

Wulkow Memorandum III

Budgets, Resources, Entrepreneurship

In this third meeting of the members of the Wulkow Group of Language Centres in Higher Education (27-29 January 2011) it was decided to explore issues relating to funding which in turn impact on quality, staffing and service delivery.

The findings of the group showed diversity and flexibility in funding methodology across Europe, but were able to draw conclusions and make recommendations with the aim to maximising the potential of each language centre to operate within acceptable norms and this to the benefit of all stakeholders.

The Wulkow group noted the following:

1. Whereas there is no one model for funding language centres in higher education across Europe, successful funding strategies are based on reliability, transparency and flexibility.
2. Funding for infrastructure and core teaching should be properly embedded into the funding system of the host university, the majority of which receive funding from government sources.
3. Such funding is best top-sliced and transferred directly to the language centre, and is preferable to a system of billing individual departments.
4. In many cases supplementary funding from extra teaching grants, through European projects and income from exploiting the institution's internal market can provide an enhancement of basic funding.
5. Some language centres are funded solely from income generation activities through both internal and external clients.
6. Other language centres use entrepreneurial activities to either boost their own income or contribute to the income generating activities of the parent institution.
7. Some language centres however now fully integrate their income generating activities into their core funding out of necessity and due to reductions in core funding.
8. The question of charging fees to students varies and the issues are complex.
 - Generally if language tuition forms an assessable part of a degree, then a tuition fee is not charged to the student.
 - If the institution does charge a tuition fee, the language centre should receive an appropriate and proportionate amount of that tuition fee.

- If a university insists that a fee be charged even if language tuition is seen to be connected to the major area of study, then a language centre needs to argue for a low or subsidised fee.

If language study is counted outside of the degree but deemed important by the university, then the lowest internal client fees should still be charged.

- External clients are charged a competitive market rate to further enhance the financial stability of the language centre.

9. Many language centres have not only built in entrepreneurial activities but have set up a separate entrepreneurial unit where staff can be sometimes employed on different flexible rates.
10. Funding must ensure that teachers are paid a rate that reflects the qualities of Language Centre employees and not just a rate that reflects the market.
 - Teaching qualifications
 - Relevant teaching experience
 - Flexibility of approach
 - Appropriate methodology

Conclusion:

- 11. Language Centres must be properly funded to carry out their activities in line with their mission statement and to ensure quality of delivery to all end users.**
- 12. Quality assurance may not be solely dependent or relative to the amount of funding but does depend on sufficient funding to ensure the smooth operation of all essential operations.**
- 13. All methods of financing should be dependable, regular and properly negotiated.**
- 14. All stakeholders involved in the process of devising a suitable financing structure must be committed to ensuring quality and sustainability.**