We are pleased to send all of you in the LTP (Language Training Programme) and LCP (Language and Communications Programme) some information about the development of our common project "Harmonization of language learning and assessment standards across LTP/LCP". Please read this newsletter and feel free to contact us (in person, via mail, via virtual meeting) if something is unclear or if you have any comments.

DEFINITION OF THE UN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE AND LPE

We are coordinating the work of an external consultant (highly specialized in the field of second language assessment) to draft a detailed definition of the UNLC (UN Language Competence). The UNLC is understood as the level any staff member should have in the official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) to perform generic or ordinary work-related duties and activities, common to all staff in the Organization. To draft this definition, the consultant will take into account the main existing language frameworks (CEFR, ACTFL, Canadian and Australian frameworks, etc.).

This is the first time we will have a UN-specific definition. It will probably be a 5 - 6 page document, written in a pragmatic, comprehensive way, easily understandable by professionals in any field of work (not only by linguists or teachers of second languages).
The UNLC is directly linked to the LPE. In fact, an internal working group involving several departments at UNHQ has been mandated by higher levels to revamp the current LPE. In order to create a valid and reliable exam, a clear definition of what should be tested is essential as the UNLC definition will become the level to be assessed by the LPE from 2019.
In the meantime the group has established a plan to optimize the existing LPE.

In the process of revamping the LPE, we should keep in mind that the name “Language Proficiency Examination” is mandated and cannot be changed. The LPE also has to be a tool capable to assess proficiency level for all types of work (all UN staff).

**PROJECT “HARMONIZATION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT STANDARDS ACROSS LTP/LCP”**

The new definition of the UNLC gives the opportunity to the LTP - LCP to establish a common framework and harmonise the content of their programmes in the long term.

The first and most important steps of the harmonization project (for 2017) are the following:
-- Agree on our own, common (LTP-LCP internal) definition of a few terms (curriculum, syllabus, course programme...) to ensure that LTP-LCP members are on the same page.
-- Open lines of communication and sharing among LTP-LCP (same departments, cross-departments) to get to know each other better and identify similarities and opportunities
-- Based on the UN Language Competence, agree on a common definition of new UN levels of reference for learning and teaching purposes and come up with a new name to define them, e.g., “UN 1”, “UN 2”, etc.

The end result of this long-term project will be a new UN framework for language training. Learning and teaching formats, department-specific and tailor-made courses will still be decided on by each duty station (according to the local and ever-changing reality, resources, constraints, client needs...).
The project will be continued through 2018. Other duty stations with language programmes will be integrated into the project as soon as is feasible: UNON (Nairobi), UNOV (Vienna), etc. Eventually the new framework will be adopted and used by all offices and duty stations in the UN Secretariat.

**WORK PROCESS**

You (LTP and LCP teams) will be updated at every important stage - and at least once a term- and given the opportunity to participate with as much feedback as your workload allows. Before the Harmonization Group makes any important decision, every individual colleague or department will be consulted in a timely manner to ensure that we are all involved in shaping the framework of our future language programmes.

**PROJECT UPDATES (TERM 174, APRIL - JULY 2017) AND NEXT STEPS**

**End of April:**
- Almudena Rueda (Sp), Jerome Quentin (Fr), Mary Regan (En) joined the project.
- Felipe Martin and the external consultant on UNLC have discussed the project and agreed orally on some of its parameters.

**Mid-May:**
- Send a survey to all LTP-LCP personnel to get feedback and input on the proposed definitions of 3-4 terms (curriculum, course programme, syllabus...)

**End-of-May:**
- Collate results of survey and achieve consensus on the use and meaning of these terms.
- Complete paperwork to hire external consultant.
Share internal documents (course descriptions, syllabi, material, etc.), find similarities between LTP- LCP regular courses (language specific programmes).
- External consultant is hired.

**June:**
Give feedback on the consultant's initial drafts of the UN Language Competence, to be incorporated into successive drafts.
06 - 09 June:
- Anna Sanvisens will travel to UNOG to meet in person with LTP colleagues to discuss many topics, including the initial (internal) draft of the UN Language Competence definition and similarities, differences and challenges between the departments (e.g. French in LTP and French in LCP, etc.).

1st July:
- Established deadline to receive a finalized draft of the UN Language Competence

September 2017:
- Increase the number of teachers directly involved in the project

Mid-September 2017:
- Fabienne Pairon will travel to New York to meet in person with LCP colleagues to discuss many topics, including the global feedback received on the UN Language Competence definition during the summer, the UN levels (e.g. UN 1, UN 2, etc.) and to draft a precise timeline on how to work in each department to continue the harmonization project.

Thanks for reading and staying updated on our common project. We look forward to your feedback on the proposed definitions of some terms (a survey will be sent to you soon), and we welcome your comments and questions at any time.

Fabienne and Anna
with Almudena, Mary and Jerome