

Faculty of Arts: BA Curriculum Renewal Discussion Paper

December 2015

Contents	Page
Goals of the BA Curriculum Renewal	2
Current BA Core Requirements	2
Current Context of the BA Curriculum Renewal Process	3
History of the BA Curriculum Review Process	4
Ongoing BA Curriculum Renewal Consultation Process	6
Recommendations of the Deans Executive Committee	7
Governance pathway for the proposed changes to BA Core Requirements	10
Next Steps of the BA Curriculum Renewal Process	10

Appendices	Page
A. Faculty of Arts Academic Plan	12
B. Comparable Canadian BA Core Requirements	15
C. Dr. Jennifer Summit and Dr. John Galaty lectures notes	18
D. Students' Union Undergraduate Student Survey Summary for Bachelor of Arts Curriculum Review 2011 - 2012	26
E. Draft Table for New BA Attributes and Requirements	90
F. BA Core Review ~ The Proposed Attributes BA	93

Goals of the BA Curriculum Renewal

The current structure of our Bachelor of Arts (BA) Core Requirements has been in place since the 2006 – 2007 academic year.¹ In November 2011, Arts Faculty Council approved a five year Academic Plan that included a systematic review of the BA general requirements (see Appendix A). Associate Dean Mickey Adolphson (Teaching and Learning) was initially assigned to Chair the BA Curriculum Review and, in July 2015, the Dean of Arts, Lesley Cormack, asked Associate Dean Allen Ball (Student Programs: Teaching and Learning) to continue this process as the BA Curriculum Renewal.

The goal of the Renewal was to develop a simpler, more attractive, and sustainable BA program that provides Arts students with an exemplary undergraduate degree. A renewed Bachelor of Arts at the University of Alberta must be flexible enough to accommodate the panoply of programs in the Faculty and allow students to be exposed to a broad range of pedagogical methods, ranging from traditional instructional strategies to community-engaged experiential learning.

Current BA Core Requirements²

The Faculty of Arts Bachelor of Arts (BA) Core Requirements are as follows:³

Arts Requirements (*36)	Courses
ENGL/WRS *6	*6 100-level ENGL or *3 ENGL and *3 WRS at the 100-level
LOE *6	*6 in one language other than English
Science *6	Courses offered by the Faculty of Science
Breadth and Diversity *18	a) *6 Group 1 - creative arts (ART, ART H, DES, DRAMA, T. DES, MUSIC, WRITE) b) *6 Group 2 – study of cultures (CHRTC, CHRTP, C LIT, EASIA, CHINA, JAPAN, KOREA, ENGL, FS, CLASS, GREEK, HIST, LATIN, MLCS, FREN, GERM, ITAL, LA ST, POLISH, PORT, RUSS, SCAND, SLAV, SPAN, UKR, PHIL, RELIG) c) *6 Group 3 – social systems (ANTHR, CSL, EAS (Arts courses only), ECON, HGP, INT D, LING, MEAS, POL S, PSYCO (Arts courses only), STS, SOC, WGS)

¹ University of Alberta, Arts – Chart 1: Basic Requirements, *University of Alberta Calendar 2015-2016*.
<http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Undergrad/Arts/chart1.html>

² The core requirements are referred to as the “Basic Requirements” in the *University Calendar*.

³ University of Alberta, Arts – Chart 1: Basic Requirements, *University of Alberta Calendar 2015-2016*.
<http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar/Undergrad/Arts/chart1.html>

The current BA Core Requirements are based on a distribution model, where students sample courses from different fields. On the one hand, in principle and practice, the distribution model enforces breadth of study in a student's degree program. On the other hand, it is not clear how these requirements relate to the many and diverse types of Arts majors or how they benefit students during and after their degrees. The weakest aspect to this distribution model is that the core requirements rarely align with courses taken as part of a student's declared major, nor do they connect with one another. In short, the pedagogical value of the core requirements is not clear, nor has the usefulness of these requirements been clearly articulated.

There are a variety of approaches to the structuring of BA programs in Canada and a broad threshold of core credit requirements among the top 20 ranked Canadian universities (see Appendix B). The lowest number of BA program core requirement credits is in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Calgary, which requires only *6 credits from the Faculty of Science, with all other requirements determined by departments or programs offering majors. The University of British Columbia Vancouver is considering a proposal to implement a structure like that at the University of Calgary in which requirements are set by major program. Conversely, students in BA programs within the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta face the highest number of core requirements among the top 20 comparable Canadian programs, with *36 core course credits needed to graduate.

Our current core requirements make transferring into the Faculty of Arts unattractive to prospective students from colleges, other programs in the University, and other universities' programs. The extensive and restrictive nature of the Arts core requirements may also dissuade high school students from choosing the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta when considering where to pursue their post-secondary education since other institutions provide more flexibility and choice. Finally, the Faculty of Arts encompasses a wide variety of disciplines. The imposition of a common core forces a degree of similarity across disciplines and ignores the distinct differences between the disciplines.

Current Context for the BA Curriculum Renewal Process

A number of factors inform the current institutional and provincial contexts in which this curriculum renewal occurs. First, in June 2015, the Government of Alberta introduced Bill 3, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act. Bill 3 reversed cuts made by the previous provincial administration (including a 1.4 percent reduction to post-secondary funding), increased base funding for post-secondary institutions by two percent, cancelled market modifiers that had previously been approved for 25 programs in Alberta, and restored apprenticeship and targeted enrolment funding. As well, the Bill implemented a two year freeze on tuition and mandatory non-instructional fees for post-secondary students in both the 2015-16 and 2016-17 academic years.⁴ In fall 2015, the Government also began a review of the overall funding model for

⁴ Alberta Advanced Education (<http://iae.alberta.ca/ministry/news/2015/tuition-and-fees-frozen.aspx>).

Campus Alberta.⁵ Given the uncertain financial future, the current period of relative stability gives the Faculty of Arts the opportunity to re-envision its BA program to better meet the goal of offering a competitive program that attracts high quality students. If the Arts BA program is re-worked now to meet our goals, the Faculty will be in a better position to face future changes and challenges

Within our institution, central administrative units are also planning for substantive change. For instance, the “Undergraduate Out-of-Province National Recruitment Strategy Discussion Paper,”⁶ recently released internally by the University of Alberta Office of the Registrar, lays the groundwork for a coordinated approach to the challenges facing the University of Alberta. As outlined in the introduction to the “Discussion Paper”:

... the environment within which we recruit students has been changing as a result of provincial and national trends. Post-secondary participation rates within the province are comparatively, low [Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education], the number of degree granting institutions in Alberta has increased [Canadian Association of University Teachers Bulletin], and national demographics have shifted [Statistics Canada]. These factors have combined to result in a smaller pool of potential undergraduate students nationally, prompting increasing and aggressive recruitment of Alberta students by other out-of-province institutions. Pg. 2

It is in the Faculty’s best interest to have a well-designed BA that is competitive with other institutions in place before the launch of the University’s national recruitment effort. Given demographic changes and the competitive environment for students, it is key that the Faculty have a competitive BA with attractive programs if the expanded recruitment effort is to be successful.

History of the BA Curriculum Review Process

In November 2011, Arts Faculty Council approved a five year Academic Plan that included a systematic review of the BA general requirements (see Appendix A).

After determining the reasons why such a review was necessary—in part, the growing need to articulate the value of a BA degree in a new educational environment, and to communicate its benefits and outcomes clearly to students, parents, government bodies, and other stakeholders—five working groups were formed in September 2012 to develop visions for the future of the BA degree. A series of open meetings and focus group sessions were held with the members of the five working groups and others in the Faculty of Arts. These lengthy discussions centered on the question of whether or not to define the BA degree in terms of “attributes.” “Attributes” were defined as the qualities, values, and dispositions that students develop during the process of obtaining an Arts degree. Broader than, but including skills, attributes are not discipline-specific

⁵ Government of Alberta, title, <http://alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=38498C947FED3-E72C-6CA8-6297F33D57AD6D0D>

⁶ University of Alberta Office of the Registrar, The “Undergraduate Out-of Province National Recruitment Strategy Discussion Paper”, unpublished. November 2016.

and are developed by all students as they progress through their degrees. The working group discussions were informed by specialists in curriculum development, including Dr. Jennifer Summit from Stanford University and Dr. John Galaty from McGill University, who presented lectures in January 2013 (see Appendix C).

The five working groups were merged into a single Task Force in February 2013. The Task Force members investigated the ways in which other universities, primarily in the United States and Australia, had organized their BA core requirements around the concept of attributes. Two undergraduate research assistants performed comprehensive surveys of the various guiding principles used by other institutions across the world (see Appendix D).

A set of key attributes were put forward at the end of 2013, along with a proposed table of BA requirements, that clearly outlined the number of course credits and expected learning outcomes for each set of attributes (see Appendix E). Five core attributes were identified:

- Analysis and Interpretation
- Research, Creation, and Inquiry
- Communication and Culture
- Global Citizenship
- Lifelong, Adaptive, and Engaged Learning

This working proposal was then sent out to all stakeholders in the Faculty of Arts for feedback.

In September 2014, an ad hoc committee was constituted at the request of Dean Lesley Cormack and Associate Dean Mickey Adolphson, then Chair of the BA Curriculum Review. This committee was asked to bring the work of earlier iterations of the BA Review Committee to fruition by drafting a proposal based on the attributes for presentation to Arts Faculty Council. In the Spring 2015, a draft entitled “The BA Core Review – The Proposed Attributes BA” (see Appendix F) was presented to various Arts stakeholder groups, including Undergraduate Student Services, Deans Executive Council, and Chairs Council. There were concerns expressed that the attribute model was too complex and would make advising individual students nearly impossible. It also became clear that there was a perception that a full conversation about the attributes themselves had not yet happened, including whether the identified attributes were the appropriate ones on which to form the foundation for our BA requirements. Further, it was obvious that many, if not most, of the degree programs offered by the Faculty incorporated many of these attributes, so it was not clear why the required core would need to duplicate the efforts of these offerings by requiring specific types of core courses. The draft proposal was brought to Arts Executive Committee and the Committee voted against forwarding the proposal to Arts Faculty Council.

Although the Faculty did not move forward with the recommendations as presented, it was agreed, in principle, by the Dean’s Executive Committee that the identified attributes were a valuable means of understanding undergraduate programs, shifting attention away from thinking about content and towards the diverse skills and competencies our students gain throughout their degrees. Disciplinary requirements are the primary mechanism that shapes students’ paths through their degrees. These discipline-specific program requirements develop many of the core attributes that become the transferable skills with which students enter the workforce upon

graduation. How these attributes are embedded in the trajectories of specific majors and minors is best determined by each individual department/program.

Ongoing BA Curriculum Renewal Consultation Process

In July 2015, Associate Dean Allen Ball took on the leadership of the BA Curriculum Review process. The review process was renamed the BA Curriculum Renewal; and, direction was given to draft a new BA Curriculum Renewal proposal for consideration by all stakeholders in the Faculty of Arts by the end of the 2015-2016 academic year.

Allen Ball has undertaken a consultative process with input from the Dean's Executive Committee. The Dean's Executive Committee includes the following members of faculty:

- Acting Dean Lise Gotell (Womens' and Gender Studies)
- Acting Vice-Dean Stuart Landon (Economics)
- Associate Dean (Graduate) Tom Spalding (Psychology)
- Associate Dean (Research) Michael O'Driscoll (English and Film Studies)
- Associate Dean (Student Programs) Rebecca Nagel (History and Classics)
- Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) Allen Ball (Art and Design)

Dean Lesley Cormack (one leave) has also be consulted about the BA Renewal.

As of December 2015, the Associate Dean (Student Programs: Teaching and Learning) has held meetings with all 15 Faculty of Arts department chairs, as well as the Executive Director of Community Service Learning and the Senior Director of the Office of Interdisciplinary Studies, with follow-up meetings scheduled for January 2016.

Ongoing updates on the BA Curriculum Renewal process have been provided by Allen Ball to the central administration, including to:

- Meg Brolley, General Faculty Council Secretary
- Dr. Sarah Forgie, Vice Provost (Learning Initiatives)
- Dr. Nat Kav, Vice Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction)
- Kate Peters, Portfolio Initiatives Manager, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

Further, in-process discussions are underway with Dr. Christine Brown, Head Librarian, to identify and address any resource implications that the proposed BA Curriculum Renewal may generate for library services.

The potential changes to our BA have also been discussed with faculties across campus. To date, the following Associate Deans have been consulted on this initiative by Allen Ball:

- Dr. Jason Carey, Associate Dean (Programs & Planning), Faculty of Engineering
- Dr. Janice Causgrove Dunn, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Programs, Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation
- Dr. Robin Everall, Interim Vice-Provost and Dean of Students
- Dr. Elaine Geddes, Associate Dean, Undergraduate, Alberta School of Business
- Dr. Clive Hickson, Associate Dean (Undergraduate Programs and Services), Faculty of Education

- Dr. Tim Joseph, Associate Dean (Student & Co-op Services), Faculty of Engineering
- Dr. Brenda Leskiw, Senior Associate Dean, Undergraduate, Faculty of Science
- Dr. Karsten Mundel, Director & Associate Dean (Academic), Augustana Campus
- Dr. Frank Tough, Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Native Studies

An update on the BA Curriculum Renewal consultation process was presented at the Arts Faculty Council meeting on October 5, 2015. The process has also been discussed extensively during Fall 2015 Arts Teaching and Learning Enhancement Committee meetings and at the Associate Chairs (Undergraduate) meetings. Discussion of the proposal and process will be central to the upcoming Winter 2016 meetings of these committees.

Roundtable sessions have taken place with the Undergraduate Student Services Advisors and Senior Administrative Officers in the Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Student Services Office. Discussions addressed the possible administrative impacts of different changes to the BA core requirements. We continue to seek input from students through OASIS (the Organization for Arts Students and Interdisciplinary Studies), our newly formed Faculty of Arts Students' Association, and seek to develop a space for open dialogue with students about the renewal process.

Throughout the BA Curriculum Review and the BA Curriculum Renewal processes, the Dean's Office has engaged and consulted with key campus partners and stakeholders, including students, faculty, contract instructors, staff, and alumni. The recommendations laid out in this document are the direct result of these consultations. The change process will involve continuing dialogue and further opportunities for feedback and input from Arts stakeholders.

Recommendations of the Dean's Executive Committee

To enhance our competitiveness among peer institutions and strengthen the quality and flexibility of our BA degree, the Dean's Executive Committee proposes the following recommendations:

- removal of all current BA core requirements;
- requirement of *6 in a non-Arts discipline; and,
- removal of the requirement that all students who declare a BA major complete a minor. Students will have the opportunity, but not the obligation, to declare a minor or multiple minors.

Proposed Basic Structure for BA			
Credit Requirement	Current	Proposed	Comment
Overall	*120	*120	No change.
Junior (100-) level	*48 maximum	*42 maximum	We propose *42. In the absence of the Basic Requirements, fewer junior credits are needed, and a maximum of *42 will still allow students to experiment widely.
Arts Courses	Minimum *63	Minimum *63	No Change. See Note 1.
Major	*30 -*48 at the senior level	*30 -*48 at the senior level	No Change.
Other Subject(s)	Not specified	Maximum of *48 senior courses in any discipline	To allow students who wish to do so to complete a double major, but also to ensure that students diversify their studies.
Minor	*12 - *42 senior	*12 - *42 in a minor if the option of a minor is chosen.	Students are not required to choose a minor, but may choose one or more minor subjects.
Non-Arts/Science	Maximum *18	Maximum *18	No Change See Note 2 below
Non-Arts Discipline Courses	*6 from Faculty of Science	*6 from a non-Arts discipline (see notes below)	Encourages experimentation outside Arts disciplines and

			expands breadth. See Note 1
Courses Completed at the U of A	Minimum *60	Minimum *60	No change

Notes:

- 1) Some Courses from Other Faculties are classified as “Arts courses”
 - Native Studies (NS)
 - Arts disciplines from Campus St Jean and Augustana (e.g. HISTE, SC PO, AUFRE, AUSOC)
 - Approved Cross-listed ALES courses (re Sociology & Economics)
- 2) This option is not open to students in the After Degree program

The proposed changes have multiple advantages:

- i) The requirements promote diversity and breadth. The maximum of *48 in any single Arts discipline, and the *6 required in non-Arts disciplines, means that students must experiment by taking courses in several disciplines.
- ii) Students will have considerable flexibility in determining the directions in which they choose to pursue their education. This will facilitate the transfer of students from other institutions and Faculties, and reduce the disincentive of students with a particular aversion to one type of course from enrolling in the BA. Students will also take on greater responsibility for designing their own program, which is part of the educational experience.
- iii) By reducing the restrictiveness of the BA course requirements, so they are more aligned with the requirements in other institutions, we will increase the relative attractiveness of the BA. With these changes, the BA requirements at the University of Alberta will be comparable to those at our most important local competitors – the University of Calgary and MacEwan University.
- iv) The added flexibility will better allow students to take double majors or multiple minors. For example, a student could graduate with a single major, a double major, a major and a minor, or a major and two minors.
- v) Ensure consistency with other institutions BA core requirements, which will make transferring to the University of Alberta from these institutions easier for students.
- vi) The Faculty of Arts encompasses an extremely broad range of disciplines. Adding more flexibility to the core requirements means that the Faculty is not attempting to impose the same requirements on all disciplines, some of which see little value in aspects of the current core requirements.
- vii) The regulations encompassed in the existing core requirements favour some disciplines over others. The elimination of these requirements means that the Faculty is no longer favouring one discipline or set of disciplines over others.

- viii) Subject to the minimum and maximum credit requirements in a major, the new core requirements leave departments free to design the programs that are best for the students in their major, including the incorporation of complementary required courses from other disciplines and, potentially, from other faculties.
- ix) The requirement for *6 of non-Arts credits ensures that students will be exposed to the disciplinary perspectives and pedagogical environments of other faculties, which will ensure and enrich students' experiences of the full breadth of university learning.
- x) Flexibility means that students will have to ability to take recommended courses that respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Calls to Action. A flexible Arts degree also means that our students will have room in their degrees for a mandated University-wide indigenous studies requirement, should this be embraced institutionally.

The new core requirements introduce significant flexibility. This structural shift creates a continuum of options that can adapt to both specific departmental programmatic outcomes and disciplinary specificity, while simultaneously facilitating breadth in pedagogical scope and curricular demands.

Together, these recommendations form a critical part of a broader effort on behalf of the Faculty of Arts to re-evaluate our recruitment strategy, and to attract the very best and brightest students from Alberta, Canada, and the world. Moreover, this proposed structure is both appropriate and proportional to the reality of our current Faculty complement and its reasonable scope of service.

Governance Pathway for the Proposed Changes to BA Core Requirements

The proposed changes to the BA Core Requirements must follow a standard governance pathway. Within the Faculty of Arts, changes must be reviewed and approved first by the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC), then by Arts Executive Committee (AEC), and, finally, by Arts Faculty Council (AFC). As we proposed no changes to academic standing, admissions (including high school subjects to be used for admission), or graduation requirements, the BA Curriculum Renewal proposal would not need to be approved by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) of GFC; however, approval of GFC is required through routine circulation.

It is anticipated that the BA Curriculum Renewal proposal will be presented for consideration at the following meetings:

- Academic Affairs Committee (AAC): March 30, 2016
- Arts Executive Committee (AEC): May 12, 2016
- Arts Faculty Council (AFC): May 25, 2016

Next Steps in the BA Curriculum Renewal Process

The BA Curriculum Renewal is an opportunity for us as a Faculty to shape our future. This proposal promotes a new BA structure that will replace our current BA Core Curriculum. The new core requirements will increase flexibility and ensure our requirements are competitive with those of other institutions.

These changes will precipitate the need to change the way we advise our students and offer guidance in assisting them in building their respective programs through appropriate course selection. In consultation with Departments, the Faculty, through Undergraduate Student Services, plan to create five “thematic” pathways to guide students in their first year. Each of these optional pathways will expose students to a variety of Arts disciplines.

The goal is for the proposed changes to be ratified by the end of the 2015-2016 academic year and for the changes to the core requirements to be effective in 2017-18. The intention is, then, that each department look at their own programs, in light of the changes to the core requirements, in order to identify, define, and articulate their respective majors independently and in relationship to one another. As a general guideline for this process, we plan to develop a template by which courses can be aligned with the original five attributes identified at the beginning of the BA Review in 2013. By moving quickly, departments should be able to develop program and *Calendar* changes that complement the changes to the core and come into effect for the 2018-2019 academic year.

Draft Only