

University of Toronto Mississauga

Change in Departmental Name

Department of French, German and Italian to become Department of Language Studies

The “Department of French, German and Italian” (FGI) proposes to change its name to the “Department of Language Studies.” The department will continue to specialize and conduct research in its core areas: French, German, Italian, and linguistics. Its mandate will be expanded to include oversight of the delivery of a broader range of language courses that will support the academic mission of U of T Mississauga and the programmatic requirements of cognate disciplines seeking language study options for their students.

Background on the Department

The Department of French, German and Italian is the second largest undergraduate language department at the University of Toronto and one of the largest departments of its kind in Canada. Historically, its curriculum has been rooted in the traditions of three major European languages, (including one of Canada’s official languages) and the field of linguistics. The department is recognized as a leader in literary and critical scholarship, interdisciplinary innovation in curriculum and technology, and for its tradition of excellence in teaching and pedagogical research.

Faculty members in FGI have had a continuing interest in curriculum development and have done much research based on direct experiment in the field of applied pedagogy. The department is at the forefront of innovation in language teaching, computer assisted language learning, and media technology. This has resulted in the creation of new courses, development of educational software, and numerous important publications (numerous language textbooks and educational software used in institutions all over the world).

In summary, this department’s strong foundation in language research and teaching, coupled with U of T Mississauga’s need to amplify the range of language study options for our students, has led to a process of rethinking the department’s mandate, culminating in the current proposal.

Rationale for the Proposal

Over the last few years, the demand for language study options has increased at U of T Mississauga. As one example, the Department of Historical Studies has re-oriented its curricula to focus on world history, religions, and cultures. In recent years, that department has sought on its own to enrich its redefined programs of study with courses in Arabic, Persian, Latin, and Sanskrit. In the last two rounds of the Academic Initiative Fund, the department has been successful in obtaining funding to consolidate its course offerings in these and other languages, including Hindi/Urdu and Chinese.

Recognizing that Historical Studies was not unique and that the demand for language study options was increasing at U of T Mississauga, the Dean asked the Department of French, German and Italian to consider whether it might assume responsibility for oversight of language teaching

in general. The Dean recognized that other departments do not often have the requisite expertise to deliver language courses effectively. On the other hand, with its proven track record of high quality teaching and its expertise in language teaching pedagogy, FGI is well-positioned to provide leadership in language teaching to the benefit of the entire campus.

At a recent retreat, the Department of French, German and Italian embraced this vision and articulated a global approach to language study programming that harmonized with the Dean's objectives, served institutional goals, and was in accord with the educational needs of 21st century Canada.

In developing this proposal, we examined a broad range of models for language programming at peer institutions. In the model we propose to adopt, the Department of Language Studies will retain the core research strengths and foci of the current Department of French, German, and Italian. It will simultaneously oversee and direct programming for the wider range of languages mentioned in this proposal. We anticipate that the new language options will be offered in sequences ranging from one to four courses, depending on need and availability of instructional resources. There are no plans at this time to introduce minor, major, or specialist programs in the new language options.

Benefits of the Expansion of Language Study Options for our Students

There are numerous merits to expanding our range of language options. In implementing this proposal, U of T Mississauga will:

- Broaden the range of linguistic and academic choices for our students.
- Address the linguistic needs of non-language departments (i.e. Anthropology, Historical Studies, Geography, Economics) who wish to enrich their undergraduate programs or the possibilities for their students with offerings of language study related to area studies.
- Increase our students' competitiveness for graduate programs where language preparation is desirable.
- Support the Dean's goal of ensuring that language instruction at U of T Mississauga is delivered at a high level of quality.
- Prepare our students for professional advancement in an emerging global economy where proficiency in more than one language can be highly advantageous.
- Provide all students, regardless of their background, an opportunity to learn languages of significant historical and religious significance.
- Expand the horizon of possibilities for undergraduate students, equipping them with valuable linguistic skills that will in turn enable them to engage in meaningful research-intensive opportunities such as the Research Opportunity Program.
- Redress the disparity in language options available to our students as compared with those available to students on the St. George campus. Currently over 40 languages are offered at the St. George Campus, whereas students at U of T Mississauga have had until recently

limited options for learning non-European languages (or even Spanish, the most taught language in North America) . Because of enrolment controls, our students have had limited opportunities to pursue these language interests on the St. George campus.

- Address a more general need at the University of Toronto to provide graduate students with the widest range of language study options. We expect that the language choices and the method of course delivery adopted at U of T Mississauga will attract graduate students from across the three campuses.

In addition to providing direct academic benefits to students, instruction in these languages enables the University to deepen its connections with some of the most vibrant diasporic communities in the GTA and supports the University's commitment to language education.

Resources

Both New College and U of T Mississauga have been awarded funding from the Academic Initiatives Fund for the appointment of term-limited positions in South Asian languages (Sanskrit and Hindi/Urdu). AIF funding was also awarded to U of T Mississauga for the teaching of Chinese and Arabic. We are currently searching for partners on the St. George and/or Scarborough campuses. Latin is currently funded by the U of T Mississauga Dean's Office. Once the funding from the AIF is terminated - and in the absence of any similar funding sources - it is expected that language courses will be taught by sessional and term-limited appointees, funded by enrolment revenue.

U of T Mississauga also received AIF funding for a web-based hub for tri-campus language instruction, and for tri-campus workshops on language instruction. The hub will collect and organize online resources for the teaching of languages. In addition to audio, video and multimedia courseware, the language hub will include dictionaries, writing systems, grammars, lessons, and placement tests. The hub is designed for easy use by language learners and will be a vital asset in the support of the full range of language options being proposed for the Department of Language Studies.

To promote close tri-campus collaboration amongst language instructors and to develop a distinctive approach to language pedagogy, language instructors will be brought together for semiannual workshops to discuss various issues related to language teaching at the University of Toronto. These workshops will focus particularly on web-based teaching technology and discussion of resources aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of language teaching.

The Department of French, German, and Italian currently has two administrative staff (2.0 FTE; an Academic Counselor and a Departmental Secretary) to support the work of the department as it is currently organized. In the short term, no further staff will be added to support the expanded mandate of the department, but workload will be monitored to assess whether additional resources are required.

Major changes are not foreseen in the tenured faculty's research foci. Present tenured faculty will retain their research agendas but individuals with relevant expertise will help to provide leadership and direction, as needed, to the new areas of programming that will be part of the new department.