

Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) Policy

Category: Academic

Approval: Senate

Responsibility: Provost & Vice President Academic

Approval Dates: Senate – May 2013 (USC – March 2013; UAPC – April 2013); Senate – May 2003 (USC – November 2002); Senate – September 1994 (ADC – March 1994; Faculty Board – April 1994; Senate – May 1994)

Updates to definitions: October 2017, January 2021

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of the Undergraduate Studies Committee policy is to formalize the guidelines under which this Committee evaluates and considers submissions for the development of undergraduate initiatives and curriculum.

Scope of This Policy

The Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC), under the direction of the Provost & Vice President Academic, is a standing committee of Senate that reports directly to Senate. It is the responsibility of USC to make recommendations to Senate on undergraduate curriculum-related issues and to make recommendations to the Academic Planning & Budget Committee (AP&B) on proposals for new academic initiatives.

All changes to existing undergraduate curriculum, including new courses, modifications to existing courses, and revisions to degree or diploma requirements or regulations, require USC approval. Subsequently, USC reports to Senate on curriculum items that either require approval of Senate or are presented for information purposes.

In considering curriculum proposals, USC references and adheres to the following policies:

- Course Syllabus Policy
- Course Numbering Policy
- University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UUDLEs)
- Institutional Program Quality Assurance Policy (IQAP)

Policy Statement

The Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) acts under the authority of Senate and is responsible for the review and approval of undergraduate academic curriculum, including modifications to existing programs, and makes recommendations to the Academic Planning & Budget Committee (AP&B) on the degree requirements and curriculum of proposed new academic programs.

In evaluating curriculum proposals USC takes into consideration:

- that Trent University is committed to offering a range and sequence of undergraduate courses and programs in the Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, professional and interdisciplinary fields to ensure a liberal education rooted in a strong institutional commitment to undergraduate teaching
- the academic standards of university-level courses and regulations
- department requirements and the planning of undergraduate degrees
- expected learning outcomes and how they are supported by program structure and curriculum

Definitions

Major Modifications are modifications that significantly alter a program's requirements, intended learning outcomes, or human or other resources associated with the program, with respect to those in place at the time the program was originally approved or as changed following the last cyclical review. Major modifications are substantial, usually creating significant new choice or experience for students, but are not so considerable as to constitute a new program. Major modifications to programs are reported to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance (Quality Council).

Minor Modifications are modifications to a program that are less substantial than major modifications, notably curricular changes such as the introduction and deletion of courses, minor changes to degree requirements, etc. Minor modifications are not reported to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance.

A **Specialization** consists of a prescribed set of at least 4.0 credits providing a particular focus within a student's major. To earn a Specialization, students must complete the requirements of both the Specialization and the major. A Specialization may only be completed as part of an Honours or General degree.

An **Option** consists of a prescribed set of at least 4.0 credits with a particular thematic focus outside a student's major. To earn an Option, students must complete the requirements of both the Option and their major. An Option may only be completed as part of an Honours or General degree.

An **Emphasis** consists of a group of courses with a particular focus and is available as a complement to regular degree programs. The current use of the term "Emphasis" has been discontinued. All Emphasis programs are to be deleted or converted to Options by June 2019.

A **Minor** is equivalent to a joint-major General degree (at least 5.0 credits) for students earning Honours degrees. A Minor is not normally offered in a subject area in which a major does not exist. Students who have fulfilled the requirements for a single-major or joint-major Honours degree may graduate with a Minor in a different subject.

An **Undergraduate Certificate** is a prescribed set of a minimum of two and a half (2.5) full credit equivalents to a maximum of four and a half (4.5) full credit equivalents. This credential will be organized around clear learning objectives. Certificates may be used

to “bridge” into undergraduate degree programs, may be used for professional upgrading, or may be complementary to degree studies. Specific admission requirements may apply. Some certificates may not be available to students enrolled in or graduates of programs with substantial overlap in subject matter.

A **Postgraduate Certificate** is a prescribed set of a minimum of four (4.0) full credit equivalents to a maximum of nine (9.0) full credit equivalents. This credential is available to students who hold an undergraduate degree from any accredited university*. Some certificates may not be available to graduates of programs with substantial overlap in subject matter. Transfer credit to a maximum of 1.0 assigned credit may be awarded towards a postgraduate certificate. The courses for transfer credit may be from Trent or another accredited university. Minimum grades may be required to receive transfer credit.

* A postgraduate certificate may also be open to graduates of specific college programs as approved by the appropriate department/program. In these cases, available transfer credit and minimum entrance grades will vary.

Course Regularization is the process by which a new course is permanently added to the curriculum offerings of a department or program. Trial courses must be regularized if they are to be offered after a period of two academic years.

A **Trial Course** is not deemed to be a permanent addition to the department’s curriculum offerings. A Trial course may be offered at the 2000-, 3000- and 4000-levels. A Trial course may be offered for a period of up to two academic years, after which time the course must be regularized to be offered again.

A **Special Topic Course** is offered to take advantage of a unique opportunity to cover material not dealt with in-depth in any of the department’s regularly-listed offerings, and should be given a course number in accordance with the *Course Numbering Policy*. A Special Topic course may be offered for a period of up to two academic years and is not normally regularized.

Course Reserve List. Departments should place courses that have not been offered for two years or longer on the reserve list. Only courses that have been regularized and approved by Senate may be placed on the reserve list. Courses may be reactivated within five years from their placement on the reserve list by written notification to USC. After five years have elapsed, reserve list courses are permanently deleted from the curriculum. To be reintroduced, such courses must go through the regularization process.

Information Items require USC approval and are forwarded to Senate for information purposes.

Approval Items require USC and Senate approval.

Department is used to reference undergraduate departments, schools, undergraduate programs, and professional programs.

Responsibilities

Academic Department

- Develops and approves curriculum at the departmental level; normally through a Department Curriculum Committee and/or Department Committee review/approval process
- Confirms that all curriculum proposals are fully supported by the department to which they belong through submission by Department Chair to USC
- Ensures that all relevant information, including decanal, cognate department and/or library consultation, if applicable, is included with proposals
- May resubmit a proposal with revised or additional supporting documentation if dissatisfied with a decision of USC

Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)

- Provides guidance to faculty and staff regarding the review and approval processes for introducing or revising curriculum
- Ensures proposed courses and programs are designed appropriately for university-level education
- Considers academic and resource factors as provided in submissions
- Advises and provides recommendations to Senate on curriculum changes
 - Reports minor, non-substantive changes to Senate for information
 - Recommends major, substantive changes to Senate for approval
- Advises and provides recommendations to AP&B on proposals for new academic initiatives
- Completes an annual report on major modifications to undergraduate programs for submission to the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance

Dean

- Approves departmental resources and staffing for new course offerings
- Approves and evaluates the impact of major modifications to programs

Senate

- Ensures approval procedures are established at the USC level in order to facilitate informed decisions
- Has final authority for the approval of undergraduate curriculum

Further Approval

- For some major modifications, expedited approval by the Quality Council may be required following Senate approval

General Application Procedures

USC forms are available at www.trentu.ca/usc. For each USC submission there is an applicable USC form which outlines the information required for approval. Forms should be completed and submitted by e-mail from the Chair to usc@trentu.ca. Questions may be directed to the USC Secretary, Office of the Provost & Vice President Academic.

Steps in the Approval Process

- 1) Curriculum proposal (program revisions, new courses, changes to courses)
- 2) Consultation with other departments, dean and/or Library
- 3) Approval of department's curriculum committee
- 4) Chair submits proposal to USC
- 5) Approved by USC
Or, if proposal is not approved: USC provides feedback and advice; proposal may be revised and resubmitted for further consideration
- 6) Item **for Senate approval**: Recommended to Senate for approval
Item **for Senate information**: Reported to Senate for information purposes
- 7) Item **for Senate approval** approved by Senate
- 8) Implementation

Implementation and Timing of Submissions

- The length of the approval process will vary depending on the individual proposal and the level of approval required
- **Information items** require approval by USC, but may be implemented prior to being reported to Senate
- **Approval items** require approval of both USC and Senate prior to implementation
- **Major Modifications** may require further approval before complete and full implementation is permitted

Consultation Process

This process should demonstrate and include statements of consultation and may include the following:

- Identification of similar programs, courses, options, specializations, or other offering at the University which may be affected or interested
- Specification of the nature and extent of the consultation and what, if any, cooperative arrangements have been explored and agreed upon with respect to staffing, appointments, course offerings, physical space
- Communication with other departments regarding overlap of content and/or possible cross-listing for new courses

- Decanal approval of courses for regularization
- Confirmation from a Liaison Librarian that library resources are sufficient to support a new course

Course-Specific Information

- **Course Numbering** – New course offerings require USC approval of a course number – see Course Numbering policy at www.trentu.ca/usc.
- **Science Designation** – If the department offers both a BA and a BSc and is designated as a discipline in the sciences, the course may be designated as a science credit. Submission should include the 'Sc' designation for science credits.

Submission Categories

The following table identifies possible curriculum submissions, indicates whether they are for Senate information or approval, and which form to complete for submission. Required criteria are outlined on the application form.

Type of Curriculum Submission		Form To Be Used
Modifications to Program For Senate Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisions to program requirements, current curriculum offerings • Degree regulation changes • Changes to academic processes • Department or program name changes • Revisions to articulation agreements (At the discretion of USC, minor modifications falling under this category may be considered for Senate information) 	Form: Modifications to Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decanal approval required (major modifications only) • Consultation with other departments may be required
New Special Program For Senate Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Specialization within a major • New Option • New Minor in a subject area in which a major exists • New Undergraduate Diploma • New Certificate for university credit • New Articulation Agreement • New Year Abroad program 	Form: New Special Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decanal approval required • Consultation with other departments may be required
Course Regularization For Senate Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New 1000-level course • New course at the 2000-, 3000- or 4000-level that will be a permanent addition to department curriculum • Regularization of existing Trial course • Substantial content change to an existing course (normally requiring a new course title and code) 	Form: Course Regularization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library consultation required (new courses only) • Decanal approval required • Consultation with other departments may be required
Course Split For Senate Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splitting a full-credit course into two contiguous half-credit courses 	Form: Course Split <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with other departments may be required
Course Compression For Senate Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compressing a full-credit course into a half-credit 	Form: Course Compression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with other departments may be required

Type of Curriculum Submission		Form To Be Used
<p>New Trial Course or Special Topic Course For Senate Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Trial Course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2000-, 3000-, or 4000-level course ○ department not ready to commit to permanently adding course to curriculum ○ may be offered for two years, after which time the course must be regularized to be offered again • New Special Topic Course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3000/4000-level course on unique topic ○ may be offered for 2 years; not normally regularized 	<p>Form: Trial or Special Topic Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library consultation required • Consultation with other departments may be required
<p>Minor Change to Existing Course For Senate Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number change • Title change • Cross-listing with another department • Calendar description change • Prerequisite change • Content change (non-substantive) • Level change (e.g., move from 2000- to 3000-level) • Reserve list placement • Reserve list reactivation (within 5 years of placement) • Permanent deletion • Other (e.g., same course offered at 3000/4000-level) 	<p>Form: Minor Change to Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with other departments may be required