

Bachelor of General Studies Program Review

College of Arts

Dean's Summary

Submitted by:
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Accepted by:
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Academic Planning and Priorities Committee in September 2015

Program and Unit Review: Bachelor of General Studies

Dean's Summary Report

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte

September 2015

The Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) review was initiated by the Dean of Arts outside of the formal timeline and list of Program Reviews run out of IR, hence it was not submitted to Senate in accordance with such. On the advice of the Program Development Coordinator, it is being submitted now so that Senate has a record of the review having taken place. Submission of the review to APPC also allows Senate the opportunity to understand the BGS program and the proposed changes.

The BGS review began in 2012 with the site visit having taken place in March 2013. The review committee included two members from other Canadian universities and one internal member from another department. The BGS Program Committee responded to the external review on June 13, 2013. As a result of the far ranging suggestions for program revision that the reviewers submitted, the Dean of Arts asked a faculty member to assume responsibility for assessing these and for drawing up a plan of action, along with the BGS Program Committee. The request included revisiting the terms of reference of the Program Committee to ensure cross-faculty ownership. In 2014, an action plan was submitted with a two year time-frame. In spring 2015, an update of the plan was provided, which included a summary of accomplished changes and a list of outstanding actions (please see the first document in the appended package). The two year timeline that was submitted included the drafting of a mission statement for the degree, revised learning outcomes, revised policies and procedures and a clearer separation of academic and administrative oversight for the degree. The benefit of the latter is to ensure that there is more convincing faculty oversight of students' selection of thematic options within the degree. The newly named General Studies Program Committee has also suggested a name change for the BGS degree.

Since the submission of this Action Plan, a change in governance of the program has included eliminating the step of College of Arts Council approval and the requirement of approval by UEC only. While UEC will have the opportunity to comment on program changes, APPC might want to entertain some discussion of the suggested name change, from Bachelor of General Studies to Bachelor of Customized Studies. In order for such name change to be approved by Ministry, a full program proposal will need to be submitted to Ministry as matters of nomenclature are the purview of AVED.

In accepting this report it should be noted that there are resource related recommendations that will need to be considered from the perspective of year end budget discussions.



General Studies Program

Action Plan 2014-16--**Spring 2015 Update**

Progress to Date

Background to Action Plan

Beginning in Fall 2014, the General Studies Program Committee (GSPC, previously the Bachelor of General Studies committee) began undertaking a complex review and revision of the BGS program. This has been a bottom-up, ground-up project, as many of the essential elements of the degree program were absent. This included learning outcomes, mission statement, and a linking of the program requirements to desired program goals. The committee set for itself a two-year timeline for this review and revision process. The GSPC simultaneously continued to conduct regular committee business, including review of student thematic option plans and student exemption requests. Review of the General Studies diploma will take place after the BGS revision process has been completed.

Summary and Highlights

The GSPC has accomplished much in its first year in this process, including addressing items that were not a part of its original Action Plan list of goals and strategies. Among the major steps completed this past year:

- ✓ Establishment of a program mission and vision statement (Fall 2014);
- ✓ Establishment (Fall 2014) and subsequent revision (Spring 2015) of program Learning Outcomes;
- ✓ Review and revision of several key policies and procedures, including: entrance requirements, GPA requirements, continuance, and transfer, as well as new timelines for student learning plan submission (Winter 2015);
- ✓ Drafting of new program requirements that are aligned with program Learning Outcomes, and which represent a progressive and flexible General Studies degree program (Spring 2015);
- ✓ Evolution of distinctive roles between faculty oversight (curricular) and staff oversight (advising) of functions related to the BGS, with these distinctions still being sharpened (Fall-Winter);
- ✓ Development of rubric for review of Thematic Option proposals (Fall-Winter);
- ✓ Approval of revised Terms of Reference (for the time-being, through the College of Arts) and institutional discussions regarding the GSPC's location within the curriculum review structure (Winter 2015);
- ✓ Review of program assessment strategies (Winter 2015);
- ✓ Website revision, part 1 (Winter 2015);
- ✓ Review and committee approval of new program name, *Bachelor of Customized Studies*, to be submitted to Dean of Arts and Program Development Coordinator (Spring 2015).

Next Steps

The upcoming year promises to be as busy as the last, and perhaps even more so. The 2014-15 academic year was one in which the committee membership focused engaged in largely internal conversation, i.e. among committee members themselves and between the committee and administration. In contrast, the 2015-16 academic year will require a substantial level of outreach across the institution in the form of consultation, solicitation of faculty support, program promotion, and new strategies for connecting with students.

The GSPC will meet for their annual retreat at the end of August to tackle some of the tasks remaining from last year's targets, as well as to strategize on the next steps needed to meet this year's targets. Major projects for the GSPC in the 2015-16 academic year include:

- ▶ Consultation with each faculty council regarding the substance and impact of proposed changes to the BGS degree program;
 - ✓ BGS changes on agendas of most faculty councils in September and early October.
- ▶ Review of proposed changes to the BGS degree through Senate curriculum review processes;
- ▶ Development, review, and approval of dedicated courses in Interdisciplinary Studies (IS 200 and IS 400) needed to support revised program;
- ▶ Development of outcomes and assessment associated with the e-portfolio requirement;
- ▶ Engagement with programs and departments in order to:
 - ▶ develop pre-set Thematic Options in areas of unique interest to faculty and students (e.g. agriculture and development, early childhood education, environmental education, popular culture studies, etc.);
 - ▶ identify potential faculty liaisons within each department who can serve as contacts and resources for BGS advisors and the GSPC;
 - ▶ promote BGS options within departmental program planning;
 - ▶ identify ways to facilitate entry of BGS students into well- and over-subscribed courses;
- ▶ Engage in outreach to alumni and employers to introduce change to the program and collect feedback on transition from school to career;
- ▶ Develop more promotional tools for the BGS, including continued website revision, social media, and print materials;
- ▶ More detailed discussion with administration and the UFV Senate regarding the realistic costs of administering the BGS program;
- ▶ If green lit, the proposed name change to the *Bachelor of Customized Studies* will require development of a full proposal;

- ▶ Begin laying the groundwork for the next program review, which may come as part of the regular institutional rotation (which would require review in 2017-18 or the year following) or as part of a review and approval of the proposed name change to the Bachelor of Customized Studies;
- ▶ Further define and refine faculty and staff roles in administering the BGS and GS diploma;
- ▶ Continue to engage in ongoing GSPC business related to student management and issue response, independent of the degree revision process.

The GSPC relies on the tremendous talents and energy of its members. With changes to both the GSPC's Terms of Reference and the institutional Advising structures, the committee will welcome two additional members in September. Even so, the work ahead will represent a significant challenge in terms of members' time. Thus, a more realistic timeline for some of these items (particularly a proposal and review for a new degree name and preparation for the next external review) may carry forward into the 2016-17 academic year.

The tables on the following pages are checklists of the goals, strategies, and tactics needed established by the GSPC at the start of the 2014-15 academic year.

Contact

For more information, past documentation on this revision process, or other materials related to the BGS or the GSPC, contact Michelle Rhodes (Geography and the Environment). For questions regarding student advising in the BGS and GS diploma programs, contact Mandy Klepic (BGS Advisor).

Goal No. 1 : Curriculum Review

To develop a flexible yet rigorous general studies degree that strikes the appropriate balance between specialization and breadth

Table 4: Strategies, Tactics, and Timeline for Goal 1

	Strategies	Tactics	Timeline
1	Define General Studies	Review how concept is defined at other institutions, and develop UFV-relevant definition	✓ (completed)
2	Ensure that students are meeting program learning outcomes that meet and exceed institutional expectations	Develop learning outcomes for the BGS degree, and align with ILOs	✓
		Develop learning outcomes for the General Studies diploma, and align with ILOs	Following BGS revision
3	Identify qualities and best practices in design of general education program requirements, and use these to inform what we see for the BGS	Review comparable degrees in Canada, as well as general studies requirements in US schools	✓
		Review program requirements and align with best practices and desired outcomes	✓
4	Review coherence of specific policies (continuance, residency, etc.) that impact entry into and completion of BGS degree	Develop revised entrance policies and procedures	✓
		Review and revise policies, calendar copy, and procedures for: Continuance, Residency, and Academic Admissions (inc. minimum GPA)	calendar copy in progress
5	Review how GPA is calculated for BGS students	Compare how GPA is calculated in other programs, and revise calendar copy to reflect stricter standard than current practice allows	✓
		Review and revise policy, calendar copy, and procedures for course repeats	calendar copy in progress
6	Determine appropriate pathways and practices for entrance into the program (e.g. direct entry, program bridging, competitive entry, etc.)	Revise calendar copy to reflect revised requirements and procedures for entrance	in progress
	Review role of vocational, Co-op, and PLAR credits within the program, and how these can add to a	Review and revise relevant policies and procedures in each of these areas	

	Strategies	Tactics	Timeline
7	coherent, yet individualized program	Review limits on vocational credits used in BGS degree, dependent upon the progress of institutional conversations regarding how credit is defined	✓
8	Review the role of student learning plans (SLPs) and Thematic Options (TOs) and identify ways in which this part of the program can be strengthened	Develop timelines for submission of SLPs, e.g. students must submit their SLPs within XX credits, or have registration blocked; students coming in with more credits will need to submit an SLP as part of application process.	✓
		Develop rubric for assessing SLPs and a process for review	Postponed to 2015-16
		Develop rubric for assessing TOs and a process for review	✓
9	Identify best approaches to ensure that students can articulate what they have learned and what skills they have developed, e.g. capstone project, portfolio, etc.	Develop strategies for assessing how LOs are met at both the diploma and degree level	Degree level ✓
		Develop criteria, value, and expectations for the three cornerstones of student learning in the BGS program: breadth requirements, SLP, portfolio/ capstone project and presentation	Postponed to 2015-16
10	Identify course needs within program and the funding requirements for these	Discussions with Dean of Arts office regarding funding requirements	Report forthcoming

Goal 2: Planning and Support

To Improve Student Planning and Support in the BGS Program

Table 5: Strategies, Tactics, and Timeline for Goal 2

	Strategies	Tactics	Timeline
1	Review program bridging needs, notably with FAATS	No tactic identified as yet	2015-16
2	Review pre-set Thematic Options (e.g. "Agriculture Extension", "Agritourism", "Construction Business Management") and determine how many there will be, who will oversee them, and how rigorous these should be	Develop, in concert, with stakeholder departments, pre-set thematic options	2015-16
		Encourage other units to promote discipline-related thematic options to students	2015-16
3	Identify the differing needs of the 'explorers' and the 'planners' student populations in the BGS, and how best to support these needs	Develop rubric for assessing SLPs and a process for review	2015-16
		Develop timelines for submission of SLPs and, if used, Thematic Options	✓
4	Review bridges between Academic Advising and Financial Aid and Awards, to reduce student loan default rates associated with program	No tactic identified as yet	No timeline identified
5	Bring Co-op into the discussion.	Invite Co-op and Career Centre to meetings to identify shared goals and tactics	2015-16

Goal 3: Reduce Barriers

To reduce and, when possible, eliminate systemic barriers to the completion of the BGS degree

Table 6: Strategies, Tactics, and Timeline for Goal 3

	Strategies	Tactics	Timeline
1	Identify criteria by which students should have access to reserved seats in programs, e.g. by number of credits, thematic options, or other criteria	Engage departments in planning for seat access for BGS students (with or without thematic options?)	Fall 2015- Winter 2016
		Collect and maintain data sets on BGS students, enrolment patterns, etc. in order to provide information to departments on demand patterns	Spring/ Fall 2015
2	Review option for direct entry to program	Review and revise calendar copy and entrance procedures	In progress
3	Build bridges between other programs and the BGS, namely those in FAATS, so as to work to reduce barriers to movement between programs	Remain on top of conversion of FAATS programs to credit-based course-based programs, for purposes of developing bridges	Ongoing
		Develop a rubric for SLP	2015-16
4	Develop strategies and tactics to improve faculty and employer engagement with the BGS, so as to support SLPs, portfolios/ capstone projects, etc.	Special strategy meeting	August 2015
		Presentation at faculty councils	Scheduled for Sept 2015 faculty councils
5	Ensure that transfer students are sufficiently accommodated	Hold off on reviewing block transfer options until resources allow for appropriate support/ advising/ space in upper-level courses	No timeline established
6	Review access to courses based on pre-requisite	Engage departments and faculties in discussions about pre-requisite options and plans for more 'open' courses	Fall 2015- Winter 2016

Goal 4: Improving Relationships

To promote the Bachelor of General Studies and the General Studies diploma and improve relationships with students, faculty, staff, and the communities we serve

Table 7: Strategies, Tactics, and Timeline for Goal 4

	Strategies	Tactics	Timeline
1	Promote the thematic options as well as the stand-alone BGS	Promote quality assurance and program rigour	Fall 2015- Winter 2016
		New promotional materials and website presence	
		Student events/ "What can you do with a BGS degree"	
		Create a unique presence at Orientation events	
2	Engage faculty as part of a campaign to build support for flexible, general studies	Outreach to faculty councils and departments	Fall 2015- Winter 2016
		Increase faculty involvement in thematic option development and review	Fall 2015- Winter 2016
3	Build bridges between other programs and the BGS for purposes of promotion	Engage faculty in co-promotion of options to students in discipline-based programs	Fall 2015-on
4	Develop message(s) linking BGS options to institutional goals, especially in Trades, Agriculture, etc.	Student events/ "What can you do with a BGS degree"	August 2015
		Identify specific thematic options for development	Fall 2015-on
5	Engage employers and BGS graduates about connections between BGS and career pathways	Profile BGS alumni as part of publicity campaign, promotional materials, website	Fall 2015- Winter 2016

Goal 5: Administrative Capacity

Develop robust capacity and administrative structures for BGS program

Table 8: Strategies, Tactics, and Timeline for Goal 5

	Strategies	Tactics	Timeline
1	Update Terms of Reference for General Studies Program Committee	Review membership and duties of committee and revise ToR	✓
		Forward ToR to College of Arts Council for review and approval	✓
2	Develop recommendations to Senate regarding program resource needs	Draft for 2015-16 report to Senate outlining program vision, revisions, needs, and recommendations	Fall 2015
3	Identify appropriate administrative oversight structure for BGS	Discussion with Dean of Arts office to secure resources for GSPC needs	Report forthcoming
		Create a clear distinction between roles of BGS Advisor, GSPC, and, potentially, program administrator	Fall 2015-Winter 2016
4	Increase reporting to Administration on General Studies programming	Develop bi-annual action plans for program	✓
		Annual mid-term and end of year reports to Dean of Arts, Provost, and Vice-Provost	✓

