

**College of Letters and Science Curriculum Committee
Report to L&S Faculty Senate
Concerning Academic Years 2007-2008 (to date)**

Curriculum Committee Members and Chair

Rob Asen (Communication Arts)	Michael Morgan (Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences)
Robert Bleiweiss (Zoology)	Teju Olaniyan (African Lang & Lit)
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Ex Officio members:

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Proposals to Add, Change or Delete Courses

The L&S Curriculum Committee (LSCC) is responsible for college-level review of proposals to add, change, or delete courses listed within *Timetable* or *Catalog* subject listings managed by L&S departments and programs. All proposals are approved by the department faculty prior to submission to the LSCC. L&S Administration staff conduct a technical review to ensure that proposals conform to college- and campus-level expectations articulated in the Divisional Executive Committee guidelines for course proposals (<http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/divcomm/courses/CourseProposals.htm>). The committee chair reviews all proposals and determines when they are ready for committee consideration. Approved proposals are forwarded to the Divisional Executive Committee. Since the committee's last report to the L&S Senate (April 10, 2007), the LSCC has approved proposals to create 65 new courses, change 39 existing courses, and delete 109 courses.

Proposals to Change Requirements for Academic Programs

Several years ago, the LSCC established guidelines for departments considering changing requirements the academic programs they oversee (<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3ccpol.htm>). Intended to help the faculty consider a variety of issues related to curricular change, as well as to formally incorporate use of information arising from the assessment of student learning into this process, the Guidelines also formalize communication with University Publications, L&S Student Academic Affairs, other departments and units within the College, and with the School of Education, which oversees programs

frequently affected by adjustments to L&S programs and course offerings.

In 2006-2007, only a few departments and programs sought permission to change their academic programs. This decline may be related to the fact that this is an “off-year” for publication of the *Undergraduate Catalog*. (Deadlines for the next edition, dated 2009-2011 fall in Semester I of the 2008-2009 academic year.) Also, when the implementation of the BABS 07 curriculum went into effect in May 2007, departments and programs were cautioned that we may need to allow a period of adjustment to the new requirements.

- The Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia sought approval to revise the track structure of the undergraduate major in LCA, creating greater distinctions between the “languages” and “humanities” track. The proposed changes to the latter create a pathway for students who wish to pursue a systematic course of study in Asian Humanities, as organized by region or by field (religion, literature, culture). After its initial review, the committee submitted several questions to the department and is awaiting a response.
- The Department of English received approval to eliminate the creative writing track within the MA in English; this program predated development of the M.F.A. in English, and has been superseded by that program. Doctoral students wishing to pursue advanced studies in creative writing will continue to be served by the PhD minor in creative writing.
- The Department of Theatre and Drama received approval to eliminate additional requirements in Voice and Movement in the Acting Specialist track of the undergraduate major. This change reduces the number of credits required for the major.
- The Department of Bacteriology, which oversees the L&S/CALS major in Microbiology, received approval to adjust the list of required courses in order to align requirements with the courses available to students. This change not only “updates” the program, but eliminates the need to grant course exceptions to help students complete requirements.
- The Department of Linguistics received approval to delete the requirement that Linguistics majors take a particular introductory course that replicated material taught elsewhere in the required program.

Implementing Revisions to the L&S Baccalaureate Degree Requirements

Although the committee anticipated spending considerable time on questions that might arise regarding implementation of changes to the L&S baccalaureate degree requirements, there was relatively little activity in this area. One question arose, related to the calculation used to determine student eligibility to be placed on the “Dean’s List”, an honor granted to students who achieve a high level of academic achievement as indicated by GPA earned in graded courses. The revised formula aligns with revisions to the L&S degree requirements that now count for degree credit courses taken outside of L&S.

The committee reviewed 21 requests to allow courses offered by departments other than L&S count as “Liberal Arts and Science” (LAS) credit for L&S students. Following its practice of allowing courses to be counted as LAS in cases where L&S majors require or accept such courses for credit in the major, or cases where non-L&S courses are cross-listed with L&S departments, nine courses offered outside the college met LAS criteria.

In the coming months, we anticipate that committee members and representatives of L&S Student Academic Affairs will again work to revise the *Undergraduate Catalog* discussion of the L&S degree requirements.

Other Curricular Issues

The committee continued to provide oversight for the Disabilities Curricular Accommodations Committee, which continues to serve as the body authorized to provide accommodation for students with certain disabilities who seek substitutions to fulfill the L&S foreign language requirement. That committee has submitted a list of courses that satisfy the substitution package's requirement for a course in "language in general". This information has been shared with L&S Student Academic Affairs.

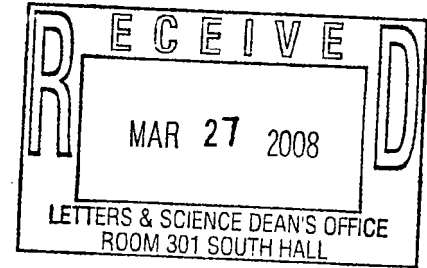
Finally, the committee spent considerable time discussing Dean Sandefur's request to inquire into the role of Directed Study in the undergraduate curriculum. Committee members conducted three assessment projects, to discern if, indeed, these courses are a cause for concern; we determined that, in *general*, they are not. Nonetheless, we found our own discussions so illuminating – particularly with respect to the value and variety of these experiences – that we believe others will benefit from holding their own discussions about what students and instructors expect of any directed study experience, what might be expected within each division or department (or even within subfields of a department), and what might be done to promote – where appropriate, and within reasonable boundaries of time, inclination, and interest – these valuable learning experiences. The committee's response to Dean Sandefur is appended to this report, and we invite further comment and discussion of these materials.

This report was approved by the L&S Curriculum Committee on March 24, 2008, and is submitted by:

Diana Frantzen, Chair, L&S Curriculum Committee
Associate Professor of Spanish, Department of Spanish & Portuguese


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March 26, 2008

To: Gary Sandefur, Dean

FROM:  Diana Frantzen, Chair, L&S Curriculum Committee
Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean

RE: Directed Study

CC: L&S Curriculum Committee members

On October 17, 2007, you asked the L&S Curriculum Committee to look into a series of issues related to the role of Directed Study in the undergraduate curriculum. In this memorandum, we describe how we approached these questions, respond to your questions, and propose recommendations for future action.

A number of rules and restrictions apply to registration for and use of Directed Study with respect to degree credit (<http://www.wisc.edu/pubs/ug/10lettsci/geninfo.html#direct>). The *L&S Handbook* states only that departments may determine eligibility to teach these courses, and that these courses may not be used as a substitute for group instruction (<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterFive/chv-18.htm>). The only general description of the role of Directed Study appears in the *Catalog*:

Directed Study offers the student an opportunity to work with a faculty member on an individual study program. A student who is stimulated by a particular concept or problem encountered in a course can pursue and develop that interest in depth through a Directed Study project. Such individualized study can make a valuable contribution to a student's educational experience. Directed Study courses are made available by departments on the basis of a student's preparation and motivation and a faculty member's willingness to accept the student in such an endeavor.

This description does not capture the rich variety of Directed Study experiences. In our research, we learned that these mentored projects are pursued in laboratories, libraries, and on stage; they advance study in less-commonly taught languages and in topics beyond the capacity of the regular curriculum; they offer instructors a chance to guide students seeking to connect service-learning and internship experiences in community and workplace to their academic studies. Each project is a unique negotiation between student and faculty that contributes to liberal

education, not only by enriching students' understanding of a particular topic, but also by teaching students to pursue knowledge outside the context of a structured course, for sake of personal interest. Hence, Directed Study teaches skills necessary to true "lifelong learning", enhancing and enriching undergraduate education.

The committee strongly supports and encourages the use Directed Study for those students who have the interest and skill to engage in it, and for faculty who have the desire, dedication, and time to teach undergraduate students in this way. Nonetheless, we understand that because these experiences are so highly variable, concerns may arise about whether every student's experience meets these ideals. We therefore studied this issue with an eye toward determining whether current practice could be enhanced by enacting policy or by providing guidance to support and promote good practice.

1. Curriculum Committee Discussion

In addition to engaging in extensive discussion of this topic, the committee focused on the results of three assessment projects focused on Directed Study.

- The committee reviewed an analysis of data gathered on undergraduate-level Directed Study courses (designated as X99) offered by any school or college, taken by all students who received L&S baccalaureate degrees between Fall 2005 and Fall 2007. About one-third of these students had taken directed study courses, and of those, most took three or fewer credits and most accumulated fewer than nine credits in directed study. Although a very small number (less than 1%) of students in the population earned more than 10% of their total credits in directed study courses, no pattern was readily discerned either in the students or in the courses taken. Grades awarded in directed study are, indeed, high; however, this might be expected in situations where projects are tailored to student interest, research is guided by the instructor who offers consultation throughout, and performance is measured against a mutually agreed-upon set of expectations rather than by comparison to a group of peers. In conclusion, the committee discerned no need for a policy intervention based on these data; however, L&S Student Academic Affairs will inquire more closely into the cases of students who earn a substantial number of credits in directed study, so we may better understand why some students gravitate toward those experiences.
- All L&S faculty and instructional staff who taught undergraduate-level Directed Study in 2007 were asked to share information about their practices and perspectives on these courses. Fifty-six percent of the 393 surveyed responded, and many respondents provided detailed discussions of their expectations of students engaged in a "typical" directed study experience in their fields. Although these experiences vary widely among disciplines, some expectations are common to the experience: instructors generally expect that the student is prepared for and capable of the work to be performed; students develop a project proposal that must be acceptable to the instructor; students meet regularly with the instructor; and the instructor evaluates the completed project. It is important to note that the term "project" is intended to encompass a range of activities, e.g., library research that culminates in a research paper, advanced work in a laboratory, or a performance, internship, or a service-learning experience. But "typical" projects vary widely, and the committee was reluctant to prescribe a college-level pattern intended to contain all of the rich experiences students might pursue in consultation with their instructors. For the time being, the committee has proposed that the

best place for development of policy related to directed study would be at the department level, where norms might be developed in the context of a field, methodology, or shared set of values related to student learning.

- Member institutions of the Consortium on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), UW-Madison's academic peer group among the "academic big-Ten" (<http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/>), were surveyed regarding their policies on directed study. Although all share an expectation that directed study is a learning experience directly negotiated between student and instructor, institutional policies among the six institutions that responded varied from no restrictions to institutions that require completion of a contract, or that impose GPA, registration, and credit limits. The committee considered this information and determined that there is no model suitable for adoption by L&S.

Summaries of key findings of each of these projects appear as an attachment to this memorandum.

2. Response to Dean Sandefur's Questions

Based on our discussions, the committee submits the following responses to the several questions you asked. (Responses are provided in italics.)

- a. Some majors (e.g., Political Science, Hebrew and Semitic Studies) and certificate programs (American Indian Studies) limit the number of Directed Study credits students may apply toward completion of program requirements; should all departments be encouraged to do so, or at least to consider doing so?

Just as the array of majors offered in L&S is broad, so, too, is the range of requirements within them. The Curriculum Committee maintains that the faculty in our departments and programs know best what should be required of their students. The committee therefore recommends that all departments and programs be made aware of the practice of limiting Directed Study in the major, but does not recommend that all academic programs be required to set and enforce such limits.

- b. Should there be limitations on the number of Directed Study credits that might be applied toward completion of degree requirements?

After extensive study of data regarding student course-taking patterns related to Directed Study, the committee finds that there is no reason to be concerned that there is a wide-spread problem of students taking "too many" such courses or credits. In fact, the data show that among L&S students in the cohorts studied, 93% of those who took directed study accumulated fewer than 9 credits in those courses. The committee did not deem that amount to be "too many". If "too many" were understood as more than 10% of an undergraduate degree, only 1% of students in the group we studied exceeded that amount. These cases are being studied further, but until we understand why a few students earn many directed study credits, we are reluctant to prescribe limits for all students.

- c. We know that students' and faculty expectations and experiences with Directed Study vary widely. Would departments benefit from having additional - if general - guidelines for Directed Study courses? For example, should there be college-level expectations regarding such issues as minimum number of hours per credit awarded, type of work evaluated on a

credit/no credit vs. graded basis, etc.? Or, should each department develop consistent standards at the department level?

The committee agrees that departments and faculty would likely benefit from having more information about standards and practices related to Directed Study. Such practices, however, reasonably vary from discipline to discipline, and are best determined at the level of the department or program. The committee would therefore recommend that the college encourage departments and programs to discuss and establish guidelines consistent with "local" expectations. To promote those discussions, this document and the results of the committee's survey of instructors should be shared with departments.

- d. Although existing policy states that deadlines for adding and dropping Directed Study courses are subject to the same criteria as traditional courses, L&S Student Academic Affairs has adopted a more "faculty friendly" policy of processing late adds without questioning the requests. Should Directed Study courses be subject to the same limitations as regular courses, particular regarding add/drop deadlines? Should policy be formally altered to reflect that, and if so, how should the faculty be informed of this delegated responsibility?

Our members were also concerned that students may add many directed study credits late in the semester. Representatives from L&S Student Academic Affairs reported that they rely on the recommendations of the faculty when asked to add students late in the semester. On the other hand, faculty members reported that they assumed recommendations to add students late would be over-ruled if it were deemed unwise. In light of what seems to be a miscommunication, the committee proposes that faculty and instructors be reminded that the responsibility for adding students is theirs, and will not be questioned. (Please note: student athletes must obtain additional permission from the Athletic Department to add courses after the ninth week of courses.)

3. Recommendations

The committee recommends maintaining current regulations with respect to directed study. These regulations appear in the Undergraduate *Catalog*, and include the following:

- Procedure: Prior to registration and before the end of the second week of classes, students are responsible for making all arrangements with the faculty member who agrees to direct their work. The student and faculty member should prepare a study plan, determine the time and place for regular meetings, the number of credits to be earned, and how to enroll in the course.
- Limitations on how Directed Study credits may be used toward completion of graduation and other requirements: Directed Study courses do not satisfy basic or breadth requirements; they count toward the maximum number of credits that may be counted in the major if taken in the major department; they may be subject to restrictions related to the number of Directed Study credits that can be earned in the major. Undergraduate students cannot take or earn degree credit for graduate-level courses designated as Directed Study, Independent Reading, Independent Study, or Individual Enrollment.

- Allowances: Directed Study courses may generally be repeated for credit if course content is not duplicated. Directed Study courses taken in non-L&S departments may be counted as Liberal Arts and Science (C) courses provided that they are offered at the 300-or-above level.

Directed Study courses are not intended as placeholder credits for registration purposes, and students with special rules for full-time status should consult the undergraduate deans before enrolling in Directed Study courses after the enrollment period.

Finally, because these experiences are intended to provide intensive, one-on-one experiences with faculty, departments are not allowed to use Directed Study courses to teach group instruction courses.

Within these constraints, the committee recommends that different groups might take different actions to address concerns about directed study. Given our belief that expectations related to Directed Study will naturally be different in each division and from field to field, many of these recommendations relate to what departments and programs might do to establish local regulations related to directed study.

Department and Programs

- a. Department and program faculty should engage in serious and thorough discussion of department/program-wide policy and practices regarding Directed Study. The goal of these discussions is to make explicit the implicit assumptions about what instructors expect of students who are engaged in mentored learning experiences.
- b. The faculty should be reminded that a wide range of Directed Study numbers are available and may be used to provide opportunities that serve both non-majors and majors. As noted in the catalog:

198 or 199. Directed Study courses numbered 198 or 199 have a credit range of 1 to 3 credits, are considered elementary level, and are intended for freshmen and sophomores, though, in exceptional cases, juniors and seniors may be appropriately admitted if the nature of the course so allows.

298 or 299. Directed Study courses numbered 298 or 299, including supervised reading in foreign languages and in subjects related to students' major fields, have a credit range of 1 to 3 credits and are considered intermediate level.

698 or 699. Directed Study courses numbered 698 or 699 (and other courses with numbers ending in 98/99, between 398 and 699) have a credit range of 1 to 6 credits, are considered advanced level, and are offered primarily for juniors and seniors. However, in unusual cases, freshmen and sophomores with exceptional preparation and motivation may be admitted. At this level, it is a prerequisite to have had previous or concurrent exposure to the subject on an intermediate level.

(Courses ending in -98 are only available Cr/N; courses ending in -99 are graded. As mentioned above, undergraduates are not allowed to take directed research at the graduate level, 700 and above.)

- c. Departments and programs have the discretion to establish requirements related to the extent to which Directed Study experiences “count” in the academic programs for which they are responsible. (Please recall, too, that changes in requirements for majors must be approved by the L&S Curriculum Committee.)
- d. Our study found that individuals and their departments use 699 courses to convey academic credit for a variety of learning experiences, some of which might be codified as regular courses (e.g., group meetings that convey the academic component of service-learning projects or internships). Wherever possible, departments and programs should be encouraged to develop these experiences as formal courses.

L&S Curriculum Committee

- e. On a related note, the Curriculum Committee should consult with the faculty regarding the potential development of a flexible L&S Interdisciplinary Timetable course to be used by participating faculty to award academic credit for internship experiences that do not relate well to a single academic department or program.

L&S Administration

- f. The Dean should share with departments and programs the recommendations and background materials related to this report, perhaps by including a discussion of this issue in the *L&S Handbook* and by presenting the topic for discussion at the next meeting of the L&S Senate.

We encourage our colleagues to share our conviction that these experiences are valuable and contribute much to our students’ learning. The data we studied reveal that two-thirds of the students took no directed study courses, which led some committee members to express concern that relatively few students take advantage of the mentored learning attained in a directed study experience. It is the committee’s hope that such discussions will encourage those members of the faculty who might be inclined to consider supervising Directed Study, to do so, so more students may engage in learning not just the topic studied, but the skills associated with the pursuit of independent learning.

CC: L&S Curriculum Committee
L&S Academic Planning Council
L&S Senate

Attachment: “Summaries of Assessment Studies”

Summaries of Assessment Studies

- 1) The committee reviewed data regarding undergraduate-level Directed Study courses (designated as X99) offered by any school or college, taken by all students who received L&S baccalaureate degrees between Fall 2005 and Fall 2007.
 - a. Of the 6,861 students in the population studied, 1/3 took one or more Directed Study courses, earning a total of 9,607 credits with 947 different instructors.
 - b. Of those students who took Directed Study, most took three or fewer courses. (60% took one course; 25% took two; and 10% took three.)
 - c. Of those students who took Directed Study, most (93%) accumulated fewer than 9 credits in Directed Study. In considering of the proportion of Directed Study credits as part of all degree credits earned by each student, most (98%) earned less than 10% of total degree credits in Directed Study courses.
 - d. In considering the small number of students for whom the number of Directed Study credits was greater than 10%, we looked at whether these students concentrated their studies in one area, or with one instructor, or if they sampled more broadly. No clear pattern emerged; however, the numbers are small, and disciplinary variations may play a role in this question. In the sciences, a student might engage in long research project as a member of a particular research group; in the humanities or social sciences, a student might explore an interdisciplinary topic with faculty from several departments.
 - e. Grades awarded in Directed Study courses are high. Committee members note that this is to be expected in situations where projects are tailored to students' interests, feedback and guidance are regularly given, and performance is measured against an agreed-upon set of expectations rather than by comparison to peers.

The committee discerned no need for policy intervention based on these data. However, L&S Student Academic Affairs has been asked to study records of students who earned a large number of Directed Study credits so we may better understand these students' needs.

- 2) All L&S faculty and staff who taught undergraduate-level Directed Study in 2007 were asked to share information regarding their practices and perspectives on these courses. The 56% response rate was remarkable (particularly for a web-based survey), and the committee greatly appreciates the contributions of everyone who shared opinions, details, and examples of course materials. We learned the following:
 - a. Directed Study Instructional Contact: Nearly every respondent reported meeting regularly with students,¹ and in general, students enrolled for more credit were expected to have more interactions than students who were enrolled for fewer credits. Most (84%) respondents' meetings with students lasted more than 30 minutes; however, this varies by

¹ Exceptions related to students engaged in "Distance-delivered" directed study, in which "meetings" were conducted by e-mail.

project and discipline, in a range that included daily or weekly interactions in a laboratory setting, formal meetings in which proposals were discussed, and final presentations of results. Several respondents cited the role of e-mail as enhancing instructional contact by allowing frequent, informal discussion of questions, ideas, and progress reports. E-mail also affords “distance education” for students who may be overseas or off-campus.

- b. Credit Level and Work Expectations: 92% of respondents had supervised at least one three-credit Directed Study course; 75% had experience with one- or two-credit courses; and about half had guided students in four- to six- credit courses.² Expectations common to all credit levels include meetings, discussion of the project, and submission of a final project, paper, presentation, or similar “culminating event”. Generally, as credit levels increased, so, too, did other expectations: number and frequency of meetings, progress reports, submission of drafts, etc. Again, the type and nature of work expected varies by discipline, and half of our respondents provided considerable detail about the type and nature of work completed. Also, in addition to the classic research project/paper Directed Study model implicit in our request for information, we learned that these experiences also include completion of annotated bibliographies, performances, laboratory research, internships, service-learning, and advanced language study.
- c. Prerequisites: 75% of respondents require some form of preparation before agreeing to allow students to enroll in these courses. Most commonly cited was an expectation that the students have a background in or basic understanding of the topic (e.g., an intro course); prior experience with the instructor; advanced coursework, advanced standing, or a declared major in the topic; or to have demonstrated interest in the topic or in the area for which a regular course may not exist. Least frequently cited was the expectation that the student have good grades. Several responses combined two or more of these conditions, and it is important to note that “interest in the topic” without also having a basic understanding was rarely proposed as a sufficient condition for enrollment.
- d. Reasons for offering Directed Study, in descending order of frequency cited, included:
 - a. To supervise a student working on thesis or special project.
 - b. To teach a motivated student more about a specific topic.
 - c. To help a student earn credit for internship/work experience relevant to an academic program.
 - d. To offer a “capstone” experience for a major.
 - e. To give credit for independent research conducted in a lab.
 - f. To teach a course not offered by the department/program.
 - g. To help a student earn credit for a service-learning/volunteer experience relevant to an academic program.
 - h. To teach a regular course that was canceled or not scheduled.
 - i. To help a student maintain registration (e.g., full-time status).

² This is consistent with the student data, in that students took many more 1-3 credit courses than 4-6 credit courses.

- e. Nearly all respondents volunteered descriptions of “typical” Directed Study experiences. These descriptions reflect the high degree of variability in these courses, which are bounded by the interest of the student and the expertise and judgment of the instructor. As such, it may be difficult to impose sensible college-level requirements regarding course format; at best, such expectations might be established at the department level, in discussions of “best” or “customary” practices.
- 3) Liberal Arts and Science colleagues at Consortium on Institutional Cooperation institutions were surveyed regarding their colleges’ policies on Directed Study. The six responses received are summarized below:
- a. All share an expectation that Directed Study is negotiated between student and faculty.
 - b. Some institutions distinguish between *types* of independently pursued projects: study, research, reading, creative projects, correspondence courses, internships, and instruction (in which the student is supervised while teaching others). Institutions may distinguish between these experiences by special course numbers and/or grading limitations.
 - c. Three institutions report no college-level limitations on Directed Study, but observe that departments have the discretion to limit Directed Study credits taken in the major.
 - d. One college limits to 9 (of 120) credits the number of Directed Study credits counted toward the degree, but does not count senior thesis, capstone courses, honor projects, or practica in those limits. Another limits students to 9 (of 45) units required for graduation, and cautions students to consult departments about courses that count in this maximum.
 - e. One institution requires a minimum GPA before allowing students to enroll in Directed Study, restricts the number of credits earned in a given department or program to 8, and counts no more than 16 credits toward the degree.
 - f. Two institutions limit credits in independent study that may be carried in a given term.
 - g. Two institutions publish requirements for a Directed Study contract, and each of these institutions require that the contract be on file in the college advising office.
 - h. Within certain limitations, one institution allows students to add a credit to an existing course to maintain enrollment status.
 - i. One institution noted, in particular, that Directed Study is not factored into faculty workload calculations, and that this may affect willingness to supervise students.