LOTE Review Executive Summary

The LOTE review 2014-2015 aims to capture the everyday work of teachers and students participating in Languages other than English (LOTE), while articulating the current structural designs of the curriculum, enrolment history, stakeholder perceptions and prevailing pedagogies across a range of language experiences.

Using an action research approach, a facilitator and review team were established to create a collaborative and participatory process that aimed to draw upon the specialist skills and experiences of LOTE teachers currently working at the College. Teachers outside the LOTE department were also engaged in the process.

The review included six components:

1) literature review
2) college analysis
3) stakeholder survey
4) structural design review
5) prevailing pedagogies review
6) recommendations.

The literature review demonstrated a lack of current data associated with enrolments in Australia. The literature highlighted declines in student participation throughout formal years of schooling, with small increases in community based language programs. The literature also highlighted the expectations associated with the Australian Curriculum and International Baccalaureate programme.

The College analysis showed declines in student enrolments consistent with national trends. The analysis also demonstrated the impact on student participation associated with offering two scripted languages in the curriculum and the low up-take of languages in Years 9 and 11. The analysis showed excellent results in student achievement associated with the Australian Language Certificate.

The stakeholder survey captured the desires of parents who wish to see Asian languages valued; however, they sought the addition of European languages to the curriculum in the primary years. Spanish was the most favoured new addition, with general agreement from both parents and staff that languages should be compulsory up to Year 10. The majority of parents and staff acknowledge the value of languages in developing international citizenship capabilities and students felt that Mandarin was more difficult to learn in the primary years. 14.8% of students sampled from Years 5-12 were engaged in community-based language programmes or private tutoring outside the College.

The structural design component reviewed a small number of ACT schools, highlighting the strong preference for offering both beginner and continuing languages across the secondary years and providing co-curricular opportunities for new languages. The issue of compulsory languages in secondary schools was also raised in the discourse.

A case study of eight teachers was used to gain knowledge and insight into quality teaching and learning practices associated with LOTE in attempt to uncover prevailing pedagogies. High levels of explicit teaching were evident in the study, driven by careful sequencing of prior learning and new knowledge, understandings and skills. A strong commitment to differentiation in the classroom was present and modelling, repetition, practice, risk-taking, correction and accuracy featured highly in all learning experiences.