

CILT, The National Centre for Languages

Qualification Strategy for Languages and Intercultural Skills, Action Plan

August 2009, Version 1.5

1.1 Background to the Action Plan for CILT, the National Centre for Languages

Languages and intercultural skills are essential skills in an increasingly global economy. *Taking Stock*, a study of employers UK wide, carried out by the CBI and Edexcel in 2008¹, reported that 48% of firms are currently recruiting some people specifically for their foreign language skills and 75% of senior executives value conversational ability in another language. In this same study, 4% of senior executives thought they had lost business as a result of inadequate foreign language skills with a further 26% admitting they did not know if opportunities had been missed. As well as having a strong commercial benefit, languages and intercultural skills are integral to the development of the private and public sector workforce.²

CILT's Action Plan for Languages and Intercultural Skills has been developed in response to demands of employers, providers and learners in terms of language and intercultural skills evidenced in employer engagement and research carried out since November 2007. It is intended to support the provision of flexible language and intercultural qualifications³ for use in all sectors of the UK workforce that can be contextualised and allow for progression and professional development.

CILT, the National Centre for Languages conducted two pieces of research with employers UK wide between November 2007 and August 2008 to assess skills supply and demand. As a result of this research, CILT developed a Qualification Strategy for Languages, Intercultural Skills, Interpreting and Translation to ensure there is a range of vocational qualifications and training that meet both employer and learner needs. CILT outlined three priorities for action as part of its Qualification Strategy:

- Ensure there is a range of qualifications available that meet employer and learner needs for languages and intercultural skills
- Promote awareness and understanding of how languages and intercultural skills can benefit UK and international business and social cohesion.
- Explore opportunities for vocational experience of languages and intercultural skills within Higher Education

This Action Plan addresses all three priorities of CILT's Qualification Strategy. It incorporates the range of qualifications available and how these qualifications meet a range of different needs across various contexts. It also features a number of actions that are not directly related to qualifications, but relate to training, professional development and progression across the range of sectors.

The Action Plan also aims to raise awareness with government policy makers of the specific needs of employers with regard to languages and intercultural skills. In addition, it will communicate employers' demands for language skills and intercultural competence to the current and future workforce.

The Action Plan is intended to be used by key stakeholders, including awarding organisations, awarding bodies and regulators in each of the UK nations. In addition, funding agencies and regional development agencies can utilise it in their own planning.

CILT's Action Plan is also intended to provide information, advice and guidance for:

- Government departments and non-departmental public bodies
- learning providers in 14-19 and post-19 phases

¹ http://www.cbi.org.uk/pdf/eduskills0408.pdf

² http://www.cilt.org.uk/qualifications/LMI_Languages_and_intercultural_skills.pdf

³ Language and intercultural skills qualifications also include all professional and vocational qualifications for the translation and interpreting professions

- individual learners in education and employment,
- employers and other key stakeholders, including other SSCs and SSBs, in the field of language and intercultural training and learning.

The Action Plan outlines CILT's response to its immediate priorities for the future of language and intercultural skills qualifications, training and development.

1.2 Priorities underpinning our Action Plan

- 1 Ensure there is a range of qualifications available that meet employer and learner needs for languages and intercultural skills
- 2 Promote awareness and understanding of how languages and intercultural skills can benefit UK and international business and social cohesion.
- 3 Explore opportunities for vocational experience of languages and intercultural skills within Further and Higher Education

Priority 1: Ensure there is a range of qualifications available that meet employer and learner needs for languages and intercultural skills

As languages are used across a wide range of sectors, at varying levels, research has shown that the key is to engage learners while meeting the needs of employers across these sectors. CILT needs to ensure that the qualifications available can be achieved flexibly and yet still match demand. The implementation of the Qualification and Credit Framework in England, Northern Ireland and Wales and the use of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework further enables the contextualisation of language qualifications and CILT must continue to work closely with stakeholders in other sectors to ensure that they are able to utilise the cross-sector National Occupational Standards in languages and intercultural skills. In addition to its cross-sector reach, CILT must also work closely with employers in the translation and interpreting sectors to maintain a fit-for-purpose range of specialist professional qualifications supported by National Occupational Standards

Priority 2: Promote awareness and understanding of how languages and intercultural skills can benefit UK and international business and foster social cohesion

There is a wide range of evidence that indicates how languages and intercultural skills benefit UK business, both on a national and international level. In addition, there is a similar body of evidence indicating the benefits of both to social and community cohesion within the UK. While CILT has always played a key role in coordinating this range of information, a primary objective of the Action Plan is to develop a coherent communications strategy to collate and disseminate this information to a diverse audience, from learners to government policy makers.

Priority 3: Explore opportunities for vocational experience of languages and intercultural skills within Further and Higher Education

Recent work carried out by CILT, the National Centre for Languages and a range of project partners has consistently indicated the concrete benefits for learners who participate in vocationally related programmes or non-accredited courses during their Further or Higher education studies. Employers consistently report that learners who undergo this type of experience are more work-ready. The Action Plan therefore aims to address this demand by working closely with Further and Higher Education institutions and with employers to increase the availability of these opportunities and ensure their relevance to a range of sectors.

2. Methodology

As part of the UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme, CILT carried out research into employers' skills needs across all sectors of UK industry. This research was used to develop a Qualification Strategy for Languages, Intercultural Skills, Translation and Interpreting during 2008. This Strategy outlined three priority areas that CILT needed to act on to respond to employer demands for language and intercultural skills.

The initial research was developed using secondary data identified by CILT and its regional partners, as well as primary data generated by online questionnaires, face to face consultations in the four UK nations and structured telephone interviews with employers across a range of sectors. The Qualification Strategy was distributed for consultation via email to employers, providers and key stakeholders in the four UK nations.

In parallel, CILT also developed the National Occupational Standards in Intercultural Working between January 2007 and July 2008. The first project phase included initial face-to-face consultation with employers, SSCs and SSBs and key providers of intercultural skills training. It also produced an up-to-date research overview of approaches and thinking on intercultural skills⁴. The second phase of the development produced and consulted UK wide on a full set of draft Standards from December 2007 to February 2008, using employer focus groups and an online questionnaire. A final draft of the Standards was consulted on in May 2008, via email consultation of all previous respondents and using expert one-to-one interviews. For the latter, the consultation targeted employers, key individuals and organisations across the four nations.

In order to establish a coherent action plan to respond to the priority areas outlined in its Qualification Strategy, CILT aimed to consolidate work that was already being carried out within the organisation with a wide range of stakeholders and build on that to ensure that all planned actions were a natural progression of the essential work, while adding considerable value and further developing areas of need. The Action Plan was created to achieve these aims.

Proposed outcomes and intended actions were then put out to consultation with a variety of stakeholders both via online and face-to-face consultations. CILT's existing fora for advice and discussion, including CILT's Employers' Advisory Group and Awarding Bodies Forum were used for face-to-face and group discussion of the proposed actions.

In addition, CILT distributed the draft of the Action Plan to key stakeholders, including other SSCs and SSBs, and employer networks in the UK nations for their feedback.

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⁴ http://www.cilt.org.uk/standards/intercultural.htm CILT Action Plan Version 1.5

3. Summary of outcomes

In producing this Action Plan, CILT has outlined the following non-qualification and qualification outcomes to achieve its priority aims.

3.1 Non-qualification outcomes

- 1. Clear progression routes within and across careers
- 2. Up-to-date, fit for purpose National Occupational Standards
- 3. Work with other sector bodies to develop qualifications based on the National Occupational Standards in languages and intercultural skills.
- 4. Vocational experience programmes in Further and Higher education
- 5. System for monitoring regional provision of qualifications and training
- 6. System to monitor trends and patterns in qualifications take-up following introduction of credit frameworks
- 7. Communication strategy to highlight the benefits of languages and intercultural skills to the UK workforce
- 8. Enhanced employer engagement programme

3.2 Qualification outcomes

CILT will work with Awarding Organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and Awarding Bodies in Scotland to create a range of qualifications for the QCF and SCQF. This range will incorporate existing qualifications as well as new entry level qualifications, VRQs, and professional qualifications based on National Occupational Standards to meet the skills and competences identified as a need in the evidence base for this plan.

- a. Diploma in Public Service Interpreting NVQ Level 4/QCF Level 6
- b. NVQs in Sign Language interpreting NVQ Level 4/QCF Level 6
- c. Diploma in Translation QCF Level 7
- d. Revised S/NVQ in languages for the QCF/SCQF NVQ Level 1-4
- e. NVQ Level 3-Level 4 in British Sign Language/Irish Sign Language
- f. S/NVQ for intercultural skills for the QCF/SCQF [title to be confirmed] Entry level-Level 4
- g. Units in intercultural working skills for import into other qualifications [titles to be confirmed] Entry level-Level 4
- h. VRQs for intercultural working skills [titles to be confirmed] Entry level-Level 7
- i. New VRQs and entry level qualifications in languages for QCF/SCQF, built to meet demand evidenced in Qualification Strategy Entry level-Level 3 [titles to be confirmed]
- j. Revised VRQs and entry level qualifications in languages for QCF/SCQF Entry level-Level 3 [titles to be confirmed]

Levels quoted as yet only apply to QCF and these qualifications would have to be credit rated for the SCQF and accredited in Scotland.

4. Partner engagement and working arrangements

CILT has a long-established strategy of working across many stakeholders to support the needs of a range of sectors for languages and, more recently, for intercultural skills. Language and intercultural skills are not confined to a small number of industry sectors and maintaining a multi-partner approach is essential to ensure support for the needs of the UK workforce.

CILT works with employers directly and with employer representative organisations across the UK.

In addition, CILT collaborates with other key stakeholders via the following groups (these groups are UK-wide unless otherwise specified):

- CILT UK CILT representative offices in the four UK nations
- Awarding bodies forum
- Diploma Development Partnership for the Diploma in Languages (England) representation from SSCs, HE, FE, schools, employers, CILT and the National Director for Languages
- Routes into Languages (England & Wales) Higher Education institutions across England and Wales
- Employers Advisory Group
- Regional Language Networks (England & Wales) offer language and intercultural support and consultancy to UK companies exporting or looking to open new markets, working in conjunction with Regional Development Agencies
- Language Professional Forum, CILT's forum for professional bodies and other representatives of language professionals in the UK
- National Language Standards review steering group including employers, training providers
- HE Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies Subject Centre
- Standards Setting Bodies Forum
- Alliance of Sector Skills Councils

These collaborations are ongoing and are viewed as essential mechanisms for feeding into our qualification strategy and Action Plan. Regular consultations will take place as part of the each group's existing forum to ensure that stakeholder views are included in future updates.

Due to the amount of qualifications development work being carried out over the course of the development and the implementation of the Action Plan, the decision was taken to form an internal Action Plan steering Group to represent key areas of work. Each individual on the Steering Group represents a stakeholder or partner group within CILT, the National Centre for Languages including Skills, Business and Adult Learning, Diploma Development Partnership for the Diploma in Languages and International Communication in England, Employer Engagement, Higher Education, Community Languages and Supplementary Schools, 14-19, and Translation and Interpreting professionals.

Expert groups and panels will be formed to discuss specific non-qualification and qualification outcomes in individual working strands. These expert groups will include awarding body representatives.

5. Risks and assumptions

5.1 UK Vocational Qualification Reform Policy - medium risk

Changes in Vocational Qualification Reform policy presents a medium risk threat to our Plan.

It has been assumed that the current policies for learning and skills will not change. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) will remain in place, all qualifications will migrate to the QCF or be credit rated for the SCQF and the current skills agenda will remain intact. It is also assumed that the 17 Diploma Lines of Learning will remain in place in education policy for England.

If these policies or relevant legislation were to change, this could have an impact on the work CILT has carried out with regard to qualifications development.

5.2 Implementation of Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) - medium risk

CILT is concerned about the potential proliferation of units on the QCF (and their subsequent credit rating for the SCQF) that relate to languages and intercultural skills without the support of CILT as the sector skills body. The detail of units will not be interrogated so other sector bodies could develop sector specific units that include elements of language and intercultural skills. In addition to the risk that these elements may not be adequately quality assured or based on the appropriate National Occupational Standards, this approach risks further duplication of language and intercultural skills related units rather than the rationalisation sought by the introduction of credit and qualification frameworks.

The addition of accredited bespoke employer qualifications, instead of the use of qualifications or units that can be contextualised, will further add to this potential duplication.

5.3 Funding – high risk

Continued changes in funding for post-16, FE and Adult education also pose a high risk threat to our Action Plans for future years.

The differences in funding policies between the four UK nations add to this risk.

Changes in funding priorities are already posing a threat and a barrier to learning e.g. in England, removal of funding for adult education and innovations like Train to Gain.

CILT anticipates they will continue to do so unless priorities change.

Funded qualifications such as the Diploma in England are not available to learners post-19, meaning they are being prevented from taking these relevant work-related qualifications.

6. Monitoring arrangements

The Action Plan will undergo periodic internal review by the internal Action Plan steering group, incorporating representatives from the Senior Leadership, 14-19 and Skills, Business and Adult Learning teams at CILT, the National Centre for Languages, overseen by its Chief Executive. This review will be conducted as part of the organisation's business planning process.

CILT will continue to link with the full range of stakeholders that contributed both to the development of the Qualification Strategy and the resulting Action Plan via our existing Advisory Groups and forums to review progress on its Actions. CILT will use its communication mechanisms, including publications and ezines, to consult on any proposed updates or amendments to the Plan.

While the Action Plan is scheduled to be updated formally on an annual basis, CILT will be receptive to interim feedback on national, regional or local developments that may have an impact and consequently require extraordinary update and review of the Action Plan.

PART B

1. List of non-qualification outcomes.

Outcome	Actions	Partner(s)	Scheduled for completion	Status of Action	Stakeholder organisations and nations
Develop clear progression routes within and across careers	Credit and level units and qualifications based on our National Occupational Standards for the new credit and qualifications frameworks across the UK Work with awarding bodies to populate the credit and qualification frameworks with a range of units and qualifications that meet employer and learner needs across a variety of contexts, and ensure that appropriate provision is credit rated.	All language awarding bodies and organisations Ofqual DCELLS SQA Accreditation	September 2010	Initial discussions with AOs have taken place. Programme of work to be finalised with AOs and ABs during summer 2009, to coincide with the programme of work on NOS review	SSCs/SSBs Awarding organisations (AOs), Awarding bodies (ABs) Ofqual (England and Northern Ireland) SQA Accreditation DELLS All UK nations
Maintain up-to-date, fit for purpose National Occupational Standards	Carry out review of National Language Standards Carry out incremental review of National Occupational Standards for Interpreting to include progression routes Carry out feasibility study for new NOS in functions and occupations highlighted in the occupational and functional map	BELB CILT UK Heriot-Watt University Professional Bodies IoLET Signature OCNW NOCN	March 2010 March 2010 December 2010	In progress and on track Scheduled to start July 09	AOs ABs Learning providers SSCs/SSBs CILT Employers Advisory Group All UK nations
Work with other sector bodies to develop qualifications based on the National Occupational Standards in languages and intercultural skills.	- Provide tailored advice to other SSCs and SSBs in how to use and benefit from NOS in languages and intercultural skills - Work with other sector bodies to develop units, qualifications and rules of combination (where relevant) that use languages and intercultural skills to enhance learning outcomes e.g. customer service qualifications for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games to include units on intercultural skills	Awarding Bodies Awarding organisations RLN NW RLN London Institute of Customer Service Other partners to be confirmed	Ongoing December 2010	Initial contact has been made with several interested SSCs, SBs and SSBs. Consultation on qualification development with awarding organisations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and awarding bodies in Scotland is underway. Project with RLN London and ICS is in the initial phases. Other interested potential partners to contact CILT	SSCs/SSBs AOs ABs All UK nations

Build on vocational experience programmes in schools, Further and Higher education	Work with Diploma consortia across England to support inclusion of languages in Additional and Specialised Learning	Awarding organisations	September 2011	Achieved in part. Some consortia are offering languages in A/SL already for 2009 intake	Diploma Consortia SSC/SSBs England only
Tilgiloi caacattoii	Work with Diploma Development Partnership to support language and intercultural specific work experience in the Diploma in Languages and International Communication	Languages and International Communication DDP	September 2011	Work scheduled to start in 2010	Diploma Development Partnership SSC/SSBs England only
	Work with National Network for Translation to enhance the profile of the Graduate Placement Scheme	Salford, Aston, Bath, Heriot-Watt, Portsmouth, Westminster universities ATC ITI	June 2010	Achieved in part. Website under construction and scheme is being marketed to employers	National Network for Translation Professional Bodies England, Scotland
	Work with Further Education bodies and institutions across the UK to ensure qualifications on the credit and qualification frameworks facilitate flexible vocational learning	FE institutions Funding bodies Awarding organisation and awarding bodies	September 2010	Not yet started	All UK nations
	Work with regional partners to deliver Business Language Champions scheme	Regional Language Networks	June 2011	Project in start-up phase	England, Wales
Monitor regional provision	Map languages taught across the UK within schools, colleges, adult education centres and higher education institutions	RLN Y& H BELB (NI) LLAS CILT UK	December 2009	Achieved in part. An initial map has been drawn up and needs to be updated for 2009	Schools, FE and HE institutions Language learners All UK nations
Monitor trends in qualifications take-up following use of credit frameworks (QCF & SCQF)	Create short questionnaire to be distributed to Awarding Organisations and Bodies every 6 months to track take-up	Awarding Organisations Awarding Bodies	Ongoing	Questionnaire to be drafted in conjunction with AOs and ABs to ensure efficiency of reporting	Awarding Organisations Awarding Bodies All UK nations

Develop a communication strategy to promote the benefits of languages and intercultural skills to the UK workforce	Develop a communication strategy tailored to specific audiences of employers, government bodies and influencers Promote the benefits of languages and intercultural skills to the UK economy to government by identifying and disseminating case studies of how using staff with languages and intercultural skills has benefited individual businesses. Engage directly with employers to ascertain the range of languages required by their organisations Develop an analytical document highlighting the gaps in supply and demand between languages offered in schools/colleges/HEIs and languages required in the workplace. Work with a range of stakeholders to create a programme of regional activities to develop the language and intercultural skills legacy of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the 2014 Commonwealth Games	Regional Language Networks UKTI NI Languages Strategy Group Heriot-Watt University CILT UK CILT Employers' Advisory Group	December 2009	Initial drafts are being prepared and case studies are being identified.	Ofqual (England and Northern Ireland) SQA Accreditation DELLS Government bodies and departments SSCs/SSBs Regional Development agencies Funding agencies All UK nations
Enhanced employer engagement	Research into existing levels of employer engagement in England Identify and disseminate case studies of learners using languages and intercultural skills at work across a range of contexts in the four UK nations	BITC IEBE Belfast Met BELB Regional Language Networks CILT Cymru Scottish CILT	November 2009 Ongoing	Partners now conducting research (England only). In England, case studies are to be identified as a result of the research. New templates to be created for case studies.	Ofqual (England and Northern Ireland) SQA Accreditation DELLS Government bodies and departments SSCs/SSBs