

HOLA – Q&A draft

What is HOLA?

The Home Language Accreditation Project (HoLA) is a project which supports young people in the Sheffield City Region to gain qualifications in their home/heritage/community language(s), usually in languages which are not routinely taught in mainstream schools.

HoLA encourages mainstream schools to enter their students for these qualifications and sometimes works with supplementary schools and directly with parents to provide access to accreditation. The Project currently works with speakers of more than 18 languages, predominantly by providing expert speakers, to mark language mock exams and facilitate speaking exams.

HoLA also aims to raise the profile of home/heritage/community languages as a valuable and transferable skill for young people and in effect make their language count.

What is the background of HOLA?

HoLA was previously funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for 6 years and consisted of 5 strands:

- 1) Support for home/heritage/community language accreditation
- 2) Pedagogical and organisational support for supplementary schools
- 3) Film Summer School in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University
- 4) Support for the ASDAN Languages short course (available in any language and delivered through supplementary schools)
- 5) Young Interpreters Course (accreditation for interpreting in home/heritage/community language)

Who runs the project?

Clare Allison is the HoLA Project Manager and Languages Project Manager at King Edward VII School, in Sheffield.

King Edward VII School is a mainstream local authority maintained 11-18 school with more than 1700 pupils on roll. The school was formerly a Specialist Language College.

What accreditation do you support?

HoLA supports any language offered at GCSE, iGCSE and A Level. We have included 18 different languages in the past.

How many languages do you support this year ?

In the academic year 2021-22 we supported 18 languages.

How many schools?

In the academic year 2021-22 we supported young people from 42 different educational establishments including mainstream schools, academies, independent

schools and provision for young people who are not on roll (usually because they entered the area in Y11).

How many students annually get accreditation this way?

In the academic year 2021-22 we directly supported 324 young people some of whom were asylum seekers, refugees and recent arrivals to the area.

How much time does it take you ? When are there peaks and troughs?

We usually launch our offer for the academic year in early October.

Peak times for the Project are in November/December/January when we are marking mock exams and assessing readiness for accreditation, and again in March/April/May when we are facilitating the speaking exams.

During peak times I am spending 80-100% of my week working on the HoLA Project.

How is your time funded?

Since the Paul Hamlyn Funding ceased (we had received the maximum allocation for any project), King Edward VII School has continued to pay my full salary, which includes my work on the HoLA Project amongst other projects and commitments. At this time we receive no additional funding for this work.

Do students/schools pay a fee?

Students on roll at King Edward VII School do not pay a fee for taking a qualification in their home/heritage/community language.

We also encourage other schools not to pass our fees onto their young people and families as the school usually benefits from the data associated with the qualifications passed by their multilingual students (and thereby scores in league tables).

In the academic year 2021-22 schools paid £35 for a GCSE speaking exam and £50 for an A Level speaking exam. We also charged for marking mock exam papers.

How do you locate your examiners? Are they paid?

The majority of the expert speakers have been supporting the project for more than 10 years and are a very experienced team. Some speakers were located via local universities/schools but the majority come from supplementary schools.

Our expert speakers are paid £30 an hour to conduct speaking exams (with additional hours paid to prepare for A-Level speaking exams). We ask our expert speakers to attend training each academic year to refresh their knowledge before conducting any exams. We also train expert speakers for Doncaster Metropolitan Council.

What sort of support do you offer students? (curriculum / strategies etc.)

We have developed resources for students which provide an overview of their qualification and how best to prepare for speaking exams at GCSE. We usually meet individually with A-Level candidates to discuss their Independent Research Project (IRP).

Within my school, I have created bespoke resources in English to support A-Level candidates as they are working independently on literature/film/translation/research and their IRPs if there is a speaking element to their A-Level language exam.

If we were to receive further funding we would like to make some videos which explain to individuals/parents/schools how to best support home/heritage/community language in terms of preparing for qualifications etc.

How do you advertise what HOLA can offer?

At the moment we only directly advertise our services to those schools who have worked with us before. However, schools inevitably talk to other schools and each year other schools/education establishments are referred to us.

For those students at King Edward VII School, the HoLA Project is embedded in the work of the school, and students are encouraged to take qualifications through our publicity materials, assemblies etc. Other staff refer students to the Project.

If the HOLA model were to be scaled up nationally, what curriculum framework (across ages and stages) is suitable in your view?

Students usually take a qualification in their home/heritage/community language earlier than Y11 or Y13. The majority of students for GCSE are in Y10 and for A-Level are in Y12 (although due to the recent pandemic many students this year were in Y11). We have had some young people take a GCSE in Y9 or Y8 and one student took Japanese GCSE in Y7.

We advise students to take their exams early as there is less pressure than in other academic years. Sitting a qualification in home/heritage/community language can provide transferable exam skills and early success can be motivational for future exams. Recent research from the University of Cambridge found that students who embrace their multilingualism tended to outperform their peers across the board at the nine subjects they studied at GCSE. There is also a wealth of research which demonstrates that supporting literacy in more than one language directly benefits development of both languages.

A King Edward VII School HoLA language exams are offered as an alternative option, meaning students can study other languages on timetable (we offer 5 languages at GCSE). For some A-Level learners an A-Level in their language can be the third subject they study, or, for most, it is an additional qualification. Commonly students who take a fourth A-Level in their language are studying mainly science qualifications and therefore need specific support to write essays and other linguistic skills.

For younger students, if HoLA were to scaled up, we would very much like to widen the use of the ASDAN short languages course, either at KS3 in mainstream, or in

supplementary settings. We would wish to engage with learners, possibly younger or possibly older, attending supplementary schools because ASDAN can be completed in any language and at any age.

Is there a visual structure of governance and operation that can be shared?

Currently it is just me who manages the project with a small amount of admin support. Of course, I couldn't deliver the project without the expert speakers.

I do have the governance etc. of the previous wider-ranging HoLA Project if that would be useful, when it was run in partnership with Languages Sheffield, a local charity.

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