

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE UNION

Losing our tongues?

Declining numbers of language degree courses in French, German and Italian in the UK 1998-2007

Summary

In an increasingly globalised society and economy, it is vital that the UK produces graduates able to communicate in key foreign languages.

Regional analysis shows that the number of HE institutions in London providing undergraduate French has fallen by 27%, and HEIs in London providing German have dropped by more than half; and according to university admissions body, UCAS, there will not be any undergraduate provision of Italian in Northern Ireland in 2007.

The government's decision in 2004 to make languages at GCSE non-compulsory could reduce still further the number of institutions providing courses in these languages. Already the number of pupils taking French and German at GCSE has dropped sharply.

These facts are a matter of concern because:

- The reduction in institutions offering French, German and Italian language courses in UK higher education threatens future provision.
- The growing concentration of provision in French, German and Italian means that students needing to live at home for financial and family reasons could find it harder to gain access to courses.

1 French

There has been a 15% drop in the number of HEIs providing French language degree courses. The fall has been slightly sharper in the numbers of HEIs providing joint honours or combined degree courses, compared with HEIs providing at least single honours degrees.

Undergraduate degrees in French

	French	French	1998-2007
	1998	2007	change %
UK total: HEIs providing at least single honours courses	49	42	-14.3%
UK total: HEIs providing joint honours or combined courses	44	37	-15.9%
UK Grand Total	93	79	-15.1%

UCAS (1997) Handbook Entry 1998, Cheltenham: UCAS; <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/search/index.html>. Analysis by UCU.

Regional analysis of HEIs providing French language undergraduate courses shows falls in most parts of the UK – with a 27% decrease in London – and an increase only in South East England.

HEIs providing French language undergraduate courses*

	French	French
	1998	2007
England:		
East Midlands	7	6
Eastern	6	5
London	15	11
North East	5	4
North West	9	8
South East	11	12
South West	6	5
West Midlands	8	5
Yorkshire & Humber	8	7
Wales	6	5
Scotland	10	9
Northern Ireland	2	2
UK Grand Total	93	79
1998-2007 change %		-15.1%

* either single honours, joint honours or combined courses

UCAS (1997) Handbook Entry 1998, Cheltenham: UCAS; <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/search/index.html>. Analysis by UCU.

2 German

There has been a 25% drop in the number of HEIs providing German language degree courses over the period 1998 to 2007. The fall has been slightly sharper in numbers of HEIs providing joint honours or combined degree courses (28%), compared with HEIs providing at least single honours degrees (23%).

Undergraduate degrees in German

	German	German	1998-2007
	1998	2007	change %
UK total: HEIs providing at least single honours courses	44	34	-22.7%
UK total: HEIs providing joint honours or combined courses	43	31	-27.9%
UK Grand Total	87	65	-25.3%

UCAS (1997) Handbook Entry 1998, Cheltenham: UCAS; <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/search/index.html>. Analysis by UCU.

Regional analysis of HEIs providing German language undergraduate courses shows falls in most parts of the UK, including a 58% decrease in London.

HEIs providing German language undergraduate courses*

	German	German
	1998	2007
England:		
East Midlands	6	6
Eastern	6	4
London	12	5
North East	5	4
North West	9	7
South East	10	9
South West	5	5
West Midlands	8	4
Yorkshire & Humber	8	7
Wales	6	4
Scotland	10	8
Northern Ireland	2	2
UK Grand Total	87	65
1998-2007 change %		-25.3%

* either single honours, joint honours or combined courses

UCAS (1997) Handbook Entry 1998, Cheltenham: UCAS; <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/search/index.html>. Analysis by UCU.

3 Italian

There has been a 9% drop overall in the number of HEIs providing Italian language degree courses over the period 1998 to 2007. While the number of HEIs providing joint honours or combined degree courses fell by 16% to 21, the number of HEIs providing at least single honours degrees remained unchanged, at 18.

Undergraduate degrees in Italian

	Italian	Italian	1998-2007
	1998	2007	change %
UK total: HEIs providing at least single honours courses	18	18	0%
UK total: HEIs providing joint honours or combined courses	25	21	-16.0%
UK Grand Total	43	39	-9.3%

UCAS (1997) Handbook Entry 1998, Cheltenham: UCAS; <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/search/index.html>. Analysis by UCU.

Regional analysis of the number of HEIs providing Italian language undergraduate courses shows falls in most parts of the UK, including the loss in Northern Ireland of all provision; however, the number of HEIs providing Italian in the East Midlands, South East England and Scotland increased over the period.

HEIs providing Italian language undergraduate courses*

	Italian	Italian
	1998	2007
England:		
East Midlands	2	3
Eastern	4	3
London	4	3
North East	1	1
North West	6	5
South East	6	8
South West	4	3
West Midlands	4	2
Yorkshire & Humber	3	3
Wales	5	3
Scotland	3	5
Northern Ireland	1	0
UK Grand Total	43	39
1998-2007 change %		-9.3%

* either single honours, joint honours or combined courses

UCAS (1997) Handbook Entry 1998, Cheltenham: UCAS; <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/search/index.html>. Analysis by UCU.