

Convener's Report for 2021

Canberra Academy of Languages

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Mailing address: GPO Box 1627, Canberra ACT 2601

Reception phone number: +61 – 2 – 6152 9140

Organisational website: <https://cal.act.edu.au>

Resources website: <https://languages.org.au>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CanberraAcademyOfLanguages>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CBRLanguages>

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CAL staffing

The Canberra Academy of Languages is delivering programs in French, German, Japanese, Spanish and Tamil in 2021. We are fortunate to have highly qualified teachers with a command of the target language that enables them to use it with confidence in routine classroom discourse. This year, our teachers are (clockwise from left) Selina Jaeck (German), Beth McArthur (Japanese), Uma Ramiah (Tamil), Eleanor Body (Spanish), Baba Alhadji (French) and Frank Keighley (Convener).



For next year (2022), we look forward to welcoming Stella Lee as our teacher of Korean, and Orion Lethbridge as Director of Studies. Rosalind Rice will take on the role of Registrar, which she has effectively been doing throughout the time since our programs commenced in 2017, while Orion will take on aspects of my role and aspects of Ros' role in preparation for a proposed transition with ACT Government in the future.

CAL programs

For the first time this year, we have a Beginning Modern Languages option in our CAL French programs in Semester 1 and in CAL Japanese throughout this year. There were also two students, one in French in Semester 1 and one in German throughout this year, participating outside the default sequence of units that we follow in the implementation pattern for units offered. This required an update in our online information, particularly for the [Home page](#) and the [Programs page](#) on CAL website and for this semester's [French class page](#), [German class page](#) and [Japanese class page](#) on our resources website at Languages.Org.Au. We also provided organisational support for the teachers working with these composite classes, through session allowances, and through provision of additional templates for unit outlines, term overviews and assessment task descriptions.

With the introduction of Tamil in 2020 and Japanese in 2021, we have been exploring the implications of assessment for languages that require significantly more time for students to reach comparable levels of proficiency. There is [documentation about meshing on the BSSS website](#), but these implications lie outside its scope. It is widely recognised that language acquisition to a level of "professional working proficiency" varies widely from one language to another. For example, the [United States Foreign Language Institute](#) estimates the usual time required as 600-750 class hours for French and Spanish, 900 class hours for German, 1100 class hours for Tamil, and 2200 class hours for Japanese. However, the achievement standards for all languages in the ACT senior secondary curriculum are identical. Interpreting and applying these is therefore a challenging issue for schools. Moderation of assessments across courses and meshing/ranking of student scores also requires more time in meshing consultations where participating teachers are not conversant with all the languages represented in the school's languages scaling group.

CAL students

We began the year with 32 students enrolled in the five languages offered in 2021 and finished the year with 29. This retention rate at 92.8% is pleasing. It is also testament to the dedication of our teachers and motivation of our learners. They commit to an evening session away from their day school campus once every week during school term, and work-required participation credits for the at-home component of our programs, in lieu of attending two on-site sessions. Through a "blended learning" model, we can deliver unit credits while only requiring attendance at the venue (or face to face online when COVID safety requires it) once each week. At our End of Year Ceremony for 2021, we will celebrate not only the completion of a major by 11 of our students, but also the award of a range of awards for external assessments of language proficiency. For details, see the concluding remarks below. Next year, on current projections, we will have more than 50 students enrolled in six languages. We will accept enrolments throughout summer.

End of year ceremony 2020

Our 2020 end of year ceremony was held at the Alliance Française de Canberra on **Tuesday 15 December 2020** from 2:30 to 3:30 pm. We thank all who participated in our End of Year Ceremony for 2020, including five of our graduating Year 12 students who could be present, representatives of students' day colleges, CAL teaching staff and advisory panel, family members of the graduating students, and friends of CAL from a wide range of contexts, including Lena Britton, Leader of the French Teachers' Network, Embassy Secretary Dario Polski from the Embassy of the Argentine Republic and Principal Wendy Cave from Ainslie Primary School.



Sarah and Declan received their certificate of completion in French, presented by Principal Julie Murkins from Lake Tuggeranong College and Sarah received her DELF certificate of proficiency in French from Floriane Henneaux, coordinator of programs at the Alliance Française; Martin received his certificate of completion in German, presented by Languages Coordinator Rosslyn Phillips from Dickson College; and Ashvinie and Nivedha received their certificates of completion in Tamil, presented by Principal Kerrie Grundy from Narrabundah College.

The welcome was provided by Alliance Française Director Nancy Ford-Waites and the organiser of the Canberra Region Languages Forum, Dr Mandy Scott, presented an acknowledgment of country. As CAL Convener, I reviewed the year's programs and events.

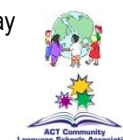
Copies of the full convener's report for 2020 were provided to those attending. It is also available as a [pdf from CAL website](#) via the home page and in print copy on request from us. Class teachers and graduating students spoke during the presentations. As Uma mentioned, ours were the first Year 12 graduates in the ACT to do the new ACT Tamil program. CAL was the only provider in the ACT running it in 2020. CAL Patron, Dennis Flannery, former Principal of Belconnen High School, provided closing remarks. Thanks to colleagues at the Alliance Française de Canberra for refreshments provided after the ceremony.









Events and partnerships

CAL has conducted and participated in several events this year:

- Regular updates on the CAL News page from the **Canberra Region Languages Forum** (CRoLF), from the CRoLF Convenor Dr Mandy Scott, who is also a member of the CAL Advisory Panel.
- An **International Mother Language Day Walk** took place in Canberra on Sunday 21 February. Dr Mandy Scott, who is Convenor of the Canberra Region Languages Forum and Secretary of the ACT Bilingual Education Alliance (ACTBEA), and who is also a member of the CAL Advisory Panel, was there for the event. There were over 150 participants. UNESCO proclaimed 21 February as International Mother Language Day in recognition of the supreme sacrifice of the Bangla (Bengali) speaking people of Bangladesh. For details, see the [ACTBEA website](#).
- **Mother Tongue Multilingual Poetry**, an organisation for which CAL has auspiced funding under the ACT multicultural grants scheme, is in transition after Jacqui Malins relinquished the coordinating role this year. There is now a group overseeing this transition and planning a program of events for 2022. The achievements and contribution of MTMLP have been impressive, which is in large part thanks to the leadership and assiduous voluntary work since its inception by Jacqui. On the [MTMLP Facebook page](#), there are details of an event titled Transporting Words, which was held on 16 April 2021 as part of the Poetic City Festival.
- **ACT Bilingual Education Alliance talk for parents**, was held at Telopea Park School on Wednesday 12 May 2021. This was a valuable session for parents of Telopea students participating in their bilingual French program. Students provided honest and insightful perspectives on the student experience.
- The **National Community Language Schools Association Day** at Albert Hall on Saturday 15 May 2021 was a great success and was well attended.
- **Hawker College Open Night** on Thursday 27 May 2021 was very well attended. We look forward to continuing collaboration with the college as the provider for their language programs other than Chinese.
- **A workshop with ATESOL**, held at Ainslie School on Thursday 3 June 2021, on acknowledging and building on the skills in home languages that children bring with them to school.
- An **ANGLS (Australian Network of Government Language Schools) teleconference** was held on Tuesday 25 May 2021 about the review of Australian Curriculum: Languages. For some notes on the discussion, see below.
- On 13 July, **Jacqui Malins** received the 2021 ACT Multicultural Art, Media or Culture Award for her work with Mother Tongue Multilingual Poetry as part of the ACT Multicultural Awards Ceremony at the Belconnen Arts Centre. Thanks to Mandy Scott and Vesna Cvjeticanin, who were the referees supporting our nomination of Jacqui for the award.



- **An information event for prospective students and their families** was held on Thursday 16 September 2021. For COVID safety, this event took place as a Google Meet teleconference with RSVP registrations beforehand. This worked well, to canvass information and questions with interested students and families and a convenient way for them to access the information without having to travel to a venue for an evening meeting. 
- The main annual **ANGLS conference** was held online this year, on Thursday 26 August 2021, hosted by Lia Tedesco, Principal of the South Australian School of Languages. Ros and I attended the event, as well as some of our CAL teachers and advisory panel members at times when they were able to participate. We thank Lia Tedesco and the ANGLS President Hilary Hughes (NSW School of Languages) for making this possible. The annual ANGLS Conferences are a valuable opportunity to touch base and compare notes with colleagues in schools of languages and languages centres throughout Australia. 
- The ACT Bilingual Education Alliance (ACT BEA) organised a **languages competition**, a video competition titled "Sharing Languages and Cultures" with a closing date of 30 September, for young people in the ACT to create a short video using a language other than English. This was highly successful in terms of engagement. The awards ceremony was held at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre from 4.30pm to 5.30pm on Wednesday 8 December. 
- **A Celebration of Languages Day** was held via Zoom by the ACT Bilingual Education Alliance as an online seminar on Saturday 16 October 2021. ACTBEA organised the event with a series of panel discussions to celebrate languages from several regions in the world and the people who use them. 
- **The CAL End of Year Ceremony** this year will be held in the early evening, from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm on Tuesday 14 December 2021, at Ainslie School, 33 Donaldson Street, Braddon 2612. The agenda will include presentation of certificates of completion for Year 12 students and the Convener's 2021 report. 
- **The Canberra Academy of Languages will run an online Japanese summer school in January 2022**, for students who wish to prepare for commencement in senior secondary Japanese studies at Continuing level. This will be for those who have completed some prior study (in or out of school), but who would like to do a bridging program in the holidays to find out with more certainty whether they are at a level to benefit from the course at that level and to improve their confidence and mastery in areas normally covered through the Australian Curriculum in Years 9-10. The summer school will be open to any interested students, whether they intend ongoing studies in their day school or with CAL. It will take place in the 2nd to 4th weeks of January, with 3 hours online plus 2 hours of homework each week for a total of 15 programmed hours. We are still taking registrations for the summer school, until the end of the first week in January. 

Venue

All CAL languages classes are now based at Ainslie School. Our main venue previously was the Alliance Française de Canberra, but in a good development for AF, their enrolments increased in 2021 and there was a shortage of teaching spaces.


As anticipated, it is highly beneficial in terms of opportunities for staff collaboration to have colleagues delivering our programs at the same site, as well as opportunities for professional connection with colleagues at Ainslie School. We thank Ainslie School Principal, Wendy Cave, and the many staff members at Ainslie who have worked closely with us throughout the year. The partnership is a natural one in terms of strategic location near central Canberra transport hubs and also in terms of the school's languages education agenda.

CAL has provided an LG plasma television display, donated by the CAL Convener, on long-term loan for use at the school in the Japanese room, and a SMART Board and Fuji Xerox copy/printer/scanner, donated to CAL by former Ainslie student Tony Redman and his wife Sheridan, of Sherony Park equestrian centre, for use by CAL and Ainslie School. With support from Rene Zbynovsky, Technical Services Manager at SMART Technologies APAC, and Peter Hill, Director, Visionext, the SMART Board has been set up successfully with digital pen and touch screen functionality.



Scheduling for sessions in 2022, which will be listed on the Programs page on CAL website, will be similar to those for this year, with French, Spanish and Tamil on Wednesday evenings and German and Japanese on Thursday evenings. It is likely that Korean will run on Thursdays at the same times as German and Japanese.

Review of Australian Curriculum: Languages

Lia Tedesco convened a teleconference for ANGLS (Australian Network of Government Language Schools) in preparation for their submission to the review of Australian Curriculum: Languages. Participants were Lia Tedesco, Principal, South Australian School of Languages; Meagan Zander Middle Years Languages Pathways to SACE Coordinator, Open Access College; Angela Natoli, Assistant Principal: Curriculum & Professional Development, Victorian School of Languages; Michelle Kohler, Senior Research Fellow, University of South Australia and Assistant Principal, Teaching and Learning, SA School of Languages; Stacey Stewart, Languages Head of Department, Capricornia School of Distance Education, Rockhampton; and myself. 

Some points from the teleconference discussion:

- Teachers have generally welcomed the simplification that is evident in the new draft for AC: Languages.
- Concerns were raised about the diminished profile of intercultural capability in the new draft.
- The first aim has changed from “develop communicative competence” to “develop linguistic competence”, which is moving away from a fundamental tenet of language teaching to an aim that could be interpreted as knowing more about grammar or being more generally linguistically informed.
- Content descriptions are now more uniform across languages, so for example French and Japanese content descriptions now look very similar.
- Detailed language-specific information has been moved out of the achievement standards and into the language guide; but without the language guide being available, it is difficult to provide valid feedback. Some viewed the separate guide positively, while others saw it as potentially an issue that, as a consequence of having a separate language guide, teachers would have to go to a separate document to map their thinking between the two documents – the guide, moreover, is optional to use.
- This mental mapping also must encompass achievement standards vs content descriptions. As the ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) background document states in an overview titled “What’s changed and why”, the content descriptions have been realigned to revised sub-strands. The four sub-strands have been modified, with a shift from higher order thinking towards a focus on skills.
- What is the future for senior secondary Australian Curriculum Languages? There does not currently appear to be any real prospect of work by ACARA on this. It is a particularly important issue for smaller jurisdictions like the ACT.
- Transition points and points of entry throughout schooling – these are not addressed adequately in terms of what we know about realities of program delivery in local and jurisdictional contexts. The design is predicated on the idea that students participate in a continuum that is either from K to 6 or from K to 10.
- Background speakers and speakers with various levels of proficiency at the starting points of their school-based language education experience – the opportunity does not seem to have been taken to leverage the work done for the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages in defining differentiated learner pathways (first language learner, language revival learner, second language learner).

Future directions

From December 2017 onwards, I have put a series of proposals to ACT government about the need for a central avenue for languages education that supplements provisions through language teaching programs in day schools. The first one was prepared as an input to the “Future of Education” consultation and was submitted in December 2017. I have lodged updated proposals several times since then, including budget submissions in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Some key aspects of these remain essentially the same, with a combination of two recommended strategies:

- A second tier of funding above the current grants to strengthen programs run by community language schools up to Year 10, for those community language schools that sign up to some agreed professional learning standards and curriculum standards.
- Government responsibility for senior secondary languages programs currently run by Canberra Academy of Languages, in a similar way to the practice in other jurisdictions with schools of languages, languages centres and centres for distance education. As outlined in our updated submissions, this would be supported by a memorandum of understanding between CAL and ACT Government, for a seamless transition with detailed preparations leading to implementation for the 2023 school year.

With the broadening of CAL programs to include beginning (in addition to continuing and advanced) languages this year and next year, and with ongoing discussions about languages education in a range of forums, we have been reviewing the CAL Charter, which is at Schedule 2 in our Articles of Association. Changes to be considered by the CAL Advisory Panel in January 2022 include a statement that the Canberra Academy of Languages advocates language learners’ rights – the right to aspire to, and to be supported in achieving, proficiency in more than one language.

Concluding remarks

Congratulations to all our students who have completed their senior secondary languages studies with us this year. Four of them have completed a minor, comprising two semesters, and as mentioned earlier, 11 have finished a major in their chosen language. Two CAL students completed the Goethe exams in German. Another student has done assessment in Level 3 French listening and reading Australian Language Certificates with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). In addition, this year, one of our Tamil students received an award in the ACTBEA Languages Competition, along with an Ainslie School student. They received their awards on 9 December at a ceremony attended by Ainslie Principal Wendy Cave, CR&LF Convenor Mandy Scott, ACTBEA President Kasia Williams, and MLAs Marisa Paterson and Andrew Braddock. Finally, I would like to express my thanks to all of our teachers and advisory panel members for their exemplary contributions throughout this year.

Best wishes to everyone for the summer break and for the new year ahead.

Frank Keighley | Convener, Canberra Academy of Languages, 14 December 2021

Organisational website: <https://cal.act.edu.au> | Resources repository: <https://languages.org.au>