

# ARC-UCC Joint Task Force on BA/BS Requirements Report

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In response to the report prepared by the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Summer Research on Academic Program Examination / Reorganization, in October 2020, Faculty Senate charged a joint task force of the Academic Requirements Committee (ARC) and University Curriculum Committee (UCC) with the following:

1. Evaluate the BA/BS requirements for curricular inefficiencies and recommend ways to streamline them
2. [Optional] Evaluate the General Education requirements for areas in which they could be streamlined, tightened up, and made more user-friendly, especially for transfer students

## 1. Survey on BA/BS Degree Requirements

In order to review the curricular efficiencies and legibility of the BA/BS requirements, the committee administered a survey to obtain input on the issues in meeting the degree requirements and opinions about integral part of the degree requirements from the advising community (primarily professional and faculty advisors) and department chairs. The survey asked the respondents to (1) report issues that students frequently face in meeting the BA or BS degree requirements, (2) share their thoughts on what requirements should not be altered, and (3) write any other issues in general.

### Summary of the Survey Results

The survey results confirmed some of the issues meeting the degree requirements that had been initially perceived by the task force members. The issues frequently reported in the survey are associated with meeting the following degree requirements:

- (1) Second Language Admission Requirements (often referred to as SLAD, Second Language Admission Deficiency)

- (2) 4 credits of Fine and Performing Arts (FPA) within the Arts & Letters area
- (3) Two Years of College-Level Second Language Proficiency
- (4) 12 credits of Science in which a minimum of 8 credits must be coursework with lab or fieldwork
- (5) 4 credits of Mathematics/Statistics

While these issues listed above confirmed our perception about hindrance in student progress toward graduation, the responses on the second question probing essential requirements for the BA or BS was very informative. The survey responses confirmed that none of the above five degree requirements should be eliminated. We concluded that the current BA degree requirements consisting of the 2-year language proficiency, the Arts & Letter which includes an FPA course, and the Science and/or Social Science should remain intact. The Second Language Admission Requirement (or SLAD), which requires Oregon high school graduates to demonstrate two years of high school language or two terms of college language, even for a BS degree, was also discussed, but since this was a statewide requirement that is still implemented at the other Oregon Public Universities, it was decided that no change would be made. Instead, communication to students and advisors will be improved, with the hope that the deficiency will be caught and addressed sooner (many students petition this in their final year at PSU). As for the BS requirements, most respondents wrote science and math are essential components. We concluded that the three components of Math/Statistics, Science coursework, and Arts & Letters and/or Social Science should remain unchanged.

We also want to acknowledge that while we identified that transfer students often petition the UNST and Writing Requirements, these were out of our scope, particularly because UNST is under interim leadership.

## 2. ARC Petition Review Report

In addition to the survey, the task force obtained data of ARC petitions from the past six years and examined the types and nature of petitions. We found that a number of petitions involved a shortfall in the number of credits. For example, many FPA courses at a community college are 3-credits, whereas PSU requires 4 credits. In addition, one year of Science coursework at a semester-system institution may transfer as 10 or 11 credits, whereas PSU requires a total of 12 credits. In these cases, transfer students fall short of the required credits and their options to make up those remaining credits are limited (Geology teaches a 1-credit field trip; Music teaches 1-credit performance/lessons). These petitions are often granted as having met the “spirit of the requirement,” but there is an issue of equity that only students who know about the petition process are excused.

The ARC report indicated that a shortfall of credits and lack of a lab component are the two major reasons for petition concerning the Science requirement. The task force members discussed the possibility of reducing the amount of Science and/or Lab coursework. We reached out to the Science departments in CLAS to receive feedback, and the majority of the Science departments opposed the idea of reducing the Science coursework, including the 8 credits with Lab/Fieldwork. They intimated that one year of college-level science is the minimum for a Science degree and students should acquire skills for scientific methods with hands-on experience that is gained through a lab or fieldwork component. After receiving this input from the Science departments, the task force concluded not to reduce the Science requirements for the BS and, instead, address the issue by enhancing transferability while maintaining the thrust of the requirement, i.e., students must have at least *one year* of college-level science coursework with some lab/fieldwork component.

In addition, we discussed the 4 credits of college-level math with the Math Department. Occasionally, students transfer a 3-credit math course, and there are no 1-credit options available, requiring the student to petition ARC for a waiver of that credit shortfall. The Math Department was willing to allow 3-credit course to satisfy the requirement. We also discussed acceptance of courses taught by departments other than MTH/STAT which cover quantitative reasoning, and ultimately we settled on maintaining the requirement that courses be taken through a MTH/STAT department.

The review of the ARC report also showed that many students face challenges with the requirement of 72 upper division credits and the residency requirement (45 of the last 60 credits must be taken at PSU).

### 3. Recommendations

Some of the issues identified can be corrected by making slight revisions to the Degree Audit (DARS) to make things clearer for students as well as improving how the information is presented in web and print materials. The Registrar's Office and Advising & Career Services will assist with this.

Based on our findings, we believe that some of our graduation requirements are not particularly “transfer-friendly.” We may be inadvertently contributing to students graduating with excessive credits. Given that more than 60% of our undergraduate population are transfer students, we can do better without “watering down” the degree.

As such, we suggest the following modifications:

## Recommendation:

Revise the BA and BS degree requirements to better accommodate 3 credit quarter courses and semester credit.

The current BA Degree Requirements (View the [current requirements here.](#))

Total of 28 credits

4 credits in a language (203 or higher)

12 credits in arts & letters (4 credits must be in PFA)

12 credits in sciences and/or social sciences

The current BS Degree Requirements

Total of 28 credits

4 credits in college-level math or statistics

12 credits in sciences (8 crs of 12 must be coursework with a lab/fieldwork component)

12 credits in arts & letters and/or social sciences

### Proposal #1:

BA Degree Requirements (minimum 23 credits in the following):

Two years college level language proficiency (typically demonstrated by completion of a minimum of 3 credits in 203 or a more advanced level) Note: students who test out of this requirement will still need 3 credits in language or arts & letters.

3 credit minimum in fine and performing arts course

7 credits minimum arts & letters

3 credit minimum science or math

7 credits minimum social science and/or science/math

### Proposal #2:

BS Degree Requirements (minimum 23 credits in the following):

One year of science courses (minimum 10 credits total), which must include two courses with a lab or fieldwork component.

One college-level mathematics or statistics course (minimum 3 credits) taught in a Mathematics or Statistics department.

10 credits minimum arts & letters and/or social science

## Justification:

Many transfer courses are worth 3 credit courses, yet we require 4 credits in mathematics/statistics for the BS degree or 4 credits in fine and performing arts for the BA.

Approximately 15% of all petitions reviewed were from students in this situation. This change should not impact any articulation agreements with community colleges that have been developed with the current requirements in mind. While the proposed minimum number of credits is reduced from 28 to 23, we feel that the core of the BA and BS remain intact. The wording of the Science with Lab requirements is supported by most of the Science departments, and that of the Math/Statistics requirement was supported by the Math Department.

### **Recommendation:**

Reduce the total Upper Division credits required from 72 to 62. [View current requirement here.](#)

### **Proposal #3: Require a minimum of 62 Upper Division credits.**

#### **Justification:**

All of the Oregon Public Universities require 60 upper division credits, except UO which requires 62. We also require more than other colleges nationwide that have a minimum requirement; we found a range from 36 semester-credits (54 quarter) at UC-Berkeley to 45 semester-credits (67.5 quarter) at Arizona State and were unable to find any college that requires more upper division credits than we do. This is especially harmful to our community college transfer students who, while we allow 124 of 180 to transfer, they really only get 108 applied towards their degree, which, as mentioned earlier, can contribute to excess credits. Currently a student with 135 transfer credits only needs to take a senior capstone as part of the UNST requirements. If the student completes a major that requires 60 UD credits and a senior capstone (6 credits), they would have to take 6 additional UD credits beyond the major credits to reach the current 72 UD credits. Changing it to 62 aligns us better with other universities and is more mathematically possible with a capstone (6 crs) or thesis and a minimum of fourteen 4-credit UD courses.

The task force consulted with the co-chairs of the University Budget Committee on the reduction of the upper division credits from 72 to 62. While acknowledging the benefit, they expressed concerns. One concern is that it may cause programs to restructure their degree requirements to include lower division courses. Another concern is a negative impact on revenue from students who are able to complete their degree sooner. In order to calculate an estimate of the financial impact, it requires close analysis of data on students (transfer, in- vs. out-state, etc.) and complex calculation, thus, the task force at this point is unable to present an estimate of budgetary impact expected by the proposed UD credit reduction.

**Recommendation:**

Revise the residence credit requirements to allow more flexibility to transfer credits at the end of the degree. [View current requirement here.](#)

**Proposal #4:**

Require that 45 of the last 75 credits (or 150 total credits) must be completed at PSU.

**Justification:**

An increasing number of students are taking courses at other institutions as they approach the completion of their degree. Currently, we require 45 of the last 60 (or 165 total) be taken at PSU, meaning they may transfer up to 15 credits at the end. This is problematic for students who complete their BA language at another institution. In many cases, students are taking courses elsewhere that are not needed for the PSU degree (e.g., professional school prerequisites). Approximately 8% of all petitions reviewed were from students in this situation. OSU requires 45 of the last 75 credits be taken there; UO requires 45 after 120, which allows students with more than 180 credits more flexibility. Changing it to 45 of the last 75 credits is more in line with them.

**Recommendation:**

Align BA/BS Distribution with Oregon Community Colleges for Transfer Students

**Proposal #5:**

To align with general expectations of HECC and legislative statewide transfer initiatives, to support more streamlined and successful transfer for students, and based on the common outcomes adopted statewide for general education distribution within the Humanities (Arts & Letters), Social Science, and Science disciplinary distribution areas, PSU will accept and apply courses from Oregon community colleges within the Humanities and Social Science areas in the same way they were categorized at the community college on their published AAOT General Education List. PSU will accept the Science courses in the same way, with the exception of Computer Science courses which are sometimes counted as Science at the community colleges.

**Justification:**

The community college general education distribution lists overwhelmingly match/align (95% or more) with the PSU categorizations.

Examples of mismatches:

At PSU, all WS courses apply as Social Science.

At PCC, one specific WS course applies as Humanities (i.e. Arts & Letters).

At PSU, all CHLA courses apply as Social Science.

At PCC, certain CHLA courses apply as Humanities.

We currently are required to accept the community college course category alignment when the student earns the recently developed Core Transfer Map (CTM) - a 30 credit common general package.

This proposed change extends the acceptance/category alignment to all the community college courses, even when the student has not completed the entire CTM package.