



Opportunities for language learning – a guide for students and parents

East Midlands Routes into Languages Consortium

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Opportunities at University

Language skills are so important in the world we live in today and you don't have to be fluent to experience the benefits – even knowing a little can go a long way and provide many opportunities for any future study and your career.

This booklet tells you all about the wide range of language opportunities available to you at university. To enable you to access the information easily, these are split into those for single honours, combined and joint degrees, opportunities for beginners, short courses or modules and studying abroad options. Please bear in mind, however, that these opportunities are often linked or overlap. You can also read about the experiences of students who have studied languages in different ways.

Also included are a number of specific examples of study options at universities in the East Midlands, which, if you are planning to study outside of the region, will still give you a good idea of what might be available at universities you are interested in. The universities featured in this guide offer a wide range of language provision in addition to the examples outlined, so check out their prospectuses or websites to find out more. You can also find full course listings on the UCAS (University and Colleges Admission Service) website www.ucas.com

At the back of this booklet you will find a list of useful organisations and sources of information.

So why should you read this guide?

Please read this booklet carefully – you may be surprised at the number of ways in which you can study a language at university! Please have a look at the different ways you can gain, or increase, your language skills and think about how this could benefit you in the future. If you haven't considered it before now is the time to do so!

The Routes into Languages programme is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Under the programme, a number of regional consortia have been set up where groups of universities work together, with schools and colleges, to enthuse and encourage people to study languages.

The East Midlands Routes into Languages Consortium is led by Nottingham Trent University in partnership with University of Nottingham, University of Leicester, and University of Lincoln.

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Why Languages? Some Fact and Figures



There is no doubt that even a little bit of language can make a huge difference – you don't have to be fluent to see the benefits of language skills.

Within our global economy and multilingual society, whichever career you choose, language skills will be advantageous and open up opportunities that might otherwise not have been there.

Your career won't be the only thing that benefits. Languages will help you with travel, communication, appreciation of other cultures and much more throughout your life. In a world where technology has made communicating across the globe simple, language skills open up endless possibilities.

Read on for some facts and figures...

- As a result of a shortage of native English interpreters the European Commission has recently launched a recruitment drive. They predict that EU organisations risk losing about half of their English-language interpreters in the next 10 years as English-speaking countries are not producing enough linguists. They have set a target to recruit 300 over the next 10 years meaning that such skills will be in significant demand.
- BMW believe that employees with language skills are worth more in the labour market.
- Being bilingual helps you to multi-task more easily.
- Learning languages gives you a greater understanding of different cultures. If you dream of travelling the world, just think how much difference it could make.
- The Government's Security and Intelligence Agency needs people who can speak languages from all over the world. Could you be the next James Bond?



75% of the world's population doesn't speak English at all.

Celebrity Linguists - you're in good company!

Paula Radcliffe went to school in Bedford where languages were amongst her favourite subjects. She studied German and French at A Level and went on to study German and French with Economics at Loughborough University. Paula reports that her language skills have been very useful whilst travelling the world through her running career.

Gary Lineker, who was born in Leicester, speaks Japanese and Spanish. In the 1980s Gary played for Barcelona and it was during his time in the city that he became fluent in Spanish. Whilst playing for Nagoya Grampus Eight in Japan he also learnt some Japanese. Gary believes that language skills are essential in the modern world.

Barack Obama speaks Bahasa, the language of Indonesia and Malaysia... a essential skill for improving international relations. Emma Watson, of Harry Potter fame, can speak French, German and Italian. Gwyneth Paltrow can speak fluent Spanish and Kate Beckinsale is tri-lingual, speaking German, Russian and French fluently. Arsène Wenger speaks six languages and earns, on average, £5 million a year!



At least half of the UK's 'richest' under 30's (53%) count languages among their skills.

74% of UK businesses need foreign language conversational skills to help build business relationships (CBI Education & Skills Survey 2009).

By 2020 Mandarin Chinese is expected to be the most-used language on the internet – ahead of English.



70% of UK companies have customers abroad.

Studying a foreign language improves your oral and written skills in English too, and also helps develop key communication skills that are crucial in the workplace (Languages Work, 2010)

Do you want to specialise in languages at university?

Specialist Language Degrees

Single Honours

You may decide to specialise in studying a single language at university. Within the East Midlands, the University of Nottingham offer a range of specialist degrees within the subject areas of French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Serbian and Croatian.

The University of Leicester enables a single language to be focused on as part of their European Studies degree.

The majority of these are 4 year courses which involve a compulsory year abroad.

Although the specific characteristics of each degree will differ from university to university the information below gives you an idea of what may be involved.

Entry Requirements

- The points required vary between universities
- In most cases an A-level, often with a specified minimum grade, in the target language is required
- Equivalent qualifications, such as the IB, are usually accepted

Content

- In addition to developing your language skills, most degrees will also include elements of culture, literature, politics and/or history
- In degrees where 'Studies' is included in the title there will be a greater emphasis on culture, literature, politics and history alongside language learning
- Typically courses will be modular in structure
- There is usually some flexibility of module choice so you can tailor your studies to aspects you are interested in
- Modules may include topics such as: film and cinema; translation; interpreting; politics; the media and press; contemporary history and culture and linguistics

Assessment

- Written and oral exams
- Essays
- Listening tasks
- Group work
- Coursework
- Reports
- Presentations
- Dissertation

Teaching style

- It is likely that a wide range of teaching styles and methods will be utilised.
- In most cases a high proportion of teaching will take place in the target language.

If you are interested in interpreting or translation as a career, some universities also offer specialist degree courses in these areas.

The University of Nottingham offer a range of specialist language degrees: French Studies; German Studies; Russian Studies; Hispanic Studies; Contemporary Chinese Studies. The French, German, Russian and Hispanic courses are 4 years in length, with the 3rd year spent abroad. The Contemporary Chinese Studies course is 3 years in length with non-native Chinese speakers spending the 2nd year at the university's campus in China.

Elise



"I studied a joint BA (Hons) in French and German at the University of Nottingham. At primary school, I had a few French lessons but they were few and far between. It wasn't until I went to secondary school in Derby that I was able to study languages properly, starting French in Year 7 and German in year 8. I thoroughly enjoyed learning

French and German at GCSE and decided to take them on to A-Level, as they were my two strongest subjects, closely followed by English. At A-Level, I studied French, German, English and Biology and had to think very carefully about what to study at university because I enjoyed all my A-Level subjects!

"In the end, I chose to study French and German because I thought studying modern foreign languages would be more beneficial to my career in the long run than studying English, as having language skills, especially in more than one language, makes you a more rounded individual and looks really good on your CV. I applied to several universities to study French and German finally deciding to go to the University of Nottingham because it was the best choice for my course and Nottingham is a great city for students.

"During my first few weeks at the University of Nottingham, I learned about the diversity of a languages degree and during my four year course I studied modules in history, literature, film, linguistics, politics and culture in both French and German. During my year abroad, I worked as an English language assistant in the south of France and did an internship in a multi-national company in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, giving me excellent work experience and invaluable language and life skills, which I can utilize in a wide variety of jobs in the future.

"I would like to learn another language, possibly a non-European one to really enhance my employability and would like a career in the UK where I can use and hone my language skills.



The University of Leicester offer a range of combined degrees which include French, Italian or Spanish. Students can study Joint Honours and Honours degrees with 2 or 3 languages, or 3 subjects including a language. Options include combining French, Italian or Spanish with English, Film Studies or History of Art. European Studies and Modern Languages with Management are also available. These courses are all 4 years in length and involve the 3rd year spent abroad.

Combined and Joint Degrees

If you want to continue with learning a language or perhaps start a new one at university, a combined or joint degree may be right for you. This is also an excellent way to combine a language with another subject area to give you a complimentary set of skills for your future career and open up opportunities that might not otherwise have been open to you. More unusual combinations can help to make you stand out in the graduate employment market.

Many universities in the East Midlands (University of Leicester, University of Lincoln, Loughborough University, University of Northampton, University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University) and across the UK offer a wide range of combined and joint degree options.

The combinations available differ from university to university and will be dependant on timetabling restrictions, however, examples of some of the subject areas that can be studied with a language include:

- Sciences
- Computing
- Film and Television
- Sociology
- Marketing
- Health Studies
- Art and Design
- Law
- International Relations
- Business
- Psychology
- Performing Arts
- Education
- Human Resource
- Geography
- English
- Economics
- History
- Tourism
- Media
- Sport
- Accounting
- Management
- Mathematics
- Philosophy
- Music
- Archaeology

This list is not exhaustive so please check out individual universities to see what they offer.

Remember you can also combine different languages too!

The amount of time you will spend studying each subject in a combined or joint degree will differ, but typically such degrees are either an equal split or a major/minor where greater emphasis is placed on one subject area. Some universities, such as The Nottingham Trent University and The University of Leicester also offer triple subject degrees.

Entry requirements differ depending on the university and combination chosen. Knowledge and qualifications in the target language are often required; however, some universities do have opportunities to start a new language as part of a combined or joint degree.

Elements of content, assessment and how you will be taught will broadly reflect those for specialised degrees.

Amy



"I loved learning languages at school, and wanted to pursue a career where I could travel, meet new people and broaden my horizons. I felt that a language degree would be the best way to achieve this.

"I can read, write and speak German to a high standard, and am now able to speak German every day in my job. My first job after graduating was as a sales executive, selling IT products to Germany and Austria. I am now a strategic account manager and as a German speaker in the IT industry I have a huge advantage over my non-language-speaking colleagues.

"The structure of my degree was flexible and I was able to tailor my course to the areas of European Studies and the languages that interested me. My third year was spent in Germany, working for an English-language training and translations company. This year was of great importance to my current job, as it gave me the ability to speak business German confidently on all levels, and gave me a greater understanding of the German people.

"I would say make every second of your degree count, even if it seems hard work: the more work you put in at the early stages, the more likely you are to gain transferable skills which are attractive to employers.

Do you want to learn a new language or study one in your spare time or as part of your other studies?

Beginners

If you haven't studied a language in the last few years or want to start a new one there are many opportunities for beginners, also known as ab initio learners, at universities across the East Midlands and the rest of the UK. Whichever subject area you choose it is often possible to study a language as part of your degree or on an extra-curricular basis. Opportunities for beginners are usually offered as part of a university wide language programme in the form of modules or short courses – more information on these can be seen below.

Short courses and modules

Short courses and modules enable the vast majority of students, regardless of their subject, to study a language as part of their course or on an extra-curricular basis. Whether you are an ab initio learner or a skilled linguist there will be an opportunity for you.

A number of universities in the East Midlands (De Montfort University, University of Leicester, University of Lincoln, Loughborough University, University of Northampton, University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University) run university wide programmes which between them offer a wide range of short courses and modules in the following languages:

- French
- Italian
- Spanish
- Russian
- Portuguese
- Polish
- Czech
- German
- Japanese
- Mandarin Chinese
- Arabic
- Greek
- Dutch

Lectures are often delivered in the target language and will consist of a range of teaching areas including grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading and writing, and culture. Assessment techniques vary depending on the university.

Which level is right for you?

Language modules and short courses are available at different levels usually ranging from beginner (ab initio), intermediate and advanced, allowing you to take advantage of opportunities regardless of your ability level. The equivalencies for these levels and the length of time required to complete them vary from university to university so it is worth checking them out.

Entry requirements vary, however, they are often as follows:

Beginner/ab initio	No previous knowledge
Intermediate	GCSE or equivalent or completion of beginners level in target language
Advanced	AS/A level or equivalent or completion of intermediate level in target language

Universities can also help you determine the correct starting level for you by carrying out a short diagnostic test or assessment.



“Languages can be difficult sometimes but the feeling of speaking another language for me is like no other”

The University Language Programme at **Nottingham Trent University** provides students, staff and members of the general public with the opportunity to learn a new language or improve their existing language skills.

A wide range of courses are available, most from beginner level, and evening classes are also available. Languages include: Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian and Spanish.

“I would say make every second of your degree count, even if it seems hard work: the more work you put in at the early stages, the more likely you are to gain transferable skills which are attractive to employers.”

Nick



“I love learning languages so I was very excited to start studying German alongside learning a new language; Italian.

“My course is great as you learn a language and a new culture which is so useful these days with the expansion of the European Union; languages are so important. My course also gives you a year abroad. I spent six months in Italy, and five months in Germany.

“We study grammar, reading comprehensions, speaking, writing and then other modules such as history and culture. I have learnt two languages which will be very useful in the future. University has also developed my personality so that I am well prepared for working life.

“My career plans are to first have a year learning Spanish in Ecuador, then hopefully to do a Masters there. I am interested in pursuing a career in interpreting. My degree has given me a real passion for all things foreign so anything with languages would be perfect as a career.

“Languages can be difficult sometimes but the feeling of speaking another language, for me, is like no other and the course I did was amazing; I have learned so much.”

Fitting it in

Many universities give you the option to study language modules as part of your course – this means that you gain credits which count towards your final grade or degree classification and that the timing of the modules fit around the others you are studying.

Time commitments usually vary from 2 to 3 hours per week although this does depend on the university and level being studied.

If you find, for whatever reason, that you cannot study a language module as part of your course, or you want to study more than one, you should still be able to access them in your own time in addition to your main studies (there is usually a charge for these). University wide language programmes try to ensure wherever possible that modules are easily accessible for all students and can be slotted into existing commitments. This means they are often at a time when other lectures do not take place or in the evenings.

To find out more about the specific opportunities that are available at the universities you are interested in visit their websites, attend an Open Day or contact them directly – they will be very happy to talk you through your options. You may also find that you can talk to specialist staff during Freshers' Week.

Studying and Working Abroad Options

Studying or working abroad as part of your university studies is a fantastic way to build on your language skills, immerse yourself in the culture, meet new people and add to your CV. There is no better way to learn about a language and culture than by being surrounded by it!

Most universities that offer language related degrees or courses, and even those that don't, also provide students with opportunities to study or work abroad.

If you decide to study a specialist language degree, combine 2 languages or take a language as part of a joint degree with another subject you will find that many universities require you to spend a compulsory placement year abroad. These types of course usually last for 4 years (with the 3rd year spent abroad) and are often referred to as 'sandwich' courses. Placement years often involve attending a university as a student, carrying out a work placement or assisting in a school. You will have to spend the year in a country that speaks the target language or you can split your time between 2 countries if you are studying 2 languages.

Your university will support you in organising a year abroad and keep in regular contact with you while you are there.

Many non-language courses also provide the opportunity for a work placement element which may be able to be taken abroad.

Loughborough University encourages its students to carry out study exchanges through the Erasmus programme. Students can spend between 3 to 12 months at a European University as part of their degree. Credits gained as a result of placements count towards their degree and can also contribute to additional qualifications such as a Diploma in International Studies.

Anita

"The highlight of my course has been having the confidence to spend a year abroad and live and work independently in both Italy and France. Since returning for my final year of study, I feel enthused and motivated to continue studying. I'm confident that my degree will open the door to many exciting opportunities for which I am thoroughly prepared.



"I enjoy studying the range of modules offered, which have inspired my own research project in my final year. The choice of year abroad activities (ERASMUS, British Council Language Assistant, work placement) promoted thorough linguistic and cultural understanding, enhances further studies and provides a contextual insight into your previous studies.

"I think with any degree, you get as much out of it as you put in. If you want to do well, take advantage of every opportunity both at university and during the year abroad. The modules are your building blocks, and the extra work you do cements them. Above all, a Modern Languages degree is about communication and interaction, therefore you meet many interesting people and learn new aspects to issues you may have never realised before!

"A Modern Languages degree is about communication and interaction, therefore you meet many interesting people and learn new aspects to issues you may have never realised before!"



Remember – whichever subject area you choose to study you may have to do a work placement year or be able to opt for one. Many universities will allow you to do this abroad and support you in the application process. This is a fantastic opportunity to utilise a language you have previously studied, but not continued with at university, or learn a new one. Subject areas that such opportunities are often available with include Business and Travel and Tourism. For example, at the University of Lincoln students can undertake a sandwich course on some degree programmes. This can be taken abroad and the University has international links to help source 6 and 12 month placements.

Erasmus Placements

The majority of UK universities are part of the European Commission's Erasmus Programme which provides UK HE students, across all subject areas, with the opportunity to study or work in another European country and provides funding to support this.

Erasmus study mobility placements last from 3 months to one year, and can be taken at any time during your degree, except during the first year and will be dependant on your course structure and university arrangements.

Work placements take place in the first year of study and usually last from 3 to 12 months. It may also be possible to combine a study period with a work placement.

Intensive Programmes are short periods of study (two to six weeks) which are related to your subject and involve collaboration between students and staff from higher education institutions in at least three EU countries.

To find out more about Erasmus visit www.erasmus.ac.uk

Want to Find Out More?

There are many organisations and sources of information and advice that can help you find out more about the benefits of learning a language and help you find the right course for you.

Learning Resources

MYLO is an online language learning service.
www.mylo.dcsf.gov.uk

The **BBC languages** website contains a wide range of resources.
www.bbc.co.uk/languages

Information and advice

The **'Why Study Languages'** website contains a range of information for post-16 learners including career information and study skills tips.
www.whystudylanguages.ac.uk

The **Languages Work** website provides information about relevant careers and a range of case studies
www.languageswork.org.uk

You will also find a wide range of blogs and social networking pages dedicated to language learning and university life.

