

College of Letters and Science Curriculum Committee Report (Academic Year 2013-2014) to L&S Faculty Senate

Curriculum Committee Members and Chair

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Overview

The L&S Curriculum Committee (LSCC) advises the Dean on the curricular integrity of academic programs offered in the College of Letters and Science, from degree requirements affecting all L&S undergraduates, to changes to requirements for existing majors, certificates, and options. The committee reviews proposals to add, change, or delete courses from the L&S subject listings, after departmental approval and prior to final approval by the University Curriculum Committee. To maintain the integrity of the undergraduate Liberal Arts curriculum, the committee also considers requests to allow courses offered outside the college to count toward L&S undergraduate degree requirements by awarding them the designation of "Liberal Arts and Science" courses. This work is described in greater detail online, at <https://kb.wisc.edu/lsc/page.php?id=20092>. At the Dean's request, the committee considers other issues related to undergraduate education for purposes of advising him, the faculty and L&S departments and programs, and the L&S division of Student Academic Affairs.

Proposals to Change Requirements for Academic Programs

LSCC guidelines regarding changes to requirements for academic programs remain in effect (<https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/page.php?id=20013>). Since the last LSCC report, several departments and programs sought changes to their academic programs; these appear in this report as **Attachment A**. The Committee and L&S Administration 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 on the "old" programs are still able to complete those requirements or that they may be transitioned to the new requirements without adversely affecting their progress.

Proposals to Add, Change, or Delete courses

The LSCC is responsible for college level review of proposals to add, change, or delete courses managed by L&S departments and programs. Proposals approved by department faculty are forwarded for approval by the college-level Curriculum Committee, which has faculty representatives from all L&S divisions, as well as advisors. Action on course proposals may only be taken if a faculty quorum is present.

A review is conducted to evaluate whether the courses conform to technical requirements (e.g., valid course number, etc.) as well as the pedagogical goals of the College. New course proposals are carefully reviewed in terms of their syllabi, course goals, and possible overlap/opportunities for crosslisting with existing courses. The LSCC chair and staff review all proposals to determine if they are ready for committee consideration, and committee members review all proposals online prior to the meeting. On any of these levels, questions may be asked of the faculty and units submitting the proposals; the committee chair and L&S staff work with departments to resolve questions that come up before proposals are submitted to the University Curriculum Committee. During the 2013-2014 academic year, the LSCC approved proposals to create 208 changes, 105 new courses, 22 course deletions, and 11 non- L&S proposals for LAS designations

Additional course related issues:

Sociology major changes. As a result of an undergraduate program review, Sociology determined that students needed more structure to guide them through the Sociology curriculum. Though courses were offered at the elementary, intermediate, and advanced level, the lack of enforcement of prerequisites meant in practice, and student could take

any course. This created a situation where seniors in the major were still working to complete elementary courses, and students early in the major were inadvertently taking advanced level coursework.

To address this issue, Sociology created a clear pathway through requirements for students, which encourages students to take elementary material course, and progress to more advanced courses. They identified the core courses that give students the skills required to be successful in advanced courses. And, they added enforced prerequisites that require students to take the coursework they need *before* they may enroll in advanced coursework.

As a result of this project, Sociology submitted a significant number of course change proposals. The changes requested added prerequisites, and also updated titles and descriptions.

Curricular Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

The L&S Curriculum Committee is responsible for L&S policies, procedures and guidelines related to college curricular issues, and advises the Dean regarding campus-wide issues. This year, the L&S Curriculum Committee discussed and approved the following items:

- A common pass/fail policy for all undergraduate students on campus
- Alignment of [L&S guidelines on Directed Study](#) with the new [campus Directed Study policy](#)
- Clarification of the [L&S Foreign Language Retrocredit policy](#)
- Updates to the [guidelines for courses to be listed in the L&S Interdisciplinary subject listing](#)

In addition, the committee had first discussions or provided feedback regarding:

- The [Career Initiative](#), a comprehensive L&S program proposed by Dean Karl Scholz to transform career advising, increase alumni engagement with students, and define and articulate the transferable – and highly desired – skills learned in majors, certificates, and courses. Conversations regarding the Career Initiative, in particular regarding a critical career development course, will continue next year.
- Requiring L&S undergraduate students to declare a major by a certain milestone (the committee plans to continue this conversation in 2014-2015).
- Allowable overlap between majors
- Exceptions data on all L&S programs, and curricular implications of programs that have high exception rates (see [Trends in Curricular Exceptions in L&S Academic Programs](#)).
- Assessment plan for L&S

Other Curricular Issues

As a new pilot this year, the L&S Curriculum Committee served as the review committee for the Sociology undergraduate program review. Faculty from the Sociology department visited the L&S Curriculum Committee during meetings, and a subcommittee also met with the department and Sociology undergraduate students. The subcommittee also generated a program review report. Sociology was chosen as a pilot for this because their programs are highly regarded, and they had identified the need to make significant changes to their undergraduate program.

Attachment A: Changes to Academic Programs (AY 2013-2014)

Program Changing

Description of Change

Undergraduate Programs

Communication Sciences and Disorder - Honors	Changed the GPA requirement from 3.3 in both overall undergraduate courses and major courses to 3.5 in both GPAs. Students with lower GPAs tend to drop the honors program after a year, or have great difficulties in finishing.
English Honors Program	The changes aligned the honors program with the changes to the English major changes approved the previous spring.
Gender and Women's Studies (and Honors)	Removed a 9-credit "concentration" requirement in the major (reducing the total number of credits to complete the major from 39 to 30)/ The Research Option was also updated to included this change. The Honors in the Major were also clarified the number of honors credits required above the Elementary level.
Jewish Studies - Track in Modern Hebrew Language, Literature, and Israeli Culture	This change is prompted by the dissolution of the Hebrew & Semitic Studies Department. These program changes create a Hbebrew and Israeli Culture 'track' in the Jewish Studies major, and closely mirrors the closed Hebrew major. Through this track, students will continue to have the opportunity to study modern Hebrew lanugage, literature, and Israeli culture.
Music Education	Changes to increase learning opportunities outside of the Euro-American classical music tradition, requiring students to be dual certified to increase employability, and reducing overlap.
Political Science	Describe quality of work requirements for the undergraduate major.
Religious Studies (and Honors)	Updated and restructured requirements to model the current discipline, to reduce bottlenecks, and align course offerings with requirements.
Slavic Studies	Undergraduate students will no longer be required to read and site original Russian sources (which had to be approved individually by the advisor) for an approved Area Studies course to meet the Area Studies requirement.
Sociology	Sociology added appropriate, enforced prerequisites to courses to create a more structured pathway for undergraduates to engage in the department's curriculum, from elementary to advaced. The changes also now require four upper level courses.

Undergraduate Certificates

Gender and Women's Studies	Changed the GPA requirement from a 2.75 cumulative GPA in certificate courses to a 2.0, to align with typical certificates in L&S.
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Graduate Certificates

Teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)	The changes reduce the required number of credits, create a clear distinction between undergraduate and graduate level of study, and reduce overlap between the certificate and the MA in Applied English Linguistics.
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Proposed Changes to Major Declaration Policy

Overview and Context

During the summer of 2014, a working group met at the request of Dean Karl Scholz to consider revising the Major Declaration Policy for the College of Letters and Sciences. Specifically, the group was tasked to create a plan ensuring all L&S undergraduate students declare a major by an appropriate time in their undergraduate career.

The working group included Michael Pflieger, Elaine Klein, Jo Ann Meier, Gery Essenmacher, John Hawks, Daniel Kapust, Nancy Westphal-Johnson, and Kimbrin Cornelius. The group met three times to discuss the need for such a policy, consider what one might look like, and how it might be implemented.

Current Policy

The current L&S Major Declaration Policy states:

“Students must declare a major through the department administering that program. The effective date of major declaration determines the major requirements to be completed. Students should request a Major/Certificate Declaration form from the academic department/unit administering the major. This form should be completed by the student and left at the department office administering the major. If a student decides to change his/her major later, the student should return to that department office and cancel his/her major. Students may have as many majors as they wish, but they must complete the Major/Certificate Declaration form for each major and cancel any major they feel they cannot complete.”

Proposed changes

The attached document includes the new proposed policy. The essence of the change is to *require* L&S undergraduate students to declare a major before they have completed 86 credits. If students have not yet declared when they complete 86 credits, registration hold will be placed on these students' records. A student may not register until they have declared a major or until the student has been granted an exception.

Rationale for Change

Declaration of a major is a fundamental part of a student's progression in their academic career, and integral to timely graduation. Declaring a major benefits students in a number of ways, including:

- Students who declare early are more likely to complete their degree within four years.

- Declared students are connected to important pedagogical benefits, such as participation in a department's culture and membership in a cohort of students, and are connected to resources such as advising, faculty connections, and course access;
- Declaration helps departments identify students who intend to complete one of their majors, and assists with outreach to those students;
- The process of declaring 'locks in' students to current requirements, and ensures they have the right to complete under those requirements.

Despite these critical benefits, and the clear connections to timely graduation, L&S policy allows students to take courses indefinitely without declaring a major. Identifying undeclared students with a significant number of credits could represent a clear and critical advisor intervention point. Advisors help guide undeclared students through important and sometimes difficult decisions that must be made to continue degree progress. For example, what majors meet the student's interests and talents? What should the student do if she/he isn't able to meet his/her preferred program's entrance requirements? What are other resources on campus that can help? Placing a hold that delays registration is a significant intervention, and it is intended to help students who may have stumbled on the path to timely completion of their academic program.

This policy change will also help the college align communication about the importance of major declaration, so messaging is intentional and consistent from arrival to graduation. This required change will promote critical interventions by advisors who will guide students toward majors that suit their talents and interests. By implementing this policy, we are also ensuring the best use of student's resources, as well as University resources, by encouraging students to develop a plan for continuing their studies.

Considerations regarding time of the hold intervention

86 credits was identified as a suitable/optimal threshold because it marks the minimum credit level for "senior standing." In addition, when looking at student declaration data, the majority of L&S students have identified majors by this point. We hope this is a point where targeted intervention makes good sense, and we are not needlessly interfering with students who cannot yet declare their major because they are still working on their entrance requirements.

Students enter L&S with a widely varying number of credits completed; they may enter with retro, transfer, text, and/or AP credit. All types of credits are included in the limit. Inevitably, some students will encounter this policy much sooner in their residence than others. Nevertheless, because 86 credits represents such significant progress towards a degree, the policy will apply to all L&S undergraduate students. As with other policies, students with special circumstances may speak to an advisor or dean for an exception.

Some students declare majors late in their academic careers because they hope to gain admission to restrictive programs either inside or outside L&S (for example, the Business School). We intend such students to be advised effectively by an advisor rather than delay making alternative plans.

Implementation

The Dean will charge an implementation committee that will develop an overall implementation plan. Once the plan is fully developed, L&S Student Academic Affairs will be responsible for coordinating all aspects of it.

The implementation plan should adhere to several principles:

- Close coordination with other campus units to support positive action for students (Registrar's Office, Cross-College Advising, L&S departments, SOAR, etc).
- Coordinated, college-wide communication about major declaration throughout the life-cycle of the student experience. The messaging may be different for targeted groups (freshman are encouraged to explore, for example, but are also given information on how to declare).
- Online resources to help students understand how to declare, and how to get assistance with choosing a major.
- Multiple modes of messaging to ensure students receive fair warning
- A clear identification of who may remove holds, documentation of the process to do so quickly, and training to advisors, staff, and faculty who may encounter students with this registration hold.
- Understanding the declaration process for all L&S programs, and identifying best practices to ensure students will not encounter 'bureaucratic' or processing delays between the time students indicate what they will declare, and when they may register.
- Document exception policies, and provide guidance to advisors and faculty about what is a reasonable exception.

Major Declaration Policy

Policy

All L&S undergraduate students are required to declare a major or be admitted into a program before or upon the completion of 86 credits (including credits from transfer, AP, test, study abroad, or retro-credits).

If an undeclared student has completed 86 credits, a registration hold will be placed on the student's record. This prevents the undeclared student from registering for additional classes until the student declares a major. To clear this registration hold, undeclared students must either declare a major or consult with an academic advisor or an assistant dean. Students who demonstrate reasonable academic progress toward declaring a major can be allowed to continue for another semester even if they are not able to declare a major immediately.

The effective date of major declaration determines the major requirements to be completed. Students may have as many majors as they wish, but they must complete the Major/Certificate Declaration form for each major. They must also complete the Major/Certificate Declaration form if they want to cancel any major or certificate they do not wish or plan to complete.

Reason For Policy

Major declaration has benefits that are critical to student success. Students with majors:

- Can plan for timely graduation, which uses their resources wisely. Graduating on time lowers the overall cost of education and allows students to pursue their next life goals.
- Connect to the major department, gaining access to departmental advising resources, faculty contacts, and courses limited to majors.
- Connect with other students who are pursuing similar academic interests.
- Get timely and important information about the major (advising hours and workshops, upcoming courses, social events, student groups, speakers, opportunities, etc.).
- "Lock in" major requirements, so if those requirements change, students are held to the rules in place when they declared.

Declaring a major is an essential part of a student's academic career, and is integral to timely graduation; the great majority of students *do* declare their majors by the time they earn 86 credits. This policy is intended to help undeclared students reach out to advisors, so they find majors that suit their talents and interests. This policy is also intended to make the best use of both student and university resources, to help students and their advisors create a plan for academic success and timely graduation.

How to Declare and Cancel a Major

Students must declare a major through the department administering that program. Students should request a Major/Certificate Declaration form from the academic department/unit administering the major. This form should be completed by the student and left at the department office administering the major. If a student decides to change his/her major later, the student should return to that department office and cancel his/her major.