

UCML AGM

Friday, 14th July, 2023

UCML Report, Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Languages Trends 2023 report was launched by the British Council Northern Ireland at the MAC Belfast on Tuesday 13 June, bringing together the languages community in the region. The key findings of the report were presented to a large audience representing a broad range of stakeholders across sectors including schools, Higher Education, Initial Teacher Education, the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), and the Department of Education. Dr Ian Collen presented the key findings from the report on behalf of the authors. Headline statistics include the following:

- The decline in language learning has plateaued at post-primary, with Spanish now the most popular language at both A-level and GCSE
- Irish has replaced French as the second most popular language at A-level
- Language teaching in primary schools is recovering following the Covid-19 pandemic
- Most pupils do not see languages being part of their future career, with just 14.2 per cent of those surveyed expressing any likelihood of using languages in the future
- The gap in language uptake continues to widen between grammar schools and secondary schools
- Almost one in five (19%) of Year 9 pupils would like to learn Italian at school

As part of the launch a lively panel discussion took place. Chaired by Professor Janice Carruthers, this included contributions from language graduates working and using their language skills in a range of settings including business and education. Contributions from the floor were equally lively, highlighting the need for investment and curriculum development moving forward, especially in terms of improving methods of assessment and related grading, and provision in primary schools.

This is my final report representing Northern Ireland on the UCML Executive Committee. It has been a great honour and privilege for me to serve the languages community in Northern Ireland and the UK in this way. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at UCML for their constant support, especially Professor Claire Gorrara and Professor Emma Cayley.

Dr Sharon Jones UCML
NI Representative 10/07/23