Response to student consultation on the content of the new Languages and Applied Linguistics subject site

Summary
This is a response to the consultation on concurrent study which took place between Friday 8th December and Tuesday 19th December 2017 on the Languages and Applied Linguistics Board of Studies forum. The summary of student feedback is at https://learn1.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/discuss.php?d=90319

Students were asked to provide feedback and comment on what they would like to see and have access to on the new school subject site, which is set to replace the Qualifications online website in spring 2018. Students were asked what they would find useful, helpful and interesting both during their studies and between modules which could be included in this subject-wide site. Students were also asked what would help the site become more of a community hub. Students participating were studying primarily towards the Q30 BA (Hons) Language Studies and the F79 MA Translation, but also there was representation from students studying Languages and Applied Linguistics modules as part of other qualifications including the BA (Hons) English language and literature.

Key messages from students included strong support for free material to prepare for the next level, including links to free online study material such as OpenLearn and FutureLearn, as well as increased opportunities for speaking practice for modern languages.

Initial meetings regarding the layout and content of the new subject site considered the suggestions received through this forum and many were incorporated into the build. The site is under constant review a second substantial phase of development of the site is set is planned to add further information particularly around career and Personal Development Planning (PDP).

Full response

Question 1: What would you find valuable on a Languages and Applied Linguistics subject site DURING module study?

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<th>You said</th>
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<td><strong>You want increased opportunities for speaking practice:</strong></td>
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<td>• You suggested extra tutorials/more tutorial time, Skype sessions, revision sessions, and extra small-scale tutorials to facilitate speaking practice and grammar practice. Recorded tutorials, online tutorials not limited to cluster, and option of daytime tutorials.</td>
<td>• We are investigating ways to increase student speaking practice. As part of new module production there will be more collaborative activities to encourage students to communicate with each other in the target language.</td>
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<td>• You suggested twinning with other European institutions and access to/exchange with native speakers of target language (the Tandem MOOC organised by a Spanish university</td>
<td>• Students are able to meet in module online rooms without tutors to practice their language speaking, and guidance on ‘Practising with other students in a self-help group’ is available on the Languages and Applied Linguistics subject site within the ‘Connect’ section, and advertised on all module websites in the ‘Resources’ tab of your module website.</td>
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<td>• A recording of each learning event/tutorial is being made available.</td>
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was mentioned as facilitating this within a relatively monitored environment).
- It would help being able to be put in touch with native speakers to help us practice, particularly speaking or links to specific sites where you can find language exchange partners.
- Occasional large f2f events

### You want more technical support:
- You said more technical help with the audio tools would be helpful and around submitting TMAs and saving files using our software.

### You would like to have quick access to additional resources to support your language learning, including:
- Language study tips, tips for assignments and essay writing skills
- Recommended websites, apps, podcasts and further reading
- Sample essays
- Academic blog/round up of recent research (and possibility of interaction)
- Access to films in relevant language
- Quick optional activities, online quizzes and tests – including graded speaking practice

### You would like information about future modules/qualifications
- You would like information on the choice of future modules, and towards the end of the module it would be good to raise the profile of 'next steps' through highlighting the modules that could be taken next.

### We did:
- All Applied Linguistics and English language (ALEL) modules have face to face events, and these are combined where practical. For example LB170 *Communication skills for business and management* holds 2 day schools.
- We are investigating the possibility of pairing Level 3 with Level 1 students for general support and additional practice activities.

- The subject site ‘Skills’ section contains more and updated information on submitting assignments and various academic and language specific skills, as well as links to various computing guides for help.
- A technical support forum moderated by OU Computing Helpdesk staff continues to be available for students to can raise any technical or IT based queries not covered elsewhere.

- Within the subject site ‘Discover’ section there are areas for each of our modern languages within which there are some suggestions for websites you may be interested in, including TV and radio sites, blogs and newsfeeds from leading foreign newspapers.
- There are also links to relevant, free online materials such as OpenLearn.
- Some module websites offer links to materials suited to that specific level of language learning, for example L112 offers a list of French films.
- The ongoing development of the subject site will take into account additional resources such as podcasts, suggestions for further reading, list of recommended films. However, we cannot provide sample essays.

- The subject site contains a ‘Plan’ section with information and advice to help with PDP and a substantial section on ‘Choosing your next module’.
- Within this, there are presentations and videos for both our undergraduate and postgraduate provision.
- A change made for the subject site is the consolidation of module choice forums in one place so you can ask questions and find information about all of our modules and qualifications by asking the module teams directly – previously this was contained within module websites and are now all found within the ‘Connect’ section.
- We are always looking to develop the information available within this section.

**Question 2:** What would you find valuable on a Languages and Applied Linguistics subject site BETWEEN your study of modules?

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You want free material to prepare for the next level, including:

- Links to free online study material such as OpenLearn and FutureLearn (and some confirmation that looking at this had been useful).
- One student also suggested a thread (or one for each language) for students to share links with one another at the top of the Languages community forum.
- Recommended and links to (up-to-date) further reading, websites, apps, movies, social media, podcasts, films etc.
- Opportunity to talk to students and staff at next level
- Guidance about progression, especially in languages only offered at Beginners/Intermediate Level at OU
- Forum to share tips

The German MOOCs (at Post-beginners and Intermediate levels) are currently running for the second time, and the Spanish and Italian MOOCs are currently running for the fourth time. These are all linked from the ‘Discover’ section.

- OpenLearn materials are linked to in the subject site ‘Discover’ section within each language.
- Students are already able to share useful links with each other on module websites. There also a general forum for students on subject site. The addition of Language-specific ones is being considered.
- Examples of work in place to support progression include L112 Language Studies 1: French have developed transition materials for L192 Beginners French students to complete before they start L112. Materials are available on the module websites.
- A new addition to the subject site is a forum specifically for new students to share their concerns and meet each other. Both this and the General forum are moderated by academic staff, and are located within the ‘Connect’ section.
- We are looking at producing some audio or video recordings from current students and staff about studying at the next level.
- Relevant tops or items of interest posted on the subject site going forward will be flagged via Module websites.

Some of you would be willing to pay for additional materials:

- Paid for intensive 'short' standalone courses in different languages (i.e. languages not currently offered as modules by the OU, e.g. Russian, BSL).
- Paid for intensive skills courses e.g. similar to those the Goethe Institut in London run during the summer. If the OU were to offer some sort of intensive course, not only would it keep up language skills, it would be at the right level and would also be tailored to OU requirements.

- A second Student Consultative Forum in 2017-18 focused further on this question on free and paid for materials including content and maxim prices, and results will be available in due course.
- The School is currently investigating possibilities to offer non-accredited short courses and transition courses for students to use during the summer in between modules however we are unlikely to develop new languages at this stage

You want information on careers/what to do next:

- Short courses that relate to careers in the language field - e.g. intro to marketing, tourism, heritage but with emphasis on using languages
- Careers information that is not exclusively related to teaching languages would be greatly appreciated
- After a module, students could be pointed in the right direction of how

- The first launch of the subject site contains some information on PDP, advice on careers using languages and applied linguistics as well as links to the OU Careers and Employability Service (CES).
- This ‘Succeed’ section is being further developed in collaboration with the CES during the next academic year.
- Information on moving on to Post graduate study is also available in this section.
Question 3: What do you expect from an online Languages and Applied Linguistics community?

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<td>Ideas to encourage a sense of community online:</td>
<td>• Languages module teams offer the equivalent of the Student Hub event via induction live sessions and induction materials, which is available for all level 1 students via their module website.</td>
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<td>• Offering (languages) tutorials to be organised by confidence/ability at speaking target language.</td>
<td>• Induction takes place during the 3 week period prior to module start. These give students the opportunity to ‘meet’ with module teams and tutors prior to module start. The opportunity to contact module teams is available through module-wide student forums.</td>
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<td>• Self-help groups for peer support</td>
<td>• All French and Spanish module wide forums are moderated by module teams.</td>
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<td>• Guest lecturers, particularly when preparing for assessments.</td>
<td>• For the time being, module-wide student forums can be used to share good practice and success stories. We are investigating the possibility to use a different space.</td>
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<td>• Engagement by and visibility of central staff for interaction with students i.e. through forums or maybe online events like those run by the Student Hub team.</td>
<td>• Screencasts have been produced by module teams for a number of ALEL modules, and are being developed for the new level 2 modules in French, Spanish and German.</td>
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<td>• More news items and events</td>
<td>• The MA in Translation has regular guest lecturers, and the team are looking into offering guest lectures on the Languages and Linguistics subject site.</td>
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<td>• Success stories of students to help motivate others</td>
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Question 4: If you are not registered on a LAL qualification, would you use our subject site?

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<td>• Those students studying a language or linguistics module as part of another qualification i.e. Humanities said it would find being it useful to have a link to this qualification as well as their own.</td>
<td>• Within ALEL module websites there is a link to both the Languages &amp; Applied linguistics and the Arts &amp; Humanities subject sites.</td>
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<td>• For there to be more emphasis on the interconnected nature of university study across faculty boundaries.</td>
<td>• We are looking at arranging with our colleagues in Arts and humanities for reciprocal links between the two sites, as well as expanding the resources relating to English language and applied linguistics on our own site.</td>
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<td>• Ease of navigation for students from other faculties will be reviewed and enhanced.</td>
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<td>• Discussions are underway between the School and the Open Degree programme to increased shared resources.</td>
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