

## Arabic Language Training

The FCO's Diplomatic Language Laboratory was established at Westminster in 1965 and became the Diplomatic Service Language Centre (DSLCC) in 1968, when the FCO began the teaching of Arabic to its officers. From the 1990s, between 250-400 officers per year received language training at the Centre until its closure in October 2007. Since October 2007 language training suppliers in London have been commissioned in accordance with procurement procedures and managed by the Human Resources Directorate. We do not hold administration information prior to October 2007.

The FCO currently has a framework arrangement with 15 language providers. The framework is also used to provide training for other government departments and the House of Commons.

Arabic is one of the critical languages that directly helps us to achieve FCO strategic priorities and helps us to support the network.

### Types of Courses

FCO levels have been mapped against the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages. The list below is attached for reference.

#### CEFR levels and the FCO equivalents:

<b>A1</b>	<b>Basic user</b>
<b>A2 Confidence level</b>	
<b>B1</b>	<b>Independent user</b>
<b>B2</b>	
<b>C1 Operational level</b>	<b>Proficient user</b>
<b>C2 Extensive level</b>	

Arabic is one of the FCO's priority languages for training, and the teaching of it is divided into several different training schemes:

1. Arabic Hard Language Programme – Pre-posting intensive courses bringing students, who have the essential requirement of proficiency in the language to fulfil their future position, to C1 level.

These courses are very intensive in nature and students are in full time language training for approximately 15 months. The officers are normally beginners when they start training and study to Operational level. Many of these officers will go on to study to Extensive level (CEFR level C2) through further in-country training.

This is a scheduled group programme which runs according to demand, approximately a couple of times a year. Groups of officers study for approximately six months in the UK and then go overseas to continue their studies for another nine months at various approved suppliers. The total contact hours are 1200 the delivery is 4 hours per day, 5 days per week. It assumes 3 hours of self study per day.

An example of a Hard Language Programme timetable is attached in Annexe 1.

2. Confidence Level for officers - Pre-posting intensive courses bringing students who have an essential requirement of basic use of the language to fulfil their future position to A2 level. These courses are very intensive in nature and students are in full time language training. The officers are normally beginners when they start training and study to confidence level, which has been mapped against the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages at A2 level, basic user. The total contact hours are 240, the delivery is 4 hours per day, 5 days per week. It assumes 3 hours of self study per day. The course takes approximately 12 weeks.
3. Ad-hoc Arabic training – some one-to-one Arabic training takes place for those officers who already have some level of language and need refresher courses, or for those who are not training to the same level as the Hard Language Programme courses.
4. Confidence level Arabic training, non-essential (equivalent to CEFR level A2, basic user) – this training is offered to spouses/ partners of officers and officers who do not have an essential requirement for their job and will be/ are living in Arabic-speaking countries. The trainees attend group classes at colleges or universities locally to where they are posted, or in the UK before they go overseas, outside their working hours.
5. Research Analysts Language Training. Research Analysts use the framework of language providers to arrange tailor-made courses delivered on a one-to-one basis or groups.
6. MPs training. MPs use the framework of language training providers. Their training is usually booked in blocks of 10 hours on a one-to-one basis. This period of training is often extended.

### **Speaker Slots**

In the FCO, certain jobs based in Arabic speaking countries require a certain level of linguistic skills, these jobs are known as speaker slots. Officers in speaker slots are required to train to levels A2, C1 or C2 of the CEFR.

### **UK Training Stage**

Currently there are six approved suppliers of Arabic training on a framework contract for providing training to officers studying in London. They are:

Communicaid Ltd  
King's College London  
London School of Economics  
Rainbow Language in Business  
School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London  
World Language Consultants

A sample of a UK course programme is attached at Annexe 2.

### **Numbers of Courses and Trainees**

These are the total number of officers trained in Arabic, each financial year, from 2004 to 2009.

2004/05 - 49  
2005/06 - 95  
2006/07 - 59  
2007/08 - 47  
2008/09 – 33 so far

#### Confidence Level Arabic Training – Non-essential

From November 2007, there have been 10 students.

#### Research Analysts Language Training.

There are currently 5 tailor made courses happening.

#### MPs training

There are currently 2 tailor made courses happening.

#### Hard Language Programme

Officers who study on the Hard Language Programme spend nine months studying overseas. The current approved training centres overseas are:

Kalimat in Cairo, Egypt  
University of Jordan Language Centre in Amman, Jordan  
British Council in Damascus, Syria

#### **Staff with Arabic skills**

From financial year 2005/06 to date, Arabic has always been one of the four languages most frequently taught.

As of July 2008 the FCO's management information system recorded 267 officers with a qualification at various levels in Arabic. This represents 4.53% of the total UK-based staff.

In December 2004, a study was conducted into the future of Arabic-speaking staff in the FCO. This is also attached for information.

#### **Cost of Arabic Training**

In financial year 2005-06 £459,104 was spent on Arabic training in the UK and overseas

In financial year 2006-07 £361,216 was spent on Arabic training in the UK and overseas

The management information for financial year 2007-08 is recorded in such a way that we estimate that isolating the expenditure on Arabic training would exceed the appropriate limit of 3.5 days. This limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provisions for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. We will not, therefore, be processing this part of the request further.

