



French Centre – Centre francophone de UBC

French across the curriculum

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Paper Abstract

UBC is a leading university in a bilingual country. UBC students who are able to speak French and English, Canada's two official languages, greatly increase their chances of employment as well as their leadership opportunities in the community, the government and in Canadian businesses.

UBC's proposal is geared towards all students interested in learning any subject in French and is not dedicated to a particular discipline. Students taking French sections of regular credit courses may in the future receive bilingual recognition with their UBC degree; however, the main goal of UBC's proposal is to educate bilingual Canadians and international students who will be able to work anywhere in Canada.

To receive the full support of the Francophone Community and to enable native speakers or second-language speakers with a good command of French to practice French in the field of their choice, the Centre must be open to the community.

The recent creation of Access Studies at UBC allows non-traditional students who are not necessarily pursuing a degree program to take some credit courses either for credit or audit. Tuition and student service fees are the same as those for regular credit students.

Paper Presentation

A brief overview of bilingualism and education in Canada will give context to our French Centre project:

Canada is a bilingual country but French is only commonly spoken in Quebec and in parts of Ontario and New Brunswick (New Brunswick being the only bilingual province).

Education is a provincial matter. There is no national education system. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) allows provincial Ministers of Education to interact with the federal government.

Funding for FSL (French as a Second Language) in all provinces and ESL (English as a Second Language) mainly in Quebec comes in part from the Department of Canadian Heritage through the CMEC.

There are a number of "national" programs funded through the CMEC: Accent, Odyssey, Explore, Destination Clic, plus different funding formulas to provide school students and teachers with opportunities to improve their second official language.

There is also funding for special programs for minority language education at the university level: The BAFF (*Bureau des Affaires Francophones et Francophiles*) at Simon Fraser

University in British Columbia (SFU), the *Faculté Saint-Jean* at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, etc.

In the British Columbia school system, Core French is taught in all schools (compulsory from grade 5 to 8). There is also the French Immersion program where English-speaking students are taught part-time in French, with two options: Early and Late Immersion. There is the new Intensive Core French in schools where only Core French is taught (students have an intensive period of study for one semester each year). Finally there is the *Conseil Scolaire Francophone* for children of French-speaking parents (as per Article 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms).

Although the French Centre at UBC will attract French-speaking and FSL students from everywhere in Canada, French Immersion students and students from the *Conseil Scolaire Francophone* in BC will be its prime target. External funding for the French Centre, if available, will come from the Department of Canadian Heritage through the CMEC.

Vision

UBC is a leading university in a bilingual country. UBC students who are able to speak French and English, Canada's two official languages, greatly increase their chances of employment as well as their leadership opportunities in the community, the government and in Canadian businesses

Mission

In Trek 2010 UBC promotes languages, Canadian values and global citizenship. As a member of *la Francophonie* and of the Commonwealth, Canada plays a key role in the United Nations, UNESCO, the Olympics and the World Bank. Canada's unique position owes a great deal to its bilingual heritage. It is UBC's duty to build on that distinction and to bring the world together for a better future.

The French Centre's mission is to allow students who have completed their education in French in BC in the *Conseil Scolaire Francophone* or in a French Immersion Program to continue part of their post-secondary education in French. The French Centre also wishes to attract native-speakers of French from Quebec and French-speaking countries and to create a community where French is spoken and where non-native speakers can practice their French.

The mandate of the French Centre is to increase the number of undergraduate courses offered by 1%. These courses will be in addition to the ones already offered by the Department of French, Hispanic and Italian Studies and the Faculty of Education. In order to reach this goal, the departments and faculties will offer French sections of high enrolment courses as well as new ones.

Goals and Strategies

Canadians should feel at home in Vancouver, Kelowna, Moncton or in Montreal. Canadians may speak different languages but they should all have the foundations to understand each other. By perfecting a second or additional language, UBC students will have the ability to communicate with French speakers and be sensitive towards those who do not speak either of Canada's official languages.

UBC is making a concerted effort to attract students from other provinces and countries. The goal of Trek 2010 is to increase the current number of students from outside BC by at least 10%. A larger number of French-speaking students will enable UBC to promote cultural and linguistic aspects of Canada and to listen to the aspirations of the 128 million people who share French as a language.

Objectives for the short term

UBC's proposal is geared towards all students interested in learning any subject in French and is not dedicated to a particular discipline. Students taking French sections of regular credit courses may in the future receive bilingual recognition with their UBC degree; however, the main goal of UBC's proposal is to educate bilingual Canadians and international students who will be able to work anywhere in Canada.

For French-speaking students, the possibility of taking courses in French is a considerable advantage. They may find that their undergraduate education is facilitated by the fact that they are able to take some of their courses in French, thereby relieving the second-language pressure of completing all their studies in English.

Access Studies, a UBC initiative, is another advantage for French speakers because adults do not need to apply and be accepted at UBC to attend some credit and non-credit courses. They only need to demonstrate to the instructor that they can succeed in the course. The entire French-speaking Community may benefit from this initiative.

UBC will use existing resources, faculty and sessional instructors to teach French sections of high-enrolment courses. For example, if there are ten sections of the same math class, an eleventh one can be offered in French. In addition, collaboration with SFU, local colleges and EducaCentre will allow students to take UBC courses that may not be offered by their home institution.

External funding for the French Centre will allow UBC to offer classes in French with fewer students than normally required in English classes. This is the only way to establish this program. This practice is similar to the one adopted by SFU at the beginning of its French program. Students choosing to register in French sections will have, to a certain extent, the advantage of small class sizes, but this advantage is mitigated by the very limited choice of courses taught in French. UBC students taking courses taught in English have a very large choice of courses and sections.

The UBC Writing Centre model

Support for UBC's French initiative will be more easily obtained if it is modeled on existing units with a proven track record. The UBC Writing Centre was created fifteen years ago and funding was provided for a half-time Coordinator, a part-time Secretary and a small office operation. Most of the funding went to pay for Sessional Instructor salaries for sections of Writing 098, a writing course preparing students for the LPI (Language Proficiency Index) Exam – an examination required by some students to register for first-year English courses. Additional sections, new writing courses and the Writing Centre Tutorial Clinic were covered by tuition paid by students.

As the program expanded, more sections and new courses were added. As a result, the Writing Centre is now a significant UBC Department with a full-time Director and Program Assistant. Each year more than 1500 students register in Writing Centre courses while several hundred additional students benefit from the Writing Centre's free tutoring services.

Portrait of a nascent French Centre

If we were to follow the Writing Centre model, the French Centre will initially consist of a half-time Coordinator seconded by a UBC department and a part-time bilingual Secretary. It will provide enough funding to support the teaching in French of sections of high-enrolment courses and will offer French resources for students and instructors. Initially, the Centre will finance assistance for instructors in developing their resource materials in French as well as free tutoring in French for UBC students modeled on the tutoring services currently offered by the Writing Centre.

Relationships with the Departments and with Sessionals teaching the courses

Instructors who are not native speakers of French will have access to Francophone Teaching Assistants while instructors who are native speakers may need teaching assistants with experience teaching French as a second language. A Francophone Resource Person will be available for final editing of all materials translated or written in French at the French Centre.

Departments (and faculties) are responsible for the curriculum and for the final selection of sections to be taught in French. Departments hire the instructors teaching the French sections and provide the academic support they need to complete their task. As Departments are able to add the credits earned by additional French sections to departmental totals, they may claim additional funds to provide French language resources for their instructors and students.

French Resource Centre

Instructors teaching sections in French will have two offices: one in their originating department and a shared office at the French Centre. For this reason, the Centre will be developed as a Resource Centre with common office space and resources. The administration of the Centre will be able to maintain regular office hours with the help of TAs, tutors and workstudy students. On-line tutorials like those currently provided by the Writing Centre for Writing 098 students will complement face-to-face tutorials and serve students who have difficulties getting to the campus or who prefer to work at home.

Levels of French required

If we adhere to the vision of a bilingual Canada, we must accept students who are not fully proficient in French. Students taught in BC in the *Conseil Scolaire Francophone* or the French Immersion Program may need additional help with their French. This is especially true regarding more specialized vocabulary for the discipline and idioms that students may not have encountered in their daily life in British Columbia. Supplementary, individualized instruction in French will be offered.

Students with French as a first language, students taught in the *Conseil Scolaire Francophone* and French Immersion students who have completed at least Grade 11 shall be accepted in French language sections of courses without an interview, as shall UBC students

who have successfully completed second-year French courses. Students without a recent French language education background will be invited to take an exam similar to the one required for admission into the French teachers' programs in the Faculties of Education at UBC and SFU.

Students must possess a certain level of French in order to register in sections of courses taught in French. A higher level will be needed on the exam to qualify for a bilingual degree, just as a TOEFL mark of 550 is required to enter UBC, and a level 5 on the LPI and first-year English courses are required to complete an undergraduate degree.

To graduate with a bilingual degree, students will need to pass a French Language Proficiency Index exam similar to the LPI in addition to accumulating a certain number of credits for courses taught in French. Such an exam will probably be borrowed from institutions like Laval University in Quebec (or the DALF from France).

French Across the Curriculum

To recognize that some students take courses taught in French, a system of points might be put in place, similar to the system proposed for English. In addition to the regular credits they will receive, students will accumulate French points leading to a bilingual qualification for their degree. The number of points attached to a particular course will vary depending on the amount and level of difficulty of French reading and writing required for the course. If students are allowed to take their exams in the language of their choice, students may receive additional points for taking the exams in French.

French Cohort (Arts One or Science One in French)

The Faculty of Arts offered a French-History cohort on the theme of Canada-Quebec this fall (2006). Unfortunately students were only able to register in two sections of French as there were not enough students to have the History section. The French courses were designed for students who graduated from the Immersion or Francophone program and the subject was French-Canadian novels with historical content.

Participation in a Francophone cohort, following the *Arts One* or *Science One* model, strongly encourages the use of the French language. In addition, by taking courses in French, students have the opportunity to spend more time communicating and studying together in French.

Bilingual exams

As we will initially be dealing with French sections of courses that are primarily taught in English, students shall have the option of writing exams in the language of their choice. Exams will take place for all sections at the same time and students of the French sections will have access to the same questions in both languages. The decision to take exams in English instead of French will limit the number of French points a student receives for a course. Students applying for a bilingual degree will need to do at least 40% of their course work in French and pass exams in French for at least 60% of these courses.

If students chose to take an exam in their second language, the quality of the written language will affect the final grade the student will receive; however, the percentage of the grade affected by the language quality shall not be different from the percentage currently

used for the UBC students who do not have English as their first language such as for Ritsumeikan, Korea University or Tech de Monterey students.

Bilingual degrees

We have to look several years into the future in order to imagine the possibility of UBC offering bilingual degrees. UBC will first need to have enough courses available to give students the opportunity to take courses in French. Bilingual degrees will be granted by completing 40% to 60% of required courses in French or by accumulating a certain number of points by taking additional courses taught in the language. A French Language Proficiency Exam will be required of all students interested in a bilingual degree.

Students

There is a large number of UBC students with the appropriate level of French to start the program. Students interested in taking courses in French will form the nucleus around which a successful program can be built. They will help non-UBC students with life on campus and the French environment created for them.

If we consider this proposal to be a provincial initiative fulfilling the needs of French speakers or learners in the Lower Mainland, special provisions shall be made to allow students from other institutions to participate. Accommodating students from other institutions will require consultation and processes that will make access to courses possible to the greatest number of students. Scheduling courses at the right time will be critical. On-line tutoring may play a significant role for students coming from other institutions.

UBC, UBCO and SFU sharing French courses

Course numbers and descriptions can be created at UBC so that they correspond to courses taught in French at other institutions. If we develop the idea a little further, two institutions can offer courses jointly that will be held at one campus. This concept will work particularly well when applied to summer courses. Campus housing facilities can be used to attract students from institutions outside the Lower Mainland. Summer sessions can be offered in some disciplines in order to attract students from Quebec. These students can combine discipline-based courses offered in French with English language courses.

We can also imagine the situation mentioned earlier where UBC, UBCO, SFU and other BC institutions each have a special classroom with full video-conferencing facilities. Students can attend a course given on the other campus without having to leave their own. This facility will allow students to take courses offered by various institutions without leaving campus. Lectures can also be broadcasted on the Web and be available to the public at no charge if they wish to audit the course.

Access Studies

To receive the full support of the Francophone Community and to enable native speakers or second-language speakers with a good command of French to practice French in the field of their choice, the Centre must be open to the community. The recent creation of Access Studies at UBC allows non-traditional students who are not necessarily pursuing a degree program to take some credit courses either for credit or to audit. Tuition and student service fees are the same as those for regular credit students.

Access Studies allows students to apply online for courses. An Advisor contacts the student to let him/her know if space is available in the course and to ensure that the student is knowledgeable enough to take the course and succeed. High school diplomas or course prerequisites do not limit admission in courses through Access Studies. Admission is open to all adult learners who have the potential to successfully complete courses.

A French-speaking Access Studies Advisor may be assigned to courses taught in French. If need be, this position can be filled by someone working for the French Centre. A special orientation session for Access Studies students may be desirable at the beginning of each term in order to prepare students for their UBC courses. On-campus and on-line tutorials may also help these students with their specific needs.

Summer Courses

Summer Session is a time when collaboration with French-speaking universities can lead to some exciting programs. UBC students are always welcome to take summer courses at other institutions and do not require a French Centre to lead them. That being said, some students may feel unprepared to take a discipline-based course in French without help.

Summer courses can be offered at UBC with UBC instructors or guest instructors from other universities. They can also take place in Quebec or in France, either hosted by a local institution or organized by UBC on the model of the Institut de Français, UBC à Québec, where Francophone instructors from BC work with Quebecers to offer French language instruction tailored to the specific needs of BC school teachers.

As mentioned earlier, the Summer Session may also attract programs from other universities where UBC can be the host or the venue of such collaborative programs.

Vision of a French Centre with a physical location

UBC has undergone substantial development in the past few years. Every year, new student residences are built. Creating a residence dedicated to students who want to practice their French is an easy project to achieve. A "Canada House" will not be limited to Francophones or Francophiles but be open to all who want to share in our bilingual heritage. A residence with classrooms, office space, a cafeteria and a theatre can produce a French-speaking Community Centre as a focal point for our diverse heritage on campus.

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