

UCET Special Interest Group Meets with APPG for Languages to Address Visa Barriers for International Teachers

The UCET Special Interest Group (SIG) for Supporting International Trainee Teachers, co-chaired by Juliette Claro, Lecturer in Education at St Mary's University, Twickenham, met with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Languages at the Houses of Parliament on Monday 27 April to highlight the growing challenges faced by international Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in securing visas to work in the UK.

The delegation included

- Tanya Riordan (Course Lead for PGCE MFL at the University of Portsmouth)
- Stephen Byrne (Headteacher at Gumley House School), and
- Jane Driver, (Principal at North Cambridge Academy and President Elect of the Association for Language Learning (ALL))

who brought their perspectives on the costs and administrative burden of visas when recruiting international teachers in shortage subjects such as MFL and Physics.

International Early Career Teachers and current trainee teachers from St Mary's University, presented a powerful and nuanced reality finding a job in English schools and staying in a school for their full induction period as visa holders. Representatives from national subject associations, including

- Chris Sheperd from the Institute of Physics and
- Rene Koglbauer- Franklin (Chair of ALL)

highlighted the importance of a joint approach to this issue.

The meeting was hosted and chaired by Darren Paffey, MP for Southampton, and Baroness Coussins from All Party Parliamentary Group for Languages.

The Department for Education, The British Council, The British Academy and representatives from the Spain Embassy supported the call for coherence in policies and for further discussion - including the Home Office - to address this important matter.

Discussions focused on the urgent recruitment and retention issues affecting international subject specialists, particularly Modern Foreign Languages and Physics. These two areas across the country face persistent shortages and recruitment comes mainly from international expertise. Attendees shared first-hand experiences of the visa barriers that prevent headteachers and trusts from recruiting international teachers, and talented trainee teachers and ECTs, from entering or remaining in the profession, despite their critical contribution to the education sector. The lack of coherence in immigration policies and recruitment targets not only invalidate the bursaries offered in shortage subjects when international trainees are not able to secure a job, but also affect the consistency and quality of teaching and learning for over half a million young people in the country who do not have subject experts in front of them at GCSE ([IoP, 2025](#))

The group put forward a series of recommendations aimed at removing unnecessary obstacles and ensuring that international teachers are supported throughout their training and early career. T

These included the creation of a three-year visa route to cover the full period of Initial Teacher Training and the two-year Early Career Framework; simplifying the process for schools through a centralised visa service at no cost to either the school or the candidate; and establishing greater coherence between Home Office and Department for Education policies to support the recruitment and retention of shortage-subject specialists. The group also called for the government to establish a cross-departmental taskforce to monitor and support international recruits, ensuring they can access appropriate guidance and secure teaching posts following their training.

Representatives from both Physics and MFL emphasised that a coherent, long-term strategy is essential, noting that a 10-year plan to recruit and retain the next generation of physics and languages teachers remains as important as ever. By bringing the voices from Physics and Languages together directly to Parliament, the group aims to ensure that the challenges facing international teachers are better understood and addressed at policy level, supporting a more sustainable and diverse teaching workforce for the future.

The UCET SIG represents 85 members across 42 Initial Teacher Education providers and subject associations across the country. The group is grateful for the debate and is looking forward to the proposal for further meetings with the Public Accounts Committee Chair and the Home Office.

As the domestic workforce remains fragmented in subjects like Physics and Languages, short-term and long-term strategies are essentials to ensure students in schools are taught by subject specialists to inspire young people through their passion and expertise in their subject. Support and integration of our international workforce in education remains essential.

Juliette Claro

Co-chair of the UCET SiG for supporting International Teachers in Education – Lecturer in Education, St Mary's University Twickenham.



Tanya Riordan – Course Lead for PGCE MFL – University of Portsmouth

Juliette Claro – Lecturer in Education St Mary’s University Twickenham – Co-chair of the UCET SIG for Supporting International Teachers in Education



Blanche Rallo – ECT Year 1 – Alumni St Mary’s University

Omoefe Igogori – PGCE student MFL – St Mary’s University

Sampson Obi – PGCE student Physics – St Mary’s University.