

Curriculum Committee 2021-2022 Annual Report

“This committee reviews curricular matters, especially individual course proposals and major and minor requirements, including the implementation of policies concerning all-college requirements. The committee may also consider curriculum questions brought before it by the faculty, students, and administration, and general recommendations concerning immediate and long-range curricular matters.”

https://www.skidmore.edu/curriculum_committee/index.php

Faculty Membership:

María F. Lander, Chair (World Languages and Literatures)

Sandra Goff (Economics)

Kate Graney (Political Science)

Minita Sanghvi (Management and Business)

Chris Vecsey (Neuroscience; Upcoming Chair)

Administration:

Michael Arnush, Associate Dean of the Faculty (ADOF; ex officio)

Dave Deconno, Registrar (ex officio)

Sharon Clemmey, Registrar's Office (ex officio)

Shannon Melvin, Registrar's Office (ex officio)

Student Representative:

Lisle Jamieson ('24), spring semester only.

Summary of Regular Business

- The committee met 15 times during the Fall semester and 13 times during the Spring semester.
- The committee was unable to include the required two student representatives during the Fall 2021 semester due to changes in SGA. We were grateful that one student representative, Lisle Jamieson, was able to join us during the spring 2022 semester. We hope the situation will be regularized next semester and the required number of student representatives will again be possible.

- The committee followed the process for reviewing procedures implemented during the 2020-2021 academic year. In this process, two teams of three committee members (ideally two faculty members and one student representative) assess a set of proposals, and the Chair and the ADOF review each proposal. This system allowed the committee to work efficiently, leaving no backlog for the incoming committee. A small number of courses are currently waiting for the faculty initiators to address the committee’s requests for clarifications and/or revisions.
- The committee would like to thank Eric Morser, Bridge Experience Director, and Amon Emeka, Director of the First-Year Experience, with whom it worked closely during the academic year.
- The Committee reviewed 86 proposals, including Bridge Experience courses, Senior Coda Experiences, Scribner Seminars, and Regular New Course Proposals, as well as Substantial Revisions of a Course. This last kind of proposal requires the consideration of the entire committee for its approval.
- Michael Arnush, Associate Dean of the Faculty, Dave DeConno, Registrar, and Maria Lander, Chair of Curriculum Committee, formed the Routine Matters Sub-Committee. This subcommittee discusses matters that, given their more straightforward nature, do not need the attention of the entire committee. Such “routine matters” refer to the deletion of courses no longer being offered, changes to course names, minor changes of course descriptions, etc. A total of 54 minor revisions were approved.

The following table shows the breakdown of courses and changes requested and approved by the committee:

Bridge Experience	23
CODA	4
Scribner Seminar	17
Regular New Courses	24
Substantial Revisions of a Course	18
Total	86
Routine Revision	54
Total Courses Reviewed	140

Notes on the Needs of the New General Education Curriculum:

- Today, the college catalog includes a total of 83 Bridge Experience courses. The estimated number of BE courses needed to reasonably offer the course during a standard academic year is 97.
- All but four departments have an approved CODA course.

- During the Fall, the committee discussed the possibility of allowing students to satisfy the Bridge Experience requirement through transfer credit. In a letter sent to CEPP, Curriculum Committee expressed the majority's view that the BE course is the cornerstone of the New General Education Curriculum, a course strategically and intentionally created to be experienced at Skidmore. The BE requirement ensures that each Skidmore student is challenged to examine and question, at least once during their tenure at the College, issues related to Power, Justice, and Identity. Indeed, other institutions also teach courses that center on one or more of these topics. However, Bridge Experience courses at Skidmore undergo a high degree of scrutiny in the approval process. In addition, courses offered elsewhere are unlikely to satisfy the practice/application component, causing students to need to take an additional course when they return to Skidmore. CEPP agreed with the committee's stance that the BE requirement should only be met through coursework at Skidmore.

Notes on Curriculum Composition:

- Prompted by CEPP, the committee discussed the need of requiring five faculty members to function. We all agree that it can perfectly function with four members of the faculty; indeed, even three will suffice.

Notes on a Concerning Trend:

- Throughout the academic year, the committee frequently discussed the possible unintended consequences of widespread, and perhaps excessive, use of the flexible fourth credit-hour.
- Even excluding the Scribner Seminar, a course designed to include a flexible fourth credit-hour, most of the courses approved this year were courses featuring a flexible fourth credit-hour. 74% percent of the approved Bridge Experience courses (17 out of 23) were proposed with a flexible fourth credit-hour. Some departments already offer most of their courses as 4-credit courses featuring a flexible fourth credit-hour.
- A few key questions were raised during these discussions:
 - 1) Does the frequent use of the flexible fourth-credit hour contribute significantly to unequal workload across the college?
 - 2) Is the flexible fourth-credit hour causing there to be fewer courses offered in some departments? This is of particular concern as the College grapples with how to reduce the number of faculty positions.
 - 3) Is the flexible fourth-credit hour contributing to an excessive use of payouts and overloads?
 - 4) How might the excessive use of the flexible fourth credit-hour affect the schedules and experiences of students at Skidmore?

Next Academic Year 2022-2023 Curriculum Committee Members

Chris Vecsey (Neuroscience), Chair

Kate Graney (Political Science)

Maggie Greaves (English)

Minita Sanghvi (Management and Business)

Jessica Somerville-Braun (Education Studies. One-year replacement).

Respectfully submitted,

María F. Lander

Professor of Spanish

Curriculum Committee, Chair