

**College of Letters and Science Curriculum Committee
Report to L&S Faculty Senate
Academic Year 2009 (to date)**

Curriculum Committee Members and Chair

Rob Asen (Communication Arts)	Kristopher Olds (Geography)
Marc Fink (Music)	Ned Sibert (Chemistry)
Diane Gooding (Psychology)	Jeremi Suri (History)
Liane Kosaki (Political Science)	Ken Sytsma (Botany)
Venkat Mani (German	
Naomi McGloin (East Asian	<i>Student:</i>
Languages and Literature)	Emily Kesner
Michael Morgan (Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences, Chair)	

Ex Officio members:

Elaine M. Klein (Assistant Dean, Academic Planning, Program Review & Assessment)
Christopher F. Lee (Assistant Dean, L&S Student Academic Affairs)
Molly McGlone (Assistant Director for Curriculum, L&S Honors Program)
Michael J. Pflieger (Assistant Dean, L&S Student Academic Affairs)
Nancy Westphal-Johnson (Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education & Academic Administration)
Tammy Weisensel (Assistant to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education & Academic Administration)

Overview

The L&S Curriculum Committee (LSCC) advises the Dean on the curricular integrity of the undergraduate degree requirements, major requirements, and special programs. The committee also reviews proposals to add, change, or delete courses from the L&S subject listings prior to submitting these requests for final approval to the Divisional Executive Committees. As part of its work to maintain the integrity of the Liberal Arts curriculum, the committee considers requests to allow non-L&S courses to count toward L&S degree requirements by awarding them the designation of "Liberal Arts and Science" courses. This work is described in greater detail online, at <http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3.htm>. At the Dean's request, the committee considers a variety of issues related to undergraduate education for purposes of advising him, the faculty and L&S departments and programs, and the division of Student Academic Affairs.

Proposals to Add, Change or Delete Courses

The LSCC is responsible for college-level review of proposals to add, change, or delete courses listed in the *Course Guide* subject listings that are managed by L&S departments and programs.

Proposals approved by department faculty are sent to the LSCC. A technical review is conducted to evaluate whether they conform to technical requirements for entry into the course database. The LSCC chair reviews all proposals to determine if they are ready for committee consideration, and committee members review all proposals online prior to the meeting. At any of these levels, questions may be asked of the units submitting the proposals; L&S staff work hard to resolve questions that come up before proposals are submitted to the Divisional Executive Committee. (See **Attachment A** for a diagram illustrating this process.) Since the committee's last report to the L&S Senate (April 9, 2009), the LSCC approved proposals to create 44 new courses, to change 64 existing courses, and to delete 7 courses. 32 proposals are awaiting department responses to questions raised in the approval process (and, most of these questions relate to requests to cross-list or alter cross-listed courses).

Obsolete Courses: The last LSCC report to the Senate included information about a Fall 2008 request made of L&S departments and programs to undertake the task of reviewing and trimming their courselists, which was prompted by the transition from a print *Catalog* to an online version that links to the online course database known as the "*Course Guide*". That review was conducted on recommendation of the LSCC, in light of the fact that the *Course Guide* presents publicly all courses that exist. Concerned by data indicating that 32 percent of the 13,600 courses on UW-Madison's books had not been taught in 6 years, and 25 percent had not been taught in the past 10 years, Interim Provost Julie Underwood initiated a review of courses that might be considered "obsolete" by virtue of not having been taught in ten or more years, with the goal of retiring from the list courses that students cannot realistically hope to see taught during their time at UW-Madison. Assistant Dean Elaine Klein worked with colleagues in the Provost's and Registrar's Office to develop a streamlined process for conducting this review; she also served as the L&S contact for departments conducting the review of their course lists. L&S departments and programs recommended for retirement from the active course array:

- 378 of 699 (or, 54.08%) courses for which there was no record of ever having been taught;
- 588 of 1061 (or, 55.41%) courses which had not been taught in ten or more years; and
- 243 of 660 (or, 36.82%) courses which had not been taught in six to ten years.

Departments are encouraged to monitor their courselists and to retire courses from the course array when they are no longer likely to be taught. They are also encouraged to develop "topics courses" at various levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) to take advantage of greater flexibility in offering new or infrequently taught courses. More information – including the LSCC's guidance regarding repetition of "topics" can be found in the *L&S Handbook*, at <http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3-topicscourses.htm>.

Liberal Arts and Science (LAS) Designation. The LSCC considered several requests from non-L&S programs to consider how their courses are found to meet College criteria for Liberal Arts

and Science courses. (Undergraduate students in L&S must complete a minimum number of credits in approved LAS courses; students completing the current BABS07 degree requirements must have at least 108 LAS credits, and students completing the 1971 requirements must have at least 100 “C” credits, and up to 20 “T” credits.) Applications for LAS have been standardized in recent years, requiring the program making the request to provide a detailed syllabus accompanied by a substantive memorandum explaining how the course contributes to students’ liberal education, and specifically, how the LAS criteria are met (**Attachment B**). Requests are usually reviewed by the full committee and discussed extensively in one or two meetings. Since the last LSCC report, five departments have submitted requests for LAS designation. Of these, one has been approved. (One is pending, one was withdrawn, and two are still under review.) In cases where it was possible and desirable to do so, the committee recommended that approvals be retroactive to the semesters reflected in the course syllabi reviewed. This allowance is intended to help students complete their degrees in a timely way.

In January 2010, a subcommittee was convened to review a request submitted by the Air Force ROTC program, which asked for six courses to be converted from “T” courses to LAS courses. Professor Jeremi Suri chaired that committee, which reviewed course readers, assignments, and examination materials associated with these courses. After careful consideration, the committee recommended that these courses be approved, and the LSCC accepted that recommendation.

Proposals to Change Requirements for Academic Programs

LSCC guidelines regarding changes to requirements the academic programs remain in effect (<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterOne/chapter1-3ccpol.htm>). Since the last LSCC report, a few departments and programs sought changes to their academic programs; these appear in this report as **Attachment C**. The Committee and L&S Administrative staff continue to work with departments to articulate the connections between requests for curricular changes and efforts to assess student learning in academic programs, to link changes to evidence, and to demonstrate more clearly that learning is improving. As part of the approval process, implementation dates are established and plans are developed to ensure that students in the “old” programs are able still to complete those requirements, or that they may be transitioned into the new requirements without adversely affecting their progress.

Implementing Revisions to the L&S Baccalaureate Degree Requirements

The committee continues to make itself available to departments and to colleagues in L&S Student Academic Affairs to monitor issues arising from the implementation of changes to the L&S baccalaureate degree requirements, known as BABS07. At this time, no issues have been formally presented to the committee for consideration.

Other Curricular Issues

Course Overlap Issues

The Provost has asked Dean Sandefur and the LSCC to change L&S policy regarding course overlaps. Current policies, which were developed prior to the university's ability to conduct electronic degree audits of student transcripts, allow departments to limit the number of degree credits students are awarded for taking courses determined have closely related or overlapping content. The policy removes credit from students' transcripts after the course has been completed. The policy presents several problems:

- the list of overlapping courses has not been updated in many years;
- other schools and colleges routinely ignore these rules;
- removal of credit students have paid for and completed is an inappropriate adjustment of the transcript;
- the policy does not provide effective guidance to students at the time of enrollment, when they might better avoid overlapping courses;
- major requirements may force students to take overlapping courses when they change programs; and finally,
- other tools are used to audit student transcripts and determine "how courses count".

The Registrar's Office is seeking permission to stop enforcing overlap rules entirely, and the committee is inclined to agree that this should be done. Before the committee issues its recommendations about this policy, the LSCC needs more information from departments about this issue at the department level. The committee is contacting departments to learn more about whether restricting credit in this way serves departments' curricular goals.

The LSCC discussion noted that students' needs and interests change as they move through the curriculum, and allowing overlaps in some cases represent advances in learning: it should be easy for students to take an "overlapping course" if the "overlap" serves to advance the student. On the other hand, it does not seem to make sense for students to reverse direction, for example, by taking "non-Calculus Physics" after having taken "calculus-based Physics". In nearly all of cases, "forward progress" could be implemented by using the existing course-prerequisite system in ISIS, which is enforced at the time of course enrollment. By enforcing course prerequisites, forward progress is addressed at the point of registration, when students are able to make other choices if they inadvertently select an overlapping course.

Recommendation:

Departments and programs seeking to control student progress through courses should do so by creating and enforcing course prerequisites. (For example, "Jurassic Studies 103: Not open to students who have taken Jurassic Studies 207, 247, or 352..." or "LitTrans XXX: Not open to students who have already taken Jurassic Studies XXX".)

Course prerequisites notices should not be used to make statements about program or

degree requirements. Rather, these requirements are more appropriately discussed in the catalog statement, and implemented through advising and Degree Audit processes.

This recommendation shifts responsibility for enforcement of this policy from the Registrar's Office to departments, which are more attuned to the course content and students' appropriate progress through their curricula, and where the concept of "overlap" may be most important. If adopted, departments will be responsible for considering whether "overlaps" in their curricula are important; and if so, identifying reasonable limits that can be enforced in course prerequisites, and enforcing those prerequisites.

Consultation Regarding CALS Degree Structure

Representatives from the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences met with the committee to discuss proposed revisions to the degree structure for CALS "non-professional" undergraduate degrees (see <http://www.cals.wisc.edu/students/majors/BSDegreeProposal.php>). The proposal suggests reducing the eight undergraduate degree programs to five, preserving the four "professional" degrees but consolidating the four "primary" programs into one general Bachelor of Science. Under the current system, students can pursue approximately 70 different curricular combinations; under the proposal, this would be streamlined significantly. The result would be similar to the L&S system, in which majors are coupled with degree requirements to complete the degree. L&S approval is not required; nevertheless, committee members expressed their support for this proposal, which will serve students well by simplifying and clarifying a confusing array of requirements.

Initial Discussion: General Bachelor of Liberal Studies Degree

Dean Sandefur has asked the LSCC to begin discussion of whether the College of Letters and Science should propose creation of a general degree in the Liberal Arts and Sciences. Such programs have been offered with increasing frequency at other University of Wisconsin institutions, and there is a general perception that having a broadly construed degree program may serve our students. The committee has not yet engaged in discussion of this topic, but would appreciate hearing Senators' initial impressions.

This report was approved by the L&S Curriculum Committee on February 22, 2010, and is submitted by:

Michael C. Morgan, Chair, L&S Curriculum Committee
Professor of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences

Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean
L&S Academic Planning, Program Review and Assessment

L&S Course Proposal Process

Elaine Klein & Tammy Weisensel

Attachment A

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Faculty member proposes course to department; course is approved per departmental process

Proposal sent to L&S Curriculum Committee

Revised proposal sent to Divisional Executive Committee Office

Proposals to add/change/delete courses are forwarded to Registrar's Office for entry into *Course Guide*.

Department processes vary; however, all proposals to add, change, or delete courses must include the appropriate course proposal form. See: <http://www.secfac.wisc.edu/divcomm/courses/CourseProposals.htm>

Depending on form used and nature of course proposed, proposals may include:

- Syllabus
- For Comm A/B, QR A/B, or Ethnic Studies, information about progress of (or request for) review
- Support from Cross-listing departments
- Discussion from affected departments (if any) regarding overlapping course content, if relevant and substantial

If cross-listing department is in a college other than L&S, those colleges must also approve the course. L&S can work with parallel routing of these requests; however, some colleges prefer sequential approval. Conflicts will be resolved at the divisional committee level.

Departments send:

Electronic copy (pdf preferred) *or* 3 hard copies to LSCC for Technical and Committee Review. *Please note:* these documents are reviewed as though they are "drafts", just in case they need revision prior to submission to college/campus committees.

Please include:

Cover letter from chair (one letter per set of proposals)

To:

L&S Curriculum Committee
c/o Tammy Weisensel
307 B South Hall
weisensel@ls.admin.wisc.edu

By:

Ten days prior to Curriculum Committee meeting that falls before Divisional Committee Deadline

- L&S CC staff & chair work with dept to resolve technical questions.
- L&S CC considers proposals when questions are resolved (may vote "approve pending resolution of minor questions").
- Notice of approval and revised proposals sent to Dept. and to Divisional Executive Committee Office.

Departments send:

20 copies (hard copy only) of revised/final proposal

To:

Divisional Executive Committee Office
(134 Bascom Hall)

By:

Three weeks before Divisional Executive Committee meeting

L&S sends:

L&S CC Chair's notice of course approval to Divisional Executive Committee Office (e-mail and hard copy) *with* correspondence about revisions.

NOTE: Divisional Committees may have additional questions for department or for L&S Curriculum Committee.

For more information about the L&S Curriculum Committee, see section I.3 of the ***L&S Handbook***
www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook

L&S Curriculum Committee Annual Report, 2009-2010
Criteria for Liberal Arts and Science Courses

Approved by L&S Curriculum Committee December 5, 2005

Courses requested for Liberal Arts and Science (LAS) credit should encourage students in one or more of the three “habits of the mind” of liberal arts education, as specified by the College of Letters and Science. These include:

1. Skilled written and verbal communication, excelling in formulating and expressing a point of view, reflecting and questioning current knowledge through reading, research and consideration of the views of others.

This criterion includes:

- a. fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication
 - b. ability to understand and use prose, analyze documents
 - c. ability to use quantitative information to understand, develop and respond to arguments
 - d. critical and reflective quantitative, reading, and communication skills
 - e. reasoned, well-organized, and sustained discussions of important issues or questions, including the ability to explain and evaluate different or opposing perspectives evenhandedly and dispassionately
2. The ability to draw flexibly upon and apply the modes of thought of the major areas of knowledge.

This criterion includes:

- a. understanding and application of the fundamental theory, methods of inquiry, and patterns of reasoning that characterize fields of knowledge within the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences, including the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning
- b. recognizing and evaluating new information, integrating that information into existing frameworks of knowledge, and adapting those frameworks as necessary or appropriate, using standards of intellectual rigor or precision appropriate to different subject areas
- c. posing meaningful questions that advance knowledge and understanding
- d. analyzing arguments, evaluating the evidence supporting them, and framing reasonable and persuasive counter-arguments; similarly, constructing arguments, supporting them with relevant evidence, and anticipating likely counter-arguments
- e. connecting theory and application through analysis of research or conducting research
- f. making connections among diverse subject areas and modes of thinking
- g. applying the major areas of knowledge to the solution of individual and community problems

3. Knowledge of our basic cultural heritage as a multifaceted and often contested history.

This criterion includes:

- a. the ability to place key decisions and developments in broader social, cultural, and historical context
- b. self-critical appreciation of cultural and personal values.

Proposed courses, including those designed to convey technical skills or specialized pre-professional training, must have extensive coverage of these aspects of the liberal arts and sciences. Although no single course will cover all of these aspects, the Curriculum Committee will look for evidence that liberal arts aspects are woven throughout a course. Course design must clearly encourage and emphasize analytical, conceptual, and creative thinking. Liberal arts learning should be heavily represented in the course objectives, list of topics covered, requirements, and assessment. The syllabus must indicate in detail how and where the liberal arts aspects of the course are integrated into the course and specify how the assessment of students incorporates the liberal arts features of the course.

Attachment C: Changes to Academic Programs
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- **East Asian Languages and Literature** reduced the number of credits conveyed for several courses in Chinese and Japanese, which allowed changes in the major requirements that will allow students to take an additional course without changing the overall number of credits in these majors.
- **Geoscience** has requested changes to the major in Geology and Geophysics, defining an array of tracks that will guide students through the major in ways that best serve their post-graduation goals.
- **Physics** also adjusted the number of credits in several laboratory courses, which increased the overall number of credits required in the program. These changes brought the lab courses into better alignment with similar courses offered in other physical sciences departments. LSCC representatives and L&S Undergraduate Academic Services are working with the department to determine the optimal implementation strategy.
- Technical corrections were approved for:
 - ❖ Modern Hebrew Literature Track of the undergraduate major in **Hebrew and Semitic Studies**; these changes were needed to align the list of courses required with current course offerings.
 - ❖ Criminal Justice Certificate Program, to allow the award to be conferred upon completion of the program instead of upon completion of the degree. This addresses a problem non-degree students encountered when attempting to complete this award.