Employability Strategy

School of Languages and Cultures

We will:

1. **develop opportunities within the curriculum to enable students to use their skills in practical contexts**

By

- Employing the skills learnt in class in practical project work, such as translation projects carried out for local business by MA in Translations students or 2nd- and final-year BA in Modern Languages with Interpreting students visiting EU and crown court translation sessions
- Including a compulsory year abroad for third-year students on all language degree programmes, many of which entail students undertaking work placements for local, national or international companies based abroad in a variety of fields, including law, marketing, big business or NGOs
- Developing new teaching modules that look to build work placements or ‘real work’ projects into their classes or assessments, e.g., Le Français des affaires (currently being revised)
- Using teaching methods such as group work, group presentations and peer review in order to develop employment skills such as team work and organization skills, for example on modules such as FRE240 or HSS3000 at levels 2 & 3 respectively
- Establishing dissertation modules at UG and PG level that foreground time management and independent research skills, some of which may lead to professional Masters programmes, such as FRE315/16 Transcription/Translation/Subtitling as a way into the MA in Screen Translation
- Allowing Single Honours students in particular to use unrestricted credits outside their home department in order to take modules that relate directly to employability, such as USE201/301 Making Ideas Happen
- Enhancing students information literacy and library skills, specifically their referencing and dictionary skills via the Information Skills Resource developed in conjunction with library services

Success

- A growing portfolio of 15 languages taught across the School at all Levels, including languages little taught or unavailable elsewhere, such as Dutch, Czech, Irish and Luxembourgish, offered via the Languages for All programme across the Faculty and University
- BA in Modern Languages regularly recruiting over 40 students per year across its 11 constituent languages
2. **enable students to gain skills through undertaking study beyond their home departments and faculties, including work and study in international contexts**

By

- Facilitating ERASMUS exchanges with partner departments and Universities across Europe in the constituent languages of the School, most usually as part of their third year of study abroad; this is already a core part of our curriculum and often includes, as mentioned above, a variety of work experience opportunities
- Providing Institution-wide language programmes for students from STEM and other University departments outside the School and the Faculty and by promoting these as widely as possible through the Languages for All initiative
- Promoting Tandem language exchanges which draw on the knowledge and experience of visiting ERASMUS students
- Providing School-wide modules such as MDL104, MDL201 or MDL301, and making them available for students outside the School where appropriate

**Success**

- 37 students in 2011 taking MLT120 Intercultural Awareness with a language, offered across three languages
- 46 STEM student incorporating one of three languages delivered by the MLTC into their degree programmes in disciplines as diverse as Engineering, Animal and Plant Sciences and Chemistry
- A wide range of School-wide modules at all UG and PG levels, such as European Cinema, Sociolinguistics or MA in European Gender Studies which offer School-based expertise, linguistic or otherwise, to students outside the School
- Example of up to 60 students taking MDL103 European Cinema in first year, and a year-on-year increase in STEM students and self-funders enrolled on MLTC language courses

3. **support opportunities outside the curriculum for students to gain work experience and to participate in volunteering initiatives**

By

- Encouraging SLC students regularly to take part in the University’s Sheffield Volunteering programme, specifically teaching languages in school and after-school clubs, or acting as classroom assistants
- Supporting extra-curricular, often foreign-language ventures with the Showroom Cinema which, given the School’s strengths in Visual Cultures, allows students to gain work experience and outreach opportunities beyond the University
- Employing students from the School to participate in the region-wide Routes into Languages, visiting local schools to explain the benefits of language study for employability and cultural agility, talking about their own language-learning and year-abroad experiences, e.g., Germanic studies outreach to 55 Year-9s from local schools to explore German Christmas activities, or their ‘Austrian Day’ organized in April 2012 with local 6th-Formers
- Involving students heavily in SLC Open Days, constituting student panels and leading language taster sessions with applicants and their parents/friends
- Involving student in theatre and music outreach activities with the community both within Sheffield (e.g., Hispanic concert) or abroad (e.g., French theatre collaborations with French universities or community groups)
- Facilitating student-led volunteering activities, such as translation or language help with local refugee women’s groups
- Involving students in mentoring activities, such as the SALT scheme for mentors to first-year dual students

Success
- Students from all year groups participate in outreach or public engagement activities, (e.g., more than 30 students across the School are involved in Open Day activities), all of which afford valuable work experience to our students

4. **encourage and support students to take up opportunities to develop specific employment skills**

By
- Arranging careers meetings with members of the Careers Service across all levels of study
- Setting out a clear calendar of meetings with personal tutors across the School that involves an explicit and regular discussion of employability issues
- Organizing Careers talks by specific local or international bodies, such as the talk given in March 2011 by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s EU desk officer who explained EU recruitment systems and opportunities to 60 final-year and PG students from the School
- Organizing a Modern Languages Careers Fair in November 2011 which was sponsored by Bloomberg and had stalls from local, national and international organizations, such as the British Council or IBM, keen to recruit language graduates, with approx. 700 student visitors attending over one day
- Arranging for alumni to visit the University to discuss their career paths and introduce current students to their work experiences, e.g., freelance translators presenting their work experiences to MA in Translation students

Success
- An increased no. of Sheffield language graduates applying to EU and other international organizations (source: FCO rep, Delphine Galon)
- The very large no. of students attending both specific employability talks and last year’s Careers Fair

5. **provide an environment in which students can reflect on the competences they have acquired and the value of these attributes to employers**

By
- Instituting pilot schemes to map the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages onto our teaching and assessment activities in the School. This has so far been done for French, Dutch and Czech and funds are sought to roll the mapping out across the School’s languages, since the CEFR provides an explicit and useful guide to students’ acquired language competences at all levels and is widely recognized by GB and European employers
- Using native-speaker Lectors to oversee CV-writing and job application letter-writing exercises in their foreign languages, thereby allowing students to reflect on and present appropriately their skills to prospective overseas employers
• Using exposé and group presentations to develop our students’ self-awareness in communication and presentation skills before an audience of their peers
• Using oral classes and assessment as a basis for honing interview skills
• Enhancing students’ reflection on their own learning via learner blogs or reports, such as the new French Year Abroad assessment exercises, the ‘Journal de bord’ and ‘Rapport de séjour’ (FRE3904/5)
• Involving students in curriculum design and curriculum review, via staff/student committees, as in the Russian and Slavonic studies’ recent curriculum review, which allowed students to reflect on the language and research skills they were looking to gain from their courses and to increase the amount of enquiry-based learning carried out on them
• Putting on Dissertation/Thesis support modules at PGT/PGR level which oblige students to reflect meaningfully on their own research practices, and thus on the transferable skills acquired through these practices

Success
• Student Union’s Employability Award 2012 for Dr Amanda Crawley-Jackson (French), in large part for the curatorial, practical skills given to students on her FRE343 final-year module, Contemporary Visual Arts, as well as for involving students from all levels in art-based community outreach projects such as ‘PlastiCities’ and ‘Occursus’
• Germanic Studies recorded a score of 88% in the NSS for the degree of ‘advice and support’ provided to students in their studies

6. engage with alumni in order to draw on their experience and advice in promoting student employability

By
• Inviting alumni to contribute to departmental talks on their jobs, e.g., freelance translators, or having alumni participate in student fora at the Modern Languages Careers Fair
• Using impressive and varied alumni case studies on the School’s web pages and in its publicity materials
• Putting individual students in touch with alumni in certain specific fields, such as EU work, publishing or in certain NGOs

Success
• Over 100 students attended the alumni forum at the Modern Languages Careers Fair, and listened to 3 very distinctive and different career paths open to them
• Engaging with graduates from the School who now work in primary and secondary education to organize school visits, masterclasses and language events
• Unistats Overview for Sept 2011 shows that 95% of French graduates from 2010 were either ‘in employment or further study’, with similar figures of 90+% and 90% for Germanic Studies and Russian and Slavonic studies’ graduates of the same cohort

7. support students to undertake further academic study after they graduate in order to further enhance their skills

By
• Offering professionally oriented PG provision, especially through the MLTC’s MA in Applied Translation and MA in Screen Translation programmes
• Promoting various kinds of language-related PG provision to final-years across the School
• Involving students in the SURE scheme to give them a taste of research culture while still undergraduates

Success
• Student Union’s Undergraduate Experience Award 2012 to Dr Audrey Small (French) for her involvement of a third-year student on her research into West African publishing and archiving cultures via the SURE scheme, including a visit to source materials in Guinée
• Contributing to the provision of an increasing no. of cross-School and cross-Faculty MAs, such as the MA in European Gender Studies which runs out of the French and Germanic Studies departments
• 78% of Hispanic Studies students graduated with a 2.i or higher degree classification in 2011, preparing a good number of them for postgraduate study