

**The Wulkow Memorandum on Staff Recruitment, Management and Development
at Language Centres in Institutions of Higher Education in Europe:
Fourth meeting held 19th to 22nd January 2012**

The fourth meeting of the Wulkow Group of Language Centres in Higher Education explored how staff recruitment, management and development procedures can contribute to language centres' ongoing efforts to maintain and improve the quality of the services they provide. The presentations and discussions focused on examples of best practices and effective approaches towards challenges in the area of human resources management.

The statements below outline the group's views on the conditions and practices needed to enhance and secure professionalism in staff recruitment, management and development in language centres in higher education in Europe. In essence, the group's approach towards professional human resources management entails:

- *Following a **context-sensitive human resources management strategy** that is embedded in the institution's overall quality management program and consists of measures that are fit for purpose.*
- *Applying **systematic and endorsed recruitment, management and development procedures** that lead to positive experiences and results for all stakeholders and maximize the benefit for both the institution and the individual employee.*
- *Implementing **effective diversity and change management procedures** that support team building and ensure continuity in quality assurance initiatives and in the services provided.*
- *Utilizing the potential of **well-functioning national and European networks** of language centres who share the aspiration to enhance the quality of language teaching and testing in higher education in Europe.*

Context-sensitive human resources management strategy

The central aim of language centres in higher education in Europe is to deliver high quality service that effectively addresses the language learning needs and expectations of the specific university and larger community in which they are embedded. As with all strategies applied by language centres, their human resources management procedures essentially serve to support this higher aim within the structural, financial and legal constraints with which they are faced in their respective national and institutional contexts. Under the guidance and leadership of their directors, language centres therefore:

- Implement clearly defined, systematic and transparent recruitment, management and professional development measures that are revised continually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and effective in addressing changing needs.
- Follow an HR strategy that is embedded within the larger institution's human resources policy and practices, while making provision for the unique needs and conditions pertaining to staffing issues in the language centre.
- Play an active and pro-active role in all HR planning and allocation processes concerning the language centre and provide accurate job descriptions and person specifications relevant to the needs of both the language centre and the parent institution.
- Acknowledge the importance of close and constructive cooperation with their institutions' HR divisions.

- Use their experience and expertise in managing multilingual and multicultural teams to contribute to the development and implementation of their parent institutions' diversity management policies and practices.

Applying systematic and endorsed measures that maximize the benefit for all involved

As is the case for all service-oriented organisations, the quality of the work done by a language centre depends heavily on the levels of competence, expertise and experience of its individual members of staff, as well as on their willingness to apply these in contributing to the language centre's aims. Its staff is thus a language centre's most important asset and investing in quality first and foremost means investing in its employees. This requires the implementation of human resources management procedures that lead to positive and constructive experiences and results for all stakeholders. Language centres therefore develop and implement a clearly defined HR policy that:

- Cultivates an organisational culture that fosters professionalism, confidence, trust and a spirit of collaboration.
- Addresses the needs of staff, the centre and the university and facilitates fast and effective reactions to changes in these needs.
- Makes provision for the application of widely acknowledged and endorsed measures for staff recruitment, management and development.

In terms of recruitment procedures, language centres:

- Follow structured, valid, respectful and fair procedures and apply clearly defined, transparent and relevant selection criteria. This entails that all stages and elements of the recruitment process accurately reflect the tasks, qualities and competencies required by a specific post and that these are communicated clearly both internally and externally.

In terms of staff management and development, language centres:

- Identify, acknowledge and develop the strengths and competences of each member of staff with the aim of maximizing the value of their unique contributions to the team's overall endeavours.
- Promote a culture of open, clear and respectful communication between staff members on all levels of the organisation that facilitates fair and professional exchanges about expectations and performance.
- Set clear and reachable goals that employ the strengths and competences of the individual members of staff.
- Use structured, objective and acknowledged staff performance assessment procedures and clear and ethical record keeping systems.
- Offer staff a wide range of internal and external further training as a means of developing available potential and equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to react to changing demands.
- Apply fair and transparent remuneration systems that reflect a concern for quality assurance.
- Follow measures that maximize job satisfaction, motivate staff and enhance their identification with the institution and its aims by acknowledging and rewarding their contributions.

Effective diversity and change management procedures

Although there are differences in the staff structure of the individual language centres across Europe, most consist of diverse multilingual and multicultural teams that include teaching and administrative members of staff, part-time and full-time employees, as well as permanent appointees, employees on fixed-term contracts and freelancers. A relatively high degree of staff turnover, especially in centres where there is a high number of freelancers and employees on fixed-term contracts, calls for special measures that promote continuity in quality assurance initiatives and in the services provided. In order to manage diversity and change effectively, language centres in higher education in Europe develop and implement an HR strategy that:

- Recognises the contributions of all members of staff and promotes identification with the institution and its aims.
- Fosters a collaborative organisational culture and supports team building measures, while it also harnesses the potential offered by diversity.
- Promotes an ongoing and lively exchange and recording of experiences and expertise in order to ensure continuity in quality assurance initiatives and the services provided.
- Ensures a healthy balance between permanent and temporary members of staff.

Utilizing the potential of well-functioning national and European networks of language centres

In addition to CercleS (the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education) and the various networks on national levels, the work of the Wulkow Group reflects language centres' joint aspiration to continuously maintain and improve the quality of their work. These networks reflect a culture of mutual support and cooperation and facilitate the fast and effective exchange of ideas. In terms of HR management issues, these networks enable language centres to:

- Share expertise in and experience with different staff recruitment, management and development procedures both in the context of formal meetings and conferences, as well as by means of informal exchanges and various internet-based forums.
- Maximize their access to the pool of professional talent available.

This document represents a first collection and summary of views and ideas on principles and conditions needed in order to facilitate professional staff recruitment, development and management in language centres in Institutions of Higher Education in Europe. In this regard, it offers a basis for negotiation and further planning with stakeholders. This is with a view to maximising the potential of future and available human resources allocated to high quality language teaching and testing in these institutions.