

General BA and BSc 2016 Annual Implementation Report

Submitted by: Richard Nemesvari, Dean of Arts;
Paul Jessop, Dean of Science

Date: July 28, 2016

Implementation Plan from 2011-2012 Final Assessment Report

Recommendation: Develop learning outcomes for General students in all programs.	
Responsibility: Associate Deans; Department Chairs; Registrar	Implementation Date: May 2013
2012-2013 Actions	
<p>Decanal Response on Recommendation: Defining Learning Outcomes for students in this program is made difficult given that most of these students end up in the program by default, with the result that there might be little coherence to the bundle of courses that they have taken. Still, there are changes – some done, some in process - that will ameliorate the situation.</p> <p>First, last year both the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science promoted a policy, ultimately approved at Senate, requiring that at least 8 credits of a 15 credit BA/BSc degree be credits associated with the Faculty granting the degree.</p> <p>Within the Faculty of Arts, the Dean’s office is currently in the process of developing a clear statement outlining the learning outcomes (LO’s) associated, on the one hand, with a university education and on the other, with a BA specifically from the Faculty of Arts. The general headings associated with the former will include at least critical thinking, communication and teamwork and the general headings associated with the latter will include things like an awareness of cultural and social diversity; engagement with the critical problems of the 21st century, experiential learning, intercultural adaptability etc. In both cases, these general headings will be associated with rubrics that can be used – in particular classes - to assess whether (and to what degree) those LO’s have been achieved. As part of the process of developing these LO’s, we will be conducting a series of surveys designed to determine the degree to which individual courses are structured to achieve these LO’s. An initial survey, aimed at gathering some initial information regarding the pedagogical structure of all 300 and 400 level courses in the Faculty, has already been distributed. In other words, to the extent that the two sets of LO’s are explicitly embedded in all Arts courses, then the fact that students in the 15 credit General BA must take 8.0 credits in Arts will ensure that a little more than half their courses, at the very least, will be associated with clear LO’s.</p> <p>Within the Faculty of Science, all departments currently have clearly defined the learning outcomes associated with their specific programs and courses. Thus, the courses taken by each student in the 15-credit General program within the Faculty of Science already have learning outcomes associated with them. However, the program-level learning outcomes need to be addressed. It would be important for both the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science to open discussion on how to manage program-level learning outcomes for both the BA and BSc General degrees.</p> <p>The Faculty of Arts is also planning a DAC retreat in early September that will be the kick off to a process that asks departments to develop a third category of disciplinary-specific LO’s (some departments have already done this. The goal is to have a link on every department’s home page for “Program objectives” that leads to a page given both the disciplinary-specific LO’s as well as the core competencies associated with a University/Arts education. At the moment, a good model is the “Program objectives” link/page on the Health Sciences home page in Science.</p>	

If the proposal mentioned below (re "concentration" in a particular discipline) is passed, then the net effect should be that students in the 15-credit degree program will have access to at least at least some of these disciplinary-specific LO's.

PRS Comments: As this recommendation focuses on two separate issues: learning outcomes and access to upper year courses, the recommendations have been split for future reporting. On the issue of learning outcomes, the PRS supports the faculty and department-level efforts for all programs to have identified learning outcomes and looks forward to an update on progress made on this recommendation in next year's report.

2013-2014 Actions

Decanal Comments: Almost all programs in the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Science developed program level outcomes in 2013-14. The matter of Program Level Outcomes for a 3 year General Degree, however, as well as access to upper level courses in this program, must await the outcome of the discussion among Associate Deans from all Faculties (see below).

PRS Comments: The committee would appreciate an update on any progress made on this recommendation in next year's report.

2014-2015 Actions

Arts and Science Decanal Comments: All departments and programs in both the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Science now have defined program level learning outcomes. Most have these posted to their website. Defining program level outcomes for the 3 year general degree, however, still waits upon the discussion among Associate Deans, which did not take place this past year; see below.

PRS Comments: The committee discussed this recommendation at length; in particular, the challenging nature of articulating learning outcomes for General degrees that are not well-defined. The committee acknowledged the positive work done towards the institutionalization of program learning outcomes across both faculties, and would appreciate ongoing monitoring of related initiatives for the General programs. Toward this, the committee would appreciate a brief update on any progress made in next year's report.

2015-2016 Progress: (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain): Recommendation does not achieve the change necessary to effectively address issues around the General Degree. A broader, more foundational revisiting of this degree offering is required.

Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Science Decanal Comments: It appears clear after reviewing the previous comments connected to this recommendation that the processes for implementing it are unlikely to occur. The difficulties surrounding the creation of coherent learning outcomes for the General Degree have not been solved in three years, nor does this seem likely to occur. This may have as much to do with the foundational structure of that degree as with determining the appropriate way to evaluate its goals. The question of the General Degree and its purposes needs to be revisited from a broader perspective, with the purpose of a complete review of how it should work – this will not be achieved by the recommendation as it stands.

PRS Comments: The committee considers this recommendation to be suspended / completed for the time being. While there is definite value in articulating learning outcomes for students who graduate with either a BA or BSc Without Designation, until such time that these programs are more well-defined, it is not possible to undertake this exercise. Students who graduate with a BA or BSc Without Designation are expected to have met the provincial and institutional Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations for a Bachelor's degree.

Recommendation: Make every effort to open their second- and third-year courses to General students.	
Responsibility: Associate Deans; Department Chairs; Registrar	Implementation Date: May 2013
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: Require all General students to have at least 4.0 credits in a particular concentration.	
Responsibility: Registrar; Associate Deans and Deans	Implementation Date: February 2013
2012-2013 Actions	
<p>Decanal Response on Recommendation: A policy to require this will be set in motion in September.</p> <p>The Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Science will each discuss how to structure the 15-credit BA/BSc General program to include both breadth and depth courses, and create program-level learning outcomes.</p> <p>General BA in Arts: The Faculty of Arts Divisional Council passed a motion requiring students to have 4.0 credits in one concentration (same as Science below). General BA in Science: minimum 4.0 credits one concentration (Psychology, Biology etc) minimum 4.0 additional Science credits; minimum 3.0 credits outside Science (with at least 1.0 credit from Division A and at least 1.0 credit from Division B)</p> <p>General BSc in Science: 1.0 credits in MA; minimum 4.0 credits one concentration (Psychology, Biology etc.) minimum 4.0 additional Science credits (with at least 2.0 from Division C); minimum 3.0 credits outside Science (with at least 1.0 credit from Division A and at least 1.0 credit from Division B)</p> <p>PRS Comments: Noted. Please follow up on this recommendation in next year's report.</p>	
2013-2014 Actions	
<p>Decanal Comments: This motion (to require at least 4.0 credits in a single concentration) passed at Arts Divisional Council but was put on hold at Senate Academic Planning pending the outcome of discussions among Associate Deans from all Faculties (including the two Faculties at Brantford) on the development of a 15 credit BA that draws upon courses from several Faculties, and upon both online and intramural courses. The discussion will be organized and coordinated by the Associate Vice-President Teaching and Learning during 2014-15.</p>	

<p>PRS Comments: The committee would like an update on progress made on this recommendation in next year's report.</p>
<p>2014-2015 Actions</p> <p>Arts and Science Decanal Comments: The proposed discussion among associate deans, unfortunately, did not take place; it is recommended that coordinating this discussion in the Fall be made a priority by the Acting Associate Vice-President Teaching and Learning.</p> <p>PRS Comments: There is an institution-wide initiative coming forward at present to better define terms like minors, options and concentrations that the committee felt may relate to this recommendation and therefore, would like it to continue to be monitored and reported on next year.</p>
<p>2015-2016 Progress: (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Completed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> In Progress</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain): The implementation of this degree should be encompassed by a wider re-evaluation of the General Degree's purpose, which would similarly necessitate an evaluation of credit requirements.</p>
<p>Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Science Decanal Comments: Although the re-definition of the terms "minor," "option," and "concentration" has now been completed, this recommendation needs to be revisited as well. Does the current, revised, definition of "concentration" match the recommendation's actual intent? Similar to the previously unresolved recommendation, this should be part of a larger reconsideration of the General Degree, which will take into account its overall purpose and utility, which would then allow a more considered assignment of credit requirements.</p>
<p>PRS Comments: The committee agrees with the decanal response to this recommendation that until such time as there is a reconceptualization of the general programs at the university, this recommendation cannot be completed. There is no need to report on it further.</p>

Recommendation: Develop a tracking mechanism to follow General students through their program	
Responsibility: Registrar; Faculty Advisors	Implementation Date: January 2013
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: Continue examining entrance requirements and university supports to ensure that those admitted have a real chance of succeeding in an honours-level education.	
Responsibility: Registrar; Deans; VP Taskforce	Implementation Date: Ongoing, to begin Winter 2013
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: Advise General students of their realistic prospects of graduating with an Honours degree.	
Responsibility: Faculty Advisors; Department Undergraduate Advisors; Central Advising	Implementation Date: January 2013
Recommendation completed.	

Recommendation: Remove "General" from any four-year degree.	
Responsibility: Arts, Science, & Brantford Associate Deans; Economics Chair; Registrar	Implementation Date: March 2013
Recommendation completed.	

Additional Comments (Deans): The two remaining incomplete recommendations, which have not been resolved in three years, should be held in abeyance until a comprehensive review of the General Degree may be implemented. Other recommendations have been usefully implemented, and as transitional revisions they have improved the current situation. We have complied with the external audit's direction that we apply the review process to the General Degree. If not all of the external reviewer's recommendations may be effectively implemented, that falls within the prerogative of the process.

Additional Comments (PRS): The committee acknowledges the efforts that have been made to strengthen the general programs since they were reviewed in 2011-2012. Since that time, several mechanisms have been put into place to better advise students on their standing within their program, as well as to reduce the stigmas associated with general degrees. After four years of reporting, there are still two recommendations outstanding from the last review, however, as noted in the committee's responses to those, we do not feel that they can be achieved or completed until such a time as the university undertakes a more comprehensive evaluation of the general degrees without designation. The next review of these programs is scheduled for 2019-2020 and the committee recommends that in advance of that review, a group is struck to consider the possibilities of a more purposefully designed general degree that may attract and serve non-traditional students. The Associate Vice-President: Teaching & Learning is willing to be part of such an initiative.