

8888 University Drive, Burnaby, BC Canada V5A 1S6 TEL: 778.782.6654 FAX: 778.782.5876 avpacad@sfu.ca www.sfu.ca/vpacademic

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Senate	DATE	October 4, 2024
FROM	Paul Kingsbury, Vice-Chair Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies	PAGES	1/1
RE:	Program Changes		

For information:

Acting under delegated authority at its meeting of October 3, 2024 SCUS approved the following curriculum revisions effective Summer 2025.

a. Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology /SCUS 24-87/**1. School of Communication**

(i) Requirement changes to Communication Honours (*Fall 2025*)

b. Faculty of Environment /SCUS 24-88/**1. Department of Geography**

(i) Requirement changes to the Geographic Information Science Major (*effective Spring 2025*)

Senators wishing to consult a more detailed report of curriculum revisions may do so on the Senate Docushare repository at <https://docushare.sfu.ca/dsweb/View/Collection-12682>.

Name of Program or Name of Faculty

Communication, FCAT

Rationale for change:

To allow students to complete an Honours program in Communication within the 120 units required for a Major in Communication (instead of 132 units) and to eliminate the course-based Honours option (Option B) in Communication.

We anticipate and hope that the revision will recruit more students to the program because it will become more affordable in terms of credit load and time to degree completion. The primary reason for the change is an ethical one: our course-based honours option has long existed in order to provide students with an honours designation on their degrees that was needed for admission to graduate communication programs in Canada in the past. No graduate communication program in Canada requires an honours degree from applicants anymore. Effectively our program currently tells students that completing extra upper division course requirements beyond 120 credits will improve their rate of admission to graduate programs. This is simply no longer true. Furthermore, our current faculty do not see any pedagogical justification for completing additional upper division course work; it does not provide students with the development of new skills or opportunities they would not otherwise have through the regular 120 credit degree. The thesis option, on the other hand, exposes students to new opportunities through designing and carrying out a substantial individual research project, which they cannot get through course work alone. The cost and time required to complete our honours program as it currently exists is prohibitively expensive for many students and only students with the economic means to take two extra semesters of undergraduate coursework have access to this designation as it currently stands. This presents a significant and obvious equity issue. While there are certainly departments and programs at SFU where students do not want an undergraduate thesis option, we know that communication students do want an honours thesis program, as evidenced by their enrolment in that program despite current barriers to access around time and cost.

Completion of an honours thesis requires a high degree of research potential and ability to work independently to imagine and carry out a project, and meet deadlines with limited oversight. In general, a GPA of 3.33 better reflects the overall academic performance of an undergraduate student who is prepared to succeed in these areas. The current GPA requirement of 3.0 does not reflect the reality of the expectations faculty supervisors have of students they are willing to work with on an honours thesis. Conversations with our faculty showed that they would hesitate to supervise a student who had not achieved an average in the range of B+ across their undergraduate degree, and in practice, no students with a GPA lower than 3.33 have been admitted to our honours thesis option in the last five years. Given all of this, the increase of the minimum GPA from 3.0 to 3.33 reflects honest and clear communication with potential students about what is expected

of honours students in terms of academic performance. The current cutoff of 3.0 is not realistic. We have also run the numbers on our majors and their GPAs and a cutoff of 3.33 is more than sufficient for ensuring that there are enough eligible students who might qualify to pursue the honours option.

We will communicate with all undergraduate students via email blast and on the department website as soon as the revision is approved by senate, prior to implementation. However, given that we have not had thesis students with a lower than 3.33 GPA in the past five years, we do not expect that there is a large cohort of potential honours students who will be disappointed by this change in minimum GPA requirement.

Effective term and year: Fall 2025

The following program(s) will be affected by these changes:

Communication Honours

Calendar Change: All deletions should be crossed out as follows: ~~sample~~. All additions should be marked in **bold font**. Do not use “to” and “from” sections.

Simon Fraser University Calendar | Summer 2024

Communication Honours

BACHELOR OF ARTS

The bachelor of arts degree with an honours in communication program is a special opportunity for advanced students. The program enables students to focus on a subject within communication that interests them by writing an extended research paper over two terms, ~~or by taking four (4) additional upper level seminars. In either case~~, it is envisioned as a contribution to their personal development and satisfaction, as well as a step toward employment, or graduate studies.

The School of Communication has a long-standing tradition of critical, interdisciplinary approaches to the study of media and technology, with a commitment to social theory and political economy. The school bridges the critical and the applied in its undergraduate programs, and is committed to offering students the opportunities and the means to explore, analyze and critically evaluate the complexities and interplay between the numerous and diverse dimensions of communication.

Admission Requirements

Applicants will have a minimum **3.00 3.33** communication grade point average (CMNS GPA, CMNS UD GPA) and **3.00 3.33** SFU cumulative grade point average (SFU CGPA and SFU UD CGPA).

Continuance Requirements

A minimum **3.00 3.33** CMNS GPA and **3.00 3.33** SFU CGPA is required to remain in good standing in the program.

CMNS course enrollment requires a C- grade or better in each prerequisite course.

Program Requirements

Students complete **132 120** units, as specified below.

Lower Division Requirements

Students complete all of

[CMNS 110 - Introduction to Communication Studies \(3\)](#)

[CMNS 120W - Creativity and Communication Across Media \(3\)](#)

[CMNS 130 - Communication and Social Change \(3\)](#)

and at least five 200 level CMNS courses, including

[CMNS 201W - Empirical Communication Research Methods \(4\)](#) * or [CMNS 201 - Empirical Communication Research Methods \(4\)](#) *

[CMNS 202 - Design and Method in Qualitative Communication Research \(4\)](#)

* completion of this quantitative (Q) course satisfies part of the university's Q requirement.

Upper Division Requirements

There are ~~two options for students to complete an Honours Program in Communication.~~

Option A: Honours Project

A minimum total of 60 upper division units is required, ~~to include the following: of which 48 upper division units must be in CMNS~~

- ~~nine eleven~~ upper division CMNS courses, at least ~~six seven~~ must be taken at SFU
- ~~including one upper division CMNS "W" course~~

and all of

Students complete all of

CMNS 362 - Evaluation Methods for Applied Communication Research (6)

CMNS 497 - Honours Research Proposal (5) *

CMNS 498 - Honours Research Project (10) **

and

~~two four~~ other CMNS 400 level courses, at least ~~one three~~ must be taken at SFU.

Directed study and field placement courses may not be used to meet any of these requirements.

*Students must complete at least ~~90~~ **75** units with at least ~~20~~ **16** units in upper division communication before enrolling in CMNS 497. A plan must be approved by the faculty member supervisor(s) and the honours co-ordinator before work is begun.

**Students must obtain a grade of B or higher in CMNS 497 in order to continue on with CMNS 498.

Students who obtain a grade of B- or lower in CMNS 497 ~~go back into the CMNS Major program and may count their completion of CMNS 497 toward their upper division CMNS course requirements. , but who still have an overall CGPA of 3.00 or higher, can still complete an honours degree through Option B.~~

Option B: Additional Upper Division Requirements

~~A minimum total of 60 upper division units is required, to include the following:~~

- ~~eleven upper division CMNS courses, at least eight must be taken at SFU~~
- ~~including one upper division CMNS "W" course~~

and

CMNS 362 - Evaluation Methods for Applied Communication Research (6)

and

~~minimum of six CMNS 400 level courses, at least five must be taken at SFU.~~

Directed study and field placement courses may not be used to meet any of these requirements.

Name of Program or Name of Faculty Geographic Information Science Major

Rationale for change:

1. Program has transferred to Geography and new language reflects the department requirements.
2. Geography 267 is a new course that needs to be added to program requirements

Effective term and year: Spring 2025

The following program(s) will be affected by these changes:

Geographic Information Science Major

Calendar Change: All deletions should be crossed out as follows: ~~sample~~. All additions should be marked in **bold font**. Do not use “to” and “from” sections.

Geographic Information Science Major Bachelor of Science

Students must complete 120 units including 45 upper division units.

~~The School of Computing Science and the Department of Geography offer a major leading to a bachelor of science degree.~~

Admission Requirements

~~Entry into computing science programs is possible via~~

- ~~direct admission from high school~~
- ~~direct transfer from a recognized post-secondary institution, or combined transfer units from more than one post-secondary institution~~
- ~~internal transfer from within Simon Fraser University~~

Admission is competitive. A separate admission average for each entry route is established each term, depending on spaces available and subject to the approval of the Dean of Applied Sciences. Admission averages are calculated over a set of courses satisfying particular breadth constraints.

For more information, contact an [Applied Sciences Advisor](#).

Internal Transfer

Internal transfer allows students to transfer, within Simon Fraser University, from one faculty to another.

Simon Fraser University students applying for School of Computing Science admission are selected on the basis of an admission Computing Related Grade Point Average (CRGPA) and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). The CRGPA is computed from all courses the student has taken from the following: (CMPT 120, 128 or 130), (CMPT 125, 129 or 135), CMPT 225, (CMPT 275 or 276), CMPT 295, CMPT 300, CMPT 307, MACM 101, (MACM 201 or CMPT 210), MACM 316. Applicants must have completed at least one MACM course and at least two CMPT courses from this list before applying. At least two courses used in the CRGPA calculation must have been taken at SFU.

No course may be included in the average if it is a duplicate of any previous course completed at Simon Fraser University or elsewhere.

The average for admission based on internal transfer is competitive and the school sets competitive averages each term.

The CRGPA minimum average is 2.67 and the CGPA minimum average is 2.40—the competitive averages will never be below these minima.

Continuation Requirements

Students who do not maintain at least a 2.40 CGPA will be placed on probation within the School. Courses available to probationary students may be limited. Each term, these students must consult an advisor prior to enrollment and must achieve either a term 2.40 term GPA or an improved CGPA. Students who fail to do so may be removed from the program.

Reinstatement from probationary standing occurs when the CGPA improves to 2.40 or better and is maintained.

Graduation Requirements

~~In addition to university minimum overall CGPA and UDGPA requirements, a minimum program CGPA and UDGPA of 2.00 must be obtained for courses used to fulfil the program requirements.~~

Prerequisite Grade Requirement

~~Computing science course entry requires a grade of C- or better in each prerequisite course. A minimum 2.40 CGPA is required for 200, 300 and 400 division CMPT courses. For complete information, contact an Applied Sciences Advisor.~~

Program Requirements

Lower Division Requirements

[...]

and all of

CMPT 120 - Intro Computing Science and Programming I (3)
SDA 250 - Computational Text Analysis (4)
SDA 270 - Data, Ethics and Society (3)
GEOG 251 - Quantitative Geography (3)
GEOG 253 - Introduction to Remote Sensing (3)
GEOG 255 - Geographic Information Science I (3)
GEOG 266W - Geography in Practice (3)

and one of

ARCH 273 - Archaeology of the New World (3)
GEOG 267 - Introduction to Indigenous Land-Based Knowledge and Place-Based Relationships
REM 207 - Indigenous Peoples and Resource Management (3)

and at least six additional units of lower division geography courses with applied geographic information content

[...]