

Evaluation of HEFCE funding for minority subjects

A report to HEFCE by Universitas

CONTENTS

Executive summary	2
Terms of reference and method	4
Initiatives to pump-prime area studies	6
Minority subjects initiatives, 1991-1999	7
Data problems	14
The 1995 and 2000 initiatives compared	15
Progress of the supported minority subjects	16
The fate of the unfunded programmes	20
Commentary on some criteria	22
Race relations	28
Annex A: Minority subject funding to English institutions, 1991-2005	30
Annex B: Extract from HEFCE 12/94, Funding for Minority Subjects	33
Annex C: Minority subjects as identified following the 1994 survey	35
Annex D: Extract from HEFCE 99/47: Minority Subjects: invitation to apply for funds	36
Annex E: Research Assessment Exercise 2001: Minority Subjects 1999 by UoA and rating	38
Annex F: Letter and questionnaire sent in respect of each minority subject funded in 2000-2005	39
Annex G: Full-time equivalent staff in funded programmes, 1998-2003	43
Annex H: student headcount in minority subjects as principal subject (50%+)	45
Annex I: Data collection	47
Abbreviations and terminology	49

Executive summary

1. Since 1991, in three rounds, HEFCE and its predecessors have provided additional funding to HEIs in support of academic subjects which are judged to be at risk of disappearing by reason of low student numbers, but whose continuation is in the national interest. Some £3M a year is currently distributed for 59 'minority subject' (MS) programmes in 18 HEIs. We have evaluated the third round, for 2000-05, with some reference back to earlier rounds, by reviewing HEFCE files, sending questionnaires to recipients and to unsuccessful bidders in 1999, and interviewing a few recipients and stakeholders.
2. The initiative has been successful, in the limited sense that 55 of the 59 programmes are still running in broadly the same shape as in 1999. Generally HEIs have allocated the minority subject funding as additional to that which the academic unit would otherwise receive, as they increasingly expect departments to break even and not be subsidised by other units that attract greater student demand or have better success in research. We do not know what would have happened without the extra funding, and the protection afforded may have distorted institutional decision-taking, as the hope of renewal of minority subject funding may have discouraged the search for sustainable provision. The programmes rejected for funding have experienced greater attrition, but not by a wide margin.
3. The MS initiative is the heir to several earlier ones to pump-prime provision in languages and area studies, provision which has not always become self-supporting through the main streams of HEFCE funding and tuition fees. The MS funding has become increasingly concentrated in those subject areas, and in ancient Middle-Eastern studies, which in turn are in larger subject groups with recruitment difficulties. The funding is concentrated in a few faculties or schools with high Research Assessment Exercise ratings. There is little evidence of upturns in recruitment through traditional routes. But in some institutions restructuring into larger operating units with modularised degree programmes has increased the volume of teaching in the MS as subsidiary subjects, but not the numbers of students learning the languages.
4. The MS initiative was not at the outset planned and designed through to its intended conclusion, and relied too much on modifying the procedures of the previous rounds, without reviewing the underlying reasoning and accommodating the changes in the higher education landscape over 15 years. The objectives were unclear, with criteria standing in their place. Application of the 'national interest' criterion seems to have been avoided, perhaps wisely, for while 'the needs of diplomacy and of industry and commerce' are capable of some definition, 'maintenance of academic diversity' is too broad to shape the allocation of such a small sum. There was confusion over whether the objective was to protect undergraduate provision or, what surely must be the priority, to ensure the continuity of the academic expertise which must underpin both teaching and the capacity to support diplomacy, industry and commerce, and which will be founded on research and scholarship. Postgraduate provision may be more relevant than undergraduate. Selection was ostensibly based on rigorous application of the criteria, but in fact they were not consistently applied. The concept

of 'subjects isolated academically from other subjects' raises too many questions to be serviceable.

5. Funding was inconsistent, with similar cases getting different amounts. The statistical data requested was not defined with reference to Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) categories and differed between bid and monitoring: no baseline position was established, nor were performance criteria clearly set. But in any circumstances, the measures of activity at such a fine level of granulation as individual (frequently fractions of) staff members are unlikely to fall out of routine data collection or to be consistent between institutions and over time.

6. Although both bidding and monitoring were quite light touch and are seen as proportionate by institutions, both carried significant costs relative to the funds distributed.

7. Any further round of MS funding should clarify the objectives, take full account of the current and prospective funding methodologies for both teaching and research, and address the role which the Research Councils – especially the imminent Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) - might play in the support of minority subjects.

Terms of reference and method

8. Universitas was invited to tender for the evaluation of the HEFCE's Chinese studies and minority subjects initiatives. This report refers only to the minority subjects (MS) initiative.
9. The intended purposes of the evaluation are:
 - a. for each objective of the initiatives, to assess how well it has been met.
 - b. to assess for each initiative:
 - what has been its major benefits
 - what could have been done differently
 - what could have been improved
 - what has worked well
 - what lessons may be learnt
 - whether the accountability regime was proportionate.
 - c. to inform future policy and thinking towards minority and strategic subjects.
 - d. to add value to and inform policy development on the strategic themes besides learning and teaching.
 - e. to help those at national and potentially regional and sub-regional levels, to understand the success and sustainability of the initiatives.
 - f. to make a 'primary impact assessment' of each initiative on race equality.
10. The 'policy objectives' for the MS initiative were:
 - a. The continued provision of the subject in the UK will be in doubt without additional funding council support.
 - b. It is in the national interest of the UK that provision for the subject should be maintained.

'National interest' is defined as:

- i. The needs of diplomacy. This covers the full range of UK interests, influence and commitments overseas, and requires a supply of independent expertise to respond to the patterns of UK interests as they vary over time.
- ii. The needs of industry and commerce. International trade and the development of overseas markets demand knowledge of local languages and cultures. Again, as international trading patterns change, so do the countries and regions about which knowledge is required.
- iii. Maintenance of academic diversity. Minority subjects contribute to the diversity of provision by HEIs, and to maintaining the balance and breadth of discipline expertise in the UK. Such subjects by their nature depend upon a very small group of experts, and would quickly become in danger of disappearing if the number of new first degree entrants were

allowed to decline too far. Once gone, the reintroduction of a subject would be unlikely.

The policy objectives are taken from the invitation of 1999 to apply for funds under the MS initiative (HEFCE circular 99/47). The relevant parts of HEFCE 99/47 are reproduced in full in Annex D.

11. Through our tender and subsequent discussion with HEFCE officers, we agreed that our methodology would be as follows:

- Consult the available paper files at HEFCE on the current MS initiative (launched in August 1999, running to July 2005): we were provided with copies of the bids and annual monitoring returns of the MS programmes being supported and with the list of the unsuccessful bids.
- Send a questionnaire to the institutions in respect of each MS programme, with a covering letter (dispatched by HEFCE in mid July, reproduced at Annex F), receive and analyse the replies. The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) was excluded from our inquiries, as its funding will be reviewed under the scheme for specialist HEIs (Circular 00/51). *We received replies in respect of 57 of the 59 MS programmes. As the two programmes for which we did not receive replies fall in the technological and artistic classes as defined below (Table 1), discussion overwhelmingly relates to ancient and modern languages and area studies.*
- Ask each institution that submitted an unsuccessful bid in 1999 ‘whether, since 1999, the programmes in question have been maintained, expanded, reduced or eliminated, on the measures of student and staff numbers, along with a note of the reasons for significant change e.g. too expensive to continue without more students, new courses have attracted more students, successful overseas recruitment’, receive and analysis the replies. *We received replies in respect of 66 of the 74 unsuccessful bids.*
- Receive from HEFCE an analysis of HESA data relating to the supported MS.
- Visit three institutions in receipt of considerable MS funding: School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London, University of Birmingham and University of Oxford.
- Consult ‘stakeholders’: Arts & Humanities Research Board, British Academy (meeting on 9 August), Foreign & Commonwealth Office. The Universities Council on Modern Languages was also contacted, without success.

12. Our terms of reference did not extend to seeking to identify subjects, the continuation of which might be in doubt without additional funding council support, and which it would be in the interests of the UK to sustain. We have evaluated the MS initiative as it was actually conducted, and our evaluation has not been commissioned in connection with either the review of teaching funding or the debate about protecting subjects, raised by the Government’s *Science & innovation investment framework 2004-2014* (July 2004). The evaluation was bounded by the subjects which HEIs put forward in 1999 for additional support from HEFCE, not what subjects might have then, or might now, warrant support.

Initiatives to pump-prime area studies

13. The minority subjects which are currently receiving additional support from HEFCE are predominantly languages and area studies, both ancient and modern. There is a long and distinctive history of initiatives by HEFCE and its predecessors to develop the modern languages and area studies, in relation to the UK's economic and political interests in non-Western countries, and the concern of UK governments to maintain expertise about those countries, particularly in their languages.

14. Special state-funded initiatives for university education to support diplomacy go back at least 300 years. In the 1690s King William III, through his Lord Almoner, endowed studentships at Oxford to provide men for the public service who were fluent in Arabic and Turkish and thus able to assist in negotiating the ransom of British seamen held captive by the Corsairs on the Barbary Coast.¹ The modern history of such initiatives begins with the inter-departmental (Scarborough) committee's report (1947) and the Hayter report for the University Grants Committee (UGC) (1961), both on Oriental, Slavonic, Eastern European and African Studies, which were concerned to maintain and encourage the national capability in less commonly taught languages, considering them to be important elements in promoting and safeguarding UK interests internationally. Funding for new departments and expansion was provided to the universities initially by way of earmarked, pump-priming, grants, which were subsequently absorbed into the block grant determined every five years by the opaque, 'black-box', funding methodology

15. In 1985, the Parker Report for the University Grants Committee (UGC), *Speaking for the Future: A Review of the Requirements of Diplomacy and Commerce for Asian and African Languages and Area Studies*, found that provision in UK universities for African, Asian and non-European languages and area studies had declined during the previous 15 years and that in those subjects there had been 'an extensive and ... quickening erosion of our national capability'. The Report concluded that specific action was necessary to halt the decline and to ensure that universities could continue to provide a source of language and cultural expertise for UK commercial and diplomatic needs in respect of non-Western countries. The UGC (and then the Universities Funding Council - UFC) allocated 'Special factor' funding for 'Parker initiatives' from 1987-8 to 1991-2, at the rate of £1.5M a year, mainly for the creation of new posts. Half of these posts were for languages likely to remain of both major political and commercial significance, for example Arabic, Chinese and Japanese, in which demand for trained personnel was expected to grow. Additional provision outside the Parker initiatives was made for the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), which, because of its specialist nature, was funded substantially by special factor allocation.

16. The next such initiative related to provision in 'former Soviet and East European Studies'. HEFCE initiated a review in March 1995, following representations that the national capability in these subjects was inadequate following the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the dissolution of the USSR. In particular, the number of independent countries in the region had increased three-fold, and the

¹ R. Symonds, *Oxford and Empire. The last lost cause?* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), 4. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), s.n. Postlethwayt, John (1650-1713), refers to lectureships at both Oxford and Cambridge.

language skills and academic expertise needed by diplomacy and business was very much greater. There was a perception in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), in industry and in universities and colleges themselves, that the higher education system was not able to respond to the new and increased need, and that this weakness was not in the national interest. HEFCE provided £825,000 a year for three years (1996-97 to 1998-99) to contribute the major part of the cost of up to 33 academic posts and related expenditure (HEFCE 32/95 and EP 4/96).

17. Most recently there has been the Chinese Studies initiative, following the now well-established pattern. The review was prompted by growing concern in several quarters that the UK HE system was not equipped to respond to the opening up of trading and political relations between the UK and the People's Republic of China. In 1998 HEFCE set up a group to review the current provision for Chinese studies in HE, and to advise on whether there are gaps or weaknesses in provision requiring action in the national interest. HEFCE allocated funding of £5M over three years and bids were invited for support of additional provision (see HEFCE 99/09, 99/35).

18. Geopolitical changes have been the main driver for particular areas of the world successively attracting attention and for the study of their languages, cultures, etc. in universities. Government action has of course stimulated other fields of study, particularly in science and technology, but since the 1960s the route has largely been through the Research Councils. Until the 1970s, for example, the research Councils (but not ESRC) funded research posts in emerging fields which universities subsequently took over, and from time to time the Research Councils run initiatives to develop a cadre of PhD or postdoctoral students in a limited field. The UGC was sometimes involved, for example in the 'new blood' scheme of the early 1980s, and also schemes, of greater or less formality, to 'rationalise' provision (e.g. the Review of Earth Sciences, and the transfers of staff to cope with the 1981-84 budget cuts). But the absence of a Research Council with responsibility for languages (and a relatively modestly funded ESRC) has presumably contributed to the continuity of UGC/UFC/HEFCE direct involvement in languages and area studies. Minority subject funding is to a significant degree continuing to provide recurrent support to provision established under these earlier initiatives.²

Minority subjects initiatives, 1991-1999

19. In 1986 the UGC introduced explicit formula funding, the bulk of grant being allocated under the teaching (T) and research (R) streams; a third stream was special factor (S) funding, to address needs not adequately met by T and R. One element under S was funding for the Parker posts (see paragraph 15). The UFC continued to make provision from 1991-92 for subjects such as those supported under the Parker initiative, but extended the scheme to cover in principle all subject areas. Subjects supported under this scheme were required to satisfy the following criteria:

- a. The subject should already be taught at the institution concerned.
- b. It should be in the national interest that the subject continue at the institution concerned.

² If the support to SOAS from the MS budget is included, perhaps 60% is going to recurrent support of previous pump-priming initiatives.

c. The institution should be unlikely to attract enough students to produce a normal ratio of students to staff in the subject either temporarily or indefinitely.

20. In considering funding, account was taken of the quality of research provision, although support was not provided exclusively for research. Special factor funding, of £1.5M for 1991-92, was distributed among 34 of the 114 bids for support received from UK institutions. As Annex A shows, the subjects which were added to the Parker subjects were almost exclusively modern Eastern and Western European languages and ancient languages and associated (mainly archaeological) studies in the region from the Eastern Mediterranean to India. Additional funding for SOAS continued to be provided separately.

21. The four higher education funding agencies constituted in 1992 inherited the UFC scheme. There had been no equivalent under the (English) Polytechnic and College Funding Council, and the Scottish and Welsh councils have phased out minority subject funding. HEFCE has continued it for English HEIs and, as the body providing expert advice to the responsible Northern Ireland department, for HEIs in that province.

22. In 1994 there was a major review of the scheme. It was conducted in two stages. The first was to identify 'minority subjects'. Institutions were invited to submit data on subjects for which they made provision and which they judged to meet the given criteria – which are reproduced, along with the statement of policy, in Annex B. The returns seem to have been considered within HEFCE, to produce a list of minority subjects which would be considered for funding. Ten subjects which had been funded since 1991 were declared ineligible, as having more than 100 students (these are marked in Annex A).

23. In the second stage HEFCE issued a list of minority subjects (reproduced at Annex C) and invited institutions to bid for funding for them (HEFCE 29/94). Some bids were considered ineligible. On the remainder, advice was sought first from academic subject advisers, who had been nominated by relevant subject associations and professional bodies. The advisers were asked to comment on the proposals and to make recommendations, taking into account the eligibility criteria and additional questions about the nature of the subjects and the level of funding sought. Secondly, an advisory group, called the National Interest Group, considered the proposals, together with the recommendations from subject advisers, to determine priority for funding between subjects, taking into account the broad national interest. The successful bids were announced over a year after they had been submitted (HEFCE 30/95). The School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, came within the scope of MS funding, having previously been funded outside the main formula, via the block grant to the federal University of London.

24. The circular stated that in 1999 HEFCE would undertake an evaluation which 'will consider the provision then available in minority subjects and will examine the impact of the funds provided. It will assess the programme's success as a method of providing protection for minority subjects, taking account of both the Council's own objectives and the need to maintain provision in order to meet the national interest.'

25. The evaluation was undertaken in late 1998 and was limited to a review by HEFCE of monitoring returns made in late 1996. Most departments reported provision and student numbers to be reasonably stable, with some having plans for modest expansion or specific new initiatives; in no case had provision ceased nor was expected to. HEFCE concluded that:

Overall therefore monitoring has shown that the special support has succeeded in keeping provision alive for which some demand exists, but has not generally led to expansion at a rate which could cast doubt on the need for support to continue.

Although our funding methods have changed since 1995 the principles which led the Council to agree to continue the programme of minority subject [support] remain valid. There are subjects provided by universities and colleges which it is in the national interest to maintain and which would be at risk if specific funding were not provided. The criteria drawn up previously remain relevant.

26. HEFCE rejected the case for change in response to criticisms:
- the initiative's emphasis on safeguarding existing provision rather than supporting important new or emerging disciplines
 - its lack of provision for subjects above the 100 enrolments threshold which may be threatened by declining student numbers
 - the absence of provision for identifying subjects which are not currently taught, or have not been proposed for special support by HEIs, but for which it might nonetheless be in the national interest in the longer term to create or retain some academic capacity.

Selection of minority subjects programmes for support, 1999

The bidding process

27. In December 1998, the HEFCE Board approved a further round of funding for minority subjects, with a two-stage process as in 1994-95, though with a single panel established in consultation with the main sources of expertise, such as the Arts & Humanities Research Board, British Academy and the Economic & Social Research Council.

28. There was an elapse of nine months between the Board's approval and the issue of the invitation to bid. The short time then remaining before decisions on grant allocation for 2000-1 may have encouraged HEFCE to truncate the process as approved by the Board. There was no survey to identify 'minority subjects', and institutions were invited to submit bids according to their judgement whether a subject met the eligibility criteria.

29. The invitation to apply for funds was issued in August 1999 (HEFCE 99/47). The circular contained a recast statement of criteria (see Annex D). The requirement that 'the subject is not a specialism under a much larger umbrella subject' was made explicit, having been applied by the 1995 National Interest Group to the given list of

minority subjects. 'The quality of research and, as far as possible, of teaching, in the subject will be taken into account' (1994) became 'Institutions will have to show that ... high quality provision will be made in the subject.' The criterion, 'The subject should not be a new development in that institution', was replaced by 'The institution is currently providing the subject. The emphasis is on using the limited resources to safeguard existing provision rather than supporting new or emerging disciplines.'

30. An Advisory Group was constituted on similar lines to the National Interest Group in 1995: three heads of institutions, a Board member and, to represent the interests of diplomacy and of industry and commerce, officials from FCO and the Department of Trade and Industry.

31. The 1994-95 process appears disproportionately costly in relation to the sums involved and the nature of the decisions required. The abbreviated process in 1999, cutting out the survey to identify 'minority subjects' and the written reports from subject experts, seems more proportionate. It still enabled institutions to exercise their own judgement as to what constituted a minority subject, though they would have been helped by clearer objectives and better defined criteria (see below, para 34).

32. English institutions submitted 133 bids for funding. Of these 44% were successful, so the proportion of abortive effort was less than in other HEFCE initiatives. But there was the possibility that many more bids would be submitted. Reliance on institutions putting provision forward for consideration can result in a lot of effort for little reward or not trying in the first place. It is possible that institution A teaching a particular subject might not receive support whilst institution B does – simply because it had not realised it would be eligible (e.g. in ignorance of how few students there were across the UK) – and it might be that A would have been the better place to put the money. This would be most likely to occur in areas of declining provision.

33. HEFCE and the Advisory Group proceeded by applying the criteria rigorously so as to reduce the field to a fundable number, while avoiding the need to judge the intrinsic academic merits of individual bids. But the Advisory Group may not have been ideally constituted. Their peers in 1995 were appointed to apply the 'national interest' test on top of the assessments of the subject specialists. In 1999 the four members from institutions, three vice-chancellors and an Oxbridge college head, had distinguished academic credentials covering a wide spread of disciplines, but they had not been chosen as subject experts and did not have access to expert advice, should it have been needed. It may not have been a good use of the scarce resource of institutional leadership for such people to devote time to reading 133 bids and to attend a half-day meeting away from their institutions. Using vice-chancellors may dampen dissent from disappointed peers, but that seems scarcely sufficient justification. Secondly, the intended representation of AHRB, British Academy and ESRC was not followed through. Thirdly, the FCO did not in the event contribute to the selection process, but DTI did help by identifying those bids which it considered were in the national interest to support.

The Advisory Group's application of the criteria

34. One shortcoming of the MS initiative is that there is no clear statement of its objectives, against which performance can be assessed. There are criteria for eligibility and there are criteria which could be used to choose as between two eligible bids (e.g. the magnitude of the 'national interest'), but these are not the same as objectives. The minutes of the Advisory Group's meeting do *not* record the reasons for accepting 59 of the bids, but they *do* record the reasons for rejecting the other 74. The reasons relate to the criteria and can be ordered as a series of filters, moving from the general (whether the subject was eligible) to the particular (whether the bid was eligible), as in the table below. Where two reasons were given, the first in sequence has been registered here.

Table 1: Outcome of bids submitted for the 2000 round, and reasons for rejection

Class	Bids N=	Funded		Rejected N=	Reason for rejection					
		%	N=		A	B	C	D	E	F
Ancient Middle-Eastern languages	18	83	15	3				2	1	
Medieval European	14	0	0	14	2	1		8	3	
Modern languages, etc:										
<i>Western</i>										
<i>European</i>	31	42	13	18		5	1	4	8	
<i>Eastern</i>										
<i>European</i>	27	48	13	14	2	1	3	2	6	
<i>Asian</i>	21	62	13	8		4		1	3	
<i>Other areas</i>	2	50	1	1					1	
<i>Other</i>	7	0	0	7	1	4		2		
Artistic	6	17	1	5	1	3				1
Technological	7	43	3	4	3			1		
Grand Total	133	44	59	74	9	18	4	20	22	1

Reason for rejection:

- A Subset of a larger subject
- B More than 100 enrolments in UK
- C Sub-degree provision only
- D Postgraduate provision only
- E Less than half the Undergraduate programme devoted to the subject
- F Unconvincing case

The criterion 'Alternative sources of funding are not reasonably available' seems not to have been applied.

35. We know why the Advisory Panel rejected bids, but not why it accepted the others. We infer that the reason for accepting a bid was that it met the criteria on which the others were rejected. Therefore the Advisory Panel in effect determined the objective, by the way they applied the criteria, the objective then being:

- to sustain, by extra funding per capita for each staff member, any first degree programme:
 - in respect of which a bid had been submitted, and
 - in which the majority of the teaching was in a subject which:
 - was ‘academically isolated’,
 - required specialist staffing and
 - enrolled, as the principal subject of study, at all levels of study, fewer than 100 students across the UK, and
 - was already offered by the institution which submitted the bid.

The ‘national interest’ test was apparently not applied; in any case, the criterion of ‘academic diversity’ could allow any subject to satisfy it.

36. Nevertheless, some of the accepted bids did not meet the criteria on which others were rejected:

- Central School of Speech and Drama, Voice Studies: was and is taught only at postgraduate level.
- Cambridge, Mongolian Studies: was taught only at postgraduate level, though MS funding has allowed the first post in the subject to be filled and undergraduate modules to be added - i.e. new rather than existing provision has been supported.
- Central England, Horology: was and is taught only at sub-degree (HND) level.
- Birmingham, Ukrainian Studies: the programme put forward was not and is not taught as a principal subject, only as modules in a wider programme.
- Oxford: Akkadian, and Aramaic and Syriac: each was less than 50% of a first degree programme – though quite close at 40%.
- Leeds Metropolitan: seven modern languages: HEFCE reports all students to be at sub-degree level. While this may be a failure to update on LMU’s part, the bids indicate that there was no HE provision before 1998 or 1999 and (as do the monitoring reports) emphasise staff and materials development. The bids appear marginal on the criteria.
- Leeds, Mongolian Studies: at undergraduate level, the only modules offered amount to less than 50% of a programme.

Funding of successful bids

37. The programmes accepted for support were funded at the rate of £35,000 per FTE staff member declared as involved in the provision, unless the institution requested less (after deducting inadmissible elements) but subject to a minimum of £20,000. Most of the subjects are in price group D, so the standard resource per staff member at a 1:18 staff:student ratio is (currently) some £62,000, plus, in most cases, what accrues from quality weighted funding at RAE rating 5, say £19,000, total £81,000. The extra funding paid at that rate therefore allows the subject to break even at around 1:8.

38. The call for bids did not state what would be the basis for funding successful bids, nor how HEIs should cost their bids, inviting only that they state ‘The annual amount of additional funding sought for the subject and how the sum requested is justified’ (HEFCE 99/47, 13c). Some HEIs costed the staffing in excess of a target staff:student ratio (Birmingham), others included all staff (King’s College London).

Some added overhead costs onto to salary costs (Oxford). Those that asked for more, got more, even though their needs, on a consistent costing basis, were probably not greater.

39. Aside from the under-costed cases, the funding was directly proportional to the number of staff in post. This would be efficient if the number of staff were the minimum necessary to sustain the subject. But arguably some subjects had more than the minimum staffing because the student numbers were relatively high. The largest grant, for example, went to a department with 10 academic staff (UMIST, Paper Science).

Monitoring of successful bids

40. The allocations recommended by the Advisory Group and approved by the Board were announced in April 2000 (HEFCE 00/17). Paragraph 11 said that ‘In keeping with our usual practice, the grant is subject to satisfactory monitoring. Monitoring will take place annually to establish that funded provision is still in place.’ Recipient institutions were asked each year (e.g. in early 2004) for:

- a. Total number of students studying the subject in the academic year 2003-04 as the principal subject of study leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification.
- b. Total number of students studying the subject in the academic year 2003-04 as a subsidiary subject.
- c. Number of newly enrolled students studying the subject as the principal subject of study leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification in 2003-04.
- d. Full-time equivalent academic staff involved in teaching the subject.
- e. A brief statement of the impact of the initiative, e.g.
 - Plans to develop your provision for this subject
 - Problems of recruiting staff or students
 - Other indicators of success.

The wording clearly signalled that the purpose of the initiative was to fund undergraduate provision.

41. We have not explored what HEFCE did with the replies – by what criteria they were assessed and what action HEFCE took or would have taken if a reply did not meet the criteria.

42. No recipient was critical of the monitoring regime, it being seen as appropriate. But there was a cost to it: a very crude estimate would be a half to one person-day for each reply, allowing for receipt in the Vice-Chancellor’s office, passage through several hands, circulation with instructions to the head of department, etc., completion by several different people (statistics and text), return up the chain, say £300 x 60 = £18,000 plus HEFCE’s costs. We do question whether annual reports are necessary for such small sums of money, especially when the criteria for performance have not been clearly specified and when the payment is part of the block grant, the expenditure of which is monitored in other ways. Unsurprisingly the textual statements frequently gave a minimal update from the previous year. We suggest that what the institution is expected to deliver for the money should be clearly stated at the outset, that performance should be assessed in the last year (or at an

earlier point if information on the success of the initiative is needed for policy purposes) and that HEFCE reserves the right to claw back grant if the institution has not delivered. Requests for student and staff numbers should be clearly and accurately aligned to HESA returns.

Data problems

43. The bidding round, the monitoring of funded programmes and this evaluation have been bedevilled by problems of data definition and counting. It is in the nature of the MS initiative that the numbers were small, and differences in definition could cause proportionately large differences in quantities. Many of the MS are not separately identified in JACS or its predecessors. Student numbers were significant, in order to establish whether the subject was eligible (fewer than 100 students in the UK), and whether the institution was continuing to make provision (even if to report zero enrolments). Staff numbers were significant, because they were the basis for calculating the grant payable – and of course represented the capacity in the subject. Both were required to establish whether the institution was eligible (by having an unsustainable staff:student ratio).

44. An analysis of the bidding is at Annex I. In summary, the circular did not indicate precisely enough to what purposes HEFCE would put the data requested, and, so far as practicable, the categories and means of calculation should have been related to those applicable for HESA.

45. Each MS programme relates to a tiny part of institutional activity, and the HESA coding structures and even internal central data collection are not at a fine enough level of granulation to pick it up routinely. This is particularly the case where the provision is not in the form of a named programme which is listed in the prospectus, for which the student applies through UCAS and is registered, and from which he or she graduates, with its own course code which indicates the MS as the subject of study. Even the identification of the staff in the MS is not always straightforward. See Annex I for further discussion.

46. The annual monitoring return did not ask for the same data as in the bids to be updated. Instead it introduced a new set of terms which did not relate to HESA definitions either.

47. For this evaluation, we attempted to recognize that institutions were juggling with fractions of whole students and whole staff. We took the number of staff as the given and asked for data on all their teaching, whether or not into strictly defined MS programmes, leading to FTEs which would sum to their total teaching load. But we are not confident that we explained what we wanted clearly enough. What is clear is that, particularly with modularisation, the matching of student choice and staff input is becoming more and more complex.

The 1995 and 2000 initiatives compared

48. The table at Annex A lists all the subjects which have been supported by the three minority subjects initiatives, starting in 1991, 1995 and 2000. We have not retrieved the sums allocated in 1991. By our classes, the comparison of 1995 and 1999 is as follows:

Table 2: Allocation of funds by subject class, 1995 and 2000 rounds

	1995 £000	2000 £000	2000 as % of 1995
Ancient Middle-Eastern languages	458	757	165
Medieval European studies	290	-	0
Modern languages, etc:			
<i>Western European</i>	247	500	202
<i>Eastern European</i>	507	706	139
<i>Asian</i>	306	551	180
<i>Other areas</i>	107	86	81
<i>Other</i>	235	-	0
Artistic	15	20	133
Technological	202	335	166
<hr/>			
Total	2,367	2,955	125
<hr/>			
SOAS	1,521	1,600	105

49. There are some marked shifts in funds, not (we infer) as a matter of policy, but as the outcome of the application of the criteria to the bids received. The rejection of all bids in the Medieval European studies and the ‘other’ classes (the latter mainly Sign Language) allowed more funds to go to the languages and related studies subject classes. ‘Technological subjects’ increased through much greater funding, under the formula, to Paper Science at UMIST and the addition of Leather Technology at University College Northampton.

50. In the more recent round, programmes in 19 institutions have been funded, compared with 22 in 1995 (counting the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) separately). The top six institutions are the same, except for Durham dropping out completely as its bids for Medieval European studies failed. They received over two-thirds of the funding in both rounds.

Table 3: Allocation of funds by institution, 1995 and 2000 rounds

1995	cumulative		2000	cumulative	
	£K	%		£K	%
UCL, SSEES	434	18	UCL, SSEES	575	19
Cambridge	313	32	Oxford	517	37
Oxford	298	44	Cambridge	294	47
Durham	236	54	Birmingham	276	56
Birmingham	187	62	KCL	249	65
KCL	133	68	UMIST	200	71
UMIST	112	72	UCL	112	75
Manchester	95	76	Manchester	108	79
Liverpool	82	80	UC Northampton	100	82
Bristol	77	83	LMU	100	86
Wolverhampton	70	86	Sheffield	98	89
Sheffield	49	88	Hull	75	91
York	43	90	East Anglia	52	93
UCL	43	92	Liverpool	45	95
Leeds	33	93	Central England	35	96
Hull	30	94	York	35	97
Nottingham	29	96	Nottingham	33	98
Essex	28	97	Leeds	32	99
University of Newcastle	22	98	CSSD	20	100
Warwick	22	99			
East Anglia	17	99			
CSSD	15	100			
Total	2,367		Total	2,955	

51. Although research excellence was not a criterion explicitly applied, the programmes funded have an above average RAE profile: see Annex E. Forty-three of 59 MS programmes funded under the initiative fall within Units of Assessment (UoA) rated 5C or higher in the 2001 RAE. This statistic in turn reflects the strong continuity from the 1991 MS round: 91% of the 2000 money went to pre-1992 universities. Seven of the top eight in 2000 are members of the Russell Group. We have not made a comparable analysis of the unfunded subjects, as we did not ask the institutions to confirm to which UoA the subjects had been returned.

Progress of the supported minority subjects

Resource allocation within institutions

52. The UGC's introduction of formulaic funding led to special factor (S) funding to cope with problems for which the T and R formulae were insufficiently sensitive. With other developments (e.g. the Jarratt Report), it also drove forward transparency of resource allocation and delegation of budgetary responsibility within institutions. So there is increasing awareness through the academic community as to which units are paying their way and which are not. As a general rule, in large institutions, income is passed down to faculties or schools, subject to top-slicing and/or charges via cost drivers for central services designed to maximise incentives for performance. Deviations from HEFCE formulae within internal Income Distribution Models or

Resource Allocation Models (RAMs) tend to be small. The same practice may extend to the next level down, with each (e.g.) department expected in (short) time to get into balance and not to be propped up by cross-subsidy from departments with more buoyant student recruitment or better success in research.

53. The allocation under the MS initiative seems normally to be credited in full to the budgetary unit within which the MS programme sits, additional to what it would otherwise get (in the same way as research grants often are). We have not found any RAM which builds in protection, to implement an institutional strategy to sustain specific programmes with low student numbers. Such programmes will be even more exposed with the introduction of higher fees for home undergraduates, because a greater proportion of income will be directly related to student numbers.

54. In terms of overall institutional budgets, the individual allocation for a MS programme is small. But amongst the big recipients, the programmes are clustered, and the MS allocations form a significant proportion of income to intermediate level units which institutions expect to balance attributable income and expenditure. For example, UCL receives £687K, of which £575K relates to nine languages in the School of Slavonic and East European Studies. SSEES has retained its identity within UCL since merger in 1999. MS funding is paid in respect of about one-third of its academic staff and amounts to some 15% of its attributable income, and SSEES breaks even year by year. Oxford receives £519K of which £436K relate to the Faculty of Oriental Studies. There, as also probably at Cambridge, income from endowments plays a crucial role in keeping the Faculty solvent. All but £55K of Cambridge's £294K is for subjects in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, while at Birmingham, £156K of £276K is for MS in the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, a department within the School of Historical Studies, in which another department receives £86K. All of Manchester's £108K relate to three MS in its (former) Department of Middle Eastern Studies.

55. As is to be expected, the replies to our questionnaire stressed that the MS funding had been well used, in helping the existing provision to be maintained and (in a few cases) development and consolidation to occur, and asserted that its cessation would put the provision in jeopardy. The way budgets now work and the figures in the previous paragraph give credence to this assertion. For subjects reliant on just a couple of staff, posts falling vacant would not be refilled, remaining staff would, if possible, be directed into less specialised teaching and the relevant modules withdrawn if MS funding were discontinued.

56. A major problem with the MS initiative is that it imposes no obligation on the recipient institution to find a sustainable solution to managing without the extra funding. Each round has been time-limited, and the basket of supported subjects has changed, but successive rounds of MS funding have given most of the big recipients on balance rather more each time.

Discontinued programmes

57. Provision in three of the supported MS programmes has been or is being withdrawn: Danish at both Hull and UEA, and Hindi at York. (Thai at Hull has ceased but the staff are transferring to Leeds and a replacement programme is admitting students this year.) Undergraduate provision in Paper Science has ceased at UMIST.

On this simple measure of survival, the MS initiative has been successful in that the great majority of the programmes, 55 out of 59, continue to offer the provision for which they sought the extra funding. A simple comparison with the unfunded programmes (see paragraphs 65-71 below) is that a smaller proportion, 53 of 66, have survived – though what has been withdrawn is in some cases much less substantial, not being principal subjects of study. We conclude that the unfunded programmes have experienced greater attrition, but not by a wide margin.

Academic staff in post

58. For reasons already given it is difficult to establish meaningful figures of the volume of teaching in MS, certainly for comparison over time. More reliable should be the numbers of staff, but they are still doubtful in several cases. Annex G shows the numbers of staff returned for 1998-9 in the bids and for 2003-4 in the monitoring reports. Excluding SSEES, whose method of calculating staff numbers for MS is not relevant to this comparison, the figures by subject classes are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: FTE staff returned for MS programmes, 1998 and 2003

	1998	2003
Ancient Middle-Eastern languages	34	35
Modern languages, etc:		
<i>Western European</i>	22	14
<i>Eastern European (excluding SSEES)</i>	8	5
<i>Asian</i>	17	16
<i>Other areas</i>	7	6
Artistic	n/a	n/a
Technological	19	12

59. The supported ancient Middle-Eastern subjects in total are holding their own, and Liverpool Egyptology has risen from 2 to 5 FTE staff. But elsewhere the trend is downwards. The technological subjects reflect the rundown of Paper Science at UMIST, Western European figures include the closure of Danish at Hull and UEA, but also erosion elsewhere. The Eastern European figures may overstate decline because the Leeds Metropolitan figures may not be comparable.

Academic staff recruitment

60. We asked in respect of the MS programmes whether there was a pool of suitably qualified people if the institution were recruiting. Given that the numbers of graduates in the MS were so small, we thought that institutions might be experiencing difficulties in recruitment. The response was remarkably uniform that recent appointments had attracted a good field or that was what would be expected – given acceptance that the pool was international. The negative comments were on that point. Thus,

recent appointments [in Persian] indicate that it is possible to attract high quality applicants, but that there are very few ‘home’ applicants. On each occasion, the majority of those shortlisted have been trained either in continental Europe (Germany, France, Italy), or the USA. A significant proportion has comprised members of the émigré Iranian community; and

it is more than likely that it will be impossible to recruit a replacement from the national pool for [lecturers in Turkish] when they retire or take leave. A recent recruitment exercise to replace one of them going on a period of leave had no UK-based applicants, emphasising the urgent need to train a future generation of academics for Turkish Studies.

It should be remembered that most of the MS programmes are in highly ranked RAE Units of Assessment and therefore well placed to attract strong international fields. The design of any successor initiative should clarify whether a purpose is to secure a cadre of scholars for appointments who are British nationals and/or British trained.

Student recruitment

61. Annex H gives the reported student headcounts on programmes which appear to meet (or almost so) the 50% criterion, in 2003. (Full and part-time students are counted equally.) We have not given 1998 figures as they may not be comparable. Most totals are indeed below what institutions would consider viable for freestanding programmes. The higher figures suggest that across the UK Egyptology, Modern Greek and maybe Byzantine Studies have more than 100 students.

62. Subjects in higher education which are not taught in schools or are not identifiable with a career path are likely to have difficulty in recruiting through UCAS, particularly if they are perceived as 'difficult', as a new language may be. Several institutions, particularly for the ancient languages, have focussed on the opportunities for 'internal recruitment' afforded by modularisation. Thus, at KCL, Byzantine and Ottoman Studies:

Recently, however, particular emphasis has been placed on internal recruitment. The School of Humanities has been notably successful in recruiting large numbers of able students: these inevitably tend to bunch up in the larger subjects, but some Departments, notably English, are now more encouraging to students who wish to take options outside.

Birmingham made the following point in relation to both Ancient Near East Studies (ANE) and other MS programmes:

Interest in ANE modules at levels 2 and 3 owes much to the first year ANE survey course, which introduces new undergraduates to Near East studies. It is often the case that, once students arrive at the University, it is easier to demonstrate the value and interest of studying such minority subjects, than it is to attract them at the applications stage.

It looks as though the restructuring which has created the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures in the new University of Manchester will open similar opportunities. The converse was reported from Cambridge:

The biggest problem we face is that the structure of degree courses in Cambridge is almost completely non-modular: the course we offer involves four years' intensive study of a 'difficult' language from scratch, and the number of 18-year-old school-leavers who would choose to undertake such a commitment will never be large. There is clearly interest in studying the subject as part of a broader course of study, as witness the regular flow of students from Divinity and the increase in takers from other Faculties also; but at present we are prevented from making 'modules' in Sanskrit available on any systematic basis.

(Another reported problem at Cambridge is that the colleges control admissions - which may work against lower (but still sufficient) entry standards for programmes in low demand.)

63. It is probable that overall there has been an increase in the volume of undergraduate teaching in the MS programmes which goes to students who are not 'majoring' in the MS, and that this increase has more than compensated for decrease in the volume to 'majors'.

Postgraduate and research provision

64. Although the focus of the initiative is on undergraduate provision, a significant minority of programmes have more graduate than undergraduate students, particularly in ancient Middle-Eastern languages (see Annex H). Furthermore, on those latter programmes often more than half the students are paying overseas fees. On the one hand, that means the programmes have an income stream other than from UK public funds; on the other hand, the graduates are unlikely to contribute to 'national need' by joining the UK work force. Several respondents commented on the scarcity of AHRB studentships for well-qualified UK candidates for whom supervision was available.

The fate of the unfunded programmes

65. In respect of programmes for which funding had been sought unsuccessfully in 1999, we asked institutions:

whether, since 1999, the programmes in question have been maintained, expanded, reduced or eliminated, on the measures of student and staff numbers, along with a note of the reasons for significant change (e.g. too expensive to continue without more students, new courses have attracted more students, successful overseas recruitment). A brief impressionistic reply will suffice: statistics are welcome if readily available, but not necessary.

We received replies in respect of 66 out of 74 bids. This is an excellent response rate, in the circumstances.

66. We have categorised the replies in Table 5.

Table 5: Fate of programmes not funded in the 2000 round

	Growing	Steady	Precarious	Declining	Terminated	No reply	Total
Ancient Middle-Eastern languages		3					3
Medieval European	1	9	1	1	1	1	14
Modern languages, etc:							
<i>Western European</i>	1	10		3	3	1	18
<i>Eastern European</i>		8	2		2	2	14
<i>Asian</i>		4	1		3		8
<i>Other areas</i>		1					1
<i>Other</i>	3	2			1	1	7
Artistic					2	3	5
Technological		1		2	1		4
Total	5	38	4	6	13	8	74

Although we have classified the majority as ‘steady’ (the programmes for which funding was sought are still being taught to much the same numbers of students), institutions may well, if asked, have marked several more as ‘precarious’.

Several points arise from analysis of Tables 2 and 5.

67. Funded in the 1995 round. Thirteen bids had been funded in 1995 but were unsuccessful for 2000: 1 because it was a subset of a larger subject (Numismatics), 2 because the subject exceeded the 100 ceiling (Celtic, Sign Language), 6 because they were for postgraduate provision only, 4 because they were under half of an undergraduate programme. Most therefore failed because of a more rigid application of the criteria in 2000 than in 1995.

68. Medieval European studies. All 14 bids under this head were rejected, mainly because they were taught only at postgraduate level (Palaeography, Medieval Latin, Old English). These subjects, particularly Palaeography, are often studied as tools for historical and literary research, and therefore at postgraduate level only. Their exclusion underlines the question as to what the initiative’s objectives really are.

69. Western and Eastern European languages. These bids were particularly deemed ineligible by reason of constituting less than half an undergraduate programme:

70. Terminated programmes. These were
- Numismatics at Durham, attributed directly to cessation of minority subject funding: the specialist teacher was not replaced on retirement in 1999
 - Dutch at Hull, at degree level, due to trend in student numbers, though language modules continue
 - Danish and Swedish for translation and interpreting at Westminster
 - Czech with Slovak at Durham: restructuring failed to increase student numbers and the one teacher not replaced
 - Balkan Comparative Politics at Sussex: low recruitment
 - Korean at Newcastle: due to staff changes unconnected with the programme
 - Siberian Studies at Leeds
 - Turkish at Durham: restructuring, and quality could not be assured with part-time staff only
 - Sign Language at City: despite demand, unable to fund MSc and most BSc teaching without MS support; focus now on short courses for sign-language teachers
 - BA in Bookbinding and in Calligraphy at Roehampton: because of limited recruitment; Calligraphy still offered at CertHE and DipHE.
 - Polar Studies MPhil at Cambridge: impossible to maintain contact hours.

71. Several replies say that programmes remain viable because of funding from foreign national or regional governments, which is not assured long-term: Catalan at Cambridge, Liverpool and Oxford; Dutch at Cambridge; Galician at Oxford; Irish Studies at Liverpool. (Similar instances of such funding, usually for language teaching, is reported by funded MS.)

Commentary on some criteria

Academic isolation

72. Central to the MS initiative is the criterion that subjects 'are isolated academically from other subjects' (HEFCE 12/94, para. 12, HEFCE 99/47, para. 8). We have not found this criterion discussed in any of the published circulars; but we have not looked at the deliberations of whichever group in 1994 sifted institutions' nominations for 'minority subject' status (HEFCE 12/94, 27/94). The 1994 list of eligible subjects also satisfied the criterion of fewer than 100 students, so we do not know which subjects nominated were accepted as 'isolated' but were found to have more than 100 students. And it may have been that in 1994 there was already a perception in the institutions that only language-based studies would qualify, or at least the effort required to make the case for other fields was more than the chances of success justified. From at least the 1994 competition the criterion has been glossed by the negative that 'the subject should not be a specialism within a much larger umbrella subject.'

73. Underlying the MS initiatives does seem to be the assumption that the requirement for command of a language other than English isolates a subject from other subjects in a way that no other characteristic does.

74. Command of a foreign language is a skill which has to be acquired, and some languages are harder for English native speakers to acquire than others. Traditionally the department (and to a large extent the teachers) which taught the literature also taught the language. But teaching of languages is, or is becoming, a professional activity separated from the academic studies for which the languages are a tool, often delivered by staff using information and communications technologies in central units, employed on different conditions of service from lecturing staff. This pattern was established first for the widely taught Western European languages. SSEES has completed the transition for its portfolio of languages.³ One university noted that language teaching assistants and lecturers were trained by the Language Centre, as part of a general policy of professionalizing the teaching of Middle Eastern languages. The MS support given to Leeds Metropolitan is primarily for the professional development of such teachers, of less-taught languages, but that is an exception: MS funding is generally going to support area studies which use the languages and require them at undergraduate level.⁴

75. Academics wishing to research new fields, and diplomats and other people whose professions take them overseas or need to use non-indigenous languages in the UK, learn languages after their initial higher education and also may acquire a deeper

³ In 2003-4, of SSEES's 554 undergraduates, only 38 were registered for programmes including one of the nine MS languages and 99 for programmes including Russian. The remaining three-quarters were on History and Social Sciences programmes without a language requirement, though a few were on new four-year courses with a year abroad (and a presumption therefore of language competence). Some 10% of non-language students choose modules to graduate with some language competence. All programmes are coded to R7, Russian and East European Studies. Studying at an area studies institute in a programme with an area studies code does not mean that the students are learning a language.

⁴ African Studies at Birmingham seems not to include a language requirement.

understanding of other cultures than the initial process of language learning affords.⁵ Are the differences between languages any more isolating than the specialist techniques, skills and knowledge of a branch of the natural science? And are languages from the same groups, such as Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian and Ukrainian ‘isolated’ from each other and from Russian? In many instances, the MS area specialist may consider him or herself (and be appointed) as an expert in, say, history or politics who knows the MS language and specialises in the history or politics of the MS country.

76. Furthermore, in support of diplomacy and commerce, the language is typically a tool to be used in the study of social sciences and history as applied to the country or region of concern: area studies are (or should be) quintessentially interdisciplinary and the contributing subjects are *ipso facto* not isolated. Most academics outside traditional language and literary studies have a comparative interest, even if specialising in one language or country. And, for undergraduate programmes, we would expect most academics to regard one devoted entirely to, say, Bulgaria or Romania as too narrow: even if the students command only one (national) language, they should be studying also the regional context.

77. For the ancient languages, the isolation argument has more force, in that the languages may be separated by time, place and structure, and are no longer evolving. But the languages and their material cultures are studied with the tools of shared disciplines such as the archaeological sciences which themselves are, in terms of traditional boundaries, multi- and inter-disciplinary.

78. We conclude that the criterion of ‘academic isolation’ is problematic.

Undergraduate provision

79. The close application of the criteria meant that to be accepted for funding a subject had to contribute at least 50% of an undergraduate programme. This was the interpretation of the criterion: ‘the subject is normally available as the principal subject of study leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification.’⁶ The word ‘normally’ signalled that subjects taught only at postgraduate level would be considered on their merits. Some programmes which had been supported in 1995 failed in 2000, because they were postgraduate only, e.g. Polar Studies at Cambridge, Palaeography at Durham. Conversely the 1999 MS funding round supported subjects where the provision was overwhelmingly at postgraduate level and the undergraduate teaching very small, or where an undergraduate programme was offered but there were no students (e.g. Finnish at SSEES, UCL) or where an undergraduate could choose options in the MS within a programme with a wider title (e.g. Akkadian, and

⁵ But the diplomat has a strong motivation to master the language, in order to function in the new posting, and is released from normal duties for fully-funded training. The encouragement to the academic to master a new language is much less, especially with the short-term pressures of the RAE.

⁶ In terms of the JACS, we take this criterion to be reflected in a first degree programme with the course code for a single subject group or a balanced combination of two subject groups or the major component in a major/minor combination of subject groups (terminology from www.hesa.ac.uk/jacs/generic.htm. Use of Generic Codes for Course/Subject of Qualification Aim Code).

Aramaic, within Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at Oxford; Egyptology within Archaeology and Ancient History at Birmingham).

80. The purpose of this criterion is unclear. Both the 1994 and 1999 calls for bids allowed that ‘at the extreme there might be only one or two students enrolled in total in a five-year period.’ Is the purpose to offer the widest possible choice to potential applicants completing their UCAS forms, by holding open provision for which there is minimal demand? Is the criterion rooted in the belief that a subject cannot be sustained if there are not undergraduates with whom the teacher may interact, and/or if there are not first-degree graduates who can progress to postgraduate work and become the next generation of teachers? Is this why sub-degree provision is not eligible, because its students are unlikely to progress to postgraduate work? Is ‘the national interest’ met by the award of a first degree every few years? Evidently not, as ‘the needs of diplomacy’ require ‘a supply of independent expertise’, which presumably should come from the academic staff, not from the graduate entering (e.g.) the Diplomatic Service. If ‘the needs of industry and commerce’ require a flow of appropriately qualified graduates, then the issue is of improving recruitment; in the absence of students it is a source of expertise that MS funding is securing. Our best guess is that the maintenance, within the academic community, of the expertise in the subject is actually what the MS initiative is about, but that that objective has got lost in the initiative’s successive mutations, first by the removal of the reference to ‘quality of research’ from the 2000 criteria (presumably to make the initiative appear open to all HEIs) and then by the overriding priority in selection given to ‘at least 50% of an undergraduate programme’.

81. Twenty years ago, from a UGC vantage point, it may have seemed self-evident that a subject should be sustained by recruiting a handful of very able students to fill undergraduate programmes, as the pupils of the leading scholars, untroubled by the demands of research assessment. This is perhaps what is expressed in the statement that minority subjects ‘by their nature depend upon a very small group of experts, and would quickly become in danger of disappearing if the number of first degree entrants were allowed to decline too far’ (HEFCE 99/47, para. 12 c; see Annex D) – though in practice it is the dearth of applicants, rather than restrictions on entry, which is the problem.

82. But increased and diversified intakes and reducing unit costs have changed and continue to change the character of undergraduate education and the graduate employment market. This has led to many more graduates progressing to a widening variety of masters programmes, many, maybe most in the student’s eyes, of which are vocational in aim. It may be a sensible strategy for subjects in low demand to be available at higher rather than first degree level, so that the teaching is closer to the research frontier and the specialist interests of the teacher and is more likely to attract overseas students. This can be seen amongst the 2000 bids. It was put to us that the old pattern of training for area studies, of language-based education followed by specialisation in a discipline, is being displaced by the reverse. We have not explored how sound this characterisation is, but the latter is the model for the Chinese Studies initiative.

83. The 50% rule may work against the survival of a subject. It may be a sound basis for discriminating between bids in the same subject: the bids which are

supported are those offering a full undergraduate programme. Five of the six bids for Catalan were rejected on that ground: funding only one may have been a deliberate and appropriate outcome. But that the subject is offered only as a subsidiary may be evidence of its vulnerability: as student demand is so low, that is how it maintains a foothold. It may be offered as a principal subject nowhere. And it may only be offered as a subsidiary (or as a couple of modules) because it is not judged appropriate as a principal subject at undergraduate level.

Research

84. Although 'quality of research' was deleted from the criteria for the 2000 round, it appears from the results of previous rounds to have carried considerable weight which continued through by inertia to 2000. Where a minority subject is to be supported for the 'supply of independent expertise', it is hard to conceive that that could be assured without the backing of high-quality research and scholarship. If the MS initiative is conceived as a means to sustain a research capacity regardless of whether there is a demand for teaching, then the current terms are not viable. In the humanities, there is effectively no continuing support from public funds for research without teaching, because R funding per capita is too low to cover costs – and the £35,000 from MS is too little to make up the difference. A healthy flow of research students - say four home and four overseas, per academic - might bridge the gap. But a university would be unlikely to take on the commitment of a permanent appointment on the basis of MS funding reviewed every four or five years, and of recruiting research students on that scale. In technological fields, the question arises whether the beneficiary industries, or interested government departments, should pay for sustaining a source of expertise.

85. Research management has changed greatly since the MS initiative was started in 1991. The Research Assessment Exercises and their link to HEFCE funding have had an enormous impact on HEIs, particularly those receiving most of the MS funds. There has been for several years a research council in waiting for the humanities. Any successor initiative must take account of these changes in the landscape, and of the policies and services of the British Library and other national institutions which are central facilities for the humanities and social sciences.

78. AHRB has been channelling funds for research projects in its fields, on a scale not known when the MS initiative started in 1991. About a fifth of its project funding is strategic, and it has instituted 'ring-fenced doctoral awards', with each selected subject area of 'strategic importance' guaranteed six awards a year for 2004, 2005 and 2006. But neither the AHRB nor the British Academy funds research units in or associated with universities, in the way that the Research Councils do in the sciences. The ancient Middle-Eastern class of MS programmes benefit from the five institutes abroad which receive public funds through the British Academy and facilitate research and fieldwork in the Mediterranean region, and the Near and Middle East. But these do not finance long-term, UK-based, research posts.

The national interest

86. The national interest is defined under the heads of the needs of diplomacy, the needs of industry and commerce, and the maintenance of academic diversity. The third, which is internal to the higher education system, is too wide to be a helpful

guide in making choices. Any successor initiative might define further external categories, e.g. needs of social welfare, or needs of culture; some such may have been defined for other initiatives, such as Higher Education Reach-Out to Business and the Community.

87. We have explored only ‘the needs of diplomacy’, by contacting the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but we did not carry the discussions as far as we would have wished, and HEFCE may wish to take them up.

88. For entry to the Policy Grades (Fast Stream Development Programme) and the Economist Policy Grade, FCO does not specify a requirement for languages or area specialism – though obviously these may advantage one candidate over another. The same applies to the GCHQ and SIS Fast Streams. When a member of the Diplomatic Service needs new or enhanced language skills, then training is provided. In 2003-4, the Language Training Department delivered 45,000 hours in the UK, over 80% of them in-house. In the UK, the outsourcing is to a spread of HEIs, e.g. SOAS (especially Far Eastern), LMU, Leeds, Exeter; and private sector. There are over 70 employed lecturers, some on flexible contracts, the majority native speakers, with the non-native speakers tending to teach the more common Western European languages. They are expected to have a first degree in the language and a relevant postgraduate qualification (e.g. in linguistics). Security vetting may become more of a constraint in recruiting native speakers. The FCO operation is on a larger scale and more advanced than other EU ministries’, and any exchange of trainees sees more coming to the UK than going out.

89. The FCO lecturers may gather learning materials from HEIs, and they value the networking which is possible when there are one or two other centres in the UK. FCO does, but not frequently, seek expert advice, e.g. on the degree of difference in language between North and South Korea and the appropriateness of training in the south for posting to the north. While FCO does not draw much from graduates of MS programmes to work as teachers, the Language Teaching Department - like all teaching institutions – does draw on the same pool of teaching expertise when recruiting staff. Many of its full-time teachers have HE experience and come into the FCO from the HE sector. The closure of HE programmes, particularly in minority languages, reduces the pool of teachers available in the UK from which FCO can recruit.

90. GCHQ seeks to recruit linguists with a thorough knowledge equivalent to that provided by a degree, or native tongue, in the languages required – which usually are Asian, African, Middle & Far Eastern and Russian languages. Its published requirements for Intelligence Analysts do not include languages or area expertise.

91. The FCO’s principal interface with the academic community is through the Research Analysts (formerly the Research Department). They are described as the institutional memory of the FCO, providing permanently available expertise, based in London, while desk officers, departmental heads and embassy staff move every three or so years. The Analysts number about 45, organised into eight regional groups and one global group. Recruitment is typically to a group, with advertisements stating a preference for expertise in one or several countries, chosen because they are ‘important’ for international relations or because information on them is hard to

access. Shortlists are formed of candidates from much the same pool as for lectureships in area studies: masters or PhD, with a relevant language, but with the restriction to UK nationals, though foreign-affairs journalism may be a more significant channel than for HE. Some analysts, typically coming in at more senior levels, are on secondment for two or three years. The nationality requirement clearly requires a UK capacity to train candidates.

92. The Analysts need contact with an informed community outside, to challenge the in-house view. The internet has reduced the requirement for this to be UK-based, but there is not yet an EU foreign policy, and a UK perspective is still valuable. The Analysts organise the briefings for heads of mission-designate by a few leading academics, as well as larger seminars and conferences; they also publish in the mainstream academic literature. Other officials, particularly at the more senior levels, develop their own contacts or build them up through the Analysts.

93. Several questionnaire replies refer to staff participating in the briefings for heads of mission-designate. A concise and specific example of how a MS subject may in other ways support diplomacy comes from Romanian at SSEES:

*Since 1990 SSEES staff have been involved in Conference/Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe activities in Romania and as election observers in Romania and neighbouring Moldova. They worked for the "Know How Fund" and continue with close ties to the FCO and British Council providing advice on such matters as Human Rights, Romania's progress towards the EU *acquis communautaire* and indeed providing advice to the Prime Minister's Office. Work with the British Council in providing specialist advice on conference organisation is likely to intensify following Romania's entry into NATO and its moves towards EU membership.*

94. A statement for a university's sole staff member in Mongolian Studies reads: *Our lecturer is in regular contact with the FCO and is frequently called on to provide expert briefings, ambassadorial briefings, to participate in the Mongol-British Roundtable, etc. [Dr X] is a regular contributor on current Mongolian affairs to the Economist Intelligence Unit, and to Oxford Analytica, offering risk assessment for potential investors.* and in Aramaic:

The present lecturer wrote a briefing paper on the Middle Eastern Christians for the Foreign Office after the last Gulf War, and has had informal briefings with military representatives during both crises.

95. We did not consult the national museums on the significance to their activities, of the expertise supported by the MS initiatives. To other organisations we put the argument that scholarship in ancient Middle-Eastern languages and related studies was international, with long-established networking between the UK and centres elsewhere in Europe and in the USA based around museum collections, and that UK institutions did not therefore need to rely on home-grown staff and expertise. The response was that the national collections were integral to the cultural history of Britain and reflected Britain's extensive global reach derived from its history,⁷ and

⁷ See recent articles by Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum, e.g. in *Guardian Review*, 24 Jul 2004.

that diminution of the UK research base would weaken their standing in relation to other museums.

96. This argument is echoed in questionnaire replies:

The UK has a long tradition of expertise in the ancient Near East going back to the rediscovery of ancient Mesopotamia in the mid-19th century. The British Museum has the world's largest collection of cuneiform texts and (e.g.) Assyrian sculptures, and British scholars have played a leading role in archaeological research at sites like Ur, Nimrud, etc.

The existence of such programmes [to train Iraqi antiquities staff] is essential to relations with elites in the Middle East, quite apart from its intrinsic value in safeguarding and promoting heritage and diversity. Britain is often perceived in the Middle East as falling behind other European countries and the USA in not taking a proper interest in the local cultural heritage.

An interest in ancient Egypt by foreign countries is seen as vitally important in Egypt today, at governmental and lower levels. Ancient Egypt is also considered there to be a counterbalance to Islamic fundamentalism and institutions and countries that support Egyptology are strongly encouraged. In addition, tourism to Egypt is vital for the economy.

Race relations

97. Our terms of reference require us to make a 'primary impact assessment' of the initiative on race relations. In the guidance issued by the Commission for Racial Equality on how public authorities should discharge their duty under the Race Relations Act 2000, a race equality impact assessment should be made while policies are under development and before their implementation. The principal purpose of the assessment is to make sure proposed policies would not have adverse effects on any racial groups. The MS initiatives predate the Act, so no such assessments were made. We have been asked to suggest what would be considerations if there were to be a similar initiative, supporting the same subjects, in the future.

98. In the light of our enquiries we can make three points which suggest that the impact of an initiative would be positive, rather than neutral, because many of the MS study the languages and cultures of regions with which the UK has strong historical ties and from which there are immigrant communities in the UK.

- a. Although the 'national interest' is expressed in terms of the UK's diplomatic and commercial dealings with those regions, if the academic capability leads to more informed and sensitive dealings, then they are more likely to gain the support of the respective immigrant communities. That, for example, British universities are involved in the rescue and restoration of Iraq's cultural heritage, and their expertise highly regarded by the Iraqi authorities, should be welcomed by responsible Muslim opinion.

- b. Secondly, the academic expertise affords a comparative understanding of the communities' cultural antecedents and of British culture, which is available to those shaping social policy for the UK.
- c. Thirdly, some immigrant communities directly support relevant programmes – and are seen as a source of students, in the second or third generation - which should support both integration and the maintenance of, and pride in, distinctive inheritances, and may encourage participation by under-represented groups. The experiences detailed in the two following quotations would probably be replicated in other institutions:

While the numbers are too small for reliable statistical analysis it is possible to discern a general trend across all undergraduate recruitment to the disciplines in Middle Eastern Studies. An increasingly significant proportion – up to 50 per cent in some years – of intake is now drawn from the region, particularly from Muslim communities based in the North West.

The School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures has maintained a long term commitment to the languages of the Middle East, including the languages funded by HEFCE's initiative: Aramaic, Persian and Turkish. The plan is for this to continue and indeed for expansion in certain areas (such as possibly Kurdish, Armenian and Urdu). The provision for these languages in part responds to the ethnic diversity of the region and has enabled the university to be involved in outreach activities to the British Asian community, the Jewish community and the large local populations of Middle Eastern background.

One area being developed involves collaboration with Nottinghamshire Area Health Authority on the treatment of traumatised refugees from the Balkans, and more generally the provision and delivery of social services to refugee communities and asylum seekers in the East Midlands.

Annex A: Minority subject funding to English institutions, 1991-2005

The table below lists and classifies the subjects which have benefited from HEFCE's special funding for 'minority subjects' since such funding was introduced, in its current form, in 1991. There have been three phases of funding, each awarded after a round of bidding, starting in 1991, 1995 and 2000. The total annual funding for each class is given for 1995 and 2000.

The classes are:

- Ancient Middle-Eastern languages and related studies
- Medieval European studies
- Modern languages and related studies, in sub-divided into five groups:
 - western European
 - eastern European
 - Asian
 - other area studies
 - other
- Artistic subjects
- Technological subjects.

SOAS is excluded from the list of subjects because it is excluded from this evaluation and because the languages for which it is receiving special funding include both ancient and modern. The funding to LMU is split between seven languages equally.

The 1991 figures do not include funding for SEESS, though SEESS may have been in receipt of special funding through another route (e.g. special factor funding for Senate Institutes through the University of London).

X = funded in this round

** = declared ineligible for this round, for exceeding the 100 student threshold.

		round beginning	1991	1995	2000
Class	Subject				
	Ancient Middle-Eastern languages and related studies				
	Ancient Near East Studies			X	X
	Aramaic		X	X	X
	Archaeology of the Eastern Mediterranean		X		
	Armenian			X	
	Assyriology (Akkadian and Sumerian)		X	X	X
	Byzantine (and Ottoman) Studies		X	X	X

	Egyptian Archaeology	X		
	Egyptology	X	X	X
	Hebrew	X	**	
	Sanskrit		X	X
£k per annum			458	757
Medieval European studies	Medieval Latin	X	X	
	Numismatic Studies		X	
	Palaeography	X	X	
£k per annum			290	
Modern languages and related studies: Western European	Catalan overlapping with Iberian		X	X
	Celtic Studies	X	X	**
	Danish		X	X
	Dutch / Modern Dutch Studies	X	**	**
	Icelandic / Icelandic Studies		X	X
	Irish Gaelic			X
	Irish Linguistics Research		X	
	Modern Greek	X	X	X
	Norwegian			X
	Portuguese, Brazilian & African Studies	X	**	
	Brazilian Studies			X
	Scandinavian Studies	X	**	
£k per annum			247	501
Eastern European	Bulgarian		X	X
	Czech		X	X
	Finnish			X
	Hungarian	X	X	X
	Polish	X	X	X
	Romanian		X	X
	Russian & East European Studies	X	**	
	Serbian and Croatian		X	X
	Slovak		X	X
	Ukrainian		X	X
£k per annum			507	706
Asian	Arabic	X		
	Chinese			
	Hindi		X	X
	Indian Studies	X		
	Japanese Studies	X	**	

	Korean	X	X	
	Mongolian Studies	X	X	X
	Persian	X		X
	Punjabi			X
	South East Asian Studies	X	**	
	Thai and Indonesian			X
	Turkish	X	X	X
	£k per annum		306	551
Other areas	Caribbean Studies		X	
	West African Studies	X	X	X
	£k per annum		107	86
Other	International Human Rights		X	
	Sign Language		X	**
	£k per annum		235	
Artistic subjects				
	Voice Studies		X	X
	£k per annum		15	20
Technological subjects				
	Horology			X
	Leather Technology			X
	Paper Science	X	X	X
	Polar Studies		X	
	Soil Science	X		
	£k per annum		202	335
	£k per annum sub-total	1,504	2,367	2,956
	SOAS £k	1,496	1,521	1,600
	£k per annum total	3,000	3,888	4,555

Sources: HEFCE circulars 12/94, 30/95 and 00/17

Annex B: Extract from HEFCE 12/94, Funding for Minority Subjects

Defining Minority Subjects Eligible for Support

12. Minority subjects are defined as those subjects which are unlikely in the foreseeable future to be able to attract ratios of students to staff which can usually be sustained through formula-based funding. In practice, and taking into account the courses in low demand that are currently supported with non-formula funding, they may be identified as those subjects which both are isolated academically from other subjects and are able to enrol no more than 100 students throughout the UK. In many cases provision will be very much less than this, and at the extreme there might be only one or two students enrolled in total in a five-year period.

13. Not all minority subjects will be supported. Those institutions currently in receipt of non-formula funding for minority subjects, with the exception of SOAS which was the subject of an independent review in 1993, should not assume that provision will necessarily continue. The HEFCE's policy on minority subjects needs to be seen in the context of its policy on non-formula funding more generally. In the broader context, the Council has concluded that there is some provision which it is in the national interest should be made within the HE sector, but which it would not be reasonable to require institutions to make within their formula-based allocations for teaching and research. The principles adopted by the HEFCE and set out in Circular 5/93 are that non-formula funding should be provided in exceptional circumstances only, and in particular where the Council is satisfied that:

- a. The broad interests of teaching and research in higher education would in some way be damaged by the absence of the facility being funded in this way.
- b. Alternative sources of funding are not reasonably available.
- c. In the absence of non-formula funding, the institutions concerned would either have to withdraw the facility or would be faced with diverting an unacceptable amount of teaching or research resource to the facility concerned, thus jeopardising overall its teaching and research capability.
- d. To include the non-formula funding within the main formula-based allocation for teaching, by adding the non-formula funding to the core for the institution concerned, would distort unacceptably the average unit of Council funding for that institution.

14. The same considerations apply in the case of minority subjects. The HEFCE intends to maintain specific provision for minority subjects only in exceptional cases and where it judges that the national interest requires this. For this purpose the national interest is defined as:

- a. The needs of diplomacy: This covers the full range of UK interests, influence and commitments overseas and requires a supply of independent expertise to be available to respond to the patterns of UK interests as they vary over time.

b. The needs of industry and commerce: International trade and the development of overseas markets demand knowledge of local language and culture. Again, as international trading patterns change, so do the countries and regions about which knowledge is required.

c. Maintenance of academic diversity: Minority subjects contribute to the diversity of provision by HEIs and their continuation is important to maintaining the balance and breadth of discipline expertise in the UK. Minority subjects by their nature are dependent upon a very small group of experts and would quickly become in danger of disappearing if the number of new first degree entrants were allowed to decline too far. Once gone, the reintroduction of a subject would be unlikely.

Criteria for Supporting Minority Subjects

15. The HEFCE will use criteria for allocating non-formula funds for minority subjects that are consistent with its intention to make provision only in exceptional cases. It wishes to select for consideration only those minority subjects which meet the criteria for defining national need as set out above, whose continued provision in the UK would be in doubt without the addition of specific support. The criteria have been drawn from those previously employed in the evaluation of minority subjects, and are as follows:

a. The low demand for the subject should be an attribute across the UK and not just peculiar to one institution. Consideration will be given only to subjects which throughout the UK, over each of the last four years, have had less than 100 enrolments across all years of study.

b. It should be unlikely that the subject would in the foreseeable future attract the ratio of students to staff possible in most other subjects.

c. It should be in the interest of the UK that provision for a particular subject should be maintained, defined by reference to the features described in paragraph 14 above.

d. The subject should not be a new development in that institution.

e. The minority subject should normally be the principal subject of study leading to a degree or equivalent qualification.

f. The quality of research and, as far as possible, of teaching, in the subject will be taken into account.

Annex C: Minority subjects, as identified following the 1994 survey

These were the subjects for which institutions were invited to bid for funding in 1994 (HEFCE 29/94, Annex A).

* = those subjects which, upon considering a bid for funding, the Advisory Panel excluded as specialisms within broader subjects (HEFCE 30/95)

** = those subjects which, upon considering a bid for funding, the Advisory Panel excluded, being known to exist at institutions other than those which had submitted and known to exceed the threshold of 100 enrolments nationally (HEFCE Circular 30/95)

Aramaic (overlapping with Akkadian and Syriac)	Serbo-Croat
Armenian	Sign Language
Assyriology	Soil Science*
Buddhism (Buddist Studies*)	Theatre Directing*
Bulgarian	Turkish
Byzantine & Ottoman Studies	Urdu
Caribbean Studies	Welsh/Irish Studies**
Catalan (overlapping with Iberian Studies)	West African Studies
Classics	
Czech (overlapping with Slovak)	
Crop Protection*	
Danish	
Egyptology	
Equine Studies	
Ergonomics*	
Ethnomusicology*	
Hindi	
Hungarian	
Icelandic Studies	
Indian	
Jain Studies*	
Korean	
Medieval Latin	
Mining Engineering**	
Mongolian	
Numismatic Studies	
Palaeography	
Panjabi	
Paper Science	
Persian	
Polish	
Romanian	
Sanskrit	
Scholastic Philosophy	

Annex D: Extract from HEFCE 99/47

Minority Subjects: Invitation to apply for funds

Eligibility criteria

8. Minority subjects are defined for present purposes as those subjects which:
 - a. Are isolated academically from other subjects.
 - b. Require the provision of significant specialist staffing.
 - c. Do not enrol sufficient students nationally to enable them to operate at the ratios of students to staff which can usually be sustained through formula-based funding.
9. With regard to the last point above, we have defined this as no more than 100 students at one time throughout the UK. In many cases provision will be very much less than this: at the extreme there might be only one or two students enrolled in total in a five-year period.
10. Not all minority subjects will be supported by this programme. Institutions that currently receive special funding for minority subjects should not assume that this will continue. Our general policy on special (non-formula) funding continues to be that it should be provided only in cases where:
 - a. The broad interests of teaching and research in higher education would in some way be damaged by the absence of the facility being funded.
 - b. Alternative sources of funding are not reasonably available.
 - c. In the absence of non-formula funding, the institutions would either have to withdraw the facility, or would be faced with diverting an unacceptable amount of teaching or research resource to support it.
11. The criteria for allocating special funding for minority subjects are consistent with this approach and have been drawn from those previously applied in this field. Institutions will have to show that:
 - a. The low demand for the subject is an attribute across the UK and not peculiar to one institution. We will consider only subjects which throughout the UK, over the last four years, have on average had less than 100 students, across all years of study, registered in one academic year.
 - b. It is unlikely in the foreseeable future that the subject will attract the ratio of students to staff possible in most other subjects.
 - c. The continued provision of the subject in the UK will be in doubt without extra support.
 - d. It is in the interests of the UK that provision for the subject should be maintained (see paragraph 12 below).
 - e. The institution is currently providing the subject. The emphasis is on using the limited resources to safeguard existing provision rather than supporting new or emerging disciplines.

- f. The subject is normally available as the principal subject of study leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification.
- g. The subject is not be a specialism under a much larger umbrella subject.
- h. High quality provision will be made in the subject.
- 12. For this purpose the national interest is defined as any of the following:
 - a. The needs of diplomacy. This covers the full range of UK interests, influence and commitments overseas, and requires a supply of independent expertise to respond to the patterns of UK interests as they vary over time.
 - b. The needs of industry and commerce. International trade and the development of overseas markets demand knowledge of local languages and cultures. Again, as international trading patterns change, so do the countries and regions about which knowledge is required.
 - c. Maintenance of academic diversity. Minority subjects contribute to the diversity of provision by HEIs, and to maintaining the balance and breadth of discipline expertise in the UK. Such subjects by their nature depend upon a very small group of experts, and would quickly become in danger of disappearing if the number of new first degree entrants were allowed to decline too far. Once gone, the reintroduction of a subject would be unlikely.

Annex E: Research Assessment Exercise 2001: Minority subjects 1999 by UoA and rating

	5*A	5*B	5A	5B	5C	4A	4B	4D	4E	3aC	3bB	2D	n/a	Total
32 Metallurgy and Materials						1				1				2
46 Middle Eastern and African Studies	2		4	3	4									13
47 Asian Studies		3	1		1			1						6
48 European Studies		1	10											11
52 German, Dutch and Scandinavian Languages										1				1
54 Russian, Slavonic and East European Languages		1	1											2
55 Iberian and Latin American Languages	1		1											2
56 Linguistics			1								1			2
57 Classics, Ancient History, Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies	4		2											6
58 Archaeology	1		2					2						5
64 Art and Design									1					1
66 Drama, Dance and Performing Arts												1		1
n/a (no RAE submission)													7	7
Total	8	5	22	3	5	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	7	59

Note that several subjects receiving minority subject funding may share the same RAE rating, e.g. Akkadian and Sumerian, Aramaic with Syriac, Persian and Turkish were all part of Oxford's submission to UoA 46.

Annex F: Letter and questionnaire

We will appreciate this questionnaire being completed electronically and will send the electronic version (in MS Word) upon request to farrant@universitas.co.uk. Otherwise transcribe the names of your institution and subject onto a clean page and give the number of each question before your response.

Institution:

Subject:

Annual funding:

RAE 2001 Unit of Assessment (please correct if necessary):

The Higher Education Funding Council for England has asked us to undertake an evaluation of the 'Minority Subjects' initiative which provides special funding, in addition to formula funding for teaching and research, to support subjects where the Council was satisfied that continuing provision was in the national interest but might be at risk (see the Invitation 99/47 of August 1999 and HEFCE Report 00/17 of April 2000). The main purpose of the evaluation is to inform future policy and thinking on minority subjects, and to assess:

- what have been the initiative's major benefits
- what could have been done differently
- what could have been improved
- what has worked well
- what lessons may be learnt
- whether the accountability regime was proportionate.

We are also keen to identify examples of 'good practice', successful measures which have helped to sustain vulnerable subjects, from which others may learn.

To reach informed judgments, we need more information than HEFCE holds in your bid of autumn 1999 and in the annual monitoring returns. We will be grateful if you can answer the following questions. Some are being addressed to all subjects supported under the initiative, others, in [square brackets] follow up points in your annual returns. The academic standards achieved in the subject are not within the evaluation's scope.

1 Student numbers and characteristics

The annual returns asked only for undergraduate numbers, but teaching in many minority subjects is sustained principally at postgraduate level (hence why we have asked for confirmation of the RAE Unit of Assessment). Often programmes in the subjects are not uniquely identified in returns to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, so we are not wanting to rely on these.

Attached are the figures in your annual returns. Please comment on any trends indicated by these.

On the same sheet is a supplementary table which we ask you to complete, in respect of the academic year 2003/4. Follow the definitions for the HESA Student Return. We appreciate that some data will not be available for teaching of modules in programmes in subjects. We are asking for a breakdown between 'home' and 'overseas' students, as an indication of how many graduating students in the subject are likely to take up work in the UK. By 'FTE student load' is meant a rough estimate of the quantity of the teaching to those students, given by the staff in the subject – so that the total corresponds to the staff's total load. We have deduced student load figures for 1998/99 from your bid and given these after the headcount figures from the annual returns; say if these are not comparable with the figures now given for 2003/4.

2 Staff numbers

Attached, in the same table as the student numbers, are the figures for staff numbers in your annual returns. Do you have any comment on them, on the age structure and on whether there is a pool of suitably qualified people if you were recruiting?

3 Developments in teaching

Summarise the developments in teaching over the past four years, e.g. new or redesigned programmes and courses (see also next question), or changes in teaching methods, and the consequences thereof.

4 Student recruitment

4.1. Steps taken (e.g. courses introduced to tap latent demand ; promotional activities)

4.2 Obstacles to recruiting more students. If demand for the programme is low, to what do you attribute this?

5 National interest

The initiative aims to support subjects, provision in which is in the national interest – defined as the needs of diplomacy, the needs of industry and commerce, and the maintenance of academic diversity. By way of update to your 1999 bid, illustrate how your subject is meeting national interest, perhaps as indicated by your graduates'

employment, bodies with which you collaborate (e.g. British Museum) or to which you provide expert advice (e.g. Foreign & Commonwealth Office)

6 Funding

The funds allocated under the initiative are paid to the institution in the block grant, are not ‘earmarked’ and are not separately accounted for. We want to understand how, if at all, the subject receives more resources than if there were no allocation under this initiative. Explain how the allocation is managed within the institution’s budget.

7 Strategic plan

How does provision in the subject feature in the institution’s (or faculty’s or school’s) current strategic plan?

8 HEFCE’s management of the initiative

Give us any comments you wish on how the initiative has been structured and operated, with particular reference to the bulleted points on the first page.

Name of the person completing this questionnaire, to whom further enquiries may be directed:

Telephone number:

Email address:

Institution:

Subject:

Summary of student and staff numbers already returned

Year (Autumn)	Principal Subject Full Time	Principal Subject Part Time	Subsidiary Subject Full Time	Subsidiary Subject Part Time	Principal Subject New Students Full Time	Principal Subject New Students Part Time	Full Time Equivalent Teaching Staff
2000							
2001							
2002							
2003							

FTE student load 1998/99 Undergraduate Postgraduate taught Postgraduate research Total

Supplementary data requested for 2003/4 (example in top row)

JACS code, where applicable	Programme	Level: UG, PGT, PGR	Full or part time	Students in 2003/4, headcount	Of whom paying home fees	Of whom paying overseas fees	Of whom female	FTE student load	First year intake
(T5L6)	(BA African Studies with Anthropology)		(FT)	(15)	(10)	(5)	(7)	(7)	(6)

Annex G: Full-time equivalent staff in funded programmes, 1998 and 2003

<i>Institution:</i>	<i>Subject:</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>comment</i>
Birmingham	Ancient Near East Studies	1	1	
Birmingham	Byzantine and Ottoman Studies	2	2.25	
Birmingham	Egyptology	1.2	2	
Birmingham	Modern Greek Studies	2	1	
Birmingham	Ukrainian	1	1	
Birmingham	West African Studies	7.3	6	
Cambridge	Aramaic with Syriac	0.75	0.5	
Cambridge	Assyriology (Akkadian with Sumerian)	1.9	1.5	
Cambridge	Egyptology (Ancient Egyptian with Coptic)	2.5	2	
Cambridge	Hindi	2	2	
Cambridge	Modern Greek	2	1	
Cambridge	Mongolian Studies	0.1	1.2	Data doubtful; estimate for 2003
Cambridge	Persian	1.75	2	
Cambridge	Sanskrit	2	2	
Central England	Horology	2	1	
CSSD	Voice Studies	?	1.5	1998 staffing cannot be calculated
East Anglia	Danish	1.8	1.2	
Hull	Danish	4.4	0.5	1998 figure uncertain
KCL	Brazilian Studies	1.25	1	
KCL	Byzantine Studies	2	2	
KCL	Modern Greek	4	4	
Leeds	Mongolian Studies	0.95	1.2	
Leeds (formerly Hull)	Thai and Indonesian	1.8	3	
Liverpool	Egyptology/Akkadian	2	5	
LMU	Hungarian	1	0.4	Comparable?
LMU	Irish Gaelic	0.9	0.3	Comparable?
LMU	Modern Greek	1.4	0.75	Comparable?
LMU	Norwegian	1	0.5	Comparable?
LMU	Polish	0.9	0.3	Comparable?
LMU	Punjabi	0.8	0.3	Comparable?
LMU	Turkish	0.9	0.4	Comparable?
Manchester	Aramaic	1	0.67	
Manchester	Persian	1	1.49	
Manchester	Turkish	2.9	1.89	
Nottingham	Serbian and Croatian	2.3	2.6	

Oxford	Akkadian and Sumerian	1	1	
Oxford	Aramaic with Syriac	1.16	1	
Oxford	Czech	2	1.1	
Oxford	Egyptology	2	2	
Oxford	Medieval and Modern Greek	1.1	1.6	
Oxford	Persian	3	2	
Oxford	Sanskrit and Pali	3	2	
Oxford	Turkish	2.4	2	2003 includes post available for filling
Sheffield	Catalan overlapping with Iberian	1	1	1998 figure uncertain
Sheffield	Korean	4	3.5	1998 figure uncertain
UC Northampton	Leather Technology	7	7	
UCL	Egyptology	5	4.5	
UCL	Icelandic	1	1	
UCL, SSEES	Bulgarian	0.45	1.39	
UCL, SSEES	Czech	1.87	2.6	
UCL, SSEES	Finnish	0.31	0.46	
UCL, SSEES	Hungarian	2.85	2.47	
UCL, SSEES	Polish	2.93	3.37	
UCL, SSEES	Romanian	2.72	2.18	
UCL, SSEES	Serbian and Croatian	3.66	3.49	
UCL, SSEES	Slovak	1.46	0.93	
UCL, SSEES	Ukrainian	1.45	1.43	
UMIST	Paper Science	10	4	
York	Hindi	1	1	

Annex H: Student headcount in Minority Subjects as principal subject (50+%)

<i>Institution:</i>	<i>Subject:</i>	<i>UG</i>	<i>PGT</i>	<i>PGR</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Comment</i>
Birmingham	Ancient Near East Studies	12			12	
Birmingham	Byzantine and Ottoman Studies	63	4	1	68	
Birmingham	Egyptology	15	4		19	UG pathway
Birmingham	Modern Greek Studies	22	4	15	41	
Birmingham	Ukrainian				0	Not offered as principal subject
Birmingham	West African Studies	72	1	7	80	
Cambridge	Aramaic with Syriac	1	1	2	4	
Cambridge	Assyriology (Akkadian with Sumerian)	5	2	5	12	UG=45%
Cambridge	Egyptology (Ancient Egyptian with Coptic)	8	4	5	17	PGR=40%
Cambridge	Hindi	5	2	3	10	
Cambridge	Modern Greek	3		2	5	
Cambridge	Mongolian Studies		2	12	14	PG only
Cambridge	Persian	11	1		12	
Cambridge	Sanskrit	2	1	1	4	
Central England	Horology	4			4	HND and lower only
CSSD	Voice Studies		24		24	PGT only
East Anglia	Danish	15			15	Being run down
Hull	Danish	4			4	Being run down
KCL	Brazilian Studies	16			16	
KCL	Byzantine Studies	3			3	
KCL	Modern Greek	12	4	10	26	
Leeds	Mongolian Studies				0	Only UG options, amounting to less than 50%. MA offered.
Leeds (formerly Hull)	Thai and Indonesian					But new Thai & SEA Studies BA should recruit in 2004
Liverpool	Egyptology/Akkadian	61	15	12	88	
LMU	Hungarian	9			9	
LMU	Irish Gaelic	11			11	
LMU	Modern Greek	68			68	
LMU	Norwegian	21			21	
LMU	Polish	8			8	
LMU	Punjabi	9			9	
LMU	Turkish	33			33	
Manchester	Aramaic	0	0	3	3	Offered as UG options which, with related ones, would reach 50%
Manchester	Persian	2	3	4	9	

Manchester	Turkish	7	1	3	11	
Nottingham	Serbian and Croatian	12		2	14	
Oxford	Akkadian and Sumerian	2	1		3	
Oxford	Aramaic with Syriac	0	??	??	0	
Oxford	Czech	20	1		21	
Oxford	Egyptology	11	4	10	25	
Oxford	Medieval and Modern Greek	25	19	3	47	
Oxford	Persian	5		3	8	
Oxford	Sanskrit and Pali	6	4	15	25	
Oxford	Turkish	3	4	2	9	
Sheffield	Catalan overlapping with Iberian	17			0	
Sheffield	Korean	1			1	
UC Northampton	Leather Technology	25	4		29	Also sub-degree
UCL	Egyptology	??	??	??	0	
UCL	Icelandic	18		1	19	
UCL, SSEES	Bulgarian	1			1	
UCL, SSEES	Czech	4		4	8	
UCL, SSEES	Finnish	0			0	
UCL, SSEES	Hungarian	3	1	5	9	
UCL, SSEES	Polish	8		5	13	
UCL, SSEES	Romanian	2		2	4	
UCL, SSEES	Serbian and Croatian	12		7	19	
UCL, SSEES	Slovak	0			0	
UCL, SSEES	Ukrainian	0		1	1	
UMIST	Paper Science		8	5	13	UG discontinued
York	Hindi	0			0	No longer part of a degree programme

Annex I: Data collection

The form to be completed for a bid for the 2000 MS funding round asked for the following:

1. Subject and course titles

Title of course currently offered to at least degree level	Qualification(s) gained on completion	Percentage of study on average relating to minority subject

2. Student registrations

Title of course	Level of study	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
(as in Table 1 above)	(UG/ PGT)	FTS PT	FTS PT	FTS PT	FTS PT

3. Academic and Academic-related Staff

Staff involved in teaching the minority subjects [for 1997-98 and for 1998-99]	FT, wholly funded by the institution	FT, other	PT, wholly funded by the institution
numbers			
average % time devoted to minority subjects			

The implications of the form are that:

- the minority subject is a readily identified part of teaching provision (e.g. as a discrete programme of study) and of staff
- Table 1 can confirm that the minority subject is offered as a principal subject (50%+) leading to a first degree or equivalent qualification
- there is a coincidence of the data: the (fractions) of staff in Table 3 teach (only) the modules which constitute the 'Percentage of study on average relating to minority subject' in Table 1 to the numbers of students in Table 2. Applying the percentages in Table 1 to the student registrations in Table 2 (assuming that part-time students are, say, 0.5 FTE) produces a student load, while the data in Table 3 produce the FTE of staff which can be divided into the student load to produce the staff:student ratio (SSR).

However, the form:

- did not ask for numbers of PGR students who are normally counted in SSR calculations (though most institutions seem to have done so, treating Table 2 as mistyped)
- asked for academic-related staff (librarians, computing staff, administrators) to be included along the academic, though they do not count in SSR calculations
- did not ask for part-time staff funded from other sources.

Some institutions did not answer in such a way that the arithmetic could be done (e.g. the fractions of part-time staff were not apparent). It is likely that there was under-recording of teaching by the staff FTE into programmes in which the MS was only a small part, thereby indicating a lower SSR than there was on the ground.

HEFCE 99/47 should have indicated more precisely to what purposes HEFCE would put the data requested, and so far as practicable relate the categories and means of calculation to those applicable for HESA.

Each MS programme relates to a tiny part of institutional activity, and the HESA coding structures and even internal central data collection are not at a fine enough level of granulation to pick it up routinely. This is particularly the case where the provision is not in the form of a named programme which is listed in the prospectus, for which the student applies through UCAS and is registered, and from which he or she graduates, with its own course code which indicates the MS as the subject of study. If an institution uses the option in HESA of Student and Module records, then the MS may show up – but pre-1992 universities tend to use the Combined record. A student may be admitted to (say) Egyptology at Oxford: Q400 BA/Egy, and choose in the first year to take Akkadian language in preference to Egyptian and to continue it in the second year. But the University does not change the course code. And the degree awarded is BA in Oriental Studies. Although there is a separate JACS code, at third character level, for Akkadian (Q430), Q400, Ancient Language Studies, remains an accurate description of the student's curriculum as a whole.

Even identification of staff in the MS is not always straightforward. It is if there is a corresponding department, e.g. Centre for West African Studies at Birmingham, or posts appropriately labelled, e.g. lecturer in Korean at Sheffield. But at SSEES – which receives MS support for nine of the ten languages in which it offers first degrees – has three-quarters of its academic staff in the Departments of History and Social Sciences, most of whom have a country-specific research interest but many of whom (also) have a regional or comparative focus. Their teaching is similarly spread. SSEES from time to time asks each staff member to estimate, for each module taught, the proportion of their material which relates to each MS country or to 'other' (which yields such answers as, for 'Introduction to Business', Bulgaria 2%, Other 98%), and from the replies SSEES deduces a figure for the staffing devoted to e.g. Bulgarian Studies. The staff FTE for Bulgarian which SSEES has reported for 2003-04 is 1.39 from 13 staff.

Abbreviations and terminology

AHRB	Arts & Humanities Research Board
DTI	Department of Trade & Industry
ESRC	Economic & Social Research Council
FCO	Foreign & Commonwealth Office
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher education institution(s)
JACS	Joint Academic Coding System
MS	Minority subject(s), usually in the national aggregate
MS programme	That which is being supported in a minority subject in a given institution
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
SOAS	School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London
UFC	Universities Funding Council
UGC	University Grants Committee
UoA	Unit of Assessment, Research Assessment Exercise
KCL	King's College London
LMU	Leeds Metropolitan University
UCL	University College London
CSSD	Central School of Speech and Drama
SSEES	School of Slavonic and East European Studies
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
UG	Under graduate
PG	Post graduate
PGT	Post graduate taught
PGR	Post graduate research
FT	Full time
PT	Part time
T	Teaching
R	Research
HE	Higher education