

COLLEGE OF  
HUMANITIES & SCIENCES

HANDBOOK OF  
CURRICULUM  
PROCEDURES  
2011-2012

(TENTATIVE – some procedures will change this  
year to parallel UUCS changes.)

UNDERGRADUATE  
ACADEMIC COMMITTEE  
(UAC)

# **Table of Contents**

## **The Undergraduate Academic Committee**

- I. Committee Composition and Membership Responsibility
- II. UAC Actions
- III. Meetings and Deadlines
- IV. Curriculum Change Procedures
- V. Forms (with Instructions) for Curriculum Change Proposals
- VI. Miscellaneous Approval Procedures
- VII. UAC Responsibility for New Degree Programs
- VIII. Curriculum Guidelines

## I. Committee Composition and Membership Responsibility

The Humanities and Sciences Undergraduate Academic Committee (UAC) is made up of one representative from each department and school in the College. Members are elected by their departments/schools for a two-year term. The Chair is elected by the committee for a one-year term from among all tenured faculty on the committee. The Associate/Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs serves as an ex officio member and does not vote except in cases when the committee vote is tied.

The responsibilities of the Undergraduate Academic Committee are described in the College of Humanities and Sciences Bylaws (revised August 1994) as follows:

*The Undergraduate Academic Committee shall be concerned with degree requirements, academic standards, curriculum development, and other matters appropriate to the maintenance and development of the Humanities and Sciences undergraduate academic program.*

*It should establish regular communication with relevant University committees, especially the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, and will report in writing its activities to the President of the Faculty Council on a monthly basis.*

*The Undergraduate Academic Committee shall study all departmental proposals in the College of Humanities and Sciences for the addition or deletion of undergraduate courses which carry semester-hour credit.*

While decisions regarding technical details of course content shall be recognized to be the province of the department concerned, the function of the Undergraduate Academic Committee shall also be to ensure that courses offered for credit be of appropriate quality and prevent serious duplication of courses offered by two or more departments or schools. It shall study and make recommendations regarding the establishment of new programs or the abolition of existing programs leading to bachelor degrees in the College of Humanities and Sciences.

The committee shall also study and make recommendations concerning new rules, or changes in the rules, affecting the academic status of undergraduate students in the College of Humanities and Sciences, in respect to admissions policies, academic advising, degree requirements, grades, and any other academic policy matters.

All actions of the committee, aside from the acceptance of topics for topics courses, must be approved by the University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UUCC). Membership on the UUCC consists of two faculty members from each School/College

at the university, one elected by the School/College faculty and one appointed by the Provost upon recommendation of the Dean.

Because the development and maintenance of curriculum change necessarily occupies a large amount of UAC time, this handbook will be primarily devoted to the mechanics of curriculum change. *Committee members are encouraged to be aware of other matters that affect the welfare of the undergraduate program and bring these issues to UAC as appropriate.*

## II. UAC Actions

All changes in any course or program description within the college, no matter how minor, are to be submitted to UAC for approval including:

- revision of curriculum outlines
- revision of existing courses, including changes in course descriptions
- course deletions
- changes in descriptive statements of programs
- new courses
- new and revised minors
- new and revised programs
- new and revised majors
- new and revised concentrations

Changes of an editorial nature may be submitted to the Dean's liaison for inclusion in future catalogue copy.

UAC also monitors topics courses, independent studies, general education requirements, and the classification of honors modules.

All departments/schools offering topics courses or intending to offer such courses shall submit to UAC a short description of the departmental/school procedure or policies for considering and approving topics to be covered in topics courses. For specific guidelines on topics courses refer to item VI. B.

Courses for inclusion in the approved College of Humanities and Sciences General Education program must be reviewed and approved by the entire committee. Before UAC will consider such a proposal, the course must be approved for inclusion in the H&S General Education program by the H&S General Education Committee. Such

courses must have learning objectives that fall within at least three of the competency areas identified by the University core curriculum, which include:

- Writing Proficiency
- Critical Thinking
- Information Fluency
- Oral Communication
- Ethical and Social Responsibility
- Quantitative Literacy

Each semester the Dean or designate, along with the H&S General Education Committee, will detail how Honors modules and courses fit within the approved General Education program.

### III. Meetings and Deadlines

UAC typically meets at 2 p.m. on the first Friday of the month during the academic year. *If there are items of business that have not been completed at the end of the scheduled meeting, the committee will continue to meet each Friday in succession until all agenda items are completed.* The 2010/2011 schedule is as follows

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Submission Deadline</u>
September 16	September 2
October 7	September 23
November 4	October 21
December 2	November 18
February 3	January 20
February 24	February 10
March 2	February 17 (may miss Fall 2012 effective date)
April 6	March 23 (may miss Fall 2012 effective date)

The University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UACC) maintains an entirely electronic submission format for all proposals and supporting documents. However, for UAC, the submission process for initial reviews and meetings is for the departmental UAC representative to deliver an **original and 20 hard copies** of each proposal to the UAC secretary in Hibbs room 211 by the submission deadline for each meeting. Hard copy packets are delivered to committee members at least one week prior to the meeting. Once a proposal is approved by UAC, the proposal (with

revisions) and all supporting documents must be sent to the UAC Chair **electronically** so they can be submitted to UUCC in the proper format.

Please carefully read the UUCC submission guidelines available at <http://www.provost.vcu.edu/committees/uucc/forms.html>. Since copy for the next year's catalogue is normally due in March, any major proposals (including any curriculum changes) should be brought to UAC in the fall semester.

#### IV. Curriculum Change Procedures

- A. All proposals that come to UAC must have been approved by the departmental/school curriculum committee and the departmental/school faculty. When the proposal has been approved at the department/school level, it is transmitted to the Dean's Office (to the UAC secretary) by the department's/school's UAC representative for placement on the agenda of UAC. Proposals for curriculum change may also be made to UAC by groups other than departments/schools such as College Task Forces or Ad Hoc Committees.
- B. To ensure proposals are fairly and thoroughly reviewed, each proposal will be assigned to two committee members outside the discipline from which the proposal comes. In advance of the UAC meeting, these reviewers will be responsible for ensuring the integrity of the proposal, checking that the appropriate forms have been completed, scrutinizing the accuracy of the forms, and asking the contact person any questions for clarification that arise. **Please note that UAC will not consider any curriculum requests that are incomplete.**
- C. At the meeting, the assigned reviewers will present a brief summary of the proposal and make their recommendation for action. Please use the checklist at the back of the handbook to make sure the proposal is complete. The reviewers (and the department's/school's UAC representative) should ask a representative from the department/school that submits the proposal to attend the meeting in order to answer any additional questions that may arise from the reviewers or anyone else on the committee. The Chair may also raise questions regarding the proposals submitted.
- D. After discussion, the Chair will call for a vote. A quorum must be present in order for a vote to be held. After a proposal is approved by the committee (and all suggested revisions completed), it is signed by the UAC chair and the

Associate/Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs, and forwarded then to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Office for consideration by UUCC.

## V. Forms (with Instructions) for Curriculum Change Proposals

### UUCC Curriculum Approval Request Form (CARF).

Proposals for curriculum change must be submitted on the UUCC Curriculum Approval Request Form (CARF) according to submission instructions that depend on the nature of the proposal. For any change, a justification must be provided. Additional Attachments (A, B, C, D, E) included with the CARF on the website must be completed depending on the type of change or addition sought.

The CARF (& Attachments) and submissions instructions can be downloaded from the UUCC website at <http://www.provost.vcu.edu/committees/uucc/forms.html>. Detailed instructions for the use of all forms and attachments are given below.

An effective date for the proposed change, e.g. the date that the department or committee proposing the change wishes it to take effect, is required for all changes. In order to ensure the effective date can actually be met, please be aware of the UUCC meeting schedule and the appropriate deadlines for submitting proposals to UAC in time for UAC approval, revisions, and submission to UUCC. The type of change must be checked at the top of the form. A contact person with phone number and e-mail address must be clearly shown on the front of the form. Also, if the justification, etc. will be lengthy and you wish to use separate pages, be certain to identify the proposal in some way on the form so that the reader will know what proposal or change the form refers to.

General Education Requirement. If a department/school is making a change of any kind that involves courses typically related to fulfillment of College General Education or University Core Curriculum requirements, the appropriate box(es) should be checked at the top of the UUCC Curriculum Approval Request Form.

In the boxes for *Current Bulletin Copy or Course Description* and *Proposed Bulletin Copy or Course Description*, include descriptions of programs or courses in *exact bulletin format, just as they are to appear in the University Bulletin or Courses database*. This includes the title, type, hours, prerequisites, and course description, and is particularly important for proposed new courses or programs. For revisions, the

two boxes should be filled in so the committee may easily see the changes being proposed. For ease of review, please **highlight** the changes that have been made.

### **Attachment A—For New Courses and Content Changes to Existing Courses.**

The answers to the questions on Attachment A should be reasonably full and carefully thought out. Additional pages can be used. If these questions are answered accurately, approval of the course can be expedited.

The question regarding overlap should be specifically addressed. If there is the possibility of overlap with a course in another department/school, that issue must be resolved before the committee will approve the course. *The department/school proposing the new course should obtain from departments/schools involved in similar instruction written statements that consultation has taken place about the specific proposal.* Departments/schools are encouraged to be sensitive to offerings and interests of other departments/schools and to consult with them before submission of proposals even when the possibility of overlap seems remote.

The question regarding student engagement should be addressed by specifying how the new course or the change in content of an existing course will affect how students are engaged in their learning in the classroom or other venues. Course components such as class discussion, group work, hands-on projects, and such may be examples of how to address this question.

Attachment A requires a “course syllabus” that contains at a minimum: a course description, student learning objectives/outcomes, a grading scheme, and a course outline (topics with dates/time covered).

Attachment A also requires the completion, submission, and **signed approval** of the *VCU Libraries New Course and Program Review Form* and the *Technology Services Resource Needs Form* (both described below).

#### **The VCU Libraries New Course and Program Review Form.**

An approved (signed) copy of this form must be submitted with all new courses or significant content changes to existing courses (i.e., with Attachment A when needed). Please note that this form requires two weeks for completion by library staff prior to bringing the course to UAC for approval. See [www.library.vcu.edu/cm/new-course-proposal-electronic-form.html](http://www.library.vcu.edu/cm/new-course-proposal-electronic-form.html); this hyperlink is also included at the bottom of Attachment A.

### **Technology Services Resource Needs Form.**

An approved (signed) copy of this form must be submitted with all new courses or significant content changes to existing courses (i.e., with Attachment A when needed). This form must be completed and faxed to 828-2088 for approval prior to bringing the course to UAC for approval. The form is located at [www.ts.vcu.edu/faq/uccr/UCCR-technology.pdf](http://www.ts.vcu.edu/faq/uccr/UCCR-technology.pdf), and its hyperlink is also included at the bottom of Attachment A.

### **Attachment B—For Other Course Revisions (deletion, descriptive statement change, numbering change, cross listing, prerequisites, credit hour change, etc.).**

A descriptive statement change is any change in the prose description of a course. The change may be a deletion of a portion of the description, an addition to it, or an entire revision of the description.

Cross-listing - The College of Humanities and Sciences encourages the cross-listing of courses both between departments and schools since cross-listing testifies to the interrelationship of knowledge. A cross-listed course will appear on a student's transcript under the listing/course rubric in the schedule for which the student registers.

Course deletion - If a department/school wishes to delete a course from the undergraduate bulletin because it does not anticipate teaching the course again, deletion of course is appropriate. The "data bank" does not exist anymore. If a course is deleted and a department/school wants to reactivate the same course or a revision of it at a later date, it must be brought back as a new course. For course deletions, an approved (signed) Attachment E (described below) must also be submitted with the proposal.

### **Attachment C—Program Assessment—Changes to requirements for curriculum, program, major, minor, concentration, etc.**

Proposals for any **new degree program, major, minor, or concentration** need to satisfy VCU requirements (and SCHEV requirements for a new degree program) for the definition and assessment of student learning outcomes. The SCHEV form is on the [UUCC Web page](#). Before a proposal can be reviewed by UAC, the following steps must be completed:

- (1) consult with the Director of Assessment (contact information is included on Attachment C),

- (2) develop the program's proposed mission, student learning outcomes, and assessment measures,
- (3) submit this assessment information (and this attachment) to the Director of Assessment, and
- (4) submit the approved (signed) copy of this attachment with the CARF.

For changes to existing curriculum requirements, including the introduction of a new course (or content changes to an existing course), the Director of Assessment should be consulted with to determine if any changes to the program assessment are needed. If no changes are required, a note of "no assessment changes needed" should be inserted into the box for *Comments from the Director of Assessment* on Attachment C and an approved (signed) copy of Attachment C should be submitted with the CARF. An email message from the Director of Assessment with this same comment would be a sufficient substitute for this attachment.

Attachment C is NOT required for proposals that do not involve changes to curriculum requirements. This may include new courses that are not part of program degree requirements, or other course revisions that would likely be submitted using Attachment B.

**Attachment D—For Program Changes—Changes to degree requirements for curricula, program, major, concentration, minor, etc.**

This attachment is required for proposals that make any changes to existing degree requirements, or propose a new program, major, concentration, minor, etc. This attachment must be accompanied with a revised ("marked up") copy of the degree audit requirements for the catalog year in which the change will become effective. Copies of degree audits can be obtained from the Degree Audit Office or by following the instructions included on Attachment D. The degree audits are in Microsoft Word format, and using "Track Changes" within Word is the most appropriate way to mark the changes.

**Attachment E—Course Change Impact Form.**

The purpose of this attachment is to verify that proposed course changes do not impact requirements for other degree programs (in particular, those outside of the College of Humanities and Sciences). An approved (signed) copy of this attachment, along with support memos from the programs affected by the change, must accompany the CARF for proposals that make any of the following changes to existing courses: content changes, course

deletion, credit hours, subject (e.g., HIST), number (e.g., 101), pre-requisite(s), or cross listing(s). For this approval, this form must be completed and sent to the Degree Audit Office (contact information is included on Attachment E) in a timely fashion so that the form and accompanying letters can all be sent with the CARF at the time of the submission of the proposal..

Attachment E is NOT required for new courses or for descriptive changes that would not affect the requirements of other degree programs.

**Attachment F—University Core Curriculum Proposal (2<sup>nd</sup> Tier courses).**

This attachment is required for proposals that wish to have a course added to Tier II of the University Core Curriculum, specifically to the areas of humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, or natural/physical sciences. This is actually a form that gets submitted to the University College Academic Committee (UCAC), and is essentially treated as an additional proposal to the CARF sent to UAC. Upon UCAC approval, the form is then sent to UUCC for approval. This attachment requires much of the same information as the CARF, plus the following: a question regarding core competencies addressed, a question regarding transferable skills acquired by the students, and a request for copies of examination and assessment materials that demonstrate measurable learning objectives on these transferable skills.

**Attachment G—University Core Curriculum Proposal (research and academic writing course).**

This attachment is required for proposals that wish to have a course added to the research and academic writing courses of the University Core Curriculum. This is actually a form that gets submitted to the University College Academic Committee (UCAC), and is essentially treated as an additional proposal to the CARF sent to UAC. Upon UCAC approval, the form is then sent to UUCC for approval. This attachment requires much of the same information as the CARF, plus the following: a question regarding the learning objectives that implement the research and academic writing course expectations, a question regarding the assessment plan for the course, a question regarding the level of the instructor for the course, and a request for copies of examination and assessment materials that demonstrate measurable learning objectives.

**Attachment H—University Core Curriculum Proposal (capstone experience).**

This attachment is required for proposals that wish to have a course added as a capstone experience to the University Core Curriculum. This is actually a

form that gets submitted to the University College Academic Committee (UCAC), and is essentially treated as an additional proposal to the CARF sent to UAC. Upon UCAC approval, the form is then sent to UUCC for approval. This attachment requires much of the same information as the CARF, plus the following: a question regarding core competencies addressed, a question regarding how this experience serves the function of a capstone or culminating event in the major, a question regarding written, oral, or performance products required of the student, and a request for copies of examination and assessment materials that demonstrate measurable learning objectives.

## **VI. Miscellaneous Approval Procedures**

- A. Graduate Courses Part of Undergraduate Programs.** Within certain undergraduate majors, qualified undergraduate students are required to take graduate-level courses. Action on graduate courses takes place through the Graduate Academic Committee of the College and then the University Graduate Council. Notice of changes, new courses, etc. should be given to UAC for information purposes only through use of one of the above-mentioned forms.
- B. Topics Courses.** The UUCC has stipulated that the school curriculum committees should monitor the use of topics courses and report their systems for monitoring to the UUCC. Accordingly, at the time courses are submitted to the Registrar for compilation of the class schedule, the department/school will present the topics courses to UAC for its review at the October and February meetings. At present, topics courses are not "approved" as other curriculum changes are, but UAC may register its concern about particular topics. The committee suggests that if a particular topic is used more than twice in a three-year period, a department/school should present the topic as a new course or justify continuing to use the topics rubric.

At present a set of standard course numbers are reserved for topics courses at three levels -- 291, 391, and 491. A standard course title is used for these courses, but the course description may vary since the level of the course may necessitate a different style of course description. An example of a course title and description would be:

(**Subject rubric**) 391 Topics in (**Subject area**)

Semester course; three lecture hours, three credits. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>. An in-depth study of a selected topic in (**Subject area**). See Schedule of Classes for specific topic to be offered each semester.

- C. Independent Study.** The committee also approves the creation of independent study courses and has established a format for such courses and minimum requirements for admission to them.

A standard course number (492) and course description would be used for all independent study courses. The department/school may add to the course description anything that more specifically describes the course. An example would be as follows:

(**Subject rubric**) 492 Independent Study

Semester course; Variable credit, \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup>. Open generally only to students of junior or senior standing who have acquired at least 12 credits in the departmental discipline. Determination of the amount of credit and permission of the instructor and department chairman must be procured prior to registration for the course.

- D. Minors.** As noted above, minors must be approved by UAC. The committee in the past has determined that a minor shall consist of a minimum of 18 semester credits. Additional requirements for the minor may be stipulated by the department/school. (See various minors under the College of Humanities and Sciences in the Bulletin.)

## VII. UAC Responsibility for New Degree Programs

The process of instituting a new degree program occupies a year to two of planning from the conception of the program to final approval by the State Council for Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). In compliance with SCHEV instructions, the University regularly updates its curricular plan, including all new degree programs that it plans to initiate in the future. The schedule for and the format of these proposals is prescribed by SCHEV. Department chairpersons/school directors or

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<sup>1</sup> Each department/school shall determine the maximum number of credits that may be taken as topics courses. That statement would be inserted after "three credits" in the course description, e.g., "maximum nine credits in all topics courses at all levels."

<sup>2</sup> Each department/school shall determine the maximum number of credits each semester and totally that may be taken under independent study. That statement would be inserted after variable credit in the course description, e.g., "Maximum 4 credits per semester; maximum total for all independent study courses 6 credits."

Humanities and Sciences deans can provide the formats established by SCHEV for these proposals. The format for new program approval is available on the SCHEV website.

UAC's role is part of the internal review of the proposal. Like other curriculum proposals, a degree proposal will probably originate in one department/school or several departments/schools after careful planning and consultation with the Dean. The committee's concerns are the usual ones: Do we have the faculty to offer the degree or will additional faculty be required? Is the proposed degree a sound one? Is there a need for it? What enrollment can be expected? What population will it serve? Are library, computer, and other support facilities adequate? Does the proposed program have a relationship to the mission of the College and the University as delineated in the current strategic plan? Although the committee is not concerned in detail with the cost of a program, it may wish to know how it is anticipated that faculty and operating costs can be met. The committee's primary concern, however, is with the academic quality of the proposed program or major.

If a new degree proposal is approved by the committee, it must be subsequently approved by a number of groups, including as the final internal approving agents, the University Council and the Board of Visitors. Deadlines and schedules for meetings become very complicated during these stages. Departments/schools considering a new degree proposal should consult the Humanities and Sciences Dean before any formal planning gets underway.

## **VIII. Curriculum Guidelines**

In acting on curriculum proposals, UAC sometimes faces the issues of standards for upper-level courses and proliferation of courses. The committee recognizes that these issues vary with disciplines, but it suggests the following guidelines.

### **A. Distinctions Between Lower-Level and Upper-Level Courses.**

Lower-level courses are: (1) open to all students but directed toward freshmen and sophomores in terms of difficulty, level of maturity, and the like; (2) designed to meet the needs of students for a general understanding of the subject as part of their liberal arts education and to provide the fundamentals of the discipline for prospective majors; (3) designed to develop and apply basic concepts.

Upper-level courses should: (1) normally be open to upper-level students with a general background; (2) require or imply academic or experiential prerequisites;

(3) be aimed at a comprehensive or intensive study of a subject or at developing the student's command of the methods of the discipline; (4) assume a more sophisticated level of reasoning than lower-level courses.

A department/school wishing to offer a course at the upper level that does not meet these guidelines is encouraged to present a justification to the committee.

**B. Possible Proliferation of Courses.** The committee urges continuing study and updating of departmental/school curricula. The committee acknowledges that in most respects the individual departments/schools can best judge what should make up the legitimate offerings in a particular discipline. Deletion of courses that no longer fit departmental/school goals and student needs is strongly recommended. However, Attachment E must accompany such proposals to ensure that courses are not deleted that are required for programs outside of the College. Topics courses may make it possible, with the committee's approval, to delete some courses that are offered only infrequently.

**Virginia Commonwealth University  
University Undergraduate Curriculum Committee  
Checklist for Proposals**

**New Course or Substantively Revised Course**

- Completed Curriculum Approval Request Form
- Attachment A
- Attachment C
- Attachment D
- Attachment E
- Completed Library Form
- Completed Technology Form
- Course Syllabus
- Bulletin Copy
- All Signatures

**Deletion or Minor Revisions (Anything but course revision see above)**

- Completed Curriculum Approval Request Form
- Attachment B
- Attachment D
- Attachment E