

Principles of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee

The responsibility of members of the Undergraduate Curriculum committee is to make sure that the academic foundation of ULM continues to be enhanced and strengthened. UCC members read all curricular changes and first ask, “How will these changes help our students gain more knowledge, improve their skills, and learn more?”

Because the UCC is guided by this aim of advancing the educational level of ULM’s students, UCC members explore how all proposed changes benefit our students. To ensure that every student who attends ULM receives an outstanding education, a UCC member must examine the academic content of each proposed change and put this principle above all others, including that of representing his/her own department/college. Accordingly, as a unit the UCC is called upon to rise above departmental/college distinctions and encourage the cooperation necessary across the campus to guarantee that our students gain a first-rate educational background. Only when all departments/colleges unite to provide the students with the academic experiences they need can our university remain strong.

Because this principle is the sine qua non, usually the first question a UCC member asks is, “Why is the department proposing this change?” Hence, the “justification” (the actual question dealing with “justification” on each form will vary) is important. Members should read the explanation carefully, and if they need more information about the “justification” or “reason,” they should ask the department head and/or departmental representatives who attend the meeting to present the proposal to explain it in more detail.

Also, the types of curricular changes that can be proposed usually elicit the following questions.

- I. Adding/Removing a class outside of that department's offerings to a degree plan or program of study
 1. If the department is adding a particular class, what knowledge and which skills will the students gain which they currently are not receiving?
 2. If the department is dropping a particular class, what knowledge and which skills will the student lose?
 3. Has the department notified the other departments who offer the class being added or dropped about the change? Will the change cause that department to need to add faculty and add sections (in the case of the addition of a class) or reduce faculty or sections (in the case of the dropping of a class)?

- II. Addition/Creation of a new course in that department
 1. Why is the department creating that new class? Does it add to or update the body of knowledge in that field?
 2. Is the course duplicating another one already existing at ULM? If so, why not recommend that students take the already-existing course? Will the creation of the new class negatively impact enrollment in the already-existing class?
 3. Is the proposed new course rigorous and challenging enough for the level of course? To answer this question, please examine the syllabus. Are the assignments, readings, and texts chosen appropriate for that level (first-year, sophomore, etc.)?
 4. If the class is approved by the UCC, does that department have an adequate number of qualified faculty to teach it?

- III. Closing a course and removing it from the catalog
 1. Why is the department removing this course? Is the material no longer relevant in that discipline? Is there a lack of student demand for the course? Does the department lack the faculty to teach it?
 2. Do other departments' curricula require that course, and will the closure negatively affect their programs of study?

- IV. Changing a Course
 1. Why is the department changing the course's prerequisites, description, etc.?
 2. How will these changes affect other departments who require this course?

- V. Add, Changing, Removing a Minor, Option, or Concentration
 1. If a department is adding a minor, how will this offering enhance the academic offerings of ULM?
 2. Will the proposed new minor, option, or concentration duplicate other already-existing minors or other programs of study?

3. If a department is removing a minor, option, or concentration, what will ULM and ULM's students lose?
4. If a department is changing a minor, option, or concentration, how will the change improve the program?
5. If a department is removing or changing a minor, option, or concentration, will the action negatively affect any other programs of study?

In addition, it is the responsibility of the UCC to help to make sure that the catalog is accurate and that all departments submit proposals in a uniform, standard, fair manner. Thus, it is necessary to check the forms for mathematical errors and inconsistencies, vague wording, poor wording, typos, and any other details that need to be recorded accurately in the catalog. Also, each department needs to adhere to the same rules for submission (meeting deadlines, sending a departmental representative to the meeting to answer any questions asked by UCC members, etc.).

Also, since the new ULM Common Core Curriculum was implemented last year, the members of the UCC need to examine each proposal to make sure it adheres to the new requirements and to the underlying "spirit" that guided the Core Curriculum Committee. That is, the new core reflects a desire to move toward greater interdisciplinary content, toward providing a broad academic foundation that emphasizes the development of writing skills and communication skills, and toward greater participation of faculty across the disciplines.

As these preceding principles indicate, the UCC is thus a decision-making body that recommends and suggests ways to improve the academic core of our University.

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