



**FOR APPROVAL**

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**TO:** Academic Board

**SPONSOR:** Trevor Young, Vice-President & Provost  
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**PRESENTER:** As above  
**CONTACT INFO:**

**DATE:** May 16, 2024 for May 23, 2024

**AGENDA ITEM:** 11

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

Change in the name of the Faculty of Arts and Science's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures to Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures.

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

Name changes in academic divisions (excluding namings) are considered by the Academic Board and confirmed by the Executive Committee. (Academic Board Terms of Reference, Section 5.2.7)

**GOVERNANCE PATH:**

1. **Academic Board [For Approval] (May 23, 2024)**
2. Executive Committee [For Confirmation] (June 18, 2024)

**PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

The change to the name of the Faculty of Arts and Science's *Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures* received approval from the Faculty of Arts and Science's Faculty Council on April 17, 2024.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

This is a proposal from the Faculty of Arts and Science to change the name of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, to the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, effective July 1, 2024. This academic unit is also a graduate unit that will similarly change its name from: the Department of Slavic

Languages and Literatures, to the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures.

The proposed change is motivated by a need to create a more inclusive academic environment for undergraduate students who may have felt marginalized by a unit name that suggests a focus on Slavic languages and cultures. The proposed unit name change supports recent modifications to the Department's suite of undergraduate programs to fully integrate Estonian, Finnish, and Slavic disciplinary areas, in response to recommendations from the most recent UTQAP review. The proposed name change also aligns with the University's Three Priorities; the more inclusive, geographic name signals the unit's interest in engaging with a wide range of international partners as well as diaspora communities within the GTA.

The Department offers the following academic programs: Specialist, Major, and Minor in Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, BA; Minor in Slavic and East European Literature in Translation(Arts); Master of Arts in Slavic Languages and Literatures, M.A.; Doctor of Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures, Ph.D.; Minor in Estonian Studies (Arts) (admissions suspended; approved to close); Major and Minor in Finnish Studies, BA (admissions suspended; approved to close); Minor in Russian Literature in Translation (Arts) (admissions suspended; approved to close)

Consultation outside the Faculty of Arts and Science has taken place with the Faculty of Law, University of Mississauga, and University of Toronto Scarborough.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Any additional financial obligations resulting from this change will be met at the Faculty level.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Be It Resolved:

THAT subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee,

THAT the name of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures be changed to the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, effective July 1, 2024.

**DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:**

**Proposal**



# Slavic Languages & Literatures UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

## Summary

Current Unit Name: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Proposed Unit Name: Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures

Proponent: Leonid Livak, Chair, Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures

Academic Programs Associated with the Department:

Specialist in Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, BA

Major in Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, BA

Minor in Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures (Arts)

Minor Slavic and East European Literature in Translation (Arts)

Master of Arts in Slavic Languages and Literatures, M.A.

Doctor of Philosophy in Slavic Languages and Literatures, Ph.D.

Minor in Estonian Studies (Arts) (admissions suspended; approved to close)

Major in Finnish Studies, BA (admissions suspended; approved to close)

Minor in Finnish Studies (Arts) (admissions suspended; approved to close)

Minor in Russian Literature in Translation (Arts) (admissions suspended; approved to close)

Proposed Effective Date: July 1, 2024

Version Date: March 19, 2024

## Overview

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, in the Faculty of Arts & Science (FAS), is **proposing to change its name to Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures**. The academic unit in question is also a graduate unit and it will similarly change its name from Slavic Languages and Literatures to Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures. The new name will better reflect the breadth of the department's programs of study, setting the course for future curriculum diversification and new faculty hires.

The department's current name is reflective of a time when our academic unit offered programs focused on Slavic languages only and structured its curriculum around literary studies. Today, at the undergraduate level, the department offers courses in seven language areas, two of which – Estonian and Finnish – are not Slavic. Furthermore, the research and teaching expertise of the department's continuing faculty goes well beyond literary studies, encompassing cultural and intellectual history as well as many forms of creative cultural expression such as film, theatre, folklore, visual and plastic arts. The proposed name change ensures the scholarly and curricular breadth of the department is evident in its name.

## Rationale

The department has recently modified its undergraduate curriculum, fully integrating Estonian, Finnish, and Slavic disciplinary areas into its suite of Minor, Major, and Specialist programs of study with a strong comparative component. The modified undergraduate programs have been renamed **Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures**. These modifications were approved by FAS in April 2023 and will take effect in March 2024. The proposed unit name change will synchronize the department's name with that of its main suite of undergraduate programs. At the graduate level, the current program name –Slavic Languages and Literatures (MA and PhD) – will remain unchanged, because we do not offer graduate instruction in non-Slavic language areas, and literary studies remain the focus of our graduate programs. Hence, no changes to the MA and PhD program names are required.

The modification of our undergraduate curriculum was motivated in part by the need to create a more inclusive academic environment for our undergraduate students, some of whom felt marginalized by virtue of studying non-Slavic languages and cultures in an academic unit that limited its pedagogical mission to Slavic areas only. Our modified undergraduate curriculum enhances communication among students in different language and culture areas, providing a greater sense of community and creating more cohesive student cohorts. The department's proposed renaming, much like the renaming of our undergraduate programs, will signal to students of Estonian and Finnish that they are an integral part of our academic unit's intellectual life and teaching agenda. The proposed renaming will also send a welcome and long-overdue signal to the donors who have been generously supporting the teaching of Estonian and Finnish at the University of Toronto.

The proposed name change will chart the course for the department's future, especially as concerns opportunities for growth. Consultations with students in the run-up to the aforementioned reform of our undergraduate curriculum have shown much interest in those non-Slavic areas in Eastern Europe which are not currently represented in the department's curriculum (Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian). The very flexible structure of the modified undergraduate programs in Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, presently composed of seven language and culture areas (Czech/Slovak, Estonian, Finnish, Polish, Russian, South Slavic, Ukrainian), allows us to add more areas in the future, provided we can secure appropriate donor funding. The department's new name will facilitate our fundraising efforts by signaling that our curriculum is open to non-Slavic language and culture areas in Eastern Europe.

Finally, the department's proposed name change reflects the University of Toronto's priorities in 1) leveraging our location; 2) strengthening international partnerships; and 3) reinventing undergraduate education. 1) By virtue of being more inclusive, the new name will signal our unit's readiness to engage with the GTA's East-European diasporic communities by expanding our language and culture curriculum with help from local donors. 2) The department's new name will also facilitate the building of international partnerships, hitherto limited to institutions and programs in Slavic countries. The department and the university are currently in the process of formalizing one such partnership with the Estonian ministry of education, and there is every reason to believe that more such international collaboration opportunities will arise, once the department signals through name change that it is open to the teaching and research of non-Slavic cultures in Eastern Europe. 3) Our recently completed program modifications reimagine undergraduate education by predicating it on greater disciplinary and geographic inclusivity and comparativity. The department's new name will reflect this paradigmatic curricular shift.

## **Disciplinary Context**

Our academic unit's evolution follows a general international trend, as reflected in the recent name changes of Slavic departments at peer institutions that have similarly integrated non-Slavic language areas from Eastern Europe into their core curriculum and expanded their teaching and research expertise to all forms of creative cultural expression.

For example, Indiana University at Bloomington and Ohio State University have renamed their departments of Slavic Languages and Literatures into Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures. Other examples include University College London (UCL), which houses the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, and University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), which has recently renamed its Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures: it is now called Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Languages and Cultures.

Our unit's research and teaching profile would be best served by the formula "Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures." This differentiates our unit from that of UCL, where the term "Studies" includes political and social sciences, which are absent from our department's expertise; and from UCLA, since the term "Eurasian" would be misleading in our case, as we do not teach or research any geographic area that falls under the Eurasian classification.

## **Consultations**

The proposed name change was discussed and unanimously accepted by our academic unit's continuing faculty at the departmental meeting on September 18, 2023.

In October, the department contacted by e-mail all undergraduate students currently enrolled in its programs of study (EST/FIN/SLA), sharing with them the September draft of this name change proposal and

soliciting their opinions and feedback on the matter. At the same time, the department reached out to all graduate students in its MA and PhD programs, asking them to share their views on the proposed renaming. We have also contacted by e-mail the chairs and directors of cognate U of T departments (English, French, Germanic Languages & Literatures, History, Italian Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Spanish & Portuguese), extra-departmental units (Centre for Jewish Studies, Centre for European, Russian & Eurasian Studies, Centre for Comparative Literature, and Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies), and the Petro Jacyk Resource Center within the U of T Libraries system. The e-mail, containing the September draft of the name change proposal, solicited the opinions and feedback of our colleagues in cognate units. The department also shared its renaming plans with community donors and stakeholders, for awareness. The September draft of this name change proposal was communicated by e-mail to the following: the Canadian Friends of Finland Education Foundation; the Estonian community (through the Estonian studies chair Prof. Andres Kasekamp, U of T Department of History); the Canadian Foundation for Ukrainian Studies; the Petro Jacyk Education Foundation; the Petro Jacyk Program for the Study of Ukraine; the Chair of Ukrainian Studies Foundation; the Council for the Support of Polish Studies; the Serbian Brothers Scholarship Foundation; the Masaryk Memorial Institute and the Czech program donors.

Reactions to the department's proposed name change have been uniformly positive. Cognate units, undergraduate and graduate students have expressed no concerns or reservations about the proposed name change. Among the more detailed responses, the director of the Petro Jacyk Resource Centre, Dr. Ksenya Kiebusinski, commented that the proposed change "will make [her] work at the [Robarts] library easier, not having to justify why we buy material from small eastern European countries that are not reflected in the general descriptions of departments, programs, or centers. I only see positive outcomes from this modification." The Chair of the History Department, Dr. Alison Smith, having consulted with her Associate Chairs Undergraduate and Graduate, wrote that the proposed name change "made sense for your department and should be a good thing for your students." The Chair of the French Department, Dr. Anne-Marie Brousseau, wrote: "I totally support the change, for all the reasons you put forward in the rationale." No revisions to the proposal have been necessary as a result of consultations.

A December 2023 draft of the proposal was shared with the Dean's Offices of UTM and UTSC for circulation within their offices and to pertinent UTM and UTSC units. UTM's Department of Language Studies, Department of Historical Studies, and Department of Anthropology received the draft and responded that they had no concerns or comments. UTSC's Department of Historical and Cultural Studies and Department of Language Studies received the draft, and no feedback or questions were received.

### **Impact of Department name change on resources**

The proposed name change will positively impact undergraduate student experience by furthering our goal to integrate students in Estonian and Finnish language and culture areas into the mainstream of the department's academic life and extra-curricular activities. The new name will send a strong message that students in non-Slavic areas of study are part and parcel of the department's intellectual community. The new name will have no impact on graduate student experience, since we currently do not offer non-Slavic language and culture curriculum at the graduate level. However, the department name that appears on graduate students' transcripts will be changed.

The new name will further facilitate the department's community outreach in the GTA, allowing us to engage with diasporic groups originating from non-Slavic countries in Eastern Europe. It will also help the department build new international collaborations with universities and academic programs in the non-Slavic countries of Eastern Europe.

The proposed name change will have no impact on the department's teaching resources, administrative staff, space, or equipment. Our undergraduate and graduate curriculum will continue to be delivered as before. After the change is approved, we will email all cognate units, all current and recent students, and all the department's faculty. The Chair will write a statement for the department's website discussing the change. At the same time, our staff will modify accordingly the departmental website, departmental signature and letterhead, promotional literature (e.g., for the U of T fall campus day), as well as our academic unit's entries in the A&S Undergraduate Calendar and School of Graduate Studies Calendar and timetables. The resources needed to update the department's publications will be minimal and supported through existing staff and departmental officers.

**Development & Governance Steps**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Date</b>
Pre-Governance: Incorporation of consolidated central feedback, coordinated by VPAP Office	February 2024
Pre-Governance: Provost's Advisory Group meeting for discussion and feedback	March 13, 2024
A&S Graduate Curriculum Committee for consideration	March 28, 2024
Arts & Science Council for recommendation	April 17, 2024
Academic Board for approval	May 23, 2024
Executive Committee for confirmation	June 18, 2024