Spring UCFL Executive Committee
Year Abroad SIG Report

Dr Claire Reid was appointed Chair of the Year Abroad SIG in January 2024 and met with Dr Jonathan Long (previous Chair) in February for a hand-over.
Unfortunately, due to personal and work-related issues, I was unable to organise a group meeting but have liaised with a number of members and potential new members on priority areas.

The consensus amongst HE colleagues involved in the Language year abroad is that the established mandatory year abroad as part of language degrees needs to be reconsidered in the current context. Issues arise with:

- **Visa requirements to European destinations**. As well as cost implications, these processes are putting students off and - in some cases - students are unable to secure suitable or timely visas
- **Funding**. Turing, as well as being a less generous scheme as Erasmus, is also not guaranteed from year to year, thus making planning difficult for language departments (as some institutions do not prioritise language students)
- **Wellbeing and diversity**. With an increased awareness of mental health issues, as well as acknowledging neurodiversity, institutions are finding it more and more difficult to ensure students going abroad are appropriately supported. Many students also opt out of going abroad as they are concerned about how they will cope.

In order to ensure that the study of languages does not create a two-tier system, with those who can afford to go abroad and those who cannot, the Year Abroad SIG will propose a review of current practices to create a new set of recommendations. This will be actioned via initial SIG discussions, followed by involvement of other parties to advise on potential solutions and recommendations.
It is anticipated that the initial meeting(s) will take place in June.