



26 June 2026

Dear University Executive Board, Council and Senate,

As the University Council For Languages (UCFL) we are writing to express our deep concern about the University of Nottingham's proposal to close all Modern Languages degree programmes and to suspend student recruitment from September 2026.

As a subject organisation, we are well aware of current pipeline challenges in some languages. However, it is worth underlining the importance of our subject fields and their key roles for society. Language learning shapes citizens who can navigate different cultures with insight and confidence. At the same time, it serves the UK's key strategic needs in security, defence and diplomacy, (among other) areas which have become increasingly critical given current geopolitics.

Short term savings may cause long term national loss. The UK is currently experiencing a shortfall in trained linguists, and language education has therefore been recognised as an urgent priority area for both governmental and higher education bodies such as the AHRC, British Council, DfE, GCHQ and the British Academy. The proposed closure of Modern Languages at a major Russell Group university would be one of the most significant and far-reaching reductions of languages provision in the sector to date. Further concerns are raised by the recent decision to close the university-wide language teaching programme currently delivered by the Language Centre. This move will eliminate any opportunity for students to pursue language learning as an academic skill, embedded and validated within their degree programmes, alongside their primary field of study. This would create a regional cold spot in the greater East Midlands. At a time when multilingual competence is increasingly recognised as essential for economic competitiveness, cultural diplomacy, global research collaboration and social cohesion, the removal of Modern Languages from a leading research institution is both short-sighted and strategically misguided.

We are particularly concerned that this proposal has been advanced despite overwhelming evidence of public, sectoral, national and international support for the continuation of Modern Languages at Nottingham. More than 21,000 individuals have signed a [public petition](#) opposing the closure. To date, the University has not publicly acknowledged or engaged with this evidence.

Such a lack of engagement risks undermining confidence in the transparency and integrity of the decision-making process.

The department has now submitted an alternative proposal that is a data-driven, and strategically aligned response to the challenges identified in the Future Nottingham (FN2) draft Business Case. The proposal offers a financially sustainable and academically robust model for the continuation of Modern Languages at Nottingham. We wish to highlight several key strengths of this proposal.

- First, the proposal delivers the financial savings sought by FN2. It reduces the number of modules by more than 80%, thereby significantly reducing delivery costs and administrative complexity. These changes directly address the University's stated need for structural simplification, academic right-sizing and financial sustainability.
- Second, the proposal aligns fully with the strategic aims of FN2. It offers a lean, radically streamlined portfolio consisting of two new degrees ('Languages and Global Cultures' and 'Languages with Business') alongside a coherent Joint Honours pathway and continued university-wide language learning provision. This structure preserves disciplinary breadth while ensuring efficient delivery, strong student experience and clear alignment with the University's own commitments to global engagement and employability.
- Third, the proposal is academically forward-looking. It replaces legacy structures with a modern, cross-cultural curriculum that reflects contemporary global challenges. Shared Cultures and Societies modules reduce duplication and enable students to develop transnational perspectives whilst also allowing for linguistic and cultural specialisation.
- Fourth, the proposal is grounded in robust data for staffing, income, student FTE and module numbers; national data on A-level and GCSE trends; and sectoral evidence from the British Academy and the University Council for Languages. It also reflects student demand, as demonstrated by recent focus group consultations.
- Finally, the proposal avoids the reputational, academic and civic risks associated with full closure. Nottingham would become the only major UK university without Modern Languages, a position that would significantly weaken its international profile, undermine its attractiveness to global partners and actually contradict its stated strategic priorities. The alternative proposal offers a proportionate, evidence-based solution that preserves the University's standing while addressing legitimate financial concerns.

Modern Languages are essential to the intellectual, cultural and indeed economic life of the UK. They are central to the mission of a global university. Nottingham has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership by adopting a sustainable, future-facing model that protects this vital area of study. We hope the University will seize that opportunity.

For these reasons, we strongly support the alternative proposal submitted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures (MLC) as part of the Future Nottingham Phase 2 (FN2) consultation. We urge the University Executive Board, Council, and Senate to engage with this proposal in good faith, to reconsider the current course of action, and to exercise their oversight responsibilities by ensuring that all viable alternatives are fully considered before any irreversible decisions are made. We would be more than happy to meet with your team to help think through alternatives, along with our other partner organisations such as the British Academy, the Institute for Languages, Cultures and Societies (ILCS); the Association of University Language Communities (AULC), and others.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Cayley', written in a cursive style.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Emma Cayley

on behalf of the Executive Committee of the University Council For Languages (UCFL)