

Cardiff University- Modern Languages

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 22 September 2025
Petitions Committee | 22 Medi 2025

Reference: RS25/11930/4

Introduction

Petition Number: P-06-1517

Petition title: Help Cardiff University to keep their Modern Languages degree courses

Text of petition:

Cardiff University's Executive Board proposes to cut all Modern Languages degrees. Losing Modern Language provision at Cardiff will severely impact student recruitment, student life and degree possibilities, and ultimately will damage the University's reputation and international standing. It will also damage language learning in Wales, and any opportunity for Welsh people to study languages degrees in their capital city.

The Welsh government says: 'Our vision is that Wales becomes a truly multilingual nation. It is a Programme for Government commitment to 'expand the teaching of modern foreign languages in our schools'. We want to increase the number of learners studying languages, whatever their background or needs.

'Wales is a confident, forward-looking nation, and we will support all our learners to be citizens of Wales and the world. We want all our learners to reach their full potential and experience the many benefits of learning international languages,



including broadening their horizons by learning about other people and cultures and equipping them with the language skills to compete in the global economy.'

Global Futures: A plan to improve and promote international languages in Wales 2022 to

2025 <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-11/atish19152doc5a.pdf>

Please uphold this, and refuse to lose Modern Language degree programmes from our capital city.

The text provided above is submitted by the petitioner. The petitions team make every effort to ensure it preserves their authentic voice. This text has not been verified for accuracy, or errors, and may contain unverified opinions or assertions.

Mae'r testun uchod yn cael ei gyflwyno gan y deisebydd. Mae'r tîm deisebau yn gwneud pob ymdrech i sicrhau ei fod yn cadw ei lais dilys. Nid yw'r testun hwn wedi'i wirio am gywirdeb, neu wallau, a gall gynnwys barn neu honiadau heb eu gwirio.

1. Background

1.1. Update

Since this petition (P-06-1517) was opened, Cardiff University has announced the intention to retain modern languages in a new School of Global Humanities albeit with a smaller cohort and a revised offer of languages.

This briefing will cover why modern languages was proposed to be discontinued by Cardiff University and how the current decision to retain modern languages has developed.

1.2. The consultation

On 28 January 2025, Cardiff University launched an official consultation on “proposed changes designed to realise its ambitions and secure the University’s long-term future”, entitled ‘[Our Academic Future](#)’. This consultation included a proposal to cease subjects and programmes in modern languages and translation.

As part of the Children, Young People and Education Committee’s (CYPE) short piece of work exploring the challenges facing the higher education sector, the Chair wrote to all Welsh Universities, [the letters can be found here](#). Cardiff University’s [written response](#) to this letter outlined the proposal to discontinue modern languages provision was due to ‘a significant and sustained drop in student demand’.

1.3. Response to announcement and decision to retain modern languages

There was a strong response to Cardiff University’s ‘Our Academic Future’ consultation regarding discontinuing modern languages from a range of stakeholders. This included the [University Council for Languages](#) and the University and College Union Cardiff which is associated with a [website campaigning](#) to save the teaching of modern languages at Cardiff University.

The [University Council for Languages](#)’ concerns with Cardiff University’s proposal included the loss of some modern language provision in Wales. In addition, there were concerns that the proposal was at odds with the Welsh Government’s Programme for Government commitment to modern foreign languages, its investment in the Global Futures strategy for international languages and its International Strategy pledge to support the language skills of young people as part of its global responsibility.

On 27 May 2025 Cardiff University announced that the University Executive Board approved an [alternative proposal](#) for the School of Global Humanities as part of the 'Our Academic Future' process.

This alternative proposal outlined Cardiff University "will continue to offer modern languages and music research and education at Cardiff, albeit with revised structures and with a smaller staff base, based within a new School of Global Humanities". This included continuing to offer modern languages programmes primarily in French, Spanish, Mandarin and Japanese.

This alternative proposal was included within a presentation of the Our Academic Future business case presented to the University Council on 17 June 2025 for approval. On 18 June 2025, [a letter to students](#) confirmed the University Council approved the business case.

2. Welsh Government action

In Welsh Government's response to this petition, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Vicky Howells MS, has reiterated the position that it would not be appropriate for Welsh Ministers to intervene in such matters given Welsh universities are autonomous institutions responsible for their own academic affairs, including course delivery and provision.

While not intervening directly with universities decisions regarding course delivery and provision, the Minister stated she has been engaged in dialogue with the higher education sector and has met with the Vice Chancellor of every Welsh university as well as representatives of unions.

Further, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Vicky Howells MS, recognised Cardiff University revised its restructuring proposal which now included retaining modern foreign languages at a reduced and rationalised scale (where Portuguese, German and Italian will be discontinued).

3. Welsh Parliament action

The Children, Young People and Education Committee are conducting [a short piece of work](#) looking at the challenges facing Welsh Universities including the proposed changes at Cardiff University.

On 12 June 2025 Vice-Chancellor Wendy Lerner [attended Committee to give evidence](#) alongside Cardiff University's Chair of Council, Patrick Younge. During

this evidence session, the Committee heard Cardiff University 'plan to retain modern languages'.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.