

PE1395/A

Response from the University of Glasgow to PE 1395

**Scottish Funding Council
University of Glasgow**

- What are your views on the issues raised in the petition?

Preamble: The committee should be aware that the University of Glasgow contains at least two units that conduct academic activity in areas covered by the petition:

1. Centre for Central and East European Studies (CEES): primarily area based studies
2. School of Modern Languages and Cultures (SMLC): Primarily French, Hispanic, German, Italian and Slavonic languages and related cultures

The major issues raised in the petition are:

1. **Support for area studies and languages:** The petitioners claim that the Higher Education Funding Council for England allocates support to these areas and that Scotland should do likewise. In fact, the Centre for Russian, Central and East European Studies (CRCEES) (an Area Studies priority), for which Glasgow forms the hub through its Central and East European Studies Centre received support through its 2006-11 funding cycle from SFC as well as HEFCE (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/centres/crcees/>). That support has ended in 2011, and HEFCE are not renewing their support for CRCEES, although there is a small sum of money being made available through a UK wide bidding process from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in 2012-13. Some Language Priority funding has also been allocated through the AHRC for the AHRC's Block Grant Partnership 2 scheme for PhD study (expressions of interest close on 29 February 2012). Both these sources of continuing funding are UK wide, not England-specific; and neither support academic staff posts. In addition, the Economic and Social Science Research Council (again a UK wide funder) is supporting some PhD studentships which will require some language teaching, and the capacity exists to meet this requirement.

During the period of the 2006-11 CRCEES grant, the School of Modern Languages and Cultures supplied specialist teaching to students supported through the CRCEES grant. This funding-amounting to just under £80 000 annually- ended in summer 2011.

CEES (the hub Centre for the expired CRCEES grant) will receive some ERASMUS MUNDUS funding (from the EU) from 2012-17 to support an International Master's degree which will require some language teaching support. The School of Modern Languages (SMLC) will provide this, though it

will be on a much reduced basis from the HEFCE centre support in 2006-11. SMLC will nonetheless continue to offer Russian, Czech and Polish specialist support teaching funded by ERASMUS MUNDUS in CEES.

From the above it should be clear that funded support for area studies and minority languages is diminishing in England, and that the previous cycle (2006-11) was supported from Scotland. Limited new funding from will be available UK wide to centres of research excellence in modern languages, while CEES at Glasgow has also secured EU funding. Student demand for languages such as Czech, Polish and Russian-important as they are- is likely to be limited in the near future, so specialist external support of this kind remains important.

2. **The Threat of Cuts:** The University of Glasgow is committed to supporting a wide range of modern languages and is not withdrawing from any. Such cost reduction as has taken place across the University has been on a voluntary basis; no staff in the Slavonic area have been made redundant. SMLC is shortly planning to make two Modern Languages appointments, the Marshall Chair in French and a Lecturer in Translation Studies. We have made transitional arrangements for staff who were supported in the past by HEFCE/SFC funding, in the expectation that there may be some work for them supported by ERASMUS MUNDUS from 2012. Though we accept this funding will be at a lower level than in 2006-11, we have avoided any redundancies through the use of core and endowment funds. Additional specialist support from SFC would of course be very welcome.

In June 2011 the University Court confirmed that the University would withdraw from no languages, but did recommend the suspension of entry to the non-language based Slavonic Studies degree to allow staff in Slavonic within SMLC to continue to support specialist language teaching for CEES students on a reduced future resource base. No staff have lost their jobs as a result of this decision. In June 2011, following the Court decision, a meeting of SMLC clearly stated that the University should make appointments in French a priority, and this is being reflected in appointments being made in 2011-12.

An earlier University review of Modern Languages in 2009, recommended the withdrawal from Czech and Polish Honours to focus on specialist postgraduate and more basic language teaching. Advised by Professor Steve Parker, Head of the School of Modern Languages at Manchester University (which includes the best research in Slavonic Studies in the UK), the Review was welcomed by the Slavonic area in SMLC, who wrote to the then Dean in January 2010 to 'welcome and heartily support the review recommendations', although expressing reservations about the withdrawal of Czech and Polish Honours. However, with only 1-4 students in these classes on average over a 5-year period, Professor Parker and the review team were strongly of the opinion that modern language teaching

elsewhere was under undue pressure unless staff time in Slavonic were allocated to support a clearer division of specialist language teaching and more general teaching duties. Honours in Russian were unaffected, as the course was much better subscribed. The School of Modern Languages as a whole did not object to the review findings.

Summary

- Support for minority languages/area studies from England has diminished, and the continuing support of whose allocation we are aware is open to the whole of the UK and supported on a UK-wide basis
- When HEFCE offered such support in 2006-11, SFC also offered it
- Glasgow is not cutting or withdrawing from Modern Languages, but is on the contrary offering transitional support in anticipation of ERASMUS MUNDUS funding for minority languages at a reduced level from 2012-17.