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Dear Mr. Powell

My Secretary of State has recently received details from Dr Derek Offord, Chairman of the Russian Language Undergraduate Study Committee, of the numbers of undergraduates studying Russian in our universities. He thought that the Prime Minister might find the information useful as briefing for the visit of Mr Gorbachev.

The statistics were collected by the British Association of Soviet, Slavonic and East European Studies through a questionnaire sent to all university Russian Departments. Whilst not an official exercise we have no reason to dispute the figures. Official statistics would not be as detailed and could only be provided for earlier academic years.

The figures show an increase in demand for the subject: only 365 (17%) of the total of 2120 undergraduates currently studying Russian are final year students, whereas 742 (35%) are in their first year. The courses normally last for 4 years, and a period of extended study abroad is a course requirement for all students other than those studying the language on a minor or subsidiary basis. It is also interesting to note that, out of the 2120, 227 (11%) are majoring in Russian language and area studies; 565 (27%) in Russian language and literature; and 1037 (49%) are taking Russian within a combined honours degree. The remaining 291 (14%) are studying Russian as a minor or subsidiary subject. The majority - 2044 (over 96%) are home students; 40 are from the EC, and the remaining 36 from elsewhere overseas.

Yours sincerely

Peter Swift

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Assistant Private Secretary



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