ALL response to Curriculum and Assessment Review

22nd November 2024

Prior to submitting the response, the Association for Language Learning actively engaged in discussions with other professional bodies and representative bodies as well as members through national webinars and a members' survey on the Curriculum and Assessment Review. We would like to thank all those who have participated in informing this response.

Section 2: General views on curriculum, assessment, and qualifications pathways

10. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways are working well to support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

The Association for Language Learning is the largest subject association for language teachers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. To represent our members' views in consultations/calls for evidence, the association undertook various member engagement events, including national webinars, regional events and a member survey. We will be drawing on all this data in our response.

Many members agreed or strongly agreed that the Purpose of Study and the Aims in the Programmes of Study for Languages are still relevant and should be kept as a strategic commitment to languages within the curriculum and assessment review's aims of a broad and balanced curriculum. Amongst those who have agreed, some concern was raised regarding its over-ambitious nature and in parts unrealistic aims (e.g. 'great literature'). A stronger focus on culture and a more in-depth guidance on specifics (e.g. language knowledge lists) were suggested as ways of modifying the statement. Some would like to see a stronger message about the 'love, curiosity of language learning'. Amongst all groups of respondents, concerns were raised regarding the implementation of the aims set out in the Programmes of Study at trust, academy and/or school level.

The strategic commitment of a multilingual language policy approach is fully endorsed by the Association for Language Learning and its members and the place of languages in a broad and balanced curriculum.

Specific mentions of what works well included also the strategic commitment to languages through the accountability measure of EBacc and the associated Ofsted interpretation of a broad and balanced curriculum. Primary colleagues particularly highlighted the benefit of the statutory status of languages at Key stage 2. Secondary colleagues commented positively on the statutory

status of languages at Key stage 3. French German and Spanish are unique amongst GCSE subjects in having just had a review leading to a new GCSE and specification, so there is little

appetite for immediate change irrespective of what people may feel about it. Some respondents also identified these new GCSEs, its subject content, the new GCSE defined wordlists and the inclusion of culture as working well to support language learning and progression. A few commented that language teacher training at secondary level is rigorous. Those who commented on A-level identified the literary text and films as motivating, allowing learners to gain real insight into culture and political background of target language countries. The Independent Research Project has been identified as a good preparation for further study (see also response to question 51) and allows students to explore an area of their own personal interest, which contributes to motivation.

11. What aspects of the current a) curriculum, b) assessment system and c) qualification pathways should be targeted for improvements to better support and recognise educational progress for children and young people?

As alluded to in question 10, while there was overwhelming support for the Programmes of Study for Languages and the Purpose of Study and Aims, members raised concerns regarding the vagueness of expectations of what primary learners should achieve by the end of Year 6. This is also coupled with the lack of investment in sufficient and high-quality training of primary teachers for languages. The absence of subject enhancement courses in languages for primary teachers and a specialist language teacher ITE route that previously existed have been identified as significant barriers. Some argue that in the mid- to long-term plan primary teachers should be required to undertake a language qualification, similar to the situation in many European countries where a language qualification is a condition to passing one's teacher training degree/qualification (e.g. Hungary). The issue of inconsistent or 'patchy' implementation of primary languages has also been cited by secondary colleagues reporting challenges at transition to secondary schools due to a wide variety and quality of language provision across their various feeder schools. Transition at all levels has been identified as an ongoing issue. All these identified barriers are also clearly and regularly reported in the annual Language Trends survey commissioned by the British Council.

Not surprisingly, GCSE qualifications and severe grading (see also question 44) have been identified by a number of members as concerns. A number of members argue for removal of tiering; members' responses indicate that tiering is particularly demoralising for learners at foundation tier as there is a limit on their grades, but also recognise that it would be depressing for them to take a non-tiered paper where they would only be able to answer a few questions.

Many responses identify the problem of pupils' attitude towards language and their perception of difficulty as a learner (see also Taylor & Marsden, 2014). This impacts on continuation and retention. Lack of curriculum time, and therefore sufficient time to develop confident language learners leads to frustration, lack of success and culminates in them not choosing the subject beyond the statutory requirement.

Lack of funding for sixth form teaching has contributed to the continuous decline of A-level languages entrants (see also JCQ entry data for languages), as schools and colleges cannot afford to run subjects where there are small groups.

It is also worth noting that there is strong correlation between successful uptake of languages at GCSE and the commitment of the senior leadership team in the school, academy and/or trust to languages, linked to the ability profile of the school.

We would highlight the importance of supporting Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCL) (where the lessons may not form part of the formal school curriculum) as part of a diverse society

Many members support the call for alternative assessment routes alongside GCSE and A-level for languages, modelled on previous qualifications and accreditations schemes, such as the Language Ladder / Asset Languages, and an alignment of these and all languages qualifications to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (noting that this applies to all languages not just European).

The optionality of language learning at Key stage 4 is seen as a barrier. This does not mean a move towards GCSE for all, but languages for all with an alternative qualification available alongside GCSE (see also assessment and qualification questions).

Section 3: Social justice and inclusion Section 3

12. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation (class ceilings) for learners experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage?

The post Brexit arrangements have not made life easy for teachers who wish to expose their learners to a real experience of interacting with target language speakers in the countries themselves. Such experiences have had a direct impact on student outcomes as argued and demonstrated by the Association for Language Learning together with partner organisations when submitting evidence to the APPG Modern Languages, which led to the House of Lords debate on Educational Trips and Exchanges (https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2024-04-25/debates/1ABF39FF-E60D-4BEA-9B29-13418D9A0229/EducationalTripsAndExchanges). The British Council's annual Language Trends survey consistently reports a low level of international engagement; very few schools have an exchange programme in place, for example. As a result, most students are not accessing the benefits (e.g. Peters et al., 2019; Sundqvist, 2009) of extramural exposure. The value of exchanges, as stated by Viscount Stansgate during the debate, are "incalculable" and are not only pertinent for languages but also other subjects, e.g. music.

13. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways are there any barriers to improving attainment, progress, access or participation which may disproportionately impact pupils based on other protected characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity)?

ALL has found widespread support that a cultural context should be specified, that authentic materials should be required and that the themes should include culture. In the past, exam

questions and textbooks were not always sensitive to barriers which could arise in doing so, but Ofqual and the exam boards gave considerable thought and implemented a number of steps to ensure that the new GCSEs in French, German and Spanish were as accessible as possible and

wrote commentaries on the specifications and sample assessment materials so as to signpost these. These include decolonising the curriculum. This process is one which could be usefully adopted in other subjects.

Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCL) where the lessons may not form part of the formal school curriculum can feel disenfranchised by the current system.

14. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways are there any barriers in continuing to improve attainment, progress, access or participation for learners with SEND?

In a recent survey conducted by the Association for Language Learning, the majority of our members responding to the survey agreed that the current GCSE and A-level curriculum were designed for the more able linguists among our learners. There is particular concern that too large a group of learners enrolled in language programmes are not experiencing success in their language progression, which then is further impacted by unsuccessful outcomes, particularly at GCSE level. It is too early, though, to assess whether or not the new GCSE French, German and Spanish syllabus and examination have addressed some of the concerns.
Introducing dictation in the new GCSE and reading aloud can affect those with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties who nevertheless have good language skills. These chosen assessment tools, their reliability and validity have not been widely explored for the past 40+ years (see Koglbauer, 2022, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/09571736.2022.2045681?needAccess=true) and therefore there is insufficient evidence of their appropriateness.

15. In the current curriculum, assessment system and qualification pathways, are there any enablers that support attainment, progress, access or participation for the groups listed above?

ALL supports the requirement in the new GCSEs that where questions are designed to test comprehension of written and spoken texts in the assessed language, they will be constructed in English. Removing mixing skills in this way removes the "double penalty" which invalidates an assessment.

We commend the report entitled 'Qualifications in home languages: opportunities, barriers and policy implications' 92 Humphries, Carruthers & Henderson (2024) https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2023.22882, which outlines the issues and offers solutions.

Section 5: Curriculum and qualification content

In languages, greater flexibility is required in order to fulfil the ambition set out in the Programmes of Study, which aligns well to the ambition set out by the British Academy (2020) "Languages are strategically vital for the future of the UK. They are important for productivity, trade and business; literacy and skills; community and social cohesion; soft power; culture; diplomacy; defence and national security; public services; health and wellbeing; cognitive capacity; social mobility; and equality of opportunity. That ability to navigate between different languages and cultures is important for life and work inside the UK as well as outside it: 'proficiency in additional languages is a new kind of global literacy'."

To achieve this, languages need to be an integral feature across the curriculum, including vocational qualifications. This requires a greater focus on success and therefore the Association for Language Learning suggests to the Review Panel an in-depth exploration of criterion referenced assessment frameworks.
However, as referenced above, with GCSE French, German and Spanish unique in having just undergone major review, there is little appetite for further change

23. Are there particular changes that could be made to ensure the curriculum (including qualification content) is more diverse and representative of society?

Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out that children have the right to use their own language, including signed languages, even if it is different from the language most people in their country speak. Therefore, languages should not only be perceived at a pure "subject" level but as an underpinning feature of a school's inclusive values, ethos and curriculum.

By decolonising the curriculum in schools, a more inclusive, equitable, and reflective learning environment can be created that helps learners to broaden their perspectives, to engage with issues of representation, linguistic diversity, rights, power, equality and justice. It also encourages learners to develop a sense of belonging to what gives them their cultural identity. According to Jones and Richardson (2023), reporting on a decolonising the language curriculum project, the process requires shifting from Eurocentric to a multicentric approach and ensuring inclusive policy development across the school/academy or trust. They argue for a holistic approach, considering colonial histories and intersectionality with gender, race and other identities. Support for teachers and school leaders through frameworks and principles is crucial, and diverse pedagogies and assessments should be promoted. Their project emphasises the importance of individual and collaborative reflection, student voices and a nuanced, culturally sensitive approach to decolonisation.

This is also supported by the British Academy (2020) arguing "[…] those who speak languages other than English (or Welsh, Irish or Scottish Gaelic) at home – languages ranging from Urdu to Polish - often lack the opportunity to develop their skills in those languages, for example by acquiring literacy in them, and frequently feel their competence in these languages is not valued. Stronger recognition of the importance of multilingualism and the UK's linguistic diversity has the potential to be an asset for the UK. It would support social integration by acknowledging the

crucial role of language as part of an individual's social identity, and enhancing cohesion, openness and tolerance of others in the local community and beyond."

Members see exam boards, publishers and tech resource companies as key stakeholders in the diversification and decolonisation of the curriculum.

Members also call for alternative qualifications alongside the 'academically framed' GCSE and A-level examination that are geared towards the more able language learners.

24. To what extent does the current curriculum (including qualification content) support students to positively engage with, be knowledgeable about and respect others? Are there elements that could be improved?

Learning about the culture of others and their language is a powerful step towards understanding and respecting them. Karlik (2023) demonstrates in her exploration of how understanding cultural context and values can deepen language acquisition that language and culture are intertwined. She argues "that it's often impossible to fully understand one without also understanding the other. The way we communicate, the words and expressions we use, and even the nonverbal cues we give, are all influenced by the cultural context in which we live and the language we speak". Karlik's arguments for embedding culture in language curriculum align with our survey respondents' views and can be summarised as follows; engagement with culture a) provides context and meaning; b) increases motivation; c) builds cultural competence and cultural as well as intercultural awareness and d) enriches travel experiences. In preparation for the first PISA 2025 Feign Language Assessment, the OECD sets out three underpinning benefits of language learning for individuals and society, i.e. cognitive benefits, economic benefits and intercultural understanding. "Foreign Languages act as a bridge to other people, countries and culture and help promote respect for diversity and inclusion" (https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/foreign-language-learning.html)

25. In which ways does the current primary curriculum support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for life and further study and what could we change to better support this?

Learning about the culture of others and their language is good preparation for life and further study. See also response to question 24.

26. In which ways do the current secondary curriculum and qualification pathways support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work and what could we change to better support this?

A language can be a very helpful tool for future study, life and work and these reasons are promoted as the basis for learning a language, but when asked about the detail of the current qualifications the majority of respondents to our survey and engagement activities disagree that the current secondary curriculum contributes sufficiently towards the skills and knowledge development for future study, life and work. A minority of respondents argue that the focus on vocabulary and the defined vocabulary list seems to be a positive feature, others argue that the specifications and approach has shifted too far away from a communicative language learning approach. The majority of respondents argue for an alternative qualification as the GCSE is seen

as too 'academic'; it has to be acknowledged here that the new GCSE has only been introduced in September 2024 and therefore it is in its early implementation phase. A greater focus should be giving to a practical approach to linguistic skills, cultural awareness.

The optionality of language learning at Key stage 4 is seen as a barrier.

27. In which ways do the current qualification pathways and content at 16-19 support pupils to have the skills and knowledge they need for future study, life and work and what could we change to better support this?

A-level languages can provide an excellent basis for future study, life and work with the requirement to use the target language to study a variety of themes typically covered in non-language A levels. However, the emphasis on analysis rather than learning language per se can be off putting and can dissuade many who otherwise would benefit from this preparation.

Section 6: A broad and balanced curriculum

28. To what extent does the current primary curriculum support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

Respondents to our survey, overwhelmingly agree that languages should be an integral feature of the primary curriculum, but this requires strategic commitment and resource at national, regional and local level (Government, Authority/Trust, school/academy).
As previously mentioned, languages need to be conceptualised not just as a subject but integral to a school's ethos and culture. Any unconscious bias towards specific languages and cultures needs to be addressed, which is also supported by Cummins (2009) arguing that "active suppression of [learners'] language and culture has given way to benign neglect".
A common feature of schools that have an effective primary language provision is a common and shared understanding and strategic commitment to languages led and exemplified by the leadership team and the languages lead. Members raise concerns of the lack of investment and training in primary languages, which negatively impacts on learners' progression and impact. Many of those responding who teach in primary schools long for a clearer understanding of knowledge and skills expectations by the end of Key stage 2.
Whilst there is in principle support for a strategic commitment to languages at Key stage 1, members would like to see a more concerted effort in addressing the inconsistent experience at Key stage 2 first. Language awareness at primary has been shown to help in future language studies, irrespective of the choice of language, thereby dealing with some of the KS2/3 transition issues.

29. To what extent do the current secondary curriculum and qualifications pathways support pupils to study a broad and balanced curriculum? Should anything change to better support this?

Members agree that languages should be an integral feature in the secondary curriculum. A vast majority of members agrees that languages should be statutory at Key stage 3 and 4; however

not all learners should be entered for the GCSE but alternative qualifications (see previous responses and assessment questions).

Members would also like to see the exploration of a digital skills portfolio for languages.

30. To what extent do the current qualifications pathways at 16-19 support learners to study a broad curriculum which gives them the right knowledge and skills to progress? Should anything change to better support this?

As the major representative body for language teachers in England, we have been concerned that languages alongside arts have been marginalised and entries declined significantly following the 2003/4 reforms and then the decoupling of AS from A-level. This has led to a detrimental effect

on linguistic progression as well as progression to higher education and consequently impacts on future language teacher supply. We therefore recommend that students should continue to be encouraged to engage with languages beyond GCSE. A broad curriculum could facilitate a different approach to language education, by learners acquiring a language from the beginning (ab initio) as well as continuing engagement with languages previously studied at GCSE. This would also build on the current EBacc ambition for languages. We advise that Home, Heritage, and Community languages (HHCL) should be available as an option as part of a broader commitment to supporting the multiple languages spoken in the UK. In practical terms, this may need to be provided in a consortium approach and/or in partnership with HHCL Saturday schools. As previously mentioned, we strongly recommend that learners who take the vocational routes should also have the opportunity to develop linguistic competence in at least one other language than English. Assessment and grading should be aligned to the levels and competence descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages. The A-level should continue to align to the B2 requirements.

31. To what extent do the current curriculum (at primary and secondary) and qualifications pathways (at secondary and 16-19) ensure that pupils and learners are able to develop creative skills and have access to creative subjects?

The published analysis of curriculum subject trends over time has shown that there is a mixed picture regarding creative subjects, and that the numbers of those studying languages have remained static, whilst History and Geography have increased.

Section 7: Assessment and accountability

Primary and national curriculum assessments

35. Is the volume of statutory assessment at Key stages 1 and 2 right for the purposes set out above?

There is currently not an "expected standard" in Modern Languages. Based on our membership survey, there is a wide spread of variety regarding language provision in primary schools, which is also evident from the annual Language Trends survey. Not having a common understanding of

"expected standard" has a negative impact on commitment given to languages. Therefore, the Association for Language Learning, alongside other organisations, have taken part in DfE focus groups on expected standards for primary languages under the previous government. There is a wide-reaching support towards the development of criterion referenced qualifications, which would enable the progress pupils have made to be recognised.

Secondary assessment
The following applies to all the questions in the section:

French, German and Spanish are in the unique situation amongst GCSE subjects of having recently undergone a complete review with new specifications which have just been introduced for teaching to Year 10 in Sept 2024 and first examination in June 2026. Although there was much debate and controversy at the time, virtually everyone recognises that there is little appetite to re-open the debate, and instead people want to focus on making a success of the new GCSEs in French, German and Spanish, endeavouring to raise standards.

On the other hand, the GCSEs in other languages ranging from Italian and Chinese to Urdu and Arabic were not changed and there is considerable debate about their appropriateness for the spectrum of candidates ranging from ab initio through to those for whom it is their mother tongue. Languages are an area enabling us as a society to recognise and formally celebrate diversity with formal qualifications.

39. Is the volume of assessment required for GCSEs right for the purposes set out above? Are there any changes that could be made without having a negative impact on either pupils' learning or the wider education system?

Having a range of assessments for different aspects such as speaking, listening, reading and writing gives an opportunity for those who have strengths in some but not all of these areas to have their abilities recognised. Members particularly valued having speaking assessed as one of the few GCSE subjects in which this attribute counted towards the final grade.

40. What more can we do to ensure that:
   a) the assessment requirements for GCSEs capture and support the development of knowledge and skills of every young person; and
   b) young people's wellbeing is effectively considered when assessments are developed, giving pupils the best chance to show what they can do to support their progression?

Maintain the breadth of the assessments. See also response to Question 39.

41. Are there particular GCSE subjects where changes could be made to the qualification content and/or assessment that would be beneficial for pupils' learning?

Some members have expressed concern about the challenges which arise as a result of having tiering, whilst on the other hand there is a recognition that as with Maths and Sciences, the exam experience would be very depressing for Foundation students if it was a single exam which

contained many harder questions (which they would know they could not answer) needed to provide valid and reliable grading of the higher attaining students.

While we understand that GCSE has been classified ahead of the review as the "golden standard", we strongly encourage the review panel to consider additional approach to language assessment, i.e. a criterion referenced assessments/qualifications. Until its official withdrawal in 2012, the language community supported Asset Languages/Language Ladders, an accreditation scheme available in 25 languages from 2005 to 2012; we strongly recommend the review panel to consider such alternatives from Key stage 1 through to A-level. For more info see https://www.all-languages.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Briefing-note-re-Asset-Languages.pdf

42. Are there ways in which we could support improvement in pupil progress and outcomes at Key stage 3?

The development of criterion referenced qualifications would enable the recognition of progress pupils have made by the end of KS3 when around half will stop studying Modern Languages in school. This also applies to primary (see Q43) where pupils may be studying a multilingual approach or a different language from that studied at the secondary school onto which they progress.

This approach would be particularly helpful for Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCL) where the lessons may not form part of the formal school curriculum.

We would also commend the report entitled "Qualifications in home languages: opportunities, barriers and policy implications' Humphries, Carruthers & Henderson (2024) https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2023.2288292, which outlines the issues and offers solutions.

43. Are there ways in which we could support pupils who do not meet the expected standard at Key stage 2?

There is currently not an "expected standard" in Modern Languages. However, based on our membership survey, there is a wide spread of variety regarding language provision in primary schools, which is also evident from the annual Language Trends survey. Not having a common understanding of "expected standard" has a negative impact on commitment given to languages. Therefore, the Association for Language Learning, alongside other organisations, have taken part in DfE focus groups on expected standards for primary languages under the previous government. There is a wide-reaching support towards the development of criterion referenced qualifications, which would enable the progress pupils have made to be recognised.

Accountability

44. To what extent, and in what ways, does the accountability system influence curriculum and assessment decisions in schools and colleges?

The severe grading of GCSE French, German and Spanish relative to the other EBacc subjects is a longstanding historical anomaly going back to O-level. It means that pupils and their parents believe incorrectly that they are not as good at Modern Languages as other EBacc subjects, and can lead to incorrect judgements being formed by senior leaders and external bodies about the performance of Modern Languages teachers. Depending on the particular performance measure in use at any particular time, and its use by Ofsted, schools will respond accordingly, and it is possible to show a close connection between changes in performance / accountability measure and uptake in Modern Languages arising from the severe grading.

Languages are key part of a broad and balanced curriculum, especially as the country seeks to form closer links again with both EU and globally. It also highlights that there is value in learning another language and gaining a greater understanding of those from different cultures.

45. How well does the current accountability system support and recognise progress for all pupils and learners? What works well and what could be improved?

Learners classified as EAL are often able to demonstrate more progress than other students in languages, perhaps because they have already learnt at least one additional language and so are very open to language acquisition.

Whilst the EBacc ambition for languages has not been met, the EBacc measure and its application by Ofsted as part of an ambitious curriculum has positively contributed to the halt of the decline of language learning in schools at GCSE. It is essential that languages are an integral

part of a broad curriculum and that school leaders are held to account to adhere to the principles of the broad and inclusive curriculum.

46. Should there be any changes to the current accountability system in order to better support progress and incentivise inclusion for young people with SEND and/or from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds? If so, what should those changes be?

Ofqual and the exam boards gave considerable thought and implemented a number of steps to ensure that the new GCSEs in French, German and Spanish were as accessible as possible, and wrote commentaries on the specifications and sample assessment materials so as to signpost these. This process is one which could be usefully adopted in other subjects.

Section 8: Qualification pathways 16-19

47. To what extent does the range of programmes and qualifications on offer at each level meet the needs and aspirations of learners?

a.   **Level 3**
b.   **Level 2**
c.   **Level 1 and entry level**

Considering responses to our members' survey, the current range of programmes and qualifications on offer is insufficient. Many members involved in our engagement events and responding to the survey have agreed or strongly agreed that there should be alternative pathways and assessment models on a criterion referenced approach. Such an approach, e.g. Asset Language / Language Ladder, or aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (which applies to all languages, not just European), will help with assessing learning and progression from primary through to secondary. Framed in "can" statements, the focus is on what a learner can achieve and therefore, as evident through previous engagement with Asset Languages, learner motivation increases considerably. Recognising our increasingly diverse society, an inclusive approach that brings all languages (modern languages and home, heritage and community languages) under one umbrella would also contribute positively to an inclusive, international/global and culturally enhanced school or college ethos.

Some members support languages at Key stage 1, partly because of the inconsistent implementation at Key stage 2. Some also argue that the challenges (lack of social skills, motor skills, English language skills, etc.) faced by Key stage 1 teachers require a focus on addressing these alongside the literacy and numeracy curriculum in order to ensure a solid basis that all learners can build on. Inclusion of home, heritage and community languages should be carefully considered in fostering positive attitudes towards languages and cultural awareness.

48.   Are there particular changes that could be made to the following programmes and qualifications and/or their assessment that would be beneficial to learners:

a.   **AS/A level qualifications**
b.   **T Level and T Level Foundation Year programmes**
c.   **Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 3**
d.   **Other applied or vocational qualifications at level 2 and below**

Taking into account the societal and economical importance of languages, communication and language skills, our current uptake of A-level qualifications doesn't align with our country's ambition. We therefore, as also argued in our response to the Advanced British Standard consultation   (www.all-languages.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ALL_ABS_Consultation_March2024.pdf), welcome the expansion of broadening the curriculum at Key stage 5. The continues decline of uptake at Key stage 5 is partly linked with the decoupling of AS from A2, which hit languages and art-related subjects most significantly. As part of a broad 16-19 curriculum languages should be re-positioned as an

integral feature. We would encourage the inclusion of languages, linguistic competence and intercultural understanding into the core aims and designs of any reformed post 16-19 curriculum. Furthermore, we would encourage the Review Panel and the Government to explore the underpinning principles and approaches of the International Baccalaureate as we believe that this existing qualification meets the aims set out in this curriculum and assessment review. Alternatively, if A-level qualifications in all subjects are perceived as the "golden standard", there should be criterion referenced alternative qualification alongside A-levels. This would allow a greater number of A-level learners to acquire further or a higher level of language skills alongside their chosen A-level courses. In Higher Education, the success of the university-wide language programmes for all students from any discipline is a clear indication that different approaches of offering languages can increase take-up, engagement and progression (see also AULC-UCML Report 2022, https://aulc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/AULC-UCML-survey- report-2021-22.pdf).

A significant majority of members responding to the Association of Language Learning survey agreed or strongly agreed that languages should be integral to relevant vocational courses. For instance, two modern languages in addition to one's mother tongue are common features in hospitality qualifications and apprenticeship programmes in European countries. In Germany, one modern language to B1 or B2 is a compulsory feature in all vocational training courses (see for instance Kultusminister Konferenz 2020 (https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2020/2020_12_17-Fremdsprachenkompetenzen-Berufsschule.pdf).

49. How can we improve learners' understanding of how the different programmes and qualifications on offer will prepare them for university, employment (including apprenticeships) and/or further technical study?

A transformational change is required here. A systemic and collaborative approach involving a much wider range of stakeholders (learners, teachers, internal and external career advisors, colleges/university outreach bodies, Employer Representative Bodies, employers and Local Skills Improvement Plan leads, parents) is required. Alongside this, there needs to be a stronger commitment that the interplay of knowledge, skills and behaviours are essential for all roles. In other words, the constant polarisation of vocational versus academic subjects needs to be challenged.

51. Are there additional skills, subjects, or experiences that all learners should develop or study during 16-19 education, regardless of their chosen programmes and qualifications, to support them to be prepared for life and work?

Schooling, curriculum and assessment should prepare our school leavers for the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring; considering the current mega trends, including the technological advances and AI, our learners will need to be embrace lifelong learning and continuous (professional) development throughout their lives. Therefore, lifelong learning skills, such as creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, leadership, communication, collaboration, information management, adaptability, curiosity and reflective skills (see also Crockett, L., 2024, https://futurefocusedlearning.net/blog/learner-agency/the-most-beneficial-lifelong-learning-

skills-to-have-and-why) are paramount. This aligns also with the OECD Skills Report (2018, p.4), where "Judgment and Decision-Making Skills [as well as] Communication and Verbal Abilities that influence the acquisition and application of information in problem solving" are highlighted as skills in high demand. Language education and therefore the acquisition of languages and the development of one's language skills contributes to all of these lifelong learning and highly-in-demand skills.

Section 9: Other issues on which we would welcome views

Transitions

52. How can the curriculum, assessment and wraparound support better enable transitions between Key stages to ensure continuous learning and support attainment?

Transition has been a concern for language teachers for decades and continues to be a problematic and challenging area (see also Courtney, 2017, Collen, 2021, Koglbauer, 2022, British Council's annual Language Trends Surveys). Transition between Key stage 2 and Key stage 3 (primary and secondary schools) continues to be inconsistent with less than 50% of primary schools reporting that they have any language specific engagement with their secondary schools (see Languages Trends, 2024, p. 16). As part of the development of a Transition Toolkit for Languages, the Association for Language Learning delved into transition and identified the following shared concerns: i) Primary teachers worry about their work being wasted and want their pupils' language learning to be valued; ii) secondary teachers want to get transition right for progress and attainment, but are concerned because of the practical difficulties arising from a very varied experience at primary; iii) both groups care about their learners' future language education and smooth continuation of learning. (see also ALL, Transition Toolkit, 2016, https://allconnectblog.wordpress.com/2016/01/05/all-connect-ks2-3-transition-toolkit/).   As part of this project, the project team looked also at the learner perspective and identified that learners want secondary teachers to recognise their primary languages achievements, want this previous success and enjoyment of learning languages acknowledged. Building on this work, the Association for Language Learning has been working with ASCL and the British Council in developing a joint toolkit for school leaders, language leaders and language teachers (see ASCL Key stage 2/Key stage 3 French Transition Toolkit KS2-KS3-French-Transition-Toolkit.pdf).

This toolkit aims to help secondary languages departments build effectively on learners' existing knowledge by creating opportunities for learners to demonstrate their prior learning, ensuring continuous progress and maintained motivation. It also aims to define core language fundamentals (grammar, vocabulary, phonology) and cultural knowledge that Year 6 learners should have after four years of primary language learning, providing clear guidance for primary teachers. This closely aligns with respondents' views of your survey, where primary and secondary members suggest a clearer articulation of milestones that primary learners should achieve by Year 6 (see also previous suggestions on criterion referenced assessment, including Asset Languages/Language Ladder).

We at the Association for Language Learning argue that whole-school transition activities/programmes must include language specific aspects. We also feel that transition is an area that may need considerable exploration following the interim Curriculum and Assessment Report and would value a dialogue with the review panel.

Any proposed solution must not undermine the widely endorsed multilingual approach that has been set out in the National Curriculum.

Technology

53. How could technology be used to improve how we deliver the curriculum, assessment and qualifications in England?

For the purpose of this evidence call, the Association for Language Learning agrees with the ACTFL perspective (2024) that the use of technology is not a goal in and of itself; rather technology is one tool that supports language learners as they use the target language in culturally appropriate ways to accomplish authentic tasks. Further, all language learning opportunities whether facilitated through technology or in a classroom setting, should be standards-based, instructor-designed, learner-centred, and aimed at developing proficiency in the target language through interactive, meaningful, and cognitively engaging learning experiences. The following aspects are to be considered:

1. Inclusivity and Accessibility: Technology can play a significant role in making language learning more inclusive, offering personalised learning pathways and providing accessibility tools (e.g., text-to-speech, AI-powered subtitles) for diverse learners, including those with additional needs.

2. Global Connectivity: Technology facilitates intercultural understanding by enabling authentic communication opportunities with native speakers and peers worldwide.

3. Assessment Innovation: For assessments, technology allows for adaptive testing, enabling a more nuanced understanding of learners' proficiency levels. It also supports real-time feedback and peer collaboration, which are invaluable for language acquisition.

4. Teacher Workload: When thoughtfully implemented, technology can reduce teacher workload by automating repetitive tasks such as marking, while also providing insights through AI-driven analytics to inform teaching.

5. Professional Development: Technology empowers educators with access to professional development resources and communities, enabling them to stay updated on best practices and innovative tools for language teaching.

Further Views

54. Do you have any further views on anything else associated with the Curriculum and Assessment Review not covered in the questions throughout the call for evidence?

As a member organisation of language teachers and educators, we are grateful for the opportunity to engage in this review through this evidence response. The Association for Language Learning welcomes any further engagement with the Review Panel ahead of the interim report. We are more than willing to provide further evidence and engage in dialogue with the Review Panel members.