



Association for
German Studies in
Great Britain and Ireland



8 July 2020

Prof Blair Grubb,
Vice Principal (Education),
University of Dundee
CHutton001@dundee.ac.uk

Dear Professor Grubb,

I write as President of the Association for German Studies, in response to the disturbing news that you are considering suspending recruitment to degree programmes with German from September 2020. I write to urge you to reconsider this damaging and short-sighted proposal to cut a leading European language from Dundee's Applied Languages provision, leaving only French and Spanish to service degree programmes across the University.

Unlike many German Departments that have been hit by the decline in German in the secondary sector, Dundee has a distinctive profile of a healthy, mainly *ab initio* German intake to joint degrees with a range of subjects from Politics to Law and Business. These students enjoy significantly enhanced employability, and many go on to further study (in Applied Linguistics or Teaching). Accounting for a third of the Modern Languages student cohort at honours level, the loss of German will have damaging consequences for Applied Languages as a whole. Furthermore, offering a weekly 2-hour (20 credit) evening class in German is no substitute for 4 hours (40 credits) of intensive, specialist *ab initio* and intermediate applied language teaching, which alone can equip students for honours study.

Clearly all universities face financial adversity post-Covid-19, but the saving made by the suspension of German will be a drop in the ocean, quite disproportionate to the resulting impoverishment of Dundee's provision. Despite assurances that this is a temporary measure, the recent attrition of posts in German points rather to a strategic decision, a fact that has not gone unnoticed among your current students who are dismayed by the situation (see their petition <http://chnng.it/fWzWVg6cvc>).

Any decision to cut Languages degree programmes flies in the face of the proven and urgent need for graduates with languages in the UK. Reports from the British Chambers of Commerce, the British Council, the British Academy and others stress the cost to the British economy of the lack of language skills. On a multilingual job market the value of a degree that includes a language (and indeed the handicap of monolingualism) can only increase post-Brexit.

Linguists and cross-cultural experts are urgently needed nationally and internationally, now more than ever. If it pushes through its plans regardless, Dundee will in the medium and longer term do the UK a very great disservice. In the short term it will send a powerful and badly timed signal about the value of European languages and intercultural literacy, and it will undermine Dundee's claim to internationalism.

I hope very much that you will reconsider.

Margaret Littler

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