

January 27, 2019

To: Rebecca Aanerud, Acting Dean, Graduate School

From: Geoffrey Turnovsky, Associate Professor and Chair of French and Italian Studies



Re: Interim report in response to 10-year report from 2016

The Graduate School Council seconded the Review Committee's initial recommendation that FIS provide an Interim Report after 3 years, to update the Council on the state of the graduate programs in French and Italian Studies. The Review Committee Report from December 2015 highlighted a series of challenges faced by FIS graduate programs, which includes MAs in French and Italian, and a PhD in French, and made a number of recommendations. These were to

- "redraft requirements" in order to simplify and streamline them
- "replenish the numbers of graduate students through active recruiting with attractive funding packages"
- "communicate a strong upbeat enthusiastic message" by updating the website
- "be aware of positive employment opportunities for professions in teaching institutions that are not necessary R1"

I would say, from the beginning, that colleagues in FIS were enthusiastically in favor of the first recommendation to streamline requirements. We have, however, not been in favor of increasing our graduate student numbers, due to a number of factors. We have been ambivalent, as a result, about the project of "rebranding," and unlike the revision of requirements, we have been slower to act on this recommendation.

The memo from Deans Eaton and Aanerud from May 19, 2016, asked that we respond to three specific issues, with respect to the evolution of graduate programs in the wake of the 10-year report. The memo asked that we "describe how the department has worked to streamline requirements for the graduate programs" and how we have emphasized "interdisciplinary opportunities for graduate students." The memo also asked that we "address the issue of funding for graduate students," though I admit to not being as clear to what specific issue this is in reference to.

Streamlining requirements

We were entirely supportive of this recommendation; indeed, we'd been discussing ways to accomplish this before the 10-year review, so we were well positioned to begin the process

as soon as we received the report. We discussed the changes and approved the adjustments in a March 2016 meeting of the Graduate Faculty. Specifically, we decided:

- To streamline the period distribution in French and Italian. Previously, students in the French MA program were required to complete “four of seven” courses in designated periods/centuries, from the middle ages to the 21st century. We reduced this to an expectation that students take at least two courses covering material largely from pre-1800.
- The old period distributions were geared towards sustained doctoral work and towards an MA exam designed to test students’ preparation for this. With the repurposing of the program towards a terminal MA, we felt an MA project would be more beneficial for students. As such, we revised this requirement, and students now complete a project, rather than pass an exam. The project is open-ended and can be tailored to various interests and purposes, from a scholarly article which might be submitted to a recognized journal, to a teaching portfolio, or to a digital project: an edition or a database.
- We also aligned the Italian and French MAs, which now have the same set of requirements. While we have not accepted students into the Italian MA, this alignment of requirements will make it easier to coordinate course offerings between the two programs and for students to take courses across the two programs.
- We also recalibrated course requirements, setting each MA’s requirements to 40 credits of 400 and 500 level coursework, in order to allow students to do one of two things: either to finish their MA by the end of their 5th quarter (completing the MA project in the WI of the second year), which allows students to proceed directly into the Masters of Teaching program in the School of Education, or to complete a Graduate Certificate, which requires an additional 10 credits of coursework.
- We updated a couple of specific course requirements, to better reflect the reorientation of our MA programs: the Italian MA now includes a requirement for a 5 credit course in Language Pedagogy; and we changed the old requirement for 5 credits of coursework “in the history of criticism/critical theory” (which was tied to the Literary Theory program in Comparative Literature) to a more updated requirement of one “designated methods course.” The “methods” designation highlights a broader category of coursework, reflecting current interests of faculty, in qualitative work, bibliography, digital methods, etc.
- Finally, we reduced the overall number of credits requirement by the French PhD, in order to shave off 1 year of course work, and to allow students to complete their PhDs one year earlier than they had been able to previously.

Emphasizing Interdisciplinary Opportunities

This is another area where we have been unreservedly supportive of the recommendations of the Committee, and indeed, we feel we have been greatly expanding and diversifying the scope of what work in French Studies is for a long time. At a basic level, this simply reflects the intellectual interests of our faculty, which steer in decisively interdisciplinary

directions, in fields that necessarily entail cross-departmental collaboration, such as Environment Humanities, Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition, as well as Textual Studies and Digital Humanities. In addition, the streamlining of requirements has enabled students to take more courses outside the department. Above all, we've encouraged students to complete a Graduate Certificate, which not only requires coursework outside of FIS, but defines an alternative interdisciplinary focus, which is intended to complement and enhance their work in French or Italian. Two certificates have been of particular interest to students, no doubt in part because faculty within FIS are involved in them: these are the certificates in Secondary and Foreign Language Acquisition (SFLA) and in Textual and Digital Studies (TDS). But students are encouraged to link their FIS coursework and projects with larger disciplinary perspectives offered by certificates in Cinema and Media Studies, Public Humanities, Feminist Studies and Queer and Sexuality Studies. In fact, we had tried to require that all FIS MA students complete a Graduate Certificate, but we were discouraged from doing so by the Graduate School.

The curricular changes highlighted in these two responses were submitted in two memos to the Graduate School in April 2016 (I have attached these memos). They were approved and have been in effect now for two years. Last year, we had our first cohort of students who, to earn the MA, completed a project, rather than the exam. The two students in question presented their work at a small event we organized in June. They both also completed graduate certificates, one in Textual and Digital Studies and the other in Secondary and Foreign Language Acquisition.

Funding for Graduate Students

This is a broader question, and touches on a number of possible issues. I'm a bit less clear how specifically to respond. Our funding possibilities for graduate students rests primarily on our ability to offer them positions as ASEs, teaching language courses at the 100 or 200 levels, or as a TA in a larger lecture course, leading discussion sections. The availability of these positions depends, in turn, on enrollments in our undergraduate courses. In French, enrollments in the language program, as well as in the major, have been fairly robust, and we have been able to support all French graduate students as ASEs in accordance with our guidelines around normative time (this comes to 2 years for the MA and an additional 5 years for the PhD, assuming good standing). We have also been able to support our top 1 or 2 recruits each year with Top Scholar packages from the Graduate School, which include 1 or 2 quarters of RAships. In addition, we offer many, and starting this year, all admitted students, small start-up packages of about \$1000 from our endowments, to be used for purchasing books or other supplies.

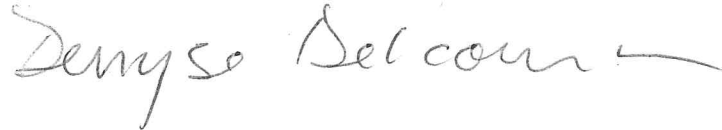
In Italian, by contrast, the decline in enrollments in the language program has made it all but impossible to admit graduate students into the MA, since we no longer have the sections of 100-level language to offer incoming students, given the staffing in the program. The Committee Report does recommend forcefully that "Graduate TAs [...] be prioritized over instructional staff." But this is a complicated directive, to put it mildly, and one that would require some years to implement. Some recent and unexpected developments – the non-renewal and retirement of two Italian lecturers – are bringing staffing a bit more in line with teaching needs in the Italian language program. This opens up the possibility in

the future of readmitting MAs in Italian, particularly if the program is better aligned with the French MA, providing a single departmental cohort. Meanwhile, positions as TAs in large lecture courses are not sufficiently abundant in our department to imagine supporting any student *only* with this kind of funding. In any case, we feel that the training students get as instructors in language courses, through the courses they teach and in the pedagogical training they receive from our coordinators, in their Pedagogy seminar and in workshops, is at the core of what it means to do a graduate degree with us. It would involve a significant rethinking of our programs to envisage having students who never taught language courses or received this kind of training. This is not to say we shouldn't talk about this. I believe we should and must. But this also strikes me as a discussion that would make sense in the context of a larger reconfiguration and coordination of graduate programs across the Languages and Humanities at the UW, perhaps as part of an initiative to create a graduate program in World Literature.

I would add here, as well, even while this wasn't a question put forth by the Graduate Council, though it was emphasized in the original report, that any effort to replenish ranks and to develop "a critical mass of graduate students" also needs to happen at this collaborative, cross-departmental level. With the academic job market in the state that it is, we do not feel that it's advisable to think about building up our French doctoral program. A retooled MA – broader, more interdisciplinary, culminating in a tailored project and leading towards different kinds of post-MA pathways – could, however, be rebuilt, and I believe we should begin, and are beginning to, undertake this work. That said, we need a clearer sense of viable outcomes and how best to serve these possibilities, through our curriculum and via collaborative, interdepartmental initiatives.

Memo

To: Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
From: Denyse Delcourt, Chair, French and Italian Studies



CC: David Canfield-Budde, Director, Academic Affairs & Interdisciplinary Programs
Re: Changes to MA Programs in French and Italian Studies
Date: April 26, 2014

On March 29 (with some follow-up adjustments agreed upon in email), the Graduate Faculty in the Department of French and Italian Studies agreed to a number of changes to the requirements of the MAs programs in French and Italian. These changes will, we believe, bring these two programs better in line with current teaching and research activities of faculty, with student intellectual interests as well as with their educational and professional goals. The MAs were designed primarily with the idea that most students would continue into traditional French and Italian doctoral programs in literature. This, however, is less and less the case, with many students moving into alternate careers straight from the MA or into different kinds of graduate programs, in the social sciences or in law, where they nonetheless still hope to pursue their interests in French and Italian culture and history. The changes proposed here are in accordance with the advice and spirit of our recent Ten-Year Review, which was mostly dedicated to revitalizing our Graduate Programs.

Proposed Changes. We propose reducing total required credits of both French and Italian MA programs to 50 credits (down from 55 in French and 60 in Italian). 40 of these credits would be taken as coursework in 400 and 500 level courses; the remaining 10 would be taken at the 600 level in the final quarter of the MA. The primary rationale for this is that, as explained below, we also propose shifting from an MA exam to a final MA project, which we envision to be a comprehensive independent project occupying the student in the final two quarters of the program. The MA exam has always required us to teach a sequence of period-defined courses covering canonical texts from the Middle Ages to the present, which would prepare students for the reading-list oriented exams. The MA project will, instead, emphasize independent research and creative projects.

In addition, for Italian, we propose to add a 5 credit required course in “Pedagogy and Teaching,” similar to the existing requirement in French. Indeed, we anticipate that all incoming TAs in FIS, whether teaching in French or Italian, will be in the same course.

We propose to replace the requirement in French that students take one of their courses “in the history of criticism/critical theory rubric.” This refers to courses previously offered in Comparative Literature, which are no longer offered. Instead, we would like to replace this with a requirement that a student take at least one “designated methods course.” This course will be selected from a list of pre-approved methods-oriented courses, highlighting different approaches to research and scholarly production in French and Italian studies. We will post these courses to our website; for now, the list will include FREN 550 (“Methods in Literary and Humanistic Scholarship”), FREN 551 (“Theories of the Text from Medieval Manuscripts to Digital Media”), FREN 577 (“Modern Critical Methods”), and a course in socio-linguistics research to be created, ITAL 550 (joint-listed with FREN 550), ITAL 551 (joint-listed with FREN 551). Students may also substitute another course taken in a different department, with the prior approval of the GPC.

We propose as well to adjust the period distribution requirements in French and Italian. In French, students are currently required to complete “four of the seven period distributions,” referring to century-based courses such as “17th-Century French Literature.” However, the nature of our course offerings has shifted in recent years such that we simply do not offer many century-based courses anymore, in order to emphasize interdisciplinary thematic topics. Instead, we would like to replace this with a more open-ended requirement that students take at least two courses covering material largely from pre-1800. We would also like to add this requirement to the Italian MA.

We propose finally to replace the MA exams in both French and Italian with a 10-credit MA project. This will ideally be completed in the spring quarter of the second year, during which time students will be registered for 10 credits of FREN 600 or ITAL 600), though we expect that students will begin to develop their projects in the winter quarter in consultation with their advisors and to prepare a proposal. As mentioned, many of our students no longer plan to continue into traditional literature PhDs, but move onto other kinds of careers and other types of graduate programs. We therefore believe that a more flexible approach to an MA final project, which moreover leaves students with a tangible intellectual artefact that will enhance their opportunities moving forward, is more beneficial than the traditional reading-list based exams. In fact, our recent 10-Year Review strongly encouraged that we move away from the long lists of canonical texts on which the exams have always been based. This final project will be chosen with a faculty sponsor in accordance with the student’s interests. It might be a scholarly article that could be submitted to (and perhaps accepted by) a recognized journal; it might be a teaching portfolio; or a digital project of some kind (a digital edition or a database providing the public with information and research on a specific topic). The project would be assessed by the sponsor and a second faculty member.

Timeline and Impacts on Current Students. Our hope is to implement these changes as soon as possible. We have two incoming MA students confirmed for AU 2016. We would like

them to follow the proposed new requirements from the beginning. In fact, this is an especially opportune moment to make changes to the MA programs insofar as we were not able to recruit any students last year. We have one current MA student who will be finishing this spring, and has decided not continue into the PhD program. Thus beginning in AU 2016, we will only have the two beginning MA students in the MA program. Therefore, if we can implement the changes by the start of 2016-2017, there will be no students caught between the two systems; there will be no impact on current students and no transitional plan needed.

We are also eager to replenish the ranks of our graduate students, in accordance with the strong advice of our recent Ten-Year Report. And in this respect, we would like to ramp up publicity of our renewed programs this summer and fall, in advance of the December application deadlines. If we can have the changes approved and effective by the beginning of the fall quarter, then we can move quickly to this phase. If not, our fear is that we would lose another year (in addition to then having to work out a transitional plan for the two students who will be halfway through the MA).

Memo

To: Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
From: Denyse Delcourt, Chair, French and Italian Studies



CC: David Canfield-Budde, Director, Academic Affairs & Interdisciplinary Programs
Re: Changes to PhD program in French Studies
Date: April 26, 2016

On March 29, the Graduate Faculty of the Department of French and Italian Studies agreed to streamline overall credit requirements for the PhD program in French Studies, which as they stand go significantly beyond the 90 total credits that the Graduate School mandates. We believe that such an adjustment will help our students focus more quickly on a dissertation project, finish more promptly, and be more competitive on the job market. It is, moreover, a change that is in accordance with the report from (and our response to) the recent Ten-Year Review of FIS (which focused extensively on the current state and future of our graduate programs).

Specifically, we propose to reduce the overall credit requirement for the PhD so that students can complete their coursework in one year rather than two. Currently, we require 77 total credits beyond the MA, including 25 at the 500-level. We would like to reduce this to 67 credits, which would include 27 dissertation credits (800-level), 10 credits at the 600-level (during the quarter when students are preparing for and taking the General Exams), and 30 credits of course-work at the 400 and 500 levels. Essentially this means reducing course requirements from 40 credits to 30 (in general, from 8 courses to 6). We anticipate that this course-work would then be completed over three quarters, and that students would be in a position to complete their General Exams in the AU or WI of their second year in the PhD program. Students will, of course, continue to be required to complete the 90 overall credits (including MA credits) required by the Graduate School.

Timeline and Impacts on Current Students. As with the proposed changes to the MAs in French and Italian, we would like to make the changes as quickly as possible. This is similarly an auspicious moment, since we have currently 8 students in our PhD program, all of whom will have completed their coursework by the end of this year (and are either

beyond their General Exams now or are scheduled to take them in the spring quarter). Thus, again no student would be caught between two systems.

We are eager to replenish the ranks of our graduate students, in accordance with the strong advice of our Ten-Year Report. We would, therefore, like to ramp up publicity of our renewed programs this summer and fall, in advance of the December application deadlines. If we can have the changes approved and effective by the beginning of the fall quarter, then we can move quickly to this phase. If not, our fear is that we would lose another year.