced.
Recommendation	<b>That the Senate note the actions taken or proposed to be taken in relation to the recommendations in the review report.</b>

The report of the Review of the Sussex Language Institute (SLI) is attached. This review was conducted between February and December 2009. The purpose of this covering paper is to provide an indication of action which has been taken in relation to the recommendations and of future action in relation to these recommendations.

The recommendations arising from this review were as follows:

1. *SLI should focus on working with and supporting all the University's Schools in developing language learning opportunities as part of their programmes and in evolving models of language learning that provide opportunities for all UG, PGT and PGR students to acquire or improve language skills.*
2. *The Panel noted consistent comments from staff about poor morale. The University needs to review its communications systems and the new SLI Director and the Director of HR should work together to devise an action plan that directly addresses the causes of poor morale.*
3. *A new Director of the SLI should be appointed without delay. His/her leadership should enable the Institute to deliver the highest quality education in languages, consistent with the University's institutional goals. The new Director should be able to demonstrate experience in innovative curriculum design, language learning pedagogy and increasing the numbers of students studying languages. S/he should also be able to encourage and support the entrepreneurial activities of staff in all sections of the SLI. S/he should be given equivalent status to a Head of School. The Director of SLI should report directly to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International).*
4. *SLI should develop key partnerships within the University. Greater engagement with the Heads of Schools would be an essential step to raise awareness of the value of the services provided by SLI.*
5. *The Director of the SLI should be a member of Senate to ensure that the activity of the SLI remains aligned to evolving University and School strategy. SLI teaching staff should be eligible for Senate election. The electoral constituency of SLI staff should be determined as soon as possible.*
6. *SLI should cease offering its own degree awarding activity from 2010 entry. The Panel recommends the adoption of a model that delivers language proficiency as exemplified by the University of Exeter.*
7. *It is proposed that the 'proficiency' model starts in the academic year 2010/11. Consequently, it is expected that the new and existing models of provision would be running in parallel for at least three years. The student experience of the current cohort of students should be at the heart of the implementation strategy resulting from these proposals. The staffing implications of the proposals should be defined by the new Director in consultation with staff, HR and unions, where necessary, over the next three years. The University should allow all students currently registered on degree programmes involving languages to finish their degrees and should make adequate provision to ensure the quality of the student experience.*
8. *The University should price premium fee programmes in the Schools of Global Studies and Business, Management and Economics to include access to the language proficiency programmes (i.e. students would have to opt out on arrival).*

9. *The Institute should be mindful of the continuing need to monitor market trends given contemporary political and international issues. The Panel was pleased to hear that the Institute is already taking advantage of the growing interest in Mandarin by offering this language at advanced level as part of its Open Courses.*
10. *SLI should work in collaboration with the Doctoral School to develop a template to extend the services to all PGRs.*
11. *The new Director of the SLI, together with the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International), in collaboration with the International Study Abroad Office should review the year abroad scheme to develop new and more flexible provision which encourages student mobility.*
12. *The Panel recommends the establishment of a working group to examine the practical implications of a universal scheme, including the impact on timetabling and scheduling of courses. Close involvement of the Communications Office would also be required.*
13. *The Modern Foreign Language section of SLI should more robustly pursue entrepreneurial engagements with the external business community. A clear strategy, focusing on sustainability and expansion of business-orientated activities, needs to be devised and implemented.*
14. *The Panel recommends that a further report, examining the progress of the changes proposed in this document, be produced at the beginning of the academic year 2012/13.*

Senate is asked to NOTE that:

- the Vice-Chancellor has acted on the part of Recommendation 3 which relates to appointing a new Director of the SLI without delay – interviews for this post have been held and negotiations with the preferred candidate are in progress;
- the implementation of those parts of Recommendation 3 relating to the status of the Director and the reporting lines for this position will be addressed as the new Director is appointed;
- the implementation of Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 will await the commencement of the new Director;
- the issues around Senate membership and electorate raised in Recommendation 5 will be addressed once the new Director of the SLI has commenced;
- in relation to the first part of Recommendation 6, it has been determined that it is infeasible to consider ceasing the degree awarding activity of the SLI from 2010 entry due to timing issues around notifying intending applicants – the earliest that this could be contemplated is in relation to 2011 entry and this will be subject to further discussion later in 2010, consistent with the usual processes for programme approval;
- in terms of the introduction of a 'language proficiency' model, covered by the second part of Recommendation 6 and by Recommendation 7, this will await the arrival of the new Director of the SLI – one consequence of this is that it is unlikely to be feasible to introduce this model in the academic year 2010/11;

- the timing of the report proposed in Recommendation 14 will have to be reconsidered in the light of the likely delays in implementing some of the other recommendations, as mentioned above.

**US**

University of Sussex

**University of Sussex  
Report of the Review of the Sussex Language  
Institute  
December 2009**

Professor Joanne Wright (Chair)  
Professor Tom Healy  
Professor Jim Rollo  
Mr Ray Satchell  
Mrs Barbara Bryan

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## I. Executive Summary

1. The SLI Review panel reconvened on October 27 2009 at the request of the Vice Chancellor. The Panel's remit had been expanded to consider all options, especially in light of the University's financial position which had deteriorated significantly since the original review in February 2009. As the panel's previous recommendations regarding English Language had been accepted, this review focussed on Modern Languages.
2. Among the additional evidence that the Panel considered was Language Centre models, especially from Exeter, Loughborough and Bristol, modelling done by the planning office and finance and the recently published HEFCE *Review of Modern Foreign Languages Provision in Higher Education in England* (Worton). The Panel also talked to students and a range of staff members and received a written submission from Dr Ben O'Donohoe, Joint Acting Director of the SLI.
3. The Panel also had available its previous evidence base and paid particular attention to *Making the Future* which sets out the University's expectations in relation to research, the student experience and international profile. The Panel particularly benefited from the presence of Professor Tom Healy who was able to outline the emerging academic strategies among the University's Arts departments and the views of several Heads of School towards Sussex's language provision.
4. The Panel believes that the University of Sussex should put language learning opportunities for all students at the core of its taught and research programmes. The panel believes that this will assist the University achieve its goals in relation to internationalisation, student employability, innovative teaching and increased fee income from taught programmes.
5. There are clearly excellent language teaching skills currently within the SLI evident in all activity and the Panel was particularly impressed by the enthusiasm of the Open Course Staff within the Institute have also demonstrated great loyalty and dedication to students, often in difficult times. By harnessing these skills and loyalty in an imaginative and flexible way under the right leadership, the SLI will continue to bring strategic value to the University as well as individual benefit to students.
6. The Panel reaffirmed its original conclusion that the establishment of a research intensive department of Foreign Languages was not feasible due to both the lack of viable student numbers and the limited potential to raise income from research. The number of students doing a single language major remains very small (3 in Year 1, 2 in Year 2, 9 in Year 3 and 9 in Year 4). This represents a significant and real opportunity cost for both the Institute and the University. The Panel further believes that in order to meet both the University's strategic objectives and to fit with the recently published Higher Education Framework, the SLI should concentrate on enhancing and embedding language learning opportunities rather than running degree level programmes of its own.
7. The Panel's major recommendations are thus:
  - 7.1 That the University should enhance its commitment to maximising language learning opportunities for all students in a range of languages as outlined in its strategic plan, including further developments in strategic languages, such as Mandarin and Arabic.
  - 7.2 That the University should appoint as soon as possible a Director of the SLI. The new Director should be able to demonstrate experience in innovative curriculum design, language learning pedagogy, and increasing the numbers of students studying

languages. He/she should also be able to encourage and support the entrepreneurial activities of staff in all sections of the SLI.

- 7.3 The panel would like to reiterate one of its original recommendations that the Director of the SLI should be a member of Senate to ensure that the SLI remains aligned to evolving University and School strategy.
- 7.4 The SLI should cease offering its own degree awarding activity from 2010 entry and shift to a model that delivers language proficiency. It should focus on working with and supporting all the University's Schools in developing language learning opportunities as part of their programmes and in evolving models of language learning that provide opportunities for all UG, PGT and PGR students to acquire or improve language skills. The staffing implications of this change should be defined by the new Director in consultation with staff, HR and the trades unions, where necessary, over the next three years.
- 7.5 The University should review the structure of its degree programmes and explore ways that 60 credits of language learning to 'with proficiency' standard can be best incorporated into them. It should additionally explore ways that all accredited language learning as part of a degree programme or as an addition to it might be highlighted within students' degree transcripts.
- 7.6 The University should allow all students currently registered on degree programmes involving languages to finish their programmes and should make adequate provision to ensure the quality of the student experience.
- 7.7 The University should price premium fee programmes in the Schools of Global Studies and of Business, Management and Economics in the first instance, to include access to the language proficiency programmes (i.e. students would have to opt out on arrival).
- 7.8 The Modern Foreign Language side of SLI should more robustly pursue entrepreneurial engagements with the external business community.
- 7.9 While the University will have to subsidise its work associated with its commitment to enhancing language learning opportunities, there will also be the potential to establish or enhance financially sustainable Language learning opportunities outside degree programmes for both University members and the wider community.
- 7.10 The new Director of the SLI together with the new PVC (International) review the year abroad scheme to develop new and more flexible provision which encourages student mobility.
- 7.11 The Panel reiterates one of its original recommendations that the SLI report directly to the PVC (International).
- 7.12 The Panel noted consistent comments from staff about poor morale. The University should review its communications systems and the new SLI Director and the Director of HR should work together to devise an action plan that directly addresses the causes of poor morale.

8. In coming to its recommendations, the Panel found the following points compelling:
- The University's desire to have a strong international focus.
  - The University's desire to increase the opportunities for all students to study languages. Here the Panel noted the Worton Review's point that the take up of languages post 14 remains low in the UK and that post 14 provision is very heavily concentrated in the independent school sector.
  - The University's desire to improve the employability of all its graduates.
  - The University's desire that its students receive their main degree experience in a research intensive environment which it defines minimally as staff being eligible for inclusion in the REF.

## II. Introduction

1. The SLI Review Panel reconvened on October 27 2009 at the request of the Vice-Chancellor. As the Panel's previous recommendations regarding English Language had been accepted, this review focussed on Modern Languages.
2. In February 2009, due to a combination of lack of research intensity (defined minimally by the University as research of sufficient volume and quality to be entered in the REF) and insufficient student demand, the Panel recommended that the Institute's foreign language provision at degree level should concentrate on joint honours, minors and electives in partnership with research-led Schools. The Panel also agreed that full ownership of academic degree programmes by SLI could not be sustained in a way consistent with the University's current strategic priorities and recommended the discontinuation of SLI's single honours programmes (one language and two languages). It was proposed that the University should bear any initial negative financial impact during a transitional period of up to three years. At the time, it was estimated that the level of income loss resulting from these proposals would be manageable for the University. Modelling by finance and planning suggested that this would be in the order of £247K.
3. However, before this level of subsidy could be confirmed, the impact of the financial crisis on the public sector and higher education became apparent. In response to this the University's Council asked the University's management to come up with a proposal to save £3m during 2009-2010 and to save a further £5m in 2010-2011 (or substitute savings with real income growth) and then to move to a planned 4% surplus across all schools. In this context, the Vice-Chancellor did not feel that a subsidy of £247K to the SLI could be justified.
4. The Vice-Chancellor thus requested that the Review Panel reconvene to revisit its previous recommendations and expanded its remit to examine alternative models of provision, with an emphasis on the affordability and sustainability of any proposals. This was consistent with what was happening in all Schools and Professional Services Divisions.
5. During the second round of discussions the Panel had available its previous evidence base (See Annex A for details) and paid particular attention to the University's Strategic Plan *Making the Future* which sets out the University's expectations in relation to research, the student experience and international profile. The Review Panel's original membership remained unchanged, with the addition of Mrs Barbara Bryan, Strategy and Operations Manager (Arts). The Panel particularly benefited from the presence of Professor Tom Healy who was able to outline the emerging academic strategies among the University's Arts departments and the views of several Heads of Schools on Sussex's language provision.
6. Among the additional evidence that the Panel considered was Language Centre models, especially from the Universities of Exeter, Loughborough and Bristol and additional modelling done by the Planning and Finance offices.
7. A written submission from Dr Benedict O'Donohoe, Joint Acting Director of the SLI was also received by the Panel. The Panel noted the suggestions made by Dr O'Donohoe to rationalise and consolidate SLI's foreign language curriculum, including the withdrawal of Single Honours (1 Language) and Joint Major (2 Languages) and to incorporate Mandarin Chinese and Arabic into the curriculum. The Panel concurred with Dr O'Donohoe when he observed that existing open courses could be developed into credit-

bearing courses. The Panel considered the remainder of the proposals but concluded that, for the reasons already described in the first stage of the Review, plans to broaden the degree-based curriculum were not compatible with the University's stated intention to maintain its research intensive status.

8. The Panel noted that *Making the Future* signalled the University's commitment to modern language teaching and its desire to increase the range of Foreign Languages available at Sussex and the opportunities for students, staff and members of the community to study them. Recognising the barriers that prevent UK students from committing themselves to the study of a language, the Panel also noted the issues highlighted in the recently published *Review of Modern Foreign Languages provision in Higher Education in England (Worton Report HEFCE 2009)*.
9. The Review Panel wishes to commend SLI staff for their willingness to engage with the planning and development of sustainable activities and acknowledged their need for stability and a strong sense of direction and purpose.
10. The Panel commends SLI for the wholly positive comments made by the students concerning all aspects of their experience with particular reference to the support they received.

### **III. Analysis and Rationale for Change**

11. During the first stage of the Review, the Panel considered whether SLI would be able to raise sufficient income to finance research activity, but concluded that this was very unlikely. In addition, the volume of teaching activity generated by the scale of the SLI portfolio created capacity constraints. As the University did not intend to re-establish a Department of Modern Languages and was not prepared to subsidise unfunded research activity, it was concluded that the transformation of the SLI into a research-intensive department was not feasible. Most importantly, the lack of a credible body of research would rule out the possibility of making a submission to the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework.
12. The current market trends in language learning were discussed during the Review, particularly in regard to the decline in demand for languages such as German and Italian and the rise in Mandarin. It had been noted that the proportion of all pupils taking languages at GCSE had been decreasing in recent years: 78% of all pupils were taking a language in 2001, 68% in 2004, 59% in 2005, 51% in 2006, 46% in 2007 and then the recent drop to 44% in 2008<sup>1</sup>. UCAS data shows that although the volume of applications has remained fairly static, the absolute numbers remain small. The data also shows that there is a trend away from single honours language study as those who might have chosen single language programmes in previous years were now studying on joint programmes. At Sussex the number of students studying a single language major remains very small (3 in Year 1, 2 in Year 2, 9 in Year 3 and 9 in Year 4). This represents a significant real opportunity cost for both the Institute and the University.
13. Intercultural competence is increasingly recognised as an important attribute in its own right, and is valued by employers of all types. According to recent data compiled by the Confederation of British Industry, 74% of employers look to hire candidates with proficiency in another language because it helps businesses to communicate with customers and clients on a wider scale. The Panel firmly believes that the University of

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/research\\_and\\_statistics/language\\_trends.aspx/](http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/research_and_statistics/language_trends.aspx/)

Sussex should put language learning opportunities for all students at the core of its taught and research programmes. **(Recommendation 1)**

14. The Panel shares the University's view that the allocation and usage of resource should be driven by the strategic importance of activities and therefore SLI should focus on those activities that add strategic value to both the unit and the University as a whole. The Panel believes that in order to meet both the University's strategic objectives and to fit with the recently published Higher Education Framework, the SLI should concentrate on enhancing and embedding language learning opportunities rather than running degree level programmes of its own. **(Recommendations 1 and 6)**
15. The Panel believes that by adopting a flexible approach to foreign language teaching, and learning that is based on proficiency, the SLI will be well positioned to assist the University achieve its goals in relation to internationalisation, student employability, innovative teaching and increased fee income from taught programmes.
16. The Panel met with staff from the Modern Foreign Language section of SLI to discuss other potential development opportunities for foreign language provision at the University, in particular, a flexible model based on proficiency. Some members of staff recognised the value of this approach and pointed to the success of the Institute's existing open courses and their potential to be developed into a full portfolio of accredited units.
17. The need for recognition of the staff's efforts was a recurring theme during the Review. The Panel was constantly reminded of the impact of long-term instability of the Unit on the ability of staff to pursue income-generating activities. Some members of staff spoke about how a number of factors (including conflicting messages on the University's expectations of SLI) had hampered their receptiveness to new ideas and had fostered a collective sense of disillusion and scepticism. The Panel acknowledged the apprehension felt by staff brought about by the prospect of change but felt encouraged by their continued commitment to SLI. The Panel expressed its confidence in the staff's ability to respond proactively to a new challenge, given the right support and a clear sense of direction **(Recommendations 2 and 3)**.
18. The Panel fully acknowledges the challenges faced by SLI resulting from continued uncertainty and the ongoing review of the Institute's activities. It was noted that the sense of dislocation and exclusion felt by some had hindered the establishment of key partnerships with other members of the University community. **(Recommendations 4 and 5)**
19. A group of undergraduate students was also invited to meet the Panel. Students described SLI as a caring and stimulating environment and commented on the sense of community that had been created within the Institute by staff and fellow students. The welcoming environment and the range of facilities available (including the Language Learning Centre) were cited as the most important factors that had influenced their choice of University.
20. All students met by the Panel showed great enthusiasm for their studies as they spoke about the impact that their choice of degree had on their personal lives. The length of programmes, financial considerations and the perceived lack of relevance of a foreign language for their future careers were cited by the students as some of the barriers that prevented their peers from studying a language. Students observed that most of their peers were not disinterested in languages but the majority felt no need for a recognised academic qualification in languages and were dissuaded by the way structures were geared towards achieving a recognised qualification. While many students could see that

acquisition of foreign language skills was an advantage, they did not wish to make a language the focus of their career or studies. The students met by the Panel were able to identify the advantages of a flexible model of foreign language study based on proficiency and were in favour of naming the language studied on the degree certificate.

#### **IV. Development of a new language model**

21. In order to develop an affordable model of foreign language provision for the University and with a view to improving access to language modules across the campus, the Panel examined models of provision adopted by other research-intensive institutions. Specific examples were found in the Universities of Loughborough, Exeter and Bristol.
22. Students at Loughborough University are provided with an opportunity to acquire or develop foreign language skills and given the possibility of studying abroad in one of the University's European partner institutions. The Panel noted that Loughborough had developed a University-wide language programme (also known as the Language Ladder) run by its Department of Politics, History and International Relations. The programme consists of a ladder of 12 single-semester 10 credit modules in French, German and Spanish<sup>2</sup>, with clearly defined entry requirements and exit levels. These modules are available to students of any department of the University whose degree programme makes provision for languages. Students may join at any point and progress as far up the ladder as they wish (timetable permitting).
23. The first step in the ladder is determined by the student's level of proficiency in their chosen language. Students who have taken a language module before just move to the next level if they continue with the same language. Level 1 is the starting point for complete beginners. Those with GCSE grade C or above are asked to join a level 3 group, levels 5 and 7 are for those with language proficiency at AS level and A level respectively. The upper levels of the ladder (for those with post-A level proficiency) are only accessible to those who have taken Level 7 or above i.e. the study of levels 9 and 10 is a pre-requisite to study a language at Level 11 and 12.
24. The programme is open to all Loughborough students, but priority (in terms of timetabling slots) is given to students from the Department of Politics, History and International Relations, the Business School and students on Economics with a Language.
25. The Panel learned that a flexible language model had been developed by the University of Exeter. Exeter offers a model whereby students can opt to have the foreign language they study with the University's Foreign Language Centre<sup>3</sup> mentioned in their degree title<sup>4</sup>. In order to achieve this, students are required to successfully complete a minimum of 60 credits of language modules, of which 30 credits are at a Level 2 or higher taken through the Language Centre.
26. Credit-rated modules are available to any undergraduate student from Beginners to Advanced Levels, as well as 'For Business', either as part of the student's degree or as an add-on. Students may choose to start a new language or develop an existing one (French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish are offered). At least 70% of students opt to complete 30 credits per year, with 30% doing 15 credits per

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<sup>2</sup> Mandarin Chinese modules were introduced at the beginning of the academic year 2009/10

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the Universities of Exeter and Bristol currently retain academic departments of Modern Languages which offer teaching in French, German, Italian, Hispanic Studies and Russian.

<sup>4</sup> For example, a History student who completes 30 credits at Spanish Beginners and a further 30 credits at Spanish Intermediate I could have their degree title amended to BA (Hons) History with proficiency in Spanish.

year. The University also offers the study of Arabic language, however this is delivered by its Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies.

27. The Panel also reviewed the model developed by the University of Bristol Language Centre and noted the emphasis placed by this institution on the applicability of the language to the students' subject discipline. Bristol offers fully accredited Applied Foreign Language (AFL) units for specific purposes to a broad base of students from across the University. First and second year UG students from the Faculties of Engineering, Science, Social Science and Law are offered languages (French, German, Italian and Spanish) at two levels as part of the 'Study in Continental Europe' programme - General Purposes for first year students and Specific Purposes for second year students. A wider range of languages (including Japanese and Mandarin Chinese) is offered to second year UG students as part of the 'Language for Medical Students' programme. In addition, three levels of language units (General Purposes, Specific Purposes and Business and Professional purposes) are offered to students from all faculties as add-on to their degree. In contrast to the model developed by the University of Exeter, there is no specific mention of the language studied on the students' degree certificate.
28. The Panel was encouraged by the growing trajectories of the models described above and the success that these innovative approaches have had in increasing the attractiveness of languages to students. It was noted that in 2008/09 the total number of registrations for the University of Loughborough's programme (at all levels) was 766. The Panel learned that various programmes at the University of Bristol had seen growth as a direct result of their link with languages and 850 students had been recruited to study a language as part of their degrees in Engineering, Medicine, etc. In addition, 550 students had signed up for Exeter's model (70% of them doing 30 credits, 30% doing 15 credits per year). The Panel noted that due to strong student demand, the University of Exeter decided to offer this option to all undergraduate students in 2009/10.
29. Under the proposed scheme, SLI would develop and deliver credit-bearing modules that would be offered to all UG, PGT and PGR students of the University. Students would be required to complete a minimum of 60 credits (2 years for UG students, 1 year for PG students) of language modules successfully. Students would be able to start a language ab-initio or continue a language previously studied, the level being determined by their individual ability and experience. It is proposed that all accredited language learning, as part of a degree programme, or as an addition to it, might be highlighted within students' degree transcripts. Hence, there would be explicit recognition of the language studied at Sussex by adding the words 'with proficiency in French/Spanish/Mandarin Chinese/etc' in the student's certificate. **(Recommendations 6 and 7)**
30. At postgraduate level, the scheme would become a de facto option for students enrolling in PGT programmes in the School of Global Studies and the School of Business, Management and Economics. Students would have to opt-out on arrival should they decide not to pursue the study of a language. It is recommended that premium fees are charged for these programmes. Internal transfer mechanisms should be developed so that the premium fee component is received by SLI. **(Recommendation 8)**
31. Student demand should inform the decisions on the levels that could be offered for each language. At other institutions only the most popular languages (usually French and Spanish) are offered at all levels (from ab-initio to post-A level). **(Recommendation 9)**
32. In order to assess the viability of this proposal, the Panel commissioned a modelling exercise conducted by the Finance and Planning Offices. The results suggest that if

students at Sussex opted to take courses in the same overall proportion as Exeter<sup>5</sup> then it would be expected that potentially 385 students would sign up for the 'proficiency' option. It is estimated that approximately 400 students (85 FTE) would be needed to achieve a break-even position. As the total number of students studying a language as part of a degree at Sussex already exceeds that number (600+ students), the Panel is optimistic that the target would be achieved.

33. The Panel believes that the development phase of Sussex's own 'proficiency' model would be assisted by the adaptation of SLI's existing open courses. During the first stage of the Review, the imperative to simplify the delivery of the Institute's suite of degree programmes prompted the Panel to make specific recommendations to ensure the integration of SLI's credit-bearing courses (electives) with the Institute's successful open courses. The Panel had noted with concern that efforts were being duplicated and opportunities missed by running these activities separately. No particular difficulties for the harmonisation of these activities were envisaged by SLI staff. Given that a similar approach would be required for the 'proficiency' model, it follows that the planning and development of courses could be done with relative ease and would enable a start in 2010/11. (**Recommendation 7**)
34. It is anticipated that the proposed model would have an impact on the University's 'year abroad' and exchange programmes including Erasmus/Socrates. Every year Sussex sends some 80-100 students on Erasmus placements. Many of these students go as part of their four-year language degree (mandatory study abroad). Others go for a term or a year as part of their three-year degree (voluntary study abroad). While it is expected that the number of students undertaking mandatory study abroad would gradually decrease in the next 3 years, the Panel anticipates that the proportion of students interested in spending time abroad as part of their studies (in any discipline) could grow.
35. As the student exchanges are facilitated by one-year bilateral agreements renewed yearly, the Panel recommends a careful analysis of the University's year abroad arrangements. The University should consider reviewing the terms and conditions of the reciprocal arrangements in 2010. (**Recommendation 11**)
36. A crucial element to the success of this initiative will be the achievement of academic buy-in. The Panel noted the observations made in the Worton report regarding the reluctance of academic departments to release students for credit-bearing language study in some institutions (either because of loss of student income or for reasons of programme coherence). If SLI is to assist the University in delivering its strategy, then the institution needs to take a proactive role to ensure that the new role of languages at Sussex is clearly communicated to all parties concerned.
37. It is foreseeable that a number of operational challenges could arise during the implementation phase of the proposal. For example, it is anticipated that this scheme would have a significant impact on the University's timetabling processes. The implications of the proposal should therefore be analysed by all parties involved in the planning and allocation of timetable slots to ensure that suitable slots are reserved for language study. (**Recommendation 12**)

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<sup>5</sup> Exeter's undergraduate intake is about 30% higher than at Sussex. A similar take-up of language modules would generate 385 students at Sussex although no account has been taken of subject mix.

## V. Recommendations

**R1.** SLI should focus on working with and supporting all the University's Schools in developing language learning opportunities as part of their programmes and in evolving models of language learning that provide opportunities for all UG, PGT and PGR students to acquire or improve language skills.

**R2.** The Panel noted consistent comments from staff about poor morale. The University needs to review its communications systems and the new SLI Director and the Director of HR should work together to devise an action plan that directly addresses the causes of poor morale.

**R3.** A new Director of the SLI should be appointed without delay. His/her leadership should enable the Institute to deliver the highest quality education in languages, consistent with the University's institutional goals. The new Director should be able to demonstrate experience in innovative curriculum design, language learning pedagogy and increasing the numbers of students studying languages. S/he should also be able to encourage and support the entrepreneurial activities of staff in all sections of the SLI. S/he should be given equivalent status to a Head of School. The Director of SLI should report directly to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International).

**R4.** SLI should develop key partnerships within the University. Greater engagement with the Heads of Schools would be an essential step to raise awareness of the value of the services provided by SLI.

**R5.** The Director of the SLI should be a member of Senate to ensure that the activity of the SLI remains aligned to evolving University and School strategy. SLI teaching staff should be eligible for Senate election. The electoral constituency of SLI staff should be determined as soon as possible.

**R6.** SLI should cease offering its own degree awarding activity from 2010 entry. The Panel recommends the adoption of a model that delivers language proficiency as exemplified by the University of Exeter.

**R7.** It is proposed that the 'proficiency' model starts in the academic year 2010/11. Consequently, it is expected that the new and existing models of provision would be running in parallel for at least three years. The student experience of the current cohort of students should be at the heart of the implementation strategy resulting from these proposals. The staffing implications of the proposals should be defined by the new Director in consultation with staff, HR and unions, where necessary, over the next three years. The University should allow all students currently registered on degree programmes involving languages to finish their degrees and should make adequate provision to ensure the quality of the student experience.

**R8.** The University should price premium fee programmes in the Schools of Global Studies and Business, Management and Economics to include access to the language proficiency programmes (i.e. students would have to opt out on arrival).

**R9.** The Institute should be mindful of the continuing need to monitor market trends given contemporary political and international issues. The Panel was pleased to hear that the Institute is already taking advantage of the growing interest in Mandarin by offering this language at advanced level as part of its Open Courses.

**R10.** SLI should work in collaboration with the Doctoral School to develop a template to extend the services to all PGRs.

**R11.** The new Director of the SLI, together with the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International), in collaboration with the International Study Abroad Office should review the year abroad scheme to develop new and more flexible provision which encourages student mobility.

**R12.** The Panel recommends the establishment of a working group to examine the practical implications of a universal scheme, including the impact on timetabling and scheduling of courses. Close involvement of the Communications Office would also be required.

**R13.** The Modern Foreign Language section of SLI should more robustly pursue entrepreneurial engagements with the external business community. A clear strategy, focusing on sustainability and expansion of business-orientated activities, needs to be devised and implemented.

**R14.** The Panel recommends that a further report, examining the progress of the changes proposed in this document, be produced at the beginning of the academic year 2012/13.