

Recommendations of the General Education Review Committee

February, 2023

Executive Summary

In May of 2020, Simon Fraser University launched the General Education Curriculum Review, a process to explore a forward-looking vision for the general education component of the undergraduate curriculum. The goals include a comprehensive analysis and consideration of the extent to which the Writing, Quantitative, and Breadth (WQB) course model meets SFU's current and planned curricular and student experience goals, and an evaluation of the support systems available to students, instructors and staff to ensure that students succeed in meeting the general education requirements.

The committee ([Appendix IV](#)) considered [General Education models](#) in the sector, [consulted](#) undergraduate curriculum committees, faculty members, and advisors, examined the 2021 Undergraduate Student Survey (including an additional question about Breadth) to understand the [undergraduate viewpoint](#), and analyzed course availability and enrollment patterns to summarize the [WQB landscape](#) at the institution. After releasing initial recommendations in spring of 2022, we performed another round of consultation, and integrated [what we learned](#) from that consultation in the final recommendations presented here.

Our main finding is that the program is seen by the SFU community to have many benefits and does not need to be replaced. There is room for improvement, however, starting with how we define the purpose and benefits of the program, and continuing with how we communicate about the program to members of the university community, especially students. There is concern both within the committee and in the SFU community that we have too many courses that do not always meet the expectations of the program, and that this contributes to a lack of student understanding of the purpose and benefits of Writing, Quantitative, and Breadth courses. There is recognition that a significant number of courses may have 'drifted' after initial certification, contributing to the perception that courses aren't appropriate for their stated purpose, as well as an acknowledgement that we need to improve how we support the development of writing skills in our students.

Recommendations:

[Recommendation 1:](#) Revise and clarify the statement of purpose for General Education, and the definitions of Writing, Quantitative, and Breadth courses, both to more accurately reflect contemporary society and to clarify the purpose and improve understanding of the program. The modernization of the definitions may lead to changes in which courses will meet the WQB criteria.

[Recommendation 2:](#) No change in the number of units students take to fulfill General Education requirements. We suggest allowing waivers for some B course requirements on a limited basis to be replaced by undesignated Breadth, as originally proposed for the General Education program.

[Recommendation 3:](#) Establish a centralized, interdisciplinary committee of faculty members who can review, audit, and approve designations for WQB courses, and recommend the designations to SCUS (the Senate Committee for Undergraduate Studies).

[Recommendation 4:](#) Re-certification of courses should occur on a regular basis (every 5 years) to ensure courses continue to meet the expectations for General Education, providing greater clarity regarding the purpose of the program.

[Recommendation 5:](#) Improve writing supports and resources for W course instructors and Teaching Assistants, as well as consider new ways to support student development of the craft of writing especially in the lower division.

[Recommendation 6:](#) Improve communication about the purpose and value of General Education to students, faculty, and advisors. Promote the program to students and provide guidance for how to thoughtfully select courses to ensure a well-rounded education, particularly in light of their program of study.

[Recommendation 7:](#) Implementation of recommendations. All W, Q, B courses should be re-certified under the new definitions. We recommend a process that rolls out over three years, and that the processes used endeavor to reduce the work undertaken within Schools and Departments as much as possible. Courses that are not re-certified after 3 years would lose their W, Q, or B designation.

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Process: The General Education Curriculum Review

The General Education Curriculum Review was launched in May of 2020. All Faculties were invited to provide a representative to the committee, which also included key staff (see [Appendix IV](#)). [Terms of reference](#) for the General Education Curriculum Committee (hereafter “the committee”) were delegated by the Provost.

The committee had 22 meetings, most 2 hours in length, between May of 2020 and February of 2023. The committee considered important historical documents, such as the [Abridged report](#) of the Ad Hoc Curriculum Committee Task Force, 2002; and the [Implementation Discussion Paper of](#) 2004; collected additional information as described in the next paragraph; and performed extensive consultation in order to form our recommendations.

Information about current state

The committee gathered information on General Education requirements for a list of [comparator institutions](#). We also performed an analysis of which departments/schools at SFU offered the different courses types, and their utilization. Our goal was to understand the landscape of course availability at SFU, including if particular units had higher or lower than the average numbers of courses, and where those courses fit into curricula (we were especially interested in whether Breadth courses were also part of the requirements of major programs). We gathered information about course enrollments, to understand if students mostly take courses within their Faculties, or if they are using the General Education requirement as an opportunity to explore different subjects at SFU. Finally, we analyzed the grades earned in courses, as we had heard opinions from the community that students choose courses that are “easy”, though we found this was not straightforward to understand from available data, given the landscape of B courses (and how many are required within programs). We had heard also that the courses were used as a way to “get funding”, but our course utilization analysis could not be designed in a way that would uncover underlying motivations for course offerings and enrollments. We have posted a summary document of [course availability and utilization](#).

First round of consultation

In Fall of 2020, the Vice Provost, Learning and Teaching (chair of the committee) brought the project plan to Deans Council, and informed the members of the Senate Committee of Undergraduate Studies (SCUS), the Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning (SCUTL), and the Standing Committee on Advising (SCOA) that a review of General Education was underway. She subsequently visited all Faculty Undergraduate Curriculum Committees to inform them about the project and consult on how the committee should solicit feedback. All undergraduate curriculum committees were then asked to answer 11 written questions about the General Education program and its associated WQB requirements; 6 of 8 Faculties and 21 of 42 Schools/Departments responded.

Faculty members at SFU were invited to complete an online survey on the General Education program; of the 1,119 faculty members invited to participate, 132 responded. The survey was also sent to the Advisors Forum, whose membership captures our complex landscape of SFU advisors who may be embedded in departments, Faculties, student central, or specialized programs; 59 advisors responded. Finally, we consulted with the library, and with faculty members and units responsible for Foundational courses FAL (Faculty of Education) and FAN (Department of Mathematics).

A summary of the [consultation findings](#) is publicly available on the [project website](#).

To capture the student perspective, we used data from the Undergraduate Student Survey (UGSS), which regularly asks students to comment on whether our W, Q, and B courses improve their skills as was intended when the General Education program was launched. In 2021, the committee added an additional open-ended question about whether there were subcategories of breadth the students thought would be useful. We asked this question because we were wondering if our current subcategories (Humanities, Social Science, Science) should be replaced. 3,211 students answered this open-ended question, and an analysis of [student responses](#) is posted on our project page.

Second round of consultation

The committee came to consensus regarding next steps, based on the many sources of information collected, and released [draft recommendations](#) in spring of 2022. The committee chair then visited Deans Council, SCUS, SCUTL, and SCOA (as well as the larger advisor's forum group) once more to discuss the recommendations. Aligned with the release of the recommendations was a websurvey open to the entire university community from May through October 2022. Multiple reminders about the websurvey were sent via email and in SFU's Learning and Teaching newsletter.

We received 146 responses to the websurvey about our recommendations, which we have posted in a [summary document](#). We also received longer written responses from a small number (< 10) of individuals, departments or Faculties.

Recommendation 1: Revise and clarify statements and definitions

The statement of purpose from the launch of the program still resonates today. The statement of purpose, and definitions of the designated course types included in the program, needed improvement and modernization, however. The definitions for W, Q, and B were found to differ from one another structurally, to lack clarity, and to be difficult to use when designating courses. The committee recommends definitions that address the skills and opportunities for students more explicitly than the old definitions. There are some instances where it is worth giving context to our proposed changes to the criteria/definitions of W, Q, and B course types.

- For Breadth, we considered a simpler model of having students simply take courses outside of their department or Faculty. However, a strength of our current three B designations (Humanities, Social Science, Breadth) is that they are agnostic to the structure of our Faculties, several of which are transdisciplinary.
- We considered whether the current sub-categories of Breadth (Humanities, Social Science, Science) remain salient today. We solicited feedback as part of our surveys, and realized that alternative suggestions (sustainability; ethics; social justice) tended to fit under the existing sub-categories, rather than having the potential to become new umbrella categories.
- Feedback about Breadth sub-categories frequently brought up SFU's obligation to Indigenize curriculum as noted in Call to Action 12 of the AFU-Aboriginal Reconciliation Council Report, "Walk This Path With Us". The ARC report suggested three options for SFU to consider, 1) a required first-year course, 2) a breadth requirement, or 3) integrating Indigenous content with current courses. This work is larger than a review of General Education. The committee therefore calls on the university to undertake the important work in Call to Action 12, which must be done with Indigenous colleagues at the table.
- Modern Language courses have traditionally been excluded from designation as Breadth courses for reasons not apparent to the committee. Our definition for B-Hum explicitly includes the possibility of designating language courses as Breadth.
- W courses have traditionally received extra financial support compared to Q courses. This is because writing intensive courses are required to be offered within each program, acknowledging differences in disciplinary norms for the forms, uses, and genres of writing. In contrast, Q courses are not required to be offered within each program, and thus Q courses are largely offered by departments with a quantitative focus. The committee saw the logic of differentiating between courses required to be offered by each department, and courses that are optional, when considering recommendations for funding/support.
- Although W courses have always had structural constraints (50% of the grade related to written work, with revision built in) there was no parallel for Q courses; the committee thought this should be added.
- The committee additionally added that group work should not be considered for designation as a W course. Although there are many benefits to group work and collaborative writing, the W course requirement is meant to explicitly provide for the development of skills in individual students, which is not straightforward to assess in group projects.

- We discussed at length the need for students to gain skills in numeracy and an ability to understand and interpret data. We have revised the Q definition to reflect this, but recognize the usefulness of formal symbolic logic and retain it in the new definition.

Revised statement on the purpose of General Education (W/Q/B)

General Education at SFU enhances undergraduate degrees by informing and complementing students' programs of study, encouraging students to develop understandings and skills that equip them for life-long learning, and preparing them to appreciate, critique and contribute ideas and values of diverse, complex, and interdependent local and global communities in an ethical and comprehensive manner.

Revised definition of a Breadth course

A **BREADTH** course provides the opportunity for students to enrich the subject matter knowledge in their program(s) of study by exposing them to new theoretical perspectives, forms of thought, and modes of inquiry. Breadth courses encourage students to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments and allow them to improve their ability to engage in conversations, debates, and actions that comprise our globally interconnected society.

Additionally, a Breadth course must substantially fulfill AT LEAST ONE of the following conditions:

1. Articulates a framework for organizing and acquiring knowledge in a particular field of study; raises overarching questions and problems within a field of study and investigates how the field generates and validates workable solutions to problems.
2. Develops students' systematic understandings of the historical development and/or the contemporary dynamics of the physical, natural, social, and/or cultural environments that comprise the program of study.

Students must take 6 units from each of the following three subcategories of Breadth, plus another 6 units of "undesignated breadth", which are any courses of interest outside the major program. These purpose statements are provided to give clarity for interpretation of each category of Breadth, and will be considered as courses are certified.

Humanities (B-HUM) purpose

- To build knowledge and understanding of both historical and current trends in human cultural production; to develop an appreciation for how the humanities help us understand and navigate the world.
- To develop cultural, artistic, or linguistic literacies that allow for students to critique of and engagement with controversies and issues informing contemporary societies.
- To prepare students to make connections among cultural, artistic, and social movements within a range of historical, present, and emerging contexts. To foster transferable skills of cultural critique, evaluation, knowledge-making, language-learning, and self-expression.

Social Science (B-SOC) purpose

- To build knowledge and understanding of the complexities of social systems and diverse world views; to help students navigate and influence societal challenges around the world.

- To develop understanding of how social scientists think, analyze issues, interpret evidence, and draw conclusions, enabling students to recognize and critique the issues that define contemporary societies.
- To prepare students to make connections between their field of study and the broader contexts of human society. To equip students with transferable skills in social critique, evaluation, and the synthesis of knowledge and understanding.

Science (B-SCI) purpose

- To build knowledge of what science has discovered and accomplished, and how science has affected societies; to gain an appreciation for how science helps us to understand the world.
- To develop an understanding of the scientific method, allowing students to recognize and critique pseudo-science and to differentiate scientifically verifiable fact from opinion.
- To prepare students to be scientifically literate members of society. To develop students' ability for analytical and technological literacy through the use of scientific data or via participation in experiential activities such as laboratories.

Revised definition of a Writing-intensive course

A **WRITING-INTENSIVE** course provides students with opportunities to use reading, writing, and revision to increase understanding and further development of ideas. A writing-intensive course fosters the development of transferable writing skills for effective and professional communication, and the ability to express ideas in the forms and genres typical of the student's program of study. These skills may include structures and styles, accepted modes of reasoning and argumentation, convincing use of evidence, and appropriate technical language.

Writing-intensive courses are expected to explicitly address the craft of writing, and they must include significant levels of timely, actionable instructor feedback and student revision in response to feedback to ensure the development of strong transferable writing skills. A minimum of 50% of the course grade must be based on individual (not group) written work.

Revised definition of a Quantitative course

A **QUANTITATIVE** course increases student understanding and appreciation of the creative potential and broad application of mathematical, computational, and statistical methods, or formal symbolic logic, as tools for solving problems and a way of representing, interpreting, and communicating about aspects of a complex world. These courses develop transferable skills in problem solving, critical evaluation, or analysis using data represented in a variety of ways.

Quantitative courses are normally expected to explicitly include some aspect of numeracy. A minimum of 50% of the course grade must be based on quantitative assignments.

Recommendation 2: No change in the number of units required; allow waivers on a limited basis for up to 6 units of Breadth

Currently, students take 24 units (formerly known as “credits”) of Breadth courses, 6 each in Humanities, Social Science, Science, and Undesignated Breadth, which includes any course outside the major program. In our consultation, some respondents thought this was too many units, but others thought it was the right amount. Our initial response was to recommend removing the requirement to take 6 units of undesignated Breadth and thus reduce the total number of units in General Education from 36 to 30. [Feedback from our websurvey](#), launched after draft recommendations were released, was critical of this recommendation. The community noted that these units are not onerous for students as they include any course outside the department that hosts a student’s major program, and that removing the opportunity for exploration was counter to the purpose of General Education: an exploration of different ideas and ways of knowing. The committee therefore no longer recommends a reduction in the total number of Breadth units.

During the consultation and the committee’s discussion, however, we learned that one reason some members of the community would like to see fewer Breadth units is related to the structure of major programs. In some cases, courses from outside a department but within one of the subcategories of Breadth (Humanities, Social Sciences, Science) are required within the major. A common example given was departments within the Faculty of Science, where students are required to take courses in other Science departments (sometimes multiple other departments) to fulfill their program requirements. Early in the roll-out of the General Education Program, these required courses, designed as central disciplinary introductions, were designated as Breadth, in part because it would make completing B requirements easier for students in allied disciplines in other departments. In effect, if these required, central disciplinary introductions did not “count” as Breadth, students would need to take additional courses in the subcategory (in this example, Science) which would add to the complexity of degrees, and sometimes not be at an appropriate level. Waivers were contemplated at the inception of the General Education program to address this particular issue but never implemented, even though waivers would be true to the purpose of the program and simplify progression through degrees.

The committee therefore recommends that in some circumstances, programs may waive the requirement that their students take designated breadth courses in their areas. For example, Biological Sciences may apply to exempt students in the major program from completing designated breadth courses in Science. If approved, students would be required to replace the courses with Undesignated Breadth (UB) courses. In this example, if a waiver was granted to the department, Biological Sciences majors would replace the 6-unit B-Sci requirement (which they currently fulfill with required courses in Physics and Chemistry that have a B-Sci designation) with 6 units of UB, for a total of 12 units of designated breadth (6 in the Humanities and 6 in the Social Sciences) and 12 units of UB (courses outside their department). Some students might still fulfill their UB with the courses required for their major, even if Physics and Chemistry chose to let the certification lapse (no increase in courses taken). This works because UB is defined as any course from outside the department. Other students might instead take different courses of interest, no longer restricted to only taking courses that are certified, which the committee sees as beneficial.

An additional benefit of removing the B designation from courses that are central disciplinary introductions, in the eyes of the committee, could be that the true purpose of Breadth courses would be clearer to all, leading to greater appreciation for our General Education model. Using our science example, we recognize that courses designed for majors in allied disciplines may not be the most effective way to build an appreciation for science and how scientists understand the world for students from outside the sciences. There are other courses, designed specifically for non-majors, that could better fill this need. The committee noted that the majority (206 out of 329) of the current B-designated courses are listed as program requirements for at least one major or minor, suggesting that at least some of these courses are central disciplinary introductions to the major. The implementation of waivers would make it possible for some of these courses to lose certification, if departments so choose. It would require collaboration among departments during the certification process to ensure the needs of students in allied disciplines are met.

The committee recognizes that disciplines vary in the complexity of their pre-requisite structure and thus how introductory courses ladder into courses later in the sequence of the major program. We understand that in some disciplines, introductory courses are quite suitable for non-majors. In other cases, introductory courses are foundational to the discipline and may not be consistent with the stated purpose of the program as broadening the experience of students outside of the discipline. We encourage departments and schools to consider whether their introductory courses are the best way to introduce non-majors to the ideas and dynamics of the discipline. We also recognize that decisions about seeking certification of courses are the jurisdiction of schools and departments.

Waivers would need approval by SCUS. Approval would be more likely for highly specified programs that already require a large number of courses outside the department but within the designated subcategory of Breadth. A waiver should be requested through the undergraduate curriculum committees of schools/departments and Faculties, and sent to SCUS. The memo to SCUS should note which required courses could be considered to meet the designated requirement within the subcategory (Humanities, Science, Social Science) of the waiver. Waivers will only be allowed for one kind of breadth.

Recommendation 3: Course designation and oversight

A concern expressed during our consultation is that decisions about whether courses are approved for W, Q, or B certification were not always clear to the Departments, Schools, or Faculties requesting the designation. An improved and transparent process is needed.

We propose an approval process under the auspices of SCUS, the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies. Committees for each course designation type (W, Q, B-Hum, B-Soc, B-Sci), each comprised of 3 faculty members, will consider applications for certification and recommend certifications to SCUS. Faculty members normally will have taught the course type they are evaluating. Decisions will be made based on the definitions included in this document. Appeals of the subcommittee decisions can be made to the Chair of SCUS. The Office of University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison will provide administrative support (organize meetings, manage forms and templates, etc.) to reduce the workload

for faculty members and undergraduate curriculum committees seeking certification. More details about certification of courses are provided in the [implementation plan](#) later in this document.

Recommendation 4: Re-certification Process and Implementation

The updated definitions, combined with the perception of many survey respondents and undergraduate curriculum committee members that courses can change over time such that they no longer meet the criteria, indicates a need for re-certification of existing courses. We recommend this occur over a 3-year period initially, with support from the Office of University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison (UCIL Office) for timelines, producing pre-populated application forms, meeting organization, and other logistical details. We further recommend that course re-certification occur on a regular, rotating basis, every 5 years. For more details, see the [implementation plan](#).

The committee has learned that there may have been exemptions made for various programs over time, although some of this information and the reasons for exemption have been lost. All exemptions assumed to exist by departments and schools should be submitted for approval by SCUS given the nature of the re-certification process.

The committee recognizes that a rigorous re-certification process, combined with waivers and department decisions about whether to seek re-certification, may reduce the total number of courses that are designated as W, Q, and B. The committee does not find this to be problematic. SFU has more W, Q, and B courses and more seats within courses than are needed to provide all students with the opportunity to complete their General Education requirements. In our study of [courses available](#) to students we learned that there are Breadth courses restricted to majors (who cannot receive the B for courses within their school/department), Quantitative courses that have multiple pre-requisites that are also Q courses (so students have already fulfilled the Q requirements prior to enrolling; that is, the designation provides little additional information for students looking to fulfill Q requirements) and disciplines with large numbers of Writing-intensive courses, more than are needed for students to meet their upper division W requirement. While these courses likely meet the criteria for being re-certified, and may have many benefits for students, the committee questions the purpose of certifying them, and wonders if certifying courses such as these might reduce clarity of the purpose and benefits of the program for the intended audience, our students. We encourage departments and schools to consider such questions as they apply for W, Q, and B designations for their courses.

Recommendation 5: Writing supports and resources

A common concern expressed by the committee and by the members of the SFU community we consulted is that SFU needs to do a better job supporting students who are developing their writing skills, and supporting the instructors whose work is so fundamental to students gaining better writing skills. Although the committee is not recommending changes to the W requirements (6 units, including an upper-division course within the program of study), we do recommend significant additional analysis beyond what we could accomplish as a broad General Education committee, to inform further decision-making by SFU.

We specifically recommend that a writing support working group should: 1) clarify how the current subsidy provided to W courses is distributed and used, as well as assess its adequacy; 2) investigate the potential for more centralized TA training in the craft of assessing written work; and 3) consider a radical change in how we provide lower-division writing instruction that was suggested during consultation. Specifically, SFU should investigate a model used elsewhere, where only a few courses exist in the lower division that teach “Writing for Academic Purposes”, or even, more broadly, “Academic Communication”. These courses would be specific to very broad disciplines, such as Science, or Business, that may or may not map onto our Faculty structure; there could also be shared teaching and a sharing of the FTEs of these courses. A benefit of such a change would be the provision of a solid foundation in writing for all SFU students. A challenge will be moving to such a centralized model in an institution that largely follows a distributed model. Further investigation is clearly needed.

Recommendation 6: Communication

In our consultation, we learned that various sectors of our community are not clear on the purpose and benefits of SFU’s General Education program. Improving how we communicate about General Education, and even how we might promote the program, will create buy-in from faculty, staff and students, support faculty in designing appropriate courses, support students in choosing courses that further the goals they have for their education, and support staff (especially advisors) in steering students to courses that will complement their program of study. A working group composed of faculty, students, advisors, and communicators will be tasked with developing a communication plan in support of the changes in the General Education program.

Recommendation 7: Implementation Plan 2023-2026

The recommendations being made represent the need to redefine the purpose of the General Education Curriculum. Their purpose is to update definitions for Writing (W), Quantitative (Q), and Breadth (B) designations and further students’ understanding of the importance of a General Education. By updating the WQB definitions it is acknowledged that some designated courses may no longer meet the intended requirements for said designation, whereas other courses will now be eligible for a designation. Thus, a review of all undergraduate courses, in all units across the university, is recommended.

Recognizing that implementing a review of all current WQB courses (863) will be complex and resource intensive it is recommended that this process of re-certification be spread out over a three-year period. Sub-committees of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS), comprised of faculty specialists, will be established to provide oversight of the General Education curriculum (review, audit, and approve designations). The University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison Office (UCIL) will provide administrative support.

Governance

It is expected that WQB designations will follow the standard SFU governance policies from Unit UCC through to Senate.

1. Requests for designations (new and re-certification) will be submitted to the University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison Office (ucil_office@sfu.ca) at the same time as they are submitted to SCUS.
2. Subcommittees of SCUS will be struck for each type of designation (W, Q, B-Hum, B-Sci, and B-Soc).
3. Subcommittees will be responsible for regular reviews of the process of certifying courses. The UCIL Office and the Chair of SCUS will ensure that processes are consistent among the different subcommittees.
4. Subcommittees will make recommendations to SCUS for each designation application.
5. The UCIL Office will be responsible for administrative support (pre-populating application forms, organizing subcommittee meetings, communication with SCUS) and for communicating recommendations to the Unit UCC.
6. If the Unit does not agree with the recommendation of the subcommittee, they can appeal the decision to the Chair of SCUS.

A. WQB Sub-Committee Composition

1. Three faculty members from different Faculties (where possible) for each sub-committee. Normally, committee members should have experience teaching the course designation type they are approving.
2. One person from the University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison (UCIL) Office (non-voting, for administrative support)

B. WQB Sub-Committee Selection Process

1. On an annual basis Faculty representatives to SCUS will submit names for the five curriculum sub-committees.
2. Faculties should follow their own process when submitting names for consideration.
3. To be considered for a committee nominated individuals would normally have experience teaching within the designated category (e.g. having taught a W course, or a B-Soc course).
4. Membership will be for a two-year, alternating timeframe with at least one member remaining in place for continuity.
5. Selection of committee members will be made by the Chair of SCUS, with input from the existing committee members as needed.
6. The Chair of SCUS will make every effort to include members from three different Faculties on each committee, and representatives from all Faculties spanning all five sub-committees.

C. WQB Sub-Committee Terms of Reference

1. Taking into consideration the need for coordination and development of undergraduate curriculum within the University, WQB subcommittees shall:
 - a. Receive and review applications for WQB designations, ensure they meet the expectations of General Education as included in this document, and forward recommendations to SCUS.
 - b. Consider and recommend to SCUS policy recommendations concerning WQB requirements, including transfer credit where necessary.
 - c. Recommend procedural changes such as refining the draft forms ([Appendix III](#)) used to certify courses to ensure processes meet the needs of faculty experts serving on the sub-committees.
2. The sub-committee quorum shall be two voting members.

Implementation Timeline

It is recognized that re-certification of all WQB courses will take substantial time and departmental resources in a period where both are limited. Working with the guiding principles that 1) curriculum reform should be equitably applied to all students, 2) will require faculty and staff resources, and 3) is important to the reputation of the university, it is proposed that all courses currently holding a W,Q, or B designation will be reviewed and re-certified (or have the certification removed) within a three-year period beginning September 2023 and completing no later than March 2026. Units wishing to move quickly may begin submitting course certification requests in Summer 2023.

Departments/Schools and Faculties may approach this work at their own pace though it is recommended that 50% of certified courses be reviewed by January 2025.

To support this work, the UCIL office will provide each Faculty with the following:

- a list of courses holding a designation ([Appendix I](#)),
- a memo template to remove designations from courses ([Appendix II](#)),
- pre-populated W, Q, and B application forms containing course number, name, and annual enrolment (based upon the average over the past 3-year period; drafts in [Appendix III](#)).

The application forms will be revised with input from the subcommittees.

New courses and existing courses that do not currently hold a WQB designation may apply for a designation once this document has gone to Senate. Designations will become effective per standard academic calendar timelines, once per year in the fall term.

A. Recertification Process

1. Units review all courses with existing WQB designations, from a list provided by the UCIL office.
2. Determine courses where a designation may be removed and submit a memo to SCUS to remove designations.
3. Determine courses where a designation may be maintained (or changed) and submit the appropriate application form.
4. Determine if courses without a designation may now qualify and submit the appropriate application form.
5. In May 2026 any course that has not applied to maintain or remove a designation will automatically have the designation removed effective Fall 2026.
6. All WQB designations for re-certified courses will be effective in the Fall term following approval by SCUS.
7. Going forward WQB designations will be reviewed every five years on a rolling basis. UCIL will be responsible for coordinating the timelines of reviews.

B. Transfer and Articulation

SFU grants transfer credit through the [BC Council on Admissions and Transfer](#) (BCCAT) for most academic courses taken by students at BC institutions (public, private, and Indigenous-operated institutes, colleges and universities) as well as many out-of-province institutions. We will work with BCCAT and sending institutions to determine which transfer courses warrant W, Q, or B designation under the new definitions, and the timelines for the designations being removed or re-certified. This

work will be done collaboratively through the Registrar's Office Admissions Team, the UCIL Office, and the SCUS Sub-Committees.

Next Steps

We recognize that improvement occurs through an iterative process. We therefore recommend regular review of forms and processes during implementation, and that a study of the impact of recommendations from the committee occur in five years time.

Appendix I: WQB Courses by Faculty and Department

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences				
Department/School/Program	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Cognitive Science			2	2
Criminology	1	2	8	11
Economics	11	34	4	49
English	33	1	7	41
French	2	1	3	6
Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies	2	1	5	8
Gerontology			2	2
Global Asia			3	3
History	25		42	67
Humanities	5		45	50
Indigenous Studies	5		4	9
International Studies	3		8	11
Labour Studies	1	1	2	4
Linguistics	4	3	5	12
Philosophy	7	3	8	18
Political Science	13	8	13	34
Psychology	3	5	6	14
Sociology and Anthropology	3		4	7
World Languages and Literatures	7	3	17	27
FASS - Dean's Office			2	2
Total	125	62	190	377
Faculty of Applied Science				
Department/School/Program	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Computing Science	3	13	6	22
Engineering Science	3	2	3	8
Mechatronic Systems Engineering	4	1	1	6
Sustainable Energy Engineering	3			3
TEKX		1	1	2
Total	13	17	11	41

Beedie School of Business	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Total	2	10	3	15
Faculty of Communication, Art, and Technology				
Department/School/Program	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Communication	6	2	3	11
Contemporary Arts	8	5	13	26
Interactive Arts and Technology	3	1	6	10
Publishing	2	1	1	4
Total	19	9	23	51
Faculty of Education	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Total	10	11	9	30
Faculty of Environment				
Department/School/Program	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Archaeology	2	2	11	15
Environment (ENV and SD)	1		4	5
Environmental Science	1		1	2
Geography	5	18	14	37
Resource and Environmental Management	2	3	7	12
Resource and Environmental Planning			1	1
Total	11	23	38	72
Faculty of Health Sciences	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Total	1		4	5
Faculty of Science				
Department/Program	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Statistics and Actuarial Science (ACMA)	1	12	1	14
Biological Sciences	5	1	8	14
Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology	4	7	5	16
Chemistry	2	39	7	48
Earth Sciences	3	9	6	18
MACM		10	1	11

Mathematics	8	55	2	65
Molecular Biology and Biochemistry	1		1	2
Nuclear Science (NUSC)		4		4
Physics	2	40	8	50
Statistics	1	21	1	23
Science Dean's Office (SCI)			1	1
Total	27	198	41	266
	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
Dialogue	3		3	6
SFU TOTAL	W courses	Q courses	B courses	TOTAL
	211	330	322	863

Appendix II: Memo to Remove WQB Designation



8888 University Drive, Burnaby, BC
Canada V5A 1S6

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies
FROM

DATE
PAGE 1 of 1

RE: Removal of WQB Designation

At its meeting on *[insert date]*, the Faculty of *[insert faculty]* Undergraduate Curriculum Committee approved the removal of Writing, Quantitative, and/or Breadth (WQB) designations from the below listed courses:

Appendix III: DRAFT WQB Designation Application Forms

DRAFT: REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATION AS A WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSE

Thank you for your interest in offering writing-intensive (W) courses. W courses will help meet Simon Fraser University's commitment to enhance the education of undergraduate students by focusing on the craft of writing within the program of study. Completing this form will provide information for assessment of whether your course meets the criteria for W courses.

Please contact the Director, University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison (UCIL) at ucildir@sfu.ca if you have any questions about completing this form.

A **WRITING-INTENSIVE** course provides students with opportunities to use reading, writing, and revision to increase understanding and further development of ideas. A writing-intensive course fosters the development of transferable writing skills for effective and professional communication, and the ability to express ideas in the forms and genres typical of the student's program of study. These skills may include structures and styles, accepted modes of reasoning and argumentation, convincing use of evidence, and appropriate technical language.

Writing-intensive courses are expected to explicitly address the craft of writing, and they must include significant levels of timely, actionable instructor feedback and student revision in response to feedback to ensure the development of strong transferable writing skills. A minimum of 50% of the course grade must be based on individual (not group) written work.

Examples of W courses can be found on the General Education Curriculum page at [\[Provide link\]](#)

COURSE TITLE, NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION: THIS INFORMATION WILL BE PRE-POPULATED

Course #: _____ Course Title: _____

Frequency of offering (# / year) _____

Average enrollment per offering: _____

OTHER INFORMATION:

Instructor(s) responsible for teaching the course: _____

List course pre-requisites: _____

Please give a one-paragraph description of the content and overall format (lecture, seminar, tutorial, etc.) of the course, listing any prerequisites (maximum 200 words).

DRAFT: REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATION AS A QUANTITATIVE COURSE

Thank you for your interest in offering quantitative-intensive (Q) courses. Quantitative-intensive courses will help meet Simon Fraser University’s commitment to the education of undergraduate students by focusing on skills in numeracy, problem solving, critical evaluation, and analysis. Completing this form will provide information for assessment of whether your course meets the criteria for Q courses.

Please contact the Director, University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison (UCIL) at ucildir@sfu.ca if you have any questions about completing this form.

A **QUANTITATIVE** course increases student understanding and appreciation of the creative potential and broad application of mathematical, computational, and statistical methods, or formal symbolic logic, as tools for solving problems and a way of representing, interpreting, and communicating about aspects of a complex world. These courses develop transferable skills in problem solving, critical evaluation, or analysis using data represented in a variety of ways.

Quantitative courses are normally expected to explicitly include some aspect of numeracy. A minimum of 50% of the course grade must be based on quantitative assignments.

EXAMPLES

Examples of Quantitative courses can be found on the General Education Curriculum page at [\[Provide link\]](#)

COURSE TITLE, NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION: THIS INFORMATION WILL BE PRE-POPULATED

Course #: _____ Course Title: _____

Frequency of offering (# / year) _____

Average enrollment per offering: _____

OTHER INFORMATION:

Instructor(s) responsible for teaching the course: _____

List course pre-requisites: _____

Please give a one-paragraph description of the content and overall format (lecture, seminar, tutorial, etc.) of the course, listing any prerequisites (maximum 200 words).

**DRAFT: REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATION
AS A DESIGNATED BREADTH HUMANITIES COURSE**

Thank you for your interest in offering a designated breadth-humanities (B-Hum) course. B-HUM courses will help to meet Simon Fraser's commitment to the general education of undergraduate students by encouraging them to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments through historical, artistic, social and cultural lenses. Completing this form will provide information for assessment of whether your course meets the criteria for B-HUM.

Please contact the Director, University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison, at ucildir@sfu.ca if you have any questions about completing this form.

BREADTH CRITERIA

A **BREADTH** course provides the opportunity for students to enrich the subject matter knowledge in their program(s) of study by exposing them to new theoretical perspectives, forms of thought, and modes of inquiry. Breadth courses encourage students to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments and allow them to improve their ability to engage in conversations, debates, and actions that comprise our globally interconnected society.

Additionally, a Breadth course must substantially fulfill AT LEAST ONE of the following conditions:

1. Articulates a framework for organizing and acquiring knowledge in a particular field of study; raises overarching questions and problems within a field of study and investigates how the field generates and validates workable solutions to problems.
2. Develops students' systematic understandings of the historical development and/or the contemporary dynamics of the physical, natural, social, and/or cultural environments that comprise the program of study.

BREADTH HUMANITIES PURPOSE

- To build knowledge and understanding of both historical and current trends in human cultural production; to develop an appreciation for how the humanities help us understand and navigate the world.
- To develop cultural, artistic, or linguistic literacies that allow for students to critique of and engagement with controversies and issues informing contemporary societies.
- To prepare students to make connections among cultural, artistic, and social movements within a range of historical, present, and emerging contexts. To foster transferable skills of cultural critique, evaluation, knowledge-making, language-learning, and self-expression.

EXAMPLES

Examples of B-Hum courses can be found on the General Education Curriculum page at [\[Provide link\]](#)

COURSE TITLE, NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION: THIS INFORMATION WILL BE PRE-POPULATED

Course #: _____ Course Title: _____

Frequency of offering (# / year) _____

Average enrollment per offering: _____

OTHER INFORMATION:

Instructor(s) responsible for teaching the course: _____

List course pre-requisites: _____

Please give a one-paragraph description of the content and overall format (lecture, seminar, tutorial, etc.) of the course, listing any prerequisites (maximum 200 words).

BREADTH RATIONALE:

Please explain how the course exposes students to new theoretical perspectives, forms of thought, and modes of inquiry, and encourages them to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments and allow them to improve their ability to engage in conversations, debates, and actions that comprise our globally interconnected society:

A Breadth course must fulfill one of the two following conditions. Please explain which one, and how:

1. Articulates a framework for organizing and acquiring knowledge in a particular field of study; raises overarching questions and problems within a field of study and investigates how the field generates and validates workable solutions to problems.
2. Develops students' systematic understandings of the historical development and/or the contemporary dynamics of the physical, natural, social, and/or cultural environments that comprise the program of study.

**DRAFT: REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATION
AS A DESIGNATED BREADTH SCIENCE COURSE**

Thank you for your interest in offering a designated breadth-science (B-SCI) course. B-SCI courses will help to meet Simon Fraser's commitment to the general education of undergraduate students by encouraging them to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments through scientific, analytical, and technological lenses. Completing this form will provide information for assessment of whether your course meets the criteria for B-SCI.

Please contact the Director, University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison, at ucildir@sfu.ca if you have any questions about completing this form.

BREADTH CRITERIA

A **BREADTH** course provides the opportunity for students to enrich the subject matter knowledge in their program(s) of study by exposing them to new theoretical perspectives, forms of thought, and modes of inquiry. Breadth courses encourage students to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments and allow them to improve their ability to engage in conversations, debates, and actions that comprise our globally interconnected society.

Additionally, a Breadth course must substantially fulfill AT LEAST ONE of the following conditions:

1. Articulates a framework for organizing and acquiring knowledge in a particular field of study; raises overarching questions and problems within a field of study and investigates how the field generates and validates workable solutions to problems.
2. Develops students' systematic understandings of the historical development and/or the contemporary dynamics of the physical, natural, social, and/or cultural environments that comprise the program of study.

BREADTH SCIENCE Purpose

- To build knowledge of what science has discovered and accomplished, and how science has affected societies; to gain an appreciation for how science helps us to understand the world.
- To develop an understanding of the scientific method, allowing students to recognize and critique pseudo-science and to differentiate scientifically verifiable fact from opinion.
- To prepare students to be scientifically literate members of society. To develop students' ability for analytical and technological literacy through the use of scientific data or via participation in experiential activities such as laboratories.

EXAMPLES

Examples of B-SCI courses can be found on the General Education Curriculum page at [\[Provide link\]](#)

COURSE TITLE, NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION: THIS INFORMATION WILL BE PRE-POPULATED

Course #: _____ Course Title: _____

Frequency of offering (# / year) _____

Average enrollment per offering: _____

OTHER INFORMATION:

Instructor(s) responsible for teaching the course: _____

List course pre-requisites: _____

Please give a one-paragraph description of the content and overall format (lecture, seminar, tutorial, etc.) of the course, listing any prerequisites (maximum 200 words).

BREADTH RATIONALE:

Please explain how the course exposes students to new theoretical perspectives, forms of thought, and modes of inquiry, and encourages them to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments and allow them to improve their ability to engage in conversations, debates, and actions that comprise our globally interconnected society:

A Breadth course must fulfill one of the two following conditions. Please explain which one, and how:

3. Articulates a framework for organizing and acquiring knowledge in a particular field of study; raises overarching questions and problems within a field of study and investigates how the field generates and validates workable solutions to problems.
4. Develops students' systematic understandings of the historical development and/or the contemporary dynamics of the physical, natural, social, and/or cultural environments that comprise the program of study.

**DRAFT: REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATION
AS A DESIGNATED BREADTH SOCIAL-SCIENCE COURSE**

Thank you for your interest in offering a designated breadth-social science (B-SOC) course. B-SOC courses will help to meet Simon Fraser’s commitment to the general education of undergraduate students by encouraging them to build cross-cultural understandings and participate in social critique and evaluation of contemporary society. Completing this form will provide information for assessment of whether your course meets the criteria for B-SOC.

Please contact the Director, University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison, at ucildir@sfu.ca if you have any questions about completing this form.

BREADTH CRITERIA

A **BREADTH** course provides the opportunity for students to enrich the subject matter knowledge in their program(s) of study by exposing them to new theoretical perspectives, forms of thought, and modes of inquiry. Breadth courses encourage students to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments and allow them to improve their ability to engage in conversations, debates, and actions that comprise our globally interconnected society.

Additionally, a Breadth course must substantially fulfill AT LEAST ONE of the following conditions:

1. Articulates a framework for organizing and acquiring knowledge in a particular field of study; raises overarching questions and problems within a field of study and investigates how the field generates and validates workable solutions to problems.
2. Develops students’ systematic understandings of the historical development and/or the contemporary dynamics of the physical, natural, social, and/or cultural environments that comprise the program of study.

BREADTH SOCIAL SCIENCE PURPOSE

* To build cross-cultural understandings and knowledge of the complexities of social systems and diverse world views; to help students navigate and influence societal challenges in the world.

* To develop an understanding of how social scientists think, analyze issues, interpret evidence, and draw conclusions, enabling students to recognize and critique the issues that define contemporary society.

* To prepare students to make connections between their field of study and the broader contexts of human society. To equip students with transferable skills in social critique, evaluation, and the synthesis of knowledge and understanding.

EXAMPLES

Examples of B-SOC courses can be found on the General Education Curriculum page at [\[Provide link\]](#)

COURSE TITLE, NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION: THIS INFORMATION WILL BE PRE-POPULATED

Course #: _____ Course Title: _____

Frequency of offering (# / year) _____

Average enrollment per offering: _____

OTHER INFORMATION:

Instructor(s) responsible for teaching the course: _____

List course pre-requisites: _____

Please give a one-paragraph description of the content and overall format (lecture, seminar, tutorial, etc.) of the course, listing any prerequisites (maximum 200 words).

BREADTH RATIONALE:

Please explain how the course exposes students to new theoretical perspectives, forms of thought, and modes of inquiry, and encourages them to reflect on their values, beliefs, and commitments and allow them to improve their ability to engage in conversations, debates, and actions that comprise our globally interconnected society:

A Breadth course must fulfill one of the two following conditions. Please explain which one, and how:

1. Articulates a framework for organizing and acquiring knowledge in a particular field of study; raises overarching questions and problems within a field of study and investigates how the field generates and validates workable solutions to problems.
2. Develops students' systematic understandings of the historical development and/or the contemporary dynamics of the physical, natural, social, and/or cultural environments that comprise the program of study.

BREADTH SOCIAL SCIENCE RATIONALE

1. This course introduces important concepts for developing cross-cultural understandings and knowledge of social systems and diverse world views by:

2. This course equips students with transferable skills in social critique, evaluation, and the synthesis of knowledge and understanding by:

3. This course prepares students to navigate, define, analyze and critique contemporary society by:

4. Other ways in which this course meets the goals and criteria of a Breadth Social Science course are:

PLEASE SUBMIT A CURRENT OR RECENT COURSE SYLLABUS WITH THIS FORM.

Appendix IV: Members of the General Education Curriculum Review Committee

Elizabeth Elle, Vice Provost, Learning & Teaching (Chair)

Faculty Representatives:

Ash Parameswaran, Applied Sciences

David Coley, Arts and Social Sciences

Shauna Jones, Beedie School of Business

Chantal Gibson, Communication Arts & Technology

Natalia Gajdamaschko, Education

Paul Kingsbury, Environment

Danny Leznoff, Science

Note: Health Sciences declined to name a representative

I-Chant Chiang, Centre for Educational Excellence

Jill Sutherland, University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison

Kathryn McTavish, Coordinator, Special Projects, Office of the VPA

Additional support:

Erin Babingao and Rose Evans, Office of the AVPLT

Jocelyn Chapman, Michelle Grahame, and Kelli Whittle, UCIL