Curriculum Renewal at Ryerson University: White Paper

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Curriculum Renewal Committee
White Paper

1. Introduction

This document presents the report of the Curriculum Renewal Committee (CRC)[1] on implementation of the new curriculum framework approved by Senate in June 2011. Incorporating the feedback received from the Ryerson community after the release of the CRC's Green Paper in January, this White Paper outlines an amended omnibus curriculum policy as well as specific approaches for the policy's implementation. Once further feedback from the Ryerson community has been received, the CRC's final recommendations will be presented to Senate, hopefully in time for a special June 2012 meeting.

a. Preamble

This White Paper is largely about transitions. It expresses desired curriculum goals to be achieved over time. One example, arising from CRC responses to community feedback on the Green Paper, is the goal of mandated breadth. The White Paper recognizes that Ryerson's current course offerings do not allow students to achieve as wide a range of curriculum experiences as we would like. However, suitable breadth is clearly a long term goal of curriculum renewal.

The theme of transition also applies to the implementation elements of this paper. For example, the use of bands to facilitate enrolment in liberal studies is not universally admired at Ryerson. To make the implementation of the revised curriculum framework manageable, the CRC believes that bands for a renamed version of liberal studies should be maintained as a transitional feature.

Finally, individual programs will have to contemplate change at the local level. This change is a form of transition as well. While the White Paper recognizes that "one size may not fit all" due to local variation in academic culture, the overarching goals of student choice and flexibility in program design must be embraced by our entire academic community. The details of how this will evolve are, of course, likely to vary from Faculty to Faculty and amongst programs.

b. Background

1. How we got to where we are

The Green Paper provided some of the history of Ryerson's tripartite curriculum as well as the context behind the curriculum renewal project. The University's current curriculum dates back at least to 1977 when the three main categories of study were formalized.[2] With only minor modifications, the nomenclature and definitions from that era still underpin our curriculum today:

- *Professional Courses* are designed to induce functional competence by presenting the knowledge and developing the skills characteristic of current practice in the student's career field.

[1] The CRC membership is presented in Appendix 1.
[2] Report #23 of the Academic Standards Committee, February 1, 1977.

- *Professionally Related Courses* are geared to providing an understanding of the theoretical disciplines upon which the student's career field is based, or that synthesize the diverse elements of professional study.
- *Liberal Studies* are intended to develop the capacity to understand and appraise the social and cultural context in which the graduate will work as a professional and live as an educated citizen, while also focusing on the enhancement of writing and critical thinking skills.

Why tinker with these long-standing definitions? Student demand is the most important reason.[3] But other factors have been at work as well, including program demand for greater flexibility in curriculum design, especially in implementing interdisciplinary ideas arising in response to contemporary developments. As noted in the Green Paper, "in the minds of some, the current curriculum model has come to be perceived as an impediment rather than a facilitator of change."

2. Framework from Senate

At the same time, there has been widespread agreement that, in modifying our current curriculum, we should not change the underlying structure so much that it nullifies its numerous benefits. The proposed framework adopted by Senate in June 2011 calls for a continuation of our curriculum's tripartite structure, but with significant amendments. In the current model, professional courses make up 50% to 75% of the curriculum, liberal studies make up 8% to 20% and professionally related courses make up 10% to 40%. In the proposed curriculum, where a typical program requires 40 courses, a specialization consists of 25 to 30 core courses, and a double major from 25 to 30 core courses (13 to 15 courses each from the two components), or some proportion exceeding 60% and up to 75% of the curriculum; professionally related electives make up 4 to 14 courses, or 10% to 35%; and liberal studies contribute 6 courses (4 for engineering students), or 10% to 15%. Note that the terminology used in the approved framework was provisional. For more detail, see the chart included in the Green Paper.

3. Guiding principles

In fulfilling its mandate, the CRC has kept in mind the guiding principles that accompanied the proposed curriculum model approved by Senate in June 2011:

- Students should have more flexibility to define their personal educational and career goals, and therefore should be given more curricular choice.
- Ryerson is known for its mission to provide career-relevant education, and programs must maintain sufficient rigour and depth to ensure that this mission is served.[4]

[3] In the 2011 NSSE data, for example, 22% of first-year Ryerson students and 37% of fourth-year students rated increased course choice within their major as one of their top two priorities for improvement in the classroom. Students in this same survey also highlighted the importance of increased course choice outside their major (18% of first-year students and 22% of fourth-year students). Similar results were found in NSSE and CUSC surveys in 2008. Further, a recent poll of Canadian post-secondary institutions (Educational Advisory Board Company, University Club, Toronto, December 2011) showed that, while Canadian university students want their curriculum to have career relevance, they wish to be creative in shaping their own curriculum—with opportunities to explore their own interests and access to co-curricular activities.

[4] The framework accommodates those programs that have external professional accreditation requirements. Accredited programs are an integral part of our academic reputation and their accreditation requirements are to be fully maintained.

- Graduates must be well rounded, with a breadth as well as a depth of knowledge.
- The undergraduate degree level expectations (UDLEs), which are now part of Ryerson's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), establish a framework for defining the attributes of a Ryerson graduate both generally and on an individual program basis. The curriculum model should provide the appropriate structure to ensure that students meet these educational objectives—including the critical thinking and communication (particularly writing) skills that are currently highlighted in the liberal studies category.

The curriculum renewal process also needs to ensure that institutional values are retained in any changes that may occur. These include Ryerson's academic values such as program intentionality, suitable depth and suitable breadth. Also important are a continuing focus on societal need and anopenness to service learning and experiential learning opportunities as well as the integration of new forms of appropriate technology in teaching and learning. In addition, the CRC wishes to explicitly state its support for values of diversity, inclusivity and equity, and the need to ensure that our curriculum continues to contribute to students' ability to reflect critically on these issues. All these values are integral to our academic mission, supporting and strengthening it. They need to remain a part of our curriculum over time.

2. Policy Recommendations

This section presents an overview of the specific policy recommendations of the CRC. In most cases, these represent elaborations and extensions of the proposals made in the Green Paper:

Recommendation 1. An omnibus curriculum policy. The CRC recommends replacing the large number of separate Senate policies (see Appendix 2) with a single policy (see Appendix 3).

Highlights

This proposed policy includes what is intended to become standardized nomenclature to describe various Senate-approved groupings of courses:

- A *major* is a program, consisting of 25 to 30 core courses and with a curricular focus, offering both breadth and depth within an area of study.

- A *combined major* is a program, again consisting of 25 to 30 core courses but with a curricular focus in more than one area, offering both breadth and depth within the areas of study. The areas of study included in the curricular focus are prescribed in the program's curricular structure.[5]

- A *concentration* is a group of 6 to 12 courses within a program. While more than one concentration may be obtained within a program, any individual course can be applied only to one concentration.

[5] Note that the combined major is a slight adaptation of the double major as outlined in the original curriculum framework. Whereas the combined major envisioned here is a fully integrated interdisciplinary package of 25 to 30 courses, the double major, as outlined in the curriculum framework, simply combined two distinct groupings of 13 to 15 courses.

- A *minor* remains a grouping of 6 courses, mainly outside one's major, selected by a student from an established minor curriculum.

Recommendation 2: Course Categories. The CRC recommends the following names for the Senate framework's proposed course categories:

- core courses (C)
- breadth electives (BE)
- open electives (OE)

Commentary

Core courses are those that comprise an essential knowledge base for a career or further study. In a discipline-based program, this includes courses in the discipline as well as courses from supporting disciplines needed to foster a full understanding of the core subject (e.g., mathematics courses for engineering students, accounting courses for marketing students). Some choice in this category may continue to be offered by programs from a finite group of so-called *core electives*.

Breadth electives are intended, as a category, to expose students to varied and diverse ways of seeing the world. They assist students in developing their capacity to understand and critically appraise the issues and context of a discipline outside their field of study, and specifically expose the students to varied types and methods of reasoning and analysis, and modes of communication.

This definition retains most of the elements of what we currently call liberal studies. In particular, courses in this category continue to be seen as contextual rather than instrumental in focus. But the revised definition explicitly recognizes the opportunity for students to be exposed to multiple methods of reasoning and analysis and modes of communication, including those not necessarily associated with writing and text. It is intended that the current distinction between lower- and upper-level liberal studies be carried over to the new category, and that students will be required to complete at least 6 (4 in engineering) of these electives to graduate.

Open electives provide choices related either to personal interest and exploration or to a student's own particular career path. Thus open electives are intended to be the main "choice category" – the part of the curriculum in which students can choose to gain additional depth in their core discipline, to pursue a minor or to develop other interests.

Recommendation 3a: Breadth Electives as Open Electives. The CRC recommends that students be allowed to use breadth electives as open electives, with the caveat that 6 courses from the breadth elective category (4 for students in engineering) will still be required to serve as breadth electives. That is, once the required number of breadth electives has been achieved, a student may choose to use additional breadth electives to fulfil open elective slots in his/her program.

Recommendation 3b: Core Electives as Open Electives. The CRC recommends that students must choose at least two of their open electives from outside their core electives. The Registrar's Office will need to offer advice on exactly how this multi-purposing of core electives could affect student choice in terms of course scheduling and timetabling.

Commentary

Recommendations 3a and 3b support the principle of student choice *and* the principle of providing appropriate breadth and depth within a program curriculum. In the case of core electives being used as open electives, the CRC felt that some limits should be set and that the limits should be clear and simple to understand for students and program administrators alike. The committee agreed that at least two open electives in each program cannot be used by a student for additional core electives, while any additional open elective slots that exist in the program can be used to take core electives. Note that "double dipping" is not allowed; that is, core electives to be used as open electives cannot be core elective courses a student has already used to meet the obligations of the program core content.

Recommendation 4: Writing Intensive Courses. The CRC recommends that Ryerson adopt the concept of writing-intensive (W) courses. These are courses designed to include an individually prepared writing component outside of class that develops the student's critical skills and ability to mount a sustained argument. Courses in any of the main categories (core, breadth elective or open elective) may be designated as writing-intensive (W). Programs should have the same number of writing intensive courses in the new curriculum as the number of liberal studies courses they have in the current curriculum; that is six in all programs except engineering, where the required number would be four.

Recommendation 5: The Breadth Elective and Writing Committee. The CRC recommends that a new committee reporting to the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) be created to replace the Liberal Studies Committee. This new committee will approve courses for designation as breadth electives and/or writing-intensive. It is envisioned that the Breadth Elective and Writing Committee (BEWC) make recommendations to the ASC, which will in turn make recommendations to Senate. This is in line with Ryerson's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) policies. The composition of this BEWC is envisioned to include the Vice Provost Academic as chair, two faculty representatives from each Faculty, one representative from the Chang School and four undergraduate students. Where possible, at least two of the faculty representatives and one of the students should be on the ASC. The criteria and procedures used by the BEWC in designating breadth elective and writing courses will be established by the BEWC during the implementation phase of the curriculum renewal. As a general principle, the CRC seeks a commitment that the writing content of programs will not be less than students obtain with the current liberal studies system.

Recommendation 6: Open Elective Restrictions and Exclusions. The CRC recommends consistent monitoring of both restrictions and exclusions by programs of open electives, with the exact mechanism by which restrictions and exclusions are monitored and/or approved being developed by the special implementation task force.

Commentary

The class of *potential* open electives in the new curriculum model includes all core courses as well as the courses currently listed as professionally related electives in the Ryerson calendar. Viable open elective courses would be those not explicitly restricted by departments and schools to their own program students, or from which programs do not exclude their own students because the courses are deemed too closely related to specific courses in their program.

Decisions by schools and departments relating to restrictions of core courses to their own program students will need to go through a formal process, and should be based on sound and verifiable grounds

and tied to an explicit set of guidelines, including resource availability (including available teaching faculty), class size limitations (e.g. for studio and lab-based courses), and the presence of non-academic criteria (e.g. the submission of portfolios) within the program's admission requirements. All school and department decisions relating to the exclusion of certain open electives for their own program students must also go through a formal process. An outline of the process for establishing acceptable open electives is presented in Section 4 of this paper.

Recommendation 7: Long-Term Goals of the Breadth Elective Category. The 'breadth elective' category should, as sufficient courses are offered, become a field wherein mandated breadth is appropriate and feasible. The extent and nature of such mandated breadth will need to be revisited by Senate as courses become available. In endorsing this recommendation Senate is expressing its intent that almost all schools/departments will make spaces and/or courses available to students not registered in their programs, to a degree consistent with their resources and negotiated with the Provost, while recognizing that this will not be possible at the outset of the implementation process, when most breadth electives are bound to continue to emanate from the Faculty of Arts. The model of mandated breadth adopted in the long term might include not just a required number of courses from the social sciences and humanities, but possibly also from a science and technology category as well as from a category of applied areas such as business and design. There will need to be a commitment by the University to ensure that sufficient courses exist in whatever set of breadth categories is finally selected.

Recommendation 8: Policy vs Procedures. The CRC recommends that the procedures flowing from the elements of Policy 2 (e.g., criteria and procedures for approving writing courses) be described in a procedures document that is separate from the policy document. This will facilitate modifications to procedures without having to formally review the policy. Given that the phase-in of the new curriculum framework will by nature have transitional elements, the CRC feels it is essential to have this flexibility to modify procedures in a simple manner as needed. The CRC strongly believes that the procedure documents must be housed in such as way as to ensure that they are available to the entire Ryerson community at all times. A probable approach is a curriculum webpage or a link on the Senate webpage.

3. Access and Advising Recommendations

This section presents an overview of the specific recommendations from the CRC concerning student access to courses and academic advising. It addresses issues of how to establish and meet student demand as well as issues of how to help students make effective choices.

Recommendation 9: Retaining the Course Intentions System. The CRC recommends that a concerted effort be taken by the special implementation task force to look at practical ways to improve the course intentions system as it currently operates.

Commentary

There are clearly problems with the way Ryerson's present course intentions system works. Student participation is not universal, with completion rates lower in programs with a high proportion of required courses, as some students in these programs tend to ignore the process altogether. The system's effectiveness is also weakened because it doesn't apply to direct-entry, part-time or probationary students. In some cases where intentions are filled out, the information provided is incomplete. This occurs whenever full-time students do intentions but then decide to take their courses through the

Chang School. Incorrect signalling also occurs when students choose to identify more intentions than they actually need in order to hedge their bets.

The CRC did discuss the possibility of moving to a mandatory pre-registration system. However, a major weakness with such a process is that it would require section sizes and section and course schedules to be known in advance. This is difficult to achieve at Ryerson because, while some of the University's programs are highly prescriptive, many others are not, and, if anything, the proportion of prescriptive programming at Ryerson is gradually falling. Even in the case of quite highly structured programs, a pre-registration system would often present considerable challenges. For example, several programs in the Faculty of Community Services (e.g. Nursing) have a heavy external delivery of content, which cannot be effectively scheduled with long lead-times. Some other programs (including several in the Faculty of Communication and Design) make substantial use of contract instructors, some with outside commitments, again making long scheduling lead-times a major issue.

Regardless of problems with the course intentions system, the information the system provides—especially when integrated with historical course registration data—is highly valuable in the annual teaching assignment and timetabling process. It is likely that the special implementation task force will suggest an improved communication strategy to make clearer to students the value of the intentions process in helping them acquire their own course preferences and in improving the overall scheduling process within their programs. It might also be useful to institute either incentives or (more likely) disincentives to help ensure student compliance—for example, a fee for non-completion of the intentions, staggered enrolment or delayed access to open registration. This could be combined with a limitation on the number of course intentions that an individual student can make, to minimize bet-hedging.

Recommendation 10: Improving Course Offerings and Ensuring Access. The CRC recommends that the special implementation task force also consider strategies to improve course offerings and the number of seats available in open electives.

Commentary

Identifying student demand is only half of the story. We must also have robust mechanisms to ensure that demand is met as much as possible given constraints of teaching assignments, number of faculty/instructors, space limitations and so on. Appropriate course offerings might be established by combining course intentions with historic data and correlating these at the Faculty level. This approach is currently used in a number of Faculties and seems to be quite effective.

In terms of ensuring appropriate numbers of seats in open electives, a number of strategies can be suggested. These include program use of the Student Choice Incentive Fund (SCIF) opportunity and/or mandated targets:

The SCIF Fund: Under this initiative, incentive funding is being targeted to promote student choice, with Faculties being required to apply for an elective (in the new framework either an open elective or a non-Arts breadth elective) to be designated as an "inter-Faculty course" eligible for funding. Each student registration in such designated courses that originates from outside the Faculty of the teaching department generates, for a four-year period, an extra $50 per student per year (or about a 12% top-up)

in addition to existing funding. The SCIF dollars are being provided to the teaching department's Faculty. This initiative provides a powerful cross-University incentive for listing existing courses and creating new courses as either open electives or (in the case of non-Arts departments) breadth electives.

Targeted Access: An alternate, complementary approach to enhancing access is to set a University-wide target for an annual increase in the number of seats reserved for students taking a course as an open elective. This growth rate could be equated with a certain pool of available dollars provided to those schools and departments that manage to exceed the target. These funds might be disbursed automatically on a retrospective basis once actual enrollment figures are known, or they might be based on the submission of viable plans by programs to their relevant Dean. It might also be possible to make such a scheme close to revenue-neutral through the inclusion of financial disincentives for schools and departments that do not manage to meet or exceed the access targets. Even in the absence of such financial instruments, it might be necessary to re-engineer the faculty teaching assignment process across the University to establish clear requirements for courses offered as open electives.

Mandated Caps: As effective as SCIF or targeted access may end up being to help create robust elective choice in the new curriculum framework, these tools may not solve all outstanding issues. For example, in some cases student demand for a course may exceed capacity (e.g., in highly popular courses). In such cases, where a course is serving both as a core course and an open elective, some sort of cap that sets out the proportions of seats for program and non-program students will be needed.

Recommendation 11: Presentation of Electives. The CRC recommends that new subject-based categories (*understood at the beginning of the implementation process to be for guidance purposes rather than a prescriptive tool)* be used to structure the range of elective selections into a more manageable format for students. The special implementation task force should decide on these categories.

Commentary

In outlining possible course selections to students in the current elective categories of liberal studies and professionally related courses, the academic calendar employs what are often extremely long and forbidding course tables. This recommendation is intended to deal with the significant presentation challenge in the new curriculum framework, as the aggregate size of these tables expands even further.

Breadth Electives: The groupings of lower- and upper-level breadth electives could be further divided by subject-based category – to begin with, potentially into the following categories:

- social science and humanities
- science and technology
- applied topics such as business and design

Open Electives: Because the number of open electives offered will exceed by a wide margin the number of breadth electives, issues of effective presentation will be even more crucial for this category. The initial division of open electives will presumably be on the basis of whether or not they have prerequisites. Again, it is recommended that both groups be further divided into subject-based categories, potentially paralleling the categories used for breadth electives.

Recommendation 12: Academic Advising Report of the University Committee on Student Success. The CRC endorses five key recommendations from the Advising Report:

- Establish a central coordinating function related to academic advising at Ryerson.
- Develop early warning systems that flag students who may be in academic difficulty.
- Develop a list of outcomes for advising at Ryerson.
- Develop a common interpretation, implementation and communication of policies and procedures
- Make RAMSS more user-friendly and build additional tools to assist students.

Commentary

The presentation of elective choice is only one facet of providing the resources that students need to make effective elective choices. Timely access to academic advice is also paramount. Currently, academic advising is handled at the local level using many different approaches. The CRC believes that academic advising is, necessarily, a prerogative of the local academic unit. The recommendations noted above are therefore not intended to shift the responsibility for academic advising from the local units. Rather, they are intended to enhance the support and advice given by local advisors and to provide some degree of commonality in advising outcomes across campus. This will benefit both students and programs.

4. Transitions: Adapting to the Changing Landscape

The CRC is making a set of recommendations that relate directly to the transition from current to new curriculum frameworks. Some of these recommendations are likely to evolve as the framework is fully implemented and we gain experience with it.

Recommendation 13: Special Implementation Task Force. Because of the large and highly complicated nature of phasing in a new curriculum structure for over 70 programs, the CRC recommends the appointment of a special implementation task force to oversee planning this process, including the development of accompanying policies and procedures. This task force should include members of the Registrar's Office as well as faculty and student representatives. The key goals for the task force include the following:

- Develop a mechanism and criteria related to creation and maintenance of restrictions and exclusions for open electives.
- Develop strategies and processes to ensure student access (improved course intentions, use of SCIF, mandated seats in open electives, and caps on class sizes as appropriate).
- Develop strategies to present open and breadth electives to students that facilitate student choice.
- Develop processes to ensure W-courses as graduation requirements are introduced in the appropriate sequence.
- Identify resource needs related to implementation.

Recommendation 14: Establishing Breadth Elective and Writing Course Criteria. The CRC recommends that the Breadth Elective and Writing Committee (BEWC) be tasked with establishing criteria and procedures for approving breadth electives and writing intensive courses.

Recommendation 15: Timing of the New Framework Rollout. The CRC recommends a phased-in rollout of the new curriculum framework, with some programs adopting the model before others, and the new framework then being sequentially introduced year by year in existing programs' calendar curricula. While the overall timelines for implementation are still under discussion, the CRC anticipates that full implementation will require several years.

Commentary

A small group of new programs should be the first to pilot the framework, followed by groups of existing programs in Faculties (first in Arts and then in TRSM) whose existing curriculum structures are most closely aligned with the new framework. The rollout phase might have the following milestone dates, running until the 2019-20 academic year:

- By September 2014, the new cross-University open electives table will have been selected and approved, based on the processing of course restrictions (i.e. departments and schools limiting some of their core courses to their own program students) as well as course exclusions (i.e. departments and schools excluding their own students from enrolling in particular open electives). The new framework will be adopted by programs slated for a 2014 start.
- By September 2015, all common-platform Arts programs adopt the new framework in their first-year curricula.
- By September 2016, all TRSM programs adopt the new framework in their first-year curricula, while common-platform Arts programs adopt it in their second-year curricula.
- By September 2017, all other programs adopt the new framework in their first-year curricula, while TRSM programs adopt it in their second-year and common-platform Arts programs adopt it in their third-year curricula.
- By September 2017, all other programs adopt the new framework in their second-year, TRSM programs adopt it in their third-year, and common-platform Arts programs adopt it in their fourth-year curricula.
- By September 2018, all other programs adopt the new framework in their third-year and TRSM programs adopt it in their fourth-year curricula.
- By September 2019, all other programs adopt the new framework in their fourth-year curricula.

Implementation of the new framework will also likely require transitional changes to the scheduling of registrarial processes. A draft schedule is presented in Appendix 4.

Recommendation 16: Moratorium on Minor Curriculum Changes. The CRC recommends a moratorium on minor curriculum changes during the phase-in of the new framework, starting with calendar changes submitted in October 2013 for implementation in September 2014. It is envisioned that the moratorium will cover the following:

- new courses added to existing professional (P) or professionally related (PR) tables
- existing courses added to current professional or professionally related tables
- courses deleted from existing professional or professionally related tables
- course repositioning from required to professionally related or from professionally related to required
- course repositioning from upper semesters to lower semesters or vice versa
- additions or deletions to existing minors curriculum

- new options/concentrations
- additions or deletions to liberal studies tables A and B
- additions, deletions or changes to restrictions for any tables – professional, professionally related or liberal studies

Changes to a course title, description, hours, or requisites would not be covered by the moratorium. Nor would the moratorium apply to any changes related to new program development, creation of new minors or to any other curriculum changes of sufficient complexity that they must be reviewed by Academic Standards.

Recommendation 17: Scheduling of Breadth Electives. The CRC recommends that, as a transition strategy, bands for breadth electives be maintained at least for now, but with the expectation that an assessment of the value of this banding take place over time.

Commentary

Up to now, the liberal studies category has been distinguished by the fact that students have a choice from a relatively wide list of subject areas, albeit primarily from Arts-based disciplines. Thanks to the scheduling of these courses in a separate set of bands, and the disallowing of prerequisites from outside the liberal studies stream, the classroom environment in these courses effectively mixes students from a broad range of programs. The carry-over of breadth elective bands would ensure continued student access to these courses and the inter-Faculty mingling of students. This same logic does not apply to open electives, however. Given the envisioned very large number of open electives available to the average student, it would be impossible to create a viable banding structure.

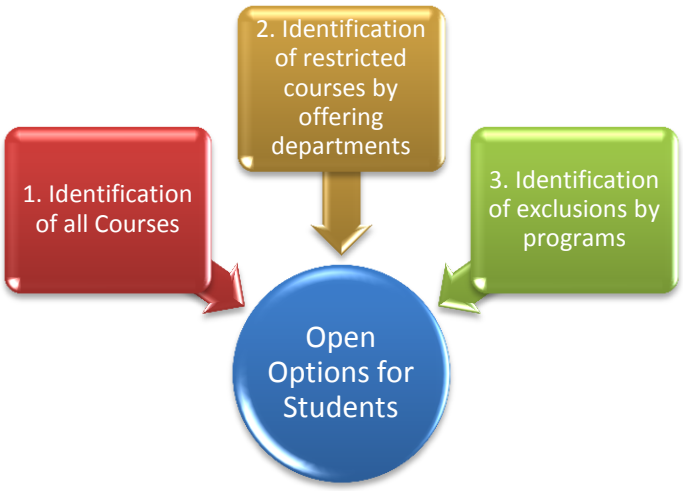
Recommendation 18: The Status of Accredited Programs. As the new framework unfolds, it is important that the dictates of accreditation be respected. However, there is an expectation that accredited programs will work towards finding creative ways to enhance curriculum flexibility and student choice within the scope of their accreditation standards.

Recommendation 19: Defining the Lists of Open Electives. The CRC recommends the process outlined below as a way to establish the list of open electives. In the context of this process the following terms are defined:

- *Restriction* – a course restricted to students in a specific program only.
- *Exclusion* – a course that program schools or departments will not allow their own students to take as an open elective.

Steps to develop lists of open electives:

1. Compile list of all courses at Ryerson
2. Restrictions
    a. Identify clear restrictions centrally
    b. Have offering departments identify additional restrictions
3. Exclusions
    a. Update list by removing restricted courses
    b. Have each program review non-restricted courses and identify which courses would be excluded as an open elective option for their program students



Open Electives for programs should include:

- Courses required for the completion of a minor.
- Courses offered by the program department that are not core or core-elective requirements.
- Courses offered by the program department as part of a core elective list that a student has not used to meet a core elective requirement.
- Courses from other departments that have not been restricted by the offering department or excluded by the student's program.
- Courses that are offered as breadth electives that the student has not used to meet their breadth elective requirement.

5. Benefits of the Recommended Changes

The CRC believes that the recommendations put forward in this document provide a number of major benefits to Ryerson, its academic programs and its students. Implementation of these proposals will provide students with choice both within their core program area of study (major) and within the scope of their electives (breadth and open). The open elective category in particular provides great flexibility for students to select what they think may be important for their own career aspirations. Students may use the open electives to explore their own interests, to add depth to their core areas of study or to build a minor subject.

At the same time, the recently revised minors policy and the possibility of programs partnering to create combined majors provide departments and schools with opportunities to design new and exciting curriculum packages beyond what is currently feasible.

In terms of institutional goals, the creation of combined majors will take Ryerson well along the road to a substantial role for interdisciplinary programming, a goal espoused in the current Academic Plan. While the idea of a combined major based on program partnerships does not perhaps go as far as some would like, there is nothing to preclude this from evolving into conventional double majors over time. In addition,

changes to the definition of the breadth category (currently liberal studies) provide a pathway to mandated breadth over time. This last point also supports our obligations under UDLEs.

Finally, the grouping of all curriculum elements into a single omnibus policy will make the institution's ability to adjust curriculum elements much more straightforward and transparent than has been the case in the past.

6. Next Steps

Dialogue with Programs: To successfully implement the new framework, an iterative dialogue will need to take place with each and every undergraduate program at the University. The CRC realizes that, for some programs, the opening up of programs' current professionally related tables into a far larger selection of open electives will necessitate extensive discussion and review. As a starting point for this discussion, the Registrar's Office will provide a customized program balance analysis for each program based on its current calendar description. Clearly the Registrar's Office will have made some assumptions about the curriculum to generate this report. The intention is that the report be shared with the program and that an iterative dialogue occurs between the program and the Office of the Vice Provost Academic and Registrar's Office to identify the best way to describe the program within the new framework. The goal would be to achieve alignment with the new framework. Changes to the curriculum required to achieve alignment would be reviewed and approved by Academic Standards.

Also, as noted above, it is important that the dictates of accreditation be respected. However, there is an expectation that accredited programs will work towards finding creative ways to enhance curriculum flexibility and student choice within the scope of their accreditation standards.

The Role of UDLEs and of the Planning Office: One of the guiding principles of this curriculum renewal initiative is that the changes made be consistent with Ryerson's obligations to support Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations. The UDLEs can, in fact, be used both as a guiding principle and a tool for curriculum redesign. A careful and sincere analysis of program curriculum in light of UDLEs can provide insight on both redundancies and gaps in curriculum. This approach may very well lead to greater opportunities for curriculum flexibility and to more effective deployment of program resources. Also helpful in this regard will be the University Planning Office's projected survey of course enrollments by program. Historic data on low enrollment courses will help programs make informed decisions about resource allocation.

Scheduling Aspects: Course scheduling at Ryerson can be a challenge for a variety of reasons. Earlier sections of this paper have addressed issues such as banding and availability of seats in open elective courses. In order to alleviate some of the constraints around scheduling, the CRC would like to suggest that, to the extent possible, the University explore the possibility of scheduling classes into the evening. The CRC also believes that clear guidelines for defining which special scheduling requests by instructors can be honoured would be highly valuable.

7. Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our colleagues on the CRC for their hard work on curriculum renewal spread over nearly ten months. Although the committee was very large (Appendix 1) and its members brought a diversity of views to the table, the working atmosphere was invariably collegial, constructive and positive.

We are also grateful to the broader Ryerson academic community. Faculty, staff and student critiques of our ideas, gleaned at consultation sessions, a Town Hall and via e-mail, were always offered in a constructive spirit. The suggestions that came from the community were often very supportive and provided useful ideas that helped us adapt our thinking.

Our hope is that this document, and others which will flow from it, will help Ryerson evolve further as a leading provider of university education in the years ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Evans
Vice Provost Academic

Mark Lovewell
Interim Secretary of Senate

Appendix 1 – Curriculum Renewal Committee Membership

Office	Name	Working Group Membership
Vice Provost Academic (Chair)	Chris Evans	Policy/Registrarial/Access
Vice Chair	Mark Lovewell	Policy/Registrarial/Access
Senate	Diane Schulman	Policy
Vice Provost Students	Heather Lane-Vetere	Access
Registrar's Office	Keith Alnwick	Registrarial
Special Advisor on Curriculum Change (ex officio)	Barbara Soutar	Registrarial
Director of Curriculum Renewal/Quality Assurance	Katherine Penny (TRSM)	Access
Interim VP Diversity	Rona Abramovitch	Policy
Arts (faculty representatives)	Dennis Denisoff/Jim Dianda	Policy/Registrarial
Chang School	Des Glynn/Gervan Fearon	Registrarial/Access
FCAD (faculty representatives)	Alex Bal/Catherine Schryer	Access/Policy
FCS (faculty representatives)	Lynn Lavallee/Rachel Langford/Janice Waddell/Nancy Walton	Access/Access/Registrarial/Policy
FEAS (faculty representatives)	Jacob Friedman/Jurij Leshchyshyn/Stephen Wylie	Access/Registrarial/Policy
TRSM (faculty representatives)	Asher Alkoby/Liz Evans/Jane Saber	Access/Registrarial/Policy
Student	Ugo Asagwara (CESAR and Senate)	Access
Student	Andrew McAllister (FCAD, Senate)	Registrarial
Student	Melissa Palermo (FCAD, VP RSU, Senate)	Policy
Student	Annie Hyder (Arts)	Access
Student	Angelo Pirosz (TRSM)	Access
Student	Liana Salvador (FCS, Senate)	Policy
Student	Shermiyah Baguisa (FEAS)	Registrarial

Reflection Committee: Marcia Moshe (Arts), Gillian Mothersill (FCAD), Barbara Soutar (ex officio), Chris Evans, Mark Lovewell.

Appendix 2 – Active Curriculum Policies up to May 2012

Policy #	Name	Year	URL
14	Liberal Studies in Polytechnic Education: Development of a Tripartite Curriculum Structure	1977	www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol14.txt
33	Program Balance	1982	www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol33.txt
44	Liberal Studies in the Ryerson Curriculum	1986	www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol44.txt
64	Change to the Composition of the Liberal Studies Committee	1989	www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol64.txt
74	New Structure for Administration of Liberal Studies at Ryerson	1991	www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol74.pdf
107	Revision of Liberal Studies Policy	1994	www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol107.txt
109	Implementation of Liberal Studies Policy	1995	www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol109.txt
124	Professionally-Related Studies in Ryerson's Tripartite Curriculum	1996	www.ryerson.ca/senate/policies/pol124.txt
148	Policy on Minors	2011	www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol148.pdf

Appendix 3 – Draft Omnibus Curriculum Policy

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

Policy Number: 2

Approval Date: TBD

Effective Date: TBD

Responsible Office: Vice Provost Academic

I. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

- Ryerson is known for its mission to provide career-relevant education and must ensure sufficient rigour and depth to serve this mission.
- Students should have flexibility to define their personal educational and career goals. While it is recognized that there are sometimes constraints on curriculum such as external accreditation requirements, students should be given as much curricular choice as possible, including the ability to undertake a minor area of study.
- Graduates must be well rounded, with a breadth as well as a depth of knowledge.
- The undergraduate degree level expectations (UDLEs), which are now part of Ryerson's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), establish a framework for defining the attributes of a Ryerson graduate both generally and on an individual program basis. The curriculum should ensure that students meet these educational objectives.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. Degree: an academic credential awarded upon successful completion of a program.

B. Program: a prescribed set of courses, normally 40 in number, and where applicable other academic requirements such as research and practice, leading to a degree, as approved by Senate.

C. Major: A Senate-approved program with a curricular focus, offering both breadth and depth within an area of study. A major consists of 25 to 30 core courses and is noted on both the degree and the academic record.

D. Combined Major: A Senate-approved program with a curricular focus in more than one area offering both breadth and depth within the areas of study. A combined major consists of 25 to 30 core courses and is noted on both the degree and the academic record.

E. Concentration: A Senate-approved, program-specified group of 6 to 12 courses within a program. More than one concentration may be obtained within a program, but an

individual course can be applied only to one concentration. A concentration is noted on the academic record.

F. Minor: 6 courses, mainly outside the major and selected by a student from a Senate-approved minor curriculum, which provide an opportunity to explore a secondary area of undergraduate study. (See section V for Requirements for a Minor). Completion of a minor is noted on the academic record.

III. COURSE CATEGORIES

Programs are composed of three basic categories of courses:

A. Core

1. Core (C) courses, in combination, are required courses considered foundational and integral to the program area(s) of study, establishing an essential knowledge base for a career or further study in the discipline(s). There may be choices of courses offered within the C courses of a program. The courses that comprise such choices shall be referred to as core electives.
2. Core courses within a major or a combined major represent a proportion exceeding 60% and up to 75% of the program (25 to 30 core courses in a 40-course program).
3. The C courses that comprise a major or combined major are Senate approved and include courses offered by all relevant departments/schools that are considered essential to the core area(s) of study.

B. Breadth Elective

1. Breadth electives (BE) are specifically intended, as a category, to expose students to varied and diverse ways of seeing the world. A BE course assists students in developing their capacity to understand and critically appraise the issues and context of a discipline outside their major or combined major, and specifically exposes the students to varied types and methods of reasoning and analysis, and modes of communication.
2. Courses must be approved by the Breadth Elective and Writing Committee (BEWC) of the Academic Standards Committee (see below) for inclusion in the BE category, based upon meeting established criteria.
3. Students are required to complete 6 BE courses[6].

C. Open Elective

1. Open electives (OE), as a category, provide students with the ability to make their own choices related either to personal interest and exploration or to their particular career paths. An OE course allows students to experience subject matter either outside or within their major area or combined major areas.
2. OEs include all courses at the University that are not limited to program students. Students are required to meet all pre-requisite requirements. Programs may exclude

[6] Four in the case of engineering programs.

their own program students from taking certain courses that are too similar to the content of their core courses.

3. OE courses can comprise 10% to 35% (i.e. 4 to14) but normally 10% to 25% (4 to10 out of 40 courses).
4. BE courses beyond what are required for that category may be taken as OEs, but will be treated as BE for the purpose of a minor.
5. A student may use all but two of their open elective slots to take non-required core courses.

IV. WRITING REQUIREMENT

A. Students are required to complete 6 courses (4 in engineering) designated as writing-intensive courses (W). These may be in any category (C, BE or OC).
B. A W course is any course designed to include individually written, out-of-class assignments that require the student to carry out an analysis of the assignment's subject and make and justify an evaluative, comparative or explicatory judgment, and that provide the student with commentary on the clarity of organization, logic, syntax, and grammar of their writing.
C. W courses must be approved by the BEWC for inclusion in this category, based upon established criteria.
D. The BEWC is responsible for establishing and overseeing appropriate criteria and procedures for design and approval of W courses.

V. REQUIREMENTS FOR A MINOR

A. A minor consists of 6 one-semester courses. If the courses are included in the approved minor curriculum, up to two C courses and up to two BE courses may be applied to a minor. These two BE courses can also be used in fulfillment of the BE requirement.
B. No course substitutions will be permitted in the completion of minors.
C. All students are eligible to take any minor except those specifically excluded by their program because they are too closely related to the major area of study.
D. Where it is possible, a student may take more than one minor. However, an individual course may be used to satisfy the requirements of only one minor.
E. It is acknowledged that scheduling issues may prevent individual students from being able to access all of the courses in a specific minor in the time frame they are completing the requirements for their degree.
F. Courses in the minor may need to be taken above and beyond those in a student's program, possibly with additional fees.
G. A minor must be completed before graduation.

VI. AUTHORITY

A. **Academic Standards Committee**
    a. **Curriculum Recommendations to Senate:** The Academic Standards Committee of Senate (ASC) has the authority to interpret this policy and make recommendations to Senate with regard to program curricula, including justifiable exceptions, based on the general principles as outlined above.
    b. **Breadth Elective and Writing Committee**: The Breadth Elective and Writing Committee (BEWC) makes recommendations to ASC with respect to approval of

breadth elective (BE) and writing-intensive (W) courses. These approvals are reported to Senate for its information.

c. Membership of the BEWC:

i. The Vice Provost Academic, or designate, who shall serve as chair.
ii. Two faculty representatives from each Faculty. One of the Faculty representatives will be elected as Vice Chair by the full committee, and at least two should be members of the ASC.
iii. A representative of the Chang School.
iv. Four undergraduate students, one of whom is a member of the ASC where possible.

d. Mandate of the BEWC:

i. To review all submissions for approval of BE and W courses and make a recommendation to the ASC with respect to their approval in keeping with the guidelines outlined for such courses.
ii. To work with individual departments/schools with respect to the development of BE and W courses.
iii. To make recommendations to the ASC with respect to criteria and procedures regarding BE and W courses.

B. Senate - Senate has the authority over all curriculum matters as outlined in the Institutional Quality Assurance (IQAP) policies.

C. Vice Provost Academic - The Vice Provost Academic, in consultation with the Registrar, shall establish procedures with respect to the administration of this policy.

The CRC believes that the criteria for both W and BE courses should be part of a procedures document, not part of the policy proper. The procedures may be an appendix to the policy document.

Suggestions for writing-intensive course criteria

A writing-intensive course must:

- include single-authored, out-of-class assignment(s) totalling at least 1,500 (2,000?) words in a combination of no more than three assignments;
- require the student to carry out an analysis of the assignment's subject and make and justify an evaluative, comparative or explicatory judgment;
- attach a weight of at least 25% (35%?) to the contribution made by the assignment(s) to the student's final grade on the course; and
- provide commentary on the clarity of organization, logic, syntax, and grammar of student writing, and explicitly indicate that such attributes will form part of the basis upon which the assignment will be evaluated.

Appendix 4 – Draft Modifications to Sequence of Registrarial Activities

In order to ensure that the Curriculum Management Unit can indeed support the rollout of moving all programs into the new structure, a number of actions will be needed. Assuming a rollout of 5 to 6 years to change over 175 programs and streams (average 30 to 35 per year), these include:

1) Changing the dates of our current program change schedule in order to provide additional time for the curriculum build in SAS.
2) Extra staff recruited to support added demand in the University Calendar office, Curriculum Management and University Scheduling for the length of time required to transition all programs to the new curriculum model.
3) The development of an effective mechanism to compel departmental compliance with deadline dates and quick follow-up with non-compliers.
4) The declaration of a moratorium on all other curricular changes for at least the first two years of the transition period.

Suggested process date changes:

Activity	Current Date	Suggested Change
Deadline for calendar submissions from Program departments	Early October	September 15
Finalization of calendar edit and transfer to Curriculum Build staff	December 1	November 15
Finalization of Curriculum Build and transfer to University Scheduling staff	February 1	February 21
Departmental review – determination of courses to offer	2rd and 4th weeks of February	Last week of February and first 2 weeks of March
Publication of the on-line calendar	March 1	March 8
Course Intentions period for students	Last two weeks of March	First week of April (reduced to one week)