Thriving in the New World of Higher Education

***You are the Head of Languages? How do you respond?***

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Marketing your course and the university

1. In 2009 your university was ranked 4th for Modern Languages in the Times league tables. This year your department is ranked 17th.
2. A student on his year abroad has become the victim of a violent crime. The story is all over the local newspapers.
3. At an open day you overhear three potential students talking over lunch. They have all visited a rival institution, the University of Margate, for an open day and are saying they would like to go there.
4. A long standing competitor in the next town announces that it is no longer going to offer modern language degrees.

Widening participation and access

1. You are conducting a junior colleague’s annual performance review. The colleague’s research is behind schedule, but she has done 23 visits to local schools in the past 12 months. Nobody has said she has to do this, but she is committed to the university’s stated widening participation policy, and no one else ever volunteers.
2. Your department has a strong working relationship with a school in a deprived area of your city. Colleagues run language taster days and talk to pupils. The Dean has told you to scale back this relationship as it is taking up a lot of time and very few pupils from that school get into higher education, let alone your university.
3. A former student who works for a prestigious investment bank asks if you can recommend any of your students for a summer internship at his bank. The internship would not be paid, but will be good for the employability of the person who does it.
4. You are under pressure from the Dean to increase your standard A-level offer from BBB to AAB in order to increase your university’s position in the league tables. The Dean has also said that the university wants to benefit from the lack of a quota on AAB students. However, you have had problems filling places for the past five years and this could make the situation worse.

Student fees and the Year Abroad

1. You meet a colleague from a competitor university at a conference. He reveals that his university is planning to charge students on the year abroad £2,000 whereas you will be charging £4,000.
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3. At a meeting of the staff-student liaison committee, the student representatives say that they want more contact with staff.
4. Your university includes membership of the Sports Centre in its £9,000-a-year tuition fees. However, the Sports Centre is on the university’s largest campus three miles away. Students complain that they are being discriminated against because their course is on the smaller humanities campus.