



Taking modern languages to the next level

In a world in which geographical distances are reduced by technology and media, the ability to speak additional languages and communicate with other cultures is more important than ever

The College is very aware of the multi-cultural society to which its students will progress and this is reflected in the breadth and teaching expertise of its Modern Languages Department.

Just one example of the importance of modern languages is the expected growth in the number of French speakers globally from the current 200 million to over 400 million by 2025, largely due to the economic growth of developing African countries, and a similar trend is predicted with regard to Spanish in South and Central America.

Furthermore, many might not be aware of the importance of German, which remains the most widely spoken language in Europe with over 90 million speakers and is also the third most popular language used on the Internet, ahead of Spanish, French and Chinese. German remains the most desirable foreign language in job applications in the UK.

WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION

Epsom College, under the guidance of its new Head of Modern Languages, Martin Fries, is in the process of implementing internationally recognised examinations to add to its domestic ones.

The Modern Languages Department has already begun teaching the DELF-DALF (Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française – Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française) diploma series in French, which provides further qualifications for the best students at IGCSE, AS and A2 level, as well as the German DaF (Deutsch als Fremdsprache). It will soon implement the teaching of the Spanish DELE (Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera) diploma.

These diplomas of the European Reference Framework for Language are recognised worldwide by universities, employers, governments and international institutions.

Currently, pupils in the M4 year group study French and one other from the range of German, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish and take one or two languages through to IGCSE (for French, German and

Spanish) and GCSE (for Mandarin). All four languages are also offered at AS/A2 level.

In the 5th form, all pupils sit final language examinations in the four key skill sets, namely listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing and speaking.

In order to stretch the strongest students, the top sets in French will now also sit the DELF B1 exam, with the German and Spanish equivalents being available by individual arrangement.

At AS and A2 level, French, German and Spanish are offered as main public exams, with DELF-DALF, DaF and DELE available as optional further qualifications. Mandarin Chinese is assessed through the Cambridge Pre-U.

PRESTIGIOUS UNIVERSITIES

The purpose of the DELF-DALF is to provide students with more "immediate" language skills, which would serve them better if they were in a foreign country conversing with locals. The course goes from Level A1 (where the student would be able to master basics, such as making an easy purchase in a shop, ordering food and drink, reading basic signs and understanding basic instructions) to DELF B2 (where the broad spectrum of a language is to be mastered, including all tenses and the subjunctive).

The DELF B2 is the required level for admission of foreign undergraduates into the most prestigious French universities, such as La Sorbonne in Paris, where students are required to follow complex lectures and submit essays and dissertations in French to the same level as native students. Epsom College tutors for levels B1-C1.

DELE is the official accreditation of the degree of fluency in the Spanish Language, issued and recognised by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. Like the DELF-DALF, it takes students from a beginner's level all the way through to mastering the language. In many countries, DELE has been adopted by departments of



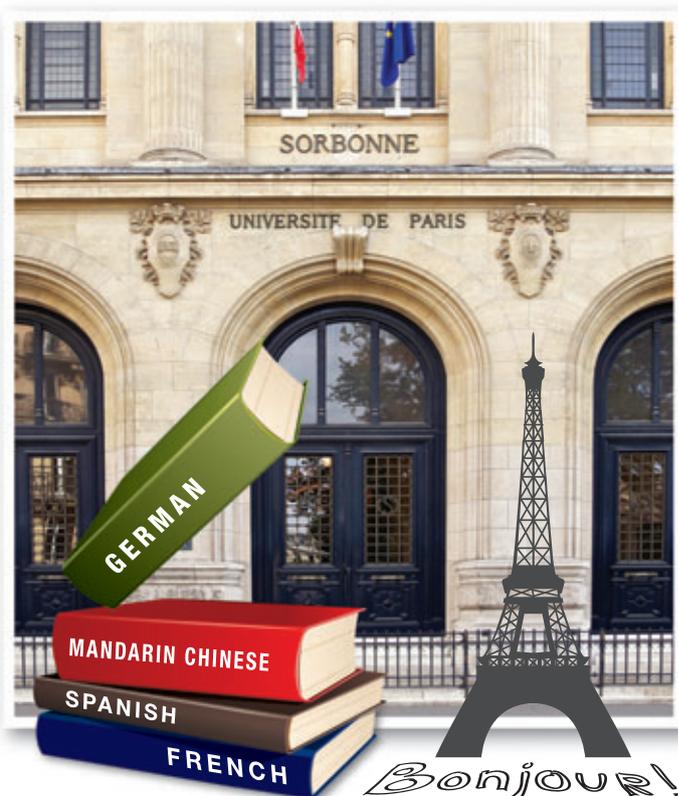
education and official institutions of learning as a complement to their own assessment programmes. Most relevantly, the qualification has a prestigious place on UCAS forms and is highly regarded by many UK universities.

HIGH LEVEL QUALIFICATION

Martin Fries is a strong advocate of the new qualifications and their support of the IGCSE exams and preparation for AS/A2 level. "It is my belief that in terms of pure language skills, a strong DALF C1 candidate is much stronger than a good A-Level candidate. Some prestigious UK universities have started considering the DALF C1 as a determining factor for admission of their students simply because it represents language use at graduate level and is proof of a truly academic candidate," he said.

Martin advocates the practical application of Modern Languages without losing sight of the literary and linguistic background. Having graduated from Cologne University and the Open University with degrees in English, French and Latin, he took up a teaching post in the Modern Languages and Classics Department at Uppingham School, just outside of Leicester, in 2001. He was appointed Head of French in 2005 and subsequently as the school's Head of Modern Languages in 2011.

He joined Epsom last September as a fully qualified DELF-DALF examiner for Levels A1-C2.



Some prestigious UK universities have started considering the DALF C1 as a determining factor for admission of their students simply because it represents language use at graduate level and is proof of a truly academic candidate, says Martin Fries